Annex B: Methodology

Methodology – core building blocks

This section describes the main tools that the evaluation team used as part of the desk review process.

Policy and Strategy Analysis: The team analysed a number of Danida policy and strategy documents to assess the extent to which they guide Danida's humanitarian decision making and help to reconcile humanitarian and development objectives in the case study contexts. The team also analysed the Humanitarian Strategy against the 23 GHD Principles in order to help address EQ 6. Evidence from these documents was gathered in the evidence assessment framework against the relevant indicators and sub-questions.

International Humanitarian Context Analysis: To address the first evaluation question related to relevance of the Strategy, the team conducted an analysis of the global context in which Danish humanitarian assistance is provided. This served the additional purpose of identifying key challenges that have emerged since the Strategy was launched in 2009 so that the revised Strategy can take these into account. By serving as a literature review and background paper, the Context Analysis will make a direct contribution to the Strategy revision process (see Annex D).

The analysis focused on the topics that were raised during the stakeholder workshop in the inception phase as well as other issues relevant for the Strategy. They include:

- trends in the number of crisis-affected people and in humanitarian aid flows
- the growing focus on resilience
- the post-2015 agenda
- the emergence of new humanitarian actors
- humanitarian coordination
- humanitarian leadership and the Transformative Agenda
- humanitarian principles, access and protection
- urbanisation
- technological advancements

Portfolio analysis: The team analysed Danida's humanitarian portfolio to gain an understanding of how Danida has made budget allocations, how these have changed over the evaluation period, and the extent to which the Strategy has guided budget allocation decisions. The team examined the humanitarian portfolio in terms of the key characteristics of the interventions (strategic priority, geographic focus, scale, timing, channel of funding/partner) as well as aims and objectives, covering not only activities that are major in terms of their monetary value ('following the money'), but also including specific sectors and/or issues important to humanitarian assistance which may have been given lesser attention because donors find them difficult to engage with and/or there is a lack of appropriate funding instruments to address them. The portfolio analysis report is included in Annex E of this report.

Results tracking: Another key element of the document review process, particularly for addressing EQ 4, was an assessment of the adequacy and quality of results documentation and monitoring by partners. The team reviewed annual reports from Denmark's NGO and international organisation partners, relevant evaluation reports, humanitarian assistance reviews by the Technical Advisory Services (UFT) and partner capacity assessments of NGO partners. The team included the evidence gathered in the evidence assessment framework against relevant indicators and sub-questions.

Comparative partner analysis: The team undertook a comparative analysis of all 14 of Danida's strategic humanitarian partners. The purpose of the analysis was to examine the effectiveness of the partnership approach in delivering against the priorities in the Humanitarian Strategy. The team developed a matrix with the priorities under the strategic directions of vulnerability, climate change and natural hazards, protecting conflict-affected populations and a focus on results, innovation and communications. It asked each partner to indicate the priorities that their programmes address. Annex F presents the outcome of this exercise. This highlighted which of the priorities receive greater emphasis and formed the basis for more detailed discussions during the stakeholder consultations. This then fed into the evidence assessment framework and helped the team to address EQ 1 and 3.

Online survey: At the end of the desk review, the team developed an online survey in both English and French with the aim of filling gaps in the data. The survey targeted staff members from partner organisations in field locations not covered by the case studies. This was a relatively quick and useful way to address evidence gaps as it did not require separate interviews and enabled the team to collect data from a wide group that it was not possible to consult using other methods. It also enabled the team to collect information from those not based at headquarters level or in the case study countries and compare findings with those from the case studies. Topics for the survey included flexibility of Danida funding to adapt programmes to changing needs, the extent to which gender and vulnerability analysis tools are used by partners, and the added value of Danida's funding. The analysis of the survey results contributed to the evidence assessment framework. The survey questions are included in Annex G.

Evaluation phases

Inception phase (May-June 2014)

Research for the evaluation began in May 2014 with an inception phase, during which the team undertook a review of documents and interviews with key stakeholders. The process included: a meeting with the ERG to obtain feedback on and input into the evaluation scope and process; face-to-face interviews with staff from EVAL, the humanitarian team and UFT; group meetings with Danida's eight NGO framework partners and one non-framework agreement Danish NGO that received humanitarian funding from Danida; telephone interviews with two international organisation partners; and a brief review of the documents made available to the evaluation team in order to identify what was available and where there were gaps.

In addition, the evaluation team held a stakeholder workshop in Copenhagen on 23 May 2014 with Danida staff members and strategic partners. This was an opportunity to present an overview of the evaluation and consult stakeholders on three questions: examples of success by Danida and its partners in achieving the Strategy's objectives; the comparative advantage of Danida and its partners in trying to achieve the Strategy's objectives; and key developments in the humanitarian context that could affect how Danida and its partners achieve the objectives. The inception report presented a summary of the discussion.

