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SUPPORT TO REGIONAL COOPERATION AND INTEGRATION IN AFRICA - WHAT WORKS AND WHY?

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Support to regional cooperation and integration in Africa – what works and why?

Fredrik Söderbaum and Therese Brolin

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Expertgruppen för biståndsanalys (EBA)

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Preface

At the beginning of this millennium, the Economist wrote about Africa as "the hopeless continent". When the same magazine in its December 2011 edition spoke of "Africa rising" and "the hopeful continent – where the sun shines bright", this reflected the beginning of a much more positive buzz about Africa that hadn't previously been seen for some time. The buzz may still be there, but is slowly petering out into more sober analysis. At the height of booming commodity prices, seven of the world's ten fastest-growing economies were in Africa. Today, with oil prices plummeting and commodity prices far from their peaks, there are still three African countries on that list.

Africa is, however, also home to the largest number of low-income countries. Many of these are categorised as 'fragile'. Undoubtedly, many challenges remain. Many of the countries are rather small, have a limited consumer base and weak institutions. In order to promote growth and stability, African leaders have placed a lot of hope in regional solutions that encourage e.g. inter- and intra-regional trade, support peace and stability, and more broadly facilitate interactions between nations and their people. At a policy level the centre of regional integration is the African Union (AU), and the regional economic communities (RECs), with agencies such as the African Development Bank supporting implementation. Being 'African-owned' institutions they have often become the preferred partners for donors seeking to promote regional cooperation and integration.

In an effort to learn from the past and guide future support, Professor Fredrik Söderbaum and his associate Therese Brolin have examined *what works* and *why* in the provision of external support for regional cooperation and integration in Africa. This has been done with a view to providing strategic input to the design and implementation of Swedish regional support, particularly for the coming strategy for Africa, which is currently being developed by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. However, their findings will also no doubt be of interest to a broader public.

Swedish cooperation strategies for Africa have focused heavily on support to the AU and the RECs. The authors argue that in continuing in this fashion, Sweden risks repeating the same mistake as many other donors, namely focusing on the level of regional integration/cooperation and capacity-building of regional organisations instead of on development outcomes and poverty

reduction. They argue that this leads to a confusion of means and ends, and an emphasis on activities and outputs rather than long-term development results. Furthermore, the authors show that many state-led regional organisations are struggling with both internal and external challenges and limitations. In fact, there is little evidence to indicate that donor support of such actors has yielded sustainable development. Rather, the donor community's strong focus on the AU, the RECs and other intergovernmental regional organizations tends to marginalise the role of both private business and civil society actors in the quest for regional integration. At the same time, these very actors may often be better placed to achieve real results.

The authors also point to the importance of better understanding both national incentives for cooperation and issues of national ownership in the context of regional development cooperation. Regional integration efforts need to be firmly rooted in a broad-based national interest. Donors need to align their national support better with regional support, and to ensure better coordination amongst themselves in their support.

At a broader level, this study raises the question of why donors, in their support to regional integration, are so preoccupied with organisations such as the AU and the RECs. If indeed the objective is to create better living conditions for people living in poverty and oppression (the objective of Sweden's development cooperation), what are the long-term development results that can be expected from such support? And would it, perhaps, not be more effective to work through other, non-state, partners?

We hope that this report will not only support the formulation of a new Swedish regional strategy for Africa, but also stimulate a broader international debate around how to structure and organise regional, as well as national, support to Africa. The work on this report has been conducted in dialogue with a reference group chaired by Mr Torgny Holmgren of the EBA. The analysis and conclusions expressed in this report are solely those of the authors.

Stockholm, April 2016

Lars Heikensten

Sammanfattning

Biståndsgivare och externa aktörer har under en lång tid, och av olika anledningar, gett stöd till regionalism och regionala organisationer (RO) i Afrika. Från att tidigare haft en kritisk inställning till statsledda regionala projekt i Afrika har många externa aktörer idag blivit starka anhängare och finansiärer av sådana projekt. Kunskapen om bistånd till regionalt samarbete är emellertid mycket begränsad. Denna rapport syftar till att undersöka ”vad fungerar och varför” i stödet till regionalt samarbete och integration i Afrika och i regionalt utvecklingssamarbete. Rapporten behandlar centrala frågor om det regionala stödets motiv och effekter: (i) hur bör regionalt utvecklingssamarbete definieras, designas och utvärderas för att det ska leda till utveckling och fattigdomsminskning? (ii) hur bör regionalt och nationellt stöd förhålla sig till varandra? (iii) under vilka förutsättningar bidrar regionalt bistånd till att minska det ”implementeringsgap” som idag finns karaktäriserar många RO i Afrika? och (iv) hur bör det regionala utvecklingssamarbetet implementeras för att det ska vara effektivt och fungera?

För att uppnå syftet, det vill säga att undersöka ”vad som fungerar och varför”, har flera olika ansatser och källor använts. Rapporten för samman information och kunskap från (i) forskning, (ii) givares utvärderingar, och (iii) en djupstudie av svenskt regionalt utvecklingssamarbete med Afrika söder om Sahara. Den övergripande ambitionen med rapporten är att bidra med ny och jämförande kunskap som är av vikt för en rad bilaterala och multilaterala givare som är verksamma inom detta arbetsfält. Fallstudien bidrar med kunskap av särskild vikt för utformningen och genomförandet av *Sveriges regionala utvecklingssamarbete med Afrika söder om Sahara* (2016-2020) (hädanefter refererad till som den svenska regionala strategin) som svenska utrikesdepartementet och Styrelsen för internationellt utvecklingssamarbete (Sida) just nu håller på att ta fram.

De viktigaste resultaten av rapporten är som följer.

Det finns flera tolkningar och innebörder av ”regionalt utvecklingssamarbete” vilket har skapat en hel del förvirring om vad som egentligen avses. Därför behövs en tydlig distinktion mellan ”regionalt utvecklingssamarbete” (regionalt bistånd) i mer allmän mening och ”bistånd till regionalt samarbete och integration”. Även

om begreppen överlappar, så är de inte identiska. Till exempel används termen ”regionalt utvecklingssamarbete” oftast när det handlar om att bidra till utveckling (fattigdomsminskning), snarare än det mer specifika stödet som fokuserar på att främja regionalt samarbete och integration. Regionala biståndsprogram som involverar fler än två länder (”multi-country programmes”) bör även särskiljas från program som riktar sig till en eller flera regionala organisationer. Om inte de här distinktionerna görs, och när givare är inblandade i för många områden och aktiviteter på en och samma gång, bidrar det till förvirring om vad det regionala biståndet egentligen syftar till och hur detta ska uppnås.

Sverige tenderar begå samma misstag som många andra givare i och med att betoningen inte ligger på utveckling utan främst på att stödja regionalt samarbete/integration och kapacitetsutveckling inom regionala organisationer. Detta hänger samman med två vanliga misstag: (i) att mål och medel ofta blandas samman, samt (ii) att givare lägger tonvikt vid aktiviteter och kortsiktiga resultat snarare än på långsiktig utveckling och fattigdomsminskning.

Ovanstående är nära kopplat till uppföljning och utvärdering av regionalt utvecklingssamarbete och till hur resultat rapporteras. Trots att det finns belägg för att regionalt bistånd är relevant och att ”resultat” uppnås, finns det olika uppfattningar om vad som utgör ett bra resultat, hur stödet ska utvärderas, och vems resultat det är som ska räknas och varför. Dessa problem hänger delvis samman med nämnda begreppsförvirring, men beror också på att det saknas verktyg och tillräcklig kunskap för att göra relevanta uppföljningar och utvärderingar. Ofta är det svårt att mäta resultaten och många gånger rapporteras de i termer av aktiviteter och kortsiktiga resultat. Bristande kunskap om och avsaknaden av fungerande mätmetoder för långsiktiga resultat riskerar att givare gör felaktiga prioriteringar och fattar felaktiga beslut om vilka aktörer de ska samarbeta med och varför.

Ett centralt inslag i det regionala utvecklingssamarbetet med Afrika är att många givare lägger mycket stor tonvikt på att stödja mellanstatliga regionala organisationer, såsom Afrikanska Unionen (AU) och de regionala ekonomiska gemenskaperna (REG) — såsom East African Community (EAC), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), och Southern African Development Community (SADC). Andra organisationer och icke-statliga aktörer

kan också stödjas, men många givare (däribland Sverige) anser att det regionala biståndet främst ska gå till aktörer och mekanismer som främjar den så kallade Afrikanska integrationsagendan och till de aktörer som arbetar med att införa denna, nämligen AU och REG.

Stöd till mellanstatliga regionala organisationer (såsom AU och REG) kan givetvis vara framgångsrikt, inte minst om och när dessa organisationer bidrar till att uppnå gemensamma kollektiva nyttigheter. Det är även relativt oomtvistat att AU och REG är mer effektiva och framgångsrika idag jämfört med bara ett eller två decennier sedan (speciellt inom politikområden såsom fred/säkerhet och regional ekonomisk integration). Rapporten visar emellertid att statsledda regionala organisationer såsom AU och REG ofta dras med både interna och externa problem, och en rad av dessa organisationer brottas med ett stort implementeringsgap eller är rentav dysfunktionella. I själva verket finns det mycket stor osäkerhet huruvida det mycket omfattande bistånd som Sverige och andra givare lägger ned på kapacitetsutveckling i regionala organisationer i Afrika faktiskt har varit framgångsrikt vad beträffar utveckling och fattigdomsminskning. Många givare, inklusive Sverige, behöver en mer nyanserad förståelse av vad som fungerar och varför. Akademisk forskning erbjuder sådan kunskap.

Ett annat problem med givarkollektivets starka fokus på AU, REGs och andra mellanstatliga organisationer gäller marginaliseringen av den privata sektorn och civilsamhällesaktörer i dessa organisationer. Även om det finns vissa tecken på ökad relevans och inkludering av dessa aktörer under det senaste decenniet, så präglas regionalism i Afrika fortfarande av en stark spänning mellan statliga och icke-statliga aktörer (mellan vad som ofta benämns "top-down" och "bottom-up" regionalism). Både forskning och diverse utvärderingar visar att denna spänning och exkluderandet av icke-statliga aktörer från mellanstatliga regionala organisationer hjälper till att förklara de blygsamma resultaten. Det behövs därför en mer diversifierad och balanserad strategi som på ett mer påtagligt sätt även inkluderar civilsamhället och den privata sektorn i det regionala biståndet. Detta har starkt stöd i både forskning och en rad utvärderingar. Medan ett flertal bilaterala och multilaterala biståndsgivare redan har gått i denna riktning utmärks det svenska regionala biståndet av ett överdrivet fokus på mellanstatliga regionala organisationer.

Rapporten understryker vidare att det är missvisande att tro att biståndsgivare och afrikanska samarbetspartners alltid delar samma

intressen och har samma uppfattning om hur regionalt utvecklingssamarbete ska bedrivas. Biståndsgivarna är inte passiva och neutrala finansiärer av regionalt samarbete och integration. Det finns vissa forskare som anser att biståndsgivarna först och främst styrs av sina egna politiska och ekonomiska intressen, snarare än av ett genuint intresse av att bidra till regional utveckling och afrikanskt ägarskap. Forskningen visar även att samarbete med vissa afrikanska aktörer och organisationer ibland är mer av ondo än av godo. Det finns dock sätt för givare att hantera dessa och liknande utmaningar, till exempel genom utformandet av mer relevanta och effektiva regionala biståndsstrategier.

Utformningen och den faktiska implementeringen av det regionala biståndet är av stor betydelse för dess effektivitet och kvalitet. Därför är valet av finansieringsstrategi och biståndsmodalitet, samt av samarbetspartner av avgörande betydelse för att biståndet ska vara effektivt. Ett annat viktigt beslut gäller huruvida målet är att bedriva ett långsiktigt eller mer kortsiktigt utvecklingssamarbete. För att kunna fatta välgrundande beslut om hur det regionala biståndets ska utformas och implementeras krävs det att givare har stor kunskap om den specifika regionala kontexten och hur den regionala politiska ekonomin fungerar. Om givarna missförstår strukturella faktorer, den regionala politiska ekonomin, och statliga och icke-statliga aktörers olika intressen finns det en stor risk att det regionala biståndet blir ineffektivt, irrelevant och att till och med kan motverka hållbar utveckling i regionen. Djupare kunskap om den politiska och ekonomiska kontexten är därför nödvändig för att förstå vilka afrikanska regeringar, samarbetspartners och andra intressenter som kan bidra till ett framgångsrikt regionalt utvecklingssamarbete.

Det finns en stor enighet i det internationella samfundet om att koordinering, harmonisering och samordning på olika nivåer och mellan olika aktörer är avgörande för ett effektivt utvecklingssamarbete. Rapporten visar på behovet av att (i) koordinera nationellt och regionalt bistånd, och (ii) ökad givarsamordning av regionalt bistånd. Koordinering av nationellt och regionalt stöd har diskuterats bland givare under flera decennier. De flesta givare är överens om att det nationella och regionala stödet i högsta grad är beroende av varandra. I praktiken hanteras dock de två stödformerna nästan alltid separat, vilket har negativa konsekvenser för biståndets kvalitet och resultat. Det här är tydligt i det svenska utvecklingssamarbetet där det regionala stödet i princip uteslutande

fokuserar på den regionala nivån i syfte att ”komplettera” det stöd som ges på nationell nivå (det regionala stödet ska ge ett ”mervärde”, och uppfylla mål som ej kan nås genom nationellt/bilateralt stöd). Den starka svenska betoningen på ”mervärde” och speciellt stödet till institutionell utveckling av regionala organisationer förstärker emellertid klyftan mellan det nationella och regionala stödet. Det svenska regionala utvecklingssamarbetet skiljer sig därmed från flera andra givares ansatser som utgår från att regional utveckling kan främjas genom nationella strategier och program. Det är dock inte nödvändigt att ersätta den svenska modellen med den decentraliserade nationella modellen. Det viktiga är att man på olika sätt harmoniserar det regionala och nationella stödet, vilket kan göras på olika sätt.

Ett intressant exempel är den ”flernivåansats” som karaktäriserar den svenska strategin för regionalt arbete med HIV och AIDS och sexuell och reproduktiv hälsa och rättigheter i Afrika söder om Sahara. Denna strategi omfattar samarbete och stöd till (i) multilaterala organisationer (såsom UNAIDS), (ii) regionala aktörer och organisationer, såväl som (iii) statliga och icke-statliga aktörer på nationell nivå. Det tycks råda konsensus inom Sida och UD om att denna ”flernivåansats” har varit framgångsrik. Sverige har därmed två helt olika ansatser för regionalt utvecklingssamarbete i Afrika. Både forskning och utvärderingar visar att en flernivåsansats skulle kunna överbrygga den klyfta som idag finns mellan det nationella, regionala och multilaterala utvecklingssamarbetet.

Rapporten pekar även på bristande samordning av regionalt bistånd. Många givare ger stöd till ett stort antal regionala projekt inom samma region men vanligtvis utan någon större koordinering eller samordning. Det finns en rad utmaningar med ökad biståndssamordning. En är att det kräver större resurser jämfört med nationell biståndssamordning eftersom det många gånger rör sig om komplexa regionala biståndsprogram där givare sitter utspridda på olika fältkontor i en rad olika länder. En annan utmaning hänger ihop med att större och viktiga multilaterala aktörer, såsom EU, Världsbanken och Afrikanska Utvecklingsbanken (AfDB), ofta är alltför sysselsatta med implementeringen av sina egna komplexa och omfattande regionala program. Även om dessa aktörer egentligen borde ta en mer aktiv roll för ökad samordning och harmonisering på olika plan och mellan olika aktörer, innebär deras inåtvändhet att ett stort ansvar för biståndssamordning faller på mindre och mer flexibla givare, såsom Sverige.

Policyrekommendationer:

1. **Förtydliga och revidera mål och medel**. Det råder alltför stor begreppsförvirring om vad givare avser med regionalt utvecklingssamarbete och stöd till regionalt samarbete vilket underminerar det regionala biståndets kvalitet och effektivitet. Nära sammanbundet med detta är att givarna behöver dirigera om fokuset på kapacitetsutveckling inom regionala organisationer och regionalt samarbete till förmån för långsiktiga och generella utvecklingseffekter såsom förbättrade levnadsvillkor, regional utveckling och fattigdomsminskning.

2. **Gå bortom den snäva fokuseringen på mellanstatliga regionala organisationer och inrikta stödet både på statligt och icke-statligt regionalt samarbete och integration samt hur dessa processer ska förstärka varandra.** Även om AU och REGs är viktiga för att hantera dagens afrikanska samhällsutmaningar finns det många begränsningar för vad dessa och andra mellanstatliga organisationer faktiskt kan åstadkomma. Det finns även starkt stöd i forskningen för att mellanstatliga regionala organisationer i Afrika är synnerligen svaga på att inkludera icke-statliga aktörer från den privata sektor och från civilsamhället. En mer balanserad ansats är därför nödvändig som tar bättre hänsyn till både statliga och icke-statliga aktörer och den mångfald av olika samarbetsmekanismer som finns.

3. **Ta större hänsyn till den regionala politiska och ekonomiska kontexten i utformningen och genomförandet av regionalt utvecklingssamarbete.** Om inte bättre hänsyn tas till den regionala kontexten, strukturella faktorer, regionala maktförhållanden, nationell suveränitet och informella institutioner riskerar det regionala biståndet (fortsätta) bli ineffektivt såväl som irrelevant. En välgrundad djupanalys av den politiska och ekonomiska regionala dynamiken är nödvändig för ett välfungerande regionalt bistånd och kan även säkerställa ett ökat engagemang från berörda regeringar, partnerorganisationer och andra intressenter.

4. **Revidera eller avsluta regionala program och projekt som inte fungerar.** Det finns en mängd orsaker till att regionala

program inte fungerar, alltifrån hämmande strukturer, dysfunktionella regionala organisationer, bristande politisk vilja eller incitement hos berörda regeringar, orealistiska givarambitioner och så vidare. Biståndsgivarna behöver därför synkronisera sina målsättningar och ambitioner med rådande realiteter på marken och bland berörda afrikanska aktörer, organisationer och institutioner.

5. **Förbättra samordningen av nationellt och regionalt bistånd.** Den konventionella fokuseringen på mellanstatliga och statsledda regionala organisationer bör ersättas av en mer integrerad och holistisk ansats som mer systematiskt samordnar nationellt och regionalt bistånd. När det är relevant bör även multilateralt stöd integreras.

6. **Säkerställ afrikanskt ägarskap och att det regionala biståndet är anpassat till nationella utvecklingsstrategier**. En förutsättning för att det regionala stödet ska vara effektivt är att det ges till områden som prioriteras av afrikanska statliga och icke-statliga aktörer. Det finns starka belägg för att regionalt utvecklingssamarbete som inte är väl integrerat i nationella utvecklingsstrategier ofta är ineffektivt och inte leder till långsiktig utveckling.

7. **Överväg noggrant för- och nackdelar med olika stödformer och finansieringsstrategier och var både mer realistisk och strategisk angående målsättningarna för det regionala stödet.** Strategiska överväganden i genomförande och val av olika stödformer bör göras omsorgsfullt. Det förefaller som att ökad kvalitet på det regionala biståndet hänger samman med att begränsade resurser koncentreras till färre områden, sektorer och partners. Strategiska beslut bör även fattas huruvida målet är att stödja långsiktiga utvecklingsmål eller om det är att uppnå mer kortsiktiga resultat.

8. **Förbättra biståndssamordningen.** Det finns ett stort behov av ökad givar- och biståndssamordning för att det regionala stödet ska bli mer effektivt. Alla givare måste vara involverade i detta arbete. Sverige skulle kunna spela en mer aktiv roll för att förbättrad biståndssamordning inom vissa regioner och vissa sektorer.

9. **Förbättra uppföljningen och utvärderingen av regionalt utvecklingssamarbete.** Det finns stora kunskapsluckor när

det gäller förståelsen för vad som utgör ett bra resultat, hur detta ska utvärderas, samt vems resultat som räknas och varför. De resultat som finns är ofta rapporterade som aktivtiter och kortsiktiga utvecklingsresultat och det saknas även tillräcklig kunskap om det regionala biståndets långsiktiga utvecklingseffekter, samt hur detta ska uppnås och mätas. Förbättrad uppföljning och utvärdering av det regionala utvecklingssamarbetet skulle underlätta för givarna att prioritera och fatta beslut om vilka utvecklingsaktörer de ska samarbeta med.

10. **Öka kunskapen och förståelsen inom berörda departement och myndigheter om betydelsen av både regionalt utvecklingssamarbete och av regionalt samarbete och integration i Afrika.** Bland beslutsfattare finns bristfällig kunskap om betydelsen av regionalt stöd såväl som afrikansk regionalism för att hantera dagens afrikanska samhällsutmaningar. Detta innebär att mycket av den potential som finns i den afrikanska regionalismen förblir outnyttjad. Särskild vikt bör ges till att bygga förståelse och kompetens kring det intrikata samspelet mellan nationella och regionala processer och strategier.

