MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF DENMARK
Evaluation of Development Assistance

Annual Report 2012
Evaluation of development assistance

1. Introduction

This document contains information about Danida evaluation activities conducted in 2012 under the auspices of the Evaluation Department (EVAL). The report was presented to the Danida Board in December 2012. Following a reorganisation of the Danida governance structure, the draft of the evaluation programme for 2014-2015 will be presented to the newly established Council for Development Policy in the beginning of 2013.

2. Key trends in evaluation activity in 2012

In 2012, the evaluation department (EVAL) concluded six actual evaluations and four evaluation studies. The evaluations covered development assistance to Afghanistan (education and region of origin initiatives); support for improving public financial management; support for civil society organisations (CSOs) with regard to influencing policy formulation and implementation; support for better access to services in the justice sector in Zambia; and finally, an evaluation of the Danish Fellowship Programme (DFP), which is administered by the Danida Fellowship Centre (DFC). The four evaluation studies comprise a study of the macroeconomic impact of HIV/AIDS and HIV/AIDS interventions in Tanzania; a study of lessons learned from support to economic development and service delivery in fragile states; a study of lessons learned from building effective state apparatuses in fragile states; and finally, a study of the evaluation-based knowledge about support for state building and livelihoods in Afghanistan.

In accordance with the principles of the Paris Declaration concerning alignment and harmonisation, EVAL emphasises the importance of conducting evaluations jointly with partner countries and evaluation departments in other development agencies. Three of the six evaluations were carried out in collaboration with evaluation departments of other development agencies or on behalf of a number of different donors. Stakeholders in partner countries were involved to varying degrees in all of the evaluations.

All concluded evaluations have contributed in various ways to developing new strategies or programmes, thereby emphasizing the utility of the evaluations. This is made possible e.g. by thorough discussions of evaluation follow-up in the Danida Programme Committee prior to the publication of new evaluations. In many cases however, the utilization of recommendations from the evaluations only become apparent in the medium to long term. The Quality Assurance
Department in the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs therefore prepares bi-annual reports for the Programme Committee regarding follow-up on evaluation recommendations.

EVAL works continually to contribute to improving methods for impact evaluations as well as other types of evaluations and a number of different types of evaluations and methods are used in order to be able to cover the breadth and variation in development cooperation and achievement of results. At international level, development and dissemination of improved methods for measuring impacts of development assistance is a high priority, for example through the two international networks in the field, 3ie and NONIE. EVAL is actively involved in both of these networks.

3. Evaluations concluded in 2012

The evaluations concluded in 2012 are briefly described below. It will be possible to download the evaluations at www.evaluering.dk either before the end of the year or at the beginning of 2013 (printed versions of the reports can also be ordered through the website). The website has brief summaries in Danish that include Danida’s comments to the individual evaluations.

3.1 and 3.2 Development cooperation with Afghanistan

The civilian part of Danish development cooperation with Afghanistan was evaluated in 2012. The evaluation work covers the majority of Danish economic assistance to Afghanistan during the past ten years. The evaluations assess Denmark’s support for education (2003-10), regions of origin (2009-11), improved livelihoods (2001-10) and state building (2001-10). The aim has been to provide the first comprehensive overview of the assistance in terms of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, as well as – to a lesser degree – the long-term impact.

The evaluation work provide an insight into the challenges that exist in providing effective assistance in a fragile state such as Afghanistan, that has been characterised by decades of armed conflict. It covers a period in which the international community, including Denmark, increased the focus on stabilisation, conflict prevention and fragile states and during which a number of valuable lessons were learned. The evaluations provide inputs for improving Danish assistance to Afghanistan as well as to other fragile states. Lessons learned will inter alia be incorporated into a new Afghanistan plan for 2013-2014. The evaluations were commissioned by Danida’s evaluation department and were carried out by independent international consultancy firms.

The evaluations demonstrate that Danish assistance has made a difference, despite the fact that Denmark is a relatively small donor out of the more than 60 countries that are assisting Afghanistan. Generally, Danish support to a large degree meets Afghanistan’s needs and has been delivered in accordance with Afghan priorities and plans. The evaluation of education support show that Danish assistance has contributed to notable progress. The evaluation of support to
refugees who have returned home as well as the evaluation of the livelihood programmes finds that the immediate goals that were set out have largely been met. The evaluation study of the state building activities indicates more varied results with regard to the effectiveness of the initiatives receiving Danish support.

