

Operational strategy 2015-2019



**OLOF PALME
INTERNATIONAL
CENTER**

THE OPERATIONAL STRATEGY OF THE PALME CENTER 2015-2019

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1. INTRODUCTION

The operational strategy defines more clearly the overall objectives as expressed in the operational policy of the Olof Palme International Center for a certain period of time. The current operational strategy covers the years 2015-2019. Each year there an annual plan is also developed with measurable objectives and activity plans. Based on these annual plans the employees make individual action plans for the current year. Since a lot can change over a period of five years the operational strategy can be revised as the circumstances changes. The decision to revise the operational strategy is taken by the board of the Palme Center.

2. THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE PALME CENTER

VISION

The overall goal of the Palme Center is:

A world of peaceful societies founded on the ideals of democracy and equality and human rights for all.

POLICY PRIORITIES AND THEORY OF CHANGE

The policy priorities of the Palme Center are human rights, democracy and peace. They presuppose each other: Without respect for human rights, no democracy or peace. Without democracy, no human rights or peace. And without peace, no democracy or human rights.

Fundamental to the idea of democracy is solidarity, equality and freedom. Free and equal people, living in a society characterized by solidarity between people is the overall vision that permeates our work and commitment in the world. The power structures that prevent people from reaching their full potential must be made visible and opposed.

Human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent. This means that political and civil rights are as important as social and economic rights. A person's right to work, to education, and to food are prerequisites for a democratic and egalitarian society. The struggle against poverty and for greater equality is in the deepest sense a struggle for dignity and human rights.

A fundamental perspective for the Palme Center is everyone's right to decide over their own lives and to influence the society they live in. We believe in societies where power emanates from the people. Democracy creates the conditions for people to live a life in freedom, and is a form of government that carries the possibility of a more equal distribution of power and resources and that resolves conflicts peacefully through dialogue and open debate. An analysis of the power structures that subordinate and discriminate on grounds such as class, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or gender identity is crucial to achieve this.

Societies change through popular participation. No society will be permanent and successful if it is not based on the will of people to come together in fellowship. To strengthen popular organization to increase equality and freedom enhances the possibility for people living in poverty to influence their own lives and communities. Strong social movements and vibrant civil societies are strong forces of change and as such they constitute the fundamentals of democracy.

Social and political organizing are powerful tools for people to both influence societies and govern. It increases popular support, facilitates an active citizenship and democratic participation and contributes to the development of society itself and a strong and persistent democracy. A prerequisite for this to come true is that these associations and organizations are democratically structured. That they are stronger than their leaders.

In the era of globalization the conflict between labor and capital is clear. For the labor movement, it is unacceptable that people compete for jobs through lower wages, poorer

working conditions and lower environmental standards. The right to organize – in civil society organizations, in trade unions and in political parties – is therefore essential.

The Palme Center's work for peace is based on the idea that lasting peace only can be achieved in societies defined by human freedom and equality. Each person's freedom and security are closely linked to everyone else's freedom and security.

In conclusion, the Palme Center's international solidarity work is primarily aimed at providing people with the opportunity to organize themselves. Low capacity for popular participation and weak popular organizations are the expression of, and reinforces, the unequal power structures and relations that characterizes the countries where we work and are an obstacle to democratic development.

The operational policy of the Palme Center states the overall objective for our development cooperation:

The operations of the Palme Center shall develop the ability of the Palme Center's partner organizations, and the individuals in them, to activate and organize people in their efforts to influence the communities they live in, and thereby their own lives.

Central to our operations is the focus on increasing knowledge of human rights and how to claim your rights.

The capacity for effective advocacy work is another important part of our international cooperation. Access to information, media visibility and advocacy work directed to political leaders and other power holders are important tools to bring about change for people living in poverty.

The following three areas make up the core competence of the Palme Center's work with international development cooperation:

- popular participation
- trade union work for social change
- party political organization

By prioritizing these three areas the Palme Center can benefit from the experience and knowledge of our member organizations and provide the support and expertise in demand in partner countries. The *operational policy* describes the focus of our operations more in detail.