Summary

The donor community and external actors have supported regionalism and regional organizations (ROs) in Africa for many decades and for a variety of reasons. In the past, many outside actors and donors were critical of state-led regionalist projects in Africa. This attitude has changed in recent decades, and many donors have now become enthusiastic supporters of African regionalism and ROs.

There is growing awareness of the fact that donors are not simply neutral financers and promoters of homegrown regional projects and ROs. This begs important questions about the incentives, logic and effects of external support to regionalism in Africa. Given the lack of systematic knowledge about these factors, this report examines "what works" and "why" in the provision of external support for regional cooperation and integration in Africa. The questions it asks concern critical issues such as: (i) how should regional development cooperation be defined, designed and evaluated in order to have a positive impact upon development? (ii) in what ways should regional and country-based assistance be related? (iii) under what circumstances does external support help to close the "implementation gap" of ROs in Africa? (iv) how should regional development cooperation be implemented in order to work?

The objective of exploring "what works and why" may be addressed using various methodologies and sources of evidence. This study crosses conventional boundaries by bringing together knowledge from (i) academic as well as applied research, (ii) from donor evaluations and (iii) from an in-depth study of Swedish regional development cooperation with sub-Saharan Africa. The report provides insights of relevance for a range of multilateral and bilateral donors that are active in this field. These include the African Development Bank (AfDB), Belgium, the European Union (EU), Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom (UK), the United Nations (UN), the United States and the World Bank. The study also provides strategic input to the design and implementation of Swedish regional support, particularly the *Swedish Cooperation Strategy for Regional Development Cooperation with Sub-Saharan Africa* (2016-2020) (henceforth the Swedish regional strategy), which is currently being developed by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Swedish International Agency for Development Cooperation (Sida).

Our most important findings are the following.

This study has found there to be a range of understandings and meanings of "regional development cooperation" and this has evidently caused a great deal of confusion. A distinction needs first to be made between "regional development cooperation" (or regional assistance) and "outside funding of regional cooperation/integration". Although these may interconnect, they are not identical. The former is usually designed to achieve "development" whereas the latter is supposed to promote "regional cooperation and integration". Regional donor strategies that target two or more countries should thus be distinguished from strategies that target one or several ROs. Pluralism is not problematic in itself, and there may be several pathways to effective regional development cooperation. Confusion arises when relevant distinctions are not made and when donors try to do too many things at once without clarifying the purposes of their interventions.

Although there are still many gaps in our knowledge about what works and why, Sweden tends to repeat the same mistake as many other donors, namely to focus on the level of regional integration/cooperation and capacity building of ROs instead of on development outcomes and poverty reduction. This results in two overlapping problems: (i) the confusion of means and ends, and (ii) a strong emphasis on activities and outputs instead of long-term development results. A different approach would help donors make better informed decisions about which development actors to cooperate with and why, and it would help them shift focus from activities and outputs to long-term development impact.

This is closely related to definition, monitoring and evaluation of results. While many donor evaluations state that regional development cooperation is both relevant and achieves results, there is little agreement about what constitutes a good result, how it should be evaluated, and whose results should count and why. While these problems are related to the many meanings of regional development cooperation, they also emerge as a result of insufficient monitoring and evaluation tools in this field. Indeed, most donors struggle with how to report and evaluate external support of regionalism in Africa and regional development cooperation. This appears to lead to donors exaggerating the gains of top-down ROs.

A key feature of regional development cooperation in Africa is that most donors focus on state-led ROs, particularly the African Union (AU) and the regional economic communities (RECs), such as the East African Community (EAC), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Even if other organizations and non-state actors are certainly recognized, many donors (including Sweden) claim that such support should first and foremost go to those actors and mechanisms that help to realize the so called African integration agenda, namely the AU and the RECs.

There is little doubt that supporting intergovernmental ROs (such as the AU and the RECs) may be fruitful when these organizations are functional, effective and contribute to the achievement of regional and global public goods. Many observers claim that the AU and the RECs are performing better today than in the past, at least partly thanks to increased capacity-building regionalism. However, as this report shows, many state-led ROs (AU and RECs in particular) are struggling with both internal and external challenges and limitations. Some intergovernmental ROs in Africa are clearly dysfunctional and demonstrate major "implementation gaps". In these cases, there is little evidence to support the idea that the large sums of money provided by mainly western donors for capacity building and institutional development has yielded sustainable development. This is where research provides important insights. In contrast to the pan-African and the liberal institutionalist approach, the new regionalism approach (NRA) helps explain why some ROs are dysfunctional and fail to function as portrayed in official treaties. Many donors, including Sweden, therefore need to broaden their horizons and consider different theoretical perspectives in order to gain a more nuanced understanding of what works and why.

Another problem with the donor community's strong focus on the AU, the RECs and other intergovernmental ROs is the marginalization of both private business and civil society actors in many of these organizations. Although there are some signs of improvement, there is considerable evidence that private business and civil society actors are excluded from many regional intergovernmental organizations in Africa. Both research and donor evaluations show that this exclusion of "bottom-up" forces of regionalization largely explains why the results of state-led and "top-down" regionalism in Africa have been so modest. A more diversified

and balanced strategy is therefore needed that acknowledges the role of the private sector and civil society in regional development cooperation and in solving Africa's development challenges. This requires, among other things, more flexible institutional solutions and a greater diversity of implementing partners than top-down and state-centric intergovernmental ROs. It is therefore necessary to be more realistic about the positive and negative effects of outside support to ROs and to identify which regional frameworks to support in a given situation.

The report stresses that it is misleading to believe that donors and the African actors they support necessarily share the same interests. Donors are not simply neutral external funders of homegrown African projects. Some researchers claim that donors are driven primarily by their own domestic political and economic concerns and by an interest in exerting "control" rather than by a genuine desire to achieve maximum development impact and African ownership. As emphasized in the NRA, it cannot be disputed that some African actors and forces are malign rather than benign. While this study accepts that this may be so, it also proposes ways in which donors may act and design their policies in order to make regional development cooperation more effective.

One essential finding of this report is that regional development cooperation needs be considered important to African stakeholders. Even if there are many different types of regional support, there is strong evidence that those that are not well integrated into national agendas or locally owned are usually unsustainable and even likely to fail. Unfortunately both are recurrent problems in this field. By implication, there is a need to better understand both national incentives for cooperation and issues of national ownership in the context of regional development cooperation.

The report highlights the need to think carefully about specific design features, aid modalities, and the concentration of resources on fewer issues, themes and partners in order to deliver high-quality assistance. Although more knowledge is needed, donor agencies nonetheless need to reflect on funding strategies and aid modalities. They also need to decide in particular whether their goal is to promote long-term development or short-term project implementation. Selecting appropriate recipients/partners and successfully implementing strategies requires in-depth knowledge about the particular context and the region's political economy. If a strategic

plan is developed that fails to take into consideration structural factors, the regional context, aid modalities and the relevance of different delivery channels, regional development cooperation may be unsustainable, ineffective and irrelevant. Adequate understanding of the political economy may also help donors secure commitment from concerned African governments, implementing partners and other stakeholders. Since most operational decisions need to be taken by officials in the field, they can only rarely be determined *a priori* in a regional strategy.

Furthermore, it has been widely recognized that harmonization, alignment and coordination is crucial for aid to be effective. This report draws attention to (i) the need to align national and regional support, and (ii) the need to coordinate and harmonize aid between donors. With regard to the insufficient alignment of national and regional development support, this has been a topic of discussion in the donor community for several decades. Although most western donors stress the fact that regional and national support are interdependent, in practice these two forms of support are often handled separately and this has negative effects upon the quality of aid. This is particularly evident in Swedish support, in which regional support is heavily focused on the regional "level" in order to bring "added value" to what could otherwise be accomplished through national support. The problem is that this "top-down" approach — which is strongly geared towards strengthening the institutional capacity of ROs — reinforces the gap between national and regional support. The top-down Swedish approach contrasts with the bottom-up approach favoured by several other donors, whereby regional development is promoted *through* national strategies and programmes (i.e. rather than vice versa). However, there is no need to replace a top-down with a bottom-up approach. A more appropriate solution is instead to adopt a more integrated "multi-level approach", which systematically harmonizes national, regional and arguably also multilateral support.

Interestingly, Sweden employs this kind of multi-level approach in its regional strategy for HIV/AIDS and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) in Southern Africa. Within a single framework, this strategy integrates collaboration with multilateral organizations (e.g. UNAIDS), regional actors and organizations as well as state and non-state actors on the national level. Most Swedish interviewees refer to this three-tiered, multi-level approach as a

"success". This means that Sweden has adopted two completely different approaches to regional development cooperation. Available evidence from both research and evaluations suggests that there are strong reasons to believe that the multi-level approach would "work" in bridging the current problematic gap between national, regional and multilateral development assistance.

There is also weak coordination between donors. Many donors support numerous regional projects in the same region without any systematic coordination or harmonization between them. Coordinating regional strategies is challenging and may be costly since they are often complex and many of the responsible donor offices are spread out in different locations around Africa. Although larger multilateral agencies, such as the EU, the WB and the AfDB, should be playing a stronger coordinating role, they appear to be primarily occupied with the implementation of their own rather comprehensive and rigid regional strategies. There therefore seems to be a window of opportunity for smaller, more flexible donors, such as Sweden, to play a more active role in facilitating coordination and harmonization.

Policy recommendations:

1. **Clarify ends and means**. There is too much confusion over what donors actually mean by regional development cooperation and by external support of regional cooperation and integration in Africa. Donors need to become more precise and also redirect focus away from outputs and means (the level of regional cooperation and "capacity building regionalism") to ends and long-term development objectives (improved living conditions and poverty reduction).
2. **Go beyond a narrow focus on the AU and the RECs and support both top-down and bottom-up regionalism.** Although the AU and the RECs are necessary for dealing with global and regional challenges, there are limits to what these and other intergovernmental ROs can realistically achieve. There is also evidence that many state-led and top-down ROs in Africa fail to include and be relevant for the private market forces and civil society actors. Donors therefore need to move beyond the exaggerated focus on state-led and top-down ROs towards strategies and policies that involve both state and

non-state actors in more flexible and development-friendly collaboration mechanisms.

3. **Take the regional political and economic context into consideration when designing and implementing regional donor programmes**. If the regional context, structural factors, power distribution, national sovereignty, and informal institutions are not considered, regional donor strategies may simply become unsustainable, ineffective and irrelevant. Analysis of the regional political economy also helps to ensure the commitment of concerned governments, implementing partners and other stakeholders.

4. **Revise or discontinue regional donor programmes and policies that do not work.** There are many reasons why regional development cooperation may not work, such as poor structural conditions, dysfunctional ROs, lack of political will of African governments, unrealistic donor ambitions, and so forth. Donors need to match their ambitions with realities and capacities on the ground.

5. **Align and coordinate national, regional and multilateral development cooperation**. Instead of the conventional top-down approach, which is heavily geared towards intergovernmental and state-led ROs, adopt an integrated "multi-level approach", which more systematically aligns national, regional and even multilateral assistance into the same (holistic) framework or perspective. This is crucial for making regional development cooperation relevant for national elites and African stakeholders.

6. **Ensure African ownership and that regional assistance is aligned with national strategies and interests.** Regional development cooperation is only successful when it addresses issues which are important to African stakeholders and when they benefit from the cooperation. Regional development cooperation that is not well integrated into national agendas or take into account national interests and local ownership are usually unsustainable, and even likely to fail.

7. **Carefully consider the implications of various aid modalities so as to make more realistic and strategic goals for regional development cooperation**. Think carefully about strategy design and aid modalities, and concentrate resources

on fewer issues, themes and partners in order to deliver high-quality aid. In particular, decide whether the goal is to promote long-term development or shorter-term project implementation, and why.

8. **Improve aid coordination and harmonization**. There is an urgent need for greater harmonization and coordination of regional development cooperation in order to improve its effectiveness. All donors need to be engaged.

9. **Improve monitoring and evaluation of regional development cooperation and external support to regionalism in Africa**. There is still too much uncertainty what constitutes a good result, how and when it should be evaluated, or whose results should count and why. Likewise data is mainly available on activities and outputs while there is an almost complete lack of data on long-term development impact. Improved monitoring and evaluation of regional development cooperation will help donors to achieve better results and to make better priorities and decisions about which development actors to cooperate with and why.

10. **Increase knowledge within relevant ministries and agencies about the relevance of both regional development cooperation and regionalism in Africa.** There is fairly limited knowledge within the donor community about the relevance of regional development cooperation and regionalism in dealing with global and regional challenges. This undermines the effectiveness of aid in general and regional development cooperation in particular. It also means that much of the potential of regionalism in Africa remains untapped.

Acronyms

ACCORD	African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes
ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific group of countries
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AfDB	African Development Bank
ALTA	Latin American and Caribbean Air Transport Association
APSA	African Peace and Security Architecture
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
CARPHA	Caribbean Public Health Agency
CFTA	Continental Free Trade Area
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
Danida	Danish International Development Agency
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
EAC	East African Community
EC	European Commission
ECA/UNECA	Economic Commission for Africa (United Nations)
ECDPM	European Centre for Development Policy Management
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (United Nations)
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council (United Nations)
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EPA	Economic Partnership Agreements
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
IADB	Inter-American Development Bank

IFI	International Financial Institution
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IWRM	integrated water resource management
LAPSSET	Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia Transport corridor
Mercosur	Southern Common Market (*Mercado Común del Sur*)
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTR	Mid-term Review
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Non-governmental organization
Norad	Norwegian Agency for International Development
NORDPOOL	Nordic energy market
NRA	new regionalism approach
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OKACOM	Okavango River Basin Commission
ORASECOM	Orange-Sengu River Basin Commission
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PPPs	Public-private partnerships
RBO	river basin organization
REC	regional economic community
RO	regional organization
SACCAR	Southern African Centre for Cooperation in Agricultural Research
SACU	Southern African Customs Union
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SANASO	Southern African Network of AIDS Service Organizations
SAPP	Southern African Power Pool
SDI	Spatial Development Initiative
SEK	Swedish Krona

SFCG	Search for Common Ground
Sida	Swedish Agency for International Development Cooperation
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
TMEA	TradeMark East Africa
TMSA	TradeMark South Africa
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
US	United States of America
USAID	US Agency for International Development
WAHO	West African Health Organization
WANEP	West African Network for Peace
WB	World Bank
ZAMCOM	Zambezi River Basin Commission

1. Introduction

1.1. Problem and purpose

Regional cooperation and integration in Africa have deepened and expanded considerably in the last two decades. External actors and donors have been supporting these processes for many decades and for a variety of reasons, though many efforts appeared to be in vain. However, there is now far greater optimism in the international donor community about their potential.

In recent decades, the European Union (EU) has emerged as one of the world's most influential region-builders and it has developed comprehensive strategies and funding mechanisms to support regionalism and regional organizations (ROs), not only in Africa but also in Asia, Latin America and to some extent in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. The EU now provides several billion Euros to the African Union (AU), the regional economic communities (RECs), such as the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), East African Community (EAC), the Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), as well as to other market and society actors and processes. While the World Bank was previously reluctant to support state-led regionalist projects in Africa, it has recently become increasingly positive to the idea. Between 2008 and 2011, the Bank's support to regional integration in Sub-Saharan Africa increased by no less than 75 percent, reaching US$3.65 billion in 2011 (World Bank 2011). Many other multilateral agencies (such as the African Development Bank, the Global Environment Facility and the United Nations) as well as influential bilateral development partners (such as Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom) are providing similar support to African ROs and regional integration processes.

This report seeks to address (1) the lack of cumulative and systematic knowledge about the role of external funding in promoting regional cooperation and integration in Africa and (2) the lack of clarity concerning what constitutes "good" and effective regional development cooperation. Its overall purpose is to examine "what

works and why" in this field. The specific questions it addresses concern the quality and effectiveness of regional aid: (i) how should regional development cooperation be defined, designed and evaluated in order to have a positive development impact? (ii) how might regional and country-based assistance be better harmonized to enhance effectiveness? (iii) under what circumstances does external support reduce the implementation gap in ROs? (iv) how should regional development cooperation be implemented in order to be effective?

1.2. Methodology and design

What, then, do we mean by external funding "working"? This study deals with *external funding of* regional cooperation and integration in Africa (and the extent to which such aid yields the results it was intended to produce) rather than regional cooperation and integration in Africa more generally. Although they overlap and intersection, it is also worth distinguishing between "external funding of regional cooperation and integration" and "regional development cooperation" (regional aid). Both concepts are relevant to this study. Yet, many observers and policy fail to acknowledge that regional development cooperation is more general and is not necessarily intended to contribute to regional cooperation and integration. It is also helpful to distinguish between "regional aid" and "regional development". The latter is a somewhat imprecise concept that is usually understood simply as an aggregate of country-based national development indicators.[1] We propose that it is therefore more useful to focus on the quality of development and its outcomes in a region (and how external funding promote such development). This and other related ideas will be elaborated throughout the study.

The question of "what works and why" may be approached using various methodologies and sources of evidence. This study crosses conventional boundaries by bringing together knowledge from (i) academic as well as applied research, (ii) from a selection of

[1] The concept of "regional development" is widely used with regard to the promotion of development of sub-national regions or cross-border micro-regions, such as Öresund region or the Maputo corridor. Understood in this sense, it is closely linked to so called "regional policy". This study focuses in particular on how external funding contributes to development within larger macro-regions.

evaluations of the major donor agencies supporting regional development cooperation in Africa, and (iii) from an in-depth case study of Swedish regional development cooperation with Sub-Saharan Africa. The case study draws on various sources, such as regional development cooperation strategies, project reports, mid-term reviews, results and impact reports, as well as qualitative interviews with Swedish officials. By this combination of methodologies and sources of evidence, the report provides both general insights of relevance for a range of multilateral and bilateral donors that are active in this field as well as strategic input to the design and implementation of Swedish regional development cooperation in Sub-Saharan Africa. It can also be mentioned that, from a methodological viewpoint, it is somewhat easier to provide evidence regarding what does *not* work rather than what works.

Emphasis is placed on three policy areas: (i) regional economic integration (especially regional trade integration and trade facilitation), (ii) the environment (especially transboundary water management) and (iii) peace and security. These policy areas are pertinent for two reasons. Firstly, they demonstrate variation in institutional design and involvement of both state and non-state actors. Secondly, apart from being priority areas for Swedish regional development cooperation with Africa, a range of both multilateral and bilateral donors are making major contributions to all of these policy areas.

1.3. The organization of the report

The report consists of seven chapters, which can be grouped in three parts and a conclusion.

The first part (chapter 2 and 3) intends to bridge the gap between research and policy. Chapter 2 describes the global context and presents the conceptual tools needed to make sense of the diversity and shifting nature of regionalism in Africa and the world more generally. Key distinctions are made between old and new regionalism and between various types of regional cooperation mechanism. Chapter 3 summarizes the findings of academic research regarding the logic of regionalism in Africa and of external support for it. It highlights various theoretical perspectives of when and why regional

development cooperation "works" and not, and policymakers need to understand the merits of several schools of thought.

The second part (chapter 4) presents insights gleaned from donor evaluations. It seeks to identify what is meant in these documents by "good practice" in regional development cooperation. It concludes that good donor practice requires, among other things, (i) a clear definition of the meaning and framing of regional development cooperation, (ii) harmonization of regional and national assistance, (iii) that donor programmes promote national interests and gain national commitment from African governments, and (iv) that donors consider carefully how regional support is implemented.

The third part concentrates on Swedish regional support. Chapter 5 describes the objectives and principles of the current Swedish regional strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa, its implementation and reported results. Thereafter, chapter 6 focuses on key issues for improving Swedish regional development cooperation. It is proposed that Swedish policy makers need to (i) focus less on cooperation with and strengthening of ROs and more upon promoting long-term development, (ii) broaden their horizons from the current limited focus on direct and indirect support to the AU and the RECs to consider multidimensional regional support that involves both state and non-state actors in flexible, development-friendly solutions, (iii) coordinate national, regional and multilateral support within the an integrated and holistic approach, and (iv) consider how different design features and aid modalities impact on the quality of aid.

Finally, chapter 7 summarizes the report's major findings. It also provides a number of concrete policy recommendations that are relevant for both Swedish policy makers and other bilateral and multilateral donor agencies that are active in this field.

2. Context and concepts

In order to better understand "what works and why" it is necessary to situate regionalism in Africa within a broader historical and global context. The following chapter gives a quick overview and some basic conceptual tools to better understand the changing patterns of regionalism in global politics.

