

Terms of Reference

External mid-term evaluation of the Sida funded programme SwedBio at Stockholm Resilience Centre, 2021-2024

1. Background

Established in 2002, SwedBio is a programme on biodiversity and equitable development funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). SwedBio is hosted at Stockholm Resilience Centre at Stockholm University as a semi-independent programme. The programme engages in key global biodiversity processes in close collaboration with a network of partners, steering towards the overall vision:

“SwedBio envisions a world that is sustainably managed and where human rights are equitably fulfilled, with people being able to make sustainable choices for biodiversity rich and resilient futures while thriving in harmony with nature.”

SwedBio intend to contribute to, knowledge exchange between actors from different knowledge systems, equitable engagement of local actors in collaborative initiatives and policy processes, and sustainable biodiversity management based on local practices.

SwedBio focuses its effort on two impact pathways for engaging with biodiversity and equitable development:

Dialogue for knowledge and policy pathway – in which SwedBio work to advance policy agendas related to biodiversity by enabling dialogue and co-production of knowledge across knowledge systems, including actors from indigenous peoples, local communities, policymakers, practitioners and scientists.

Key prioritised international policy processes and platforms related to biodiversity that SwedBio engage in include the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, the Committee on World Food Security, the FAO Committee on Fisheries, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Collaborative partner implementation pathway – where SwedBio provide support to strategically selected partner organisations in their implementation of locally-driven sustainable and equitable solutions. SwedBio has during this programme phase established collaboration with 29 partner organisations across the global South.

These two pathways for change are interacting and complementary in order to bridge the local and global, and narrow the gap between policies and their implementation. Within them, SwedBio has identified five central [themes](#) during this programme phase:

- Climate Change and Ecosystems
- Agroecology for Resilient Food Systems
- Small-Scale Fisheries and Coastal Livelihoods
- Urban Nature for Resilient Cities
- Biocultural Diversity, Values and Governance

The following cross-cutting approaches and [principles](#) underpin all SwedBio’s areas of work:

- Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA)

- Gender Equality
- Conflict Perspective
- Guiding Principles for Knowledge Collaborations
- Adaptive Approach

SwedBio's hope is that the impact pathways, its areas of work and contributions from the programme and partner's combined efforts lead to a number of longer-term changes:

- Enhanced quality of biodiversity-related policy processes, for more relevant policies.
- Co-created and enriched knowledge on governance in harmony with nature, for context-appropriate and equitable solutions.
- Improved governance and management of ecosystems, which realises the implementation of biodiversity-related policies.
- Increased local management in harmony with nature, which contribute to enabling sustainable and equitable livelihoods.

See further on SwedBio's Theory of Change, areas of work and collaborative partners on the SwedBio website <https://swed.bio/>

SwedBio's work in the two impact pathways is also underpinned by robust supporting functions and internal management and administration systems, including its MEL system and internal policies for integrated approaches and principles.

Since its inception, SwedBio has been subject to six external evaluations and system audits.¹

2. Evaluation purpose, scope and delimitations

SwedBio is commissioning a mid-term review in order to evaluate programme design, implementation, progress and learnings during the period 2021-2023 and to give recommendations to support SwedBio and Sida in further developing the programme. The review is expected to assess and provide recommendations related to both impact pathways, meaning both local implementation in the global South and global policy processes, and linkages between local to global.

The period for review is work that has been implemented during 2021-2023, and constructive recommendations shall be provided primarily regarding implementation during the current programme phase which ends December 2024, but also reflect on issues with implications for the programme beyond 2024.

The scope and delimitations can be further elaborated by the evaluator(s) in the inception report.

3. Approach and methodology

The mid-term review shall be led by external consultant(s) independent of the evaluated activities and the outcomes of the review. The evaluator(s) are expected to elaborate on the proposed approach and methodology for the review in the tender proposal and inception report, which shall reflect the following aspects:

The review shall consider the OECD DAC criteria relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, sustainability, and coherence and apply these as appropriate and in line with the two principles for

¹ These were conducted in 2006 (special emphasis on the partner collaborations), 2008 (entire SwedBio programme 2003-2007), 2009 (systems audit), 2014 (entire SwedBio programme 2011-2014), 2019 (mid-term review of the SwedBio programme 2016-2020), and 2020 (review of internal control and systems), respectively.

their use. Prioritised issues for mainstreaming within Swedish development cooperation such as rights of people living in multidimensional poverty, human rights-based approach, gender equality, conflict sensitivity, and environment should be reviewed. The review needs to be sensitive to intersectionality and power dynamics, including gender and culture, by respecting and reflecting divergent views and if relevant seek to consult with representatives of groups who tend to otherwise be marginalized or overlooked. The consultant(s) need to demonstrate an understanding for dynamic social-ecological systems, and the review need to depart from the perspective of non-linear change in complex systems.

