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Management response to the Evaluation of the Sida supported programme “International Science Programme 2014–2018”, Sida Decentralised Evaluation 2018:18

A. Executive Summary

The evaluators find that ISP fulfils a direct, facilitating and promotive role in supporting scientific activities in its partners, and that the reach of its capacity development interventions is justified by the public good argument to support such research.

The evaluators state that there is no question that ISP's support to the development of research capacity has been broadly relevant and aligned with Swedish policies for research in development cooperation. Furthermore, they point out that all the recipients interviewed see the ISP support as being highly relevant to the development of their scientific research capacity. In many cases, they find it evident that much of the research is very relevant to local development challenges.

They find that ISP's funding for skill development, equipment provision, consumables, as well as ability to facilitate international research collaboration and exposure, has done much to bring its grantees into a wider community of research. Its pragmatic approach to problems and issues has been effective. Much of the research that has been supported has clear relevance to country-specific development needs and where the application is less clear, the research has been of intrinsic merit. In this sense ISP has contributed significantly to the public good in its domain of activities.

ISP agrees with the evaluators' general view of the program. The future development of ISP, to be laid down in a new strategic plan, will take one starting point in the assessments by the evaluators. A specific suggestion to introduce a time bound modality may be subject to particular consideration.

Regarding ISP's results framework, the evaluators find it not to be coherent and not helpful to programme learning and reporting. ISP values the evaluators' assessment, although specific recommendations of improvement of the monitoring framework are absent.

The evaluators conclude that monitoring has focussed primarily at a lower level of the results chain, while ISP's specific objective 3 (Increased use by society of research results and of graduates in

development) is set too high to be achievable. Still, the evaluators have not made clear which level of monitoring would be more appropriate. The evaluators also state, regarding specific objective 3, that a degree of attribution to ISP can be assumed where there has been uptake of research results that ISP funding has made possible, and that there are some persuasive cases where ISP support has clearly contributed to such outcomes.

Regarding initiation of support, ISP agrees that the capacity gaps of supported research groups and scientific networks have not been systematically assessed and documented, and there have not been set specific strategies for the work with each supported partner.

The evaluators express concern that ISP's long-term funding and commitment to Research Groups (RGs) and Scientific Networks (SNs), may have trapped these into financial dependency on ISP. This may to some extent be true, although it is contradicted by the findings from a study of 47 partners phased out of ISP support 2003-2014, where close to 80% were found to sustain on competitive funding when investigated in 2016.

The evaluators believe that the ISP Board would benefit from broadening its skills sets even further, with members with experience in development cooperation and in the politics and bureaucracy of the focus countries. ISP sees this as a matter of discussion with Sida and the leadership of Uppsala University, before any action is considered.

ISP agrees with the evaluators' suggestion to develop the operation of the scientific reference groups to the program and to introduce a more formal, systematic and coherent review process.

The positive recognition by the evaluators of ISP's work to promote gender equality is acknowledged, and efforts will continue.

Regarding environmental impact, ISP agrees that the indicator based on scoring of predefined issues may be of limited value, which is a matter to be considered.

ISP agrees to the evaluators recommendation to communicate better on what ISP has achieved. It would, however, have been helpful if the evaluators had spelled out which specific actions ISP could take in the design and development of its programme that could make it more attractive to complementary funding.

ISP agrees that the introduction of a postdoc scheme could be valuable. Such a scheme was in fact introduced in 2015, although to a limited extent within the ISP mathematics program. An overall ISP postdoc program would indeed be worth considering.

Moreover, the suggestion to introduce funding on a competitive basis for more mature partners is an interesting idea worth considering.

ISP has in fact since 1961 been navigating in a changing higher education landscape, and will continue to take this into account in the future development of the program.

Finally, ISP is looking forward to the dialogue with Sida in revising the program logic and the indicators; on how to systematically ensure that the complementarities between ISP and its bilateral programmes are supported; and on the continued cooperation.