2.1. Old and new regionalism

Since the late 1980s, there has been a global upsurge of various forms of regionalist projects. The widening and deepening of the EU is perhaps the most prominent example, but there has also been a revitalization or expansion of many other regionalist projects as well, such as the AU, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Southern Common Market (Mercosur). More or less every government in the world is engaged in regionalism, which also involves a rich variety of business and civil society actors. This has resulted in a multitude of regional processes in most fields of contemporary politics (Söderbaum 2016).

Both policy makers and scholars emphasize the important role of regions and regional organizations for dealing with regional and global challenges. To understand the logic and drivers of regionalism today — and what works and why in delivering transnational and global public goods — it is essential to understand both its changed *content* and its changing historical *context*. The phenomenon of regionalism has become increasingly complex. We may distinguish between the classical or "old" top-down forms of regionalism and recent and more heterogeneous patterns of so-called "new" regionalism (See Table 2.1.).

The first wave of classical (or "old") regionalism took place between the 1950s and the 1970s. The key concept underpinning these projects was "regional integration", which was essentially perceived as an endogenous state-led process arising from internal conditions specific to each region in question. The greater interdependence of today's global political economy and the focus on regional as well as global challenges make contemporary regionalism more extrovert in nature than old regionalism.

Compared with old regionalism, the new regionalism has become more comprehensive and multidimensional. The broader strategy of regionalism explicitly links outward-oriented trade integration to regional cooperation in many complementary fields of activity, such as infrastructure, transport, agriculture, health and education, natural resources and energy (AfDB 1993; World Bank 1998; ADB 2008).

Furthermore, although state actors (as well as inter-state ROs) continue to be of crucial importance, today's regionalism involves a greater set of actors and institutions than old regionalism, which was strongly dominated by governments and state actors (Söderbaum and Shaw 2003). A variety of non-state actors from the business and civil society are becoming more active in regional cooperation and integration. The result is not only a greater variety of state-led regional mechanisms than in the past, but also a growing number of non-state or hybrid regional arrangements, networks and governance mechanisms. These different (and not seldom overlapping) cooperation mechanisms are turned to in the next section.

Table 2.1. Old and new regionalism

Classical (or "old") regionalism	Contemporary (or "new") regionalism
Shaped by Cold War logic and often imposed from outside by the superpowers	Shaped by a multipolar and "multiplex" world order
European phenomenon modeled on the European Communities	Global and heterogeneous phenomenon
Introvert in nature and often protectionist	Extrovert in nature, linked to globalization and global challenges
Exclusive in terms of membership	Inclusive in terms of membership
Specific objectives (usually in specific sectors)	Comprehensive and multidimensional
Dominated by state actors in intergovernmental regional organizations	Built by state, market and civil society actors in various institutional forms and networks

Source: Söderbaum (2016).

2.2. Types of regional cooperation mechanisms

There is an increasing diversity and overlap of different types of regional cooperation mechanisms. One relevant distinction is between *form* and *scope*, which leads to four types of regional cooperation mechanisms (see Table 2.2.). Form refers to whether the regional cooperation mechanism is an "organization" or, instead, a more loosely structured "network". Scope refers to whether the cooperation mechanism is specialized or multipurpose. A specialized (or single-purpose) scope implies that the regional mechanism is concerned either with a particular type of activity, usually within a given sector, such as trade or transport, or with one particular task, such as financing development projects. A multipurpose regional organization or network has a broader scope, spanning two or more themes or sectors.[2]

Table 2.2. Types of regional cooperation mechanisms

		Form	
		Regional organization	***Regional network***
Scope	***Specialized***	Transport organization Health organization Trade agreement Regional development bank River basin organization	Research network Public-private partnership Civil society network Regional power pool
	Multipurpose	Development community REC Economic union Political union	Growth triangle Development corridor

[2] Lenz and colleagues refer to task-specific and general-purpose ROs (Lenz et al 2014).

Specialized regional organizations

A large number of regional cooperation mechanisms correspond with the category of specialized ROs. Most frequently encountered are *sectoral ROs* that operate in most fields of activity, such as transport and communications, education, research and health. Examples include the West African Health Organization (WAHO), Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), and the Latin American and Caribbean Air Transport Association (ALTA).

There are many *regional trading agreements* of various types and sizes. These may require only a minimal organizational structure, as is the case of NAFTA and the Southern African Customs Union (SACU). However, a certain organizational and institutional capacity tends to evolve in order to regulate regional relations. Furthermore, compared to the situation with old regionalism, regional trading arrangements have now tended to become integral parts of more comprehensive and *multipurpose ROs*, such as ASEAN, EU, ECOWAS, Mercosur and SADC, although these have different historical trajectories.

Regional development banks such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the African Development Bank (AfDB) have facilitated regional cooperation on their continents. Even if they fund projects in a wide variety of sectors and fields, their mission is nevertheless limited to financing and mobilizing resources for development projects.

River basin organizations (RBOs) such as the Mekong River Commission (MRC) or the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) are a particular type of RO. Several of these were established with a particular focus but with time have taken on more river basin-related themes such as navigation, flood control, fisheries, agriculture, electric power development and environmental protection. They have thus become more multipurpose in scope. Their institutional structures may vary greatly but two trends are recognizable: they tend to become more organized and institutionalized over time, transforming themselves from loose networks with less formalized agreements to more centralized ROs; and they tend to evolve from state-centric bodies into organizations that include a host of non-state actors and stakeholders, such as civil society groups, donors and local communities (they thus become more multipurpose in character).

Multipurpose regional organizations

Multipurpose ROs are important for regional cooperation in many parts of the world and have become increasingly so in the last few decades. Examples such as ASEAN, AU, ECOWAS, EU, and SADC have a multitude of aims and activities across many sectors and often a rather comprehensive organizational structure. Multipurpose regional cooperation enables them to explore the linkages between various sectors such as security, economics, politics and culture.

As noted earlier, trading blocs/development communities are increasingly engaging in multisectoral cooperation. In the era of old regionalism, regional cooperation was often specified by or separated into specific sectors, whereas in more recent regionalism, a variety of sectors are grouped together in a single comprehensive and multipurpose framework. The EU is perhaps the most obvious example of this, but similar patterns arise elsewhere. Most of the multipurpose regional organizations in the world have similar agendas and, to an increasing extent, a political content. The number of members may vary considerably depending on whether the RO is continental, macro-regional or sub-regional.

Specialized regional networks

To a larger extent than during the old regionalism, contemporary regionalism is organized in terms of looser networks. Many networks operate within a specific sector or are concerned with carrying out a specific task, such as research or training. *Regional research networks* that exist more or less all over the world are one example. There are also *regional power markets*, such as the Nordic energy market (NORDPOOL) and the Southern African Power Pool (SAPP). SAPP consists of national power authorities in Southern Africa, with associate membership from private energy operators (who are expected to become full members in due course).

Other examples include *business* or *civil society networks*, such as the Southern African Chambers of Commerce, Hemispheric Social Alliance in the Americas, the Social Justice Network (in Mercosur), the West African Network for Peace (WANEP) and the Southern African Network of AIDS Service Organizations (SANASO). Some of these networks are tending to develop into more formal regional organizations.

Public–private partnerships (PPPs) may also be understood as a particular form of network. These partnerships between public and private actors are often formed for specific purposes, such as building a road or a port. An example of this is the consortium for managing the toll road between Johannesburg and Maputo. The main role of the public actors in PPPs (often the central or regional government) is to satisfy statutory or other legal requirements, while the private actors carry out the actual work and often manage the programme. Sometimes these networks are temporary and are intended to dissolve after completion of the project.

Multipurpose regional networks

To be effective, regional networks often tend to be specialized rather than multipurpose. However, there are some important exceptions that are often related to different types of *micro*-regions. *Growth triangles* can be understood as one example of multipurpose regional networks. With limited regional institutional structure, growth triangles utilize the different strengths of the various countries of Southeast Asia and exploit cooperative trade and development opportunities. For instance, the Southern Growth Triangle (SIJORI) Singapore has concentrated on becoming the network's technology centre while locating labour-intensive operations in low-cost neighbouring Malaysia and Indonesia. The private sector provides capital for investment, while the public sector provides infrastructure, fiscal incentives and the administrative framework to attract industry.

Spatial Development Initiatives (SDIs) and *Development Corridors* in Southern Africa are another distinct type of micro-regional initiative (Söderbaum and Taylor 2003, 2008). Some well-known examples include the SDIs of Phalaborwa, Platinum and Gariep and the development corridors of Maputo, Nacala, Tazara, Namibe and Beira. A more recent example is the Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia Transport (LAPSSET) corridor project. These SDIs and development corridors are designed as short-term efforts to stimulate economic growth by creating globally competitive regional entities through new investment, infrastructural development and job creation. Because of the relatively limited scope of SDI projects, they tend to be quite informal and non-bureaucratic so as to allow them to be flexible to the demands of private business.

2.3. Summary

This chapter distinguishes between old and new regionalism and between various types of regional cooperation mechanism. Although there are clearly continuities between old and new regionalism, there is little doubt about that regional cooperation and integration in Africa as well as elsewhere has become more heterogeneous and diverse during recent decades. The diversity of organizational forms and functions "help to refute the notion that regional cooperation involves only one type of regional apex organization through which all efforts are coordinated in top-down processes" (Bilal and Vanheukelom 2015: 5). Nevertheless, many donors (including Sweden) tend to persist with old, state-centric thinking about regional organizations in Africa, which results in an overemphasis on top-down regionalism centered around the AU and the RECs.

3. The scholary debate

This chapter demonstrates that research is highly relevant for enhancing our understanding of the conditions under which regional development cooperation "works". Two academic fields of debate are of particular relevance: (1) scholarly debates about regionalism and ROs in Africa, and (2) scholarly debates about the role of external actors and outside funding of regionalism in Africa.

3.1. Scholarly debates about the logic of regionalism in Africa

The ideational and ideological foundation of regional cooperation and integration in Africa is linked primarily to the visions of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and, more recently, also to those of the AU and the RECs (Asante 1997; Murithi 2005). Two broad and partly overlapping schools of thought dominate the debate: a "pan-African" approach and a "liberal institutionalist" approach. Both of these focus strongly on state-led and inter-state regional frameworks and organizations for providing global and regional public goods. A third school of thought (critical and new regionalism) draws attention to both state and non-state actors found in a range of institutional forms and networks that may have beneficial or harmful effects.

The pan-African approach is closely connected to the visions and series of treaties developed within the framework of the OAU/AU and, more recently, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). While earlier strategies for African cooperation were built around state-led industrialization, import substitution and collective self-reliance, the dominant view today is that Africa "must unite" so that it does not become marginalized in the global economy but can instead exploit the opportunities offered by economic globalization. This has led to a stress upon a comprehensive and multipurpose approach to regionalism, which usually combines trade and common market integration with sectoral regional cooperation in a range of fields, such as transport, infrastructure, natural resources, energy and agriculture. Although specialized and task-specific regional organizations may still be relevant, they are usually considered to be

support structures for the multipurpose and more politically relevant frameworks, such as the AU and the RECs.

The liberal and institutional approach also focuses heavily on formal inter-state institutions and frameworks, frequently with reference to the EC/EU as a comparative marker, model or mentor (Vale, Swatuk and Odén 2001). This line of thought sees the European experience as demonstrating a universal potential for regionalism and it sees regionalism in Africa as an important instrument for achieving peace, security and development. However, according to this school of thought, very modest results of regionalism in Africa thus far observed and the implementation gap are seen to be consequences of the weakness of African states and the failure of their governments to transfer sovereignty, engage in meaningful collective action and build the capacities of regional institutions and organizations.

It is worth noting that despite their fundamental differences, both the pan-African and liberal institutional approach arrive at a similar conclusion: notwithstanding the modest results (even "failure") of most ROs in Africa this far, there is still great potential to build more successful ROs if resources and institutional capacity are increased. The EC/EU is an important inspiration or "model" for both approaches, although the liberal institutional approach tends to emphasize the role of the market, trade integration and cooperation through specialized regional organizations and networks, whereas the pan-Africanists pay more attention to development and political intervention through the multipurpose ROs to ensure economic restructuring and security.

A third and smaller group of scholars in this debate challenges the "optimism" of the other two approaches. In particular, it questions the idea that weak implementation of ROs in Africa has to do with lack of capacity and instead draws attention to deeper underlying problems. The realist school of International Relations stresses the role of power rivalries in explaining poor implementation and the weak impact of ROs in Africa. The new regionalism approach (NRA) also acknowledges power dynamics, but in addition claims that non-implementation may result from the way politics is played out in the African state-society complex (Bach 1999, 2005; Bøås and Hentz 2003; Bøås et al 2005; Grant and Söderbaum 2003; Söderbaum 2004, 2016).

The NRA underlines the diversity of regionalism and that it is constructed by a variety of state and non-state actors, both within and outside formal organizations and networks. Not only economic but also social and cultural regional networks and projects (so called bottom-up regionalization) are anticipated to develop more quickly and sometimes also be more efficient than the top-down states-led regionalist frameworks. The NRA draws attention to that that bottom-up and top-down regionalism may be competing in the African context, or at least proceed in different directions (Söderbaum 2004, 2016).

Even if the NRA accepts that state-led and top-down regionalism may facilitate collective action and development, it has also been noted that these ROs may be used for more malevolent purposes. "Rhetorical" or "symbolic regionalism" refers to the way in which African leaders sometimes engage in symbolic and discursive activities – praising the goals of regionalism, signing cooperation treaties and agreements, and participating in "summitry regionalism" – while showing no commitment to implementation of the policies they have agreed to. The summit meetings of the Heads of States from the main intergovernmental ROs, such as AU, ECOWAS and SADC, are major events at which leaders can make a show of promoting regional cooperation and demonstrate that their own regime is important (or at least "visible") on the international arena. These gatherings are important for the discursive and imaginary construction of regional organizations and their theatrics then become routinized at other ministerial meetings, which in reality allow for no real debate or broader consultation within or between member states (Simon 2003: 71; Söderbaum 2004).

This kind of rhetorical practice is part of what has been referred to by the NRA as regime-boosting or sovereignty-boosting regionalism (Söderbaum 2004, 2016), in which the main goal is to protect the interests (and formal sovereignty) of national regimes. Although regime-boosting regionalism shares features with more conventional types of regional cooperation, it has a different logic since it promotes neither public goods (liberalism) nor broader national and societal interests (realism/structuralism). The NRA sees that leaders may use regionalism simply to enhance their image. They can use it to demonstrate mutual support and loyalty and this helps them raise the status and formal sovereignty of often exclusivist and authoritarian regimes without ensuring that policies they have agreed upon will be

implemented (Bøås et al 2005; Söderbaum 2004). This kind of regime-boosting regionalism is particularly notable on the African continent partly because of the way in which African post-colonial states have been included in the global order and partly because of how the donor community has supported African regionalism from the outside.[3]

Regime-boosting regionalism may also be related to the overlapping membership of ROs on the African continent. The problems of overlap and duplication have been subjects of debate among researchers and policy makers for several decades. Membership overlaps are often assumed to indicate that regionalism has failed or at least that there is little political commitment to ensuring an appropriate division of labour between different ROs. Many policy-makers are deeply concerned with overlapping memberships and regional integration agendas. However, since overlap is such a distinctive feature of regionalism and ROs in Africa, it is important to not only assess its negative effects but also to ask why it has become institutionalized in the first place. The NRA proposes that maintaining many competing and overlapping intergovernmental ROs may in fact be a deliberate strategy that helps regimes increase opportunities to enact symbolic and rhetorical regionalism.

3.2. Scholarly debates about external funding of regionalism in Africa

Many theorists view regionalism as a response by intra-regional actors to external pressures, such as globalization and the hegemony of international powers. While globalization and the global structure have been widely discussed in the study of regionalism, particularly since the end of the Cold War, the influence of external actors and donor agencies upon states has received little attention.

Poorer countries and regions are more susceptible than richer ones to outside influence and funding, and so it is in the developing world that external actors may have most impact. Most external actors and donors officially declare that they support regionalism to "help" regional actors build their "own" regions. However, research has

[3] See Byiers et al (2016) and Vanheukelom et al (2016) for a broader "political economy approach" to explain the implementation gap among ROs in Africa.

shown that this is somewhat disingenuous (Gray 2013; Söderbaum 2016).

Historically, the US has had a great impact upon both the integration as well as disintegration of regions around the world. The US has repeatedly tried to reshape regions in other parts of the world, such as in the Caribbean, Central and South America as well as Central and East/Southeast/South Asia, to suit its own national interests. The US also played a significant role in the early stages of European integration just after the Second World War.

In recent decades, the EU has emerged as the world's most influential region builder. It has comprehensive strategies and funding mechanisms to support regionalism in Africa, but also in Asia, Latin America, the Middle East and the Mediterranean. Its role in this has been hotly debated. The literature tends to fall into a more idealistic and a more critical camp. The "idealists" focus on official EU policy, which proclaims that "the idea is to help the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group of countries integrate with their regional neighbours as a step towards global integration, and to help them build institutional capacities and apply principles of good governance" (European Commission 2004: 10). It is assumed that this will benefit both the EU and the weaker partner regions (European Commission 2004: 3).

Critical theorists, on the other hand, claim that the EU's approach is both hypocritical and self-interested. These scholars point out that the EU's trade strategy with Africa is hard to reconcile with the idea of an "equal" partnership that is so often referred to in the EU's official policies for Africa. Mary Farrell argues that the EU's partnership strategy and the Cotonou Agreement in fact reveal neoliberal goals and political conditionalities instead of the norms that are repeatedly stated in the EU's official discourse. Farrell sees this as a "triumph of realism over idealism" (Farrell 2006).

Research on external actors and institutions other than the US and the EU is sparse. We need far more systematic knowledge about the role of external actors in the promotion of regionalism in Africa and we need to critically analyze what is meant by "good" and effective regional development cooperation. Regarding the question of what works and why, three clusters of problems are particularly pertinent.

One consideration about external funding is whether it reduces or widens the "implementation gap" of state-led ROs in Africa (i.e. the

gap between agreed policies and their implementation). In the last two decades, many donors have invested heavily in strengthening the capacities of the AU, the RECs and many other intergovernmental ROs. However, whereas the EU and Sweden officially continue to emphasize capacity-building of state-led ROs, other influential donors, such as the WB, the US and GEF have partly shifted towards funding business and civil society actors instead and have developed a range of more flexible, project-based and *ad hoc* funding strategies (Gray 2013; Söderbaum and Granit 2014). Although some differences between donors may be expected, the broad variation reveals uncertainty about what regional development cooperation actually means and what funding strategies yield desired results.

A further problem concerns the interests and behaviour of external actors themselves. Most external actors and donor agencies declare that their policies and funding strategies are designed to help African actors build their "own" regions and ROs. However, awareness is growing that donors are not neutral. A great deal has been written about transboundary waters in Africa and the way the *modus operandi* of many donor agencies has reinforced the fragmentation of regional and national programmes (Nicol *et al*., 2001; Söderbaum 2015). Indeed, different donors are often found supporting overlapping or competing transboundary projects at the same time, and they also prefer bilateral arrangements with riparian countries. Research on regional economic integration has also drawn attention to detrimental effects of donor behaviour. In her comprehensive study of the role played by external actors in promoting regional economic organizations in the developing world Julia Gray (2011, 2013, 2014) claims that Africa's ROs are rarely founded upon the interests of their member states but instead upon those of powerful external actors. This has far-reaching implications for contemporary regional economic integration in Africa. Although Africa undoubtedly needs external assistance, Gray's analysis explains why so many African regional ROs are unstable and not under the control of regional actors. Gray concludes that the donors are indeed driven primarily by their own domestic political and economic interests and desires to achieve control over other states rather than by the desire to achieve the maximum development impact and local ownership in Africa. Her views are consistent with critical research about the way the EU's self-interest distorts its region-building and about the NRA, referred to in the previous section.

A third set of problems relates to our lack of knowledge about the impact of external support. It is often unclear whether the development community's objective is primarily to enhance regional cooperation and integration or instead to achieve development and poverty reduction. Furthermore, a recent overview of the field highlights a range of weaknesses in understanding the performance and impact of regional development programmes (Combaz 2013; cf. Phillips 2010). According to this report, "the evidence base remains weak", and most data focuses on the level of regional integration instead of poverty reduction. Furthermore, "no information exists at impact level, only at output and outcome levels" (Combaz 2013: 2-3). This lack of knowledge about development impact is then compounded by the scarcity of research on the effects upon poverty of regional development programmes and by the fact that many donor evaluations, though rigorous, tend to be internal assessments rather than independent evaluations (ibid). This brings us to the question of donor evaluations.

