Sweden’s Foreign Aid in Afghanistan from an Environmental Perspective

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Sweden’s foreign aid in Afghanistan from an environmental perspective

LINNEA KARLSSON

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Abstract: Afghanistan has been in armed conflict for over 30 years. The many wars have severely affected the environment negatively. Sweden has between 2010-2015 been allocating 4.7 billion SEK in foreign aid to Afghanistan. This is a qualitative study with the purpose to critically analyse how this foreign aid has contributed to a sustainable environmental development in Afghanistan. To be able to answer this question a review of projects documents and Sida assessment was conducted. This was then supplemented by interviews with 14 people who in different ways had been working with these issues. In the analysis theories connecting to environment, poverty and conflict have been used.

Sida is supporting two types of foreign aid in Afghanistan; humanitarian aid and development aid. The study found that the Sida’s humanitarian work in Afghanistan has a clear focus on environmental issues, whereas the development aid overall where lacking a focus on environmental issues. The larger focus within the humanitarian aid was explained by that environmental consideration is a part of the Sida’s strategy for the humanitarian aid in Afghanistan and humanitarian aid’s natural connection to environment, in for instance natural disasters. The lack of environmental focus within the development aid was found to have three explanations; the strategy did not have an environmental focus, the staff lacked the necessary environmental knowledge and environmental issues was not believed to be prioritized in Afghanistan. It was however believed to be possible to have more focus on the environment in Sida’s work in Afghanistan.

The study shows that environmental issues are not believed to be a necessary component for creating a sustainable development or peace in Afghanistan. The study is arguing that one way to create more focus on environmental issues within the development aid would be to work closer with the humanitarian aid. The thesis was finally presenting an alternative way to look at environment and sustainable development; to focus on the environmental problems of the current generation and by doing so preserving the nature for the future generations.

Key words: Sustainable development, foreign aid, development aid, humanitarian, Afghanistan, environment, poverty, environmental impact, Sweden, Sida, natural resources,
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Popular abstract:

Afghanistan has been in armed conflict for over 30 years. The many wars have severely affected the environment negatively. Sweden has between 2010-2015 been allocating 4,7 billion SEK in foreign aid to Afghanistan. The purpose of this study is to assess if, and in that case how, this foreign aid has contributed to a sustainable environmental development in Afghanistan. To be able to answer this question two methods were used. Firstly, a review of projects documents and Sida assessment was conducted. This was later supplemented by interviews with 14 people who in different ways had been working with these issues. The result was then analysed using different theoretical framework. The chosen theories were connected to environment, poverty and conflict.

Sida is supporting two types of foreign aid in Afghanistan; humanitarian aid which is focusing on saving life and allocating suffering and development aid with a focus on long-term development. The study found that the Sida’s humanitarian work in Afghanistan has a clear focus on environmental issues, whereas the development aid overall where lacking a focus on environmental issues. Of Sweden’s total foreign aid between 2010-2015 going Afghanistan an average of 85 percentages have gone to development aid and 15 percentages to humanitarian aid. The larger focus within the humanitarian aid was explained by that environmental consideration is a part of the Sida’s strategy for the humanitarian aid in Afghanistan and humanitarian aid’s natural connection to environment, in for instance natural disasters. The lack of environmental focus within the development aid was found to have three explanations; the strategy did not have an environmental focus, the staff lacked the necessary environmental knowledge and environmental issues was not believed to be prioritized in Afghanistan. It was however believed to be possible to have more focus on the environment in Sida’s work in Afghanistan.

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Key words: Sustainable development, foreign aid, development aid, humanitarian, Afghanistan, environment, environmental impact, poverty, Sweden, Sida, natural resources,
1. Introduction

1.1. Background and problem formulation

Afghanistan has been in armed conflicts for over 35 years. It is today one of the poorest countries in the world (UNDP, 2015: 228). The centuries of conflict have damaged the environment extensively. The deforestation has heavily increased, the agriculture is believed to have been damaged to nearly the point of extinction and only approximately 30 percentages of the population have access to safe water (Habib et al., 2013; Shroder, 2012). The poverty among the population is believed to put even more pressure on the environment since poor people have a tendency to overexploit the nature, due to limited livelihoods options (Cobbinah et al., 2015; Zhen et al., 2014).

Afghanistan are receiving most foreign aid in the world. Sweden has been giving foreign aid to Afghanistan for many years and Afghanistan is at the moment the country that are receiving the highest amount of foreign aid. Between 2010-2105 Afghanistan has received 4,7 billion SEK in Swedish foreign aid and the stipulated amount are increasing for every year (Open Aid, 2016a, Open Aid, 2016b, Open Aid, 2016c, Open Aid, 2016d, Open Aid, 2016e, Open Aid, 2016f).

Since 2014 Sweden have a new government that has environmental issues as one of its main focus. This has started to be shown also in the foreign aid. The document that is guiding the foreign aid in Afghanistan, the Results strategy for Sweden’s international development cooperation with Afghanistan for 2014 – 2019, does however not have an environmental focus. Environment is only mentioned in one sentence where it is connected to sustainable use of natural resources connected to agriculture (Regeringskansliet, 2014).

The new Swedish government has a clear emphasis on environment. It is therefore of interest to see how Sweden through the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, SIDA, have been working for with environmental issues in Afghanistan.

Considering the extensive amounts of foreign aid that is being transferred in the world each year and how environmental issues have moved higher and higher up on the agenda, one could expect to find extensive research on how foreign has affected the environment in the receiving countries (Lim et al., 2014). This is however not the case; it has only been made a handful of studies within this field. It is the hope that this thesis is to create knowledge in the existing case study but also contribute to this research area.

1.2. Purpose and research objective

The purpose of this study was to assess how Sweden with their foreign aid through Sida has been working for a sustainable natural environmental development in Afghanistan. The scope for this thesis is the aid that was funded by Sida in Afghanistan between 2010-2015. The purpose is three fold; to understand how Sida has been working with natural environmental issues in Afghanistan, to understand why the work was conducted in this way and finally to see if it would be possible to do it differently and in that case how? Two methods were used to answer this question. Firstly, to be able to understand what have been done, project proposals and Sida’s assessments of these project proposals were analysed. To be able to understand why the work had been conducted in this way and if it would be possible to do it differently the review of documents was supplemented by interviews of people who in different ways had been working with these issues.

This thesis has the following research objective:

To critically analyse how Swedish foreign aid has contributed to sustainable environmental development in Afghanistan?

To be able to answer the overarching question a set of sub-questions have been constructed:
a) How are Sida working with environmental issues in Afghanistan?
b) Why are they conducting the work in this way?
c) Would it be possible to do it differently, in that case how?
2. Background

2.1. Afghanistan

After more than 35 years of violent conflict Afghanistan is today a fragile state with high levels of poverty and inequality (UNDP, 2015: 228). The country has one of the lowest living standards in the world (Shroder, 2012). The poverty in the country is widespread where approximately 36 percentages of the population is living under the national poverty line (UNDP, 2015: 228).

The international troops that had been present in Afghanistan for decades started to leave the country in 2014 (Kadirova, 2014). After the troops have left the country the security situation has worsened. The conflict was intensified during the following year which lead to an increase in the number of civilian casualties where 2015 had the highest number of civilian casualties since 2009 (UNAMA, 2016: 1–3).

Afghanistan has received the highest amount of foreign aid between 2010-2014 in the world. During this time period Afghanistan received 4.2 percentage of the total foreign aid in the world (OECD, 2016).

2.1.1. The environment in Afghanistan

Afghanistan has a diversity of climate regions, from the glacial landscape in the northeast to hot lowland deserts in the southwest of the country. The temperature reaches the extremes on both ends, where it can in some areas be +50 °C during the summer and in some areas go down to -50°C during the winter (Habib et al., 2013).

Until recently ecological changes in Afghanistan has happened slowly (Saba, 2001). The decades of war have affected the environment in a severely negative way (Kanderian et al., 2011; Shroder, 2012). The 35 years of conflict have led to several damaging environmental effects, for instance overuse of natural resources, pollution from toxic rocket fuel, spilled oil and landmines. The conflicts in combination with a poor population has made people forced to use the natural resources in an unsustainable way to survive (Kanderian et al., 2011). The wars have also lead to the collapse of traditional governance systems and an erosion of rule of law. This has created a situation where the state’s protection of the environment is almost non-existent (Emadi, 2011). After the Taliban war was over in 2001 the focus has been to rebuild the country as fast as possible which has affected the environment negatively (Kanderian et al., 2011).

80 percentages of the population are dependent on natural resources to survive. 60 percentages of the population have their livelihood within the agriculture sector (Shroder, 2012). The agriculture sector is 40 percentages of the country’s GDP (Emadi, 2011). The decades of war has however damaged the agriculture sector to what some researchers believed were nearly to the point of extinction (Sarhadi et al., 2014). The high amount of landmines in Afghanistan has also affected the environment negatively since it has forced people to abound their farm lands (Saba, 2001).

Afghanistan is a county heavily affected by different natural disasters, such as drought, floods and landslides. Between 1998-2012 more than 6.7 million people in the country has been affected negatively by natural disasters and extreme weather (Shroder, 2012).

The forest is today covering less than 2 percentages of Afghanistan, which is an extensive deforestation compared to before the decades of war. This deforestation has been due to a combination of timber that is smuggled and sold in Pakistan, attacks during the decades of wars and the conflict situation in combination with the high level of poverty that has made people in desperate needs of wood for energy and due to (Moumin, 2009; Shroder, 2012). Deforestation has led to that the major source of fuel in rural Afghanistan are small bushes that are being dug up and burned, with even worsening effects on the environment (Kanderian et al., 2011). The
decline within the forest industry has also lead to that poor farmers turned to start cultivate
opium (Saba, 2001).

Afghanistan has a fairly good access to water, since the snow that comes every winter melt
during the spring and summer to water (Shroder, 2012). However only between 25 percentages
to 31 percentages of the population has access to safe water. Even if Afghanistan has a fairly
good access to water the country’s capacity to preserve the water is fairly low, which during
droughts creates shortage of water. The rivers through Afghanistan are passing several of the
neighbouring countries that do not have the same inflow of water each year which makes them
partly dependent on the Afghanistán water. The neighbouring countries are in many cases more
effective at preserving the water which in some cases can lead to water shortage in Afghanistan
(Habib et al., 2013; Shroder, 2012).

Afghanistan has good conditions for renewable energy, mainly within hydro and solar
power (Shroder, 2012). If this sector would expand it could have a positive impact on the
countries development since at the present only 10-12 percentages of the population have access
to electrical power (Moumin, 2009). For hydro power the neighbouring countries however need
to work together since the rivers are going through several countries (Shroder, 2012).

Another natural resource industry with potential is the mining sector. Afghanistan are rich
in several minerals, such as copper, gold and silver and rare earths for instance lithium. These
natural resources have the potential to create a substantial cash inflow for the country, however
at the moment practically no mining is taking place due to the conflict situation (Shroder, 2012).

Afghanistan has two ministries focused on environment; Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation
and Livestock (MAIL) and Natural Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA), created in 2005. NEPA
serves as Afghanistan’s overarching environmental policy-making and regulatory
institution, with MAIL holding responsibility for the daily management of Afghanistan’s
rangelands, forests and protected areas (Kanderian et al., 2011; Shroder, 2012). The first
environmental law came in 2005 (Kanderian et al., 2011).

2.2. Sweden’s Foreign aid in Afghanistan through Sida

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida, is responsible for
Sweden’s foreign aid. Sida does not conduct or implement programs. They are instead funding
different organisations and projects. Sida’s work is therefore mainly focusing on assessing
project proposals before granting funds and follow ups and evaluations during the
implementation phase of the projects. Sida receives strategies from the Swedish government
that states what they should focus their work on. These strategies can have either regional or
national focus, depending on the size of the foreign aid. Sida has also thematically priorities
that applies to all foreign aid strategies. One of these priorities are at the present environment,
where environmental issues should be incorporated in all Sida’s work (Sida, 2016 a).

Sida is supporting both development aid and humanitarian aid. The humanitarian aid aims
to save lives, alleviate suffering and establish the dignity of people affected by different
disasters. The focus for the humanitarian aid is therefore often reactive and focused at the
present. The development aid is on the other hand focused on supporting long-term
development, for instance poverty reduction and democratic processes (Sida, 2016b).

2.2.1. Sida’s foreign aid in Afghanistan

Sida has been funding aid in Afghanistan for several decades. After the Taliban fell the
foreign aid to Afghanistan was increased. Before 2001 the main focus for Swedish aid in
Afghanistan had been on humanitarian aid. After 2001 the development aid has increased
substantively. In 2001 the total foreign to Afghanistan through Sida was 212 million SEK, with
192 million SEK in humanitarian aid and only 20 million SEK in development aid (Open Aid,
2016g). In 2015 the total amount has increased to 867 million SEK, with 730 million SEK in
development aid and 133 million SEK in humanitarian aid. This makes Afghanistan the largest receiver of Sida’s aid (Open Aid 2016f).

The development aid in Afghanistan and the humanitarian aid in Afghanistan are being guided by two different strategies. The development aid is guided by the “Results strategy for Sweden’s international development cooperation with Afghanistan 2014-2019”. This strategy has two main focus areas. The first one is to “Strengthened democracy and gender equality, greater respect for human rights and freedom from oppression”, with a focus on empowerment. The second focus area is “Better opportunities for people living in poverty to contribute to and benefit from economic growth and gain a good education”. This objective is focusing on four areas; education, employment, enterprise with means private sector development and rural development and finally economy integration. Environment consideration is not a stated goal in the strategy. The only time the environment is mentioned in the strategy is in connection to agriculture, where it is stated “Increased productivity and value added in agriculture, as well as sustainable use of natural resources” (Regeringskansliet, 2014: 4).

The humanitarian aid in Afghanistan is being guided by the “Strategy for humanitarian assistance provided through the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) 2011–2014. Due to the nature of humanitarian work, which is often connected to natural disasters, environment is an active part of the humanitarian strategy. It also stated that: ”To the extent possible, environmental and climate aspects should be taken into account in humanitarian assistance.” (Regeringskansliet, 2011: 3).