B. Introduction

Since the evaluation in 2011¹, and particularly in the Sida agreement period 2014-2018, ISP has been focusing on adapting to the recommendations given by the evaluators, including strengthening the monitoring and evaluation function as well as financial control functions, and to implement results based management, as instructed by Sida, delivering aggregated outcome indicators agreed with Sida. It is stated in the terms of reference of the current evaluation (Section 4, item 15), “*The evaluation shall further assess how ISP has approached and addressed the recommendations given in the latest (2011) evaluation of ISP, with special emphasis on ISP’s Strategy Plan 2013-2017, and the yearly action plans for ISP’s strategic work.*” It appears as if the evaluators have put less effort in this assessment, than in assessing the program in relation to the theory of change model and to other theoretical models that have been selected as suitable for the purpose.

The theory of change model has not been applied in ISP’s operation, although the thoughts behind it are evidently similar to what in fact since long is already practiced. Many of the changes resulting from ISP support, as witnessed also by the case studies, has happened despite the absence of documents prepared beforehand to describe the intended changes. Such documents can of course be produced, with additional administrative input, and a formal theory of change model be introduced in ISP’s next strategic plan and in the following development of the program, to await scrutiny in future evaluation exercises. In any development of ISP’s theoretical framework and monitoring system, however, Sida’s standing requirement should be considered, for ISP to keep administrative costs low.

C. The Evaluators’ Perspective and Findings

1) General

The evaluators find that “*ISP fulfils a direct, facilitating and promotive role in supporting scientific activities in its partner research groups and university departments.*” Furthermore, they state that the “*reach of its capacity development interventions are justified [...] by the public good argument to support such research.*”

The evaluators state that “*There is no question that ISP’s support to the development of research capacity has been broadly relevant and aligned with Swedish policies for research in development cooperation*”. Furthermore, “*all the recipients interviewed see the ISP support as being highly relevant to the development of their scientific research capacity*”, and “*In many cases it is evident that much of the research is very relevant to local development challenges*”.

They find that “*Its support through funding for skill development, equipment provision, consumables, as well as ability to facilitate*

¹ GDH (2011). Report on the Evaluation of the International Science Programme, 30 September 2011.

international research collaboration and exposure has done much to bring its grantees into a wider community of research. Its pragmatic approach to problems and issues has been effective. Much of the research that has been supported has clear relevance to country-specific development needs and where the application is less clear, the research has been of intrinsic merit. In this sense ISP has contributed significantly to the public good in its domain of activities.”

ISP’s response: The evaluators’ general view of the program is acknowledged.

2) Monitoring

It is noted that “*ISP management has done much to bring in routines and systems in order to bring coherence to the programme, and this started before the 2014-2018 period*”. Still, the evaluators regard the results framework not to be “*coherent and not helpful to formal programme learning and reporting*”, and find “*a disconnect between what ISP actually does in relation to capacity development and its monitoring framework*”.

ISP’s response: It should be remembered that ISP’s program logic was developed after Sida required ISP to introduce Results Based Management in 2009, when a first logical framework was drafted following a workshop led by Prof. John Mathiason, Associates for International Management Service (AIMS). It was further developed during the 2011 evaluation, and in the spring of 2013 a first version was published in ISP’s Strategic Plan 2013-2017. A slightly amended version was introduced in a revised proposal to Sida later that year, after consultation with Prof. Mathiason and Sida staff, and it was next published 2014, in the Annual Report 2013, along with 24 performance indicators of the outcomes, selected for monitoring.

In 2014 and 2015, the indicators were calculated for the previous Sida agreement period, 2008-2013, and in 2016 the indicators were calculated for the years 2014 and 2015 and published in the Annual Report 2015. Since then the indicators have been calculated annually, and given in the annual reports.

At the launch of this system, ISP decided to evaluate the value of the logical framework and the value of the selected indicators after operating the logical framework for five years, and then to do any adjustments found necessary – including abandoning indicators that are regarded to make less sense, and refining the remaining as needed. The resulting, developed results framework was then intended to be included in a new strategic plan and in a planned, new proposal to Sida.

Therefore, the evaluators’ assessment of ISP’s logical framework is an important input in this development of the program logic, independent of whether RBM will be applied in the future operation of the program or not.

