



Palacký University Olomouc  
University of Clermont Auvergne  
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## **Master Thesis**

**Assessing International Funding Allocation for Child-Rights Based Projects:  
the case of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency**

**Mariana Gomes de Carvalho**  
**Supervisor: Lucie Macková**



GLODEP 2022

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## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that this thesis “Assessing International Funding Allocation for Child-Rights Based Projects: the case of the Swedish international development cooperation agency”, is my own work and by my own effort for the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree in International Development Studies – GLODEP. Where sources of information have been used, they have been acknowledged.

Name: Mariana Gomes de Carvalho

Date: 31st of May, 2021

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M. G. de C.', written in a cursive style.

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### Zásady pro vypracování

There has been ongoing research about the impact of investment in children for economic prosperity and country development. However, there is a gap in research on the allocation of resources to support child rights. This issue is also covered in The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in a dedicated article highlighting the importance of resource allocation to support the realization of child rights. So far, there is little understanding of the motivations behind funding child rights, donor priorities, and the decision-making process. Governmental agencies are key and traditional actors in funding child rights development and therefore, this research investigates the allocation of resources for child rights-based projects by selected Development Cooperation Agencies.

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## **Abstract**

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is one of the most ratified international law instruments of the history. It prescribes the allocation of resources to support the realization of the rights in the Convention. Yet, there is limited evidence on the incorporation of a rights-perspective in the development field. This research is divided in two parts, the first puts forward a theoretical discussion of the implementation of a human rights-based approach (HRBA) in the development practice, while in the second part, a qualitative interpretative analysis of governmental briefs, reports and policy documents is conducted to identify motivations, priorities and the decision-making process behind funding child rights-related projects by the Swedish international development cooperation agency (Sida). The research reflects upon the rationing of the children as right-holders and discusses Sida's main partner, justification for support and implementation of a HRBA. This research findings provide a glance over a rights approach to development and contributes on aid transparency by tracing donor motivations and flows of resources, which can be especially useful to institutions in the development field aiming to explore potential partnership with Sida.

Keywords: child rights, human rights-based approach, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

## Table of Contents

1. Introduction .....	6
2. Historical Evolution of the Rights of the Child and Key Topics .....	9
3. Rationing of Child Interventions in the Human Development Field .....	13
4. Components and limitations of a human rights-based approach (HRBA) to Child Development 17	
5. The Human Rights Perspective in the Funding of Governmental Development Agencies .....	24
6. Research Methods .....	31
7. Funding Allocation for Child Rights-Based Projects: the case of Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) .....	33
7.1. Key figures on Sida allocation of resources and priorities .....	33
7.2. HRBA interpreted by Sida .....	37
7.3. Sida motivations, main partners, priorities and decision-making process to fund child rights- based projects .....	38
7.3.1. Motivations, Main Partners and Priorities .....	39
7.3.2. Decision-Making Process .....	42
8. Final Remarks .....	45

## **List of Acronyms**

CRC – United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

CSO – Civil Society Organisations

ECD – Early Childhood Development

DAC – Development Assistance Committee of Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

HRBA – Human Rights-Based Approach

INGO – International Non-governmental Organisation

NGO – Non-governmental Organisation

ODA – Official Development Assistance

OECD – Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

UNICEF – United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund

SDG – United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

Sida – Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

UN – United Nations

## **List of Graphs**

Graph 1 – Total Allocation of ODA to the Government & Civil Society sub-sector among DAC Countries from 2011 to 2020 (in Millions of USD)

Graph 2 – Sida’s global aid during 2021 per category of action (in millions of USD)

Graph 3 - Sida's Worldwide Aid to all partners into the Government and Civil Society Sector (in Millions of USD)

Graph 4 - Sida's Worldwide Aid to all partners into the Government and Civil Society Sector share per region in 2021 (%)

Graph 5 – Share of support provided by Sida per institution from 2015 to 2022 (%)

## **List of Tables**

TABLE 1 - Components of Child Wellbeing

TABLE 2 - UNICEF Program Assistance Expenditure by Program Type from 1960-2010 (in Millions of USD)

TABLE 3 – Total ODA for the Government & Civil Society sub-sector for selected OECD Countries (in Millions of USD)

TABLE 4 – Donor approaches to integrating human rights

## 1. Introduction

The article 4 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) prescribes that States must undertake appropriate measures for the implementation of the rights described in the convention up to the maximum extent of their available resources<sup>1</sup>. International legal instruments as conventions and declarations have the capacity to shape national to international agenda, priorities, regulations and policies. For instance, regarding the field of early childhood development (ECD), Pence et. al (2004) identified that the advancement of the CRC during the 1990s set a higher importance for national policies targeting ECD in countries as Ghana, Senegal and Namibia. Rebello Britto et al. (2013) evidenced the influence of the A World Fit for Children Declaration (UN General Assembly, 2002), the UN Millennium Declaration, and the CRC to the development and design of the Jordanian policy for ECD (Rebello Britto et al., 2013).

Conventions can drive international development practices, aid and funding allocation by further than raising awareness about a specific topic. It provides a framework for field action based on the entitlement of rights, which is called the human rights-based approach (HRBA). Yet, there is limited incorporation of the rights-perspective in development practice. This thesis departs from the premise that human rights can inform development and offer a different perspective, by changing the target group status from beneficiaries to right-holders. Sustainable and meaningful interventions develop the capacity of duty-bearers and civil society actors to, respectively, ensure rights realisation and claim their entitlements (Schaub et al., 2017).

In tradition, development economics reasoning paves the way to development practices, especially in key agencies as the World Bank. In this perspective, the importance of child development rests in the investment in future generations responsible for enhancing economic and social progress. Child issues can also be instrumentalized as a proxy indicator. From that perspective, the child is traditionally seen as a becoming adult rather than a child-being. The lack of evidence on the effectiveness of the application of HRBA is denoted as a challenge for its broader implementation in the development field. This thesis investigates the foundations of the human rights-based approach implemented by the Swedish development agency, especially regarding to child rights-related initiatives.

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<sup>1</sup> “States Parties shall undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognized in the present Convention. With regard to economic, social and cultural rights, States Parties shall undertake such measures to the maximum extent of their available resources and, where needed, within the framework of international co-operation.” (United Nations, 1989)

Children are a key target group in development policies and practices, both national and internationally, since they represent 28% of the global population, nearly 2.2 billion people, with 2 billion living in developing countries (UNICEF & ILO, 2019). Moreover, children are subjected to poverty in a different way, due to dependency on adults' income and decisions for allocation of resources. Based on a multidimensional composite indicator considering shortcomings in education, health, housing, nutrition, sanitation, and water, UNICEF identified that 46% of the children around the world faced multidimensional poverty, which increased up to 56% after the COVID-19 pandemic (UNICEF, 2020).

Recent efforts from the development field have called for more comprehensive and participatory approaches to address poverty in marginalised and unprivileged communities, including children. This research combines knowledge from international law and development fields to first provide evidence on the potential and current use of a rights-based approach to inform development practice. Second, it aims to investigate the allocation of resources, prioritization and decision-making process for rights-based projects focused on children in governmental development agencies, giving attention to the case of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). This research aims at answering the following questions: *Does the development field have a rights-based approach to development interventions?*, *How does Sida understand the human rights-based approach?* *How HRBA is translated into Sida's funding allocation?* *How does the decision-making process work for defining priorities of funding the child right agenda?*.

The analytical framework centres on a document analysis of briefs, reports and external evaluations of the selected governmental development agency. Development agencies figure as the traditional actors in the development sector. The valorisation of a rights-based approach by development agencies would be translated into guidelines, programmatic areas and financial support to projects bearing the approach. Additionally, the current research aims to investigate aid allocation, donor priorities and decision-making process, as aid flows are often criticized by the lack of transparency and accountability.

The Swedish development agency was selected for a case study due to its long-term advocacy and support for rights realisation, which made it a human rights champion organisation. Established in 1995, Sida strive the global reduction of poverty and oppression, cooperating bilaterally with 35 countries and supporting civil society, research and multilateral organisations across the globe. Sida has an operating human rights-based approach that guides its development cooperation which is subjected to analysis in this thesis. Additionally, the institution provides data on flows of resources



to development aid at the OpenAid Platform, along with external evaluation of targeted development cooperation, which make the analysis possible.

The present research does not intend to exhaust the debate on the implementation of a HRBA in the development field at national and international levels. It rather examines and provides a sample of usage of the approach. Bearing in mind that donor priorities and motivations change over time and budgets are reactive to rising emergencies across the globe, the research is constrained to Sida's rationing from 2015 to 2020, with a limited number of documents analysed dating beyond that period. Official policies and reports from Swedish development cooperation agency available in other languages than English were not incorporated into the analysis. Finally, among the limitations is important to highlight the challenge of putting together fields with diverse epistemological foundations such as law, economics and international relations.

The present thesis is divided into seven sections starting with a background on the historical development of the rights of the child. It moves to the rationing of development interventions with children, based on the development economics perspective. The thesis then discusses the components and limitations of a HRBA to development, especially to child-related interventions. Furthermore, the chapter discuss the *status quo* of the HRBA implementation in governmental development agencies. The fifth chapter brings the research methods for analysing Sida's support to child rights-based projects, while the sixth chapter explores the analysis of Sida's motivations, priorities and resource allocation. The final chapter presents the conclusions and final remarks.

## 2. Historical Evolution of the Rights of the Child and Key Topics

The historical development of the human rights of the child dates to the 1970s, once two social movements emerged at the international level advocating, on one hand, for self-determination and individual liberties of adolescents and, on the other hand, charity institutions pointing out grave social issues faced by the children. In 1978, Poland was the first state to propose the development of an international treaty on the rights of the child at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. In the following year, the United Nations (UN) held the “*International Year of the Child*” to promote a debate among states and push for a revision of national policies and practices aiming at comprehensive frameworks for child protection (United Nations General Assembly, 1978). The UN General Assembly included for the first time in the agenda the discussion over the development of a convention on the rights of the child. The “International Year of the Child” expanded the perception over the so-called child issues, departing from needs-based assessment focusing mainly on food security, health, and education to other social challenges as imprisoned children, “street children”, sexual abuse and child labour. Despite its important efforts in raising awareness, this movement that has leaped to the international level came out with slight regard for the word “rights” and considered their realisation as a secondary outcome of ongoing work on relief and assistance (Invernizzi & Williams, 2011). The settings of these primary coalitions reflect contemporary barriers to adopting a rights-based approach when working with children.

