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Irregularities in activities related to the Agriculture Sector Programme Support II (ASPS II) in Bangladesh

Reference is made to the previous report dated 24 August 2021 regarding suspicions of irregularities on a grant to the Agriculture Sector Programme (ASPS) implemented by the Department of Agriculture in Bangladesh (DAE). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (MFA) provided the Agriculture Sector Programme (ASPS) with DKK 110 million for the period of 2006-2011.

In 2011, suspicions of irregularities with two staff members based in the Barguna region arose, and investigations using departmental compliance mechanisms were initiated. The DAE determined that funds amounting to DKK 17,848 had been mismanaged. The responsible staff was directed to remit the amount to the government account which they did not obey. The Barguna office of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) hereafter started an investigation. In 2020, one of the accused staff members died. The proceedings have since stalled due to the continued non-issuance of witness summons and the presiding judge's refusal to proceed to a full hearing, leaving the matter in prolonged procedural stagnation with no resolution in sight.

Following the conclusion of the Danish Embassy's partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture in 2022, monitoring the matter became difficult. Updates on the case were eventually obtained through informal channels, revealing no substantive progress. There is very little likelihood that the case will be processed anytime soon, if ever, among other things due to high case load and the political reform agenda.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs thus regards the case as closed with a loss of Danish funds amounting to DKK 17,848.