The evaluators conclude that “*Monitoring has focussed primarily at a lower level of the results chain*”, and argue that “*While a considerable*

volume of data has been collected it has not provided a basis of learning or a tool for management of the programme.” The evaluators regard the “*aggregation of data across all RGs and SNs and the presentation of averages in annual reports*” to be of limited use for “*learning about the chronology of development of specific RGs and SNs over time*”. Further, “*While the contribution of ISP to the improvement of scientific research facilities and technical resources has been a core strength of the ISP the absence of relevant data means that it is not possible to assess whether capacities to formulate research problems or improve research proposals have changed.*”

ISP’s response: Hopefully, program learning will happen when the logframe indicators are evaluated (see above), in particular in perspective of the assessment by the evaluators. The disadvantage with aggregated indicators was discussed in the Annual Report 2015, Section 5.2.2, but no alternative was seen as feasible in the earlier discussions with Sida, the evaluators in 2011, and with Sida and the AIMS representative in 2013. The data collected, however, still permits assessment of the chronology of development of individual research groups and scientific networks, and were presented to the evaluators in a manner so that such comparisons could have been made. It seems, however, that sufficient time was not available for such exercises – which also is the main reason why ISP has not yet embarked on such compilations. In the planned assessment of the selected outcomes and the corresponding performance indicators, such longitudinal studies might be done, in those cases where that available data is regarded to be of relevance and to constitute a long enough time series.

Whether the collected data are relevant or not will, then, be a matter of the planned assessment, but all data that correspond to the logframe indicators are clearly *present*, for each year and for each supported partner – although their presentation in the annual reports has been in an aggregated form. Which relevant data are *absent* has not been specified by the evaluators, which would have been quite helpful.

In addition, it is expressed that “*ISP does not specify what the capacity gaps are for each RG or SN, or establish baselines of capacity at the time that funding starts to a RG or SN, or set out specific strategies that will be used to address these. Its monitoring data, both because the indicators poorly address the development of capacities and because ISP averages its metrics across the total population of its grantees offer no systematic understanding of ISP’s contribution to enhanced research capacity.*”

ISP’s response: ISP agrees that the capacity gaps have not been systematically assessed and documented, and there have not been set specific strategies for the work with each supported partner. A tool for that will be implemented in the planned, next agreement period, and will possibly be applied also to currently supported partners.

To improve the monitoring system, it would have been helpful if the evaluators had substantiated their criticism that “*the indicators poorly address the development of capacities*” by indicating which other

performance measurements should have been chosen instead to serve that purpose. It should again be emphasized that behind the averaged metrics presented in the Annual Reports are detailed, longitudinal metrics for each supported partner, and these detailed metrics were available to the evaluators.

The evaluators find that *“The ISP’s strategic objective 3 (Increased use by society of research results and of graduates in development) is set at too high a level to be achievable, since ISP has little or no influence over whether and how research results are disseminated or taken up by the public or private sectors.”* The evaluators mean that *“the effects of the ISP support on the policy level are too far removed from ISP’s actual operations and sphere of influence to be meaningfully measured.”*

ISP’s response: When ISP was informed about the operation of the RBM logical framework, in the workshop with Prof. Mathiason late 2009, it was made clear that for each specific (not “strategic”) objective, desirable outcomes should be formulated, the achievement of which are beyond the control of the program, but necessary for the objective to be reached. The rationale behind the selection of ISP’s specific objective 3 is twofold. 1) As pointed out by Prof. Mathiason, building capacity is useless if it in the end does not come to any use, and 2) as formulated by the Swedish government as an “area objective” in the Strategy for Sida’s support for development research cooperation 2010-2014: *“Increased production by the research community [in developing countries and regions] of research of relevance in the fight against poverty in developing countries”*. Hence, a ISP specific objective on the use of research results and graduates’ skills was developed. Also, the evaluators admit that *“A degree of attribution to ISP can be assumed where there has been uptake of outputs from research that ISP funding made possible and there are some persuasive cases where ISP support has clearly contributed to such outcomes”*.