A number of different factors contributed to the positive results of Danish development assistance, but for all of the four focus areas it was generally of decisive importance that the Danish support had been i) in accordance with Afghan policies and priorities and delivered in accordance with the principles regarding good donor practice; ii) based on a long-term approach with the aim of building the capacity of both government authorities and within the general population; iii) flexible with regard to adapting the assistance to changes in local needs and local conditions, including security, as well as with regards to complementing other donors. It is recommended that Denmark continue to base its development assistance to Afghanistan on these principles. The evaluations also emphasise however, that there are still many unmet needs and major problems to tackle in Afghanistan and that there is a clear need for continued assistance.

### 3.3 Joint evaluation of the support for improved financial management

The evaluation was launched in order to examine two core questions: 1. Where and why do Public Financial Management reforms deliver results? And 2: Where and how does donor support contribute most effectively to creating results? The evaluation was undertaken by the African Development Bank, Sida and Danida and was conducted by independent British consultants (Fiscus and Mokoro) in collaboration with local consultants. The evaluation, which covers the period 2001-2010, is partly based on comprehensive literature studies and available data from approximately 100 countries and partly on country studies and visits to Burkina Faso, Ghana and Malawi.

The evaluation concludes that three conditions must be met simultaneously if Public Financial Management reforms are to lead to results. First, there must be a strong political will in the country. Second, the reforms must be adapted to the local context, and reform processes must be continually adjusted to reflect the lessons learned. And third, the developing countries themselves should be in charge of coordinating and monitoring the reform process.

Even though significant results could be seen in a large range of Public Financial Management reforms, the evaluation does not establish a clear correlation between assistance to reforms and results. This underscores the crucial role that political will in each country has in determining the extent to which results are achieved. The evaluation finds that budget support is generally an effective tool for strengthening the reform process in countries where the will for reforms is present. Budget support provides governments with incentives to adopt reforms that are adapted to the local context, and it ensures that the external support focuses on the government's own reform programme. The evaluation does, however, demonstrate that many donors have still not come very far with regard to using national administrative systems for the channelling of donor funds. Attempts at strengthening the reform process by attaching conditions to budget support has
not shown to create better results. Apparently, reforms cannot be forced through from the outside. Reform initiatives should ideally come from within the country itself. The donors are criticised moreover, for supporting initiatives that governments themselves do not give high priority. Support for low priority areas is often wasted since initiatives that the countries themselves do not prioritise, are not sustainable once the donor support ceases.

The evaluation recommends that donors adjust their support to the level of political will to reform in the partner country. It is recommended that the support is aligned as closely as possible with the reform programme in the partner country, so that isolated initiatives of a technical nature are avoided. Development cooperation policy and practice should support reforms that are anchored in the partner country’s own systems so that parallel administrative systems are not developed. It is furthermore recommended that support continues to be given to CSOs, parliaments and other stakeholders while accepting that the impact of such support will only be seen in the long term.

3.4 Evaluation of support to civil society engagement in policy dialogue

This evaluation was launched in order to gather lessons learned about best ways to support civil society organisations in developing countries, in their engagement in policy dialogue, in order to raise the voices of the most poor and vulnerable groups.

The evaluation was commissioned by the informal donor group concerning Civil Society and Development, which includes i.a. countries such as Denmark, Sweden, Austria, Canada, Finland and Switzerland. The evaluation was carried out in the period June 2011 – September 2012 by the British consultancy firm ITAD Ltd. supplemented by experts from COWI and from the three countries in which field studies have been conducted: Bangladesh, Mozambique and Uganda.

The evaluation concludes that civil society has an important role to play as a political actor and that this role is being increasingly recognised both by the public authorities in developing countries and by the donors. Over the years, progress has also been made with respect to ensuring the formal rights of civil society to engage in policy processes. However, in reality the way that laws and rules are administered – particularly with regard to controversial issues often means that this freedom is limited and actively opposed. Recognizing this, the evaluation recommends that donors should more carefully monitor the situation and take a more active approach in supporting civil society.