3.3. Summary

This chapter shows that the proponents of the pan-African and liberal institutionalist approach see the modest results of African regionalism as resulting from a lack of resources and capacity, weak commitment to regionalist projects, and/or a general failure to resolve collective action dilemmas. These two approaches argue that capacity building for state-led ROs would result in better development outcomes. The NRA, by contrast, questions idealistic assumptions about the involved actors genuinely striving for common goals and does not assume that enhancing capacity would solve the problem. Those who observe regime-boosting regionalism suggest that the political elites in weak African states are mainly interested in strengthening their regimes' official image, sovereignty and legitimacy rather than having any real concern for policy implementation. Indeed, some actors may benefit from ensuring that policies they formally agree to are not implemented.

The NRA also draws attention to that regionalism may be driven by variety of both state and non-state actors. Sometimes bottom-up regionalization may be more efficient and development-oriented than the top-down states-led regionalist organizations and frameworks. At other times, however, top-down regionalist projects may work against

both private business and civil society actors. According to the NRA, a more diversified approach is needed that that carefully examine the relationship between top-down and bottom-up regionalization and the variation in achieving positive development outcomes.

This chapter also stresses that it is misleading to believe that donors and the African actors necessarily share the same interests. Donors are not simply neutral external funders of home-grown African projects. Some researchers claim that donors are driven primarily by their own domestic political and economic concerns and by an interest in exerting control rather than by a genuine desire to achieve maximum development impact and African ownership. This is compatible with the NRA, which underlines that certain regionalist frameworks are malign rather than benign.

4. "Good Practice" of regional development cooperation

Although scholarly literature provides important insights into the logic and effects of outside funding upon regionalism in Africa, there is still a deficit of research regarding what works on a more concrete level. In order to move beyond existing knowledge gaps in research, this chapter examines a series of independent evaluations of regional development programmes to clarify what is meant by "good practice" in this field.

The evaluations selected include some of the most comprehensive ever conducted on regional development programmes. For instance, the World Bank evaluation covers 19 regional and multi-country programmes and over 100 regional operations in Africa and other regions (this is the only evaluation examined here that goes beyond Africa). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report evaluates its entire regional programme for Africa 2008-2013 by drawing together and summarizing a large number of evaluations and assessments of UNDP's activities in a range of policy fields and issues. The evaluation of the European Commission's regional assistance to Southern Africa is similarly comprehensive. Some of the other evaluations are more focused and specific and evaluate external support to specific regional organizations or projects, sometimes in specific policy fields, such as the Swedish support to ECOWAS (Sida 2015b) and DFID's support to TradeMark South Africa (TMSA) (DFID 2012). In addition, the evaluation of Danish regional support to peace and security, regional integration and democratization in Southern Africa focuses largely on regional development cooperation within the framework of SADC (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Denmark and Danida 2008). See Appendix 1 for the full list of evaluations.

4.1. Multiple meanings of regional development cooperation

There are many different understandings of "regional development cooperation". This has resulted in a great deal of confusion both in the donor community and among African partners. There exist a range of

overlapping but also competing concepts: "regional development cooperation", "regional support", "regional development", "regional programme", "multi-country support", and "support to regional integration". The evaluations also reveal a tendency in the donor community to use "regional integration and cooperation in Africa" and "regional development" and even "regional development cooperation" interchangeably.

A more precise and coherent conceptual framework is therefore required. It is particularly important to distinguish clearly between donor-driven activities and "regional integration and cooperation" between African stakeholders. For instance, "regional development cooperation" targets a region or at least two countries within a region (i.e. Africa or Southern Africa) but may take place without a counterpart regional organization (such as SADC). There is thus no generally agreed definition of what regional development cooperation entails and it is sometimes unclear to what extent "regional programmes" or "regional development cooperation" genuinely contribute to the broad processes of regional integration and cooperation in Africa, or whether regional integration is in fact an objective of the donors' policies. The many meanings of regional development cooperation are not necessarily problematic by themselves. Confusions arise when donors try to do too many things at once and with little clarity about the ends and means of their interventions.

There are several reasons for these ambiguities. Firstly, it is found that a general definition of regional development cooperation is often missing, which makes it difficult to implement and evaluate this kind of support (e.g. Ministry of Foreign Affairs Denmark and Danida 2008; DFID 2010, DFID 2013; GIZ 2014). Secondly, many donor agencies do not clarify what they mean by "region" and "regional". This is particularly clear with multilateral development agencies (such as the AfDB, WB, UN and GEF), which frequently use "regional", "multi-country" and "multinational" programmes/interventions interchangeably. Multi-country and multinational may consist of parallel projects taking place in several countries but with no obvious links between them, and thus may not have much relevance for regional cooperation and integration at all. In fact, the World Bank defines regional cooperation as "an undertaking to accomplish one or more *development objectives* in three or more countries in the same *Bank region*" (World Bank 2007: xvi), while the AfDB employs the

term "multi-country programmes" for interventions that involve at least two countries regardless of whether they are supposed to increase regional integration or not (AfDB 2012). In these cases, regional support cannot be reduced to the funding of ROs but includes other activities that fall outside of the framework of ROs. Both types of support may work. They may also be more positive for development compared to external funding of ROs. But there is little doubt that donor practice would be enhanced by greater precision in the definition of regional development cooperation and greater clarity about the purpose of the planned intervention.

4.2. Capacity building

Capacity building is one of the main components of regional development cooperation because "weak capacity" is frequently identified as one of the main obstacles to regional integration and cooperation in Africa. This is also emphasized in both the pan-African and the liberal institutionalist approaches described previously. Several donors therefore attempt to strengthen the institutional capacities of their partners, especially at the regional level, by building capacity in regional organizations and institutions (European Commission 2008; Ministry of Foreign Affairs Denmark and Danida 2008; DFID 2010; DFID 2013; Sida 2015b).

Despite the fact that capacity building is one of the main strategies and goals of regional programmes, it remains unclear what actually works in this field. Several evaluations found that capacity-building efforts had had a positive impact on African regional cooperation and integration. However, the evidence behind these claims is weak and conclusions are quite often based on anecdotal evidence, which makes it difficult to draw any broader conclusions about good practice (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Denmark and Danida 2008; Norad 2014; Sida 2015b). These problems are compounded by: (i) the confusion of means and ends; (ii) the fact that capacity building sometimes competes with other goals; and (iii) the "capacity-building paradox".

Firstly, rather than being a goal in itself, capacity building is usually considered to be a means to achieve other objectives (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Denmark and Danida 2008). However, the evaluations often report results in relation to capacity building, for instance, the number of trainings or workshops carried out, rather than in terms of

what these have accomplished (ibid). One limitation of capacity building is that it may disregard the larger context and what may arguably be more important issues, for instance the fact that member states may not (and for a variety of reasons) be interested in strong ROs. So while capacity building may be important, it may not be sufficient for solving the deeper problems of fostering collective action.

Secondly, the goal of strengthening capacity sometimes conflicts with other goals, particularly that of ownership. Several evaluations note that efforts to increase institutional capacity require increased donor presence and involvement in African regional cooperation (DFID 2010; UNDP 2013). For instance, the Sida evaluation from 2015 claims that "[i]n a region characterized by weak institutional capacity and political risks, Sida should have had a greater presence in governing and monitoring" (Sida 2015b: 34). This makes it difficult to clarify what is meant by good practice with regard to capacity building.

Thirdly, there is the "capacity building paradox". The paradox refers to the fact that even if capacity building is a donor priority, in many cases the capacity of the regional counterpart is so weak that the donor programmes fail to fulfil their objectives. Various strategies have been proposed to deal with this problem. In some evaluations it is argued that even more resources should be invested in strengthening the partner organizations (UNDP 2013). Others argue for disengagement. For instance, Danida's main implementing partner SADC lacks the capacity to implement (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Denmark and Danida 2008) and it has therefore been argued that Danish regional support should be redirected through other regional organizations and mechanisms. Similarly, DFID changed strategy after its implementing partner (the African Conflict Prevention Pool) proved unable to deliver according to the requirements of DFIDs Regional Plan (DFID 2010). DFID found it more effective to pursue its objectives at the country-level rather than through ROs.

There is no clear evidence as to whether capacity building works better in multipurpose or in specialized ROs. There are good reasons to believe that it may work well in various institutional designs. However, many evaluations claim that institutional capacity needs to be increased at *both* national and regional levels at the same time (European Commission 2007). This again suggests that good practice means the donor community should focus less on the regional level

and state-led ROs. Indeed, given the fact that national implementation so often lags behind, good practice may mean strengthening the domestic/national capacity to build regionalism (cf. Gray 2014). This brings us to the link between regional and national support.

4.3. Coordination of national and regional support

Nearly all the evaluations reviewed in this report conclude that there is insufficient coordination between national and regional support. They claim that much more could be done on the national level to increase the effectiveness of regional support, but also that regional support needs to be better linked to and coordinated with national support. Indeed, several of the evaluations recommend that donors should increase their focus on national development cooperation, and in this way increase regional involvement, rather than supporting the ROs (European Commission 2007; DFID 2013; UNDP 2013; Norad 2014; Sida 2015b). According to one evaluation, "support for regional institutions and programmes is more effective if combined with support for national efforts to implement and participate in regional projects" (Norad 2003).

The point is to avoid the current tendencies to isolate national and regional support from one another. Instead, regional and national support should be coordinated and made mutually reinforcing. For instance, the evaluation of DFID's Southern Africa Programme 2004-2009 finds that DFID overemphasized regional integration, as DFID's Regional Plan "focused on Pan-African ideals rather than the regional realities and presented a false dichotomy between regional and bilateral engagement" (DFID 2010: viii).

Good practice in this field would thus be to improve the links between regional and national assistance (AfDB, 2012; European Commission 2007; World Bank 2007; DFID 2010, 2013; GIZ 2014; Norad 2014; UNDP 2013; USAID 2013).[4] Several of the evaluations favour a "bottom-up" approach, whereby development in the region and/or regional cooperation/integration is built or strengthened *through* national strategies and programmes, instead of the current

[4] Only the evaluation of European Commission's support to Eastern and Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean (European Commission 2008) comes to the conclusion that there is enough coordination between its regional and national strategies, although there is a lack of coordination in the implementation of these strategies.

top-down approach, which consists of supporting AU, RECs and ROs and other regional projects to yield national benefits (European Commission 2007; DFID 2013; UNDP 2013; Norad 2014; Sida 2015b). A bottom-up approach offers a new solution to the current disjunction between regional and the national assistance. This may imply a paradigm shift in the way support for regionalism in Africa is understood. This is associated with the importance of improving the link between national commitment and benefits in the process of regional cooperation.

4.4. National interests and national commitment

Many of the evaluations underline the importance of building national commitment in and clear benefits for African countries and stakeholders. For instance, the AfDB evaluation shows that "key factors of effectiveness include country commitment and ownership, implementation and governance arrangements as well as a conducive policy environment" (AfDB 2014). The same evaluation underlines: "The contribution of operations to development outcomes is more likely to be sustainable if accompanying measures and policy reforms are adopted at country level" (AfDB 2014).

It is important to appreciate that incentives for national cooperation as well as the creation of national ownership are both critical for the sustainability of regional cooperation. There exist many types of ROs and mechanisms that facilitate collective action, but the evidence shows that ROs that are not well integrated into national agendas are usually unsustainable and likely to fail.

However, it has proven difficult to build national commitment and to make visible the benefits a nation may enjoy. This is particularly so when there are large structural or political differences and asymmetries between countries within the same region. The World Bank has included national commitment in their regional programmes but although the Bank "has been particularly effective in fostering country interest in regional programmes through analytical work and resource mobilization", it has been much "less effective in helping countries deal with their conflicting interests and plan for sustainable activities" (World Bank 2007: xxvii). The World Bank evaluation has therefore identified five design features of regional development programmes that have proven critical to their success (World Bank 2007: 27). Most

of these features are linked in some way to the national-regional interface. A good regional programme design includes among other things:

- strong country commitment,
- scope of objectives is matched to national and regional capacities,
- clear delineation and coordination of the roles of national and regional institutions,
- accountable governance arrangements, and
- planning for sustainability (which is strongly dependent on strengthening country commitment and national benefits).

4.5. Ownership

Ownership is also an important element in contemporary discussions about development cooperation (as emphasized in the 2005 Paris Declaration which has provided guidance for many OECD donors). Most OECD donors pay tribute to the need for ownership and it is considered important in the case of regional development support. As pointed out in the WB evaluation, "success and sustainability depend on strong ownership of all participating countries" (World Bank 2007). Another evaluation explained that "regional co-operation will only be successful when the participants feel it addresses issues which are important to them, when they benefit from the co-operation and when there is sufficient ownership of the regional institution or activity" (Norad 2003).

However, ownership of regional programmes is often limited and difficult to achieve (European Commission 2007; World Bank 2007; AfDB 2012; UNDP 2013; Norad 2014). Creating ownership with regional development cooperation programmes has proven to be more difficult than with traditional country-based development cooperation. This is at least partly due to the fact that many ROs and regional actors are extremely dependent on outside funding with most RECs depending on external funding for between 60-80 percent of their total operational budgets (ECOWAS being the main exception, since it has its own tax levy).

Ownership at the regional level may be distinguished from that at national level. The evaluation of DFID's Southern Africa Programme

(DFID 2010) found that ownership is needed at both regional and national levels and that cooperation should be based on partnership and mutual accountability. Ownership is also seen to be related to the commitment of both the donor and the partners as well as to good performance of the regional programme (DFID 2010; AfDB 2012). The evaluation of the World Bank's support of multi-country operations concludes that the "regional partnerships" the Bank has supported, which are often dominated by donors, have performed less successfully than "regional projects", which have had "a strong country voice" (World Bank 2007: xvii). Given that project-related support has been criticized in the discussions about aid effectiveness, it may seem surprising that "regional projects" are found to enhance ownership. However, the evaluation found that countries are more engaged in and benefit more directly from regional projects than when a more distant RO is supported.

Ownership depends heavily on relationships of trust and accountability between donors and African partners. The evaluations show that these are often missing in regional development programmes. Greater clarification of the structure of programmes, including clearer guidelines for who is responsible for what might increase confidence in them and enhance trust between the participants (Norad 2014). However, ownership also depends on the capacity, competence and accountability of the recipient.

4.6. Donor characteristics and programme design

The political capital of a donor, such as its trustworthiness and reliability, is recognized as a key factor for successful regional development programmes. For instance, Denmark is considered to have significant political capital in Southern Africa partly because of its history of supporting liberation movements in the region and partly because Danida has provided long-term development cooperation based on trust and partnership without too many strings attached (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Denmark and Danida 2008). The UNDP is also able to coordinate regional interventions thanks to its reputation for neutrality in convening actors and coordinating programmes at the regional level (UNDP 2013). The European Commission is described as having the advantage of being a regional organization "[t]hrough these regional programmes, the European Commission has played – and is playing – a leading role in supporting

regional integration, a role that corresponds to its specific value added, namely for its know-how in regional integration, its mandate on trade policies, its capacity to coordinate the EU member states and its level of global international player" (European Commission 2008: ii).

Even if several evaluations draw attention to that many donors have sufficient political capital, there is at the same time evidence of that donors may sometimes be ill-equipped and lack the competence, organizational capacity and resources to engage in some policy fields. For instance, the evaluation of the European Commission's support to SADC claimed that the Commission lacked appropriately qualified personnel for supporting peace and security (European Commission 2008). The evaluations also stress the importance of giving a clear focus in the design of regional programmes. Many regional programmes are unrealistically ambitious. For instance, the evaluation of DFID's support to TMSA claims that its targets were unachievable and that efforts had taken place at REC level rather than national level, where results are measured (DFID 2013). Several evaluations suggest that the lack of realism results in a lack of focus. The AfDB evaluation notes, "the Bank should clarify and further strengthen the strategic focus of its approach to regional integration" (AfDB 2012). It is therefore frequently recommended that regional development programmes should be more focused and set more realistic goals with donors limiting themselves to fewer partners, sectors and themes (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Denmark and Danida 2008; DFID 2010; GIZ 2014; Norad 2014; Sida 2015b).

The evaluations also note that delays in the initiation of programmes postpone implementation and mean that the anticipated outcomes may not be achievable within the programme's timeframe (European Commission 2007; UNDP 2013; Sida 2015b).

Aid modalities have been widely discussed with regard to country-assistance but have received less attention in relation to regional development support. There is a range of aid modalities, the most important being project support, programme support and core support. But there is now also an increasing number of flexible forms by which donors channel their assistance through basket funds, which are sometimes controlled by the donors and sometimes by the recipients. The number of possible delivery channels is also increasing. Some evaluations favour core/budget support (European Commission 2007; Ministry of Foreign Affairs Denmark and Danida 2008) as "it would enhance the effectiveness, strengthen the partner institution,

and would also alleviate management burden at embassy level" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Denmark and Danida 2008: 43). However, in practice much regional development cooperation is delivered through project or programme assistance, which is more clearly earmarked. There is as yet no conclusive evidence about the advantages and disadvantages of the various aid modalitites, so more research and discussion is urgently needed.

4.7. Relevance and results

Despite the shortcomings of regional development cooperation identified in the evaluations, there is evidence that regional support is relevant to both Africa's development needs and the donors' interests. This may be explained by the fact that many of the challenges facing countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are "regional" in nature. This is particularly so in the three priority areas of the Swedish regional strategy: peace-building, trade and economic integration, natural resource use and environmental degradation and climate change. For instance, a transboundary river cannot be managed properly without some degree of regional cooperation. Consequently, "relevance" is seldom the problem when donors support regionalism in Africa but the support may be less than efficient when it is not properly designed or implemented.

Several evaluations found that regional programmes do not achieve worse results than national development programmes (World Bank 2013; AfDB 2012). The AfDB study even suggests that regional programmes can be more effective than national programmes (though the evidence for this is weak). There are two problems in determining the development impact of regional programmes. The first concerns how results should be measured. The second concerns the kind of results these programmes generate. These problems are interrelated since measurement/evaluation methods influence the design and outcome of regional support programmes.

Although most donors agree that regional development cooperation may help alleviate poverty reduction, there is little agreement on how to evaluate performance (e.g. DFID 2010; DFID 2013; UNDP 2013; Sida 2015b). The evaluations stress the need for improved results-based management (RBM) structures, with precise indicators for measuring results. Several evaluations note that although

regional interventions have yielded results, these have not been captured. In the evaluation of DFID's Southern Africa Programme 2004-2009, it is noted that "[i]n practice the results have been more positive" (DFID 2010: vii). However, there is clearly a need to develop the tools to understand what these results actually are.

Although there is a consensus among most development actors about the need for better RBM and monitoring systems, it cannot be denied that there are also a number of problems associated with the RBM agenda. One concerns the quality of reported results and the lack of common understanding of what constitutes a result, how and when it should be measured and whose results should be measured and why (Natsios 2010). The monitoring and evaluation reports of development interventions vary in quality and may therefore lead to development actors making inappropriate priorities and decisions about which development actors to cooperate with.

The results agenda is geared towards particular types of outcomes. Even if the RBM approach endorses a focus on results at outcome and impact levels, the evaluations show that many regional development programmes are reported as activities and outputs (DFID 2010; Ministry of Foreign Affairs Denmark and Danida 2008; Sida 2015b; AfDB 2012; UNDP 2013). This is mainly explained by weak administrative structures and lack of capacity in reporting on results in the ROs, linking back to capacity-building. There is thus a general need for capacity building within the area of monitoring and evaluation. Improved theories of change/logical frameworks and systems for measuring and capturing results are considered key factors for improving reporting on results (see also the previous section on support to capacity building) (European Commission 2007; Ministry of Foreign Affairs Denmark and Danida 2008; AfDB 2012, UNDP 2013; GIZ 2014; Norad 2014; Sida 2015b).

There is also the question of costs. The results agenda forces recipients to invest considerable effort in planning and reporting on outcomes (Klingebiel 2012). The RBM approach is mainly donor-driven and reported results therefore reflect the donor's development objectives. Although these objectives are supposed to be harmonized with the recipient's goals, the demand for results tends to draw attention away from the partners' accountability for beneficiaries' needs and focus it instead upon the donors' requirements (Hyden 2008; Kindornay 2011). RBM may thus impact negatively upon the quality of aid, African ownership and donor coordination.

4.8. Summary

This chapter uses a series of independent donor evaluations to explore what is meant by "good practice" in regional development cooperation and external funding of regional cooperation and integration. These evaluations reveal that many external funding strategies were marked by considerable conceptual imprecision and good practice would doubtless be facilitated if there was greater clarity in the definitions of concepts that are central for development cooperation in this field. It is particularly important for donors to make a clear distinction between (the external funding of) regional cooperation/integration and regional development cooperation.

Capacity building is a major strategy of regional development cooperation, yet it is unclear precisely what is being achieved. Many donors report the number of workshops or training exercises carried out as "results", but this means that capacity building is presented as though it was a goal in itself rather than simply an instrument for promoting development. There is also much uncertainty about how to successfully build capacity and for what purpose.