In contrast, as referred above, the evaluators observe that *“Monitoring has focussed primarily at a lower level of the results chain”*, while here follow-up on a too high level is discussed. It would have been helpful to know more in detail the evaluators’ view on the appropriate level of monitoring in practice, that is, which indicators should have been selected.

3) Financial dependency

The evaluators express concern that *“ISP’s long term funding and commitment to RGs and SNs, may have trapped these [...] into forms of financial dependency on ISP.”*

ISP’s response: To an extent, ISP agrees with this concern. However, starting support in a very resource challenged environment requires a long-term commitment for a positive development to be secured. Then, during the course of ISP funding, the local situation often changes, implying emerging availabilities of funding from the supported partners’ universities and governments. In addition, when intellectual and instrumental resources are enhanced, many partners

succeed in acquiring short-term funding from external sources, on a competitive basis, which is encouraged by ISP. The capacity to handle such grants is facilitated by ISP's long-term engagement.

In a recent study of 47 partners phased out of ISP support 2003-2014, it was found that in 2016, about 80% continued scientific research and postgraduate education on competitive funding. So, despite systematic efforts from ISP's side in the past to decrease the dependency on ISP funding (more about that below), a quite high degree of sustainability of previously supported partners was reached. In addition, although a number of currently supported partners are fully dependent on ISP funding, the share of research funding available to supported partner (including that from ISP) that is granted by other sources was on average 34% during 2008-2013 and 43% 2014-2017 – on an aggregated level.

4) Board

The evaluators remark that *“Although the Board membership has been diversified during the current programme period, the ISP Board would benefit from broadening its skills sets even further”*, implying including *“members with experience in development cooperation and in the politics and bureaucracy of the focus countries”*.

ISP's response: According to the ISP Ordinance (UHÄ-FS 1988:18), the Board of Uppsala University decides on the ISP Instruction, including the composition of the ISP Board. Because of the nature of the program, the majority of ISP Board members are scientists (7 of 12). Many of these have profound experience of development cooperation, although probably to somewhat less of an extent of the politics and bureaucracy of the partner countries. However, in three of the non-academic Board categories, these skills sets are largely met; 1) *“A member from an international organisation, active in a field relevant to ISP”*, which from 8 May 2018 is Dr. Jennifer Blanke, Vice-President of Agriculture, Human and Social Development at African Development Bank; 2) *“One representative for the developing countries”*, which from 1 April 2016 is Prof. Mohamed Gharib Bilal, Chancellor of the Nelson Mandela African Institution of Science and Technology, Arusha, Tanzania, and former Vice President to the United Republic of Tanzania; 3) *“One member with considerable experience of work outside the academic sphere, of relevance to the program,”* which from 23 May 2017 is Mr Hans Corell, Ambassador (ret.), Former Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and the Legal Counsel of the United Nations.

Whether there is need to create an additional category of Board members, adding more specifically *“experience in development cooperation and in the politics and bureaucracy of the focus countries”* will be a matter of discussion with Sida, should their support continue.

5) Scientific Reference Groups

The evaluators find that the “*performance management of the Reference Groups remains underdeveloped*” and that “*the Reference Groups are not playing a sufficient and systematic role in evaluating progress reports and outcomes and evaluating new research proposals*”. Although the “*changes in the invitation and selection of RGs*” is acknowledged by the evaluators, they find that “*the weaning of RGs or SNs off ISP funding has not happened in a systematic way.*”

ISP’s response: Here the evaluators point at two issues that will need to be addressed in the future.

Without going into detail about the introduction of scientific reference groups to the program, the shortcomings identified in the evaluation 2011 have largely been corrected. However, ISP agrees that there is a need to develop a more systematic and coherent scientific reference group review process, still embedded in the framework of the basic peer review system for research performance evaluation. This will be subject to discussion with Sida and included in the next strategic plan. In its bilateral programs for support to development of research and higher education, Sida operates a review process of “letters of intents” and “full proposals”, the experiences of which might be useful in this development.

The second issue, about the shortcomings with regard to “*weaning of RGs or SNs off ISP funding [...] in a systematic way,*” was identified also in the ISP study of partners phased out of ISP support 2003-2014, and is already subject to attention.

