

Final Management Response & Follow-up Note
Evaluation of Danida supported Research on
Agriculture and Natural Resource Management, 2006-2011

This note summarises the main findings, conclusions and recommendations from the final report of the Evaluation of Danida supported Research on Agriculture and Natural Resource Management from 2006 to 2011. It also includes Danida's comments (management response) and follow-up to the Evaluation. The Evaluation was commissioned by Danida's Evaluation Department and conducted by a consultancy team from a consortium of ORBICON, Denmark, and ITAD, United Kingdom.

Introduction and Approach

Danida has supported development research through various modalities and channels since the 1960s. In order to assess more recent aspects of this support, and provide recommendations to feed into the current process of formulating a strategy for development research, Danida's Evaluation Department (EVAL) commissioned an external evaluation of support for research within agriculture and natural resource management from 2006 to 2011.

The Evaluation was implemented from January to June 2013 with dual objectives, to assess, document and explain the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency – and where possible sustainability and impact – of Danish support to development research within the thematic areas of agriculture and natural resource management (NRM) and to provide lessons learned and recommendations which may feed into on-going discussions on how to improve support to development research, and more specifically into the current process of developing an overall strategic framework for support to development research.

The Evaluation considered the historical and future aspects and implications of two elements of Danida support, the mechanisms and processes of providing it and the products and outcomes of successful delivery. Data collection and analysis was based on a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data analysis with qualitative methods, and included site visits to Tanzania and Burkina Faso.

Five funding instruments were considered by the Evaluation: 1) Support to Centres, 2) Support to Networks, 3) Minor studies, 4) Projects under the Consultative Research Committee for Development Research (FFU), both North- and South-driven and 5) Building Stronger Universities (BSU), specifically two of the four platforms.

76.1% of the DKK 602.6 million Danish funding for agricultural and NRM research under these modalities in the period from 2006 to 2011 was allocated for the directly-funded research cooperation projects under the FFU. Country-wise, about 40% has gone to three

countries (Tanzania 17.5%, Vietnam 12.6%, and Burkina Faso 9.8%). In Tanzania, 77% of the research funding was linked to Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA).

Main Findings

Centres. The two Centres covered by the Evaluation were the Danish Forest Seed Centre and the Danish Seed Health Centre for Developing Countries. Changes in the Danish national research environment, changing Danida and international development policy, a lack of requests from Danida and Sector Support Programmes for services and the integration of the centres into KU-LIFE resulted in the decision to phase out funding for the support of the centres from 2011 onwards. The main outputs (PhD, MSc and publications) and activities of the centres under their performance contracts were achieved and positive results have been delivered. Collaborating research institutions have been strengthened and the strong personal links with Danish researchers established have been the driving force behind the successful establishment of research projects (including FFU projects).

The centre support modality provided a strong platform for capacity building which has made the collaborating research institutions stronger when competing for funds. The approach relied on North-driven technical support to develop physical as well as intellectual capacity which over time became an inappropriate mechanism for supporting the building of Southern research capacity for reasons mentioned above.

Networks. From 2006 to 2011 the networks supported by Danida have been variously evolved, merged and disbanded. This started in 2007 and was driven by a number of mechanisms, ending with the merging of three networks which created the Danish Development Research Network (DDRN). In broadening its technical base, DDRN became much more of an information hub, well-placed to promote multi-stakeholder dialogue, meetings and networking. Development-based research projects have been successfully generated out of the links established through the network platforms. However, in becoming an information hub it became less effective as a focussed technical platform of skilled specialists in a position to provide targeted advice.

In contrast, the Danish Water Forum (DWF) continued as a relevant forum for networking among water sector stakeholders in the North and South, but shifted its focus in response to the demands of its stakeholders and in doing so became a network more relevant to Danish private sector companies in the water sector. Arguably, this has reduced its immediate relevance to Southern stakeholders, especially in Africa, as well as reducing DWF's interests in development.

The networks established relevant platforms for multi-stakeholder dialogue, networking and exchange of research information across and between South and North that were effective in linking groups and individuals with common research interests. However, mechanisms were never established for the networks to inform Danida-funded sector programme formulation processes. Loss of focus within some networks, and changes in aid delivery mechanisms, further challenged the networks potential for influencing policy.