Prior to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, there were efforts from the international community to raise awareness of children’s issues. In 1924, the League of Nations adopted the *Geneva Declaration on the Rights of the Child*, a non-binding instrument summarizing the duties of “men and women from all nations” *vis-à-vis* children, for instance, the commitment to realize their development, protection, assistance and relief in times of distress (League of Nations, 1924). Yet, no specific reference was made to the rights of the child and the latter as a rights-holder.

The rights-embedded language appears as a novelty during the drafting of the convention on the Rights of the Child, which was adopted in the portrayed turmoil of increasing debate over new information arising about the reality of children and the terms of the rights of the child. It stretched into a long decade of discussions and was marked by, for the first time in human rights history, a diverse composition of actors in the working group of the convention with substantial participation of the civil society, especially NGOs, during the negotiation of the content of the treaty. The heterogeneity of actors and the extended timeframe allowed the thriving of an international child rights movement. It led to a review from the child-focused organisations on the means by which their work comprehended the rights of the child (Invernizzi & Williams, 2011). The nature of the

participants in the draft of the convention facilitated its adoption on a wide scale. Still, the politization of the campaign received strong resistance from traditional actors, namely States and human rights lawyers, who feared landing on solutions with a lack of jurisprudence.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was adopted in 1989 and entered into force the year after. It has lately become one of the most ratified international treaties in the world, in which all countries are state parties, except the United States. The Convention acknowledged children as bearers of human rights, namely the human rights of the child, conferring an innovative perception of the role played by children in a society, distancing from the paternalistic gaze towards the strengthened independence character of a right-holder. For instance, children were given the right to express their opinions freely, receive faithful information, and form and join groups and institutions (United Nations, 1989). For Cantwell, the Convention provides a unified framework replacing dispersed international laws which did not specifically target children but were extended to them.

*“Indeed, one of the aims of drawing up the CRC, especially in the eyes of the NGOs, very quickly became that of bringing together the rights that were scattered throughout a range of instruments was so wide to render them almost inoperative as a basis for coherent, comprehensive advocacy and meaningful responses to violations.”* (Cantwell, 2011, p. 41)

The Convention on the Rights of the Child followed an alternative pathway of the orthodox development of the international human rights law, which departs from political rights towards economic, social, and cultural rights. The child human rights advocates limitedly demanded children’s right to vote, for instance, rather than their right to protection and promotion. Children were not fully perceived as independent actors and according to Cantwell, *“too often, these rights are not looked on as children’s inalienable human rights, but simply as... children’s rights”* (Cantwell, 2011, p. 42)

Despite its comprehensive framework, embedded innovations and wide adoption, the Convention presents limitations when it comes to depiction and implementation. At first, the Convention restrictedly equates adult and child rights, due to still persistent gaze over children as part of the private helm, subject of love and not rights-holder, as beings who should not oversee complex topics which can compromise enjoyment of childhood and perception of children as future adults, not young human beings. Children are beings and becomings who should be entitled to protection, which means having more rights than adults and not less (Invernizzi & Williams, 2011).

Another limitation regards the definition of child in the convention, which declares that “a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier” (UN General Assembly, 1989). The definition is commonly criticized for infantilisation while including every child in the amorphous category of under 18 and especially for not challenging the idealized image of children that led states to ratify the treaty (Invernizzi & Williams, 2011) and can lead to age-bias in the implementation of policies and programmes for children. A good example of the pervasive role of infantilization is the term child soldier, which is based on a sentimental image of young children, while most of the individuals recruited and used in armed conflict are adolescents. Years after the international movement for child rights emerged, states started to realize that the commitments undertaken in the convention were hard to accomplish, mainly due to financial constrain and the increasing securitization of the human rights agenda after the 9/11 (Alston and Tobin, 2005 in Invernizzi & Williams, 2011). In view of its implementation, the aforementioned perception of children’s rights as detached from the international human rights framework brings child victims of rights violations to the outskirts of an already existing complex system from which they could benefit from protection, promotion, and redress.

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child is a treaty-body<sup>2</sup> established to monitor the implementation of the Convention and its Optional Protocols by the state parties. It does so by the examination of reports submitted by states every five years on the situation on the rights of the child at the local level and points its concerns and recommendations to states as “concluding observations”. Under the Third Optional Protocol, the Committee is also able to conduct inquiries into allegations of grave or systematic violations of rights. Finally, the Committee publishes general comments on thematic issues and promotes yearly debates on topics of interest at the day of general discussion (OHCHR, 2020). It is a key actor in providing awareness about child rights, formal procedures for their realisation and working with governments and civil society for implementation and monitoring.

Since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, significant improvements in advancing children’s agenda have been put forward, namely the adoption of the Optional Protocols, simplification of the reporting process, the increased focus on a rights perspective in designing policies and programmes, and the lifting of children’s issues in the international and national levels. There is a persistent need to address the traditional gaze over children and to elaborate on fluid concepts such as the best interest of the child or child participation.

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<sup>2</sup> According to OHCHR, treaty bodies are committees responsible for monitoring the implementation of core international human rights treaties.

The four principles in the Convention are non-discrimination, best interests of the child, the right to survival and development, and the views of the child (UNICEF & ILO, 2019). The emphasis placed on the principles by the Committee can mislead actors about the determination of the rights of the child prescribed in the Convention. For instance, in a report, the Committee attested that “*the new and deeper meaning of this right [to participate] is that it should establish a new social contract*” (Committee on the Rights of the Child 2006: Recommendations, Preamble). Cantwell highlights:

*"One wonders what other CRC rights may suddenly be deemed to have 'new and deeper' meanings, what those meanings might allegedly imply, and whether States Parties to the treaty are prepared to accept that they knowingly signed up to them."* (Cantwell, 2011, p. 56)

When it comes to child participation, it is perceived as a mandatory practice even if the guidelines for its implementation are very limited. The usual practice for participation is to provide spaces for children to raise their voices in the international forums and promote child-led initiatives. Despite its importance in terms of representativeness, participation demands broader action for institutional change and citizenship promotion, especially evidence-based actions on what constitutes effective child participation. Another key concept is the best interest of the child, which is often seen as a primary goal for states and actors. There is a complex group of factors which determines the will of the child, calling for efforts on data gathering.

This scenario provokes a movement in which child-focused organisations apply the rights prescribed in the Convention according to their interpretation while the international human rights community pushes for adjustments in the practice of child-focused organisations, without providing enough evidence on effective implementation of international law. Despite significant improvements in the connections between the child development and international child rights fields, adapting a rights-based approach to children is still necessary. The absence of such a framework impacts the implementation ground, especially the way children's organisations conduct their work with a lack of or biased rights language. The next chapter explores how children and child rights are perceived in the development field.

### 3. Rationing of Child Interventions in the Development Field

The concept of development shifted in the past centuries, departing from a focus on outcomes at the national level towards achievements at the individual level, and incorporated a broader understanding of what constitutes development. The present chapter aims to explore the theoretical approach and practice of the development field on policies and programmes focused at improving child welfare, not exhaustively covering the evidence on child development initiatives, but providing an overview of the epistemic foundations, and main topics explored.

The development field is a multidisciplinary area traditionally focused on the well-being of nations. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, development was interchangeable with sustainable economic growth. An increase in national production or income would directly result in greater welfare. With the end of World War II, development was associated with a transformation in the social-economic structures to satisfy basic needs and tackle poverty, inequality, and unemployment. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Amartya Sen inaugurated the foundations for a human-centred understanding of development, while targeting the expansion of human capabilities and the conditions to allow freedom of choice upon one's future as a priority for policymakers searching for welfare promotion (Todaro & Smith, 2015).

The field has generally recognized that *“human development is a dynamic process that starts in the womb”* (Conti & Heckman, 2012, p. 3) . This can be seen in programs addressing women's health and education as measures for lowering the child and infant mortality risks. The compounding elements of child development diverge according to distinct theoretical foundations, which pave the way of developmental initiatives with children. Two main reasonings prevail, one focusing on the subjective well-being of child development and the other looking at the human realization and the degree of one functioning in the society. The latter, a utilitarian perspective, is the most common in the literature and practice, with institutions focusing on the development of child capabilities (Conti & Heckman, 2012).

Child well-being can also be an analytical instrument used as a proxy indicator reflecting other interlinked social issues. For instance, rates of child malnutrition can offer an overview of famine in a specific context (White, 2002). A review of evidence produced on child development identified that the literature generally emphasizes increased attention to prevention as the most efficient intervention approach rather than remediation (Conti & Heckman, 2012). Despite increasing evidence on effective programs to tackle issues of concern faced by children, the awareness and incorporation of specific actions by development institutions have limited consideration to long-term sustainable approaches.

Developing an evidence-based comprehensive framework on child well-being and its wide publicization would endorse the long-term impact of development practice.

International institutions have the potential to build up guidelines for policy and programs. UNICEF and OECD have child development as a target and initiated efforts to define the components of child well-being, illustrated by the table below. At the national level, countries have developed indicators, such as the United States composite indicator called Foundation for Child Development's (FCD) Child Well-Being Index (CWI) (Conti & Heckman, 2012).

TABLE 1 - Components of Child Wellbeing

UNICEF (2013)	OECD (2009)
<i>Material wellbeing:</i> monetary and material deprivation as indicators: % children living in relative income poverty and the poverty gap, % of children lacking two or more of 14 specific items <sup>3</sup> and % of children reporting low family affluence <sup>4</sup> .	<i>Material wellbeing:</i> average disposable income, children in poor homes and educational deprivation.
<i>Housing and environment:</i> reported housing problems and overcrowding; children's exposure to crime and pollution.	<i>Housing and environment:</i> overcrowding and poor environmental conditions.
<i>Health and safety:</i> infant mortality, low birthweight rate, national immunization rate, overall child mortality rate <sup>5</sup>	<i>Health and safety:</i> infant mortality, low birthweight, breastfeeding rates, vaccination rates, physical activity and suicide rates.
<i>Educational well-being:</i> school participation at early childhood (% of those aged between 4 years enrolled in preschool), further education (% of those aged 15 to 19 enrolled in further education) and proportion of young	<i>Educational well-being:</i> average mean literacy score, literacy inequality and youth NEET (not in education, employment or training) rates.

<sup>3</sup> The items are: three meals a day; at least one meal a day with meat, chicken or fish (or vegetarian equivalent); fresh fruit and vegetables every day; books suitable for the child's age and knowledge level; outdoor leisure equipment; regular leisure; indoor games; money to participate in school trips and events; quiet place with enough room and light to do homework; an Internet connection; some new clothes; two pairs of properly fitting shoes; the opportunity, from time to time, to invite friends home; the opportunity to celebrate special occasions.

