

SWE DEV

SWEDISH DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH NETWORK

SweDev survey results. Presentation at the seminar "Where do we go from here? Swedish research funding for collaborative research in LMICs after U-forsk. 16th April 2024

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About the survey

- Two parts: 1. Networking/SweDev's activities. 2. Consequences of cuts in research aid budget.
- The survey was ongoing for 3 weeks, in February-March 2024.
- Respondents were contacted through SweDev's mailing list and social media channels. Members were encouraged to spread the survey in their professional networks to reach out broadly within the research community.
- 51 questions. Collected diverse answers generating both quantitative data, such as multiple-choice answers, and qualitative data, including open text.
- The qualitative data in open-text responses has been categorized into relevant themes to show the trends in the data.

About the respondents

- **199 respondents**
 - 185 from academia/research and 14 from development practice/policy
- Respondents from academia
 - 82% hold a PhD. 36% professors, 34% researchers.
 - 53% work in Humanities and Social Sciences, 26% work in Science and Technology, 18 % in Medicine and Pharmacology
 - 32% focus their research on Environment and climate change, natural resource management, land, and water issues, followed by Public health and pharmacology (14%), Rural development and food security (13%) and Peace and conflict studies (8%)
 - Most between 40-58 years (39%), 39-48 (28%), 59-68 (17%), 18-28 (10%)
- Respondents from practice
 - 28% of the respondents in this group work in the civil society. 28 % work in the public sector and independently, each. 14% work in the private sector

