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## **Utvärdering av centrumbildningen The Swedish Program for Information and Communication Technology in Developing Regions (Spider)**

### **Bakgrund**

Enligt beslut fattat av Områdesnämnden för humanvetenskap (daterat 2019-04-10) ska centrumbildningar under områdesnämnden utvärderas av en särskilt utsedd granskare minst vart sjätte år. Granskaren analyserar verksamheten utifrån dess syfte/mål/ändamål, verksamhetens organisation och lednings- och styrfunktioner samt finansiering och ekonomiska förvaltning. Ytterligare ska granskaren analysera verksamhetens utvecklingsmöjligheter och ta ställning till ett eventuellt behov av revidering av stadgarna. I utvärderingen ingår det att bedöma om centrumbildningen fyller ett för universitetet angeläget syfte.

### **Utvärdering av The Swedish Program for Information and Communication Technology in Developing Regions (Spider)**

Spider har utvärderats av utsedd granskare Dr David Hollow vid Jigsaw Consult, London. Granskarens rapport kom in 31 augusti 2020 (bilaga) som Samhällsvetenskapliga fakulteten, Institutionen för data- och systemvetenskap samt Spider har tagit del av. Spider och institutionen har tillsammans fått möjlighet att kommentera förslagen som lades fram i rapporten (bilaga).

Samhällsvetenskapliga fakulteten bedömer utifrån utvärderingen att centrumbildningen fyller ett för universitetet angeläget syfte och att omprövning av stadgarna inte är aktuellt. Stadgarna reviderades senast 2019-09-26 (bilaga). Fakultetsnämnden föreslår att Spider ser över granskarens förslag vid kommande revidering av stadgarna.

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## **Samhällsvetenskapliga fakultetsnämnden**



### **Förslag till beslut**

Samhällsvetenskapliga fakultetsnämnden föreslår för Områdesnämnden för humanvetenskap att föreslå rektor att verksamheten vid The Swedish Program for Information and Communication Technology in Developing Regions (Spider) ska fortsätta.

# Independent review of SPIDER for Stockholm University: final report

David Hollow, August 2020

## 1. Context and purpose of the review

This external review has been undertaken by Dr David Hollow in an independent capacity. The work was completed between June - August 2020. The reviewer has been familiar with the work of SPIDER for the last decade because of his work across the sector of 'technology for international development'. The review has sought to remain impartial and provide a thorough response to the areas of analysis requested by Stockholm University.

The purpose of the review is to evaluate the centre according to its purpose and goals, organizational structure and governance functions, funding and financial management, and its development possibilities. In doing this, it provides input for the decision of Stockholm University on whether the center serves an important function for the university. David is happy to have a follow-up conversation regarding the implications of the findings if that would be useful for either DSV or the SPIDER leadership.

## 2. Methodological approach to the review

The methodology for the review had four main components which together provided a foundation for the analysis. These are:

1. A review of the documentation provided by Stockholm University, and other publicly available documents on SPIDER
2. Key informant Interviews with six relevant individuals recommended by Stockholm University (see below)
3. A review of the SPIDER website and social media channels
4. The relevant sector-related expertise of the independent reviewer, based on 10 years knowledge of SPIDER

Interviews were conducted with all the individuals recommended by Stockholm University. These are:

- Uno Fors, DSV Head of Department
- Katja Forsberg Bresciani, DSV financial project manager
- John Owuor, SPIDER director
- Caroline Wamala Larsson, SPIDER deputy director and head of research programme
- Ulf Larsson, SPIDER programme manager
- Magda Berhe, SPIDER programme Manager

An explanation of the purpose of the review was provided for each interviewee at the outset of the interview. Interviews lasted an average of 45 minutes and were based on a semi-structured

approach. The questions for each interview were tailored according to the expertise and responsibilities of the interviewee, and engaged with each of the main focal areas of the review. The interviewees are not cited by name within the report. However, because of the small number of interviewees it is not possible to ensure that all the contributions are fully anonymous.

The review is inevitably limited in scope and may well have misunderstood some issues or giving inappropriate assessment of the significance of particular themes. All of the suggestions made should be held lightly and scrutinised by those with the relevant expertise. In light of this it is suggested that the DSV Head of Department and the SPIDER Director discuss the findings collaboratively and are given the opportunity to respond to any inaccuracies.