<sup>4</sup> Questionnaire applied to children on material deprivation, covering the number of items possessed by households, as vehicle, computers, bedroom, and other behavior connected to affluence as travel history.

<sup>5</sup> Deaths per 100,000 aged 1 to 19.

people not participating in education, training or employment at the age 15 to 19. School achievement by the average score in PISA tests of reading, math and science literacy school achievement at age 15.	
<i>Family and peer relationship:</i> family relationships (% of children reporting it easy to communicate to their parents) and peer relationships (% of children reporting their peers 'kind and helpful')	
<i>Behaviours and risks:</i> eating and exercise (% of overweight, eating breakfast and fruits and exercising daily); risk behaviours (teenage fertility rate and % of cigarette, alcohol, and cannabis use); exposure to violence (% of children involved in fighting and being bullied)	<i>Risky behaviours:</i> smoking, drunkenness and teenage births.
<i>Subjective well-being:</i> life satisfaction with a score of 6 or more on 11-step 'Cantril Ladder' scale.	<i>Quality of school life:</i> bullying and liking schools.

Source: (UNICEF, 2013) (Conti & Heckman, 2012).

Both frameworks allow the monitoring of child development indicators in different countries; however, they fail to provide a single definition of child well-being or offer a skeleton for policy action. Building further, the main limitation is the absence of differentiation over child development stages (Conti & Heckman, 2012). A relevant data as recent research has shown that early childhood is a key stage for human development. The last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century brought to the attention research on early childhood development, which became a key research interest in child development due to the associated idea of long-term investment in human capital development. Relevant to this research is to note the absence of a reference to the rights of the child among the components, even as cross-cutting issue.

*“The period of human development from conception to 8 years of age (early childhood) is now recognized as a period essential to a healthy, happy and productive adulthood.”*  
(Rebello Britto et al., 2013, preface)



The traditional lens through which development literature and practice sees the child is as a ‘becoming’ in which interventions for child development would mitigate risks that could affect a complete experience of adulthood. For instance, programs on nutrition and health focus on the impact of early cognitive development on building future human capital.

Producing evidence on child development is a recent concern<sup>6</sup>, since the issues faced by children came up to international attention in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The lack of data on children, driven by the novelty of the field and ethical concerns about conducting research with children, is a key challenge in defining evidence-based action. The traditional focus on specific aspects of development targeted by topic (e.g., education and health) or on cross-cutting vulnerabilities (e.g. child with disabilities and girl child) leads to stratified interventions instead of a holistic approach. For instance, few studies mention child well-being as a research goal, despite increasing research centred on adult well-being (Conti & Heckman, 2012).

Another challenge is the traditional unit of analysis in the development field, which focuses on the outcomes of the household and does not consider the needs of specific groups within the household, such as children. In this regard, White stresses that:

*“As feminist analysis has shown, it is important to go beyond assumptions of household unity and explore internal divisions and conflicts of interest, and the power relations that sustain them. While many studies privilege economic perspectives, others recognize that to understand what different members can and cannot do and what it means, you need to re-examine the ideologies of family that they hold. (White, 2002, p. 1098)”*

In general, the field is more concerned with development outcomes than with approaches. There are examples of multilateral organisations and development agencies with established policies and guidelines to inform development practice. The United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development, adopted in 1986, attests that every human being is entitled to development, adding it to the category of human rights. The Vienna Declaration and Program of Action in 1993 recognized the mutual reinforcement of development and human rights protection. The next chapter explores the intersection between the international law on the rights of the child and the use of a rights-based approach as a framework in the development field.

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<sup>6</sup> The 20th century is considered as the Century of the Child due to the increasing concern about child development.

#### 4. Components, adoption and limitations of a human rights-based approach (HRBA) to child development

A human rights-based approach is defined as the integration of rights into the resolution of an issue under consideration (Tobin, 2011). The discussions on the implementation of a human rights-based approach to the development practice is the evolution of a debate that emerged during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when more bricks on the bridge between the field of human rights and development were set. Amartya Sen had paved the way to a broader understanding of the components of development, while international lawyers were questioning the ‘ivory tower’ in which formalism and legal language put international human rights treaties far apart from the fieldwork. As a result of this phenomena, in the last decade of the century, the United Nations started a movement for human rights mainstreaming within the UN system and respective bodies (Tobin, 2011). The process of human rights mainstreaming aims to incorporate a rights-perspective as the backbone of international development practice.

Tobin (2011) put together different dimensions of what constitutes an international rights-based approach, which is namely international due to conformity with international human rights treaties<sup>7</sup>. This approach can be juxtaposed or combined with already existing frameworks, as the needs-based or welfare-based frameworks, common in the development economics literature. Tobin (2011) specifies the components of an international child rights-based approach, dividing it into two dimensions. The first is the existing expressed rights prescribed in the CRC and other international treaties with rights extended to the child as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Right, the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The second is the implicit principles present in other international law instruments (Tobin, 2011). The expressed rights are:

- *Accountability*: the state is considered a duty-bearer in the protection and promotion of human rights and must be accountable in its role.  
*“States Parties shall undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognized in the present Convention. With regard to economic, social and cultural rights, States Parties shall undertake such measures*

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<sup>7</sup> Tobin remarks that international human rights treaties can be the backbone of the human rights-based approach due to its wide adoption – especially in the case of extensive ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, international instruments are not necessarily the sole base for a rights-embedded approach.

*to the maximum extent of their available resources and, where needed, within the framework of international co-operation.” (Convention on the rights of the child, 1989)*

- *Non-discrimination*: every child being is entitled of rights no matter the gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, nationality or religion. In the case of the rights of the child, there is an extension of the right to non-discrimination towards guardians, due to the dependent nature of the child being.

*“States Parties must ‘ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child’s parents, legal guardians, or family members’.” (Convention on the rights of the child, 1989)*

- *Participation*: consists in the individual right to join debates of public interest, freely express its opinion or associate in groups of interest. Mentioned in the articles 12 to 15, this principle is interpreted differently on the figure of the child to consider age and maturity, as the Article 12 specifies:

*“States shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child” (Convention on the rights of the child, 1989)*

The aforementioned rights act as general expressed principles, being present in other international instruments on human rights. Adding to them, Tobin (2011) highlights other rights of the child present in the CRC, which inform the implementation of rights and are therefore important for a child-rights based approach: the best interest principle, the right to survival and development, requirement to respect parents and guardians in the exercising of their responsibilities (due deference) and the principle of evolving capacities.

- *Best interest of the child*: the actions taken in public or private sphere must take into consideration its impacts on child wellbeing, protection, and care (Convention on the rights of the child, 1989)
- *Right to survival and development*: particularly relevant for a rights-based approach in the development field is the mentioned child entitled right to development. Governments are the primary responsible to ensure child survival and development. (Convention on the rights of the child, 1989)

- *Due deference*: the principal agent for childcare is parents and guardians. (Convention on the rights of the child, 1989)
- *Evolving capacities*: recognizes that by growing in age, the capacity of children to determinate their own preferences and destiny evolve. (Convention on the rights of the child, 1989)

These rights offer a pathway for action, by defining respectively the core target in which projects with children must be developed, naming the primary responsible for child development and differentiating the scope of the intervention (towards more or less autonomy) according to the age of the child. On the other hand, Tobin (2011) highlights implicit principles of a human rights-based approach, which are not present in the international conventions, but expressed in the international human rights system, as *universal dignity, interdependence and indivisibility of human rights, and cultural sensitivity*.

In practice, the rights perspective was incorporated into the field without the distinction offered above. A study that analyzed 65 years of policy documents from the most acknowledged agency on child development, UNICEF, concluded that the new dimensions over childhood were constructed throughout time, which can be seen by the expansion of the topics covered in the budget of UNICEF (Schaub et al., 2017).

TABLE 2 - UNICEF Program Assistance Expenditure by Program Type from 1960-2010 (in Millions of USD)

Program Type	1960 (%)	1970 (%)	1980 (%)	1990 (%)	2000 (%)	2010 (%)
Heath	109.0 (78)	109.6 (49)	153.2 (23)	417.1 (47)	517.2 (40)	118.0 (6)
Early Childhood Development	-	-	-	-	-	1,704.0 (51)
Water and Sanitation	-	-	134.7 (20)	136.8 (15)	155.1 (12)	-
Nutrition	19.9 (14)	31.5 (14)	50.0 (8)	48.4 (5)	90.5 (7)	-

Social services and community development	0.7 (1)	10.1 (5)	36.8 (6)	70.1 (8)	116.4 (9)	-
Child protection	-	-	-	-	103.5 (8)	325.0 (10)
Education	-	57.3 (26)	91.6 (14)	95.1 (11)	232.8 (18)	696.0 (21)
Emergency aid	10.3 (7)	5.6 (3)	151.9 (23)	125.1 (14)	-	-
Child Rights	-	-	-	-	-	367.0 (11)
Other	-	10.1 (5)	47.4 (7)	-	77.3 (6)	74.0 (2)
Total	140.0 (100)	224.2 (100)	665.6 (100)	892.6 (100)	1,292.7 (100)	3,354.1 (100)

Source: Schaub et al., 2017

In 2006, the rights of the child were mentioned as UNICEF’s new programmatic priority (Schaub et al., 2017). Note for instance that a financial stream on UNICEF’s budget for projects on child rights appears for its first time in 2010, representing 11% of the total budget in that year. However, since 2013, there is no streamline of funding specifically for the rights of the child. This might be for two reasons: deranging the importance of the topic in UNICEF’s priorities or spillover of the topic across the different programmatic areas.

Another important finding in the named study is the evolution of figure of the child towards a ‘global child’ and globalization of its entitlements, despite their geographical location in UNICEF’s work, which can be related to the universality of rights attested on the CRC. Since the 1990, UNICEF shades light on how a child is an individual entitled of rights in need of physical, cognitive, and psychological development.

*“Although UNICEF programs remain in developing nations, their advocacy for children is worldwide. The CRC helped to reshape the image and growing complexity of childhood around rights and less on needs, representing a transformation from a position of crisis and deficits to one of power and entitlement and the beginnings of diplomatic recognition of children as able participatory citizens.”* (Schaub et al., 2017, p. 20).

The UNICEF is a global actor responsible for shaping understanding about the relevant interventions with children and it practically does so by providing financial resources for projects aligned with its priority areas. Ideally, as the rights of the child gain prominence in the agency's budget, the institution will call for design and implementation of projects aligned with this topic. The determination of a rights-based approach and its wide adoption in initiatives supported by UNICEF, would promote incentives for the adoption of the framework. The impact of UNICEF and international agencies on development pathways is yet to be known.