2.2.2. Sida’s organisation for the foreign aid in Afghanistan

Sida’s foreign aid in Afghanistan are going through two department’s units in Stockholm. The development aid is administrated by the Afghanistan unit whereas the humanitarian aid is handled by the Humanitarian unit.

Since the Embassy in Kabul is not delegated it is the unit in Stockholm that has administrative responsibility whereas the staff in Kabul, both Swedish Sida staff and local staff, are responsible for the follow ups and have most of the contact with their partners. The development aid to Afghanistan is divided in what is called different portfolios, based on the focus areas that are stated in the “Results strategy for Sweden’s international development cooperation with Afghanistan”. At the moment the unit has five portfolios; human rights, democratisation, education, gender and the three E portfolio that are focused on employment, economic integration and enterprise. One or two program officers in Stockholm are responsible for each portfolio that contains several projects. Each project has also a responsible person among the staff at the Embassy in Kabul.

Sida’s humanitarian aid in Afghanistan is handled by one program officer in Stockholm and one national Afghan program officer employed at the Embassy in Stockholm.

2.3. Previous research

Very few studies have been conducted with a focus on environmental outcome from the foreign aid. Among the few studies that have been done, most of them are focused on only one program, country recipient or specific donor agency. There is only one study that are looking at the issues on broader level. The results from the studies are mixed (Arvin and Lew, 2009; Lim et al., 2014; Sahoo et al., 2014). The only study that are looking into a variety of countries shows that foreign aid decreases the level of CO2 in the atmosphere whereas it is increasing the deforestation and are increasing the water pollution (Arvin and Lew, 2009). Another study focusing solely on foreign aid in India is confirming the findings the level of CO2 in the atmosphere did decrease. This study did not however look into the impact on forest and water quality (Sahoo et al., 2014). Another study are getting inconclusive results since the impact differs among different countries (Arvin et al., 2006).
It is therefore not clear how foreign aid affects the environment in the receiving country. Some researchers are arguing that when a country that is lacking resources receives aid it will have a positive impact on the environment. The logic applied is that when the government receives more funds they will not have to do the trade-off between environment and economic needs, that many poorer countries are facing. The foreign aid is therefore argued to have an indirect positive impact on the environment. Foreign aid is also believed to enable for poorer governments to clean up pollution and invest in environmental protection (Lim et al., 2014).

There are however also researchers who are arguing that foreign aid instead has a negative impact on the environment. They are arguing this based on the idea that foreign is often not focused on environmental issues, which makes it unlikely to encourage environmental consideration. It is also argued that by encouraging an increased level of development the foreign aid can lead to a negative impact on the environment. It is for instance argued that this focus on development can create initiatives for expanding polluting industries or plunder natural resources (Lim et al., 2014).

Some researchers are also arguing that since aid makes the government less dependent on people’s taxes it might lead to a situation where the government becomes less concerned with provide public goods, such as environmental protection (Lim et al., 2014).

There is one previous study that are looking into how Sida has been working with environmental issues, with a focus on how they have been integrating environment considerations in their work. This study found that Sida failed to constantly attempt to integrate environmental consideration in the work. Environmental issues were often viewed as a separate matter. The approach used by Sida was defined as “No Harm” approach were project documents were assessed to evaluate that the project would create a negative impact on the environment. One of the explanations that was brought forward for the lack of environmental focus was that a low level of knowledge about environmental issues among the program officers. It was argued that they did not understand the wider context of environmental integration. The causes for this was believed to be several; environmental issues were not considered to be a mainstreaming issue among all program officers. Due to lack of time during the assessments environmental issues were therefore not prioritized. One of the explanations was also believed to be that the mangers, both at the head quarter and local level, where not prioritising environmental issues. It was finally believed that the lack of follow up on environmental issues was the main reason to the weak implementation of the environmental policy (Brunnström et. al., 2006).
3. Theoretical framework

3.1. Sustainable development

For centuries the nature was viewed as external to humankind, it was believed to be something humans could take advantage of. The relationship between humans and the environment was seen as humanity’s triumph over the nature. It was believed that humans knowledge and technology could concur all obstacles, including problems connected to nature and environment. This view was later supplemented with the idea that the overall aim in the world should be to create as much development as possible since it was believed to benefice all people. It was development that would end poverty once and for all (Hopwood et al., 2005).

In the 1970s that view started to be replaced by the concept of sustainable development (Hopwood et al., 2005). It was soon realised that the increased growth rate in many countries had a high price. The extensive focus on growth had in many places lead to increased gaps between poor and rich groups and regions in the world, to increasing global environmental problems and to the weakening of social and cultural systems (Das, 2013b: 12, 19).

The sustainable development paradigm started to questioned if increased trade and industrialisation would improve the well-being for everyone. It was also argued that the increased focus on development severely had damaged the environment. Instead of humans dominating the nature it was believed that our life, activities and societies was nested in the nature. According to this new idea, humans were not the master of nature, we were instead dependent on the nature for our security and basic needs now and in the future (Hopwood et al., 2005).

The most well-known and used definition of sustainable development comes from the Bruntland Commission that defined sustainable development as: “development which meets the needs of present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Bereketeab, 2014: 298). The sustainable development movement wanted to change the focus from development at any cost to a qualitative and sustainable development. (Hopwood et al., 2005). For a development to be sustainable it needs three pillars; economic, social and environmental concerns. The three pillars are believed to be at least in some extent co-dependent. If not all of these three factors are considered in the development process it will not be possible to create a sustainable development (Das, 2013a; Hopwood et al., 2005).

Today there is often extensive focus on the economic development and to some extent the social development. The environmental part is however most often overseen, which have the risk of create a development that is not sustainable over time (Das, 2013a). For development to be sustainable it has to include environmental consideration: “sustainable development redefines progress to include environmental protection or restoration as something to be achieved along with other goals not something to be sacrificed in order to reach these goals” (Dermbsach cited by Das, 2013a: 107–8).

Another important aspect when creating a sustainable economic development not just the needs of the existing generation but also the needs of the coming generations have to be taken into account. It is of importance to use both an intra-generational and an inter-generational equity principle when assessing if a project is sustainable. Intra-generational equity means that it should be equal between the living generation in the world today, so that a development in one part of the world will not negatively affect people in another part of the world. Inter-state equity is focused on the needs of future generations. In order for a development to be sustainable what is done today should not affect future generations in a negative way (Das, 2013a).

The Bruntland definition has received a lot of criticism based on that the definition is too wide and too unspecific. It makes the definition problematic to use since due to the wide definition a variety of actors and projects can be claimed to work for a sustainable development. It has therefore been argued that it is possible for actors to continue doing much the same that
they are doing today, and still say that they are creating a sustainable development (Hopwood et al., 2005).

The Bruntland definition is still however one of the most used definition of sustainability. Some argues it is just because the definition so wide and unspecific that it is applicable in a wide variety of situations. It is therefore a definition that is possible to use all over the world (Bereketeab, 2014; Das, 2013a).

3.2. Sustainable development, environment and poverty

Which environmental issues that are prioritised differs between developing and developed countries. When developing countries are focusing on environmental issues it is often in connection to basic life factors in the close environment such as the quality of urban air, secure water, sanitation and toxic contaminations. In the richer developed the focus is almost always on the global systems of ozone, climate and the earth’s biodiversity (Conca, 2003).

Environmental issues can often be viewed as a luxury problem in many poorer countries, since it do not appear to be as urgent as other problems in the society. However, environmental problem is in poor countries many times actually the opposite to a luxury problem since it is a matter of life and death. People cannot survive without clean water, drink or clean air to breathe (Maathai, 2008). A degradation in the environment are also affecting quality of life in other ways. For instance, if water or wood becomes more scarce people have to walk longer distances for accessing it (Maathai, 2008).

There are also researches arguing that poverty can worsen the environmental degradation. The logic behinds this is that poor people are more dependent on environment (Zhen et al., 2014). This in combating with a shortage of living essentials creates a situation where poor people have a tendency to overexploit the nature, due to limited livelihoods options (Cobbinah et al., 2015; Zhen et al., 2014). It has also been argued that poor people are believed to have more focus on immediate benefits and less focus on long term development. This is believed to be due to that they cannot afford to wait for economic gain and environmental benefits. They have neither the resources nor the funds that is needed to be able to do activities or projects focusing on protecting the environment (Zhen et al., 2014). A third argument connected to this says that poorer people often have lower degree of education which affects the knowledge regarding environmental issues (Cobbinah et al., 2015).

Researchers have however found a lot of evidence against this theory. One study done in India shows that the connection between wealth and dependency in nature forms a u-shaped relationship: it is the poorest and the richest that are most dependent on the nature for their livelihood. Also the idea that poor people do not have a long term focus have scientists been able to disprove. One survey done all over Africa found that it was other factors than poverty that affected the degree of long term focus, for example education level. A higher education level lead to a more long-term focus. This study was arguing that it might be possible that poorer people are in fact more focused on saving the environment long term since they are more aware that they are dependent in it (Zhen et al., 2014).

3.3. Sustainable development, environment and conflict

War can be seen as the antithesis of sustainable development. It is argued that what happens during war cannot be said to take into account all three aspects of sustainable development; the environment, social consideration and economic factors. Wars are also affecting both the current and the future generations, where actions during war can have a negative affect for many decades to come, both on the social life, the economic development and the environment (Das, 2013a).

There are however different views on the possible link between violent conflicts and environment. Some researchers argue that they are inter linked, some argue that there are no
connections and some argue that environment and violent conflict are partly connected (Bereketeab, 2014). The researcher who argues that wars and conflicts are connected sees this in two different aspects. First, conflict can lead to a degradation of environment. Second, a degradation of environment can increase the risk for conflict (Upadhyay, 2014).

### 3.3.1. Conflict lead to degradation of environment

The environment is a silent victim during war, either as the aim of war or as collateral damage. Environmental damages during war can affect coming generations for a long period. It can however also strongly affect the living generation by adding a burden to an already difficult situation. A damaged environment can also become an additionally obstacles for creating a sustainable development after the war (Das, 2013a; Droege and Tougas, 2013).

During a conflict environment are often not being seen as an important factor to consider (Reyhani, 2006). Other issues, such as security, humanitarian relief, economic development and political reconciliation are often seen as more important. However, a negative impact on the environment have often a direct impact on people’s life and livelihoods. It most likely will affects for example peoples struggle for food, sanitation, water and fuel (Conca and Wallace, 2009). It can also affect livelihood negatively if the population are unable to reach natural resources during the conflict, if the natural resources are polluted or destroyed during the conflict or if the biodiversity are being affected negatively (Das, 2013a).

Conflicts and wars have numerous negative environmental effects. One can divide them as direct and indirect caused by war. The direct negative impacts are for example toxic from bombs, land mines, heavy military vehicles that are used, deforestation due to that wood is either used for fuel or is sold as a source of income (Bereketeab, 2014; Conca and Wallace, 2009). The indirect negative effects on the environment can for instance be that it burdens an already constrained eco system. Another indirect negative effect is that during war governmental institutions are often deteriorating which makes it difficult for authorities to protect the environment and implement environmental protection laws. A third indirect effect is that desperate people can be forced to live in a none sustainable way (Conca and Wallace, 2009).

War can also create two different types of chocks; the direct effects from combats that can create deaths, loss of homes, loss of lands and crops, land mines and troops that are looting. There is also an indirect chock that affects the overall livelihood after the war. In many cases the first, direct, chock creates a negative development that leads to the indirect overall negative effect (Unruh, 2008). Another aspect connected to environmental related chocks are that natural disasters, such as drought or floods, risk to have a much more negative impact during and after conflicts since people do not have the same protection, socially or economically, towards the damage that is affecting them (Marktanner et al., 2015; Unruh, 2008).

### 3.3.2. Degraded environment can lead to conflict

There is a disagreement among researches if a degraded environment increases the risk for violent conflict. Several case studies have found that a degraded environment has increased the risk for conflict. The logic in this is that when the environment degrades and resources scarcity occurs, for instance of water or food, people will not have any other choices than to fight for the resources. Another logic argues that lack of natural resources will create a frustration among citizens that can lead to such a dissatisfaction with the government that it might create an insurrection against the government (Koubi et al., 2014).

There are however critiques arguing that in these cases the conflict was not solely created by the degraded environment, it was instead primarily political and economic factors behind the conflict (Bereketeab, 2014; Koubi et al., 2014). The scarcity of natural resources can be one of the factors that are putting pressure into an already strained situation. One of the logics behind this argument is that scarcity of nature resources do not lead to an increased risk for
conflict in all countries (Das, 2013b: 72). For instance if it is a weak state institutional capacity it might not be able to mitigate when environmental driven scarcity arises (Bereketeab, 2014). A degradation will most likely affect countries differently, where the richer countries probably will have easier to adapt to the new situation whereas the impact in the poorer countries will be more extensive (Raleigh and Urdal, 2007).

Even if several case studies have shown a link between resources scarcity and risk for conflict, it has not been able to establish this link within quantitative studies (Koubi et al., 2014). For interstate, between two states conflicts the research has mainly been focused on one natural resource; water. The studies show that it is more common for countries to work together with the scarce resource than to fight over it. In the cases were it leads to conflict it creates political tensions and disputes but not violent conflict. When it comes to intrastate, within one state, conflicts the science cannot give a unified answer. Some of the studies finds that natural resource scarcity leads to conflict in some case, some of them find that it can contribute to conflict during special conditions, for instance a strong population growth, whereas other researchers do not find a link (Koubi et al., 2014).

There are also researchers that are arguing that the climate change will affect the world in such a way that it increases the risk for conflict. It is believed that climate changes most likely will create three problems connected to conflict: degradation of croplands, increasing fresh water scarcity and population displacement. It is however also here believed that the climate change will have different impacts on the increase risk for conflict for different parts of the world, depending on factors such as wealth and stage of development (Raleigh and Urdal, 2007).

3.3.3. Abundance of resources can lead to conflict

As shown above scarcity of natural resources has long been argued for having the risk to lead to conflict. However also abundance of natural resources can, according to some researchers, lead to conflict. When a country has a lot valuable natural resources rebels may find it easier to fund their movements. It can also be more attractive to try to grab the power in such a country. However, it has been difficult to find empirical support for these arguments. Some of the studies find a connection between the existence of rebels, whereas others do not find the connection. There is finally also those who argue that the connection is in fact due to a weak state mechanism (Koubi et al., 2014). Natural resources might also impact different stages of the conflict in different ways. It can be a factor in the conflict, it is however unclear in which way; if it affects when a conflict starts, the duration of the conflict or the intensity of the conflict. It can affect one of these or several of the factors, it can also affect these factors in different ways (Koubi et al., 2014).