### 3. Summary of the findings

SPIDER has a good reputation, is increasingly focused in its technical work, has a clear methodology, a strong global network, and some recent successes in attracting new funding. It has a close working relationship with DSV and achieves a lot with a relatively small annual budget and small staff team.

Within the international development sector there is current and growing emphasis on the role of digital within development, the place of research and evidence-building within development, and the importance of technical networks. These three things have defined SPIDER for many years, and mean that the organisation has the mandate and expertise to thrive within the global international development context. It should be noted by DSV that the positioning of SPIDER provides a strategic global opportunity for the university.

There are, inevitably, several areas where SPIDER can strengthen. There is a need to define more clearly SPIDER's specific contribution to the sector of 'digital development' and to build long-term technical specialisms. The overall communication of the vision and purpose can be sharpened, and the specific communication of the research activities and outputs should be improved. DSV can help SPIDER with each of these, particularly with how the centre presents the contribution it makes to academic research. The efforts to diversify funding should be applauded and should be sustained as a priority focus.

The review finds that SPIDER makes an important contribution to DSV and thus to Stockholm University. It explains the areas of strength that can be maximised, and the areas of weakness that can be improved. The intention is that in doing this, DSV has useful guidance for how it can help SPIDER increase its impact in the months and years ahead.

### 4. Structure of the findings

The specific findings are structured into the following five sections:

- Chapter 5 - the purpose and goals of SPIDER
- Chapter 6 - Organizational structure and governance functions
- Chapter 7 - Funding and financial management
- Chapter 8 - Relationship with DSV
- Chapter 9 - Development possibilities and suggestions for the future

Four of these sections (chapter 5, 6, 7, 9) were required by the review, and the fifth (8) has been added on the basis of the data collected. There is inevitably some overlap between the five sections. The purpose of the report is not to provide recommendations. However, some are tentatively offered as suggestions throughout and summarised within chapter 9, on the basis of the data, to hopefully be of use for both for DSV and also for SPIDER.

## 5. The purpose and goals of SPIDER

### **Purpose of the organisation**

SPIDER has a high degree of clarity regarding its overall purpose. Everything that the organisation does is focused on the role of digital within international development, and is clearly aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. However, because the sector is now more crowded than when the organisation started, DSV should encourage SPIDER to become more explicit in stating the specific things it works to achieve in relation to digital development. The organisation has been working for 15 years and should be in a position to capture and communicate systematic thought leadership for a wider audience.

There is a clear emphasis within SPIDER that the work focuses on those that are at most risk of being 'left behind' - so it makes sense to decide what the organisation is actually advocating for in relation to marginalisation and digital technology. The annual report (2019, p.7) discusses the 'basic DNA of Spider' - but it is not clear what this 'DNA' actually is. This could be addressed by deciding and articulating a set of principles and priorities that become the DNA that informs everything SPIDER does. It is likely that most of the principles and priorities already exist tacitly within the organisation - but the crucial step is to communicate them in a compelling and consistent manner so that they shape the 'public face' and perception of SPIDER globally and become the plumb-line for strategic decision making.

Linked to the above, SPIDER would benefit from developing and communicating an organisational Theory of Change to explain to the sector how it understands its own work, and how it believes the world will be different as a result of it (with the conventional links articulated between activities / outputs / outcomes / impact). It is important that this is structured according to overall organisational priorities rather than current programmes.

### **Understanding and communicating impact**

It would appear that the activities of SPIDER lead to significant positive impact. But there are limited mechanisms in place for tracking and then articulating the link between the activities undertaken and the impact achieved. To illustrate, the annual review (2019, p.8) does seek to communicate lessons learned in the previous year, but the way that they are expressed are likely to be of limited interest to the wider sector. In future, SPIDER should consider making an explicit link between 'lessons learned' and 'what will be done in light of the lessons learned'. This would better communicate the reality of SPIDER as an active learning organisation. Similarly, some of the 'results at a glance' contained in the 2019 annual review appear to be more focused on outputs rather than outcomes. This could be addressed by writing different reports for different audiences (e.g. one for SIDA and one for the general sector), and highlighting the things that are most pertinent for each.

There has been ongoing work to develop a new strategy for SPIDER but this has not yet been finalised. A top priority within this is to align with the new SIDA strategy, and demonstrate how

SPIDER is an effective vehicle for the delivery of this strategy. Linked to this, it is positive that SPIDER has started work to develop a digital reporting system that can be used to aggregate data across the organisation rather than simply at the programme level. This is significant, as an organisation focused on digital in development should also consider how digital is used internally to ensure it is at the leading edge of innovation for capturing data to understand effectiveness.