The consultant(s) shall propose relevant quality control mechanisms for the review process that are deemed suitable in relation to the scope and complexity of the review. The proposed mechanism should integrate a peer review / reference group consisting of SwedBio, Sida and relevant SwedBio partners.

The main actors and users of the mid-term review report are SwedBio programme staff together with Sida. A continuous communication between the evaluator(s) and SwedBio throughout the evaluation process will need to be built in to the assignment and will need to work around the participation of the SwedBio staff in key international meetings during the period of review.

The review shall engage SwedBio and partners in the assignment through an inclusive approach and the tender proposal need to suggest a process for how the intended users will be involved at different stages of the evaluation process (e.g. the design phase, implementation, findings and recommendations). The review shall be conducted in a manner that contribute to enhancing the evaluation capacity of partners, by for instance supporting enhanced evaluation knowledge and skills, strengthening evaluation management, stimulating demand for and use of evaluation findings, and supporting an environment of accountability and learning, as relevant. It shall include interviews with relevant Swedish and international actors, and review of documents. Surveys, seminars/workshops and travels to implementation countries are to be planned for, to the extent judged feasible within the assignment budget (see section 8 below.) The findings and recommendations of the evaluation shall be presented and discussed in a debriefing meeting with SwedBio and Sida.

In addition to staff at the Sida Unit for Global Cooperation on Environment and the Unit for Global Social Development, SwedBio and Stockholm Resilience Centre, the following actors should be consulted through interviews:

- Other relevant units at Sida if applicable;
- Partners in the Collaborative partner implementation pathway;
- Swedish Government representatives, e.g. Ministry of Environment;
- Swedish and international collaborators as well as actors involved in processes where SwedBio is active.

A list of contact persons for the above stakeholder groups will be provided at the start of the assignment. Additional relevant stakeholders that might be identified can be interviewed upon request.

Documents to review include but are not limited to:

- SwedBio's proposal to Sida for 2021-2024 including the SwedBio policies for integrated approaches and principles;
- The current agreement between SwedBio and Sida for 2021-2024 and Sida's basis for the decision including amendments;
- Previous evaluations of SwedBio and partner evaluations, as relevant;
- Annual workplans and budgets and annual narrative and financial reports submitted to Sida;

- Reports from supported partner projects and decision-memos regarding support provided in the Collaborative partner implementation pathway, as relevant;
- Other SwedBio reports such as event reports and briefs, see also <https://swed.bio/reports/>.

4. Evaluation questions and criteria

The mid-term review shall assess programme design, implementation and progress in relation to SwedBio's Theory of Change developed for the 2021-2024 programme phase and provide supportive recommendations on strategic directions and for further strengthening of the programme implementation.

Specific evaluation questions which are to be assessed based on the relevant OECD DAC evaluation criteria and informed by consultations with the intended users include, but are not limited to:

SwedBio's Theory of Change and MEL approach

- Assess how SwedBio has applied its Theory of Change and MEL approach and provide suggestions for further improvement.
- Assess how SwedBio has been operationalising its integrated approaches and principles, including:
 - a HRBA, gender equality and conflict perspective and provide recommendations for improvement on these and possibly other relevant cross-cutting issues;
 - the results of SwedBio's work in relation to biodiversity and human rights;
 - capture results, lessons learned and challenges related to partners' contexts in their regions for implementation related to implementing HRBA, gender equality and conflict perspective and give recommendations for moving forward in both the Collaborative partner implementation as well as Dialogue for knowledge and policy pathways;
 - assess how SwedBio's impact pathways enable both planned and unplanned/emerging outcomes and provide recommendations on enabling conditions for further fostering an adaptive management approach. This could entail an assessment of SwedBio's and partners adaptive capacity during the COVID-19 pandemic for lessons learned on adaptive management.
- Assess progress in relation to the desired long-term changes and provide recommendations on strategic direction for further strengthening of the implementation.
- Assess how the nexus in between SwedBio's two impact pathways allow for bridging from local to global and the relevance and effectiveness of SwedBio's support to local organisations.