Even if it research has not been able to verify a clear link between natural resources and conflict they have been able to establish that if natural resources leads to conflict it is more likely to be resource abundance than resource scarcity that leads to conflict (Koubi et al., 2014).

3.4. Environment and peace

It is often difficult to prioritize the management of natural resources and environment in post-conflict situations, other questions such as security, demobilisation and reintegration are often prioritized. It is often believed that that environmental focus are difficult to combine with peacebuilding development goals, the two goals can even be viewed as contradictory (Jensen, 2012; Jensen and Lonergan, 2012).

Environment is therefore often not a part of the peace process, instead the focus is on building a short term stability. This creates a situation where the peace building processes often are focusing only on the first two pillars of the sustainable development; economic and social factors, whereas the environmental factor is being ignored. When focusing on quick economic recovery and political stability environmental concerns are often sacrificed in the process
If environment is not a part in the peace making process, the peace process and development risk to become unsustainable. Natural resources are often very important in the peace building process, for instance access to water for drinking and agriculture, forests and rangelands for livelihood and high value natural resources that have the possibility to kick start the country’s economic growth (Jensen, 2012).

Another important issue connecting to environment and peace is that since it is not possible to protect the environment during the conflict, it becomes even more important to protect in the post-conflict and peacebuilding stages (Das, 2013b: 212). The environmental damage that is made during the war can make it more difficult to reach peace, if the peacebuilding process do not focus on environmental issues the damages can become irreparable (Das, 2013a).

Lack of environmental considerations in the peacebuilding process has also the risk to lead to renewed conflict, since it is believed that when a government cannot respond to the environmental needs of a war torn society this can create such an unstable situation that a new conflict can emerge (Conca and Wallace, 2009).

Environment and war is also connected to health issues. One common acknowledged health issue linked to war is the contamination that often takes place during conflict. Environment is however also connected to health in the peacebuilding process. The most obvious connection is to exposure for contaminants. Health can however also be argued to be connected to environment in the sense that how effective natural resources and livelihood is managed can have on impact on reducing diseases, increasing food security and limiting the implications of natural disasters. Humanitarian projects often temporarily address these issues but it often does not become a focus for the long-term development policies (Briggs and Weissebecker, 2012).

A third example is in connection to landmines. Landmines are according to several researchers one of the major obstacles to post-conflict development and peacebuilding. The mines affect the life of people long after the conflict ends. They block access to important services and resources, such as; farming land, schools, health clinics, roads and water sources. The landmines can also delay the return of refugees, if their former place of living is affected by mines. To be able to recover and develop past the post-conflict situation it is of importance that landmines are removed (Shimoyachi-Yuzawa, 2012).

Environment can also be used as a tool in the peace building effort, where disagreeing parts can work together with an environmental issue that is of importance for both parties. One examples of this can be that the parts work together regarding a lake or a river to ensure water access (Conca and Wallace, 2009; Milburn, 2012). Another example of this is programs focusing on environmental clean-up that can also be used in the peacebuilding process to unite conflicting parts. (Briggs and Weissebecker, 2012).

4. Method

This thesis has an explorative approach where the focus is to understand how Sweden has worked with its foreign aid in Afghanistan and why it is done in the way it id. To answers these questions a qualitative method has been used. This method was chosen since it gives the opportunity to get a more thorough and deep understanding of the investigated issue.

To get a comprehensive understanding of the two questions; how and why, two different qualitative methods have been used. First: different documents such as project proposals, assessments and annual reports have been analysed. Second: This analysis has then been supplemented with interviews with people who in different ways have been working with Sida’s foreign aid in Afghanistan.

This thesis is on Sida’s work in Afghanistan between 2010-2015. To get a better understanding of the work it was believed that several years had to be analysed. Since the analysis of the documents would be complemented with interviews it was important to choose a time frame where it would be possible to find respondents that has knowledge about Sida’s
work during those years, so it could not be too far back in time. It was finally believed that this interval would be manageable to analyse within the scope of this thesis.

4.1. Method 1 Analysis of project documents

As explained above Sida’s foreign aid in Afghanistan are going through two department’s units. The development aid is administrated by the Afghanistan unit whereas the humanitarian aid is handled by the Humanitarian unit. To get as comprehensive understanding of Sida’s work in Afghanistan as possible the decision was taken to analyse projects from both units.

4.1.1. Selection of projects and documents to analyse

Since environmental issues is not a goal in Sweden’s strategy for development aid in Afghanistan it was believed that it could be difficult to find environmental components in all the projects. It was therefore decided that the analysis should be focusing on the projects where it was believed that it could be possible to find an environmental component. Based on this information a first selection of projects was made. The decision was made to look into the multi sector support to the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), two projects within the education portfolio, one project within human rights, two projects within gender that had some component of construction, medicine waste and/or education and finally all projects within three E portfolio; economic integration, enterprise and employment. The first selection excluded all the projects within democratization, most of the project within human rights, some of the projects within the gender portfolio and some of the projects within education. This decision was based on that it was difficult to find an environmental component within those project, since they were focusing on for instance attitude changes regarding gender issues, election support and capacity strengthening within the education sector. This first selection gave nine projects to focus on. After the project proposals had been analysed the decision was made to exclude another two of the projects, because it was difficult to find an environmental connection in these projects. At the end therefore seven programs were analysed.

Of the totally 23 currently ongoing development aid projects seven was analysed. However, ARTF receives a large amount of the unit’s total funds and several of the other chosen projects had large budgets. The analysed projects received during 2015 618 million SEK in funds out of units total 734 million SEK (Openaid, 2016a). Therefore, although only seven out of 23 projects were analysed these seven programs received 85 percentages of the funds for Sida’s development aid in Afghanistan in 2015.

Most of the chosen programs have had several project cycles during the years of analysis, 2010-2015. Some of the programs have had up to three succeeding projects during this period. In the analysis all of the succeeding projects between 2010-2105 within the chosen programs were analysed. This meant that a total of 13 development aid projects where analysed.
The table below shows an overview of the selected development aid programs during 2010-2015 and the amount of funds they have received. As shown in the table the whole time period the analysed years are receiving a large amount of the funds, from 69 percentages to 84 percentages.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>ORGANISATION</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
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<td>200</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>280</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Swedish Committee for Afghanistan</td>
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<td>153</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF Bacis Education and Gender Equality</td>
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<td>70</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNOPS Rural Access Improvement Project</td>
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<td>54</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>56</td>
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</tr>
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<td>496</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>591</td>
<td>619</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>746</td>
<td>734</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The projects total % of total funds:</td>
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<td>84%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1: Development aid funds 2010-2016**

A review over the funds different development aid projects have received 2010-2015, stated in million SEK (Open Aid, 2016a, Open Aid, 2016b, Open Aid, 2016c, Open Aid, 2016d, Open Aid, 2016e, Open Aid, 2016f).

As stated above Sida has also aid in Afghanistan that is administrated by the humanitarian unit. The humanitarian unit is supporting both projects that are solely working in Afghanistan and projects that is working in several countries, where Afghanistan is one of several beneficiaries. Since this thesis is focus on the work in Afghanistan the choice was made to only analyse the humanitarian projects that exclusively worked in Afghanistan. Based on this criterion a total of four programs during 2010-2015 were analysed. The largest amount of the foreign aid that Sweden allocated to Afghanistan during the research period was funding development aid projects, whereas only an average of 15 percentages of the total foreign aid went to humanitarian aid (Open Aid, 2016a, Open Aid, 2016b, Open Aid, 2016c, Open Aid, 2016d, Open Aid, 2016e, Open Aid, 2016f).

### 4.1.2. Analysis of the project’s documents

The documents that were analysed for each project where the assessments Sida performed regarding the organisation before they had granted them funds, the project proposals from the applying organisations and in some cases the annual report of the organisation. Several of Sida’s documents are published on the web site openaid.se. I started to review all projects there and downloaded as much documents as possible from this site. For the documents that was not published on openaid.se I contacted the staff at the Afghanistan unit and at the Humanitarian unit and asked for these documents.

The assessments of the organisations were analysed to see if Sida in their assessment has been looking into environmental concerns. I reviewed if the project was evaluated from an environmental perspective, if an environmental risk assessment had been done, if any indicators for follow up was connected to environment and if environment was set as a dialogue question.

The project proposals were analysed to be able to get a full understanding of the aim of the projects, to see if the project contained components that could be analysed from an environmental perspective and to see if the organisation had analysed their projects from an environmental perspective. By analysing the project proposal, it was possible to assess both if the project had some components that Sida could have made an environmental impact assessment of and if the projects had some environmental components that Sida not had focused
on in their assessment. In this way it was possible to assess if there were cases where the aid in Afghanistan was supporting projects that actually had more environmental focus than Sida had mentioned in their assessments. For projects where environmental factors were part of Sida’s follow up the annual report was also analysed, to see how the organisations reported about the environmental issue to Sida.

4.2. Method 2 Interviews

To get a deeper understanding why Sida has been working in this way, if it would be possible to do it in a different way and if so how this could be done, the analysis of the project documents was complemented by interviews with people who in different ways had been working with these issues.

4.2.1. Selection of respondents

All the current responsible program officers, both in Stockholm and Kabul, for the projects the thesis was analysing were contacted and interviewed. The Afghanistan unit and the Humanitarian unit had when this study was conducted a total of 14 staff members in Sweden and Kabul, excluding the administration and financial staff. Nine out of the current staff was interviewed, six program officers in Stockholm, two Swedish Sida staff working in Kabul and one of the national Afghan staff members in Kabul.

Since it also was of interesting to get insights into how Sida had been working with these issues previously I also contacted several of the former staff members that had been working with Afghanistan. This gave another four respondents; three former staff members in Kabul and one former staff member in Stockholm. One environmental specialist at Sida was also interviewed in order to get that person’s understanding of the issue and the perspective on how the environmental work in Afghanistan was conducted. Finally, I interviewed one person working in Palestine since the analysis of Sida’s strategies showed that Palestine is the only conflict country that has a clear focus on environment. The aim of this interview was to see if the fact that environment was a goal in their strategy was believed to be of importance for their environmental work and also to see how they worked with these issues in such a conflict environment. The selection of respondent was, as above explained, non-randomized where purposive sample was used based on voluntary participation from the respondents (Saunders et al., 2012: 287–9). This approach gave a total of 14 interviews.

4.2.2. Conducting the interviews

There are several advantages with conducting physical interviews, compared to for example phone interviews. It is easier to create trust for the interviewer and it is also easier for the interviewer to read the respondents (Saunders et al., 2012: 404). The aim was therefore to conduct as many physical interviews as possible. It was however not manageable in several cases due to a variety of reasons; some of the respondents were working either in Palestine or Afghanistan, some were on vacation and some of the respondents preferred to take the interview over the phone. In the end three interviews were conducted in person whereas twelve interviews were conducted over the phone or over internet.

The interviews were semi structured. Several themes had been identified before and some questions had been prepared in advance (Saunders et al., 2012: 384–5). During the interviews the same initial questions were often used. The following questions were adapted based on how the interview developed, what the respondent brought up and also depending on in which area the respondent was/had been working. One of the advantages with semi-structured interviews is that new issues and perspectives could be given by the respondents - issues that the interviewer not had thought about. This was the case during this thesis which lead to that themes and questions were adjusted during the process. When theoretical saturation had been reached,
after several respondents had been giving similar answers, that question was excluded in further interviews (Saunders et al., 2012: 374). When the last interview was conducted theoretical saturation had been reached for all themes.

There is always a risk that the interviewer can misapprehend answers in the analysis or interpret the answer based on personal bias (Saunders et al., 2012: 393). To avoid this, I made sure to always ask clarifying questions, even in cases where I thought I knew what the respondent meant, so that the respondents with their own words could explain what they meant.

4.2.3. Analysis of the interviews

With the permission of the respondents all interviews were recorded. These recordings were then transcribed. The first six interviews were transcribed completely, to be able to find interesting themes. A conscious decision was thereafter made not to transcribe things that clearly were not relevant for the thesis, such as for instance the background questions in the beginning. An estimated 95 percentage of the contents of all the interviews were transcribed. After each interview reflections and ideas for new questions was written down and used during the next interview.

It does not exist a standardised method for analysing qualitative data (Saunders et al., 2012: 556). In the analysis for this thesis an initial analysis was performed after the first six interview to find new interesting themes for the remaining interviews. This was believed to be important so that the remaining interviews would have the right focus (Saunders et al., 2012: 562). In this first analysis all the transcribed interviews were analysed. 27 themes emerged during the analysis and all interviews was coded based on this themes. All the quotes in the transcribed interviews were coded with colours and numbers based on these themes (Saunders et al., 2012: 557–8).

A second analysis was performed after the eleventh interviewed had been conducted and transcribed. In the second analysis the five new interview were coded based on the previous themes. During this work another 16 themes were found, which gave a total of 43 themes. In the next step the first six interviews were read through again and were, if possible, coded based on the new themes that had been found. The 43 themes were then arranged under four categories based on the aim of the thesis; what is done today, why is it done this way, how can it be different, what is needed for it to be different. Within each category it was then possible to fins subtitles which all the 43 could be divided under. This procedure was able to merge several of the themes so that they were cut down to 17.

The four categories were then used as main title in the structure of the result chapter and the 17 remaining categories were used as subtitles. After this all the quotes that had been coded was placed under the corresponding subtitle. From all these quotes a selection of which quotes to use in the thesis was made based on how clearly the quote illustrated the theme. Consideration was also taken that all respondents would if possible be represented by at least one quote. If quotations were believed to be of importance where was possible to identify the respondent based on some of the information in the quote this information was changed so that the quotation should remain anonymous.