In spite of strategies in place for the prioritization of the role of civil society as a political actor, the evaluation concludes that donor practice is often still so, that CSOs are primarily supported in their role as providers of basic services such as health care and education, rather than as political actors. Increased and more effective support for civil society engagement in policy dialogue requires that donors develop new tools suited to that type of support and methods for measuring the impact of this support. Donors should increasingly allow CSOs to develop their own policy agendas instead of keeping civil society tethered to the donors’ own agendas. Moreover, the evaluation has a number of specific operational conclusions and recommendations, including
recommendations for increased support to independent media and capacity building.

3.5 Evaluation of support to legal services in Zambia

This evaluation was undertaken to assess the impact of support for the legal sector in Zambia. It was carried out at the request of the Danish embassy in Lusaka as part of the phasing out of Danish support to legal services in the country. As the support is to be continued by GIZ/Germany and the EU, their representatives in Zambia were invited to follow the evaluation process through participation in an informal reference group. The evaluation, which covers the period 2006-2011, was conducted by the German consultancy firm GHK in partnership with the Danish firm Tana. Completion of the evaluation was awaiting a workshop that was to be held in Zambia with the participation of representatives of the Zambian government. This workshop took place in the middle of November 2012 and the evaluation was completed in the end of 2012. The main results from the evaluation have already contributed to the new strategic sector plan that is being prepared.

The evaluation concludes that the given support has largely been relevant and contributed to reducing the number of bottlenecks in the legal sector and a number of poor and vulnerable groups have benefitted from improved services. In a number of areas the goals that were set have not been achieved, and the legal sector in Zambia still faces major challenges. The evaluation emphasises, that in order to ensure sustainability of the reform, it is absolutely key that future reforms in the sector are supported by the highest political level. It is acknowledged though, that such complex reform programmes require a longer timeframe than the evaluated programme period. The evaluation includes a number of recommendations of a more specific nature which inter alia focus on prioritisation within the sector in the short-term and the long-term, as well as on capacity development and the need for a more systematic monitoring and evaluation system within the sector.

3.6 Evaluation of the Danida Fellowship Programme

The aim of this evaluation, which covers the period since the last review in 2008, is to assess the activities and results of Danida Fellowship Programme, which is administered by Danida Fellowship Centre. The evaluation was carried out by Oxford Policy Management with case studies in Ghana and Uganda.

In recent years, the programme has taken its point of departure in the strategy for 2011-2013 and an agreement with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark for 2010-2012. Transfer of some of the training activities to cooperating institutions in partner countries has been a primary element in recent years. Besides documenting completed activities, an important part of the evaluation was to assess results that training has brought about in the form of behavioural changes as well as the importance for participating in the activities for the organisations.
The evaluation finds that the training activities that were carried out were well planned and relevant, and the lessons learned from transferring activities to a number of cooperating institutions were found to be positive. At the same time, the evaluation indicates that one weakness is that an overarching framework for assessing results of the training has not been established, which means that systematic follow-up on completed training is not taking place, apart from self-evaluations by trainees. Moreover, the evaluation finds that training is most effective if it is done in close coordination with other activities that receive Danish support. The evaluation further recommends *inter alia* that the monitoring and evaluation system is improved, and that the tools used to select participants for training activities are improved. Furthermore information should be given to providers of training activities with a view to ensuring increased competition in terms of both price and quality.

4. Studies and analyses

As mentioned in the introduction, EVAL published four evaluation studies in 2012:

- 2012/1. The macroeconomic impact of HIV/AIDS and HIV/AIDS interventions in Tanzania. The aim of this study was partly to assess the extent to which economic models could be used to assess the impact of HIV/AIDS and HIV/AIDS interventions and partly to analyse more specifically this impact in Tanzania.
- 2012/2. Economic development and service delivery in fragile states. This evaluation study along with evaluation study 2012/3 was prepared as a part of carrying out the evaluation of the engagement in Afghanistan. This study summarises the lessons learned from supporting economic development and service delivery in fragile states based on a review of a number of existing analyses and evaluations.
- 2012/3. Building effective state apparatuses in fragile states. This study supplements 2012/2 by analysing a number of evaluations and analyses of the support to state building in fragile states.
- 2012/4. Support for state building and livelihoods in Afghanistan. As mentioned above, the study was part of the overall evaluation of the engagement in Afghanistan and thus supplemented the evaluations of education and region of origin initiatives.