Communicating impact within SPIDER appears to be currently largely driven by programme needs and accountability to SIDA for specific grants. This is understandable, and interviewees report that SIDA is relatively flexible in their use of RBM frameworks. It may be possible for DSV to help SPIDER engage increasingly with impact at an organisational as well as a programmatic level. The top priority is for SPIDER to have its own impact strategy, rather than one driven by the programmes that it implements (see chapter 9).

### **The research contribution made by SPIDER**

One of the distinctive aspects of SPIDER, and one that is particularly valuable within an academic research environment, is the commitment to action research within all implementation. The activities that SPIDER engages with are focused towards user needs and always start with a needs assessment. This is methodologically innovative and should be of significant interest to DSV and the wider academic community as it reflects a strong commitment to bringing together theory and practice, and promoting reflective working. SPIDER should be encouraged to package this and develop it, with the input of DSV, into a model that can be shared and promoted widely. Another significant distinctive feature of SPIDER is the link that it provides between globally leading universities and local researchers in many different countries. There are few other organisations globally that have such established research networks within ICT4D - this is something for SPIDER to articulate more clearly, and then actively emphasise when seeking new funding streams.

The SPIDER narrative is clear that 'research is the backbone' of the organisation, as articulated on the website. This is a positive statement and appropriate because of the location of SPIDER within DSV. However, the website and social media of the organisation do not communicate clearly how this focus on research is outworked. Most of the research outputs immediately accessible through the website are somewhat outdated (more than five years old) and do not show much of the more recent research work that has taken place. The research bulletins (see an example [here](#) from July 2020) provide a welcome contrast to this, giving a clear and informative summary of activities. It should be a relatively simple adjustment, to ensure that everything happening is also communicated through the website, as this is the primary online location that most users will engage with.

SPIDER can continue to make progress in defining its overall research strategy. It will be beneficial to have a high-level understanding of the 'big problems' or knowledge gaps within the sector that SPIDER research is seeking to address. As noted above, this could be articulated as a Theory of Change for SPIDER research, or simply as a list of research priorities. However, for this to be effective it needs to actively affect decision making, and will require a more directive approach than has been taken previously. The challenge for SPIDER will be to build a clear research strategy that dictates priorities, while still remaining responsive to the needs of individual programmes and grant recipients. As a first step, each programmatic area could identify the two to four overall research questions that their work engages with, and explain

how their activities and outputs can contribute to these.

It would seem that DSV would also benefit from SPIDER improving the public sharing of its academic research outputs and impact. At present SPIDER does not track the number and ranking of academic articles that are published by the team or through funding of southern-based researchers. DSV should continue to encourage SPIDER to emphasise its academic research credentials. However, it is important to note that too much public emphasis on academic research will receive push-back from SIDA. This is a healthy tension, but it is important for DSV to recognise that SIDA, as the main SPIDER funder, does have some reservations about SPIDER presenting as overly focused on research.

The SPIDER team should be commended for the amount that they manage to achieve within research with a limited budget and small team. It will require additional dedicated staff time to consolidate and communicate all the research work that is taking place. It may be helpful for DSV to lend expertise in this area, and particularly in relation to how SPIDER could better integrate with the wider DSV metrics for assessing research impact.

### **Overall website and online presence**

It is recognised by the SPIDER team that the website needs improvement and appears dated, and the process of redevelopment is currently underway. Ideally the changes to the site will be made prior to the SIDA review as this will strengthen the SPIDER case for on-going funding. The main changes required are to explain more clearly: the specific purpose of SPIDER within the sector of 'digitalising international development', the detail of what the programmes do and how they align with the overall strategic priorities of SPIDER, and the research outputs that SPIDER is responsible for or has contributed to (as noted above).

In addition, there is a need for more consistent communication of SPIDER's purpose across different channels. One example of the inconsistency is that the website strapline says that SPIDER is about 'digitalising international development' and the Twitter strapline says SPIDER is about 'ICTs 4 sustainable development'. Alignment could be achieved by conducting a light-touch internal review of messaging across all products and platforms.