ADVOCACY WORK AND INFLUENCE

To be able to contribute to democratic development, change power relationships and overcome exclusion and subordination, communication and advocacy work is necessary. The overall objective for the Palme Center's advocacy work is:

To contribute to increased knowledge, stronger engagement and increased mobilization for international solidarity, democracy, human rights and peace as well as to make power structures visible and inform how they impede development.

The Palme Center shall be a clear and powerful voice for human rights, democracy and peace. We shall continue to support and develop the labor movement's international solidarity work and its commitment to global development. The mission of the Palme Center's advocacy work is:

In order to increase the commitment for international solidarity and the support for democracy, human rights and peace the Palme Center will, together with our member organizations and cooperation partners, raise the awareness of our target groups of people who work to democratize their societies by organizing people and struggle against injustices. In order to achieve the overall objective we also need to make the power structures that impede development visible.

The Palme Center will be a storytelling organization, highlighting the work of our partners, to increase the understanding and awareness of global development issues. The Palme Center shall offer factual and easily accessible information about our international development cooperation and the results it yields. Our advocacy work is also aimed at increasing international solidarity, contribute to fundraising to the Solidarity Fund and be a driving force in the debate on human rights, democracy and peace.

THE STRENGTH OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT

The Olof Palme International Center is a member organization on international issues for the Swedish labor movement. The three founding organizations are the Social Democratic party, the Trade Union Confederation and the Cooperative Union has since expanded to 26 member organizations that represents more millions of members of the labor movement.

The history of the labor movement in Sweden is a key reference point for the Palme Center's operations. Not more than a hundred years ago, poverty, lack of equality and political repression prevented people from participating in public decision making in Sweden. Through democratic mobilization that included large parts of the population and through strategic cooperation between the Social democratic party, the trade union movement and the women's movement a massive mobilization and advocacy campaign was done. Public debate, advocacy, public rallies, strikes and manifestations eventually led to universal suffrage in 1921.

The continued organization and mobilization of the labor movement later became indispensable for fundamentally transforming Swedish society. It was the key force that pushed for a long series of political, social and economic reforms during the 1900s, all contributing to changing the power structures and power relations that characterized the Swedish class society in the beginning of the last century. The strengthening of workers' rights, equality between men and women and progress in relation to children's rights represent important steps of this social change. Adult education, using the study-circle method, contributed to the spread of knowledge and power to under-represented groups excluded from the formal education system. It gave strength and substance to the labor movement's debates and contributed to mobilization.

International solidarity is one of the pillars of the labor movement and has played a decisive role in its history. This experience and the long term relationships that it spawned is of great importance for the Palme Center today. The international networks and organizations that were formed positive contributes to the sustainability and legitimacy of our work. For the Palme Center international solidarity is expressed through the partnership with our partners. Partnerships that are characterized by reciprocity, respect, exchange of experiences and long term relationships.

THE VARIOUS ROLES OF THE PALME CENTER

The ambition of the Palme Center is to safeguard the labor movement's unique character and role. The Palme Center is a versatile actor in Swedish development cooperation and to find an effective way to integrate our three main roles represents a challenge:

Quality assuring framework organization

The Palme Center receive funds from Sida for dissemination to the projects of our member organizations under the CSO framework agreement (CSO support). As a framework

organization the Palme Center shall ensure that operations are relevant, sustainable, feasible and cost effective.

Party affiliated organization

The Palme Center also has a role of dissemination and quality assurance for support to party affiliated organizations (PAO support). This role is performed on behalf of the Social Democratic Party and projects are undertaken by the party's local and regional divisions as well as its auxiliary organizations.

Strategic actor and direct partner

Linked to both CSO and PAO support, the Palme Center receives funds as a strategic actor. This means that the Palme Center, in addition to the projects carried out by member organizations, has operations of our own in support of partner organizations. In this role the Palme Center also receives funds for development cooperation beyond the CSO and PAO support. This relates to funding from different Swedish embassies, financing from the Swedish Institute, other international donors as well as the EU. It is a goal to expand EU support for our activities in this period.

The Palme Center's operations shall be characterized by good organization and long-term planning, in which the roles as a quality assuring framework organization as well as a strategic partner are integrated with each other and contributes to making sure that projects and programs consistently is of high quality.

3. OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES 2015-2019

The world constantly changes and the Palme Center is therefore an organization in constant development. The operational strategy's overall objectives shall guide Palme Center activities in the coming five years. The annual plan sets out the objectives and activities that will contribute to achieving them. Three operational objectives have been set for the period 2015-2019 and are listed below:

3.1 The commitment and experience of member organizations shall characterize the Palme Center's work with democracy, human rights and peace

The labor movement's commitment to international solidarity is the basis for the Palme Center. A commitment that can take many forms; by actively participating in projects, financially supporting a specific project, as a monthly donor to the Palme Center, providing support to fundraisers or participate in the Palme Center seminars and follow us on social media.

PARTICIPATION IN PROJECTS

In recent years the administrative requirements concerning development cooperation has increased resulting in increased professionalization. Different forms of engagement have therefore been introduced to make it easier for our member organizations to participate in projects: project management with full responsibility, project management without administration and supporting a specific project financially. The Palme Center continues with these three forms of project cooperation to make it possible for all member organizations to participate in the development cooperation work on terms relevant to them.

The relationships of development cooperation have changed as a consequence of changed circumstances in partner countries. The capacity of our partner organizations is higher today than it was ten years ago and the world is more connected and interdependent than before. To a greater extent than before it will be important to match the right organizations and representatives from our member organizations with our local partner organizations. It is

therefore a priority to strengthen the cooperation with experts within our member organizations.

The partnerships that define our work with international development is based on reciprocity and solidarity. Member organizations and local partner organizations share core values, creating consent, trust and an effective cooperation. Projects are implemented based on existing needs and objectives identified by our local partner organizations. It is also our partners who work to achieve change in relation to these objectives. The labor movement's historical and current experience serves as a reference point for how change can be achieved and our partner organization's activism is a source of inspiration for our member organizations in their work.

The exchange of experiences with our member organizations shall be a strategic part of all programs. A long-term goal is that all our member organizations shall participate in some form of cooperation, and that more people within each member organization is involved in this work. Increased participation lead to increased possibilities to connect member organizations and local partner organizations in interesting collaborations. Great participation also ensures the continuity of the projects and limits the risk of becoming dependent on individuals.

COMMUNICATION AND ADVOCACY WORK

Communication and advocacy are central to strengthen the commitment for the Palme Center's operations. We shall inspire people to be engaged in international solidarity in the spirit of Olof Palme. In the Palme Center's development cooperation the target groups of our partners shall be at the heart of our advocacy work. This clarifies that it is the local partner organizations that struggle to transform their communities and that the role of the Palme Center and our member organization's is to support this work.

The Palme Center shall inform about our work in a live and vivid together with our member organizations and local partners to form public opinion on human rights, democracy and peace. These stories of change in relation to popular participation, trade union work for social change, party political organization shall reach out to the members of our member organizations. Both Palme Center staff, representatives from our member organizations and our local partners need to contribute to this work of gather and disseminate good examples of the results of our mutual efforts.

FUNDRAISING

Fundraising activities shall be closely linked to communication and advocacy work. The fundraising of the Palme Center is necessary to be able to sustain a long term work for international solidarity. The Palme Center's *Solidarity Fund* covers the own contribution of 10 percent of the CSO support from Sida, amongst other things, which funds about half of the Palme Center's operations. After several years of decline the fundraising increased in both 2012 and 2013. However, it needs to grow further, be used more effectively and eventually generate a surplus in line with the objective for the fundraising activities:

To ensure sustainable financing of the own contribution required for the Palme Center's operations and, in addition, that it creates space for both communication and advocacy work as well as fully financed development projects.

The level of funds raised is partly a measure of the commitment for the work of the Palme Center in competition with other interests and fundraisers. Monthly donors are the stable and continuous source of income for the Palme Center. The trend of a declining number of monthly donors have to some extent been turned around, however, the average age of donors is high. It is a continued priority to increase the number of monthly donors in the coming years.

To sponsor a project provides member organizations with the possibility to support the own contribution for a specific project from which they then receive information continuously. To increase these kind of sponsorships will be a key strategy in order to increase the fundraising of the Palme Center.

To succeed in these ambitions requires a broad commitment from the staff of the Palme Center and our member organizations. Communication activities need to include a fundraising element and contribute to the understanding of the long-term social change that the Palme Center works for.