Opportunities for utilising DDRN/DWF capacity and skills in research communication and in the dissemination of information and promotion of multi-stakeholder dialogue has not been

utilised by the emerging BSU funding modality, although this has been identified as a constraint for the modality.

Minor Studies. Minor studies funding is intended to strengthen the quality of Danish development cooperation by providing guidance and input into strategy development and planning. It is a flexible instrument to promote internal learning, influence policy and strategic thinking and to encourage innovation. Operationally, studies under this modality tend to build on known information, compiling, consolidating and analysing existing knowledge and placing it into a specific policy context. Four studies in the area of agriculture and NRM have been completed in the evaluation period, and each was clearly linked to Danida policy and priorities, all were highly relevant. From the available evidence these studies all appear to have made an impact on Danida policy and raised awareness amongst the organisation's decision-makers, which is what they were designed to do. However, with only four studies commissioned for agriculture and NRM between 2006 and 2011, the modality, for all its potential usefulness, appears to be underutilised.

FFU Research Grant Projects (North-driven). Calls for research proposals are advertised in Denmark, based on Danish priorities and selected themes and administered by the Danida Fellowship Centre (DFC). Proposals are checked for relevance by the Danish embassies and technically assessed by FFU and peer reviewers based on three criteria of the Quality of the research being proposed, the Relevance of the research to national and Danish priorities for development cooperation and policy and the potential Impact of the research. There is no logframe or result framework for the FFU approach and no clearly articulated objective or set of outputs which describe what it is trying to deliver overall, apart from a very broad sense that it is about capacity strengthening and research. This, and the lack of indicators, makes it difficult to measure the full extent of its effectiveness. Successful projects are by definition relevant but gender issues were poorly dealt with in both research calls and in the subsequently approved proposals, despite the fact that Danida had a strategic focus on women's rights and access to resources during the evaluation period.

DFC's role in the general administration and support to logistics and finances of this modality was positively assessed by stakeholders. DFC monitors compliance with administrative and financial requirements of the modality but has no role in technical monitoring or evaluation. This area of oversight and quality assurance is very limited, with no formal structures or mechanisms in place. In general, resources have been used as planned and agreed in project proposals.

The embassies have no official role in the operation of the FFU projects and there is no official interaction between project and embassy staff, although some limited personal interactions do take place. The lack of a mechanism to support embassy-FFU project interaction has meant that opportunities to incorporate or promote research output in programme support planning have not been realised.

Within the FFU project structure, and the other funding modalities under evaluation, there have been several shifts in strategic direction. These changes have had implications for stakeholders and those evaluating proposals, but despite this there has been no deliberate change management process to support them.

The mechanisms and platforms for information exchange are often limited in partner countries and this reduces stakeholder access to research output. There is an inherent tension between the need for immediate outcomes and benefits at farm-level, often a priority for Southern researchers, especially those in national research institutes, and the production of high quality research for publication in peer-reviewed journals, which is a key requirement of the Danish university system.

The FFU projects have provided an attractive, bilateral funding modality in a relatively closed institutional environment that has benefited researchers in Denmark and selected Southern countries. It is a modality that has been largely driven from Denmark, and places emphasis on quality research and publications linked to postgraduate degree training. It has been successful at providing this training and at the same time has generated a number of research publications; the outputs in terms of PhD degrees and publications have been documented as part of the Evaluation for Burkina Faso, Tanzania and Vietnam as an illustrative example.

Impact of the FFU projects is difficult to measure. For example, although Danida support to research activities is relatively high at Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA) in Tanzania between 2006 and 2011, attribution has proved difficult/impossible. Norway is by far the most influential development partner at SUA providing a large share of funding through comprehensive institutional research programmes, which have aimed at addressing capacity development issues at the institutional level, while the Danish research funding to FFU projects at SUA has focused on support to individual researchers.

Without a comprehensive strategy for support to development research, any modality which is functioning well and delivering postgraduate degrees and publications can be judged a success. The question remains as to whether, in the participatory and holistic environment which characterises modern development research, the FFU project approach remains an appropriate modality.