*“A central future research agenda for both theoretical perspectives is understanding possible causal pathways through which UNICEF influences INGOs' activities that might improve child rights outcomes such as decreased national-level rates of child labor and increased rates of primary and secondary education enrollment” (Boyle & Kim, 2009, p. 29).*

Another example of the rights perspective incorporation into development practice is the creation of the Early Childhood Rights Indicators Group by the CRC Committee in 2006. The CRC Committee is a central actor when it comes to providing guidance on child development, since it issues recommendations and promotes discussions on topics of public interest related to the figure of the child. Since the beginning of the century, economists and social practitioners questioned the insufficient presence of early childhood development in the CRC<sup>8</sup>. As a response to the raised concern and acknowledging recent evidence on the impact of early childhood on global child development, the Committee started to work on the General Comment 7 (GC7), an appendix to the Convention, which gives guidance on the implementation of the rights of child in the early childhood<sup>9</sup>. In 2006, the Committee moved further and created a group to work on the development of the Early Childhood Rights Indicators, a conceptual framework to guide policymakers on implementation and monitoring of their obligations with early childhood.

The evidence-based indicator was released in 2008 and compounded 17 sub-indicators based on the CRC reporting guidelines, UNICEF's Multiple Information Cluster Surveys, and the World Health Organisation's Right to Health framework. The sub-indicators are clustered in three parts: structure, process and outcome, aiming respectively at the commitment, action and measurable results in the realization of the CRC. Representatives from the governments received training on data collection

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<sup>8</sup> The CRC specifically mentions early childhood development six times throughout the Convention, along with intrinsic values of early childhood development. For further details see chapter 4 Rebello Britto et al. (2013)

<sup>9</sup> General comment no. 7 (2005) Implementing child rights in early childhood available at <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/570528?ln=fr>

and implementation of this monitoring tool and are expected to use the framework in reporting activities to the Committee<sup>10</sup>.

As a framework in the development field, the rights-based approach has a preventive nature rather than remedial. It centers efforts on building the capabilities of duty-bearers to meet the obligations of right holders. In terms of decision-making at the institutional level, the rights-based approach can support calls for the allocation of financial resources as Tobin (2011) highlights:

*“In other words, if a decision must be made between funding something that is connected to the realisation of a human right, such as adequate assistance to homeless children, and something that is unconnected to a human right such as the installation of decorative lights on a bridge (an initiative recently undertaken in Victoria), then a rights based approach would demand that priority be given to housing homeless children. This of course does not resolve the question of how to allocate scarce resources between competing rights such as health care and education for children. A rights based approach cannot provide an explicit answer to this question but it can guide the process of determination to the extent that the principle of participation must be employed to inform how scarce resources are to be allocated.” (Tobin, 2011, p. 80)*

Some considerations emerge on the operationalization of such a rights-based approach. Tobin (2011) highlights potential sources of resistance on the adoption: 1) *General resistance*: The contested nature of the rights of the child and other human rights warm up political debates which can challenge implementation; 2) *Resistance in the political field*: In the essence, a HRBA changes power structures by empowering right-holders, which can be seen as a threat by established political elites; 3) *Resistance from guardians*: the rights of the child and the rights of guardians can be competing claims. Litigation on that context is a key subtopic of a child rights-based approach; 4) *Resistance from other knowledge communities*: fields as psychology, social work, education, public health and others working with children have their own mindset and established approaches for intervention and might not see the value added of an HRBA (Tobin, 2011).

Conceptual and operational challenges limit the deep incorporation of a human rights-based approach in development. As with gender issues, the immediate response of development agencies to the CRC was incorporating children as beneficiaries/target group. The Convention set children from early

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<sup>10</sup> Further details about the Early Childhood Development Indicators available at <https://ecri.globalchildnetwork.com/index.php/group/intro/2>

stages up to 18 years old as a group entitled of human rights and needing specific protection. However, there is an important diversity within the group.

While one's needs and capacities vary and develop through time, the process is accentuated on childhood. While working with the target group of children, practitioners must be aware that *"the target is a moving one"* (White, 2002). In empirical experiments, where the goal is to analyze changes which can be directly attributed to the intervention, controlling variables on the ever-changing nature of the childhood might be a challenge<sup>11</sup>.

At the operational level, the implementation of a rights-based approach can challenge already existing frameworks for action. The World Bank is a key example of an institution that resisted the adoption of a HRBA after twenty years of pressure to do so. One of the reasons for that is due to clash of expertise, since the World Bank has a more evidence-oriented perspective and sees limited value in adding the rights dimension in projects with limited budgets.

*"An early formulation of the Conceptual Framework for the World Bank's investment in children and young people (which has since been amended) rested on the argument that 'it is economically efficient to invest in the early years' (World Bank 2006, 2005: 11). In contrast, a rights based approach demands the provision of early childhood services and educational opportunities for children because they have a right to such entitlements irrespective of any prospective economic benefits." (Tobin, 2011, p. 74)*

The investigation and production of evidence on the impacts of implementing a rights-based approach are necessary to stimulate organizations in the field of development to push forward with its adoption. Starting with the investigation of the results of the rights mainstreaming movement at the UN level can provide evidence of the impact of the approach in development practice. In the next chapter, evidence is provided on the application of human rights in the practice of development delivered by Governmental Agencies, with focus to resource allocation.

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<sup>11</sup> "An eight-year-old child at the beginning of a five-year programme will be a thirteen-year-old adolescent by its end, with a very different outlook, needs and interests, quite independently of anything the project may achieve. Interventions for children thus need to differentiate services and indicators of success by age and categories of children, and monitoring and evaluation systems must reflect how the needs and interests of their 'clients' change over the project period." (White, 2002, p. 30)



## 5. The Human Rights Perspective in the Funding of Governmental Development Agencies

At the international level, the advocacy for the incorporation of human rights into the practice of governmental development agencies translated, at the first stage, into declarations and guidelines on the connection between human rights and development. For instance, the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) developed in 1993 a guidance on *Orientations on Participatory Development and Good Governance*, highlighting the importance of principles such as accountability, participation and transparency, pillars of human rights, in development practice. Years later, the DAC Guidelines on Poverty Reduction referred to the human rights aspect of the multidimensional understanding of poverty.

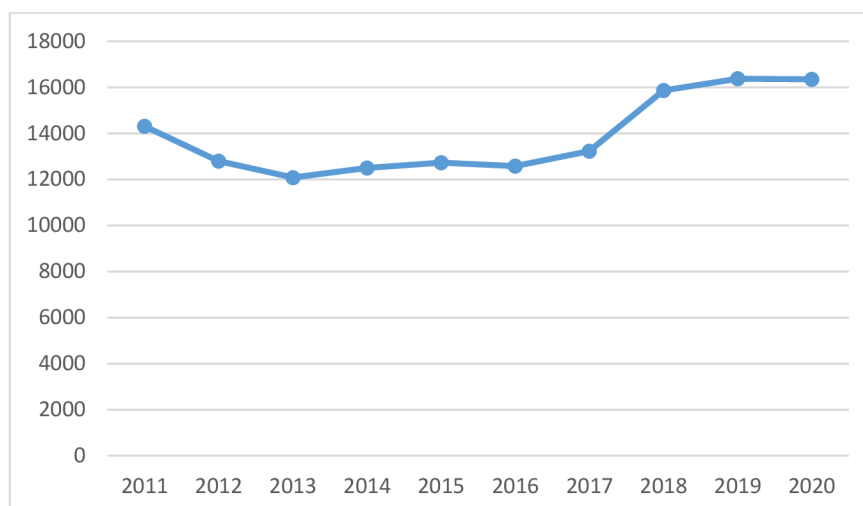
Regarding funding allocation, moral concerns, cross-border externalities, commercial interests, geopolitical challenges, and historical relations can motivate aid flows to developing countries. Governments are traditional actors in the development field contributing to disbursement of resources and sharing of expertise to projects on human development. New coming modalities of international development assistance are emerging along with new actors, changing the dynamics of international funding for development. Governments are the providers of official development assistance (ODA), defined by OECD as the flow of resources to developing countries for development purposes and with a concessional character.

The OECD provides yearly statistics on ODA flows divided into nine sectors: social infrastructure & services, economic infrastructure & services, production sectors, multi-sector/cross-cutting, action relating to debt, humanitarian aid and unallocated/unspecified. Each of the nine categories has subsectors which narrow into the related topic of the intervention. There is no specific subcategory for human rights ODA allocation, since human rights are a cross-cutting issue to be addressed in the distinct categories of the ODA programmes. The subtopic of Government & Civil Society, part of the Social Infrastructure & Services sector, can be considered as a proxy indicator for human rights-based interventions. It embraces the projects with right-holders and duty-bearers, and it usually incorporates initiatives on human rights. In 2020, Government & Civil Society represented 13% of DAC countries allocation of ODA, being the greatest subsector to receive resources among the category of Social Infrastructure & Sector<sup>12</sup>. Since 2010, it has had constantly allocated resources, as shown below.

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<sup>12</sup> Other subsectors in the Social Infrastructure & Services are Education, Population Policies, Water Supply and Sanitation.

Graph 1 – Total Allocation of ODA to the Government & Civil Society sub-sector among DAC Countries from 2011 to 2020 (in Millions of USD)



Source: (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2022)

The Commitment to Development Index ranks the dedication of developed economies in policies on key topics concerning developing nations<sup>13</sup>. The table below brings ODA allocation for Government & Civil society subsector for the top 10 countries of the Commitment to Development Index. Countries present different trends when it comes to the allocation of resources in this subsector. A detailed analysis of trends will not be covered by this study, but an overview of allocation is important to understand if the topic qualifies among the priorities of OECD countries and key developed nations.

TABLE 3 – Total ODA for the Government & Civil Society sub-sector for selected OECD Countries (in Millions of USD)

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Donor									
Australia	661,29	740,74	637,01	546,99	524,03	503,73	474,19	471,28	418,02
Canada	317,65	210,97	243,54	288,92	361,38	403,6	345,35	507,55	761,18
Denmark	478,7	291,97	413,8	365,77	483,02	262,19	372,86	404,62	441,4
Finland	142,99	139,59	126,12	114,05	127,91	63,23	69,3	153,77	72,64
France	199,2	134,38	174,98	166,37	153,88	530,38	408,62	839,51	821,44

<sup>13</sup> The areas of concern for developing nations are: development finance, investment, migration, trade, environment, health, security and technology.