All interviews but one was done in Swedish. Since this thesis is in English this meant that almost all quotes had to be translated from Swedish to English. This can be a challenge, especially when a respondent is using expressions that do not have a corresponding expression in English. A lot of effort was put in the translation in order to try to get the same understanding and feeling as that of the Swedish quote. As an extra precaution all quotes with the Swedish original and the English translation were emailed to the respondents so that they could read through their quotes and see if they believed that I have caught what they tried to say. Several of the respondents wanted to adjust small things in the quotations. Where the meaning of the quotations was assessed to be the same these changes was made. If I assessed that the editing created to much of a change in the quotation, I tried to have a dialogue with
respondent regarding this and explain how I believed it had changed. If the respondent still wanted to have the new editing I had decided to choose to not use the quotation and instead references to what had been said in the text.

4.3. Method discussion and criticism of the sources

4.3.1. Validity of respondents’ answer

When part of a study is based on interviews it is always a risk that the respondents will not give the full pictures. It was believed that one risk of the chosen method could be that the respondents would hesitate to describe their own work or their organisation in a way that could be experienced as negative. For example, if asked if they have taken environmental issues into consideration the respondents could feel the need to say yes and give a more positive view. The risk was therefore that they would adjust their answer in such a way that it could affect the validity of the study.

Several factors were however identified which were believed to counteract this risk. Firstly, since environment is not stated in the strategy for the development aid in Afghanistan it was believed to be easier for the respondents to talk about these issues without feeling that they or their organisation would be perceived in a negative way. Secondly, since I had done an internship at the Afghanistan unit last fall I knew or had met eleven out of the fifteen respondents and they knew me. This was believed to ease the feeling that someone came and evaluated them since at least the component that the interviewer was a stranger was eliminated for a majority of the respondents.

To further diminish this risk, four people who had previously worked with Afghanistan, were interviewed, since it was believed that it could be easier to raise sensitive issues if they did not work there anymore.

It is however possible that my former connection to the Afghanistan unit for the former employees possible could have had a negative effect on their wish to talk about sensitive issues. Due to this and the fact that even if some of them knew me previously it can still be viewed as sensitive to talk about these issues, I carefully formulated the question to put emphasis on that I was curious and tried to understand, rather than evaluating them. I furthermore made sure to acknowledge that Afghanistan is a very difficult environment to work in. Another strategy I used was when the first interviews had been conducted to, anonymously, refer to something that another respondent had said and ask for reflection about this. This was done based on the idea that it could be perceived as less sensitive if the respondent knew that another respondent had talked about the question before.

My assessment is though that environmental issues, for almost all of the respondents, were not perceived as a sensitive to talk about. I believe that especially the fact that environment is not a goal in the development strategy made this issue much less sensitive than what I had feared.

A second possible concern connected to the validity of the respondents’ answer is that during the time period that I have analysed, 2010-2015, Sida’s have had more staff members then what I have been able to interview for these thesis. Due to the time limitations of this study and the problem with finding more former staff members to interview it was not possible to do a more comprehensive selection. However, since several of the respondents have been working with Afghanistan for Sida’s part for several years it was assessed that this sample would be able to give an in-depth understanding of the subject.

4.3.2. Validity of assessed projects

Sida has, especially through the humanitarian side, also been giving funds to organisations that are working in several countries and not solely in Afghanistan. Since this thesis is focusing
on the work in Afghanistan the decision was made to not analyse those projects, since it would be difficult to assess how much of Sida’s assessment that was connected to Afghanistan and how much that was connected to the other countries. This approach can though be criticized since it meant that not all Sida’s foreign aid was taken into account when suitable projects to analyse was found. Not all of the development sides projects were analysed either, but here at least all of them were assessed during the election of projects to analyse.

One could also argue that by only, for most of the project, analysing Sida’s assessment before granting funds and the organisations project proposal the analyse of documents only focused on what happened before the project started. This analyse did therefore not give any information about what happens during the project cycle. One could therefore argue that it could have been better to analyse all annual reports, review and so on. The assessment was however made that this would not have given more information, since if Sida does not in their assessment decide to follow up on environmental issues through for instance indicators or dialogue questions, they will not in the coming reports focus on these issues. An analyse of the rest of the documents was therefore not believed to give any further information. What happened during the project phases was instead captured through the interview where the respondents were asked different questions about if they in some ways followed up on environmental issues.
5. Result

5.1. What has been done?

5.1.1. Review of the documents

In the review ten programs with a total of 19 succeeding projects was analysed. All assessments of projects made by Sida as well as all the project proposals from the organisations were analysed. Sida’s assessment was reviewed based on five criteria:

1. To what extent had environmental concerns been assessed
2. To what extent had risks connected to environment and/or climate been assessed
3. To what extent had the indicators chosen by Sida for follow up an environmental focus
4. To what extent had the environment been chosen as a key dialogue issue with the organisation
5. If any external review of the project proposal been conducted by the climate specialist at Sida.

This review was then summarised in a table, see next page.

The first criteria; if Sida had conducted an environmental analysis in their assessment was graded in three levels; superficial, medium and thorough. When doing this grading three things were taken into consideration. The first factor that was looked for was if the assessment included a thorough analysis of the project, both regarding how well the organisation was handling environmental issues and what possible environmental impacts the project might have on the environment. The second factor analysed was if the assessment had an overall environmental analysis, for instance if environmental issues were mentioned in the description of the situation in Afghanistan. The last factor reviewed was how thorough the possible risk analysis connected to climate and/or environment was conducted.

5.1.1.1. The development aid projects

The review showed that out of 13 projects on the development side six had a superficial environmental assessment, five was assessed to have a medium quality on its environmental analysis whereas two of them was given the grade thorough. Of the six projects assessments that was graded as superficial the most common problem was that they conducted a very shallow assessment of the organisations capacity to handle environmental issues and/or the possible environmental impact from the project. One of the most illustrative examples of this is the environmental assessment that was done for the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) program for 2010-2013 where the complete analysis states: “For ARTF the WB (World Bank) rules on Environmental Impact Assessments are applicable. The assessment is that this system is acceptable to Sida.” (Kjellson, 2010: 10). Another example is from the assessment of Danish Demining Groups (DDG) project in 2014-2016 which states: “It is not possible to appraise whether environment/climate aspects have been taken into account in the intervention set-up. DDG will carry out a semi-extensive Environmental Impact Assessment during the second half of 2014.” (Bjarnevi & Zeineldin, 2014: 6). DDG are supported by Sida in its removal of mines, an activity with a clear environmental focus. It would thus be expected to have a more thorough environmental analysis of this program. It could also be expected that, if it was not possible to assess whether environmental and climate aspects have been taken into account, DDG would have been asked about how they worked with these issues in order to get knowledge about this before Sida disbursed funds to the program.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROJECT</th>
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<th>ORGANISATIONS’ DOCUMENTS</th>
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<td>Thorough</td>
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Table 2: Review of projects documents and the assessments of project documents done by Sida.

A third example is from the assessment of the United Nations Office for Project Service (UNOPS) road program in Afghanistan, Rural Access Improvement Project (RAIP), for 2010-2012 where the text that assessed if the RAIP project had taken climate and environment into consideration was copied directly from RAIP’s own project proposal.

There are however two positive exceptions, the assessment of Aga Khan’s project and the assessment ARTF program for 2015, where the assessment of the ARTF program especially stands out in regards to the quality of both the possible environmental impacts of the project and the World Bank’s ability to handle environmental issues.

Another finding was that almost all of the organisations had in their project proposal some components that could have a positive impact on the environment. These positive effects were however often not mentioned in Sida’s assessments.

5.1.1.2. An overall environmental focus

A second common problem in Sida’s assessment was that very few of the assessments had an environmental focus in the overall analysis of the situation in Afghanistan. Almost all of the assessments are giving some background overview about the situation in Afghanistan where for instance the conflict, the poverty level and the corruption level often are mentioned. However, there were very few cases were environment issues were part of the analysis of the current situation. Taken into account the high proportion of the population that are living in rural areas being dependent on natural resources for survival the lack of environmental focus in the overall analysis of the situation in Afghanistan was a bit surprising.

5.1.1.3. Risk of doing harm environment/climate

A third common problem in Sida’s assessment of the different projects was that the project’s risk of doing harm to environment or climate was only assessed in three projects. The analysis of the project proposals showed that all of the projects except two, had components that possibly could have a negative environmental impact. The most common one were connected to construction and waste management. For instance, the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan and UNICEF Basic Education and Gender Equality programs included constructions of schools. UNOPS road program do not have a component of constructing new roads. However, even if just existing roads are being repaired or improved it is still possible that this can create negative environmental impact, for instance by increased traffic or a non environmentally friendly transportation of production of the used gravel.

5.1.1.4. Indicators and key dialogue issues with environmental focus

The review of Sida’s assessment showed that only one of the projects had indicators for follow up that were connected to environmental issues. The review also revealed that environment was a key dialogue question in just one project. The latter can to some extent be explained by the fact that the Afghanistan unit has three predetermined key dialogue issues that always should be used; corruption, gender and conflict sensitivity. It is however possible to add more dialogue issues than these three. Regardless of why, the fact that Sida for all assessed projects, besides one, does not have any environmental focused indicators or have environment as a key dialogue issue makes it very difficult for Sida to follow up and get knowledge about what is happening in the projects regarding environmental issues.

It was possible to see in the assessments that Sida has a focus on the three above mentioned predetermined key dialogue issues. One of the most illustrative example of what impact this focus have had is once again from the assessment of DDG’s demining project for 2014-2016. This project has a clear environmental connection, however the environmental and climate
aspects are being analysed on four rows whereas gender issues are given a 51 row long analysis. The length of an analysis does of course not say everything, but it is still an interesting comparison.

5.1.1.5. External environmental reviews

The program officers have the option to ask for external assistance regarding specific thematic issues, for instance conflict sensitivity, gender or environment. Sida has an external environmental helpdesk connected to two of the universities in Sweden and an environmental specialist at the department where the Afghanistan belongs. The review showed that an external environmental assessment had only been done for one of the projects, the Aga Khan project. It was interesting to see that this project had by far the most thorough assessment of a project regarding environmental issues. Environment had been taken much more thorough into consideration in this assessment it was this assessment that had chosen environmental connected indicators and environment as a key dialogue issue. One could of course argue that if an external environment assessment is believed to be needed this project probably had a lot of environmental focus to start with. The assessment of the other projects’ proposals did however show that environment would be possible to take into consideration in more of the assessments.

To see to what extent the environmental specialist had been used during the last years I contacted both the external environmental helpdesk and the environmental specialist at the department. The external helpdesk had assisted the Afghanistan unit in only one assessment, between 2011 and 2015, the above mentioned Aga Khan project. According to the environmental specialist at the department it was not common that the Afghanistan unit had contacted her either. This shows how seldom the Afghanistan unit has been using external specialist to review environmental issues.

5.1.1.6. The humanitarian aid projects

As stated in chapter two of this thesis the humanitarian result strategy has more focus on environment issues than the result strategy for the development aid in Afghanistan. When analysing the assessment of the humanitarian projects this difference is clearly shown. Besides the fact that the humanitarian result strategy has a clearer focus on environment, environment concerns are also a natural part of humanitarian contribution. Environment is one the factors that creates humanitarian crises, through for instance floods, drought or landslides. Environment is therefore taken into consideration in all parts of the humanitarian assessments. Among the reviewed assessment it is particularly one that stands out, the assessment of the Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DACAAR). This assessment has a thorough analysis of the projects possible environmental impact. The assessment is detailed to such a level that it is mentioned that DACAAR are building their latrines with concrete instead of wood since there is a shortage of wood in Afghanistan.

There is though one exception among the humanitarian assessments and it is the assessment of the United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs’ (OCHA) project Afghanistan Emergency Response Fund (ERF). This assessment mentions environment as one of the factors that can create humanitarian disasters in Afghanistan. It does not however analyse this in any way. One of the explanations is that the assessment tool used by Sida has evolved heavily during the last six years. The assessments that was written in 2010 did not have the same guiding questions for assessment that are used today.

5.1.1.7. A positive development over time

As mentioned above Sida’s assessment program have evolved considerable during the last six years. This becomes very obvious when analysing documents that was written in 2010 and compare them to the documents that was written in 2015. The biggest change is that the assessment program is now giving the program officers many more standardised questions to
answer. In the current version of the program there is a question regarding if climate and environmental issues have been considered. The program officers also have to actively deselect to answer the risks connected to the environmental and climate effects of the project if they believe that it is not applicable. This change in the assessment program can explain some of the varieties when it comes to the environmental quality of the assessments. It is possible to see an overall positive trend where environment has started to get more and more focus.

This change in the assessment tool can however not explain all differences, since also some of the assessments that has been written during the last couple of years was superficial in their environmental analysis.

5.1.2. Respondents comments on what is done today

As the review showed the development aid in Afghanistan has not had a clear focus on environment in the assessments of projects. However, this only give information about how Sida has handled the environment component during the assessments, maybe environment has been more prioritized in other parts? All the respondents were asked about if environment had been a concern during their time at the unit. The short answer to this question is no, here clearly stated by one of the respondents:

When it comes to your question about sustainable development and environment, my short answer would be: No. There has not been such a thought at all. (Respondent 7)

That environment had not been a focus are for the development aid in Afghanistan was a common view among the respondents. There are however two exceptions where two respondents, both former staff members at the Embassy in Afghanistan, believed that even if environment had not been a focus issue it had still been discussed to some extent. This could indicate that, if anywhere, environment might have been more discussed among the staff in Afghanistan. This was also something one of the two respondents mentioning:

I believe that, here at home (at Sida in Stockholm) it is discussed a lot connected to policy issues. You are talking about in a theoretically way, down there (at the Embassy) it is more practical hands on. I think that, here at home the projects are developed but I believe that it is a more vivid, active discussion in the field than what it is at home. (Respondent 13)

The result was however not conclusive regarding if environment was more in focus among the staff in Afghanistan. Of the interviewed respondents eight had been working or was working in Afghanistan. Besides from the two respondents above it was not possible, in the analysis of the interviews, to see that environment was believed to be discussed more in Afghanistan than in Stockholm. Here is for instance a reply given by one of the former staffs in Afghanistan to the question if they discussed environment during the respondent’s time at the Embassy:

Environment is something that has not been in focus even if it is a part of the (Swedish) government’s priorities. It has been more focus on gender than on environment, if one should compare those two. I have thought about this and it has not been there. I am trying to remember when we ever even discussed environment. (Respondent 2)

The two respondents who believed that environment had been in focus to some extent in the field work, shared the common view that it had not been a main focus. It is therefore possible to state that the result from the review of the documents overall was confirmed by the respondents; environment has not been a focus issue in Sida work in Afghanistan between 2010-2015.