There are two separate, but related issues. Firstly, the FFU project research is driven by a thematic approach based on shifting Danida priorities, and projects are linked to the skills and strengths of Danish researchers, the majority of whom are in universities. Secondly, the linear approach to research, assumes that the responsibility for dissemination and uptake of successful outputs is outside the project boundary and the responsibility of others. Both of these issues need to be addressed in designing the new Danish Strategy for Development Research.

FFU Pilot Research Cooperation Programme – PRCP (South-driven projects). The South-driven PRCP research projects under FFU are seen as a mechanism for making support to research more relevant to Southern partners and represent a new approach for Danish funding. The calls have required that the project proposals were developed in the context of Southern priorities linked to Danish strategic development priority areas, although the link to Danish priorities has now (2013) been dropped.

The modality operates in Ghana, Tanzania and Vietnam, and the Evaluation has focussed its analysis on Tanzania, where there were five projects implemented within agriculture and NRM during the evaluation period. In all five cases the South-driven research projects were of high relevance and provided value-addition to the key research areas in their respective institutions.

Concept Notes for the PRCPs have been prepared by Tanzanian researchers, and Danish partners have played an active role in converting the notes into project proposals. On occasion, the Concept Notes have been of poor quality, pointing to a wider issue on the need for support to related change management and capacity development processes within national partner institutions.

The interest among Danish researchers to respond to the open PRCP calls has been limited, due to a number of reasons, although there are also good examples of how the South-driven research project modality has created new partnerships and links between Danish and Southern researchers. The modality has proved mutually beneficial and encouraged continued cooperation between the project partners, and where projects have been approved and implemented, satisfaction amongst stakeholders is high.

The South-driven research project modality represents a new and relevant approach, which creates strong ownership in the South, positive outcomes and new partnerships. It addresses issues linked to ownership and relevance as part of Danida's current approach to development research and alignment with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

By being more responsive to Southern demands and better reflecting national priorities and issues, it has created potential for leveraging additional funding. At the same time it has sparked new partnerships and opened up the possibilities of wider collaboration between Danish and Southern institutions. However, although the modality has many positive features it remains somewhat trapped within the same research framework (academically-focused linear model involving, for the large part, university-based research) as the FFU projects. There is the additional problem that many Danish researchers feel that incentives to engage are limited.

Building Stronger Universities – Environment and Climate (BSUEC) and Growth and Employment (BSUGE) Platforms. The initiative originated from the Danish Universities Rectors' Conference and was developed further in consultation with partners in the South and in dialogue with Danida. The process resulted in a compromise structure with four platforms, a co-funding arrangement and a focus on institutional capacity building and not research. The Evaluation considered only two of the four platforms, and findings and recommendations should be viewed in this context.

Detailed interviews and discussions were held with Danish administrators and researchers involved in the two platforms in Tanzania and Ghana but due to travel limitations, only Tanzanian partners were interviewed in-country. The findings from interviews with Danish stakeholders who were working in both Tanzania and Ghana were similar.

The BSU aim is to strengthen institutional capacity at Southern universities, through partnerships with those in Denmark. However, the platform approach is thematically based on Danish strategic priorities, and as such the platforms are not necessarily relevant to this aim. Despite the fact that later inception workshops were held at Southern partner universities, the overall framework for the BSU concept and Phase 1 design was developed and agreed in Denmark, and no systematic capacity needs assessment was done.

The ownership of the BSU initiative within the Southern partner universities has been weak. Institutionalisation of new courses developed under BSU has been hindered, at least in

Tanzania, by the lack of plans or resources for incorporating them into the mainstream of the university academic and administrative structures. The generic and specific PhD courses that have been taught by Danish senior researchers for PhD students and supervisors at the partner universities in the South however, have been popular and well-attended.

At the operational level the objectives of the BSU are not supported with clear and measureable outcome indicators (short-term and long-term), nor have baseline data been collected against which to measure improvements.