53% have adjusted their research in response to the funding cuts

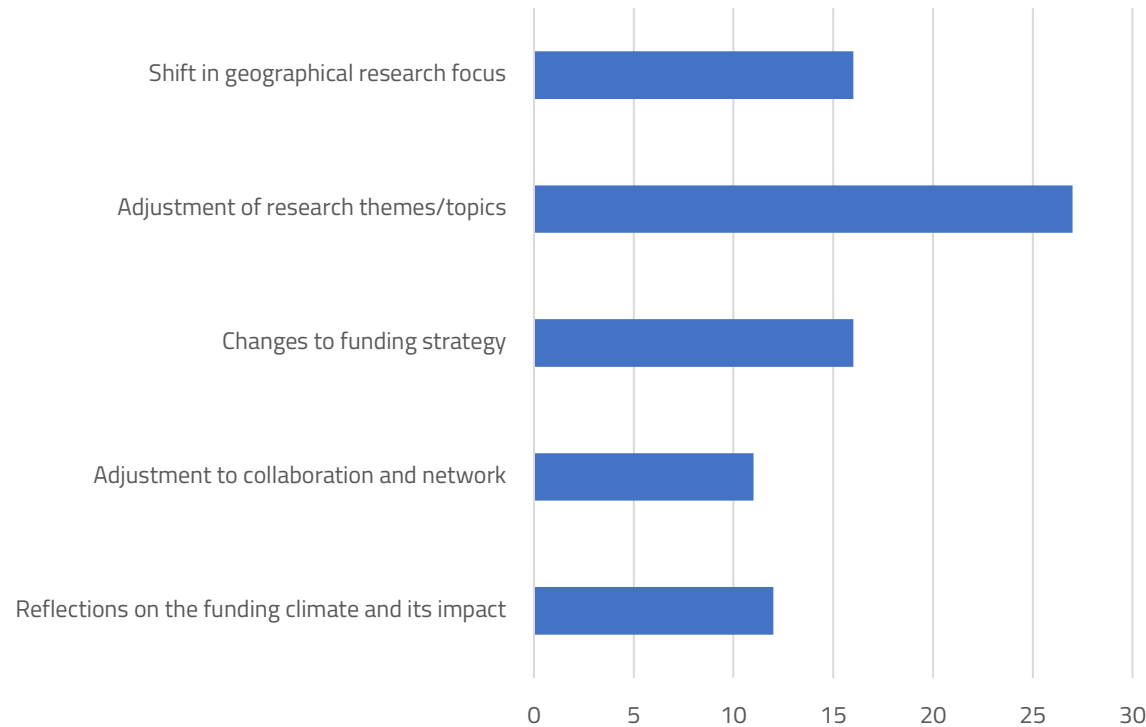


Figure 1; N=82

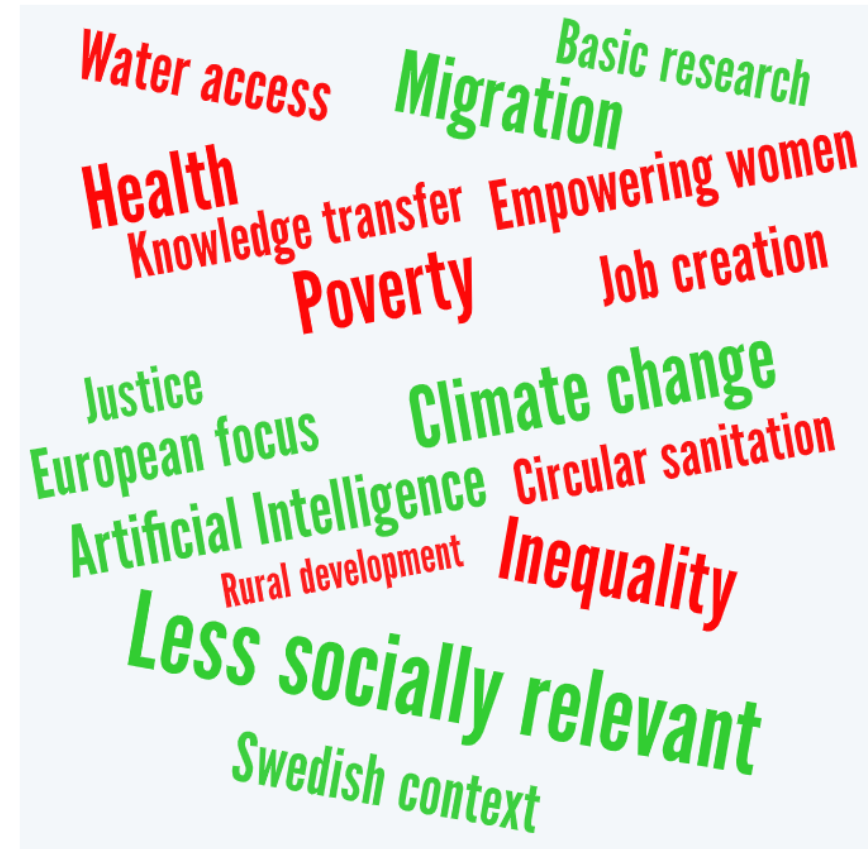
"I was trained as an International Development scholar to become an expert on development/inequality and justice topics, however now I find myself carving out case study research in Sweden."

"[...] Rather than go in a direction that built on our ongoing research and was co-created by in-country collaborators, I have had to focus more on 'hot' topics to try and keep funding going."

Shift to 'safe' topics more likely to attract funding and to focus on the Global North

"I have revised last year's U-forsk grant application so that it focuses less on issues that are relevant from a practitioner-perspective as well as less on issues related to the SDGs. It is less development research and more mainstream political science [...]"

"I will focus my research on Sweden related issues. It is not what I wish to do but I see no option at the moment unfortunately."