Theme structure and thematic focus:

- Assess the current theme structure and provide recommendations for possible improvements related to the thematic scope.
- This can include assessing the perspective of SwedBio's collaborative partners and other relevant actors on how SwedBio's thematic scope can best be relevant and add value, and what topics SwedBio partners would see is important for SwedBio to focus on.

Communication:

- Assess how SwedBio's communication work support the desired programme outcomes and vision.
- Provide guidance on how to further improve communication of the SwedBio programme externally given its target groups.

5. Conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations

Conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations can include, but not necessarily be restricted to, the questions above. As a mid-term review, the emphasis should be on supportive recommendations for programme development in the current programme phase, but also provide recommendations on potential developments in a next phase.

6. Time schedule, reporting and communication

The evaluation should be carried out during October 2023 to February 2024 and the following steps should be included in the overall assignment:

- Initial start-up meeting with SwedBio management;
- Review and analysis of background documents provided by SwedBio and Sida;
- Preparation of inception report, highlighting the key questions, methodology, timeline and stakeholder engagement plan as well as outline for the evaluation report, that shall be shared for comments by SwedBio no later than October 2023;
- Interviews with Sida and SwedBio staff;
- Interviews with relevant Swedish and international stakeholders, mainly partners in the Collaborative partner implementation pathway;
- Field visits to SwedBio partners in the Collaborative partner implementation pathway;
- Preparation of the interim report, submitted to SwedBio/SRC for comments no later than December 2023;
- Interim meeting/seminar/workshop;
- Finalisation of the final evaluation report that shall be submitted to Sida and SwedBio/SRC no later than February 2024;
- Internal and external debriefing meetings shall be held between the evaluators, SwedBio and Sida, respectively, to discuss the outcomes and recommendations of the evaluation.

The final report shall contain an executive summary of conclusions and recommendations. It shall describe the methodology used and all limitations shall be made explicit in the report and the consequences of these limitations be discussed. Outline for deliverables is to be included in the tender proposal and agreed on in the inception report.

7. Evaluation team qualifications

The evaluator(s) should have extensive knowledge and demonstrated experience of:

- International development cooperation;
- International policy and method development regarding biodiversity governance and management based on central perspectives for international development cooperation such as a human rights-based approach, gender equality and conflict perspective;
- Collaborative processes between policy, practice and research in the global South including experience of networking with e.g. NGOs, civil society, Indigenous peoples and local communities organisations, negotiators, policy makers, UN agencies, universities;
- Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning of development programmes with an adaptive management approach;
- Relevant academic background and/or experience of working with policy and method development in international development cooperation and biodiversity from the entry point of rights-based approaches, social and environmental justice;
- Evaluating international development cooperation initiatives;

- Good communicative skills and excellent ability to express oneself orally and in writing in English.

It would also be considered an asset if the evaluator(s) have the following skills:

- Ability to communicate with respondents in Spanish and/or French.

A joint evaluation team, e.g. where more than one agency and partner country carry out the evaluation to better meet the above qualifications and cover implementation regions is considered advantageous. Eastern and Southern Africa and / or South and Southeast Asia are prioritised regions for follow-up with implementing partner organisations.

The evaluator(s) must be independent of the evaluated activities and have no stake in the outcome of the evaluation.

8. Tender and price

The application material should include:

- Interpretation of the assignment, outline of the proposed methodological framework and approach;
- Price;
- CV:s, sample evaluation(s) and references.

Received tenders will be evaluated on the following assessment criteria:

- Qualifications and competence – alignment with the profile elaborated in section 7 above;
- Understanding of the assignment as outlined in this Terms of Reference and proposed methodology;
- Time plan – that the assignment can be carried out according to the time plan in section 6 above;
- Price – tender prices that exceed SEK 700 000, which is the upper limit for procurement according to direct award procedure, will not be considered. The final budget will be based on a proposal containing a work plan specifying consultancy rates and number of days/hours allocated per activity.

Suppliers must be able to provide a registration certificate and organisation number.

Tenders are submitted to tobias.andersson@su.se latest 2 October 2023.

9. Reference materials

SwedBio and Sida will ensure that all relevant documentation and contact details for relevant persons or organisations is available to the evaluator(s) at the start of the assignment.