Although BSU key stakeholders at both SUA and University of Dar es Salaam considered the BSU to be a useful gap filler, the BSU platforms in Tanzania are not coordinated or collaborating with other related interventions funded by other development partners within the same universities. The administration costs of the BSUEC and BSUGE platforms are both above 25%, due to a complex governance structure, considerably higher than for the other modalities covered by this evaluation.

BSU was established without a systematic assessment of Southern university needs, and the assumption was that Danish universities had the skills and capacity to address those unknown Southern priorities. Requests for support are demand-driven from the South, and implementation depends on the willingness and ability of the seven Danish universities under BSU to respond.

For different reasons, the incentives for the majority of senior researchers in the South and Denmark to engage in the process are insufficient. This has led to a low level of participation, except by PhD students. Wider attempts to improve institutional skills and capacity have been hindered by a lack of integration in Southern university systems.

The idea behind BSU, of strengthening institutional and research capacity of Southern universities in key areas by calling on the skills and capacity available in Denmark, is a sound one. However, the operationalisation of this concept has been flawed, and threatens its immediate and medium-term success. The existing BSU governance structure is not appropriate for the aims of BSU, and is both expensive and cumbersome. There were no indications, from the platforms visited, that BSU in its current form will produce any lasting and documentable results within the South partner universities.

Synergy and Coherence. The Evaluation has considered five funding modalities (six if the Minor Studies component is included) over a six year period. These have not all been operating at the same level or for the same length of time and they represent a succession of funding and activity levels. Although the Evaluation found evidence of interactions between these different modalities, the synergies were mostly on an ad hoc basis and because the same individuals are involved in multiple modalities.

There is no systematic or formal set of procedures which give guidance on how information should or could be shared, and the limited formal role for embassies means that in-country knowledge of agricultural and NRM research by embassy staff is limited to initiatives stimulated by personal interest. Synergies and coherence are dependent on individuals and not institutions.

Under the current system for implementing centrally funded research to agriculture and NRM, Danish embassies in-country have no formal role in management of the research activities and there is no obligation to connect with other development partners.

Overall Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the findings above, the following main conclusions and recommendations are drawn from the Evaluation of Danish support to development research in the period from 2006 to 2011 within the thematic areas of agriculture and NRM:

Paradigms for Agricultural and NRM research. The focus of the current research paradigm under which the bulk of FFU projects are operating is a North-driven, thematically-organised, academically-focussed linear model involving, for the large part, university-based research in Denmark and the South. Current development thinking has moved away from this approach to a more holistic view. Similarly, capacity strengthening under the BSU also needs to be reconsidered, and the appropriateness of the current model reviewed.

The most appropriate research paradigm and approach to capacity strengthening will depend on the strategy for development research which Danida adopts. One option, however, is provided by an approach widely used throughout Africa and South Asia, which is built on a broad-based stakeholder grouping, that considers issues in a wide context (value chain) and then utilises those best placed to develop and implement different elements to provide a combined solution. Sometimes referred to as integrated agricultural research for development or agricultural innovation systems, this type of approach is applicable where the need exists for a strong agricultural sector which can drive economic growth.

The extent to which cross-cutting issues have been dealt with between 2006 and 2011 is mixed. Some have received priority treatment (climate change, environment), others have been less obviously considered (gender, youth). The current Strategy for Denmark's Development Cooperation identifies quite clearly several key priorities which cut across sectors and which influence and effect support to research in agriculture and NRM. Of these, Green Growth, Stability and issues linked to the Human-Rights Based Approaches and Gender Equality are perhaps the most clearly relevant and should be integrated into the new paradigm.

Recommendation 1. In developing its new Strategy for Development Research, Danida should consider institutionalising a research paradigm which moves away from the current linear model, to one that is holistic, participatory, linked to value chains and largely driven by Southern priorities.

Recommendation 2. As part of its new Strategy for Development Research, Danida should consider including a particular focus on the need for support to strengthening of national institutional frameworks and capacities for planning and coordination of development research within Southern partner countries. This would include support to formulation and implementation of relevant strategies and policies for prioritising and coordinating of research interventions within and across research institutions in the partner countries. Such a focus would benefit from stronger embassy engagement in research activities (see also Recommendation 3).