Many donors continue to favour a "top-down" approach, which consists of strengthening ROs and regional projects to bring benefits at the national level. However, there is also a growing emphasis on using a "bottom-up" approach, whereby regionalism and development are to be strengthened *through* national strategies and programmes. Good donor practice therefore requires insight into the links between regional and national assistance and the matching of national with regional capacities, roles and governance frameworks. This also requires greater country commitment and African ownership. Ownership is needed at both regional and national levels, but there is evidence to suggest that regional projects that have a strong "country voice" may be strategic and successful.

Several evaluations reveal that the capacity, competence and trustworthiness of the donor are also important. It is evident that some donors lack the capacity to design appropriate regional strategies and programmes and to ensure that they are effectively implemented. There is also noticeably less discussion about aid effectiveness in relation to regional development cooperation than there is in relation to country-based development cooperation. If notions of good practice used in country-based aid were extrapolated to regional support, donors would be required to increase coordination,

alignment and harmonization of aid and to reduce project assistance in favour of programme aid as well as core/pooled funding.

Finally, there is little agreement in the donor community about how to evaluate performance and there is a range of unsubstantiated claims about results and development impact. It is therefore clear that donors urgently need to develop adequate tools to assess and report on development results, and this brings us back to the problem of defining regional development cooperation and assistance to regional cooperation in Africa. Evaluation tools can only be designed once donors define what they mean by regional development cooperation and by what means they intend to achieve specified goals. At present, there remain many unresolved questions and knowledge gaps in this regard.

5. The Swedish regional strategy – an overview

5.1. General objectives, principles and priorities

The overarching objective of the *Swedish Cooperation Strategy for Regional Development Cooperation with Sub-Saharan Africa* (2010-2015) is "to increase the capacity and the political accord among the African intergovernmental communities and the countries concerned to manage transboundary challenges such as regional stability, trade and economic integration, and sustainable development" (Government Offices of Sweden 2010: 1).

This reveals the assumption that the capacity and political accord among the African intergovernmental communities and countries are limited. It is also assumed that this hazards regional stability in terms of peace and security, trade and economic integration, and sustainable development regarding the environment and climate change. These are considered to be problems common to several countries in the region and it is believed that improvement is more likely to result from regional support than from bilateral country-led contributions.

One of the most important features of the Swedish regional strategy is the strong focus on strengthening the mandates, capacities and strategic roles of the AU and the RECs, such as COMESA, EAC, ECOWAS, IGAD and SADC, in their management of regional and global challenges. The aim is to enhance "their ability to carry out their mandates effectively, and to coordinate and secure the African policy agendas" (ibid: 3). However, the operationality and institutional capacity of these organizations vary and therefore "need to be strengthened in order for them to fulfill their respective mandates and strategic roles, namely to manage regional and global challenges in areas such as environment and climate, peace and security, expansion of intra-African and intercontinental trade, demographic change due to urbanization, and other forms of economic migration as well as refugee flows" (ibid: 1). As a result, the main requirement to implement the Swedish strategy is to strengthen the institutional capacities of the AU and the RECs to enable them to carry out their mandates and implement agreed programmes and commitments.

Sweden may also support other bodies and actors with a regional mandate, such as "equivalent" and "collaborating" organizations, other intergovernmental ROs, civil society organizations, economic organizations or other national or regional initiatives. Support to other bodies and actors should first and foremost go to those actors and mechanisms that —directly or indirectly — help to realize the African agenda and to the main drivers of this process, namely the AU and the RECs (ibid: 1-2).

The regional strategy specifies three so-called priority areas: peace and security, environment and climate, and economic integration (including trade, business and financial systems) (ibid: 3). These three areas are seen as interlinked and it is thought that advantage should be taken of opportunities to promote peace and security in other areas, such as the management of common natural resources and trade. Figure 5.1. outlines a general Theory of Change (ToC) for the Swedish regional strategy with Sub-Saharan Africa.[5]

The Swedish regional strategy also describes general priorities related to aid effectiveness and dialogue issues, applicable to all development efforts made in relation to the regional strategy. Increased aid effectiveness should be achievable by increasing the share of programme-based support, strengthening alignment and donor coordination, conducting dialogue about and assessments of the risk of corruption, building capacity, supporting the cooperating partners' priorities, strategies and activities in order to strengthen the partners' ownership (ibid: 5–6).

There are also "overall dialogue issues" that concern all areas of the strategy, such as, transparency in decision-making processes and financial management, the rights perspective and representing poor people's interests, gender equality, environment and climate change concerns and anti-corruption measures. Dialogue should be conducted both bilaterally and multilaterally and within the Joint Africa-EU strategy and together with other donors. The dialogue with the AU

[5] A theory of change (ToC) can be defined as "a representation of how an organization or initiative is expected to achieve results and an identification of the underlying assumptions made" (Morra-Imas and Rist 2009: 151). A ToC could also be labelled a logical model, programme logic, programme theory, casual model, results chain or interventions logic (cf. Funnell and Rogers 2011) The main intention of describing the ToC is to clarify how the strategy is intended to work and the assumptions upon which is it based. This may help reveal shortcomings in the strategy that may affect the implementation of development cooperation. The problems that the strategy addresses are also briefly outlined.

and the RECs should be designed in accordance with their development strategies and be based on their international and regional commitments (ibid: 3 and 7–8).

Collaboration with other donors is also to be further developed, especially with the EU and other multilateral actors such as the AfDB and various UN organizations (ibid: 12). The EU is viewed as a positive force for regionalism in Africa. Swedish support should contribute to the EU's region-building activities, both because Sweden and the EU share the goal of promoting African regionalism but also because a considerable part of Swedish funding is channeled through the EU framework. Like the EU's strategy, the Swedish strategy emphasizes the importance of regional cooperation for preventing Africa from becoming marginalized and for furthering its integration into the world economy. Consequently, the Swedish strategy underlines the importance of African actors deepening their cooperation with the EU and the European Commission, though Sweden also favours cooperation with other relevant multilateral actors (ibid: 7, 11).

The Swedish regional strategy also sees an opportunity for improvement of EU policies. "The government aims at acting for a clearer focus of the European Commission's aid on the central conditions for growth, economic integration, regional cooperation and infrastructure … in a way that is promoting development and supporting Africa´s integration agenda" (ibid: 28-29).

Figure 5.1. Theory of change: Swedish Cooperation Strategy for Regional Development Cooperation with Sub-Saharan Africa 2010-2015

General problem:
Limited (or lack of) capacity and political accord among African intergovernmental communities. This is assumed to impede regional stability and thus hamper development.

Capacity building of AU and RECs
(increased aid effectiveness & dialogue)

Priority areas			
Sector	Peace and security	Environment and climate	Economic integration
Objective(s) in the strategy	Increased regional cooperation aimed at preventing, solving and managing the effects of armed conflict.	Increased regional cooperation aimed at promoting environmentally sustainable use of natural resources, and mitigating as well as adapting to the impacts of climate change.	Increased regional cooperation aimed at promoting regional and international trade and economic integration.
Assumptions on how the sector objective contributes to the strategy's overarching objective	Conflicts are prevented and their structural causes are addressed and remedied which contribute to regional development.	Improvement of the use of natural resources and climate adaptation (incl. agriculture) will lead food security and function as an engine of economic growth and regional development.	Economic integration will lead to increased trade which will contribute to regional development.
Interlinked sectors: achievements in one sector are assumed to contribute to development in the other sectors.			

Overarching objective with strategy:
"to increase the capacity and the political accord among the African intergovernmental communities and the countries concerned to manage transboundary challenges such as regional stability, trade and economic integration, and sustainable development"

Source: Authors' elaboration

5.2. Implementation of the Swedish regional strategy

The Swedish regional strategy is in its final year of implementation, and a new strategy is to be formulated and adopted in 2016. According to Sida's statistics, Sweden disbursed SEK 3,088 million in regional development cooperation between 2010 and 2014.[6] This section provides an overview of Swedish regional support in terms of sectoral disbursements, funding mechanisms, implementing partners and recipients.

Sectoral disbursements

In line with the priorities of the strategy a large proportion of the support has been disbursed to interventions classified under peace and security, environment and climate, and economic integration, which together account for 63 percent of disbursements. Other sectors that have received funding within the Swedish regional strategy are research cooperation, institutional development and anti-corruption efforts (see Table 5.1).

[6] As reported March 2015. The total allocation for the entire 2010–2015 strategy period is reported to amount to SEK 3,260 million, including funding of the Government's special climate-related initiative and research collaboration. Sida will allocate at least SEK 150 million to anti-corruption measures during the strategy period. The strategy further promotes multi-year agreements and long-term commitments "of special political or strategic importance" (Government Offices of Sweden 2010: 12).

Table 5.1. Disbursements by sector — Swedish regional strategy

Sector	Disbursed amount 2010-2014 (million SEK)	Percent
Environment and climate	761	25
Peace and security	635	21
Research cooperation[7]	543	18
Economic integration	511	16
Institutional development	442	14
Anti-corruption	126	4
Other/unclassified	70	2
Total	3,088	100

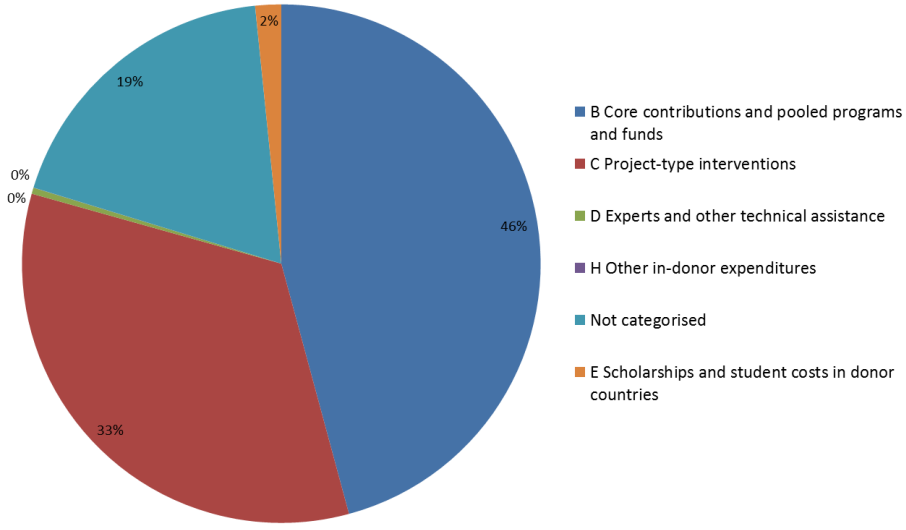
Source: Sida statistics 2015a. The figures are based on support classified by Sida as regional support 2010-2014 (support to the health sector is not included as it is part of a separate strategy).

Types of assistance

According to Sida's classification system, two main types of assistance dominate the implementation of the regional strategy: core contributions and pooled funding, and project-type interventions. Although some assistance is also provided for "experts and other technical assistance" and "other in-donor expenditures", these account for less than one percent of the total disbursed funding. Figure 5.2 gives an overview of the main types of assistance, as categorized by Sida.

[7] Research cooperation was "removed" from the regional support in 2013. In 2015 a new Swedish strategy for research cooperation and research in development cooperation was adopted (Government Offices of Sweden 2014). However, Sida's statistics on disbursement for regional support continues to include research cooperation (Sida statistics 2015a, 2015b), which makes it difficult to disentangle research cooperation from the overall picture.

Figure 5.2. Main type of assistance (according to Sida's categorization)



Source: Sida statistics 2015a, 2015b.[8]

The type of assistance may have consequences for aid effectiveness and for development results. The donor evaluations note that core contributions are often associated with more freedom and ownership for the implementing partners to formulate their own development agenda and implementation plans. However, the categorization system within Sida is neither straightforward nor entirely consistent. Furthermore, in practice the distinction between core contributions and project funding is often unclear and in several cases they are combined.

[8] The figures are based on support classified by Sida as regional support 2010-2014. N.B. this figure is based on two different data sets.

Partner organizations and implementing partners

The Swedish regional strategy is implemented by a wide range of partners, ranging from the AU and the RECs, to international, regional and Swedish NGOs, international banks, UN organizations, universities and government institutions. Figure 5.3 gives an overview of implementing partners and their shares of the budget and Table 5.2 explains the categories with examples of recipients within each category.

Figure 5.3. Implementing partners of Swedish regional assistance

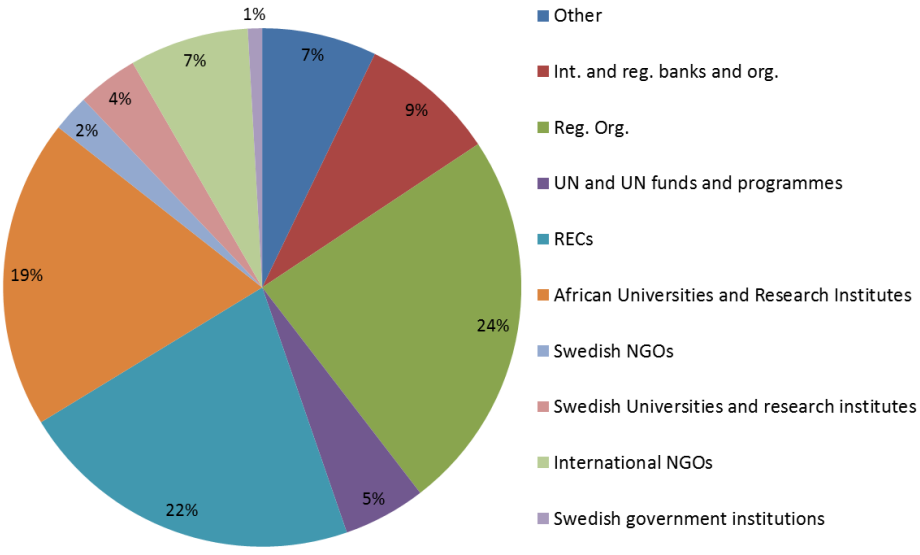


Table 5.2. Category and examples of implementing partners

Category	Examples
AU and RECs	AU, EAC, ECOWAS, IGAD, SADC
Regional Organizations (excluding AU and RECs but including intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations)[9]	Nile Basin Initiative, Kofi Annan International Peace Training Centre, Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa
African universities and research institutes/centres/organizations	Afrobarometer, African Economic Research, Consortium, Organization for Social Science in Eastern and Southern Africa
International and regional banks	World Bank, African Development Bank
The UN and its funds and programmes	UNEP
International NGOs	Oxfam, WWF
Swedish government institutions	AMS, Riksantikvarieämbetet
Swedish universities and research institutes	University of Gothenburg, Stockholm International Water Institute
Other	DFID, the Government of Mozambique, consultancy firms

[9] Lumping together intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations in the same category is rather problematic.

5.3. Reported results of the Swedish regional strategy

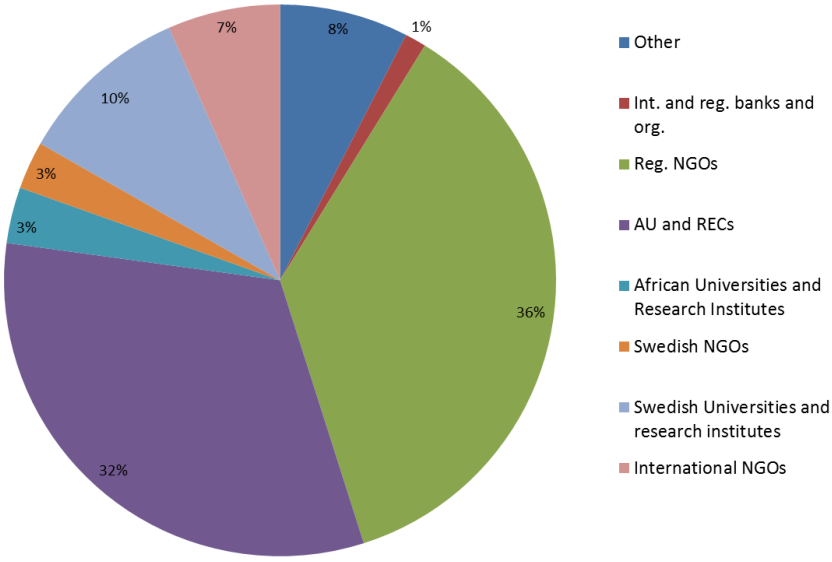
The results of the implementation of the regional strategy have been reported annually in so-called "strategy [results] reports". A mid-term review (MTR) was also conducted in 2013 (Sida 2013a). A summary of the results by Sida in the three prioritized sectors is presented below.[10] The classification of implementing partners is done in accordance with the previous section.

Peace and security

The many conflicts and general instability in many African countries are major challenges for the implementation of Sweden's regional strategy. The number of conflicts, their magnitude and effects on societies are also increasing (Sida 2015a). The Swedish support within this sector is focused on interventions for conflict management and capacity building, and the AU and IGAD are among the most significant implementing partners. This appears to reflect the increasing relevance of the AU and the RECs in the emerging African Peace and Security Architecture. Also regional and international NGOs, such as the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) and Search for Common Ground (SFCG) have received large shares of the Swedish funding in this sector (Sida statistics 2015a). Figure 5.4 gives an overview of the partners implementing the Swedish regional strategy in the peace and security sector. The percentages show the share of the budget that the partners have been allocated.

[10] The strategy reports focus on examples of interventions in order to illustrate implementation (Sida 2011, 2012), or on the "1-3 most important results the Swedish assistance has contributed to achieve" (Sida 2013b: 6). The examples of results presented in the strategy reports are therefore rather anecdotal, although general assessments are made of the Swedish contributions to regional integration.

Figure 5.4: Partners implementing the Swedish regional strategy within the peace and security sector.



Source: Sida statistics 2015a.

Sida's reports state that long-term support from Sweden and other donors for capacity building in AU/REC is showing results. The AU and the RECs are, for instance, acting in the crisis in South Sudan, in relation to Boko Haram's atrocities in Nigeria, in AUs peace-keeping interventions in Somalia and in relation to the recent Ebola outbreak (Sida 2015a). Capacity building within the AU and the RECs is considered a cornerstone of Swedish regional development cooperation in this field and is believed to be essential for conflict management on the continent (Sida 2012, 2013b, 2015a).

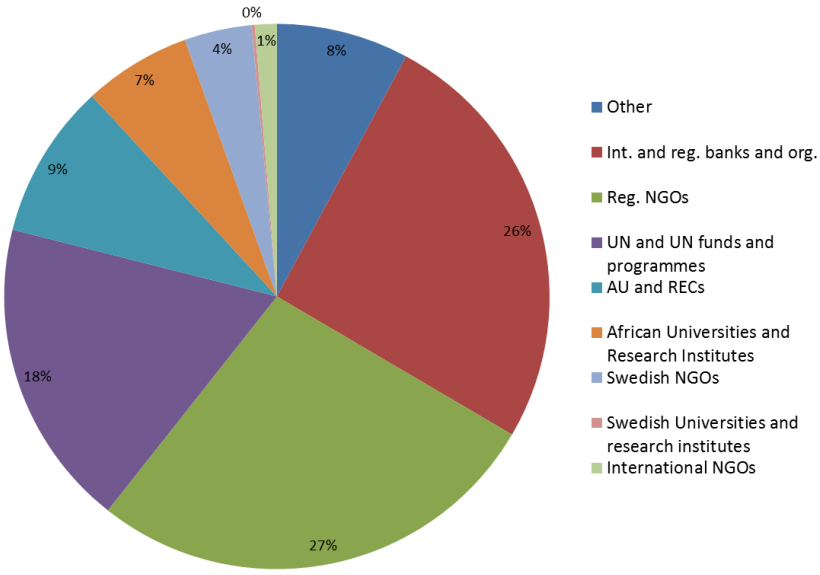
However, the results of capacity-building efforts are often reported as activities and outputs, for instance in terms of financing of key staff members of the AUC (Sida 2012, 2013b) or the number of manuals for education and security reports resulting from support provided to the Institute for Security Studies (Sida 2011, 2012). The support provided to the Raoul Wallenberg Institute is reported to have

increased the capacity of national institutes and improved regional cooperation between ROs (Sida 2012).

Environment and climate

Support in this sector is primarily directed to transboundary water management, sustainable use of natural resources, food security and climate adaptation. Climate variations have become highly unpredictable and large parts of Africa have recently been experiencing more severe droughts and flooding than usual. Several initiatives have been taken to help people adapt to these changes. A common position has been adopted and negotiations undertaken (Sida 2013a). The MTR concludes that "AUC/RECs are better prepared to analyse the problems arising and to set in motion programmes of adaptation and most RECs are building regional adaptation programmes (AUC, IGAD, ECOWAS, EAC, SADC, UNECA, AfDB)" (Sida 2013a: 20). These are organizations that have received support, mainly in the form of capacity building, within the framework of the Swedish regional strategy. However, it is also noted that although the need for sustainable management of natural resources is acknowledged and policies exist, implementation is weak (Sida 2013a). Figure 5.5 gives an overview of the partners implementing the Swedish regional strategy in the environment and climate sector as a whole. The percentages show the share of the budget that the different partners have been allocated.