6) Gender

The evaluators note that the “*Annual ISP reporting includes some basic gender-disaggregated data [...]. In line with most global trends, these show low rates of participation by women, and they generally indicate no significant changes in the gender balance in RGs and SNs since 2014. On the whole, chemistry RGs and SNs have higher proportions of women than either physics or mathematics. Findings from the evaluation did not clarify the reasons for this.*” Further, they observe that “*The very different contexts in which RGs and SNs are located mean that cultural norms alone cannot explain the small number of female postgraduates in science. Other country- and institution-specific factors need to be considered.*”

Finally, they note that “*In its 2013-2017 strategic plan, ISP committed to initiating a focused approach to promoting gender equality [...] and a Gender Equality Working Group was accordingly set up. A number of initiatives have resulted including a grants programme to promote gender equity that started in 2017. Initial results from this look promising but it is still too early to reach a full assessment of its impact.*”

ISP’s response: The positive recognition by the evaluators of ISP’s work to promote gender equality is acknowledged, and efforts will continue.

The evaluators note, however, that there have not been any significant changes since 2014, and that the proportions of participating females are higher in chemistry and in physics.

It should be remembered, though, that also before the strategic plan 2014-2017 was adopted, considerable efforts were made to promote gender equality among supported research groups and scientific networks. A review made in 2016 showed that the proportion of female students in the chemistry program increased from 4% (MSc and PhD students) in the period 1970-1984, to 37% (PhD students) in the period 2010-2014, which is similar to the proportion at Swedish universities of female chemistry students 2013-2014, 42%. The reason for this increase in the chemistry program is not clear, nor whether it to any degree can be attributed to ISP influence.

The proportions of female PhD students in the ISP physics and mathematics programs 2010-2014 were 16 and 17%, respectively, which can be compared to 29 and 27%, respectively, in Swedish PhD students of these subjects 2013-2014.

This data was submitted to the evaluators.

7) Environment

The evaluators note that *“ISP collects information in its activity reports on whether RGs and SN have implemented any of the 9 measures listed to reduce or avoid negative natural environmental impact. However the data is not complete and its current organisation did not allow time for group and network based analyses. Moreover the scoring approach on predefined issues might speak to some of the environmental issues faced by individual RGs but not necessarily all of them. They tell us little about the environmental impacts of activities of ISP-supported research.”*

ISP’s response: As explained in ISP’s comments to the draft report, the table is based on the environmental impact assessment (EIA) required by Sida in the 1 July 2008 to 31 December 2010 agreement, and submitted to Sida 27 August 2009. The EIA itself was based on the environment policy of Uppsala University at that time.

ISP agrees that the scoring of predefined issues may be of limited value, but at the time of drafting of the results framework no better alternative was seen. However, the data does allow for group and network based longitudinal analyses, and that could have been compiled, if it had been requested. In addition, besides the scoring table, each group and network were asked for a narrative comment to the issue of environmental impact, which makes up complementary information that could have been accessed if so requested. The value of the indicator to ISP will be considered in the assessment of the performance indicators as indicated above.

8) Sustainability

The evaluators conclude that *“With respect to the sustainability of RGs and SNs, the analysis of financial data made available to the evaluation for the period 2014-2016 shows that most RGs and SNs*

remain highly dependent on ISP. The sixteen RGs/SNs that have received ISP support for 20 years or more had funding levels that varied between 32 percent and 100 percent with a median of 79 percent. Similarly, funding levels to groups and networks in the case study countries ranged between 13 percent and 100 percent, with most lying between 60 percent and 80 percent. The prospects for financial sustainability of most ISP-supported groups and networks therefore appear poor.”

ISP’s response: This conclusion is contradicted by the findings accounted for above, in part 3) of this section, from the study of 47 partners phased out of ISP support 2003-2014.

Regarding ISP as a whole, the evaluators stress that “few if any donors are prepared to focus on capacity development processes and give the time for it that Sida has been willing to do. The chances of getting significant complementary funding for ISP given its current mode of operation and weaknesses in the performance monitoring are also slight. ISP has not communicated well on what it has done and a more articulated and managed process that could speak more convincingly to external actors of the strengths of the ISP approach and achievements might be more likely to find co funding. There are actions that ISP could take in the design and development of its programme that could make it more attractive to complementary funding.”