65% say their work was either discontinued or significantly altered as a result of the funding cuts

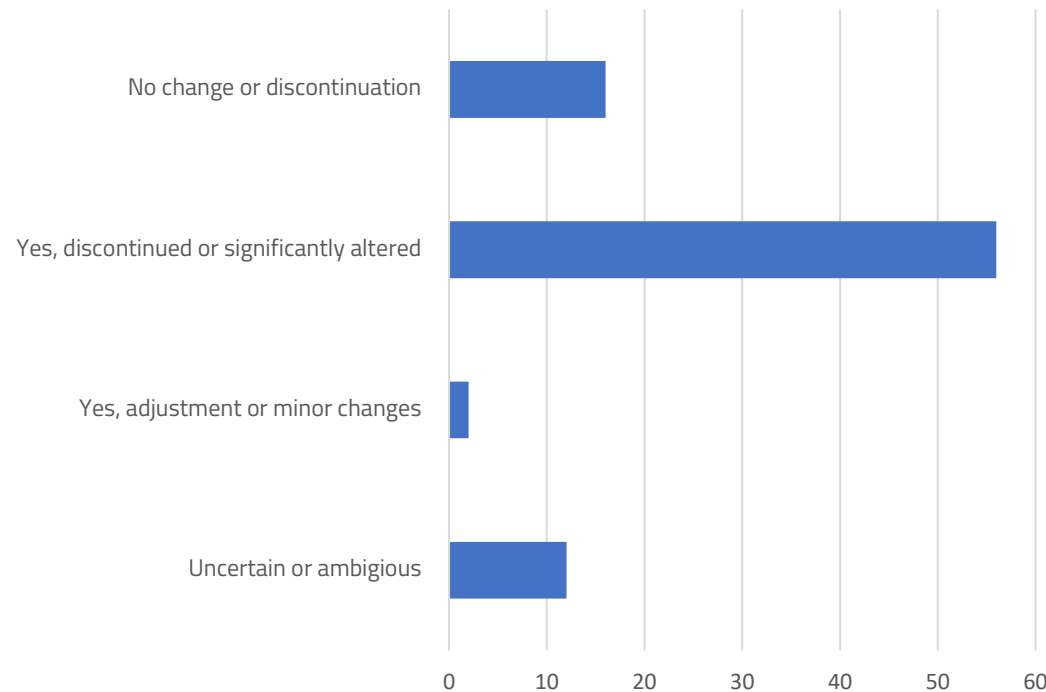


Figure 2; N=86

“As an early- to mid-career academic without a permanent position, the decision to cut the earmarked funding has seriously impinged on my possibilities to continue my academic career.”

“For the first time since 2008 I have no projects with collaborators in Kenya, Ethiopia and Tanzania (none in sub-Saharan Africa), and we have abandoned a new collaboration started in 2022 in Uganda [...]”

86% of the respondents have been able to sustain contacts with research partners in developing countries

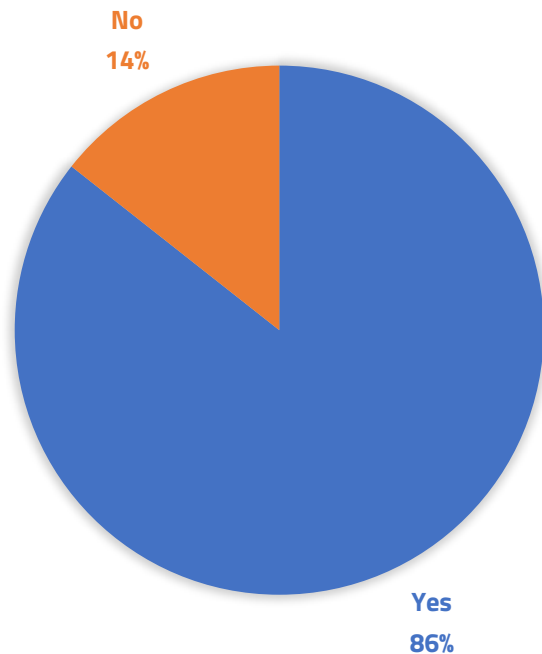


Figure 3; N= 153

"I maintain them right now but foresee this will be difficult in the future. We have spent years to build trust and establish robust research consortia that now risk to disappear. We will lose new generation of researchers in the global south."

"Email, Zoom and meeting at conferences. This will of course only continue for a relatively short time after the funding has dried up, as our colleagues have to find other partners that can supply the funding needed to do essential research. [...]"