Mechanisms for Communication and Coordination – The interaction and sharing of information across and between modalities and stakeholders has been sub-optimal, although there have been exceptions. There are two main reasons for this, firstly the nature of individual projects largely focussed on research as an end in itself and, secondly, the lack of institutionalised mechanisms which place specific requirements on those implementing projects to share. This needs to be addressed at a strategic and operational level.

Recommendation 3. The roles and responsibilities of Danish embassies in relation to planning and implementation of Danida research initiatives should be redefined and institutionalised to become a more useful platform for follow-up and sharing of information as well as for potential application of relevant results from in-country research activities, including in relation to Danish-funded sector support programmes. Specific issues to consider:

- 3.1 If the potential for a more programme-based approach to development research will be positively considered by Danida in countries with high levels of Danida-supported research activity (see also Recommendation 2 and 8) the relevant Danish embassies should become more involved with coordination, follow-up and contact to supported national research institutions to ensure synergy and coherence, including with research activities supported by other Development Partners within the partner countries.
- 3.2 Annual circulation, by DFC to embassies, of 20-line summaries abstracted from the FFU progress/completion reports and BSU annual project reports.
- 3.3 Requirement for more systematic briefing of embassies on planned country visits from FFU and BSU project coordinators and staff.
- 3.4 An annual in-country research event (e.g. workshop or seminar) with participation of representatives from BSU and FFU projects, national governmental institutions, the embassy and possibly other stakeholders as well (e.g. other Development Partners, private sector actors, national research institutes).

Planning, Implementation and M&E – The evidence shows that one of the most significant features influencing the weaknesses identified during the evaluation period has been the lack of a clearly articulated strategy and plan on which funding modalities and implementation can rely. Such a plan could have linked and supported coherence of the various projected activities and provided a basis for monitoring and evaluation. This is currently being addressed.

None of the funding modalities (past or present) have, or had, indicators which allowed the assessment of changes or outcomes linked to funding. At best product indicators existed in some cases, measuring the number of degrees, publications or workshops. A loose theory of change approach, linked to broad objectives, has been implied but the Evaluation finds that a causal framework based on a logframe approach (LFA) would have provided a number of clear and distinct advantages not only for monitoring and evaluation but also for planning, implementation, communication and coordination.

In the context of M&E, monitoring of administrative compliance has been done by DFC, and although there are gaps and inconsistencies in the reports available, generally this has worked well. There is, however, no mechanism in place for technical evaluation of research projects due to the lack of baseline data and the inconsistency and inappropriate nature of indicators. Even projects pre-2009 with logframes, lacked indicators other than those measuring product

and the quality of the logframes themselves which were of little practical use as monitoring tools. Clear and coherent planning for interventions will be a prerequisite for the success of Danida's support to development research in agriculture and NRM in the future. An LFA at strategic level will make it feasible for a similar, nested results-based approach to be developed for research projects and activities. This would also be in line with how development research is currently being planned and implemented by other development partners and Southern organisations.

Recommendation 4. In the development of its new strategy for development research, Danida should use an LFA including a stakeholder and problem analysis. The development of such a framework should precede the writing or formulation of any strategy.

Recommendation 5. The LFA and Result-Based Management (RBM) should be institutionalised within Danida's modalities for funding development research, and utilised from the strategic level down to projects and other funded activities. It should be used to support and encourage more coherent nesting and linking of activities and funding and used to demonstrate clear causal links between inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and objectives.

Recommendation 6. Specifically for the institutionalisation of the LFA the change management support (see **Fejl! Henvisningskilde ikke fundet.**) should be provided with adequate resources and include:

- 6.1 Training and capacity strengthening in LFA and RBM, and the sensitisation of stakeholders to the new Strategy.
- 6.2 Agreement on clear definitions and instructions on what constitutes an objective, output, outcome and indicator for inclusion in DFC guidelines.
- 6.3 Technical monitoring and evaluation of research projects against agreed product and outcome-based indicators linked to logframes should be included in Annual Reports (against milestones or intermediate indicators) and Project Completion Reports, requiring baselines at project start.