5.1.2.1. Humanitarian aid

Since environment had not been a focus area almost all of the program officers had problems with finding example where environment had been a consideration in projects. The clearest
exception that several of the respondents brought up was, which was also shown in the review of the documents, the humanitarian work that Sida has done in Afghanistan. Environmental concerns were believed to be much more taken into consideration in the humanitarian work. The staff that worked with the humanitarian shared this view:

*In general, environmental issues are more looked at in the humanitarian project and not so much in the development project, as a general trend. That is because people closely link environmental issues to disasters and they think that disasters are closely related to the humanitarian system. So yes, it is often something that humanitarian look at. (Respondent 11)*

One of the problems though is that since humanitarian work is focused on saving life and alleviate suffering this create a situation where even if environmental issues are more considered, this work ends up being more short term focused. The humanitarian aid handles the consequences of a problem, for instance a natural disaster, but it is not possible to work with the causes of the problem. Here explained by one of the staff that is working on the development side:

*The humanitarian staff have it more in front of their faces all the time. The disasters often have some connections to environment, much more than what our work has. On the other hand, they have a shorter term focus than the development side, so there are two aspects on it. (Respondent 13)*

### 5.1.2.2. Some other positive examples

There were two examples were the interviews showed that two of the projects, UNOPS road project and DDG mine clearing project, had taken environment issues more into consideration than what was shown in the project proposal and in the assessments done by Sida. One of the respondents are here explaining how they have been working with waste management with the UNOPS road building project:

*When you are building a bridge as in this program or when you are building roads it creates quite a lot of constructional waste that needs to be removed. It is more of a detail, but it still need to be handled. So we have had several discussions about that. When they have knocked down an old bridge (we have talked) about waste management and that it should be handled according to good environmental principles. We have done that to some extent and received good response on it. (Respondent 1)*

The same respondent also gave examples of how natural disasters have been taken into consideration during the road constructions, here talking about what the project has done to protect the roads against floods and landslides:

*When they build a road they are also trying to secure it so that the road will not be flooded or affected by landslides. They are making these kind of steel cages, which you fill with stones and are placing them as protection. (Respondent 1)*

The Danish Demining Group (DDG) project is another example where the respondents’ answers show that the project had clearer focus on environment than what was shown in the review of the documents. DDG had, according to the respondent, planned to do an environmental assessment and connected to this review the environmental impacts from the demining process.

It was also possible to find examples of where the program officers had discovered that the projects Sida supported in fact had more environmental focus than what the program officers were aware about:
For instance, when we visited MSI’s (Mary Stopes International) that have the family planning clinics, we discovered that they are working with solar energy for their clinics, which is really positive in a country as Afghanistan. (Respondent 5)

5.1.2.3. Summary of what has been done

The review of the assessment done by Sida showed that, except for one exception, in the Aga Khan agriculture project, environment was not stated as a key dialogue issue and no indicators with environmental focus had been chosen. The respondents were asked if the projects were followed up regarding environmental issues. The answers confirmed the finding that Sida in almost all cases in the development aid have not followed up the projects with respect to environmental issues. The only project that had been followed up was the above mentioned Aga Khan agriculture project that had environment as a key dialogue issue and had indicators with an environmental focus. As stated above environment was, even if it was not part of the official follow up of the project, to some extent discussed in the UNOPS road project and in DDG’s demining project. In all other development aid projects Sida were not following up the projects in regard to environment.

As the result clearly shown so far, it is another situation however within the humanitarian, where environment is a natural concern and the respondents answers indicated that it is something that is followed up with the organisations.

To conclude, the interviews confirmed most of the findings from the review of the documents, environmental issues have not been a clear focus area for Sida’s work in Afghanistan. The question is why, and that will be the focus for the next section.

5.2. Why is not environment more prioritized?

The next question to try to understand is why environmental issues has not been more of a focus for the development aid in Afghanistan.

5.2.1. Environment is not in the development aid strategy

When asked why Sweden through their development aid has not focused more on environmental issues in Afghanistan, all respondents gave the same answer; it is not a focus area in the result strategy for Sweden’s international development cooperation with Afghanistan. It is through the strategy that the Swedish government decides what Sida should focus their work, and as one of the respondents explains it:

“It is the strategy that is the central, it is that one that we follow, it is that one that we are reporting on. It is that one that we are responsible to implement.” (Respondent 12)

Since environment is just mention in one paragraph, connected to sustainable development, in the development aid strategy this has led to that environmental issues, in most cases, has not been prioritised:

“It has never been a focus area. As you said in the beginning, it is of course to a big extent because we do not have it in our strategy. We have never had it, I would say, and therefore it has not been something we follow up. When writing appraisals (assessments) we are barely touching it, like; ” it is not necessary”,” our assessment is that it will not affect environment negatively” and then you do not look into if there is something you can do.” (Respondent 5)

It was also possible to see that the humanitarian projects had much more environmental consideration in their assessment and follow ups, this could be argued to be connected to that the humanitarian strategy has a clearer focus on environment.
It is true that environment is not a focus area in the Afghanistan strategy for the development aid. Environment is however one of the thematically focus area at Sida on an agency level. When interviewed an environmental specialist at Sida was commenting on this:

“But then also a general comment that Afghanistan strategy does not cover environment and climate change. No, it is not a stated goal but it is a goal that environment and climate change should be integrated as a cross cutting issue. As far as I have seen environment and climate change have not been integrated systematically.” (Respondent 10)

The same specialist also pointed out that the unit has programs that would be possible to link closer to environment:

“The team understand environment and climate change as it is not to be prioritised, but the strategy prioritises humanitarian aid and agriculture, and the strategy prioritise education. Environment is closely connected to these areas and it should go without saying that it should be integrated in modern foreign aid including humanitarian assistance.” (Respondent 10)

When asked why the unit has not worked more with environment when it is thematically focus area on the agency level, some of them could not really give an answer and seemed to be almost as surprised as I by the fact that they had not been focusing on it more:

“I think it is odd. It is a thematically focus area and we are getting away with not working with it. We are almost not even considering why we are doing it or not doing it. We are just leaving it.” (Respondent 5)

“But we have not pushed the issues of environment and you wonder why, since it is the governments two primary priorities and has been for the last twenty years, if I remember correctly. It is interesting why we have not pushed for it.” (Respondent 2)

So if environment is a thematically Sida focus area, why have not the work in Afghanistan been more focused on environment? One of the respondents gave a fairly pragmatic explanation to this. Since the time, money and resources is limited the best way according to this respondent was to focus on what is in the strategy since that was believed to make the Swedish Ministry of Foreign affairs and the Swedish government happy:

“You have to focus on what makes an impact, on what gives a result but also satisfy those who are following up the implementation. There I think you are fairly pragmatic. Yeah, we need to have gender. Yeah, we need to have a little of this and we can take some of that at least. But then I am not sure that we manage to do so much more.” (Respondent 6)

One of the other respondents commented on that Sida has so many priorities that it was difficult to be able to follow them all:

“Most of the time, program officers focus on the main priorities as described and stipulated in the strategy. If sustainable development and environment are not in focus by the strategy, it is difficult to work from that perspective. Therefore, you rely on things you have knowledge about and things that are closer to the strategy.” (Respondent 7)

One of the respondents also brings up the fact that it is not possible to add on more and more things to work with without consider how it will fit with the already existing portfolio and the competences in the team:

“We are not that keen on jumping on one train after another, we rather work with what we are imposed to do. It also a question about resources and competences. How
should we do it? Do we have the competence and who should do it? How will this fit with everything else? You cannot just add on and add on”. (Respondent 12)

The interviews clearly show that the respondents had different views on how the goals in the strategy are connected to the thematically focus areas at Sida. Most of them believed that the strategy should be the only guide deciding what they should focus on. This idea was based on the fact that the unit are reporting back to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the strategy and therefore should focus on what is in the strategy. These respondents were of course aware of the overall thematically focus that Sida had on environment, but the strategy was believed to always come first. The majority of the respondents shared this view. Some of the respondents did however believe that even if they had to have a focus on what was in the strategy it could be manageable to see if it was possible also to integrate the thematically focus areas, such as environment. One explanation to why these different views on how the strategies are connected to the thematically focus areas at Sida, is that the previous Swedish government changed the way the strategies are written:

“The strategies took a new form during the previous government. Before, they could be very long, like 25 pages. Then it was really that what is in the strategy is what should be done. What the previous government did was that they tightened up the strategies so that only what was specific for that country was mentioned, but not all the generic issues that applies to all countries. That environment and climate should be integrated in all foreign aid, it applies to all foreign aid, so therefore it was left out since it was not specific for that country. But Sida still had their old reading of the strategies, that what is in the strategy is what should be done.” (Respondent 8)

5.2.2. Environment is not believed to be prioritized in Afghanistan

Another explanation for why Sida’s work in Afghanistan has not had a clearer environmental focus is that the respondents assess that the question has not been in focus in Afghanistan. One of the respondent gives an example where the Afghan government’s new draft for the development strategy for Afghanistan had been circulated among donors:

“The latest draft for the new Afghan Development strategy for Afghanistan was circulated a couple of months back and what stroke me was that environment and climate was totally absent. It did not say a word about it and I do not believe it was something that any of the other donors raised as a concern.” (Respondent 8)

Among the respondents it was common believed that it was security, peace and the growing numbers of Afghan refugees who left the country that was in focus for the Afghan government, whereas environment was not believed to be a priority:

“I believe that for the government it is other issues that come first. I think there is an awareness but they feel such a strong pressure. Take for example just everyone who is leaving the country, unrest in the provinces, and so on. They have an interest, of course, but in realpolitik there are other issues that comes first.” (Respondent 6)

“In all this to expect people and decisions makers, to think about environmental issues is a bit ambitious. There have always been too many priorities and among these priorities security has always been in top and then other things follow and environment doesn’t even make the list.” (Respondent 11)

The Afghan government has created two ministries focused on environment, one with the aim to work for natural catastrophe prevention and one to work with climate and environmental policies. According to one of the respondents these two ministries are however the weakest in the government, which according to the respondent shows the low priority environmental issues are given by the Afghan government.
In a country as Afghanistan with so many urgent and present needs environment was not believed to really be a concern for the public either:

“People are dying and are leaving the country but we think it is important to recycle, I think that would be hard to sell to the Afghan population. It is an environment that makes it very difficult to think long-term about these issues because you do not know what will happen.” (Respondent 6)

Another of the respondents were also talking about this issue; how difficult it is to focus on long term issues, such as environment, when living in a conflict situation:

“With an open conflict the situation on the ground constantly changes and affects people’s everyday life in a concrete way. They live under great uncertainty and don’t know what will happen from one day or week to another. Then it is difficult to also pay attention to issues that by their nature are more long term.” (Respondent 3)

Also this respondent was mentioning how difficult it was to work with environmental issues when the country was in conflict:

“If one would be crass, Afghanistan is like in war. They have been at war in 30 years. They are still in war, now with an internal guerrilla. We can just conclude that environmental issues have a tendency to not be high on the agenda in conflict countries over all. /…/ Clean water is of course important but if it might not even be possible to drill wells, at all, due to the ongoing combats?” (Respondent 14)

One of the respondents did also bring up the fact that environment can be difficult for everyone to understand. When added the high illiteracy rate in Afghanistan it becomes even more challenging:

“Environment is something that I think is even difficult to explain in the developed world. /…/ Add to that the fact that many people are alliterated here, they have many more import, or immediate problem to think of and so on so it is more of an issue to convince people what environment issues are.” (Respondent 11)

One of the respondent did however raise the issue that since Afghanistan is still mainly a rural country which could make it easier for people to understand the connection between nature and environment issues.

Sweden was not the only donor country with little focus on environment in Afghanistan. When asked about if environmental issues were discussed amongst other donors, the general answer was no. Here explained by two of the staff who had been working at the Embassy:

“At least in all my meetings with the donor community and the donor coordination so far this has not been an issue.” (Respondent 9).

From the respondents’ experiences environment was not at the agenda at the larger international donor meetings either:

“I have attended several international meetings and environmental issues have not been high on the agenda.” (Respondent 12)

An explanation for this that one of the respondents raised was that environmental issues was believed to be difficult to raise attention for, whereas it was easier to create interest for other issues such as education:

“When money and resources and ideas came to Afghanistan, first thing was yeah let us build schools, because people need schools, very truly. /…/ . So the most obvious things were first, environment was never the easiest to understand and never the easiest to notice. And education and health were easier to sell to the public, to policy
makers, to anyone. To say look; cute children have access to education, it is sold easily.” (Respondent 11)

During the interviews one of the respondents talked about that in the beginning when Sweden scaled up its foreign aid in Afghanistan after the Taliban fell 2001 environment was seen as a sort of a luxury problem:

“In the situation where you started here, environmental issues were still a luxury problem. The focus was mostly at; let us get something to work. It was not that they ignored it or so, but I do not think it was a major focus.” (Respondent 6)

During the interview I got the sense that environment still was partly viewed this way among some of the respondents, for instance in these three examples:

“But I think that many people would wonder how you would be able to prioritise it (environment) in the situation the country is in, but of course, it is technically possible.” (Respondent 9)

“When you are working in a country as Afghanistan you are very much working with the primary needs, as food, health and shelter. My impression is that environment and climate are viewed as secondary, for natural reason. I do not think that people are viewing environment and climate as a primary need.” (Respondent 2)

“I mean imagine to tell someone common Afghan in province to tell him not to use the plastic bag, I’m not sure if one could never convince a rural Afghan why not. He would simply tell you, you are crazy, let me have the bag because it is convenience.” (Respondent 11)

One of the respondents were talking about how the conflict do not only affect the country’s population but also the people who works with foreign aid in a conflict country:

“In that kind of constant uncertainty and unpredictability it is natural and psychologically easy to understand that it is difficult to also engage and being interested in these other issues. This also applies to the countries engaged in foreign aid here. This is not on the top of their agenda either, instead they, their agenda and their strategies and plans are also highly affected by the conflict.” (Respondent 3)

5.2.3. It is a challenging environment

During the interviews a third reason was brought up, for why Sweden has not been working more with environmental issues with in Afghanistan. It was believed to be due to the difficult situation in the country with the conflict going on. The organisations that Sida supports had difficulties with managing the work they already had. With the conflict escalating it became even more difficult to focus on even more issues:

“Right now within the education sector one of the main concerns is that the conflict makes ¼ of the country controlled by Taliban so they are trying to establish a communication with the Taliban to make sure that the education will continue. To start, in that position, to talk about environmental issues, I do not think it is that easy. /.../ The energy is being used to make sure that there is any education at all going on.” (Respondent 9)

Even when organisations had ideas about how to work more with environmental issues, there were situations where the security situation became a contributing factor to why it was decided to not go further with the idea. Here one of the respondents are talking about such ideas within the mine clearing project by Danish Demining Group (DDG):
The security situation was also brought up as a contributing factor to why it was challenging for organisations who wanted to put more focus on following up their programs from an environmental perspective. Since it is so difficult for the organisations to review their environmental work, it also becomes challenging to have a clearer focus on the issue.