The evaluation studies can – as can the actual evaluations – be downloaded at [www.evaluering.dk](http://www.evaluering.dk) or [www.evaluation.dk](http://www.evaluation.dk)

5. Other dissemination activities

In 2012, EVAL hosted one international workshop and a public meeting. The workshop was arranged in cooperation with the University of Copenhagen and the English periodical *Evaluation*, focusing on the use of case studies in the evaluation of development assistance. A summary of the
discussions from the international workshop were published in *Evaluation* 2012(4), and the periodical is also preparing a thematic issue based on selected contributions from the workshop. The public meeting focussed on the emerging findings from the evaluation of the contribution of CSOs to policy development and implementation. Material from the meetings can be downloaded at www.evaluering.dk under ‘reference documents’.

A single issue of EVAL’s newsletter (*Eval news*) was published in 2012. The website was also regularly updated to include new publications as well as information about forthcoming events or events that have been held. Additionally, EVAL staff members have published articles in various academic journals and have also given lectures and taught courses at, for example, Copenhagen Business School, Roskilde University and the University of Copenhagen. EVAL staff members took, moreover, the initiative of publishing an introductory book in Danish on evaluating development assistance. The book was published by DJØF Publishing in November. Together with colleagues from the OECD/DAC and NORAD, an agreement was reached with the English publisher Routledge regarding the publication of an anthology about evaluations in fragile states. The anthology, which will include contributions from a number of foreign colleagues, is currently being edited and is expected to be published in 2013.

Finally, EVAL has regularly contributed to the dissemination of evaluation-based knowledge in the Programme Committee and in MFA activities, aimed at communicating results of development cooperation.

6. International cooperation

In 2012 EVAL has actively participated in relevant international coordination networks, including the OECD/DAC’s evaluation group, and have participated in meetings between the heads of the EU Commission’s and EU Member State’s evaluation departments, the Nordic+ network, the Scandinavian network for the staff of the evaluation units in Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and the Swedish evaluation institute SADEV. Apart from the specific collaboration on joint evaluations, EVAL staff members have carried out quality assurance for other donors, e.g. for NORAD, DFID and the African Development Bank, and have also assisted in the accreditation of the evaluation staff at the DFID. EVAL has also supported the Global Environment Fund’s initiative concerning the promotion of evaluation capacity and methods within the fields of climate adaptation and natural resource management, and has contributed with fellowships for participants from developing countries in the international evaluation course IPDET.

7. On-going evaluations and studies that will continue in 2013

The following evaluations were in progress at the beginning of 2013:
- Budget support, Tanzania
- Support to the peace process in Nepal
- Media cooperation under the Danish Arab Partnership Programme
- The Civil Society Strategy
- Research support within the fields of agriculture and natural resource management
- Support for combating HIV/AIDS in Uganda

In addition, various evaluations are currently in preparation, including an evaluation of Danida’s Business-to-Business (B2B) Programme. Preparations are also underway for an evaluation study of systematic reviews (meta-evaluations). The study is expected to be presented at the next Nordic+ meeting, which is scheduled to take place in Copenhagen in May 2013. In addition, more evaluation studies are expected to be launched and completed in 2013.

Together with the OECD/DAC and a group of other evaluation departments, in 2012 EVAL also took the initiative of drawing up an “Evaluation Highlights”, which summarises the lessons learned from support to fragile states. The study is expected to be published by the OECD/DAC’s evaluation network. Discussions with the OECD/DAC and other evaluation units are also underway regarding a possible “Evaluation Highlights” on lessons learned from support to CSOs.

8. Revision of Danida Evaluation Guidelines

The revised guidelines were published at the beginning of 2012. The purpose of the revision process was partly to update the guidelines in the light of the up-dating of the OECD/DAC’s quality standards for evaluation and partly to make the guidelines more precise with regard to handling issues of impartiality in connection with conducting evaluations.