Figure 5.5. Partners implementing the Swedish regional strategy within the environment and climate sector



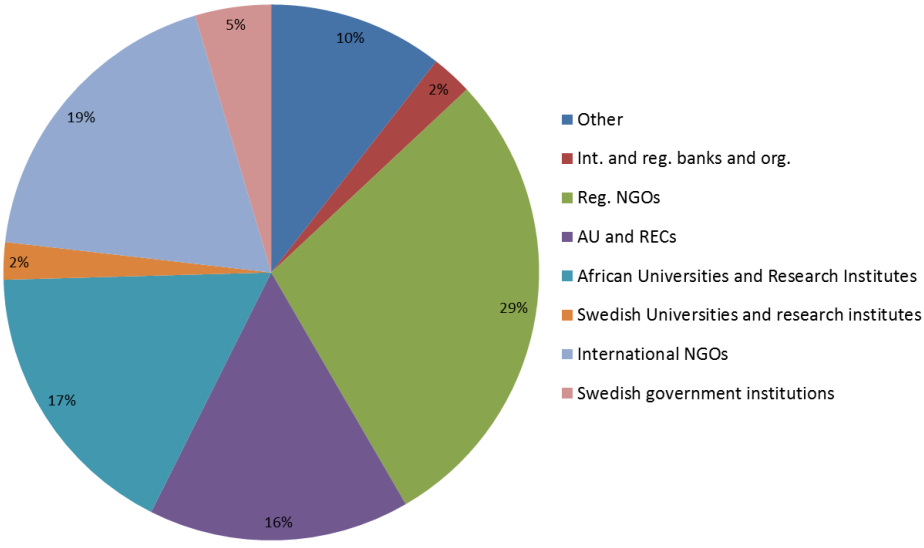
Source: Sida statistics 2015a.

The results in the environment and climate sector of the strategy reports are mainly reported in terms of activities and outputs, such as the coordination of organizations, or "improved coordination between transboundary level and central national levels" (Sida 2011: 6, see also Sida 2012: 14). The reports on the Lake Victoria Environmental Management Project II show that in 2011, activities consisted mainly of inventories and consultant procurement (Sida 2011). Later reports show that these activities had resulted in the establishment of a regional environment fund and a strategy for sustainable land use (Sida 2012, 2013b). However, there have been delays in several of the interventions in the environment and climate sector and this has meant that anticipated results were not achieved within the estimated timeframe (Sida 2012).

Economic integration, trade, industry and financial systems

A major portion of the Swedish contributions to the sector goes towards capacity building for increasing economic integration at the regional level (Sida 2013a: 42). RECs such as EAC and ECOWAS are found among Sweden's partners, as well as international and regional NGOs, including World Customs Organizations and TradeMark East Africa (Sida statistics 2015a). Figure 5.6 gives an overview of the partners implementing the Swedish regional strategy in the economic integration sector. The percentages show the share of the budget that the different partners have been allocated.

Figure 5.6. Partners implementing the Swedish regional strategy within the economic integration sector.



Source: Sida statistics 2015a.

Sida considers that the growing international interest in Africa's economic potential will create opportunities for countries on the continent and the initiatives that have been taken between and within RECs to strengthen intra-regional trade and financial markets are seen as positive for regional economic integration. However, it is also

noted that these processes are complex and unpredictable (Sida 2013a).

The MTR states that within regional economic integration "substantial progress has been made" (Sida 2013a: 20). For instance, it is argued that ECOWAS has contributed to economic integration in West Africa and that negotiations between RECs about a *Continental Free Trade Area* (CFTA) have begun and that an agreement by 2017 is envisaged (Sida 2013a). The political will to achieve regional economic integration is generally considered to be strong. However, there are limits to the degree of engagement at national level and with the implementation of regional agreements (Sida 2011, 2012, 2015a). For instance, the common market agreements made within the EAC and COMESA have not been realized at country level (Sida 2012).

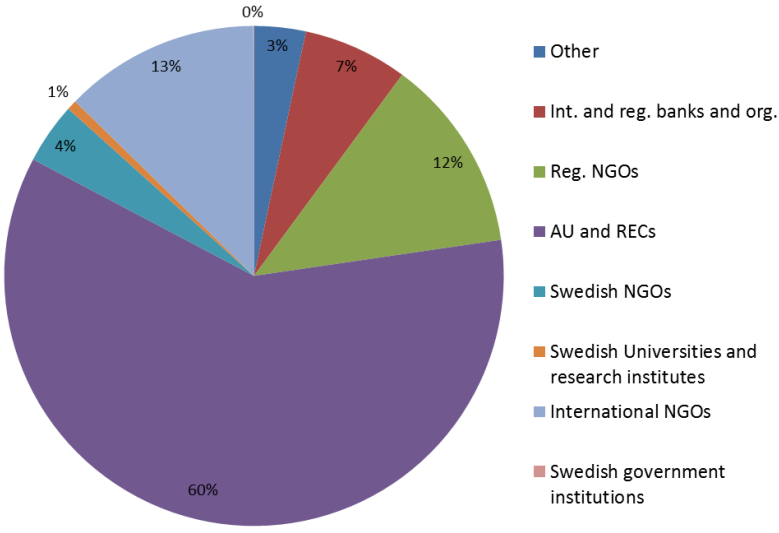
The results presented in the strategy reports are mainly described in terms of harmonized rules, establishment of institutions and regulations (Sida 2012, 2013b). There are also outcomes reported in relation to Swedish assistance. For instance the establishment of a certification programme for economic actors involved in import and export has reduced the time and costs associated with international trade (Sida 2013b). Similar to other sectors and subsectors, there have been several delays in the implementation of interventions in this sector, which means that the anticipated results have not been achieved within the estimated timeframe (Sida 2012).

Institutional development

There is no specific objective concerning institutional development in the Swedish regional strategy, although it is noted that "Support provided to the communities will contribute to enhancing their ability to carry out their mandates effectively, and to coordinate and secure the African policy agendas", and capacity building is one of the cornerstones of the regional strategy (Government Offices of Sweden 2010: 3). Sida's description of "the sector of institutional development" includes only the support that has institutional development as its main objective (Sida 2015a: 13). 60 percent of this support is allocated to the AU and the RECs, with the AU receiving 33 percent of the funds (Sida statistics 2015a). Figure 5.7 presents an overview of the partners receiving support for institutional development within the framework of the Swedish regional strategy.

The percentages show the proportion of the budget the different partners have been allocated.

Figure 5.7. Partners receiving assistance for institutional development within the framework of the Swedish regional strategy.



Source: Sida statistics 2015a.

Although Sida considers the AU and the RECs to be weak and to show slow progress in in terms of improved capacity, supporting their institutional development is still considered crucial since these organizations "are the only ones with the political legitimacy to pull together the political decisions that are needed for improved regional political and economic integration" (Sida 2013a: 7). Institutional development support has been directed mainly to the AU and the RECs but also to so-called intermediary organizations that support the AU and the RECs' agenda. These intermediary organizations are argued to offer a more efficient mechanism for achieving medium-term results than the AU and the RECs because they often have better capacity and are less affected by political constraints (Sida 2013a). An

important factor in the support of institutional development has also been the improvement of donor coordination so as to make the administration of the funding more effective and efficient (Sida 2012, 2015a).

Unsurprisingly, the results of support to institutional development are reported to concern mainly capacity building. This is described in terms of the establishment of IT-systems, the introduction of implementation guidelines and manuals and tools to improve monitoring and evaluation, the establishment of regional offices, and the publication of reports and trainings (Sida 2011, 2012). Sweden's support to AU's institutional and capacity building programme, to its election observation and to the EAC's partnership fund, are identified as the major achievements of Swedish assistance to institutional development (Sida 2013b).

Overall assessment of the strategy and its implementation

The overall assessment made in the MTR is that the strategy "continues to be relevant in relation to the African needs and priorities" (Sida 2013a: 3). The institutional capacity in the AU and the RECs is considered to be weak and continuous support to strengthen these institutions is therefore deemed to be essential for the implementation of the Swedish regional strategy and to be important for sustainable regional integration (Sida 2013a). The composition of the Swedish portfolio is considered to be appropriate and well consolidated and it is considered to be contributing to achieving the objectives of the strategy (Sida 2015a).

There is a strong tendency to report results as activities and outputs. Nevertheless, some changes are also evident in this regard. While reports from the early period of the strategy focused on activities and outputs (e.g. Sida 2011, 2012), more recent reports have focused on outcomes as well (e.g. Sida 2013b, 2015a). To some extent this may be expected since it takes time to achieve more long-term results. The strategy report covering 2014 claims that results were achieved in that year in the form of an enhanced ability for AU, ECOWAS and IGAD to act in armed conflicts and in the establishment of regional financial systems. However, it is noted that although some results have been achieved, many challenges remain before the objectives of the strategy can be met (Sida 2015a).

5.4. Summary

This chapter describes the objectives and principles of the Swedish regional strategy for sub-Saharan Africa, its implementation and reported results. Although Sweden relies on a variety of implementing partners, perhaps the most important feature of the Swedish regional strategy is its ambition to strengthen the mandates, capacities and strategic roles of the AU and the RECs in their management of regional and global challenges.

Most Swedish support goes to the three so-called priority areas: peace and security, environment and climate, and economic integration. There is some variation in how the support is implemented in these areas because of the differing characteristics of each area and the fact that different actors and institutions are selected as appropriate cooperating partners in each sector. Swedish self-evaluations and reports claim that the regional strategy is both relevant and on track for achieving many of its stated objectives.

6. Making Swedish regional development cooperation "work"

This chapter deals with a number of challenges in making Swedish regional development cooperation work. These challenges were identified in several overlapping sources: previous research (chapter 3), "good donor practice" (chapter 4) and the agenda for aid effectiveness (OECD/DAC, 2005, 2008), and they were noted in discussions held with Swedish policy makers in Stockholm and in the regional sections of the Swedish Embassies in Addis Ababa and Nairobi. Although the focus here is on the design and implementation of Sweden's forthcoming strategy for regional development cooperation with Sub-Saharan Africa (2016-2020), the issues discussed here are equally relevant for other bilateral and multilateral donors.

6.1. Ends and means

The overall objective of Swedish development cooperation is to ensure that men and women living in poverty and under oppression have the ability to improve their living conditions (Government Offices of Sweden 2003). However, there is uncertainty over how this broad objective can be achieved using the Swedish regional strategy, which goal is "to increase capacity and the political accord among the African intergovernmental communities and the countries concerned to manage transboundary challenges" (Government Offices of Sweden 2010: 2).[11]

Focusing on increasing capacity and political accord means focusing on *activities*, though it remains contested in what way capacity building of intergovernmental communities would help resolve transboundary problems. Although the Swedish regional strategy mentions three major transboundary challenges, it provides no description of the underlying problems that need to be addressed or how this could be done. The assumptions embedded in the ToC are not made explicit and it is therefore unclear whether and how the goals of the regional strategy relate to the overall objective of Swedish

[11] The guidelines for the new Swedish regional strategy with sub-Saharan Africa (2016-2020) reveal that this overarching objective will remain essentially unchanged (Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2015).

international development cooperation (see Figure 5.1.). This results in a confusion of means (capacity building of regional cooperation/regional organizations) and ends (poverty reduction, improved living conditions). This is evident, for instance, in one of Sida's strategy reports, which explains that it is difficult to report outcomes at sector level, since all objectives are formulated in terms of processes – as "increased cooperation…" (Sida 2013b: 2).

Swedish policy makers tend to use regional development cooperation interchangeably with assistance to regional integration/cooperation and to ROs in Africa. The concept of "regional development cooperation" (as used by Swedish policy makers) is relatively open, which means that there is no clear distinction between means and ends. Nor is it entirely clear what results are hoped for or how they should be measured. As noted in chapter 4, Sweden is not alone among donor countries in confusing the *level* of regional cooperation with *development outcomes*. Interestingly, some other Swedish strategies for regional development cooperation do seem to offer a solution. The Swedish regional strategies for Southeast Asia[12], the Middle East and North Africa[13], as well as the regional health strategy with Southern Africa[14] all define their objectives in terms of broader development results instead of in terms of regional collaboration mechanisms and capacity building. It is not clear why the Swedish regional strategy with Africa deviates so markedly from other Swedish regional strategies as well as from established "good practice". Indeed, many other donors define their overall goals in terms of poverty reduction, infrastructure

[12] The objective of the Swedish regional strategy with Asia (2010-2015) is "greater respect for human rights, more sustainable use of natural resources and planning for communal services for people living in poverty, and increased regional cooperation" (Government Offices of Sweden 2010a).

13 The objective of the regional strategy with the Middle East and North Africa (2010-2015) is "stronger democracy and greater respect for human rights; sustainable development that improves conditions for peace, stability and freedom in the region" (Government Offices of Sweden 2010b). While these goals remain the same in the new Swedish strategy (2016-2020), it is also made clear that "Sweden's development cooperation in the region will be based on and characterised by a rights perspective and by poor people's perspective on development" (Government Offices of Sweden 2016: 4). Clearly, this perspective is fundamentally different compared to the regional strategy with Africa, which focuses heavily on the AU, the RECs and top-down regionalism.

[14] The Swedish strategy for HIV/AIDS and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) has three long-term development objectives: reduced number of HIV infections; improved living conditions for women and girls who are affected by HIV and AIDS; and increased respect for LGBT-persons' human rights (Government Offices of Sweden 2012).

development, peace and security, improved management of natural resources and so forth.

Most evaluations in this field and the "good practice" outlined in chapter 4 suggest that greater precision would help sort out some of the confusions between means and ends and other key concepts that tend to be used imprecisely, such as "regional cooperation", "regional integration", "regional development", "regional programme" and "regional assistance". This would also clarify the relationship between "output", "outcome" and "impact" in the regional context, which is also currently unclear in the Swedish regional strategy.[15]

6.2. Problematizing the AU and the RECs

One of the core elements of Swedish policy is to strengthen the AU and the RECs (Government Offices of Sweden 2010; Sida 2015a: 2). A considerable proportion of Swedish funds is used to support the AU/AUC and the RECs and their strategic plans through so-called "direct" and "indirect" support. "Direct support" to the AU and RECs is straightforward — the lion's share goes to AU and the EAC, less to ECOWAS, SADC and IGAD, and nothing to COMESA. "Indirect support" is given to organizations and partners that Sida assumes will support the AU and the RECs and, thereby, the African integration agenda.

Several Swedish development officials stress that they experience ineffective and even dysfunctional ROs in their daily work. There is also substantial evidence in Sida's own reports that the current methods of capacity building of the AU and the RECs do not yield anticipated results and this was confirmed in our interviews with the Swedish officials. One of the main problems interviewees noted was the lack of (institutional) capacity in AU and the RECs, and generally low levels of competence and work ethics in most of these organizations (Sida 2013d-i). Sida's report noted that the AU Commission (AUC) is described as lacking technical staff (Sida

[15] Apart from aggregated national country-based indicators, there are no statistics or measurements available for "regional development". The Swedish reasoning about this is that recipients lack assessment techniques and results-based management structures. Sida states, rather awkwardly, that: "Objectives are difficult to measure, but results are being achieved" (Sida 2013a: 9). Even in the absence of measurements of results, the mid-term review from 2013 claims that the strategy continues to be relevant to Africa's needs and priorities.

2013d) and that the EAC lacks institutional competence and capacity; the report also notes that staff are often politically appointed and do not have sufficient knowledge in their field of work (Sida 2013f). Poor work ethics and competence are also noted for SADC (Sida 2013i) and COMESA is described as understaffed and suffering from poor institutional capacity (Sida 2013e). ECOWAS is considered so weak that most donors avoid making direct financial transfers to the organization (Sida 2013g). Finally, IGAD is described as lacking competence because of conflicts in the region (Sida 2013h).

The heavy dependency on external funding in organizations such as the AU, EAC and SADC is also described as a major problem that undermines effectiveness and the ability to implement programmes. Another recurrent problem is the absence of results and evaluation frameworks in these organizations. For instance, although the EAC has an ambitious development strategy, this is not followed up by an appropriate evaluation. Similarly, IGAD is reported as having insufficient capacity to evaluate its work. It is also worth noting that the weaknesses of the AU and the RECs are generally considered to reflect weak domestic capacity and political commitment to ROs in many of the member states (Sida 2013b, p. 4).

Table 6.1. summarizes the most important weaknesses of the AU and the RECs according to Sida's reports.

Table 6.1. Sida's reports on problems with support to the AU and the RECs

Area	Problem/challenge	AU and REC
Capacity building	Lack of institutional capacity (lack of competent staff, organizational structure etc.)	AU, EAC, IGAD, ECOWAS, COMESA
	Few permanent positions, high turnover of staff	SADC, COMESA, IGAD, ECOWAS, COMESA
Internal organizational challenges	Internal organizational problems (i.e. hierarchies, lack of coordination within the organization)	AU, IGAD
	Lack of efficiency in meeting development challenges	SADC
Relations with member state	The organization has a weak or limited mandate from member states; members act or cooperate through other mechanisms	AU, EAC, ECOWAS (IGAD)
	Member states do not want a strong organization	SADC (IGAD)
	Weak mobilization of resources, including member states not paying membership fees	AU, IGAD
	Conflicts within and/or between member states	AU, IGAD
Donor relations	Dependence on outside funding	AU, EAC, SADC
	Poor/limited communication with donors (i.e. with Sweden)	EAC, SADC, ECOWAS
Reporting and results	Lack of a results framework	EAC, IGAD
	Absence of reporting, revisions and repayments	EAC

Source: Authors' compilation from Sida's reports on the AU and the RECs (Sida 2013d-i).

Despite the problems identified by its own staff, the official stance is that the Swedish portfolio is well designed for achieving the overall objectives of the regional strategy and of Swedish development cooperation (Sida 2011, 2012, 2013b, 2015a). It is also claimed that Swedish support is in line with African priorities and is necessary to enable the AU and the RECs to play a leading role in achieving

African integration (Sida 2013b: 2, 2013c). The MTR recommended that the regional strategy be implemented along similar lines as during the first phase (2010-2012), albeit with greater emphasis on indirect support (Sida 2013a: 6). The guidelines from the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs to Sida for the new regional strategy (2016-2020) also strongly emphasize the continued relevance of the AU and the RECs (Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2015). This somewhat contradictory position is justified in propositions such as this:

> The AUC and RECs continue to be weak, and capacity building is a slow and long-term process, but continued support to RECs is important for longer-term results of regional integration. These organizations are slowly improving, and they are the only ones with the political legitimacy to pull together the political decisions that are needed for improved regional political and economic integration (Sida 2013c: 7).

Supporting intergovernmental regional communities such as the AU and the RECs may certainly be fruitful if these organizations contribute to public goods. This is supported by research, as outlined in the "pan-African" and "liberal institutionalist" approaches (see chapter 3). And it cannot be denied that the AU and many RECs have achieved important results during the last decade, especially in the field of peace and security and regional economic integration. However, the NRA shows that strengthening the institutional capacities of these and similar intergovernmental ROs may be pointless if the organizations are used only for symbolic regionalism or for resource capture. Indeed, there is still great uncertainty about the circumstances under which support to the AU and the RECs yields positive results. While some donors are reducing their support to the AU and the RECs in favour of other collaboration mechanisms (such as networks and bottom-up regionalization), Sweden continues to focus heavily on the AU, the RECs and indirect funding of top-down projects. We believe that it is necessary to be more realistic (and self-reflective) about the positive and negative effects of the AU, the RECs and top-down regionalism. Not all intergovernmental ROs are dysfunctional or exclude non-state actors but it is important to identify which regional frameworks to support in a given situation and for what reasons. A significant problem that Swedish officials face is that of deciding whether the logic dominating an organization is beneficial or not in terms of the objectives of Swedish assistance. Selecting appropriate recipients and implementing agencies requires

in-depth knowledge of the regional context and the regional political economy, and such decisions should therefore not be taken priori in a strategy but rather by field officers. As convincingly argued in a comprehensive set of studies produced by the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM), a key to effective regional donor support is a recognition of the political nature of regional cooperation and integration in Africa. According to the synthesis report of this project:

> Elite-defined national interests influence whether, when and how effectively countries engage on the regional agenda. This needs understood rather than assumed by regional policy-makers and donors. This implies a need to explicitly identify national and elite interests and their potential to undermine or support the role of regional organisations, and indeed how to adapt regional projects to contribute to attaining key political objectives. Identified interests in a specific policy area may suggest the need to await better circumstances or to avoid specific regional players or organisations for progress to be made (Van Heukelom et al 2016: 20).

In a related study Bilal and Vanheukelom point out that: "Mere technocratic fixes to aid modalities or technically sound sector support won't suffice. For technical and financial support to work there is a need to understand the political and interest dynamics at play, so as to target and prioritise support accordingly" (Bilal and Vanheukelom 2015: 11).

