

## **“Denmark gave us milk rather than alcohol”**

### ***Denmark has been a strong supporter of Nepal’s journey from fatalism to freedom***

“I have worked with development for more than 30 years and it is rare to have the privilege of looking into a development corporation that spans over several decades as does the Denmark-Nepal development cooperation, and thus look at the long-term impact and legacy,” says Julian Caldecott, team leader of the evaluation.

“To me, the words of one Nepalese interviewee captures the essence of the partnership. He said that

Denmark gave Nepal ‘milk’ to sustain its growing body over time and contrasted this with the stunting effects of ‘alcohol’ from quick-fix stimuli. That was his way of illustrating the long-term commitment of Denmark.”

### **From fatalism to freedom**

The evaluation report is not only extraordinary due to its size (403 pages including detailed annexes and case stories), but also because it details the historical context in Nepal AND how it changed over the years from the development cooperation started in 1991.

It even does this from an anthropological point of view, as this – as the report notes – “is very helpful in understanding the Nepalese context.” The report goes on to say, that when Danish support to Nepal started “the prevailing attitude (in Nepal) was one of fatalism, a feeling that destiny is determined by birth, class, caste, gender, disability, or some other accidental, natural, social or supernatural factor, over which no control is possible. This discouraged the idea that change was possible and inhibited the sense of agency among people.”

But over a relatively short period of time, several episodes took place showing that there was a pressure in Nepal for change. An overall, and very strong conclusion, is that Denmark in numerous ways supported this push for change.

Actually, several conclusions are extremely positive, and – as Julian Caldecott notes: “The wording is carefully done, so let the report speak for itself.”

### **So here are a few quotes:**

“Nepal is in a much stronger position to cope with any challenge in 2017 than it was in 1990, with a viable Constitution, widespread progress on both representative and participatory democracy, and a better-educated population that is more aware of and better able to defend its rights.”

“All Danida’s interventions encouraged this outcome, by supporting elections, decentralisation, transparency, inclusion, equity, literacy, various measures to promote the habits and mechanisms of participation, and to introduce new ideas and ways of doing things, often through exposure to global and Danish experience.”

“The evidence suggests that, of all the individual donors with which Nepal might have had a long-term relationship, **Danida was among the best suited to its particular needs for intimate, non-judgemental**, long-term encouragement while it worked out how to solve its own problems in its own way. **It is hard to imagine any large, ideologically-driven or multilateral actor performing as well as Danida in such a context.**”

“Taken together with design quality, the key finding is that the Danida interventions in Nepal were on average and with few exceptions **well designed, well-targeted, and strongly effective**. This is consistent with the judgement that they made a significant contribution to Nepal’s development over many years, even though some errors were made, and the actual drivers of that development have primarily been the Nepalese themselves. This conclusion is about as positive as it can be for any aid programme of this diversity and duration subjected to this intensity of scrutiny.”