Germany		1341,85	1475,8	1581,98	1897,53	1752,75	2333,38	2571,96	2998,55	3315,83
Netherlands		564,02	969,51	504,39	473,35	1606,37	577,64	474,47	575,9	932,37
Norway		436,14	491,43	579,21	563,2	446,41	496,72	405,13	632,97	646,3
Sweden		695,59	769,15	766,06	853,88	680,99	834,85	860,73	1156,19	746,48
United Kingdom		1266,45	1214,8	617,65	765,4	958,19	947,66	1189,09	972,47	1463,84

Source: (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2022)

It is important to highlight that an analysis of ODA flows will not bring the complete picture of governmental funding for human rights projects, since it does not incorporate north-north flow of resources, for instance to NGOs and INGOs located in developed nations. The challenges in analysing aid effectiveness comes from the fragmented and volatile flow of resources, along with low transparency in its allocation.

Apart from the flow of resources, the general understandings held by governmental agencies on the importance of incorporation of the rights perspective into development can provide an overview of the usefulness of such framework to development practice. A study from the DAC surveyed representatives of governmental development agencies of member-states on the perception and implementation of a HRBA into the international cooperation for development. The survey identified the existence of a dual perspective on human rights, as an objective *per se* and a tool for improving development assistance. First, they represent a legitimate framework for action allowing states to comply with international standards and legal obligations bore by the parties of the international conventions on human rights. It provides a reliable background which states can reinforce its action and invoke legitimate action. Moreover, human rights were used as a tool, in the design of development practice and to measure aid effectiveness. Human rights turn attention to existing social structures and root causes of deprivation, push for a comprehensive approach to comply with its interdependence and indivisibly and its principles as non-discrimination and participation, and raise awareness on vulnerable groups, central in programme targeting and data disaggregation (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2006).

Further on, the research finds that most of the donors surveyed had a human rights policy. For instance, Sida established its own policy in 1997. The field is marked by diverse levels and forms of human rights integration into development, with approaches ranging in focus, scope, and perspective. Projects vary in terms of targeted rights initiatives - for instance, women's rights, rights of the people with disabilities - or a broader perception of mainstreaming of human rights as a human rights-based approach. Considering the focus, initiatives can oversee specific communities and vulnerable groups

or provide direct support to field organisations. Moreover, the level of explicit mention of human rights can vary from a direct reference to rights to an implicit or rights principles-based reference, the last one seen in the work of some international finance institutions (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2006).

The different perceptions among donors about the human rights connection to development result in a diverse human rights language and focus on policy and project documents. In other words, the approach varies in terms of language according to the perception of donors on what constitutes fair incorporation of human rights into development practice. The table below from OECD illustrates the diversity in approaches.

TABLE 4 – Donor approaches to integrating human rights

Human rights-based approaches	Human rights mainstreaming	Human rights dialogue	Human rights projects	Implicit human rights work
Human rights considered as constitutive of the goal of development, leading to a new approach to aid and requiring institutional change.	Efforts to ensure that human rights are integrated into all sectors of existing aid interventions (e.g., water, education). This may include “do not harm” aspects.	Foreign policy and aid dialogues include human rights issues, sometimes linked to conditionality. Aid modalities and volumes may be affected in cases of significant human rights violations.	Projects and programmes directly targeted at the realisation of specific rights (e.g., freedom of expression), specific groups (e.g., children) or in support of human rights organisations (e.g., in civil society).	Agencies may not explicitly work on human rights issues and prefer to use other descriptions (“protection”, “empowerment” or general “good governance label”).

Source: (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2006).

As a crosscutting issue, human rights appear in programming experiences interlinked with different topics, as governance, civil and political rights, democracy, and rule of law. The type of support granted by donors also varies and appears in terms of project granting to initiatives led by civil society organisations (CSOs), direct country-level support to capacity building programs to duty-bearers and institutional development and support to multilateral agencies mandate on rights promotion. Tied to

a moral approach or aiming to comply with the international legal obligations upheld by states, donors can set human rights as conditionalities for project realization or aid decision-making. The interventions tend to appear either on the duty-bearer or right-holder sides.

The development agencies interviewed by OECD provided evidence on the added value of human rights to their development practice. The agencies identified human rights as a useful framework to guide project design, monitoring, and evaluation, and to increase aid effectiveness, keeping agencies accountable for their performance. The human rights-based approach is connected to the adoption of participatory techniques by agencies. For instance, the United Kingdom Department for International Development's staff interviewed in the study highlighted that it invested in "Participatory Rights Assessment Methodologies" in projects conducted in Peru and Malawi. Agencies find out that human rights programming offers holistic approaches to avoid discrimination and exclusion (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development., 2006).

Other studies have also identified the instrumental value of the human rights framework to map and target structural causes of poverty. It provides the gaze of seeking understanding of social constraints that impede the realisation of rights and consequently human development, for instance, looking at root causes of school evasion by girls associated with gender inequality and discrimination. Human rights frameworks call for a multidisciplinary approach. Raphael (2005) identified in surveys conducted with UNICEF country officers that 36% of them engaged in multi-sector programming after applying a human rights-based approach.

Human rights approaches focus on the interlinkages between the duty-bearers side and the right-holders rather than considering them separately. It emphasizes how local policy makers can, on one hand, build the capacity to deliver human development and, on the other hand, raise awareness and build capacity of right-holders to claim their entitlements and assure the realisation of those rights. This provides a sustainable approach in the long-term, with less reliance on the project intervention by building ownership which can sustain after the intervention period.

Human rights frameworks are aligned with the movement of donors shifting from direct intervention to support of local initiatives. If donors have a HRBA as a framework for conceiving financial support to partners or projects, the practice of local institutions will be shaped accordingly. Donors would be in the supervision position and have a specific framework to analyse the minimum expected standard and effectiveness of the supported initiative.

*"The assessments of whether human rights are being met, and the kind of additional resources needed to allow partner governments to better respect, protect and fulfil human*

*rights, are already contributing to aid allocation decisions. This is a sensitive area, as it is closely related to the use of political conditionality and the withholding or suspension of aid in certain circumstances. Some agencies are using public sets of human rights and governance indicators in order to identify and reward good performance.”* (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2006)

At the internal level, donors build capacity among the staff and operational corps of development agencies to further incorporate a human rights-based approach. The study identified that UNICEF and Sida had promoted training with their staff to familiarize them with the concept of a human rights-based approach, which required a deeper explanation of concrete tools and examples (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2006). Further development of those frameworks needs to be addressed to donors to translate rights language to the field practices. Agencies are integrating human rights into the results-based frameworks when performing monitoring and evaluation of programmes. For example, UNICEF declared that the lack of disaggregated data constrains their chances to target and monitor the evolution in non-discrimination.

Challenges to the implementation of human rights frameworks need to be remarked. The combination with competing international frameworks, for instance, the sustainable development goals (SDGs), is not a smooth task. Authors have identified the mutual reinforcement of human rights and sustainable development, including explicit mention and incorporation of human rights in the goals (Krajewski et al., 2020). The compatibility between the frameworks does not mean that targeting SDGs in projects leads to automatic incorporation of the human rights framework. Further derivation of international regulations in useful indicators – as the Early Childhood Development Index – would facilitate the implementation by translating human rights frameworks into viable targets, along with promoting harmonisation of approaches between donor institutions.

*“The most recent UNICEF progress review identifies a number of contextual challenges faced by staff implementing a HRBA. Constraints include the operations of government structures in partner countries, in particular when they operate in a highly centralised manner, with limited public accountability. Some country contexts present greater challenges: war-torn societies, widespread poverty or extremely weak capacity, where basic survival or institution building is seen as a priority. There can also be open political resistance to human rights, for example in the context of sharp ethnic divisions were collecting disaggregated data or providing education in native languages is not politically acceptable. Resistance to human rights goes beyond governments and can include social norms and values, such as opposition to child and adolescent participation, and a preference*

*for seeing aid as charity.”* (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2006)

Particularly relevant to the current study is the result of the OECD report highlighting a successful advancement of rights mainstreaming on child-related projects, both in field organisations and donor agencies. Based on the CRC and crosscutting indicators related to children – child mortality, gender parity, child labour – agencies and donors have developed approaches to children with an integrated child human rights perspective. Due to the successful implementation of a RBA within UNICEF, child rights mainstreaming has been happening in different sectors such as health, education, and gender (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2006).

The targeted institution analysed in this thesis, Sida, has a human rights-based approach as one of the five frameworks that guide its development cooperation. Considered as human rights champion, Sida conduces advocacy on the incorporation of human rights in the development field. The next chapter explores the research methods for the evaluation of the HRBA understanding, priorities, motivations and funding allocation for child rights-based projects in the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

## 6. Research Methods

Based on a qualitative interpretative approach of official documents, this study analyses the content of briefs, policies and evaluation reports of the Swedish Development and Cooperation Agency (Sida) from 2015 to 2020, along with already existing literature on the Swedish action on human rights and development. The selected period starts after the historical peak of the debate about the necessary connection between human rights and development during the first decade of the 19 century and extends until the period with the most recently available data and written documents. The timeframe was designed to identify if the Swedish support for human rights-based projects persists even in periods with less international visibility over the topic.

The theoretical discussion conducted above was based on the following research question: *Does the development field have a rights-based approach to development interventions?*, which aimed at providing an overview of how the development and international law literatures perceive rights frameworks, especially for the child-related programmes, and design interventions in accordance with the perspective in place. In this following empirical part, we aim to address three research questions derived from the discussion above: *How does Sida understand the human rights-based approach? How HRBA is translated into Sida's funding allocation? How does the decision-making process work for defining priorities of funding the child right agenda?*. The second part of this research dive into the practice of a traditional human rights-focused development agency to understand the translation into practice of the called human rights-based approach.

The website of the governmental agency provides a section on publications. Using this platform, keywords such as “child”, “child rights” and “human rights-based approach” were used to identify relevant documents, from which nine documents were available and selected for analysis. Among the documents, there are three briefs, two policy documents, two evaluation reports and two institutional guidelines. Evaluation reports were conducted by external agents as consultants or the evaluation department in Sida. They were incorporated into this thesis to tackle the bias derived from analysing documents offered solely under Sida's perspective. Moreover, the Openaid platform, managed by the Swedish Government, was used to generate quantitative data on the Swedish development aid, with a focus on Sida.