## **6. Organisational structure and governance functions**

### **Clarity of structure**

Many organisations struggle to articulate what they do in a clear and consistent way and SPIDER is no exception. There is a long and complex history, with reasons for each decision taken in how the organisation is structured - but this can lead to a somewhat confusing picture for the general reader. A review of the website and annual report shows the multiple ways in which SPIDER explains itself - perhaps indicating that the way the structure is communicated could be sharpened. The table below gives a snapshot of this, to illustrate how many different categories and themes exist within SPIDER's work. Specifically it is worth noting: the overlap but difference between 'what SPIDER does' listed on the website and the 'main modes of operation' listed in the 2019 annual review, the large number of diverse topics included under 'areas of expertise' and 'cross-cutting themes', and the lack of clarity regarding how the areas of expertise and the cross-cutting themes are distinct from one another.

<b>What SPIDER does (four things listed on website)</b>	<b>Main modes of operation (annual review 2019 p.7)</b>	<b>SPIDER areas of expertise (five things listed on website)</b>	<b>Cross-cutting themes (six things listed on website)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Programme Management</li> <li>● Applied Research</li> <li>● Capacity Building</li> <li>● Networks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Networks</li> <li>● Project coordination</li> <li>● Research</li> <li>● Capacity-building</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Transparency and accountability</li> <li>● Education and Learning</li> <li>● Health and Well-being</li> <li>● Infrastructure and Capacity Building</li> <li>● Research and Results</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Gender</li> <li>● Increased access to ICT</li> <li>● Social realities</li> <li>● Rights based approach</li> <li>● Environment</li> <li>● Disabilities</li> </ul>

**High level of dependency on people**

There is a high degree of dependence on specific highly-talented individuals within the organisation in order to maintain the activities of SPIDER. Interviewees noted that the organisation would probably run into difficulties if specific long-serving individuals were to leave. However, this has been identified as a threat and work is on-going to address it. The SPIDER leadership has taken positive steps to establish more systems and processes for how the organisation works, and these should be increased as discussed below. It is also worth DSV considering what it can do to help ensure that SPIDER is the best possible work environment for employees, to ensure maximum staff retention and fulfilment.

**Increased focus in specific areas**

A range of perspectives were expressed in response to the question of whether or not, and how, SPIDER could adopt a more specialised set of technical areas. Some individuals who have been associated with SPIDER for many years noted that the organisation has already taken positive steps to become far more specialised than it was previously - and has reduced the number of sector areas within which it operates. Others expressed concern that its activities are still too broad and disparate. Others emphasised that it is SPIDER's ability to adapt and respond to changing priorities that is actually a strength, thus it should continue to engage with a range of technical priorities in each context. However, there was an agreed emphasis on the need to have a strategy and clearly articulated logic for all activities - showing how each of them contributes to the overall mission.

In relation to technical specialisms, as previously noted, when SPIDER began there were far fewer organisations working in the sector of 'technology for development' than there are in 2020. There are so many organisations now working in this sector that 'digital' is no longer enough of a specialism in itself: there are organisations much larger than SPIDER that focus on just one topic area within the SPIDER portfolio. This is not inherently problematic but is worth the on-going consideration of SPIDER and DSV. It would be sensible for SPIDER to consider not adding any new technical areas, but instead actively developing further expertise in the pre-existing areas and building an organisational structure around them. In the long term this is likely to provide a clear 'comparative advantage' that distinguishes SPIDER from other organisations working in the same overall sector. There may be a useful role for DSV in helping

SPIDER to decide on its technical specialisms and how these can be articulated and effectively resourced. In addition, it may be worth considering increased alignment with some of the DSV areas of technical specialism, so that SPIDER can draw on the benefits of being part of the university. The future will be increasingly secure for SPIDER if it is able to demonstrate deep expertise in a small number of technical areas, and this is well aligned with its identity within an academic research environment.

A final point on specialisms which affect the organisational structure is in relation to the geographic focus of SPIDER activities. There is significant global momentum towards international development work that is grounded in detailed contextual knowledge. This is encouraging for SPIDER because an emphasis on 'understanding context' has been a long-term value for the organisation and is reflected in the strength of its established global networks. However, SPIDER currently works in 31 different countries and it is unclear whether it will be able to maintain sufficiently detailed knowledge of each country context in order to operate effectively in all of them for the long term. It may be worth SPIDER reducing the number of countries within which it operates so that it can go deeper with them, or developing a strategy for how it ensures sufficient contextual knowledge across such a wide range of geographies. This depends on the overall future strategy, and would benefit from taking place in conversation with DSV to align with departmental priorities.