A comprehensive strategy for communication, advocacy and fundraising for the period is included in Annex 1 of *the operational strategy*.

3.2 Organizations' capacity to mobilize for human rights, democracy and peace shall be strengthened through long-term cooperation

The Palme Center's development cooperation focuses on long-term social change toward democracy and human rights through the collective organization of people living in poverty, to be able to influence their communities and their own lives. Organization and mobilization are at the core of our work. A rights-based approach ensures that partner organizations contribute to sustainable change.

A successful implementation of the Palme Center's programs will yield results for social change and build stronger organizations. A clear ideological foundation, goals for what to achieve, as well as a theory of change firmly established, gives direction for our work and the ability to assess whether the work is successful.

The Palme Center's theory of change emphasizes popular participation and trade unions work for social change as the basis for our support to civil society and organizing in political parties for our democracy-centered political party support. The labor movement's experience of social change derives from democratic organization to change relations of power. How this affects the orientation of the Palme Center's work with development cooperation is described in *the operational policy*:

The Palme Center will work to broaden its network of contacts among popular movements and in civil society in the countries where we are present. We shall primarily work with and support democratically structured, member-based, grass-roots organizations and social movements or associations with the potential to become one. In local contexts where popular movements and civil society are less developed, for example as a result of conflicts or authoritarian rule, exceptions can be made. Cooperation could then take place with more professional non-governmental organizations that work to support the development of democratic, member-based organizations.

Organizations in partner countries do not have the same traditions and structures of organizing as in Sweden. A number of our partner organizations are not membership-based or democratically structured. This can be a result of the circumstances of authoritarian rule where the security situation limits the ability for open membership. It can also be because there is no widespread culture of membership in organizations and that change therefore is driven by well-educated elites in organizations that can be similar to consulting firms. However, experience shows that it is essential that target groups participate in work for change for it to be sustainable in the long term as well as to guarantee the legitimate expression of interests and needs. This perspective is central to all our partnerships irrespective of how the organization is structured.

An important part of our development cooperation work is to strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations and political parties to organize themselves democratically. In this work priority is given to strengthen partner organizations' democratic legitimacy, to support broad

representativeness, to develop structures for accountability and methods of mobilization. A continuous dialogue about ideology, values and our analysis of power also constitutes an important basis for our cooperation. This may, for example, involve ensuring that there is a board that allows for accountability and that constituencies can influence the direction of the work. To be able to provide support for such change requires that the conditions for constructive dialogue is established that respects the partner organizations integrity but provides space for the Palme Center to express its opinions and values.

Women and youth are often under-represented and have less influence in society which inhibits organization and democratization. A large part of the Palme Center's work is therefore focused on increasing the opportunities of women and youth to participate and influence society. This work is also aimed at to strengthen the efforts of women and youth to influence organizations and to develop their own. Other discriminated groups such as ethnic minorities are also important target groups for the Palme Center.

The Palme Center will increase our efforts to strengthen civil society organizations further. To support cooperation organizations' capacity is also one of two goals for Sweden's support to civil society. When we succeed in the development of strong organizations with democratic legitimacy and support among their target groups, real force for social change and change of power is created. It is therefore a priority to continue to develop methods to strengthen partner organizations' capacity and monitor how this capacity develops.

3.3 Development cooperation should be of high quality in all areas and developed through continuous learning

The Palme Center aims for high quality of our work with development cooperation to ensure that our resources yields the greatest possible benefit. When the cooperation is of high quality it increases our possibility to support our partners work for social change. The situation of our partner organizations are constantly changing. Therefore, the Palme Center needs to constantly prioritize learning and develop our ways of working.

Changes in the politics of Swedish development aid and abroad increases the number of organizations and private actors that are active in development cooperation. This increased competition for funds also means that the Palme Center needs to put more effort into quality assurance to be able to finance our work.

QUALITY OF IMPLEMENTATION

Local ownership is crucial for the quality of development cooperation. Programs and projects need to be developed in cooperation and open dialogue with member organizations and partner organizations. Objectives for the cooperation shall be developed jointly and be clear to all partners involved.

The Palme Center gives priority to have presence in the countries where we work, to be able to offer dialogue and support for our partner organizations and to come closer to the operations of our partners. Local managers enhances quality through close dialogue and proximity to partners and flexibility in relation to their needs.