As stated above, one of the respondents believed that the weakest administrations in the government was the two ministries working with environment issues. One of the other respondents were also commenting on the difficulties working with environment on the policy level. The situation in Afghanistan with the ongoing conflict, a weak administration and a president that to not have full control of the country, makes it according to the respondent, challenging to work with environmental issues on a higher policy level:

“It is probably difficult to build strong institutions in a country that does not have any stability, I would say. Some basic stability is probably needed first. I have a hard time visioning the Afghan government being able to build an environment agency, it does not even seem like the government have control over the whole country, who should they then be able to take responsibility for environmental issues?” (Respondent 4)

The Swedish foreign aid in Afghanistan also have a somewhat special history, since it started out as a cooperation between the military and the foreign aid workers. One of the respondents talked about how the military intervention overall had not taken environment into consideration:

“This whole military present, that we have been a small part of, when it comes to all NATO countries that has been there and all the countries outside NATO there were very little environmental consideration other than in waste recycling at the military bases.” (Respondent 2)

One of the other respondents brought up this issue in connection to the development work that Sida did in Afghanistan when the Swedish troops were present:

“I would almost argue that most of the foreign aid that to Afghanistan during the first ten years (after 2001) was so politicized and fragmented that it was more like a large humanitarian intervention than anything else. It was harmful both for sustainability and for the environment. /.../ If you look at the infrastructure project and what the first purpose of some of them, it was not rural development in the beginning it was access for the military. First came the military forces and then came the aid agencies.” (Respondent 7)

The Swedish troops have now left Afghanistan. None of the other respondents did spontaneously mention the military connection to the development aid. When asked, the common view among the respondent were that the military in some ways had impacted the aid, but rather in the sense that the focus had been more of what was believed to be winning hearts and minds for the military intervention. These respondents did not believe that the roads were built with the purpose for military to use them, but they did however acknowledge that the cooperation with the military to some extent had impacted the foreign aid. It is therefore difficult to assess based on these different statements how much the cooperation with the military actually affected the foreign aid, but it is still an interesting point of view as a part of the explanation for why environment has not been more of a focus in Afghanistan.

Most of the international troops have left Afghanistan which has worsened the conflict situation. The respondent who made the connection between the Swedish military presence and
the foreign aid did however believe that it might be easier to work for issues such as environment when there is a lower degree of political focus:

“I believe that it is possible to work with environmental and sustainable development issues. Maybe the possibilities to do will increase with the new government and the fact that Afghanistan is less politically “hot” therefore it is possible to work more with long term and sustainable solutions. Those who were there for other reasons will leave the country and therefore the actors that are left are the ones that want to stay and hopefully do something more long term.” (Respondent 7)

This view was however not shared among all of the respondents. One of them did instead believe that the withdrawal of the troops and the other international donors will create an even more narrow focus on other issues, such as security and peace, which according to one of the respondents would mean even less focus on environment:

“The other donors will withdraw; they are withdrawing already. /.../ They will focus on certain core areas that will help to keep the peace. They will focus on peace and security and such issues. They will stop doing a lot of ‘nice to have’.” (Respondent 6)

5.2.4. The program officers lack environmental knowledge

Another explanation for why environmental issues has not been a focus area for Sweden’s work in Afghanistan, that was raised by several of the respondents, were the lack of environmental knowledge among the program officers. One of the respondents are here arguing that that one reason for why the Afghanistan unit has not worked more with environmental issues is that the staff lack competence within this field:

“I do not think they have had that competence in the team, I believe that is one of the reasons (for why they have not worked more with environmental issues).” (Respondent 10)

Several of the respondents are raising this issue. It is also something that I notice during my interview. It is a noticeable difference in knowledge level about environmental issues among the respondents. Some of them had a hard time coming up with ideas about how it would be possible to have more focus on environment, whereas others were able to give a thorough analysis. It was also apparent that most of the respondents were able to come with one idea on where it would be possible to focus more on environment. Few of them were however able to give an analysis over all sectors or give an analysis of where it would be easiest to start working with these issues. Several of the respondents did instead come back to the same idea over and over again. In other words: the respondents did not have a common view of how to work with environmental issues. This can be a sign of that this issue have not been discussed as much between the program officers and that there has not been any educational focus on these issues. Several of the respondents were bringing up this and explained that environmental issues are more difficult to understand than for example gender issues:

“Gender is requiring less effort. Where are the women? It is easy to make it an affair of the heart. It has a higher complexity if one would take into account intersectionality and everything else, but you know including it is easy. What percentages are women? It is easy. Environment is a much more complex issue; I do not think most people get a knowledge about it as a part of their education in the same way. /.../ So it is of importance to train the program officers so that they feel comfortable to push for a higher profile of environmental issues.” (Respondent 6)

One explanation to why Sida was believed to lack knowledge within environmental issues was given by an environmental specialist at Sida, who argued that a reorganisation at Sida in 2011 partly was to blame:
“In the new organisation the thematic competence was divided and some departments got more of environment and climate whereas others got less, mainly based on the priorities by the departments’ management. Sida got at the same time a new upper management that did not prioritize environmental issues. We also had to cut down staff, around one hundred staff had to leave. This happened was and at the same time as an older generation, who had extensive environmental knowledge, disappeared. So during this reorganisation we lost a great deal of environmental and climate competence that we now have to build up again.” (Respondent 10)

5.3. Is it possible to have more environmental focus?

So far the focus has been on how Sweden through their foreign aid via Sida have been working for environmental issues in Afghanistan and why they have been working this way. It is clear that Sida has not had environment as one of its main focus in Afghanistan and we have also got an understanding for why they have not worked more with this issue. The next question is then, is it possible to do it differently and have a clearer focus on environment in the contributions in Afghanistan? If so, how should it be done?

5.3.1. Yes, it is possible to do more

As a way to see if the respondents believed that it was possible to work more with environmental issues in Afghanistan all of them were asked if they thought it would make a difference if the development strategy would have a clearer focus on environmental issues:

“Yes, absolutely. Then it will be prioritized be the management. Then they have to report the results achieved every year to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. You know, it will be a completely different process.” (Respondent 7)

“Absolutely. Because then we would be obligated to report results within this area, it is really important to get such writings incorporated (in the strategy).” (Respondent 10)

The respondents had different views on what a clearer focus on environment in the strategy would mean in practice. Some of them were a bit more sceptical:

“Of course if it would have been stated more specific in the strategy then it would probably have been more visible in writings and so on. Then one can always wonder if it will make much of a difference in practice.” (Respondent 4)

The respondent above was though in a minority. Most of the respondents were quite positive about that it would be possible to work more with these issues in Afghanistan. Several of the respondents also believed that it would be doable to start working more with environmental issues already today. Since the strategy regulates what the Afghanistan unit should be focused on, it would not be possible to start separate environmental projects within the current strategy. It was however believed that environment could be more included in the programs they already were supporting:

“We have a mandate to deliver on the results that are stated in the strategy, so we cannot start working with environment as a separate question, but to integrate it, that is a different issue, and I believe we could do more of that.” (Respondent 8)

One of the respondents were also pointing out that even though environmental issues was not viewed as an urgent need, Sida was working with many issues that was not urgent needs:

“We do work with a lot of things that are not urgent needs so I do not understand why it (environment) would not be integrated.” (Respondent 8)
One of the other objections mentioned above was that Sweden probably would be the only country working with environmental issues. One of the respondents commented on this:

“It is not like you have to be several donors to be able to push for it. It is possible to start with a few separated projects and keep a dialogue about it. There is a paradox in that. We have pushed fairly hard the gender issue within several projects, particularly in the World Bank.” (Respondent 2)

Sida work in Afghanistan with gender issues is a good example of when Sweden has pushed for issues that was believed to be a "luxury problem" in an environment with so many urgent needs:

“I don’t know if it is that other things are believed to be of more importance, almost like it was with gender issues in the beginning, like: "it is not so important for we are eradicating poverty and we are working with much more important issues.”” (Respondent 5)

Several of the respondents were drawing parallels to how Sida has worked with gender issues. Gender issues was also believed to not being able to work with in such a challenging environment. Here in one of the respondents answer to if it would be possible to work more with environmental issues if Sida would be asked to do so:

“I believe that if you are forced, or of if it is prioritised that way, or if you get an extra dictate or so, I of course think it is possible. Then it has to be possible. Say that we would not have been working with environmental issues (then people would say) “it is not possible to work with gender issues during this circumstances”, but it is possible.” (Respondent 12)

In comparison to gender it was also believed that environment issues could be easier to work with in Afghanistan:

“If we take a parallel to gender that is such a difficult issue in Afghanistan, large nations like the USA have been cheering and saying “Oh that is so nice that you are raising this issue since we are not allowed to talk about them.” /.../ Towards the Afghan government environment issues cannot be a be viewed as a difficult issue, it is rather very good for their population and their economy if they would work on these issues. So it cannot be dangerous or sensitive in any way if one would work with these issues. It must be easier to gain support for it (environmental issues)” (Respondent 5)

The quotations above show that it was believed to be possible to work more with environmental issues, was it though believed to be relevant? One of the respondents believed so and explained it this way:

“It is very relevant both for the people who are living in cities and for the people who are living on the county side. For the 75 percentages that are working in the agriculture sector and for the people who have children and are thinking about their health and so on.” (Respondent 5)

5.3.2. How should it be done?

If it then was believed to be possible and, at least to some extent, relevant to work more with environmental issues how did the respondents believe it should be done? It was apparent during the interviews that not all of the program officer had thought that much about these issues. It was though possible to see that during the duration of the interviews when talking about environmental issues the respondents came up with more and more ideas for how to work with these issues in Afghanistan.
The respondents had different views of what approach was the best one to take. A majority of the respondents believed that the best way to go would be mainstream environment in all projects. One way to do this at the present would be to put a clearer focus on environment in the existing assessments that Sida are actually doing. Environmental issues in the project documents should be assessed today and one of the respondent believed that it would be possible to put even more focus on this assessment.

The same respondent did however believe that instead of trying to mainstream environment in to all projects, it would be more successful to create special environmental focused projects:

“I think it is easier to start supporting clear cut environmental projects than to have developed mainstreamed comprehensive components in all programmes. The later will take time. The latter can be done faster and easily get a national ownership among Afghans.” (Respondent 12).

To be able to do separate projects with a special focus on environment would require that the strategy had a clearer environmental focus. The fact that environment is not a clear issue in the strategy has been mentioned repeatedly as a constrain to a more environmental focused work in Afghanistan. The strategy stipulates which sectors the work should be focused on. It was believed that the strategy also in this way was constraining the possibility to work with environmental issues, since several of the sectors that the strategy focused on, such as human rights, was believed to be difficult to work with environmental issues in. One of the respondents are discussing this in comparison to how environmental issues had been handle in the country the respondent worked with before:

“There we worked a lot with water management that is in some ways an environmental issue, there was a lot of focus on soil quality which also is an environmental issue. So in that way it (environmental issues) was prominent, but it was because we worked with other sectors. I do not know if the mainstreaming were better but we had other sectors that gave greater opportunities to work with these issues.” (Respondent 8)

Among all the sectors the one that was believed to be easiest to work with was the one focusing on the three E:s; economic integration, enterprise and employment:

“The three E portfolio is probable the most suitable, I would say, to implement a better, or maybe not better per se, but to make the environmental focus more thorough and integrate it in the long term work.” (Respondent 6)

5.3.2.1. Agriculture, infrastructure and natural resources education

Even though the sectors the strategy is focusing on was believed to in some extent constrain the Afghanistan unit’s possibility to work with environmental issues, the respondent were still able to come up with ideas about how it would be possible to work more with these issues in several of the projects. These ideas were mainly focused on three of the areas where the Afghanistan unit currently had projects; agriculture, infrastructure and education.

Agriculture was one the sectors were several of the respondents believed it would be easy to work more with environmental concerns. Sida was working with one project focusing on agriculture in Afghanistan. Since economic integration, enterprise and employment were sectors that had been added in the last strategy from 2014, this was still a fairly new project that just had started. It was however believed that this project would be possible to extend in the future.

Another issue that several of the respondents mentioned was renewable energy, especially solar power. This was believed to be of importance since the power system in Afghanistan in undeveloped and do not enough electricity for the country. Most of the rural areas are not connected to a power system, they instead have to use diesel generators for power. Solar energy
was believed to be a good alternative for this. Another advantage with solar energy was that it also was believed to be a more dependable system during the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan:

“It has been several spectacular long power cuts in Kabul last winter when the Taliban had blown up electricity cables so it is very vulnerable. What happens then in both cities and in the rural areas is that people are running generators on diesel. That is both expensive and environmentally a bad solution.” (Respondent 1)

The respondent who was most focused on solar energy during the interview was though not convinced that the Sida should go in and support some sort of solar power project:

“The capacity and competence of the Afghan ministries are not convincing and they have not presented any real project proposals regarding this, even though the country is in a very big need of something like this.” (Respondent 1)

Another issue connected to energy that many of the respondent brought up was the lack of environmental friendly heating alternatives. Since Afghanistan be really cold during the winter and many households do not have a good heating system this leads to that people are burning everything they have in order to keep warm:

“People need to burn plastic and garbage during the Winter, it affects the air in Kabul. That is why the staff at the Embassy are coughing that much during the winter because we breath in this air with plastic particles.” (Respondent 14)

Interesting enough one of the few infrastructure issues that Sida are supporting today, road works, was not really mentioned among the ideas were it would be possible to work more with environmental issues.