After gathering relevant data, the documents were analysed in terms of identifying the described priorities and motivations for supporting child-rights projects, followed by the current main partners of the agency and its decision-making process for selection of partnerships. The outcome of this



research aims at providing a reflection on the implementation of HRBA into development practice, using the case of Sida, along with guiding the design of current and future partnerships with Sida.

In terms of limitations, the documents in other languages than English, mainly referring to documents in Swedish, were excluded from the analysis. This means the exclusion of Sida's annual reports, which can also provide evidence on institutional support to the rights of the child. The content and outcomes of projects financially supported by Sida were not analysed in this research.

## **7. Funding Allocation for Child Rights-Based Projects: the case of Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)**

### *7.1. Key figures on Sida allocation of resources and priorities*

Established in 1995, Sida is the focal point agency for international cooperation and development practice of the Swedish parliament and government, accounting for half of the total share of the aid granted by the country. Working in the field of development cooperation and humanitarian aid, Sida aims at addressing poverty and oppression to improve well-being. In 2003, Sida defined rights perspective and considerations of the poor as two essential pillars to be systematically adopted in the development practice carried out by Sweden and its partners (Government of Sweden, 2003a).

Historically democracy and human rights figure out as an important thematic area in Swedish development cooperation. For instance, in 2020, it was the largest thematic area in terms of resources allocation, equivalent to 27% of the agency total disbursement. Strengthening democracy and human rights is perceived as crucial in combatting poverty, discrimination, and oppression. Sida built bridges between democracy and human rights and the realisation of the Agenda 2030 declaration, identifying important targets which reflect Swedish government goals in terms of democracy and human rights:

*“While democracy is only explicitly mentioned in the declaration, and not in the goals themselves, the broad agenda of goal no. 16 includes promotion of inclusive decision making, access to justice for all and effective and accountable institutions at all levels. Among the targets of particular relevance to the work of Sida within the thematic areas of democracy and human rights are:*

*16.6 Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels.*

*16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.*

*16.10 Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements.*

*Goal 10 promotes social, economic and political inclusion reducing inequalities in opportunities and outcomes:*

*10.2 By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or social status.*

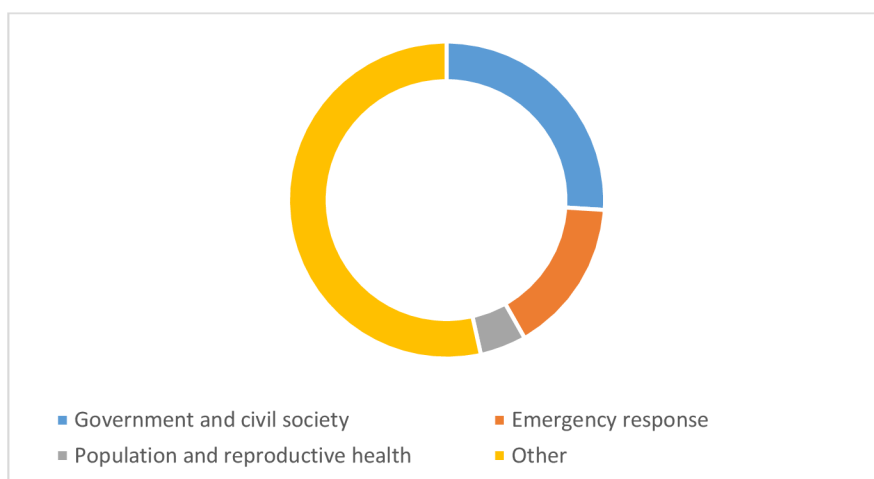
*10.3 Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard.*

*The rights of persons with disabilities are highlighted under goal 4.5 and 8.5. The rights of the child are visible under a number of goals such as Goal 3, 4, 5 and especially:*

*16.2. End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.” (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, 2020a, p. 1)*

The prioritization of the thematic area is reflected in the aid allocation among the Sida sectors of cooperation. In 2021, 30% of total disbursements were destined to Government and Civil Society sector, making it the greatest sector to grasp resources allocated by Sida. Since 2015, Government and Civil Society persist as a top destination of aid on Sida’s international cooperation and development, ranging from 28 to 35 percent among the years.

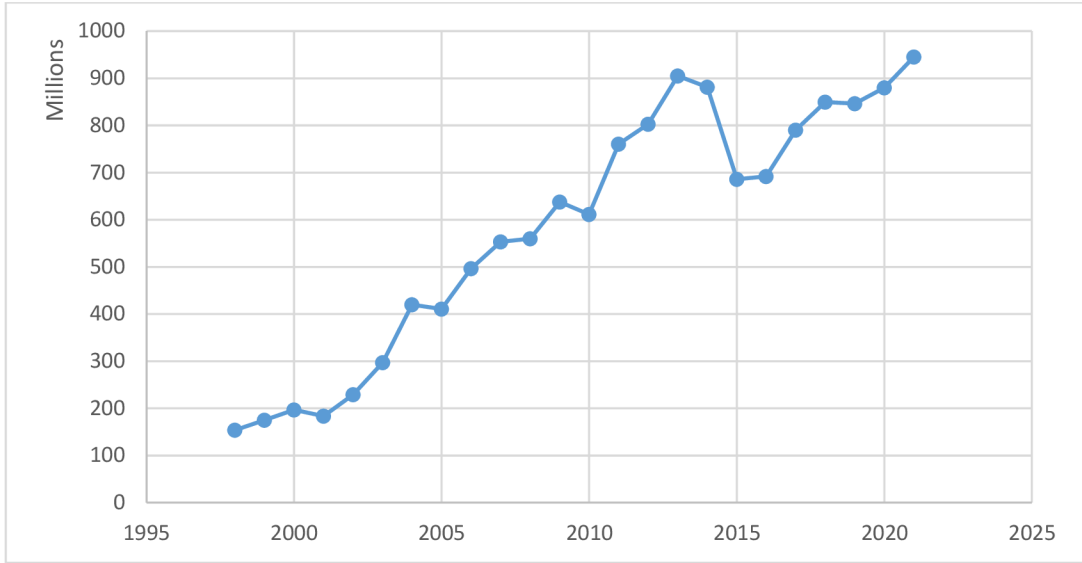
Graph 2 – Sida’s global aid during 2021 per category of action (in millions of USD)



Source: Open Aid, 2022

From the total aid executed by the Swedish Government and Parliament, in 2021, Government and Civil Society Sector represented a share of 15,85% which can be divided into 1776 activities. The graph below shows the increasing prioritization of the thematic area within the resources destined by Sida.

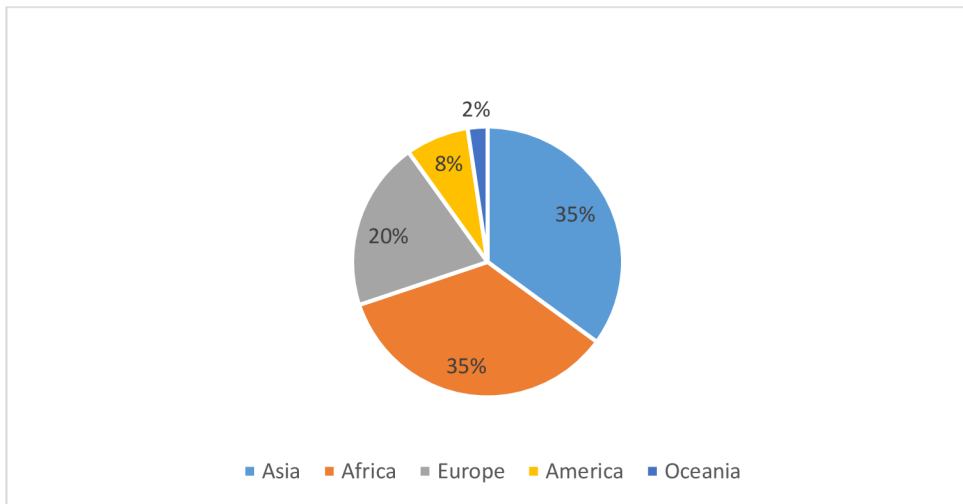
Graph 3 - Sida's Worldwide Aid to all partners into the Government and Civil Society Sector (in Millions of USD)



Source: OpenAid, 2022

The traditional partners of Sida are Multilateral Organisations and Civil Society and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), which received respectively 40 and 38.1 percent of the aid allocated in 2021. In the sector of Government and Civil Society, the partners in the category of civil society and NGOs received 53% of resources, being the biggest partner of Sida on this specific topic. In terms of geographical priorities, the largest share of Swedish aid is destined to Africa and Asia.

Graph 4 - Sida's Worldwide Aid to all partners into the Government and Civil Society Sector share per region in 2021 (%)



Source: OpenAid, 2022

The rights of the child have appeared as a programmatic area for Sida since the 1990s, with external evaluations and guiding policies dating as of the decade. In 1997, an external evaluation identified the impact of Sida's financial support on UNICEF's child rights programmes to support vulnerable children, mainly children in a street situation in Latin America (Benno Glauser et al., 1997). In 2002, the Swedish Government issued a communication offering guidelines for work related to the rights of the child (*The Rights of the Child as a Perspective in Development Cooperation*, 2002). At the beginning of the 19 century, Sida initiated efforts on child rights mainstreaming across the agency, providing training and materials to advise programme officers on the adoption of a rights perspective thoughtful to children (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development., 2006). In terms of established tools, Sida has an optional questionnaire to guide the assessment of human rights coverage in a project, comprehending elements such as the connection with human rights conventions, the rule of law, non-discrimination, the right to education, participation and other principles. In this regard, OECD sees the Swedish comprehensive approach as a proven engagement with a HRBA.

*“By comparison with other bilateral agencies, which often provide no human rights training and only have one full-time or part-time staff member responsible for human rights, Sida's combination of a strong policy framework and institutional capacity demonstrates a serious commitment to a democracy and human rights-based approach.”* (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2006, p. 26)

On a global perspective, Sida cooperation and action within the UN prioritizes child development among the different UN agencies. In this regard, the report attests that *“Support to WHO is based on a human rights perspective that places women and children at the forefront, for example in the areas of maternal mortality and the right to sexual and reproductive health. Its support to the International Labour Organization includes a project on “Understanding Children's Work and its Impact”. UNICEF, as Sida's largest channel, is responsible for 40 programmes in partner countries.”* (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development., 2006, p. 45)

Sida presents a series of toolkits to guide officers, partners and stakeholders during the operationalisation of development cooperation. On the website, Sida mentions the following kits: Poverty Toolbox, Gender Toolbox, Green Toolbox, Peace and Conflict Toolbox, Human Rights Based Approach Toolbox and Market Systems Development Toolbox. The following section explores the toolkit on HRBA (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, 2022).