Another problem with exaggerated emphasis on the AU, the RECs and other state-led and intergovernmental ROs relates to the marginalization of both market and civil society actors in many of these organizations. The focus of the regional strategy on state actors and top-down ROs does not harmonize well with the general objective of Swedish development cooperation to safeguard the participation of private business as well as civil society actors. As noted above, a more diversified approach is required that to a greater extent includes private sector and civil society actors in regional development cooperation. Although there has been a slightly greater involvement of non-state actors in the AU/RECs in recent years, more flexible institutional solutions and implementing partners than top-down ROs are required (also see Vanheukelom et al 2016).

6.3. Ambiguities concerning direct and indirect support to AU and the RECs

There are several ambiguities and challenges concerning the Swedish invention of "direct" and "indirect" support to the AU and the RECs. While "direct support" seems relatively clear, there is uncertainty in Swedish policy circles about what exactly is to be regarded as "indirect" and "other" support. "Indirect support" is given to organizations and partners that are assumed to support the AU, the RECs and the so-called African integration agenda. There is both "formalized" and "non-formalized" support (2013a:24). The former refers to those organizations and partners that have a "formalized" partnership with the AU and the RECs, usually a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The latter is more diffuse and refers to partners that lack a formal relationship to the AU and the RECs but are nevertheless believed to contribute to them "indirectly" in a "non-formalized" way. "Other" support is considered to be support that is unrelated to the AU and the RECs and includes support to multilateral organizations and Swedish governmental institutions.

According to the MTR, 74 percent of Swedish funds were disbursed as direct and indirect support during 2010-2012 (Sida 2013a). Yet, the statistical material provided by Sida (e.g. Sida statistics 2015a, 2015b) does not enable such assessments for the purposes of this report. Sida's statistics do not specify the organizations or what kind of support is included in each of these categories. It is also unclear how to categorize so-called "collaborating" organizations and agencies (such as UNECA and the World Bank) or "equivalent" intergovernmental regional organizations and mechanisms, such as the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Nile Basin Initiative (Government Offices of Sweden 2010). The various categories and definitions are thus open-ended and this creates uncertainty. For instance, it is unclear in what ways "collaborating" and "equivalent organizations" help strengthen the AU and the RECs and achieve the objective of the regional strategy. These ambiguities make it difficult to discern the logic behind the selection of organizations and the different interventions.[16]

[16] When gathering data for this report, we searched for concrete evidence (in Openaid and on public websites) that the recipients contributed to the agenda of the AU and the RECs. However, it proved difficult to find such evidence and this makes it hard to assess the

It is positive that there is an ongoing discussion within Swedish policy circles about the meaning and relevance of direct and indirect support. The emerging Swedish position is that:

> Cooperation with other organizations, that support the agenda of the RECs, is often a more efficient way to achieve results in the medium-term than directly supporting the RECs, as these organizations normally have better capacity and are less affected by political constraints. Intermediary organizations can furthermore support the implementation of regional integration through close and simultaneous collaboration with the REC secretariats as well as the REC member states, thereby ensuring that ownership is shared between the main actors. Hence, indirect support to AUC/RECs assists the processes towards regional integration and open up the AU/RECs to external cooperation and scrutiny, and to practical direct engagement of the African civil society in their work (Sida 2013c: 7).[17]

Swedish policy makers also consider the AU and RECs to be "norm-setters" that are less concerned with policy implementation than are technical and specialized organizations:

> The African inter-governmental organizations [especially AU/RECs] are primarily political organizations for norm-setting and mediation of political agreements, not technical organizations for implementing concrete programmes. Sida argues that it would be a mistake to try to build AU/REC capacity for practical implementation of programmes at national level. Implementation must be done by the member states and regional partners to AU/RECs, which are active at the national level (Sida 2013c: 7).

Even if it is true that there are important differences between the AU/RECs and specialized ROs, it is problematic to base a policy on a binary distinction between norm-setters and implementing organizations. While this distinction may be relevant, the relationship and division of labour between the different types of organizations need to be elaborated. It is also problematic to make such a sharp distinction between these organizations. In many sectors and policy areas (ranging from trade, investments, to security and the

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meanings of the different sub-categories of indirect and other support. This kind of lack of clarity meant that it was uncertain what worked and why with direct support.

[17] Our translation from Swedish.

environment), the AU and the RECs do act as norm-setters but they also make decisions and design policies that need to be "implemented", as they are in specialized and technical ROs. Both types of organization therefore make decisions that require implementation on a national level and by member states. Indeed, the much discussed implementation gap concerns both the AU/RECs and more specialized ROs.

Although academic research on "institutional design" is growing rapidly, there is still a lack of policy relevant and applied research regarding which institutional design is most appropriate in the African context and for achieving the stipulated goals of regional development cooperation. The evidence for "what works" remains inconclusive. It is therefore only possible to draw provisional conclusions. Research suggests that that the two types of organizations have distinctive features. Specialized regional organizations and networks often deliver effective outcomes when tasks, national benefits and incentive structures are relatively clear, and when the political environment is conducive to regional cooperation. It is commonly believed that specialized and functional ROs are more cost effective and less bureaucratic. The evidence also suggests that specialized organizations and networks play an important role in prompting and supporting regional cooperation regardless of divergences of national interests in other fields. However, although there may be common interests and incentives, mutually beneficial solutions and effective project implementation are not always forthcoming and may depend heavily on political support and mobilization, which may be difficult to ensure through specialized and technical ROs (Söderbaum 2015). This implies that specialized ROs may not necessarily be good at policy implementation if they do not have enough political clout.

Multipurpose ROs may be better equipped than specialized ROs (that have less political leverage) to facilitate transboundary coordination at higher levels and to mobilize political commitment and national buy-in. Many multipurpose ROs have a distinct political content that is closely intertwined with broader economic or security interests, and this means that cross-sectoral linkages may be exploited. Historically, the organizational structure and political frameworks of multipurpose ROs have gradually deepened and broadened as the organizations have taken on new tasks and acquired new members. These organizations may therefore maintain momentum regardless of whether or not agreed policies are implemented, whereas specialized

ROs are more sensitive to underfinancing and poor implementation. Indeed, multipurpose ROs such as the AU and the RECs appear to be able to survive and prosper in spite of large coordination and implementation failures.

6.4. Aligning regional and national support

The link between national (bilateral) and regional development assistance has been a topic of discussion for Swedish donor officials for at least two decades. The Swedish regional strategy clearly states that regional and national support are interdependent and need to be aligned. Nevertheless, these two forms of support have continued to be implemented more or less independently of one another in Swedish development cooperation. This disjuncture is emphasized in several documents and strategy reports (Sida 2013b, 2015a). For instance, according to a strategy report from 2013 "the connection between regional and bilateral level … is weak and diminishes the effects of the Swedish regional development assistance" (Sida 2013: 4). The report furthermore argues that now more than ever the synergies between regional and bilateral development cooperation need to be considered. Similar conclusions were drawn from our interviews with Swedish officers in the field.

One reason for the current difficulties in linking national and regional support lies in the framing and conceptualization of Swedish regional development cooperation. The regional strategy focuses specifically on "regional development cooperation" but although there are several references to other types of assistance, there are few guidelines for implementation and very few links to Swedish bilateral Country Strategies or multilateral assistance. The disjuncture is reinforced by the fact that most Swedish Country Strategies only rarely deal with cross-border ("regional") issues and regional cooperation.

These problems are then exacerbated by the fact that Swedish regional development cooperation is supposed to bring "added value" over and above that provided by national assistance. However, it is unclear exactly what is meant by this "added value" and it is difficult to identify how it would manifest when regional and national development cooperation are closely interdependent. Our interviews show that different officials interpret the notion of added value in

different ways. Furthermore, several interviewees state that "added value" should be linked to the principle of "subsidiarity", which means strengthening the lowest institutional level involved in managing a particular problem. In this context, subsidiarity means providing regional support primarily when country support for the national level is inadequate for dealing with a specific challenge. The weakness of this approach is that in practice it tends to favour top-down ("regional") and "single-level" solutions. That is, contrary to its stated intentions, the "added value approach" reinforces the gap between national and regional development cooperation. There is now a substantial body of literature arguing that many of today's transnational challenges require not only "horizontal" cooperation (between state and non-state actors), but also "vertical" cooperation between actors at various governance levels (local, national, regional and global) (Kaul *et al* 2003: 6). This suggests that what is needed is not to find the optimal "single-level" solution (usually at the "lowest" level) but rather to find appropriate links and division of labour between various levels of cooperation (i.e. a multi-level and holistic approach). This helps explain why Swedish policy makers have such difficulty aligning national with regional development cooperation.

In contrast to the current Swedish top-down approach, which favours direct and indirect support to the AU and the RECs, several other donors have adopted a more integrated or bottom-up approach that promotes regional cooperation and development *through* national strategies and programmes. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) appears to be the most systematic advocate of this approach (Söderbaum and Granit 2014). The AfDB and the World Bank are other examples.[18] We do not wish to promote the replacement of a top-down with a bottom-up strategy but instead to suggest alternative and flexible approaches, framed within a holistic understanding of how to promote development.

There are several examples in Swedish policy making of regional and national assistance being aligned and integrated in a way that

[18] A recent study by Gray (2014) draws attention to the relevance of a bottom-up approach. Gray shows that variation in domestic national capacity (both physical and institutional) can explain the implementation gap between what agreements promise and what they deliver in the field of trade. One policy implication is that donors can help to strengthen the infrastructre and national governance frameworks of those member states that are unable to carry out the obligations they agree to in their trade agreements.

differs from the top-down approach characterizing the regional strategy with Africa. The joint Swedish-Norwegian health secretariat was at least partly successful in aligning Swedish national and regional assistance (Government Offices of Sweden 2012). Similarly, the Swedish regional strategy for HIV/AIDS and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) in Southern Africa adopted a multi-level approach, which integrates support to multilateral organizations (e.g. UNAIDS), regional actors and organizations as well as state and non-state actors on the national level (Government Offices of Sweden 2015). Many Swedish interviewees refer to this multi-level approach in the field of health as a "success story". However, this success story differs markedly from the current Swedish regional strategy with Sub-Saharan Africa.

There is evidence that Sida is starting to find new solutions to the gap between regional and national support for instance by recommending that the alignment of regional and bilateral development cooperation should be promoted in future bilateral country strategies. For instance, Sida states that "National implementation of regional agreements and commitments should be supported in different ways; through direct support to organizations and government agencies responsible for the implementation, through support to actors within civil society who work with accountability and through dialogue at national level which, in a systematic and informed way, are connected with commitment in the regional context" (Sida 2013c: 5).

Hence, national and regional support may be aligned through different strategies, and there is no need to formulate one single strategy for all "levels" of development cooperation. As explained in the recent Swedish strategy for the Middle East and North Africa (2016-2020): "Support for the development of central national institutions and strategic organisations has to complement regional initiatives" (Government Offices of Sweden 2016: 6).

These new and promising ways of aligning (and thinking about) regional and national development cooperation are important. They appear to be a relaxation of the previous top-down approach in favour of a more integrated and holistic approach. Although these changes are positive, they will require improved knowledge and discussion within Sida and the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. However, apart from the units that are specifically engaged in regional development cooperation, there appears to be fairly limited knowledge

and interest about these issues within the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Sida. One possible exception is transboundary water management and to some extent health, for which a regional approach appears to be more integrated. Many multilateral development agencies (AfDB, EU, GEF and the WB) and some bilateral agencies (Germany and the UK) seem to have greater knowledge and competence in regional development support than Sweden does.

6.5. Aid modalities and funding strategies

There is a broad variety of funding strategies and aid modalities today. Most notable among them are project funding, programme funding, basket funding and core funding/budget support. The choice of aid modality undoubtedly has implications for aid effectiveness and sustainability. This is well known and frequently discussed by those involved in country-based development assistance. It is also well established that core support is claimed to give recipients greater discretion and autonomy and that this will usually lead to more sustainable development cooperation. By contrast, project and programme support are generally given on shorter terms and are more tightly controlled by the donors. As noted in chapter 3, some researchers are sceptical of the role of the donors and claim that external support to ROs is designed mainly so that donors maintain ”control” or so that they can achieve short-term “results” (Gray 2013; also see Vanheukelom 2016: 11). If correct, this would, among other things, suggest a large share of project support and less core support.

One problem is that there is little empirical evidence available on the implications of different aid modalities used in regional development cooperation. Questions about the implications of different aid modalities are often overlooked by both researchers and donor agencies. Given the limited evidence base, the ambition here is to draw some tentative conclusions for Swedish regional development cooperation with Africa.

Somewhat surprisingly, the Swedish regional strategy provides few guidelines for implementation of its aid modalities and funding strategies, apart from a brief statement that the share of programme-based support should increase (Government Offices of Sweden 2010). Similarly, the Swedish donor officials we interviewed could offer few answers to questions about what modality to prefer and why. This

may eventually be related to the fact that Swedish statistics lack precision (see section 5.2.2.). However, the problem appears to be somewhat deeper. The relative silence about aid modalities can be contrastred with the Swedish strategy with the Middle East and North Africa which states that programme-based approaches should account for 70 percent of the portfolio at the end of the strategy period (Government Offices of Sweden 2010b: 2). Similarly, the Swedish regional strategy with Asia demands an increase of core and programme-based support as opposed to project-type interventions in accordance with the aid effectiveness principles in the Paris Declaration (Government Offices of Sweden 2010a: 1-2).

It is pertinent to compare Swedish support to the EAC and TradeMark East Africa (TMEA), the latter being a large non-profit donor driven company supporting the East African integration process. Between 2011-2014, about 93 percent of Swedish support to TMEA was classified as core contributions/pooled programmes and funds, while the corresponding sum to EAC was 21 percent (i.e. implying that 79 percent of Swedish support to EAC was classified as project-type interventions) (Sida statistics 2015b).[19] In view of these figures, it cannot come as a complete surprise that there are some tensions in the relationship between the EAC and the donors. For instance, the EAC has rejected institutional support from donors in order to stave off what is referred to be excessive donor interference. From Sida's point of view, this is "complicating the overall cooperation" (Sida 2013a: 3). As far as TMEA is concerned, the initiative is undeniably donor-driven and donor-controlled. Even if many EAC countries are reportedly enthusiastic about TMEA, the tendency of the donor community to deliver outside the formal structures of RECs raises questions about respect for homegrown African ROs and initiatives, African ownership, and longer-term sustainability.

However, it should be highlighted that there are trade-offs to be made when selecting among the various funding strategies and aid modalities. It is not as easy that project support is necessarily worse option. On the contrary, given the implementation problems seen with many ROs in the past, the quick and efficient implementation

[19] Between 2011-2014 Swedish support to TMEA reached 89m SEK (83m SEK was classified as core contributions/programme support and 6.1m SEK was classified projects). During the same period, Swedish regional support to EAC was nearly 72m SEK (15.4m SEK as core/programme support and 56.5m SEK was project support).

enabled by projects and programmes may arguably be desirable and may even enhance African commitment to the regional agenda. As pointed out in section 4.5., it is possible that African countries may be more engaged in and benefit more directly from regional "projects" than when a more distant RO is supported through institutional development or core support. Speedy implementation may thus be important, particularly for tasks such as building a road or a border post. Linking back to the comparison between TMEA and EAC, it is clear that TMEA is more efficient at implementing projects and programmes than the EAC.

6.6. Insufficient donor coordination

It is widely recognized that donor coordination is essential for aid to be effective. This is also stressed in the Swedish regional strategy. However, donor coordination is clearly weaker in relation to regional programmes than it is in relation to national assistance. Although coordination has increased (especially at sectoral level), it remains inadequate for regional programmes. This may indicate that regional support works less well than national support, and this may be due to the fact that many regional support programmes are complex and multidimensional. Many donors support numerous projects in the same region with little coordination. Different donors (and sometimes even the same donor) tend to support and fund overlapping or competing regional organizations and transboundary projects in various policy areas without systematic coordination between them. This is particularly evident in the field of transboundary waters. Sida has noted that donor coordination is also weak in relation to several of the RECs and that much could be done to improve coordination in general (Sida 2015b).

Larger multilateral agencies and donors, such as the EU, the WB and the AfDB, should be able to coordinate their activities. However, they tend to have comprehensive and multidimensional programmes and portfolios that require considerable attention to keep them internally consistent and coherent. This means that these agencies are often more concerned with the implementation of their own regional development programmes than they are with coordinating with others. Furthermore, fragmentation results from the fact that most donors continue to rely on extensive use of earmarked funds as well as separate reporting systems (Vanheukelom 2016: 20ff).

Sida sees the lack of a common EU-programme at the regional level as one of the main problems, particularly since the EU, like Sweden, focuses on supporting capacity building, regional economic integration, peace and security, as well as environmental management at regional level (Sida 2015b).

Coordination of donors' regional programmes would of course be challenging, partly because of the complexity of these programmes but also for administrative and logistical reasons. As noted by Sida:

> Donor coordination at regional level is challenging, with the donor offices responsible for regional cooperation spread out in different locations. Sweden should continue its attempts to improve donor coordination and increased joint initiatives. Sweden should continue selectively to take on lead roles for strategic programmes. This however entails considerable personnel commitments. (Sida 2013: 2)

Despite the difficulties, Sweden has nevertheless taken a leading role in encouraging donor coordination (Sida 2015b), for instance in the EAC Partnership Fund, in which donors pool their resources into a common basket fund. However, far more needs to be done and many issues remain unresolved. Questions remain about how overlapping mechanisms and aid modalities supporting economic integration in East Africa should be coordinated or how intersecting donor programmes dealing with transboundary waters, such as the Nile Basin, should be streamlined. The good news is that this leaves a window of opportunity for Sweden to engage far more intensively in facilitating donor coordination. Indeed, there are policy areas in which Sweden is well equipped to play a leading role in strategic donor coordination in areas such as climate and transboundary water management, and regional economic development and infrastructure. Furthermore, the efforts that have thus far been made to improve coordination within the AU, EAC and SADC deserve scrutiny.

6.7. Summary

This chapter deals with a number of issues relating to the improvement of Swedish regional development cooperation with Sub-Saharan Africa. Although we focus on the problems facing Swedish policy makers regarding Sweden's regional strategy, the problems are equally relevant for other bilateral and multilateral donors.

The most distinctive feature of the Swedish regional strategy is its ambition to strengthen capacity in intergovernmental frameworks, particularly the AU and the RECs. "Capacity building regionalism" may be fruitful when ROs are capable of achieving transboundary public goods. However, many intergovernmental ROs in Africa (the AU and the RECs in particular) do not function as portrayed in official treaties and many struggle with what may be referred to as an "implementation gap". Providing external funding to these organizations is therefore risky and may not result in the donor's goals being fulfilled. It is also unclear whether and how capacity building of the AU, the RECs and similar ROs contributes to the overall objective of Swedish development cooperation, which is to ensure that men and women living in poverty and under oppression have the ability to improve their living conditions. The Swedish regional strategy thus tends to confuse ends (development and improved living conditions) and means (strengthening of regional cooperation and/or ROs).

Another limitation of many state-led ROs in Africa is that they are so selective in their involvement of business and civil society actors. Many donors, including Sweden, fail to acknowledge the tension that often exists between top-down and bottom-up regionalism in Africa. Swedish policy makers would therefore benefit from broadening their horizons and instead of limiting their focus to direct and indirect support for the AU and the RECs, consider a broader approach that more effectively involves both state and non-state actors in flexible, development-friendly solutions.

Although the Swedish regional strategy clearly states that regional and national support are interdependent, in practice the two forms of support continue to be dealt with independently. We therefore propose that a "multi-level approach" be adopted, which would systematically harmonize national and regional support. Support to multilateral mechanisms should also be integrated into such a framework. In order for this to happen, national considerations must

be integrated into regional strategies and vice versa. Swedish policy makers may learn from studying the EU, which is often considered to be successful in harmonizing national and regional support. Agencies such as the GEF, the EU and the World Bank have also developed strategies to try to align their national and regional strategies.

Our analysis suggests that there are several ways in which the relevance, quality and effectiveness of Swedish regional development cooperation could be improved. Swedish support to regional cooperation in Africa needs to be "locally owned" and better integrated into the national agendas of African countries. This requires a greater understanding of national incentives for cooperation and issues concerning local and national ownership in the context of regional development cooperation.

This chapter also highlights the need to think carefully about specific design features, aid modalities, time perspectives and the concentration of resources on fewer issues, themes and partners in order to deliver quality support. Harmonization, alignment and coordination of aid are also crucial. Sweden is becoming involved in donor coordination and there may now be an opportunity for Sweden to play a stronger role in this in future.