Afghanistan are rich on several minerals and the mining sector can be a potential revenue source for the government in the future. The respondents did however believe that the future mining industry in Afghanistan had the potential to create environmental damage:

“The great hope for economic development is the mining industry, which in itself obviously is devastating for the local environment. I think the economic needs and opportunities will trump all environmental considerations. It would not surprise, it could create all sorts of problem, like opening Pandora’s box.” (Respondent 6)

One natural resource that at the present had a negative impact on the development in the country was the cultivation of opium. The Taliban receive a large portion of their revenue from the opium cultivation. I therefore asked the respondent if they in any worked with this problem. According to the respondents it was not something that Sida was focusing on, it was though more a focus for the political side of the Embassy. The view was that it would be difficult to have on impact on the opium production and it was believed to be a police matter.

5.3.2.2. The education sector

A sector within the Afghanistan unit’s current portfolio where it was believed to be possible to integrate more environmental consideration was in the education sector:

“I also believe that there is a possibility in countries like Afghanistan to work with environmental issues within the existing support to the education sector. /.../ Simple things like garbage collection, and learning about how plastic and other materials has to be managed are good first steps for children in school to learn, especially in country where consumption of plastic and other materials are still limited.” (Respondent 7)

Environmental issues were believed to be possible to integrate here in many different ways:
“It could mean guide lines for water in schools, it could include clearer guidelines when building schools what has to exist and for the placements of schools. One could consider looking into curriculums.” (Respondent 9)

The respondent believes that it would be easiest to start working with environmental issues connected to education in a pilot project. To start with one organisation and have a dialogue with and make it very hands-on. However most of Sida’s projects within education in Afghanistan are focused on capacity strengthening the Ministry of Education. The respondent doubted if it would possible to make them interested in environmental issues:

“But to imagine that you would go today to the Ministry of Education and have a dialogue with them about environmental issues. I think they would look at you like you were an UFO.” (Respondent 9).

Sida are however supporting one organisation that is working directly with education projects, the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA), and the respondent believed that it could be possible to start a pilot project with them connected to environmental issues.

5.3.2.3. Multi sector support projects policy work

33 to 38 percentages of Sweden’s total development aid towards Afghanistan between 2010-2015 went to the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF). The money is payed to the World Bank who then supports several larger programs in Afghanistan, especially connected to the state functions. Since this fund both receives such large part of Sweden’s funds and also supports an extensive amount of programs in different sectors in Afghanistan it is a program worth looking into. The common view among the respondents was that environment was not on the agenda within ARTF today:

“I have not seen anything. But it is not one of our key dialogue issues for ARTF and therefore I think we are dropping it. But I have not seen anything from others either. And I do not believe I have seen any presentation of environmental issues in ARTF.” (Respondent 8)

Another of the respondents gave a similar answer:

“I can give a fairly simple answer to do, and the answer is no. Environmental issues are not discussed at all, not at the meetings I have to for seven months. At the board it was not brought up by the World Bank, it was not brought up by the Ministry of Finance and it was not brought up by the donors, at least not in any of my meetings.” (Respondent 14)

Environmental were according to the respondents not an active focus area of the ARTF fund. One of the respondents are here explaining how procurement for school constructions had been done in a non-satisfying way:

“Regarding material to the EQUIP schools I can conclude that the constructors increase their profit by buying cheap materials to the schools. It is complained about that in the villages, that the receive inferior doors and inferior windows, because the Ministry of Finance has not specified clear enough what they want, if they want to windows that hold for 40 years if you paint them or if they want plastic windows that might crack after three hot summers in Afghanistan. The donors cannot go down to that detail level, but at the same time we discover that the system itself cannot take responsibility for that it will be good quality. Then you can imagine how it is with environmental issues, is it for instance environmental friendly produced doors or windows?” (Respondent 14)
Since ARTF is such a large program, it was believed among several of the respondents that if Sweden would start focusing more on environmental issues in this program, it could be a good start.

“Regarding the big ARTF fund, it is really striking. Environment and climate change has not been taken into consideration by the Government or the Donors. It is so much money that affects Afghanistan so broadly. Here it would be possible to interact a focus on environmental issues from a Swedish perspective and make a substantial contribution since no one else is focusing on these issues.” (Respondent 10)

It was believed among the respondents that it could be possible to work more with environmental issues in the ARTF fund.

5.3.2.4. Natural disasters prevention and immediate environment

When asked about how it would be possible to work for a sustainable development in Afghanistan, most of the respondents were thinking in terms of decreasing plastic use or growing more ecological. Some of them, however, also considered the vulnerability of Afghanistan’s environment and what problem this creates for the population.

“It almost feels like the whole year is characterized by some sort of natural disaster. It is dry during the summer, then it starts snowing, then everything is flooded, then it raining and then it is snowing. You need the snow for when it melts it becomes water for the plants next year but when it melts it also creates mud and landslides. It is a country that is very sensitive to the changing nature. It is very vulnerable.” (Respondent 6)

In this environment, it was common with natural disasters. Two of the respondents are here talking about it in connection to floods:

“You could almost predict when the floods started. You knew that during this season people will die in floods or landslides or so.” (Respondent 7)

Another of the respondents were talking about that several of the natural disasters have known root causes:

“In Afghanistan’s case, the most common disasters are floods, landslides, and snow avalanches, but primarily floods and there are seasonal slides so they happen every year and more or less their roots are known and their locations are known.” (Respondent 11)

One of the problems brought up was however that the humanitarian work is in their nature not supposed to work with preventative issues. This respondent therefore believed that the development side should work more with these issues:

“Often times a lot of environmental and climate issues have root causes that are more effectively catered under the development budget, not under humanitarian budget. Humanitarians are supposed to just deal with the consequences of environmental and disaster issues.” (Respondent 11)

It was interesting finding to see how separated the humanitarian and development aid through Sida in Afghanistan was. A natural connection between them could have been that the problems that humanitarian had to react on, the development side could have prevented. This was not however according to the respondents the case:

“It was the interesting issue with development aid and humanitarian aid, there are so many needs identified that the people who are working with the development aid do not even consider. It is that gap between the two parts.” (Respondent 7)
One of the arguments that the respondents for why environmental issues was not believed to be of importance in Afghanistan was that it in many cases was viewed as a luxury problem, something that could be focused on later. It was only those respondents who were viewing environment from the local Afghanistan perspective who argued that environmental issues are in fact of importance in the country:

“It is not a luxury problem, it is as important as having a sterilised scalpel, because it is basically a health problem in the villages. It is important but is as not received the attention it deserves in the urban planning and the overall society.” (Respondent 14)

This respondent also gave an example on how an environmental focused project had impacted people’s life:

“We visited a newly constructed pond, since it was built people did not have to walk for two hours to carry water. They also received better water quality so that the health had improved for 700 households. Since they got access to water close to their land they could also quadruplicate the production of vegetables for 700 households. That is quite crucial when you are self-catering.” (Respondent 14)

One of the other respondents gave examples of several environmental problems in the close nature:

“There are such very obvious environmental problems. The Kabul, it is just a rubbish-heap and a disgusting sludge. Those kind of things would be possible (to do), cleaning of rivers, practical things. /.../ Also the air in Afghanistan, especially in Kabul, is terribly bad. It is worst during the winter when everyone is burning garbage. There is so much things that could be done.” (Respondent 12)

It was argued that if one would connect the environmental issues to health issues then it would be easier to explain for Afghans why environmental issues are important:

“All people want to have clean water and all people understand when floods occurs. Afghans understand if you say that floods are an environmental issue. Then it is not about the future, it is just about next winter. I believe that it is really important that people understand that floods are not God’s work instead it is a consequence of how you plan certain things.” (Respondent 7)

Another suggestion on how to make Afghans feel that environmental issues are import was to help explain the positive impacts an environmental project can have. Within one of the programs in the ARTF the villages are provided financial help to solve problems the villages believe were important. One reason for why not more of these project had an environmental focus was, according to the respondent, due to that they did not understand the positive implications:

“People will think I need a place to socialise, to plan socially, I need electricity, I need a bridge, roads those kind of things. They wouldn’t think that if it would be a catch damn three, four, five, I don’t know, ten villages ahead. “If something would be build, there I would never have to deal with the consequences of the floods that I am experiencing every year or every other year or often a few years” Of course they do not think along those terms since they see and notice the immediately.” (Respondent 11)

This section shows that environmental issues can be of importance in Afghanistan, if it is thought of as problem in the immediate environment and in connections to natural disasters. By having this focus on environmental projects it was also believed to be something that would be viewed as important in Afghanistan.
5.3.3. What is needed for it to happen?

For Sida to have more focus on environment in Afghanistan it is primarily two things that according to the respondents are needed; that the Swedish governmental give a stronger signal that the issue should be focused on in Afghanistan and that for the program officers to receive more education about environmental issues. An educational session for the staff was actually already planned since the new governments priorities on the environment had created some new directives on the department level:

“This year, considering that the priorities by the new government, environment and climate change has become part of the SIDA operational plan for 2016. The plan is that there will be some sort of capacity building for the staff which will be presented in August or September.” (Respondent 10)

The signal from the government that was believed to gain most overall impact was to have environment as stated goal in the strategy. Since the current strategy is valid until 2019 this is however not an option. It was therefore believed that some other directives have to come, from either the department level or the unit management.

A final suggestion that one of the respondent had was to make environmental issues a clearer focus in the quality controls committees where most of the assessments made Sida are review. This was believed to be possible by education the responsible people in the committees about how to integrate environmental consideration.
6. Discussion

This study showed that the humanitarian aid has been much more effective in incorporating environmental considerations in their projects compared to the development aid projects. Several of the research questions do not apply to the humanitarian work, since they are already working with environmental issues. This discussion will therefore be focused on the development aid if not otherwise stated.

The discussion will be structured based on the three sub-questions; what is done, why is it done this way and could it be done differently?

6.1. What is done?

The review of the documents showed that besides a few exceptions environmental issues have not been prioritized when Sida have assessed project proposals in Afghanistan. The environment analysis is overall superficial and environmental issues are not the focus for further follow ups. This is in line with the study done on Sida’s integration of environment form 2006, where it was found that environmental issues had not been a focus for the assessments (Brunnström, et al, 2006). Environment has not, besides one exception, been set as neither an indicator or a key dialogue issue to follow up for the review projects. The chosen projects are together 69 to 84 percentages of the total Swedish development aid to Afghanistan between 2010-2015. It was difficult to find environmental considerations within the reviewed projects, the likelihood to find more environmental focus in the excluded projects are believed to be even lower. If this premise is correct it would mean that, besides one example, Sida has not in a structural way used environmental aspects to follow up of the development aid in Afghanistan during the analysed six years.

The 14 interviews showed that overall environmental issues are not discussed with the organisations later in the projects phase either. There were some exceptions however; UNOPS road building projects where discussion was held connected to waste management and protection against natural disasters. DDG’s demining project where environmental issues were a natural concern, and where for instance ideas regarding management of the land after the demining project had been discussed. Finally, also the Aga Khan agriculture project where environment was an integrated part. Besides these three projects environmental issues have not been discussed. It is especially noteworthy in connection to the ARTF (Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund) that has received between 33 and 38 percentage of Sweden’s development aid to Afghanistan between 2010-2015 (Open Aid, 2016 a, Open Aid, 2016b, Open Aid, 2016c, Open Aid, 2016d, Open Aid, 2016e, Open Aid, 2016f). Sweden is just one of many donors to this really huge fund. It is therefore quite remarkable that environmental issues are not something that has been discussed or seem to, at least from the donor’s perspective, be of focus for the fund.

The review of the documents and the interviews showed that even if Sweden is not actively focusing on environmental issues the aid through Sida are still supporting environmental issues in some cases. One example is the Mary Stopes International’s (MSI) use of solar power at their clinics. Another example is the support to Danish Demining Group (DDG) and Aga Khan’s agriculture project. Even if DDG’s and Aga Khan’s projects are not viewed as environmental projects by Sida they still have great environmental implications. It was also possible to see in some other projects, such as within the Swedish Commission for Afghanistan (SCA) or the Basic Education and Gender Equality program (BEGE) that both have components that are focusing on improving sanitation.

That environment has not been a focus in the assessments can be argued to in some parts affected the organisations. If Sida would assess environment in a more thorough way, the organisations would have to show how they are working with these issues. This would most likely lead to that the organisations would have more focus on environmental issues. What the
assessment and follow ups are focusing on can therefore impact also how the organisations would work with environmental issues in Afghanistan.

6.2. Why has it not been a focus area?

6.2.1. Environment is not in the strategy

The most common answer for why Sida has not been focusing more on environment issues in Afghanistan is that it is not a focus area in the development aid in Afghanistan. It is interesting to see how big impact the statements in the strategy has on what is being done in Afghanistan. It was also believed among the respondents that environment is a difficult issue to work with in Afghanistan. Everyone did however agree that if environment would be mentioned in the strategy it would be possible to work more with these issues. This this shows the importance of incorporating environmental perspectives in the strategy.

It is also interesting to compare the development aid with humanitarian aid that has a strategy where the environmental issues are a focus area. The humanitarian work in Afghanistan has much more focus on environmental issues. It is though difficult to determine whether this is due to the fact that this is a focus area in the strategy or whether it is due to the fact that environmental issues are a natural part of the humanitarian work.

Whether environmental issues are mentioned in the strategies or not it is still one of Sida’s overall thematic focus areas. This study shows that this thematic focus has not been incorporated in the development aid projects in Afghanistan. Why it has not been integrated has not been possible to fully answer, since also some of the respondents were surprised by the fact that the Afghanistan unit have not been asked to incorporate environmental issues to a larger extent. One explanation is probably that, as the study shows, the unit are lacking some of the needed environmental knowledge. Another possible interpretation is that since it is not a focus area in the strategy and it does not seem as anyone at Sida’s management side have been asking for it, it just have not been incorporated.