## *7.2. HRBA interpreted by Sida*

The HRBA is a mandatory perspective to be applied in the Swedish development cooperation. Sida considers it as a legal ground to guide development work based on two dimensions: the empowerment of rights-holders to claim entitlements and building capacity of duty bearers for rights realisation. The approach is divided into five dimensions: participation, link to human rights obligations, accountability, non-discrimination and equality, empowerment and capacity development and transparency, summarized by the acronym PLANET.

The provision of a rights gaze and accountability justifies Sida's implementation of a HRBA. According to Sida, the HRBA is at the core of development action for the human rights of vulnerable groups, which is aligned with the key goal of Swedish development aid as offering opportunities for people living in multidimensional poverty or under oppression. Sweden's starting point for development is the entitlement of rights. For instance, poverty is seen as a massive violation of human rights.

Internally, Sida conducted efforts for mainstreaming rights language and perspective across the work and programme management. Since 2012, Sida's IT system has provided information to help programme officers use the HRBA. On its website, Sida offers thematic guidelines on the implementation of HRBA across different sectors such as democratic governance, digitalization, education, health, internet, migration, and others. Another available tool is the e-learning course in HRBA, targeted at employees from Sida and other members of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, 2022).

An external evaluation on the implementation of HRBA by Sida identified that the Swedish Agency was strongly associated with the implementation of a HRBA by its partners. In 1997, the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that human rights should be integrated to the foreign policy and a HRBA should pave development cooperation. The aid policy framework of 2013 provided human rights as a starting point for Sweden's development aid (Alffram Henrik et al., 2020). The rights perspective persisted as a pillar up to its most recent strategy on Human Rights and Democracy for the period of 2018-2022 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Government of Sweden, 2017).

In practice, the external evaluation also found that Sida's degree of explicit articulation of HRBA varies over the project period and between countries. Sida promotes context-specific interventions and combines HRBA with other frameworks, as the Multidimensional Poverty Analysis, noting that poverty is a deprivation of rights and triggers human rights violations. Albeit there is significant incorporation of HRBA in Sida's programmatic action, the Swedish agency does not systematically

evaluate the outcomes of the implementation of HRBA, from which it could derive lessons to guide strategic frameworks.

Regarding internal programme management, the evaluation found that Sida programme officers benefited fairly from recommendations from international human rights bodies (Alffram Henrik et al., 2020). Another important finding is that despite PLANET was not explicitly mentioned as a used tool during the interviews with programme officers, the five dimensions were present in the discussions. This shows that there is an internalisation of the principles among the staff, which will be reflected in practice.

The existence of policies, tools and evaluations on Sida's HRBA is an indicator of how strategic the implementation of rights-based projects to the development agency is. The rights of the child figure as a political priority to Sida and Swedish foreign policy in general since the 1990s. The next session explores motivations, priorities and decision-making process for resource allocation to child-rights based projects.

### *7.3. Sida's motivations, main partners, priorities and decision-making process to fund child rights-based projects*

It is estimated that around 60 per cent of the resources allocated by Sida benefit directly or indirectly children, especially in the sectors of health and education (*The Rights of the Child as a Perspective in Development Cooperation*, 2002). The Swedish government has a list of priorities to inform interventions direct to children rights: “(i) put children first; (ii) listen to the children; (iii) invest in the future; (iv) exclude no one; (v) education for all; (vi) equal opportunity for girls and boys; (vii) health for all; (viii) protect children in war; (ix) combat HIV and AIDS; (x) stop exploitation of children. These points are intended to guide all planning, appraisal, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of aid interventions” (Tostensen et al., 2011, p. 33).

In the most recent strategic document on development cooperation in the areas of human rights, democracy and the rule of law (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Government of Sweden, 2017), Sweden specifies as foreign policy goals the promotion of inclusive and democratic societies, endorsing equal rights, and ensuring security, justice and accountability. The document explicitly mentions concerns with children in poverty and that Sweden may advocate for rights issues which does not receive sufficient attention from the international community.

*“The perspectives of poor people on development means that the situation, needs, condition and priorities of poor women, men and children will be the point of departure for fighting*

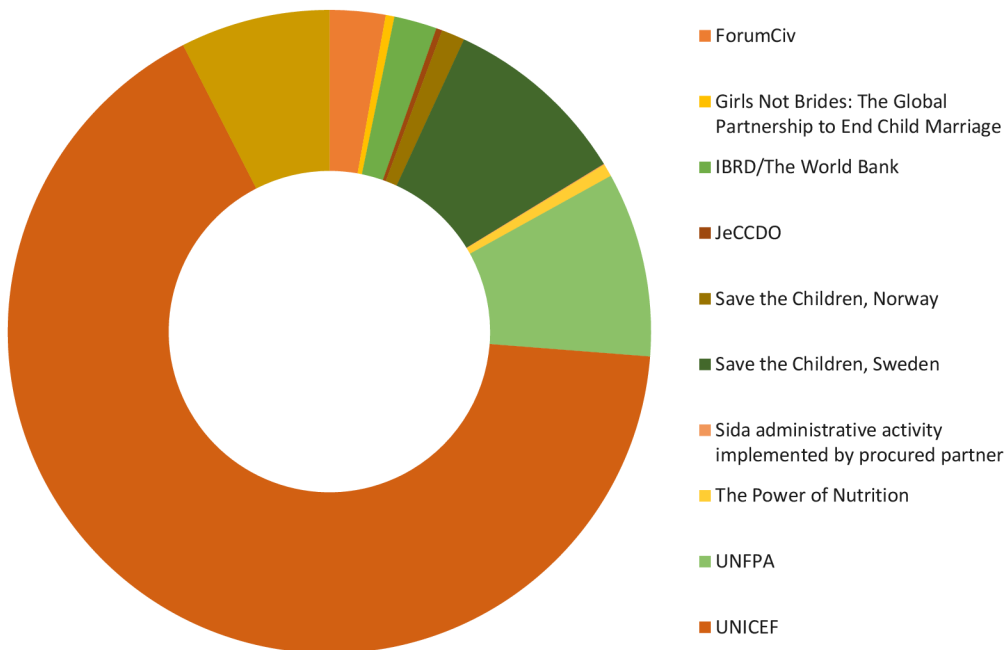
*poverty and promoting faire and sustainable development.” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Government of Sweden, 2017, p. 8)*

The translation of the policies into practices on project support and funding allocation will be explored below in the subsections.

### 7.3.1. Motivations, Main Partners and Priorities

The OpenAid platform provides information on the resources flows and projects supported by Sida and other Swedish development agencies within different thematic priorities. Filtering by the keyword “child”, this research identified 73 initiatives supported by Sida from 2015 up to today, divided by 12 partner institutions. The greatest share of financial support was directed to multilateral institutions, mainly UNICEF accounting for 66% during that period. This is an important finding regarding the nature of partners of the Swedish aid when it comes to child-related projects. The support is focused on multilateral institutions, distancing from Sida’s traditional approach of mainly working with NGOs and CSOs on the democracy and human rights topics. In terms of support to civil society, a significant portion of 9% was directed to Save the Children Sweden.

Graph 5 – Share of support provided by Sida per institution from 2015 to 2022 (%)



Source: OpenAid, 2022



The Sida Brief on the *Rights of Children and Young People* is a concept note with definitions and information aiming to guide policymakers and increase policy dialogue over child and youth rights. It provides an overview of the main motivations for Swedish support on the topic, with child participation highlighted as a priority theme. The diagnostics is that policymakers fail to spot children's capacity to participate and to provide child protection. Support for the rights of the child is seen as a human rights obligation and compliance with legal responsibilities bore national to internationally. The right to information and non-discrimination are mentioned as an opportunity to hold accountable institutions responsible for rights realisation (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, 2010a).

The brief suggests donor motivations when it justifies the importance of dialoguing about the rights of children and young people. Sida highlights the issues faced by children as subjected to poverty<sup>14</sup> and rights violations<sup>15</sup>, along with the obligations held towards children to fulfil legal responsibilities, promote their protection and participation and how child participation is a source of data by allowing children to inform and improve development practices. Sida specifically mentions the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as a policy framework for the rights of the child, along with the Optional Protocols, AU African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Ibero-American Convention on Young People's Rights. Another important element to inform action with children is cultural sensitivity:

*“Be informed about the local context. Knowledge is key to meaningful dialogue. Draw connections to national debates and country conditions relating to the rights of children and young people. Gather information and data about the development status of children, and the nature and extent of traditional practices affecting them. Be aware of the current legal framework in the country governing the protection and delivery of children's rights.”*  
(Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, 2010a, p.3)

The Sida Brief on *Conducting a Dialogue on Young People's Political Participation* gives specific emphasis to Article 12 of the UNCRC and on the UNCRC Committee's General Comment 12 on the Rights of the Child to be Heard, informing the capacity of policymakers on participation. It identifies youth as “agents for change” and specifically mentions the political participation of young people as a “high-profile issue” (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, 2010b). It is noteworthy to mention that Sida defines young people as boys and girls aged between 13 and 25

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<sup>14</sup> According to UNICEF, 1 billion people under the age of 18 (every second child in the world) live in poverty.

<sup>15</sup> An estimated 300 million children are subjected to violence, exploitation and abuse (UNICEF).

years, creating a division between child and youth that the UNCRC does not provide which is subject to public debate nowadays. Among the motivations to promote youth participation, the brief underscores the legal responsibilities, strengthening democratic processes, improving decision-making and services, and providing space for young people to appraise development action (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, 2010b) (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, 2010b).

Sida's evaluation report *Supporting Child Rights: Synthesis of Lessons Learned in Four Countries* analysed Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) and Sida's policy for child rights with a focus on four countries: Guatemala, Kenya, Mozambique and Sudan. The evaluation team identified that Sida's intervention reflected principles of the CRC Convention. The principle of non-discrimination appeared especially on child victims of human rights violations, such as Maya children in Guatemala and girls targeted by female genital mutilation in Sudan, while principles as the right to life, survival and development arise holistically in the initiatives. The best interest of the child figures as a mainstreaming principle while no evidence was found on substantial child participation (Tostensen et al., 2011).