Change Management – There have been several changes in the modalities and nature of funding during the period under evaluation with limited formal support, consultation and guidance. For new approaches and modalities to succeed, ownership and understanding are critical. Implementing change requires deliberate management of the process and future changes in direction, introduction of new modalities and ideas. Introduction of the new Danish Strategy for Development Research will need to be accompanied by sensitisation and consultation workshops involving a broad-base of stakeholders.

Recommendation 7. The introduction of any new strategies, funding instruments, tools or guidelines should be deliberately managed and institutionalised using change management principles and fully supported with well-resourced integrated workshops, documentation, capacity strengthening and technical support, as appropriate.

Funding mechanisms – Currently both the North and South-driven FFU projects are funded on a project by project basis, which can make coordination and coherence at programme level difficult for organisations, especially in the South. There are several options and models for the disbursement of funds to support research and capacity strengthening. Some development partners utilise a basket funding approach through externally managed multi-donor trust funds (DFID, EU, USAID, CIDA), others, including Danida, provide funds at programme-level to national or sub-regional organisations (Norad, World Bank, AusAID).

For FFU projects between 2006 and 2011, Danida has relied on project funding on an individual researcher basis, with project-designated funds channelled through Southern institutional systems for specific activities.

The Evaluation has interacted with a number of organisations and administrators, both North and South, and concludes that a more institutional and programme-based approach would be closer to current trends in development assistance.

Recommendation 8. Where feasible, development research funds should be provided directly to organisations in support of programmes, rather than projects and individuals, in parallel with developing the appropriate institutional capacity to manage them. As an interim step, resources for South-driven FFU projects should continue and be increased by reducing, or merged with, North-driven project support in those countries.

Capacity Strengthening – Currently the key mechanism for capacity strengthening is the BSU initiative and whilst the idea underpinning BSU is sound, operationalisation, at least for the two platforms evaluated (BSUEC and BSUGE), has been flawed. The Evaluation finds a significant shift in BSU’s strategic approach should be considered after the current phase has been completed.

Capacity strengthening is not just about PhD and MSc degrees, and many stakeholders in the South and in Denmark, expressed the view that a broader definition should be adopted, which considered capacity strengthening as an aspect of empowerment which provides stakeholders with the skills to access and use information, work effectively and efficiently within their institutional systems and interact and respond to wider challenges. These are issues that could be, and to some extent are being, addressed under BSU.

Recommendation 9. In the short term, the BSU governance structure should be simplified. Specifically the administrative and technical functions of BSUGE and BSUEC platforms should be merged and a common secretariat established that has a communication function linking to the other platforms.

Recommendation 10. A comprehensive, independent, technical review of the whole BSU initiative should be implemented as soon as possible to inform a decision as to whether it should be continued in its current form. Issues to be considered should include:

- 10.1 The cost-effectiveness of including the BSU concept as a new capacity development and empowerment modality nested within the Danida development research strategy, technically under FFU and administered by DFC, as they have the experience and skills to do this.
- 10.2 Narrowing the Southern-focus of BSU to permit larger, institution-based inputs at fewer Southern partner universities and reviewing the current group of South partner universities¹ to determine whether support should be to smaller, under-resourced universities with greater potential for generating internal change and impact.
- 10.3 The nature and options for improving incentives and ownership of BSU.

¹ The current Southern partner universities are relatively large universities which already receive significant amount of external funding.

Danida comments/management response.

General comments:

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) appreciates that the evaluation has aimed at generating clear conclusions and specific recommendations concerning a complex and challenging evaluation topic. It is helpful that the evaluation does not cover its key findings in caveats and reservations, and the Ministry agrees with most of its conclusions.

The endeavour to address several different support modalities and point out strengths and weaknesses in a consolidated analysis has been fulfilled. Previous evaluations and reviews have addressed only selected issues (usually one support modality at a time), and although some important support forms are not included in the evaluation (e.g. core funding to the CGIAR system and other international research institutions), the comprehensiveness of the evaluation makes it stand out.

The representativeness of the evaluation for all Danish support to development research is difficult to assess. It may be argued that the thematic focus on agriculture and natural resource management may have led to conclusions, which had been slightly different, had the support to the human health area been selected instead. While this may be true for the assessment of the Building Stronger Universities programme and minor studies, the Ministry does not have reason to believe that a different thematic focus would have changed conclusions regarding North-driven and South-driven FFU research grant projects.