6.2.2. It is not being seen as a part of development or peace

Another finding in the study is that environment are not being viewed as something that has to be integrated in the development or peacebuilding process in Afghanistan. The idea is rather that the country has to reach some basic level of development and stability, and then when this is achieved it could be possible to start working with environmental issues. This result is partly confirming the previous study of how Sida has been integrating environmental considerations, that also found that environmental issues was viewed as separate matter (Brunnström et. al., 2006). Environment is rather being viewed as something that could be fixed when there is an ongoing development and/or stable peace, it is not viewed as an essential part of the development or peace-making process. This is interesting since both the sustainable development theory and the environmental peacebuilding theory are based on the idea that to be able to create a sustainable peace and development environmental issues has to be taken into consideration. If they are not taken into consideration it is argued that it will not be possible to create a long-lasting development and peace (Das, 2013a, 2013b; Hopwood et al., 2005; Jensen, 2012).

If environmental consideration is believed to be so important for both sustainable development and sustainable peace, why have not the work in Afghanistan had a clearer focus on environmental issues? One explanation for this could be found in the notion that it is often difficult to work with sustainable development and environmental issues in poorer countries and in conflict situations. These theories are arguing that environmental concerns often are not highest on the agenda in poorer countries and/or in conflict environments, since other issues are believed to be more urgent (Jensen, 2012; Jensen and Lonergan, 2012; Maathai, 2008). This
study confirms those theories. In connection to the development in Afghanistan several of the respondents was commenting that it would be challenging to try to promote environmental issues when the country is so poor and so unstable.

It was never stated by the respondents that environment and/or development or peace was viewed as contradictions, it was however implied. Almost all of the arguments was based on the idea that how would it be possible to work with environmental issues when there are so many urgent needs. If environment and peace and/or development would have been seen as something integrated than the argument would not have been “how can we focus on this when that is needed”, since if they would have been viewed as connected then working with environmental issues had been understood as also working for development and/or peace. It is therefore possible to argue that rather than viewing environment as a necessary factor to create development and peace they were almost viewed as contradictions, or at least like two separate things that are lacking any connections (Jensen and Lonergan, 2012; Maathai, 2008).

The sustainable development concept was developed after the notion that a strictly focus on development was damaging both the environment and the social structures. To be able to avoid this development should be viewed form sustainable perspective and incorporate social and environmental concerns (Das, 2013a, 2013b; Hopwood et al., 2005). Looking at all the projects in Afghanistan supported by Sida, including the projects not analysed here, they have a clear focus on both economic growths and social factors, such as democratisation, gender and human rights. They do not however, as this study clearly show, have an environmental focus. The sustainable development theory is based on the idea that for environment to not be damaged by development, environmental consideration has to be incorporated in the development (Hopwood et al., 2005). It could therefore be argued that there is a risk that the development creating project supported by Sida have the risk to can in fact damage the nature, due to the lack of environmental focus from Sida’s part.

It can on the other hand be argued, based on the theory that aid is allowing the Afghan government to focus more on environmental issues, that is even if Sweden have not been pushing actively for environment issues the Swedish aid may still indirect manner been improving the environment in Afghanistan (Lim et al., 2014).

Sida do not support any project that is focused on environmental peacebuilding. Demining is however one of the factors that researchers are viewed to be of importance for the peacebuilding process (Shimoyachi-Yuzawa, 2012). By supporting DDG it could therefore be argued that Sida to some extent indirectly are supporting an environmental peacebuilding, even if this is not the focus of the project.

One part of the environmental and conflict theoretical framework is the idea that natural resource abundance can lead to conflict. This theory is based on the logic that when a country has an abundance of natural resources it is possible for guerrilla groups to use these resources for financing and it is also believed to be more compelling to try to take power over the area, since that would give even better access to the natural resources (Koubi et al., 2014). In the case of Afghanistan, they have two natural resources that has the potential to affect conflict, the mining industry and the poppy farming. The mining industry is not so active today, due to the security situation. It is though possible that it in the future can affect conflict when the wealth from this industry is starting to be apparent. The poppy farming is however currently affecting the conflict in Afghanistan since it gives the Taliban their largest revenues. The poppy cultivation was not something that the respondents spontaneously talked about, however when asked they acknowledge that Sida are not supporting any programs connecting to it. It was however something that the political side of the Embassy was believed to have more focus on and since it was viewed as a police matter it was not believed to be something that should be handled within the foreign aid.
6.3. What can be done?

6.3.1. A western view of environment

During the interviews it became soon apparent that the respondents had what Conca (2003) would call a developed world view of environmental issues. When the respondents were asked if it would be possible to work more with environmental issues in Afghanistan, and in that case how, the answers were focusing on that it would not be possible to tell an Afghan to avoid using plastic bags or that it would not be doable to force all farmers to start grow their plants in an ecological way. Environment was talked about in the terms of saving the nature for the next generation. Very few of the respondents were mentioning any of the environmental problems the Afghan population lives with every day.

Conca (2003) is explaining this with that environment are being viewed differently in the richer developed world compared to the poorer developing world. In the developed world the focus is on global systems such as climate change or biodiversity. In the developing world environment is connected to basic living conditions (Conca, 2003). In the developed world environmental issues are something that in many ways are viewed as something outside the daily life, it is thought of in connection to coming generations and saving the planet. In the developing world however, environmental issues are in many ways an active part of their daily life. The majority of population in Afghanistan do not have access to clean water, the air during winter is poison to breath, they are affected by floods that comes around the same time every year, to just mentioning some examples.

When thinking of environment from a western perspective it is easy to argue, as many of the respondent have done, that environment is not something that is possible to work with in this situation, that it is really important but the country has to become more developed and/or stable first. It is as Maahai (2008) describes viewed as a luxury problem. I would like to argue that this view is based on the idea that environment is connected to saving the nature for next generation. If environment instead would be viewed as an important factor for saving lives today, then it would become much easier to motivate why it is an important issue in a country as Afghanistan. To be able to work with sustainable development in poor conflict countries the concept of environment has to be widened so that the focus is on the needs today. To see environment as a part of saving lives today, not saving the planet for future generation. By doing so environment issues would most likely be viewed as more important, even in poorer conflict torn countries.

6.3.2. Humanitarian identified needs

One other possible contributing explanation for why the respondents were mainly thinking about environment as something outside the daily life is due to the lack of collaboration in Afghanistan between the humanitarian side and the development side at Sida. The humanitarian staff are working with all the consequences of the natural disasters, but the development side are not working for preventing them. The humanitarian aid is focused on saving lives and alleviating suffering, and do not have a component of preventing the problem. It creates a strange situation when the development side do not work preventative either, since it is not easily integrated in the current development strategy.

It is interesting to see how poorly the two strategies are connected to each other. The humanitarian strategy is not specially written for Afghanistan since it applies to all of the humanitarian work supported by Sida. It could though be argued that in a country as Afghanistan, where Sida are conducting both humanitarian and development work, to make sure that the development strategy in some parts is connected to the humanitarian strategy. Otherwise problem similar to the once in Afghanistan arises, where the humanitarian side are
identifying several problems that could be decreased through preventative work but the development side cannot do the preventative work since it is not incorporable in their strategy.

6.4. What is needed?

This study found four things that are needed in order to create more environmental focus in the foreign aid from Sida in Afghanistan. Firstly, it is needed some sort of external pressure for working more with environmental issues. One way to create this pressure could be to incorporate it in the next strategy. Since the current strategy is going all the way to 2019 it is suggested that this external pressure is being created in an alternative way, for instance by an increased focus on these issues on department level.

The second thing that is needed is increased education regarding environmental issues among the staff. The fairly low knowledge about environmental issues are conforming the findings from the study of Sida’s integrating of environment that also did find a low level of knowledge connected to this issue among the program officers (Brunnström et. al, 2006). When the staff have accessed more knowledge within the area it would be easier to conduct more thorough environmental analysis which could create more environmental focus in the projects.

Besides for these two elementary suggestions two more things could have the possibility to increase the environmental focus in Afghanistan. The first is to create a closer link between the humanitarian side and the development side. This has the potential to spread the knowledge the humanitarian staff has regarding the immediate environmental needs in Afghanistan to the development staff.

A final suggestion is to add a question in Sida’s assessments program focusing on possible positive environmental implications of the project. During the review of the documents and the interviews it was apparent that environment was in almost all cases viewed from the perspective of what negative implications the project could create. By adding a question focusing on what positive implications the project could have, this could make the program officers considering environment in a more innovative way. The review of the documents showed that the environmental focus in the assessment done by Sida on overall level had improved over the time period. This was believed to be due to that the assessment program used by Sida has put more focus on environmentally connected questions. It could therefore be argued that a similar development would be expected if a question connected to positive effects would be added.

6.5. A new way to view sustainable development?

An important factor in the sustainable development idea is that you have to take future generations into consideration; the environment should be saved for the future. What is apparent from this study is that this understanding of sustainable environmental development have made it difficult to work with environmental issues in Afghanistan. Since when the needs are so urgent here today, for this generation, how will it be possible to argue that you should save the environment for the future generation? One way to come around this is that instead of focusing on the needs of coming generations, start to focus on the current generation. 80 percentages of the population lives in rural areas and 60 percentages of the population is dependent on agriculture for their livelihood (Shroder, 2012). At least 70 percentages of the population lack access to fresh water (Habib et al., 2013; Shroder, 2012). 6.7 million people in the country have been affected by natural disaster between 1998-2012 (Shroder, 2012). I would argue that by starting with the needs of people today and to create sustainable, in the meaning of sustainable for perhaps five or ten years, this could be a possible way to also save the future generations in Afghanistan. By changing the focus from saving the environment for coming generations to saving people’s life today by improving their local environment, it could actually be a way to make environment an important issue also in poorer and conflict countries.

The intergeneration focus of sustainable development is one of the corner stones in sustainable development. It is important to preserve the environment for the future, since the
risk is otherwise high that it will lead to over exploitation of the nature (Hopwood et al., 2005).

The problem is though that if this view makes environmental issues something that will first be prioritized after everything else is taken care of, it has the risk of creating such a high ideal that it becomes an obstacle for actions. One idea could be to have sustainable development adjusted to the reality of poor and conflict countries. The solutions should still be sustainable, but in the implication phase over a shorter time frame, for instance five years.

This result of this study, that it has not been possible to implement a sustainable environmental development in Afghanistan, can be due to that the respondents I interviewed were lacking the necessary knowledge of the issues. However, since this issue has been touched during previous research it still raises the question; as sustainable development is defined today is it possible to work with this concept successfully everywhere? Based on this study, the answer would be yes and no. Sustainable development focused on intergenerational equity, to preserve environment for future generations, has not been possible to work with in Afghanistan. Based on this study it is however believed to be possible to work with sustainable development if the focus is on intragenerational equity and sustainability with a shorter time frame.
7. Summary

This aim of this thesis was to critically analyse how Swedish foreign aid via Sida has contributed to a sustainable environmental development in Afghanistan. To be able to answer the overarching question three sub-questions were used. The first question was how Sida has been working with environmental issues in Afghanistan. The study found that it was a difference between the humanitarian and the development aid in how they are working with environmental issues. In humanitarian aid environmental issues are a natural part of the work. On the development side the environmental focus in Sida’s work in Afghanistan has however been limited. Environmental issues are overall not being considered in the assessments of project proposal done by Sida. Environmental issues have not been, except in one case, a key dialogue issue or part of the indicators for follow up. The study could however see that, even if Sida are not actively pushing for environmental, issues several of the projects that they are supporting still have environmentally focused aspects.

The explanation for why Sida have not worked more with environmental issues in Afghanistan was found to be three folded. The first reason, and the one that was viewed as most important, was that environment is not a stated focus area in the Result Strategy for Sweden’s development aid in Afghanistan. It is the strategy that decides what Sida should focus their work on, if environmental issues are not included in the strategy it therefore becomes less prioritized. Environmental and climate issues are however one of Sida’s overall thematically focus area, this has thought not impacted the work in Afghanistan. The second explanation for why not more has been done was that environmental issues was not believed to be of importance in Afghanistan, neither at the government level or among the public. Environmental issues were therefore believed to be difficult to work with due to the very poor conflict environment with so many urgent needs. Environmental issues were to some extent viewed as a luxury problem among the respondent. The final explanation for why environmental issues had not been more in focus was connected to the limit knowledge regarding environmental issue among the staff.

All the respondents believed that it would be possible to work more with environmental issues. They had several ideas of how to do this. It was possible to see two categories within these ideas. The first one was connected to the projects and areas where Sida are already working in Afghanistan. The second category of ideas was connected to urgent environmental needs in Afghanistan in the immediate nature. Two things were believed to be needed to create an increasing focus on environment; a clear signal from the government or Sida’s higher management that environmental issues have to a focus areas and more knowledge within the team on how to incorporate environment in the work.

The analysis focused on three major findings. First, the study showed that environment was not believed among Sida staff to be a natural part of neither development nor peacebuilding in Afghanistan. This is interesting since in both sustainable development and environmental peacebuilding environment is believed to be one of the corner stones. It was argued in the thesis that this view of environment is due to a western world understanding of environment as connected to large global systems. Whereas in the poorer developing world environmental issues are an active part of their daily lives, in connection to livelihoods, natural disasters, clean water and food security.

The second focus in the discussion was the lack of cooperation between the humanitarian aid and the development aid. It was argued that one way to incorporate more environmental focus within the development aid would be to work closer with the humanitarian aid. The humanitarian aid is working reactively and by working closer together the development could be a driver for the preventative work. It was however acknowledging that this at the moment can be difficult due to that the current development strategy do not have a focus that easily incorporates such work.

The final major point from the analysis was that the focus in sustainable development on saving the environment for coming generations can make it difficult to work with
environmental issues in poor and/or conflict countries. Such countries have so many urgent needs that it becomes difficult to argue that focus should be on saving the planet for the coming generations. This can lead to a situation as the one in this study, that environmental issues were viewed as being partly a luxury problem that could be focused on when other factors have been stabilised. The thesis argued that by instead focusing on the wide ranging present environmental problems in a country as Afghanistan this could lead to that environmental issues becomes a focus area. By starting focusing on the needs of today this can contribute to a preserving of nature for coming generations.

7.1. Ideas for further studies

Since this is a fairly unexploited research area it could be of great interest to further study this field. One interesting future study would be to compare organisations that have different level of internal environmental focus to see how this affects the foreign aid they are supporting.
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