### **Integration of SPIDER programmes**

There is a high level of respect and mutual appreciation for colleagues across the SPIDER team. This is a significant strength and should be celebrated. However, there appears to be a lack of detailed insight across the team regarding what other SPIDER programmes are working, potentially indicating a somewhat siloed way of working. There are encouraging activities underway to improve the way in which different SPIDER programmes learn from one another and approach impact in a consistent manner. The SPIDER leadership is committed to better integration of people and programmes, and it is likely that this would helpfully lead to more consistent methodological approaches across the organisation.

### **Promotion of SPIDER exemplars**

Within SPIDER there are several examples of noteworthy programmes that demonstrate innovative practice that could be replicated both internally, and shared as structural examples to promote elsewhere in the sector. One instance of this is the 'ICT regulation policy and practice' programme. This started in 2015 when SPIDER was approached by SIDA and the Swedish Telecom Authority to run a capacity building programme for similar authorities in Africa. A pilot was completed in 2016 with three countries in East Africa, based on a model (the International Training Programme) that SIDA has run with similar authorities around the world. When SPIDER delivered it effectively, they were given the mandate to run it for 2017-19 and then again for 2020-21. SPIDER's success with the programme has given SIDA the confidence to allow SPIDER to adapt the model to best suit the requirements of the regulatory authorities in the participating countries. This provides an example of how SPIDER's international network can be utilised to make connections with Swedish technical experts and give them positive international influence, in a way that could be of benefit for DSV and also the wider Swedish academic research community.

### **Governance and accountability**

SPIDER is clear regarding its financial accountability to DSV and all aspects of this appear to be

working effectively. The primary pressure for financial accountability comes from SIDA as the largest funder. The governing board of SPIDER is responsible for approving all key decisions before they are sent to SIDA. They receive operational monthly updates, and hold quarterly strategic meetings. The recent changes that have been made to the board appear to be highly positive and have increased the active governance of SPIDER. Interviewees noted that before 2016 the board was relatively passive. It is now active and energetic, and focused on contributing to vision, strategy formation, and impact. It is also noted that a particular strength of the current board is in the personal skills they contribute: expertise with budgets, fundraising, diplomacy, technical experts. DSV is also actively involved with the board and every meeting is attended by either the Head of Department or his deputy. There is a positive plan to add new board members with a fundraising specialism - this is sensible in light of the recognised need for new funding streams.

## 7. Funding and financial management

### Financial structure

The institutional 'core' funding from SIDA, plus the financial contribution from DSV, are what enables SPIDER to exist. Of the core funding, approximately 90% is from SIDA and 10% is from DSV, and it operates on five year funding cycles. Separately from this, SIDA also contributes to SPIDER through the 'bilateral programmes' and through 'commissions'. In addition, SPIDER has recently developed new funding streams (as discussed below). The financial systems of SPIDER appear to be strong, and benefit from being part of DSV and the university more widely. As a result of this, SPIDER has a level of rigour in its financial reporting and proposals that is unusual for an organisation of its size. The staff note that there are significant benefits in finances being processed through the DSV system - because it provides security and everything is thoroughly reviewed and approved.

DSV reports that one of the particular financial strengths of SPIDER is the well defined and well practiced ways for transferring money globally, and that all the barriers and logistical challenges associated with this have been largely overcome. A DSV interviewee explained that this means things that would be difficult for others have become routine for SPIDER.

It is also structurally significant that SPIDER is not able to build significant financial reserves as any underspend from SIDA grants has to be returned. This is not unusual for a centre such as SPIDER but does have implications for sustainability and ability to invest in building new revenue streams. There appears to be more flexibility with the DSV funding and this is highly valuable. Interviewees noted that the ability to generate financial reserves would help provide security and continuity but that it is difficult to see how it could be done within the current structures. There may be a positive role for DSV in relation to navigating this.

### Diversification of funding streams

Since 2015 there have been efforts to diversify funding away from SIDA. This has been repeatedly requested by SIDA, and agreed as a priority by SPIDER and its board. It will be beneficial for SPIDER to decide its future strategy for funding diversification, with explicit targets and planned alternative revenue streams. This should be discussed with DSV and SIDA, and a structure built that can enable the strategy to be realised. The positioning of SPIDER within DSV has some benefits in securing new funding. One specific example of this is with the bilateral programmes (the SIDA bilateral research cooperation programmes), which

interviewees noted have been secured at SPIDER because of being located at Stockholm University. These operate in Bolivia, Rwanda, Uganda, Cambodia, Tanzania - some will continue until 2022 and the hope is to extend them to 2026. This is a noteworthy success and directly possible because of the structure and position of SPIDER.