The evaluation identified that Sida combines targeted and long-term interventions on the topic of child rights. The long-term perspective allows for addressing changes in circumstances and is especially beneficial for rights mainstreaming. In terms of the relevance of the interventions, the evaluation found that the Norwegian and Swedish interventions have helped to address child rights concerns raised in the 'Concluding Observations' by the CRC treaty body to the state parties' periodic reports. Regarding the effectiveness of the interventions, the evaluation report stresses:

*"There is no doubt that the tangible results emanating from the interventions were considerable. However, the results were not easy to measure, particularly not at the outcome level. Most reports account for activities and to some extent outputs but rarely outcomes, let alone impacts. There was some but less involvement in the legislative and policy processes. Among the external actors UNICEF was probably the most successful in pushing the legislative and policy agenda on child rights forward, even if attribution was difficult to establish."* (Tostensen et al., 2011, p.125)

The evaluation findings on the effectiveness of UNICEF's initiatives can be one of the explanations for the expressive funding support held by Sida with the partner on child rights-based projects. Despite the emphasis on child and youth participation perceived in the briefs and policy documents, the absence of evidence on child participation promoted by Sida's support demonstrates an

incongruence between development policy and practice. Further research must investigate the outcomes of the individual projects supported by Sida in terms of child participation. The next session dialogues about the decision-making process for the selection of partners including financial support.

### 7.3.2. Decision-Making Process

The external evaluation of Sida's HRBA reviewed appraisal documents and identified a brief and semi-standardised statement referring to HRBA with some degree of flexibility on how the approach is presented in the intervention. Sida can also introduce the rights dimension if the project does not sufficiently comprehend it during the negotiations of the partnership. With long-term partners, the rights agenda develops organically across the intervention design and implementation (Alffram Henrik et al., 2020).

For the selection of projects for financial support, Sida grounds the decision-making process in guidelines, from which the present article will explore two: the *Sida's guidelines for application and reporting in partnership with Swedish strategic partner organisations (SPO) within the CSO (civil society organisation) appropriation* and the *Guiding Principles for Sida's Engagement with and Support to Civil Society*. The first one offers the key criteria used by Sida during the assessment of projects submitted for funding, while the second provides the ideal scenario of Swedish cooperation with civil society.

As per practice, Sida discusses with its strategic partners the potential funding amount before the application, which is assessed based on the partner's capacity, operational plan, results, quality and relevance of activity. Sida traditionally has long-term partners and for future collaboration, the previous performance assessments are taken into consideration. There are different criteria used by Sida which partners must be aware of and comply with when submitting projects. They can be grouped into partner characteristics, project characteristics and donor frameworks (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, 2020b).

In the partner characteristics, the approach is similar to other donors; Sida analyses the partner's vision, mission and strategic plan, the proven capacity to achieve the mentioned objectives, to conduct monitoring, evaluating and learning (MEL) assessments of activities, its internal processes, governance structure and policies – with special emphasis on anti-corruption policy and risk management efforts – capacity to adapt, and sub-grantees or sub-partners when existing (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, 2020b). Sida mentions the consideration of submitted reports to the CRC Committee when conducting negotiations with partners (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development., 2006).

Regarding the project characteristics, Sida shares common ground with other donors by examining the clarity and feasibility of project objectives, activities and expected outcomes. Sida emphasises the need for a theory of change, the logic behind the intervention which leads to achieving the expected results. Moreover, the Swedish agency requires evidenced alignment of the project with the Agenda 2030 and a clear risk assessment, especially concerning the environmental impact. The main criteria of Sida is the incorporation of multidimensional poverty analysis and power analysis, the latter targeting right-holders, duty-bearers and other actors relevant to the project (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, 2020b).

*“How the SPO analyses the activities based on a multidimensional poverty analysis and identifies the primary target group (rights holders), duty bearers and other actors relevant to the achievement of the objective.” (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, 2020b, p. 20)*

Finally, Sida set the tone of international cooperation according to its priorities and frameworks. One of the assessment criteria is the integration of the project to Sida’s five perspectives: level of integration of human rights-based approach, poor people’s perspective on development, environment and climate perspective, gender quality perspective and conflict perspective. Sida specifies that the *“connection between the perspectives should also be evident”* (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, 2020b). Considering the environment, Sida *“takes a positive view”* of proactive measures to improve topics related to climate and environment. There is a strong focus on environment, calling for impact and risk management assessment on the environment. Among the five, there is a prominence of the environment and climate perspective.

Other elements of importance are innovation and, aid and development efficiency. The latter incorporates as dimensions the respect for local ownership, flexibility, adaptation, harmonisation and coordination among partners, predictability of project outcomes, forms of financing for the project (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, 2020b).

The guiding principles for Swedish development cooperation with the civil society are particularly important to inform decision-making with the most present actor collaborating with Sida. The five principles are: *“explore the various roles of civil society, strive to support civil society in its own right, provide aid and development effective support to civil society partners, support civil society partners’ efforts to strengthen their own development effectiveness, including their transparency and accountability, engage in continuous dialogue with civil society”* (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, 2019, p. 5).

Sida understands support for civil society as one programmatic area per se and to support other development objectives. The previously described power analysis and theory of change appear as tools to ensure the accomplishment of the guiding principle one - support to civil society - by enhancing inclusion and ownership and developing democratic culture and process. The second principle prescribes the balance between setting donor priorities and supporting initiatives based on local needs identified by partners. Regarding some flexibility and incentives to support locally-led initiatives, there is a clear mention of the most favourable approach to be taken by partners aligned with Sida's priorities, the poor perspective and the human rights-based approach.

*“The primary potential CSO partners would be those that focus on opportunities for people living in poverty and under oppression to improve their living conditions and do so based on the perspectives of people living in poverty and a human rights-based approach”* (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, 2019, p. 11)

Sida is considered a flexible donor and support to core funding is advised by the Guideline as a form to guarantee partner's autonomy and reduce the inappropriate tailoring of local initiatives to donor priorities which might not reflect local needs. Core funding is also seen as a better form to foster cooperation instead of competition between CSOs and establishing long-term partnerships than calls for proposals, which are particularly relevant considering the extended period required to achieve changes in democratic processes and human rights.

When selecting partnerships for development interventions, Sida set the importance of the rights perspective among other five guiding perspectives. There is a prominence over the environmental considerations during partnership selection over other frameworks used by Sida, as the human rights-based approach. This imbalance, combined to the flexibility with the project structure coverage of a HRBA challenges the real implementation of a rights-perspective throughout the project. In consequence, the subjective understanding of a HRBA implementation limits the apprehension of the outcomes of such an approach to the development field.

## 8. Final Remarks

This research was based on the theoretical discussion about the use of human rights frameworks to design and implement development practices and policies. The discussion presented existing evidence about the implementation of a rights perspective on development practice, for instance in form of international indicators, national policies and guidelines of development agencies the development. The main identified added values of the human rights-based approach to the development practice are the shift in the perception over the target group of the intervention, from beneficiaries to right-holders and the dual dimension of the approach focused on building capacity of duty-bearers to assure the realization of rights along with strengthening the ability of right holders to claim their entitlements. Considering the limitations, the effectiveness of a HRBA to the development field still requires further investigation and is a topic encouraged to future research.

The Swedish international development cooperation agency (Sida), as a development agency which applies a rights-based approach throughout its practice and support to field organisations, was subjected to analysis in this research. The current thesis provides a glance about the institution's understanding of HRBA and its translation into practice, by the mapping of funding allocation and documented institutional priorities, motivations and decision-making process for the support of child rights-based projects. The findings of the case study section can be divided into three categories: type of partnership, motivations and selection process for child rights-based projects.

First, this research was able to identify the prioritization of multilateral organisations, especially UNICEF, in Sida's support to child rights-based projects. UNICEF received 66% of the resources allocated for child rights-based projects during the period analysed. It is a divergent trend of the general Sida's development cooperation, which has CSOs and NGOs as traditional partners, receiving the largest share of funding. Potentially the firm support to UNICEF derives from Sida's external evaluation finding of significant results achieved by UNICEF in promoting political change regarding the rights of the child. This data is relevant especially to field organisations, for whom the funding efforts can be shaped to fit Sida's priority partners, for instance by partnering with UNICEF for development practices to be supported by Sida.

Second, Sida justifies the support to the rights of the child in terms of 1) a legal obligation to be borne by states and the society; 2) a potential source of information to improve development practice through increasing child participation and 3) the existing linkages between children, poverty and rights violations. Sida raises the CRC as a guiding framework for child rights-based projects, showing the importance of the Convention in Sida's development agenda. The impact of other documents

produced by the CRC Committee (Optional Protocols and General Comments) on setting donor motivations and priorities was not evident in Sida's agenda. Despite the relevance given to participation in the analysed documents, there is no substantial evidence on meaningful child participation in the work supported by Sida. A detailed analysis of the projects supported by Sida is encouraged to better understand the child participation outcomes.

Third, regarding the decision-making process when selecting partner institutions, this research identified that, apart from the traditional donor criteria related to partner capacity, project scope, alignment with donor priorities and the relevance of the initiative, Sida considers country reports submissions to the CRC Committee when negotiating with partners. This action reflects the importance conferred by Sida to the treaty body of the CRC. In terms of project scope, some of Sida distinguished requirements are theory of change, the extent to which the project contributes to Agenda 2030, a risk assessment, multidimensional poverty analysis and power analysis. A HRBA is one of the five dimensions that a project should incorporate. This research identified that Sida places a stronger emphasis on the environment-related aspect of the project by mentioning several times the observance of the environment rather than the HRBA and other dimensions.

The contributions of this thesis to the field of development can be divided into two areas: theoretical and empirical. First, it provides a discussion on the perception of the figure of the child into the law and the development fields, drawing an intersection between the areas *via* the human rights-based approach. In terms of empirical contributions, this study provides a glance over aid allocation, tackling the recurrent acknowledged lack of transparency in the aid flows. The findings of this research can inform institutions interested in building a partnership with Sida, as NGOs, research centres and multilateral organisations.

It is true that Sida has a mandate focused on supporting government, civil society and human rights initiatives. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to the Swedish foreign policy or other government fund allocation. Governmental agencies are subjected to high-level policy changes and new government priorities. For instance, Sida released in April 2022 a news piece affirming current budget cuts to support the new Swedish Emergency Plan on Ukraine. When analysing donor priorities, we must be aware that changes might occur due to internal budget reallocation and reprioritization.

'Child-centred' development action must be comprehensive to improve the overall wellbeing of the child, based on a policy logic intervention rather than a sectorial initiative. A HRBA provides a holistic perspective towards the child and is designed to be thoughtful to different dimensions of child

development. The approach is applied by government development agencies in implemented projects and supported initiatives, as Sida's example illustrated. Further investigation and transparency are necessary to understand the effectiveness and required improvements for the approach.



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