The workshop was also an opportunity to explore the possibility of reconstructing a theory of change behind the Strategy. The team undertook participatory consultations with Danida staff and focused on the theory of change underlying three priority areas of Strategy implementation: linking relief and development; Danida's partnership approach; and Danida's focus on selected protracted crises. However, as discussed in Section 2.1 of the synthesis report, it was evident from these discussions that there was no single underlying rationale behind the Strategy, and therefore it would not be possible to continue with a theory-based approach.

The findings from the workshop, consultations and review of documents enabled the team to finalise the evaluation approach and methodology and approach, and to submit an inception report in June 2014.

Desk review and field study phases (July-September 2014)

The desk review began with further review of Danida and partner documentation, and interviews with Danida's NGO and international organisation partners at headquarters level. Alongside this, the team examined the internal and external context for the Strategy, through a policy and strategy analysis and an analysis of the international humanitarian context. It examined how the Strategy's priorities have been translated into funding decisions through the portfolio analysis while the results tracking identified what partners achieved with the funding and how well they report on results. The comparative partner analysis complemented the portfolio analysis and results tracking. In addition, the team used the web survey to collect data to compare findings from the case studies with those from non-case study countries.

The evaluation team then divided and conducted two field visits in succession, the first in Lebanon and Jordan to cover the Syria crisis from 24 August to 5 September, followed by a second in South Sudan from 22 September to 1 October. Danida selected the case studies on the basis that both crises are currently among the top five recipients of its humanitarian funding. In addition, these crises are likely to continue receiving humanitarian funding so using them as case studies can provide useful learning for Danida. By focusing on situations receiving a high level of funding, the evaluation team was able to 'follow the money' and cover a representative sample of Danida-funded activities in a relatively short period.

Other criteria for case study selection included access and security, and whether Danida had already reviewed the case study countries. Of the other three countries that make up the top five recipients, Somalia was ruled out due to a recent review conducted there, and Pakistan was excluded due to the challenge of access. It was, however, decided to retain Afghanistan as a case study in spite of the challenges of access and high staff turnover, but in the form of a desk study based on document review and limited interviews. Since Denmark has engaged in Afghanistan through different instruments there were likely to be lessons for EQ 5 on linking relief and development. The team undertook a document review and interviews for the Afghanistan desk study alongside the field visits for the other two case studies.

Before travelling to the case study countries, the team reviewed available project documents and reports from Danida partners and combined this with consultations with Danida's partners to determine the selection of project sites for field visits. Criteria for the selection of project sites included partner coverage (selecting sites where evaluators can see the work of several partners), the range of activities financed by Danida, opportunities to review innovative programmes, and opportunities for assessing links to development activities. In both case studies, the team visited a representative range of sites to the extent possible and consulted with aid recipients through focus group discussions.

At the end of each country visit, the team presented preliminary findings to relevant stakeholders as part of the evaluation's participatory and inclusive approach, thus enabling the team to validate its findings and obtain feedback on potential recommendations so that they are practical and more likely to be implemented. The team shared debriefing notes from these stakeholder workshops with Danida.

Analysis and reporting phase (October 2014-February 2015)

On return from the field visits, the team conducted a number of Skype meetings to discuss emerging findings and conclusions and establish data gaps requiring additional document review and stakeholder consultations.

As part of the continuing participatory nature of the evaluation, the team leader visited Copenhagen in October to meet with EVAL and the humanitarian team to present an overview of the findings and informally discuss recommendations. Feedback was taken into account and informed the preparation of draft reports. A second stakeholder workshop was held in late November to present the findings from

the draft synthesis report. A third stakeholder workshop is planned for early 2016 at the end of the follow-up phase of the evaluation.

Follow-up and update phase (planned for January-February 2016)

An additional data collection phase is planned for January-February 2016 in order to follow up on any changes to the management of humanitarian assistance and whether recommendations from this phase have been implemented. This is an innovative approach that will enable Danida to use initial findings from the evaluation to start addressing any challenges highlighted, rather than waiting until the end of the Strategy implementation period.

The team will base the follow-up report and stakeholder workshop on evidence gathered through a review of additional documents and a limited number of interviews with key stakeholders. The document review will examine reports on activities in 2014 to see whether recommendations relating to results reporting, gender and vulnerability, and other key issues have been implemented or not. Similarly, the interviews will focus on the extent to which Danida and its partners have been able to implement the evaluation's recommendations and what challenges they have encountered. This will be in keeping with the evaluation's focus on lesson learning. This will also contribute to Danida's aim, as stated in the ToR, to maintain pressure to implement recommendations and improve performance.

The team will use the stakeholder workshop at the end of the follow-up phase to identify, in a participatory way, the key lessons and issues that Danida should address in the revised Strategy. This should help Danida to use the evaluation's findings in the revision of the Strategy or the formulation of a new one.