There have been recent successes with funding applications - both with new units within SIDA and also outside SIDA (EU Equals grant and UK research grant). It should be encouraging to DSV that SPIDER is beginning to secure funding beyond SIDA, as this demonstrates the strength of its wider network and reputation for quality. It is also noteworthy that DSV and SPIDER have been able to make joint funding applications. These should be pursued, as when successful it will strengthen relationships and expertise.

The SPIDER team should be commended for their work to secure funding. This will become easier as the associated work is completed to improve the communication of impact, and develop the distinctive products that will demonstrate SPIDER's unique offering to the sector. It is in the interests of DSV to ensure that trajectory continues towards more diverse funding for SPIDER in order to build a more financially resilient organisation. However, DSV should be realistic about the amount of time it will take to diversify funding streams. SIDA is likely to remain SPIDER's most significant funder for the long-term, and that is not problematic: SPIDER is an explicitly Swedish entity, and is a valuable contribution to SIDA's work in technology for development.

## 8. Relationship with DSV

### **A mutually beneficial relationship**

There is a high degree of respect between DSV and SPIDER, and mutual appreciation for the strengths of each party. Both DSV and SPIDER gain significantly by being associated with each other. The DSV Head of Department is clear in his assessment that SPIDER makes a positive impact in the countries and organisations where it works. SPIDER has started to attract external funding, and provides valuable global networks and reputational benefits for DSV. There is a well-functioning relationship between the DSV Head of Department and SPIDER. The Head of Department is an active participant in SPIDER board meetings as an adjunct member. He views this level of engagement as vital in order to fully understand the challenges and opportunities that SPIDER faces. The role of DSV within SPIDER has increased significantly since the beginning when DSV was focused on transmitting funds and had limited technical involvement. There has been significant and positive work put into building an effective collaboration from all parties.

### **SPIDER contribution to the university**

SPIDER actively contributes to teaching within DSV, offering specific modules to students of ICT4D. This is a benefit for DSV and provides a distinctive offering for students: interviewees noted that some masters students are attracted to Stockholm University because of the availability of internships at SPIDER. This is valuable for DSV because of its global reputation for having a socially-driven emphasis within computer science: SPIDER provides an effective exemplar of how this emphasis is out-worked in practice. There will always be questions regarding the best long-term future home for SPIDER, with inevitable suggestions that it could become either part of SIDA or an independent centre. Each of these have complex implications for funding, reputation and specialism. The best long-term home for SPIDER appears to be

within DSV, and this will also have significant benefits for the university. To maximise the benefits of being within the university, SPIDER and DSV should continue to consider how research specialisms can be aligned.

## 9. Development possibilities and suggestions for the future

The issues related to development possibilities for SPIDER have been addressed in the sections above. This section concludes the report by summarising these and briefly highlighting specific suggestions for SPIDER and DSV to work on in order to develop and strengthen the organisation for the future:

- The landscape of international development is changing in relation to digitalisation and research: SPIDER can respond to this with the help of DSV for their mutual benefit.
- SPIDER can actively invest in improving how it tracks and communicates its contribution to evidence-building, and specifically research, building on the expertise of DSV.
- If it can demonstrate thought leadership and technical specialism, there is the opportunity for SPIDER, and therefore DSV, to make a contribution to global good practice in the sector.
- SPIDER requires an organisational level impact strategy, rather than one driven by the programmes that it implements. This is likely to involve developing a SPIDER theory of change with emphasis on research, systematically capturing and communicating stories of change, building a cost-effectiveness framework across the organisation, ensuring that all programme-specific targets and indicators can be aggregated into organisation-wide reporting, tracking research outputs in a manner that works for both DSV and SIDA.
- SPIDER can build on its significant expertise by systematising its ways of work and its assessment of what constitutes good practice within the sector. This will involve detailed work to understand and articulate the 'SPIDER approach to digitalisation of development'. This should contain a tool-kit and clear systems and processes that define the work of the organisation. The website states that SPIDER is focused on 'solving big problems through human centered digital tools'. The organisation will benefit from stating explicitly, and in detail, what the big problems are, and what the tools are that are used to help solve them. This is focused on building the resources that can be publicly shared, both to inform practice across the organisation and also demonstrate thought leadership to the sector.
- It is likely that SPIDER will be strengthened through the production of a 'white paper' and associated toolkits within the first 12 months of the new SIDA funding cycle. This would articulate the 'SPIDER approach to digitalisation of development' and would be based on the last 15 years. It would include:
  - a. The key principles that SPIDER works by - what the organisation believes about achieving change within the digitalisation of international development
  - b. The tested methodologies that SPIDER uses to achieve positive change - including the integration of action research with implementation
  - c. The thought leadership in each of the technical areas - how SPIDER is working at the leading-edge of theory and practice
  - d. The impact that SPIDER is focused on achieving - including the theory of change to explain why and how the approaches used lead to the desired outcomes.