While thorough investigations have been made and the evaluation draws on fieldwork in two countries with a substantial amount of Danish-funded research activities, the empirical basis for conclusions regarding the Building Stronger Universities programme and minor studies may not be sufficient to sustain a description of the former as a failure and the latter as a success. Furthermore, the evaluation does not sufficiently consider that the Building Stronger Universities programme is not a traditional development cooperation programme designed by Danida but a special arrangement established at the initiative of Danish Universities, which has had a high degree of ownership and has co-funded by 1:1 all funds directed to Danish institutions.

It would have been useful if the evaluation had been able to depict main international trends concerning support to development research and to place the support provided by Danida in a larger picture. Since many of the research fields, institutions, and even individual researchers supported by Denmark receive assistance also from many other development partners, it would have been interesting to see an analysis of whether Danida follows a mainstream path among like-minded donors, is lagging behind others in terms of resources and innovativeness, or is pioneering new approaches.

The evaluation touches on some of the underlying dilemmas and the choices which an agency as Danida must make when deciding on what kind of support to provide. Thus, it highlights a difference of the agendas of, on the one hand, Danish researchers who tend to focus on basic research and publications, and, on the other hand, researchers based in partner institutions who are more responsive to national priorities and tend to prefer more applied-oriented research. Many other dilemmas could have been presented and discussed, including the interest of Danida in linking development research closely to Danish development

cooperation versus the interest of governments in priority countries of drawing on research for many other purposes such as the development of sectors, where Danida is not present.

Despite these limitations, it is the assessment of MFA that the evaluation offers a systematic and comprehensive examination of a substantial share of the Danish support to development research and thereby represents a valuable contribution to the on-going preparation of a strategy for the future support.

Specific comments:

Recommendation 1. MFA agrees that the new strategy for support to development research should envision a gradual shift of support modalities so emphasis in the future will be on activities driven by Southern partners. The Ministry is more sceptical towards the suggestion to adopt the 'integrated agricultural research for development' or 'agricultural innovation systems approach' and the implicit suggestion to do away with all other support forms. The idea of working with a more holistic and participatory research paradigm driven by Southern priorities is fine. It is the expectation that more south-driven research will over time lead to improved linkages between research and national stakeholders in need of research results. However, the suggestion to take the point of departure in "broad-based stakeholder grouping that considers issues in a wide context (value chain) and then utilises those best placed to develop and implement different elements to provide a combined solution" is not very specific and seems to require a very different set-up of the management of the support. Thus, it would appear to require close involvement of the embassies in identifying the relevant stakeholder groupings and facilitating the link between research and development activities through assistance to the identification of 'those best placed' to provide the support. This kind of close involvement is presently not an option for the majority of Danish embassies.

Recommendation 2. MFA agrees with the recommendation to engage in support to strengthening national institutional frameworks capacities. Support to capacity development at national level is a relevant supplement to capacity development at institutional and individual level. It is a very demanding endeavour, however, and in the new strategy, ambitions must be balanced against resources available. Most likely the first step will be to embark upon this kind of support only in one country with extensive and long-established Danish support within the area of development research. Denmark could provide support to e.g. the development of a national research strategy and the establishment of national peer review mechanisms, and based on experience from a test case, options for moving further along this path could be considered.

Recommendation 3. A number of Danish embassies are already actively involved in the implementation of Danish-supported research activities, and MFA agrees that it would strengthen the support if the involvement could be further extended. Substantially increased involvement, however, would be dependant upon a reduction of the total number of countries, where support to development research is provided.

- Close involvement by Danish embassies in coordination, follow-up, contact to national research institutions and to other development partners would require a set-up similar to the model applied by Sweden and Norway where research support is concentrated in a limited number of countries, and dedicated staff in the embassies (research attachés) are managing the support. It may be possible to increase the

involvement of a few selected embassies, but visions cannot be developed without considering the resource situation.