67% of respondents state that incentives to include researchers from the Global South were negatively affected

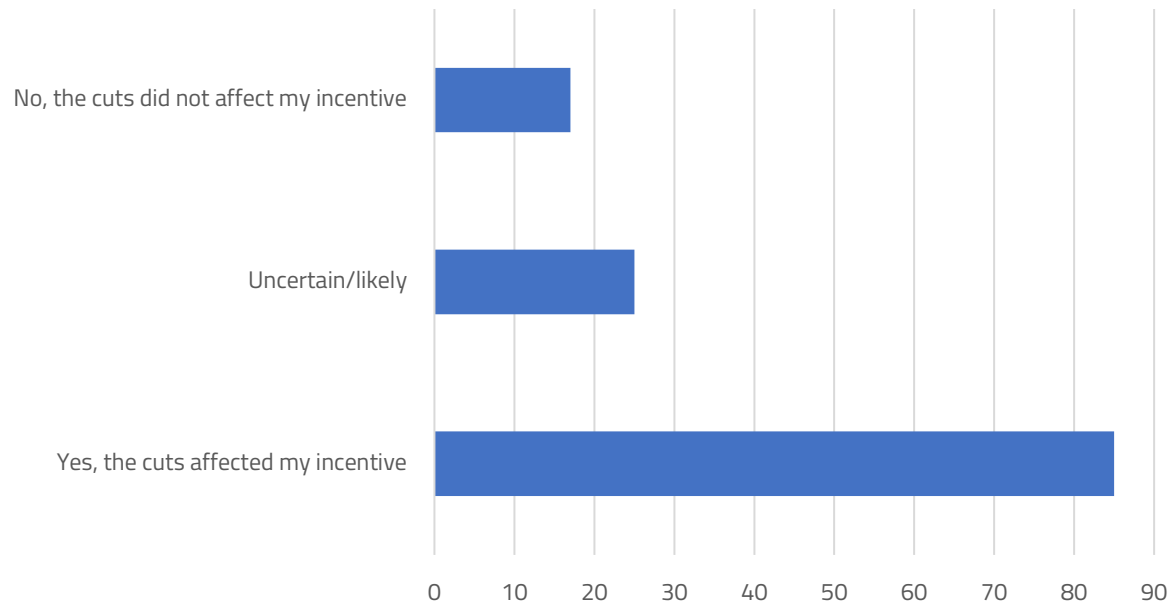


Figure 4; N= 127

“In-depth case studies where researchers from the Global South are crucial actors will be more difficult to do now.”

“My frequent collaborators have stepped away”.

93% of respondents believe that the impacts of the cuts for the Global South are negative