7 Conclusion and recommendations

This report is an attempt to respond to the need for greater knowledge about the incentives, the logic and the effects of external funding upon regional cooperation and integration in Africa. The purpose of the report is to explore the question of "what works and why?"

This question may be addressed using various approaches, methodologies and sources of evidence. The study crosses conventional boundaries and combines three types of knowledge: (i) from academic research and scholarly debates (ii) from donor evaluations and (iii) from an in-depth case study of Swedish regional development cooperation. The report is therefore relevant for a range of multilateral and bilateral donors while also providing more detailed insights into Swedish regional support.

The study focuses particularly on the quality and effectiveness of regional development cooperation and therefore concentrates on issues such as: (i) how should regional development cooperation be defined, designed and evaluated in order to have a positive impact upon development? (ii) in what ways should regional and country-based assistance be related? (iii) under what circumstances does external support help to close the "implementation gap" of ROs in Africa? (iv) how should regional development cooperation be implemented in order to work?

7.1. Bridging the gap between research and policy

The first two chapters of the report concentrate on concepts and theories used in scholarly and academic debates as a means to bridge the gap between research and policy. The distinction in chapter 2 between old and new regionalism illustrates the growing diversity of regionalism around the world. Although regional specificities may be found in different parts of the world, new regionalism is clearly evident in Africa. Chapter 2 distinguishes also between regional cooperation mechanisms (organizations/networks and specialized/multipurpose) because it highlights the fact that old regionalism was focused on state-led regional organizations, while new regionalism includes a variety of ROs and looser, more flexible networks and partnerships that involve both state and non-state

actors. Many donors (including Sweden) tend to persist with old, state-centric thinking about regional cooperation and integration in Africa, centered around the AU and the RECs.

Chapter 3 highlights three main approaches that are helpful for explaining the logic of regionalism in Africa: (i) the pan-African approach, (ii) the liberal institutionalist approach, and (iii) the new regionalism approach (NRA). The first two approaches focus on capacity building and strengthening state-led and inter-state regional organizations and ways of improving development outcomes. The fact that outcomes tend to be poor and that there is a significant "implementation gap" in these ROs is believed to be a result of the lack of resources and capacity, weak commitment to regionalist projects or a general failure to resolve collective action dilemmas. By contrast, the third approach, the NRA, questions the idealistic (sometimes even naïve) assumptions about state-led ROs that underlie the first two approaches. The NRA's notion of regime-boosting regionalism suggests that political elites in weak African states use discursive strategies primarily to strengthen their regimes' official status, sovereignty, image and legitimacy rather than showing much real concern for policy implementation or for people on the ground. Under these circumstances, externally driven capacity building may exacerbate rather than ameliorate the implementation gap.

These three schools of thought are all relevant for enhancing our understanding of the conditions under which regional development cooperation "works". What is problematic is the fact that most donors base their policies and strategies on a combination of the first two approaches. This is evidenced by the fact that many donors (including Sweden) are most interested in strengthening the mandates, capacities and strategic roles of the AU, the RECs and other specialized intergovernmental regional organizations. Their intention is to strengthen the capacity of these organizations to manage regional and global challenges, fulfil their mandates, and implement the policies they have agreed to.

The evidence from both research and donor evaluations reveals numerous problems with this type of support. Tentative evidence suggests that capacity building and institutional development is likely to be effective in organizations that have clear internal structures, effective agendas, and no internal power rivalries. However, as this report shows, many state-led regional organization (AU and RECs in particular) are struggling with both internal and external challenges

and limitations. Some intergovernmental ROs are clearly dysfunctional and demonstrate major "implementation gaps". In these cases, there is little evidence to support the idea that the large sums of money provided by Sweden and other donors for capacity building and institutional development has yielded sustainable development. The NRA helps explain why many ROs become dysfunctional and fail to function as portrayed in official treaties. The donors therefore need to broaden their horizons and consider all three approaches in order to gain a more nuanced understanding of what works and why.

Another problem with the donor community's strong focus on the AU, the RECs and other intergovernmental ROs is the marginalization of both private business and civil society actors in many of these organizations and mechanisms. The NRA and a number of donor evaluations show that the marginalization of non-state actors may be another explanation for why the results of state-led and top-down regional cooperation and integration in Africa have been so modest. The NRA and donor evaluations suggest that a more diversified approach is needed that involves the private sector and civil society in more flexible institutional solutions, such as networks and partnerships. However, research offers no clear answers to the question of which institutional design is best for development and for yielding pro-poor outcomes. So although academic research provides many useful insights into the emergence and logic of regionalism and regional development cooperation, there is still not enough knowledge about what is actually effective on the ground. In order to bridge current knowledge gaps, chapter 4 of the report consists of an assessment of ten selected donor evaluations, from which it seeks to identify what is meant by "good practice" in regional development cooperation. The majority of the findings here are consistent with the in-depth case study of Swedish regional support presented in chapter 5 and 6. The following section discusses the general findings regarding the design of regional development cooperation.

7.2. Designing regional development cooperation

This study has found there to be a range of understandings and meanings of "regional development cooperation" and this has evidently caused a great deal of confusion. A distinction needs first to be made between "regional development cooperation" (or regional aid) and "outside funding of regional cooperation/integration".

Although these may interconnect, they are not identical. The former is usually designed to achieve "development" whereas the latter is supposed to promote "regional cooperation and integration". Regional donor programmes that target two or more countries (sub-regions or regions) should also be distinguished from programmes that target one or several ROs. Confusion arises when such distinctions are not made and when donors try to do too many things at once.

Furthermore, Sweden tends to repeat the same mistake as many other donors, namely to focus on the level of regional integration and cooperation and capacity building of ROs instead of on development outcomes and poverty reduction. This results in two overlapping problems: (i) the confusion of means and ends, and (ii) a strong emphasis by many donors on activities and outputs instead of long-term development results. A more strategic approach is therefore needed that would help donors make better informed decisions about which development actors to cooperate with and why, and it would help them shift focus from activities and outputs to long-term development impact.

This is closely related to monitoring, evaluation and the way results are reported. While the evidence suggests that regional development cooperation is both relevant and achieves results, there is little agreement about what constitutes a good result, how and when it should be evaluated, or whose results should count and why. While these problems are related to confusions about the meaning of regional development, they also emerge as a result of insufficient monitoring and evaluation tools. Indeed, the evidence base is poor and data are mainly available on activities and outputs while there is an almost complete lack of data on long-term development impact. The monitoring and evaluation reports often vary in quality and may therefore lead to donors making inappropriate priorities and decisions about which development actors to cooperate with and why. A better knowledge base is therefore needed in order to improve the way the monitoring and evaluation of regional development cooperation.

The report stresses that it is misleading to believe that donors and the African actors they support necessarily share the same interests. Donors are not simply neutral external funders of home-grown African projects. Some researchers claim that donors are driven primarily by their own domestic political and economic concerns and by an interest in exerting control rather than by a genuine desire to achieve maximum development impact and African ownership. The

NRA also draws attention to the malign effects of certain regionalization processes. While this study accepts that this may be so, it also proposes ways in which donors may act and design their policies in order to make regional development cooperation more effective.

One essential finding in this regard is that African ownership should be guiding principles also for regional support. Indeed, donor assistance to regional cooperation in Africa "will only be successful when the participants feel it addresses issues which are important to them, when they benefit from the co-operation and when there is sufficient ownership of the regional institution or activity" (Norad 2003: 1). Even if there are many different types of regional support, there is strong evidence that those that are not well integrated into national agendas or locally owned are usually unsustainable and even likely to fail. By implication, there is a need to better understand both national incentives for cooperation and issues of national ownership in the context of regional development cooperation. In this context it must be recognized that a strong emphasis on top-down regionalism and on the agenda of the AU and the RECs may counteract national ownership and national benefits. Indeed, donors need to problematize top-down regionalism and instead find ways to promote a more effective relationship between top-down and bottom-up regionalism.

The implementation of regional aid is associated with a number of other more specific challenges, such as the choice of aid modalities and aid coordination. This report stresses the need to think carefully about specific design features, aid modalities, and the concentration of resources on fewer issues, themes and partners in order to deliver high-quality development cooperation. They also need to consider whether their goal is to promote long-term development or short-term project implementation. Selecting appropriate recipients/partners and successfully implementing strategies requires in-depth knowledge about the particular context and the region's political economy. If a strategic plan is developed that fails to take into consideration structural factors, the regional context, aid modalities and the relevance of different delivery channels, regional donor programmes may be unsustainable, ineffective and irrelevant. Adequate understanding of the political economy may also help donors secure commitment from concerned African governments, implementing partners and other stakeholders. Since most operational decisions need

to be taken by officials in the field, they can only rarely be determined a priori in a regional strategy.

There is broad acknowledgement in the donor community that regional support needs to be aligned with national support if it is to be effective. Nevertheless, although this has been a topic of discussion in the donor community for several decades and most western donors recognize the interdependence between regional and national support, the two forms of support continue largely to be handled separately, and this has negative effects upon the quality of aid.

The problem is particularly evident with Swedish aid, in which regional support is heavily focused on the regional "level" in order to bring "added value" to what could otherwise be accomplished through national support. This "top-down" approach — which is strongly geared towards strengthening the institutional capacity of ROs — tends to reinforce the gap between national and regional assistance. The Swedish approach contrasts with the bottom-up approach favoured by several other donors that promote regional development through national strategies and programmes rather than vice versa (e.g. AfDB, the GEF, etc). Another donor suggests that "that support for regional institutions and programmes is more effective if combined with support for national efforts to implement and participate in regional projects" (Norad 2003). Hence, it is not necessary to replace a top-down with a bottom-up approach. A more appropriate solution would be to adopt an integrated "multi-level approach" that systematically aligns national and regional support. Multilateral support with a regional dimension could preferably also be considered in such a framework. This may furthermore imply that donors should to an increasing extent focus on issues where they are already providing bilateral support.

It has been widely recognized that coordination is crucial for aid to be effective. However, the coordination of regional development assistance is weak compared to that provided for national development. Many donors support numerous regional projects in the same region without any systematic coordination or harmonization between them. Coordinating regional programmes is challenging and may be costly since they are often complex and many of the responsible donor offices are spread out in different locations around Africa and due to the sheer complexity of many regional programmes. Although larger multilateral actors, such as the EU, the WB and the AfDB, should be playing a stronger coordinating role, they appear to

be primarily occupied with the implementation of their own rather comprehensive regional programmes. There therefore seems to be a window of opportunity for smaller, more flexible donors, such as Sweden, to play a more active role in facilitating coordination and harmonization.

7.3. Policy recommendations

1. **Clarify ends and means**. There is too much confusion over what donors actually mean by regional development cooperation and by external support of regional cooperation and integration in Africa. Donors need to become more precise and also redirect focus away from outputs and means (the level of regional cooperation and "capacity building regionalism") to ends and long-term development objectives (improved living conditions and poverty reduction).

2. **Go beyond a narrow focus on the AU and the RECs and support both top-down and bottom-up regionalism.** Although the AU and the RECs are necessary for dealing with global and regional challenges, there are limits to what these and other intergovernmental ROs can realistically achieve. There is also evidence that many state-led and top-down ROs in Africa fail to include and be relevant for the private market forces and civil society actors. Donors therefore need to move beyond the exaggerated focus on state-led and top-down ROs towards strategies and policies that involve both state and non-state actors in more flexible and development-friendly collaboration mechanisms.

3. **Take the regional political and economic context into consideration when designing and implementing regional donor programmes**. If the regional context, structural factors, power distribution, national sovereignty, and informal institutions are not considered, regional donor strategies may simply become unsustainable, ineffective and irrelevant. Analysis of the regional political economy also helps to ensure the commitment of concerned governments, implementing partners and other stakeholders.

4. **Revise or discontinue regional donor programmes and policies that do not work.** There are many reasons why regional development cooperation may not work, such as poor structural conditions, dysfunctional ROs, lack of political will of African governments, unrealistic donor ambitions, and so forth. Donors need to match their ambitions with realities and capacities on the ground.

5. **Align and coordinate national, regional and multilateral development cooperation**. Instead of the conventional top-down approach, which is heavily geared towards intergovernmental and state-led ROs, adopt an integrated "multi-level approach", which more systematically aligns national, regional and even multilateral assistance into the same (holistic) framework or perspective. This is crucial for making regional development cooperation relevant for national elites and African stakeholders.

6. **Ensure African ownership and that regional assistance is aligned with national strategies and interests.** Regional development cooperation is only successful when it addresses issues which are important to African stakeholders and when they benefit from the cooperation. Regional development cooperation that is not well integrated into national agendas or take into account national interests and local ownership are usually unsustainable, and even likely to fail.

7. **Carefully consider the implications of various aid modalities so as to make more realistic and strategic goals for regional development cooperation**. Think carefully about strategy design and aid modalities, and concentrate resources on fewer issues, themes and partners in order to deliver high-quality aid. In particular, decide whether the goal is to promote long-term development or shorter-term project implementation, and why.

8. **Improve aid coordination and harmonization**. There is an urgent need for greater harmonization and coordination of regional development cooperation in order to improve its effectiveness. All donors need to be engaged.

9. **Improve monitoring and evaluation of regional development cooperation and external support to regionalism in Africa**. There is still too much uncertainty what constitutes a good result, how and when it should be evaluated, or whose results should count and why. Likewise data is mainly available on activities and outputs while there is an almost complete lack of data on long-term development impact. Improved monitoring and evaluation of regional development cooperation will help donors to achieve better results and to make better priorities and decisions about which development actors to cooperate with and why.

10. **Increase knowledge within relevant ministries and agencies about the relevance of both regional development cooperation and regionalism in Africa.** There is fairly limited knowledge within the donor community about the relevance of regional development cooperation and regionalism in dealing with global and regional

challenges. This undermines the effectiveness of aid in general and regional development cooperation in particular. It also means that much of the potential of regionalism in Africa remains untapped.

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Appendix 1. List of interviews and informants

Karin Andersson, Swedish Embassy, Nairobi (24 November, 2014).

Camilla Bengtsson, Swedish Embassy, Addis Ababa (24 November, 2014, 3 February 2015).

Jenny Björk, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), Stockholm (6 May, 2015).

Ulrika Cronenberg, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Stockholm (2 February, 2015).

Torbjörn Petersson, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), Stockholm (6 May 2015).

Patrik Stålgren, Swedish Embassy, Nairobi (24-26 November, 2014).

Dag Sundelin, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), Stockholm (3 February, 6 May, 2015).

Johanna Teague, Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs (8 May, 2015).

Appendix 2. Evaluations under review

List of evaluations under review in chapter 4:

AfDB (2012) *Fostering Regional Integration in Africa: An Evaluation of the Bank's Multinational Operations 2000-2010.*

DFID (2010) *DFID's Southern Africa country programme 2004-2009.*

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Appendix 3. Summary of recommendations in the evaluations

Evaluation	Recommendations
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark and Danida (2008) *Evaluation of Danish Regional Support to Peace and Security, Regional Integration and Democratisation in Southern Africa*	Partnership and long-term (sustainable) development relations are vital for effective regional development cooperation (e.g. p. 36). Clarification of DK policies, including its rationale and what results it should achieve. Improved management systems. A more focused cooperation: cooperate with fewer partners and more core support (p. 55). Improve the dialogue with other donors (harmonization). Support SADC as an institution. Continue research cooperation to improve the understanding of the complexity of regional development. Develop guidelines/guiding principles for how to select partner organisations for a more strategic engagement (p. 55).
Norad (2014) *Building Blocks for Peace. An evaluation of the Training for Peace in Africa Programme*	Strategic direction: Continue as a programme or as case-by-case interventions alongside other Norwegian support in this area. Only justifiable to continue as a programme if efforts are made to attach strategic direction to it. Programme interventions: Covering too many issues with too little focus on what it wants to achieve. Should be more based on "what works". Research needs to be based on what the TfP needs. TfP could be harmonize with support from other donor programmes to make it more sustainable and increase effectiveness.

Sida (2015b) *Evaluation of Swedish Trade-Related Support to ECOWAS through Phase II of the Trade Negotiation and Capacity Building Project*	Recommendation 1: Sida should continue to support trade policy and integration in West Africa. Target more specific needs of the individual member states. Recommendation 2: Sida and ECOWAS should consider novel ways to cooperate: Sida could contribute to the GIZ-EU programme (harmonization). Sida could build on its existing support to trade policy training. Sida could engage in discussions with Danida on collaborating within the framework of ATWA (harmonization). Recommendation 3: the ECOWAS Commission should improve its project management capabilities: internal bureaucratic constraints (properly staffed projects with easy access to funds). Improve RBM. Recommendation 4: Sida should increase its engagement in monitoring efforts (supervision and follow-up) without interfering with project implementation to strengthen partnership between Sida and the implementing organization. A RBM framework with "good" indicators. Sida to take a clear role in the governance structure of a project and establishing clear specification of what funds could be spent on. Clearer physical presence on an on-going basis, either from Sida staff or by engaging monitoring consultants. Stricter audit procedures. Engaging with other donors.
DFID (2010) *DFIDs Southern Africa Programme 2004-2009*	Clearer implementation strategy for engaging regionally. Stronger culture of learning. Deepening the relationship with SADC with a formal presence in Gaborone. Increase the DFID staff (senior advisers).

DFID (2013) *Mid-Term Evaluation: Final report TradeMark Southern Africa (TMSA)*	Pool of experts to assist REC and member countries on a request basis. Continue technical support to Chirundu border. TMSA and the RECs should adopt a programme of engagement to solicit support from national governments for the implementation of a regional transit management system. More advanced statistical techniques to generate more rigorous assessment of border performance..
GIZ/NEDA (2014) *Supporting the implementation of the Regional Integration Agenda – Achieving Compliance in the Member States of EAC, ECOWAS and SADC*	Needs to prioritize relatively high impact areas of clear benefit to a relatively broad range of countries. This prio should take into account where to find relatively strong champions (?) in support of the issue in more than one country. Clearer implementation regulations and monitoring systems (lack of monitoring systems and adequate indicators).
European Commission (2007) *Evaluation of the Commission's support to Southern African Development Community – SADC Regional Level Evaluation*	Policy and strategy: Integration of national and regional efforts; coordination of efforts. Implementation: EU delegations meeting to address regional issues (together with national and regional representatives); Sector wide approaches; SADC to develop procedures for budget support; Support to national institutions so that they can contribute to regional integration (for an increased ownership etc.). Sector specific: Harmonisation between SADC and COMESA; Commission support to SADC's role in liberalizing the transport market etc.
European Commission (20008) *Evaluation of the Commission's support to the region of Eastern and Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean*	European Commission should clearly stress that the general strategy should be based on strengthening the specific capacity of each RO and on enhancing dialogue and harmonization within the RIOs.

USAID (2013) *Southern Africa Regional Environment Programme Performance Evaluation*	SAREP should be extended into the option period. Essential if the programme develop "a flow of community benefits; which in turn is essential for the sustainability and legacy of SAREP" (p. vii).
AfDB (2012) *Fostering Regional Integration in Africa: An Evaluation of the Bank's Multinational Operations, 2000-2010*	The Bank should clarify and strengthen the strategic focus of its approach to regional integration. The Bank should develop its definition of multinational operations. More focused when addressing the soft constraints. The Bank should define the role of sector operations. A mechanism for systematic feedback and learning from the Bank's experience with MOs should be established to influence the design of new operations, especially in relation to the key factors of performance. Define roles and responsibilities and adapt tools to the specifies of the multinational operations.
UNDP (2013) *Evaluation of the Regional Programme for Africa (2008-2013)*	Consolidating democratic governance: Enhanced capacities of national and regional institutions have ensured transparent and credible electoral processes, systems and results. Mixed results as regards the strengthened governance and enhanced service delivery. African ownership and leadership over the governance agenda: a core value for AU and NEPAD and RECs. But to implement this, their knowledge base needs to be strengthened. Conflict prevention, peacebuilding and recovery Responded to the need for the AUC & UNDP responded to the need to strengthen capacities as regional and sub-regional levels to manage and reduce the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

	Harmonization: shifts in donor environment and capacity constraints within the peace and security department are among the factors affecting the achievement of results. UNDP not coherence in funding mechanisms for the AU peace and security agenda (i.e. an intended result). Energy, environment and sustainable development: Low access to sustainable energy and other environmental issues are threat to economic growth. Increased capacity of African governments to participate in climate change negotiations. The sustainability within the area of energy has been institutionalized at REC level. Efficiency of the programme operations was a concern cutting across all focus areas. Low delivery rates due to delays in start-ups and fluctuating management arrangements at regional service centers.
The World Bank (2007) *The Development Potential of Regional Programmes. An Evaluation of World Bank Support of Multicountry Operations*	The evaluation identifies five design features that have proven critical to the success of regional programmes: strong country commitment, scope of objectives matched to national and regional capacities, clear delineation and coordination of the roles of national and regional institutions, accountable governance arrangements, and planning for sustainability.

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