- MFA agrees that annual circulation to the embassies of 20-line summaries abstracted from FFU progress and completion reports and from BSU annual reports is a good idea. DFC will be tasked with the follow-up on this recommendation.
- MFA agrees with the need for more systematic briefing of embassies on planned country visits by researchers involved in FFU and BSU activities and will follow up on this.
- MFA agrees with the recommendation to have an annual in-country research event with participation of representatives from FFU projects and BSU activities, national government institutions, the embassy, and other stakeholders. This already takes place in Tanzania, and it is envisaged that other countries with south-driven research cooperation will have similar arrangements.

Recommendation 4. MFA appreciates the clear recommendation by the evaluation to strengthen the results framework for the support to development research and has decided to apply an LFA in the development of the new strategy

Recommendation 5. MFA agrees with the recommendation to use LFA and Results-Based Management (RBM) in a more systematic way, where this is practically possible, and will particularly focus on the development of better indicators. Core support to selected institutions will be an exception but in these cases, institutions will be urged to develop their own results framework, if this does not already exist.

Recommendation 6. MFA agrees that a more systematic use of LFA and RBM requires various initiatives to institutionalise the approach.

- It will be attempted to include training in LFA and development of indicators in the in-country training workshops in financial management offered by DFC in countries with south-driven research cooperation programmes.
- DFC's guidelines will be amended to include clear definitions and instructions on what constitutes an objective, output, outcome and indicator.
- The formats for annual reports and project completion reports will be revised to reflect the increased focus on clear results and indicators. It will not be realistic to require baselines undertaken at project start.

Recommendation 7. While it is acknowledged that the application of change management principles are important for ensuring a positive outcome of new strategies, funding instruments, tools and guidelines, the expectation that it will possible to ensure “well-resourced integrated workshops, documentation, capacity strengthening and technical support” may not be realistic. MFA will consider the recommendation and provide the support possible.

Recommendation 8. MFA agrees with the principle that development research funds should be provided directly to organisations in parallel with developing the appropriate institutional capacity to manage them. Provision of core support to international and regional research institutions is already among the modalities used, and with the changes currently ongoing in the Building Stronger Universities programme (ref. recommendation 9), the anchorage of the

support in partner institutions will be further strengthened. MFA, however, does not agree that increasing institutional support should imply that support to research cooperation projects and to individuals (through financing of Ph.D. studies) should be reduced. Direct research cooperation between researchers in partner countries and Danish researchers is a valuable modality which is much-appreciated by the researchers involved, their institutions, and national governments in priority countries. Institutional capacity support without 'research content' in the form of production of new knowledge is often referred to as support to the establishment of 'empty shells'. MFA agrees that resources for South-driven FFU projects should continue and be increased by reducing North-driven projects, and this will be reflected in the new strategy.

Recommendation 9. The BSU programme is currently under revision, and a significant simplification of its governance structures is among the changes foreseen. In the next phase of the programme, it will be driven by partners in the south, and it is expected that the platforms will be phased out. Thereby the extensive coordination activities, especially in Denmark, will be replaced by a much leaner set-up.

Recommendation 10. The recommendation to undertake a comprehensive, independent, technical review of the entire BSU initiative has been overtaken by events, as the programme is currently under reformulation after MFA management has decided that the programme should not be continued in its current form.

- MFA does not agree that the BSU initiative should be technically under FFU, as the key competence of FFU is to provide high-quality technical assessments of research applications, whereas BSU concerns institutional capacity support. DFC will be further involved in the administrative aspects of BSU.
- MFA agrees with the recommendation to concentrate support on fewer Southern partner institutions and have already decided to reduce the number of partner institutions and countries involved in the programme. Among the institutions where support will be phased out are several larger universities which already receive significant external funding, whereas most of the smaller, under-resourced universities remain in the programme.
- MFA agrees that options for improving incentives and ownership of BSU should be carefully considered, and initial steps have already been taken to address the issues. Thus, the decision to change the organisational set-up of the programme so it becomes south-driven is expected to increase the ownership by Southern partner institutions. The decision not to request counterpart funding from participating Danish universities in the second phase of the programme is expected to increase the incentives for Danish researchers to participate.