ISP’s response: The evaluators’ appreciation of Sida’s approach of supporting long-term capacity building is acknowledged. Regarding the chances for ISP to attract significant complementary funding, ISP agrees to the evaluators recommendation to communicate better on what ISP has done, and to introduce a “*more articulated and managed process that could speak more convincingly to external actors of the strengths of the ISP approach and achievements.*” It would, however, have been helpful if the evaluators had spelled out which specific actions ISP could take, in their opinion, “*in the design and development of its programme that could make it more attractive to complementary funding.*”

9) General Recommendations

Overall, the evaluators find that “*ISP’s strengths can be leveraged in new ways and there is a future role for ISP. It offers a modality of working in capacity development support that is all too rare in allowing its partner national scientists the opportunity and support to develop their capacities. ISP needs to develop a robust Theory of Change and articulate which specific capacities it is focusing on supporting and from this develop an appropriate monitoring framework. Such a framework should enable both accountability to Sida and learning within the programme.*” Furthermore, they suggest that “*The current model of operation provides the basis for continuation, albeit within a phased and time bound modality. A time horizon for support to RGs/SNs should be defined at the outset, linked initially to five three-year cycles of funding. This would then be subject to external review if a case was to be made to extend funding for a further defined period. This would encourage more systematic*

monitoring of capacity changes and joint assessment by ISP and the concerned RG/SN of progress towards sustainability. This would take account of both baseline conditions in the institutional environment as well as any subsequent changes.”

ISP’s response: The future development of ISP, to be laid down in a new strategic plan, will take one starting point in the assessments of the evaluators, in line with what is proposed above. The specific suggestion to introduce a “*time bound modality*” may be subject to particular consideration.

The evaluators also suggest that “*ISP will need to consider whether it has the responsibility and the capacity to assist RGs and SNs to develop and implement fund-raising plans so that, by the end of an agreed period of ISP support, they have diversified their funding and significantly reduced their financial dependence on ISP.*”

ISP’s response: To proactively support partners to attract new sources of funding was, along with other quality- and capacity-enhancing activities, proposed in the application to Sida 2007, but could not be developed then or in the consecutive granting extension periods. However, with the agreement 2014-2018, and based on the strategic plan 2014-2017, the issue could be started to be addressed and is now gradually being implemented.

Other suggestion by the evaluators is that “*ISP could consider moving its support a little more upstream and provide selective support to a post-doctoral scheme;*” and to “*consider moving towards a competitive research funding approach, particularly for more mature RGs/SNs specifically designed to bring them up to competitive standards.*” They propose the principle of the latter to be for ISP “*to identify core areas in the basic sciences that it considers are in the public interest, in need of support and are not being addressed by others,*” and to be “*fixed term and subject to progress which must be closely monitored.*”

ISP’s response: ISP agrees that the introduction of a specific postdoc scheme could be valuable, considering the increasing number of PhDs graduating from supported groups and networks. In fact, such a scheme has already been introduced, in 2015, although to a limited extent, in the Eastern African Universities Mathematics Program, using the allocation awarded by the ISP mathematics program. An overall ISP postdoc program could indeed be of value and is well worth considering. It should, however, be remembered that the ISP funding model already at present permits partners to budget allocation money for postdoc training of graduates.

The suggestion to introduce funding on a competitive basis for more “*mature*” groups and networks is also an interesting idea well worth to consider. However, it is doubtful whether ISP should take the role to “*identify core areas in the basic sciences that it considers are in the public interest, in need of support and are not being addressed by others.*”

10) Specific Recommendations to ISP

- 1) *“There is a lack of coherence between ISP’s activities and achievements in capacity development and its results framework. ISP needs to be much clearer about the research capacities that it can contribute to and design a Theory of Change and Results framework that is consistent with this.”*

ISP’s response: The point is taken and will be addressed in the next strategic plan as well as in the planned, next proposal to Sida, for continued support to the programme.