The follow-up of the results of our development cooperation work is essential to increase our understanding and our partners of which action that contribute to social change, and which ones are less efficient. The Palme Center shall continually develop our methods for follow-up in dialogue with member organizations and partner organizations.

It is important for the quality of our operations to safeguard the added value and unique profile of the Palme Center. We shall therefore prioritize cooperation in areas where the labor movement has a special competence.

The Palme Center chooses which countries we work based on selection criteria decided by the board. The focus on a limited number of countries means that quality and knowledge can be maintained and results strengthened. Changes of the countries where we work may need to be done as the world changes, but it shall always be done with a long term perspective on cooperation.

To work from a rights-based perspective is central for the implementation of our development work. The basis of our work is to clearly define which rights our collaboration aims to strengthen. It also means to constantly work based on the principles of participation, non-discrimination, accountability and transparency. Increased support will be given to partner organizations' capacity to work from a rights-based perspective. In this way the sustainability and impact of their work will be strengthened.

Corruption is a major challenge in most contexts where the Palme Center operates. The Palme Center has zero tolerance policy and always acts to combat corruption and to tackle suspicions of corruption. The work with corruption is integrated both in the work to strengthen organizations as well as the work to guarantee internal control and quality assurance.

The Palme Center's policies provide guidance for our administrative systems, internal controls and ways of working. An important focus for the coming years is to continue to ensure that those policies are enforced across the organization. The policies shall be known by all employees and a continuous monitoring is required to update and develop them. Special support shall be given to partner organizations and member organizations to ensure that they comply with the requirements stipulated in the policies.

The controller handbook, the programme manager handbook and the project manual provides guidance on policy documents and how they should be applied by employees, member organizations and partner organizations.

HUMANITARIAN WORK

There are constant emergencies arising around the world such as political crises, natural disasters and armed conflicts. This creates demand for the Palme Center to show solidarity in these situations. During the previous programme period, specific campaigns were conducted to support forest workers from Cameroon, victims of flooding in the Philippines and in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as people affected by the war in Gaza.

Humanitarian work is not part of the regular activities of the Palme Center. But in situations where crises and disasters directly affect our partner organizations the Palme Center can choose to fundraise in solidarity with our partners and provide support for reconstruction. In such instances the Palme Center chooses to support efforts initiated by existing partner organizations or initiatives they form part of. The Palme Center can also choose to channel collected funds to another international organization that is able to convey resources to the ones in need.

To ensure quality also in the implementation of our humanitarian work it is essential for the Palme Center to develop knowledge of the principles and methods for humanitarian work. Administrative systems and procedures shall be reviewed to ensure that there are clear processes for the management of funds also for these efforts. The partnership shall also be developed with international "sister organizations" such as Norwegian People's Aid and Solidar in order to channel resources as well as receive resources from other organizations.

CONTINUOUS LEARNING

Development cooperation takes place in complex and shifting context. Policy development and demands governing Swedish and international development cooperation constantly changes. The Palme Center is therefore working continuously to further develop our methods in development cooperation. Through continuous learning from both successes and setbacks

the Palme Center ensures operations of high quality. Learning also needs to be continuously conveyed to new employees.

Over the next five years results based management, aid effectiveness and capacity development for organizations is high on the agenda. With certainly unexpected events and new issues will also occur that requires priority and innovation.

A crucial question for the future is climate change. The impacts of climate change will increase the vulnerability of people living in poverty and already today influence their livelihoods. However, the distances between people living in poverty and the policy makers who have the key responsibility for influencing climate change is big. The Palme Center for includes as a new priority to support to advocacy efforts linked to climate change mitigation. To contribute to effective operations to counter these changes increased knowledge is also a priority.

The Palme Center continuously carries out training for employees, member organizations and partner organizations in relation to our priorities. External training is also used to increase the knowledge of employees.

COORDINATION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

The Palme Center gives priority to the coordination with other framework organizations, Concord in Sweden as well as with other international organizations working with similar visions and strategies in our partner countries.

Coordination with international organizations enhances the possibilities to work with advocacy towards the EU and international organizations. For the international coordination the Palme Center gives priority to the European Forum, the European Network of Political Foundations Progressive Alliance and Solidar.