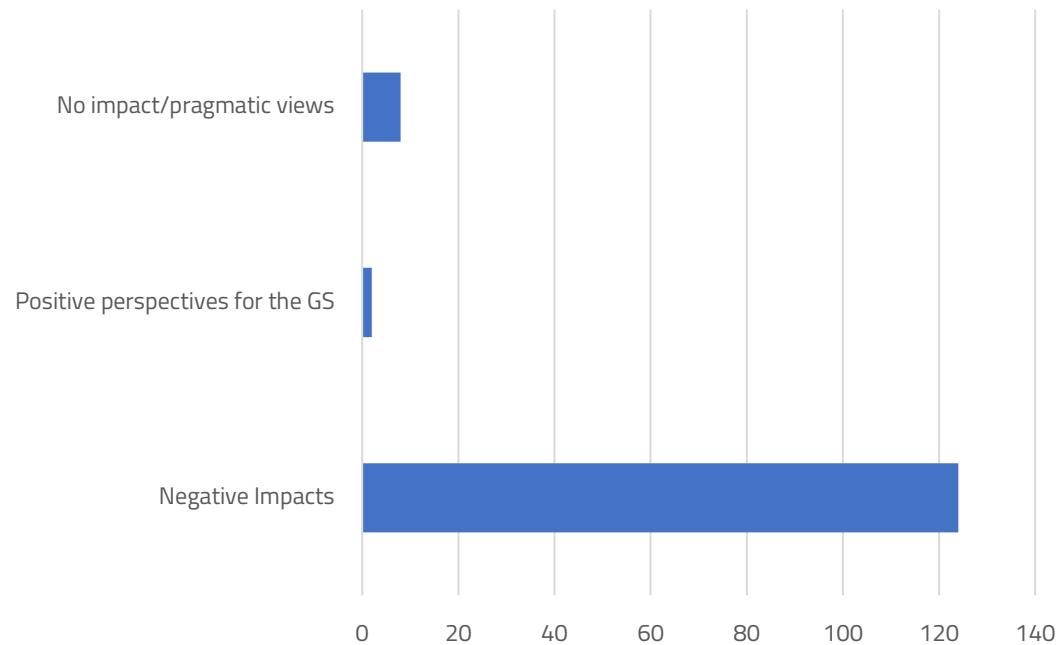


Figure 5; N=134

"[...] Collaborations with institutions in the Global South will be ruined. Competence and capacity building in the Global South will be negatively affected. In the long run, there is a risk that knowledge and solutions needed to meet contemporary challenges - ecological, economic and social - in the Global South will not be produced in the extent it could have been done."

"Absolutely tragic for several reasons. First of all, it is impossible to talk about 'effective' aid and then making it impossible to evaluate which interventions that are best. Further terribly short-sighted given our legacy as a solid partner."

55% of practitioners say that their work has been negatively affected by the cuts in funding

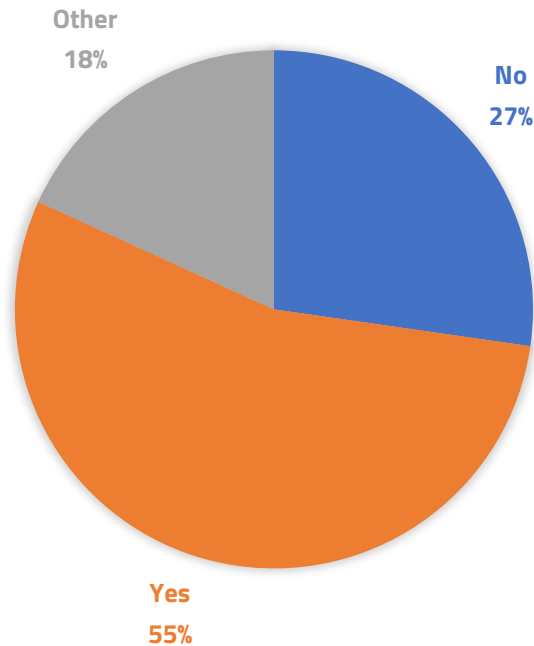


Figure 6; N= 11

"Many NGOs and research institutes work like a web, we're interlinked with so many different people, organisations, groups and institutions. Cutting down funding not only affects the direct beneficiaries but also our web of organisations whom we've helped and supported. They in return also support local projects and hires local people. All of which are affected by these cuts."

Some hope for the future

"In all honesty I think the research grants for 'development' created perverse incentives to work on less beneficial projects with partners that couldn't maintain an equal footing in research projects. So, depending on how funds are allocated in the future this may actually be beneficial."



Conclusions

- While consequences are still unfolding, the cuts have led to:
 - Changes in research focus, geography and methods
 - Changes in funding strategies
 - Diminished relations with researchers in Global South
 - Changes in relations with other actors such as NGO's

Op-Ed from SweDev in today's Global Bar Magazine

Reiterating arguments made earlier (to Government research bill):

- New strategy for research on and for Global Development needed
- Clarify steering towards research financiers, Sida and other agencies
- Investigate alternative forms for organizing and supporting research excellence, innovation, bridging science and policy-making for global development in LMICs.

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