- 2) *“ISP’s monitoring framework has not provided relevant data, information and knowledge. Many of the current indicators are inappropriate and its focus on assessing ‘averages’ that cut across the entire grantee population that exists in diverse contexts is not helpful to learning. ISP needs to rethink its indicators in relation to a new Theory of Change and Results Framework. It should revise its set of indicators to capture essential aspects of capacity development it wants to develop and focus more on analysing time series data for each individual grantee. Such a revision should be done in dialogue with Sida (cf #8 below)”*

ISP’s response: A review and revision of the indicators, as well as the results framework as a whole, has already been planned, as stated in the previous section. It should, however, be noted that “time series data for each individual grantee” is already at hand for the presently used indicators, and it will be seriously considered whether compilation and analysis on the individual level will provide information that is of such value that the additional administrative effort can be justified.

- 3) *“The ISP has not established systematic baselines and identified a chronology of capacity development that is assessed and monitored over time by the Reference Groups. ISP needs to develop for each RG/SN that it supports a baseline and chronology of capacity development stages which must be assessed and monitored over time by the Reference Groups. These should contain a clear timetable of change.”*

ISP’s response: ISP agrees, and a tool for that will be implemented.

- 4) *“The Reference Group procedures are not consistent across the programmes and do not appear to consistently review and assess research grant applications. More formal procedures for the Reference Groups need to be implemented, including more structured review processes whereby judgements are supported by argument and recommendations followed up.”*

ISP’s response: ISP agrees that there is a need to develop a more formal, systematic and coherent scientific reference group review process.

- 5) *“ISP funding appears to have created a dependency for groups that it has been funding long term. ISP needs to proactively support groups that it has been funding long term to attract new sources of funding and with a clear cut-off date for ISP funding.”*

ISP’s response: ISP does not fully agree. The conclusion on dependency may to some extent be true, although it is contradicted by the findings indicated in part 3) of the previous section, from the study of 47 partners phased out of ISP support 2003-2014, where close to 80% were found to sustain on competitive funding when investigated 2016. Still, ISP agrees that a systematic approach to proactively supporting partners to attract new funding sources is a necessary development, which already has started to be implemented.

- 6) *“The gender equality grant mechanisms offers a very useful mechanism for understanding gender constraints. ISP should build on the early experience of implementing the gender equality grant mechanism and ensure that positive and negative lessons learned from this are disseminated widely and that good practice in promoting gender equality is taken up throughout the programme.”*

ISP’s response: The work on this issue will continue.

- 7) *“The higher education landscape is changing with new networks, forms of cooperation and funding for science and technology. ISP’s strategy needs to take this into account leveraging its specific contribution to build synergies with other actors. ISP should develop a new strategy that builds on its strengths and what it can contribute to scientific research capacity in a changing higher education landscape. It should consider a competitive grant approach in thematic areas of science where there is a public good interest.”*

ISP’s response: ISP has in fact since 1961 been navigating in a changing “higher education landscape”, and will continue to take this into account in the future development of the program. Introducing a competitive grant approach, under particular circumstances, will be considered.

11) Specific Recommendations to Sida

- 8) *“Sida’s accountability requirements have not been helpful for ISP to establish a monitoring and reporting framework that supports learning within the programme. We understand a formal results based framework is no longer a statutory requirement for Sida funding. Sida and ISP should negotiate and agree on a revised set of indicators that serve both the purpose of accountability towards Sida and learning for ISP and its grantees.”*

ISP’s response: ISP is looking forward to the dialogue with Sida in revising the program logic and the indicators.

- 9) *“Synergies between the ISP programme and the bilateral programme have not been fully realised. Sida should more systematically ensure that the complementarities between ISP and its bilateral programmes are supported.”*

ISP’s response: ISP is looking forward to enter into a discussion with Sida on how to “systematically ensure that the complementarities between ISP and its bilateral programmes are supported.”

- 10) ISP offers a model of cooperation that has immense value and is consistent with Sida’s principles. Sida should continue to support ISP but subject to the rethinking and re-positioning of its approach

ISP’s response: ISP is looking forward to a discussion with Sida on the continued cooperation.