2020-10-01

## Comments on the Observations from Independent review of SPIDER by Stockholm University

The SPIDER team had the pleasure to work with SU-appointed independent reviewer David Hollow between June and August 2020. We therefore welcome the findings on SPIDER's purpose, goals, structure, governance, internal control processes, funding, relationship with DVS/SU and opportunities for future growth.

SPIDER staff and board members have exhaustively read through the report and are generally pleased with the work of the external reviewer. Below is an outline of how SPIDER will respond to some of the specific points raised in the report.

### **Purpose and goals of the evaluation.**

One key recommendation in this area is to communicate results effectively to different audiences. Suggestion is to make Sida reporting specific to Sida requirements and then produce another report that showcases impact of SPIDER's work for general audience.

**Response:** This is one area of improvement that has been discussed internally at SPIDER and also with SPIDER board. It is a recommendation that SPIDER will take on board to improve our efforts to communicate results more effectively. This will include lessons learned, resources and research published as a result of SPIDER projects.

### **Funding**

SPIDER should form relevant partnerships to use in attracting funding to diversify from the current Sida reliance.

**Response:** Whereas SPIDER would like to continue to work closely with and receive funding from Sida, the team is also working on expanding the funding base to include national and international foundations, impact investors and other state-linked funding agencies such as EU, NORAD, DFID and USAID.

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## Institutionen för data- och systemvetenskap

### **Relationship with DSV/Stockholm University**

The report noted an effective collaboration between SPIDER and DSV, which we are happy about. SPIDER will work towards maximising research synergies so that DSV expertise can inform or support ongoing research work at SPIDER and the findings inform overall DSV research agenda.

### **Development possibilities and suggestions for the future**

SPIDER takes on board the recommendation to improve how it tracks and communicates its contribution through research.

SPIDER is developing its strategy to be able to track and document centre-wide impact through its programmes. The new strategy will also respond to the call to systematise way of working and assessment of what constitutes good practice through a well-articulated SPIDER's approach to digitalisation of global development. SPIDER will, in consultation with Sida, develop a new five-year programme that aligns with Sida's new digital strategy 1.0.



Uno Fors  
Professor  
Prefekt för DSV



## Stadgar för The Swedish Program for ICT in Developing Regions (Spider)

fastställda av rektor 2011-06-16 att gälla tills vidare, reviderade 2019-09-26.

### 1. Bakgrund

Informations- och kommunikationsteknik (IKT) kan vara ett kraftfullt verktyg för att utveckla grundläggande samhällsfunktioner, speciellt i delar av världen som saknar traditionell infrastruktur, men har ett förhållandevis välutvecklat telekommunikationssystem. Det är av ett allmänt samhällsintresse att på bästa möjliga sätt göra IKT tillgängligt och möjligt att utnyttja för så stora grupper som möjligt. Det är nödvändigt att såväl ministerier, myndigheter, akademien, civilsamhället som privata näringslivet är engagerade i arbetet att finna fungerande tillämpade IKT-baserade lösningar på de samhällsutmaningar framförallt utvecklingsländerna ställs inför.

### 2. Syfte och mål

Spider syftar till att mobilisera olika samhällsintressenter för att utveckla och implementera IKT-baserade tillämpningar som motsvarar användarnas behov. Spider lägger vikt vid de lokala förhållandena och arbetar aktivt med lokala organisationer både under genomförande och i ett aktivt forskningsbaserat uppföljningsarbete. Spider stödjer samverkan mellan olika aktörer för att underlätta för att marginaliserade människor i utvecklingsländer kan nå och använda IKT-baserade tillämpningar som kan ge långsiktiga förbättringar av deras liv.

### 3. Huvudman

Spider är placerat under Institutionen för data- och systemvetenskap (DSV) vid Samhällsvetenskapliga fakulteten inom det humanvetenskapliga området.

### 4. Organisation

Spider leds av en styrelse och en föreståndare. Styrelsen består av en ordförande och 5-7 övriga ledamöter, vilka utses för en period om tre år av rektor vid Stockholms universitet på förslag av prefekten vid DSV efter yttrande av Områdesnämnden för humanvetenskap. Ledamot kan omförordnas.

Föreståndaren ska vara vetenskapligt kompetent, ha kompetens inom IKT-området och ha erfarenhet av arbete i några av de länder Spider verkar i, samt utses för en period om tre år av rektor på förslag av prefekten vid DSV efter yttrande av Områdesnämnden för humanvetenskap. Föreståndaren kan omförordnas.

### **5. Styrelsens sammansättning**

Styrelsen ska till majoriteten bestå av kompetenta ledamöter och vara sammansatt av representanter från olika delar av samhället och/eller de länder Spider har samarbete med.

### **6. Styrelsens arbetsformer**

Styrelsen sammanträder på kallelse av ordföranden, minst fyra gånger årligen. Ordförande utses av styrelse vid första mötet varje kalenderår. Styrelsen är beslutför då ordförande samt minst hälften av övriga ledamöter är närvarande, under förutsättning att majoriteten av de närvarande ledamöterna är vetenskapligt kompetenta. Den mening om vilken flertalet ledamöter förenar sig gäller som styrelsens beslut. Vid lika röstetal gäller den mening som ordföranden företräder. Föreståndaren och institutionens prefekt har närvaro- och yttranderätt vid styrelsens sammanträden. Styrelsen får vid behov särskilt kalla personer med närvaro- och yttranderätt.

### **7. Styrelsens arbetsuppgifter**

Styrelsen ska

1. stödja och främja verksamheten vid centrumet,
2. besluta i frågor om budget och verksamhetsplanering,
3. årligen rapportera om centrumets verksamhet till Områdesnämnden,
4. godkänna årsrapporter och revisionsrapporter,
5. aktivt delta i Spiders verksamhet,
6. aktivt delta i Spiders strategiarbete.

### **8. Föreståndarens arbetsuppgifter**

1. tillse att styrelsens beslut verkställs,
2. ansvara för den ekonomiska förvaltningen, budgeteringen och uppföljningen,
3. vara operativt ansvarig för verksamheten,
4. ha personalansvar,
5. ansvara för de avtal som sluts i Spiders namn,
6. ansvara för att Spider och personer och organisationer knutna till Spider följer uppsatta regler,
7. aktivt arbeta med att bygga och upprätthålla ett för Spider relevant nätverk,
8. aktivt arbeta med att säkerställa Spiders finansiering.

I övrigt gäller överordnade organs delegationsbeslut.

### **9. Finansiering och resurshantering**

Centrumet finansieras genom medel från Sida och andra motsvarande finansiärer.

I övrigt gäller överordnade organs budgetbeslut.

Centrumet ska utgöra en egen redovisningsenhet inom DSV.

Attest- och utanordningsregler samt övriga ekonomiska föreskrifter vid Stockholms universitet ska tillämpas vid centrumet.

### **10. Utbildning/undervisning**

Lärare är anställda vid institutionen och institutionen ansvarar för den utbildning som bedrivs



inom ramen för centrumets verksamhet. Doktorander kan inte antas vid centrumet. Ingen grundutbildning sker inom ramen för centrumet.

### **11. Utvärdering och omprövning**

Centrumets verksamhet ska systematiskt utvärderas samt omprövas av Områdesnämnden för humanvetenskap minst vart sjätte år. Områdesnämnden beslutar om formerna för utvärderingen.

### **12. Avveckling**

Om centrum inte längre fyller sitt syfte ska det avvecklas. Rektor beslutar om avveckling efter begäran av Områdesnämnden för humanvetenskap.

### **13. Ändring av stadgar**

Beslut om ändring av stadgarna fattas av rektor efter hörande av Områdesnämnden för humanvetenskap. Ändring av stadgarna kan föreslås av styrelsen för centrumet, prefekten vid DSV, fakultets- eller områdesnämnd.