

Evaluation of Danish Support to Civil Society: Phase II

Learning Synthesis I: Danish CSOs and their Pathways to Change



September 2015

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	3
1.1	How the Civil Society Policy envisages change	3
1.2	“A diverse civil society”: Danish Frameworks CSOs	4
2	Creating a results framework.....	7
2.1	How do we aim to achieve change?	7
2.2	What kinds of change do we aim to achieve?	11
2.3	How will we demonstrate the changes we have helped to achieve?.....	13
3	How do we contribute to change?.....	16
3.1	Partnership	16
3.2	Capacity Development	20
3.3	Advocacy	23
3.4	Fragility	25
4	How do we demonstrate our success?	28

List of Abbreviations

AAI	ActionAid International
CBO	Community-Based Organisations
CSOs	Civil Society Organisation
DANIDA	Danish International Development Assistance
HCP	Humanitarian, Civil Society and Personnel Department
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
HPA	Humanitarian Partnership Agreement
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
RAM	Resource Allocation Model
SCI	Save the Children the Children International
ToR	Terms of Reference

1 Introduction

1.1 How the Civil Society Policy envisages change

This synthesis paper aims to stimulate learning about how Danish Framework CSOs implement, monitor and report on the key elements or ‘change pathways’ of the Danish Civil Society Policy 2014. The Policy sets out four goals for civil society support:

- Contribute to a strong, vocal, independent civil society;
- Promote a vibrant, inclusive, and open debate;
- Promote the rights to assembly, association and an enabling environment that promotes civil society participation in decision-making;
- Promote a representative, accountable, and locally-based civil society.

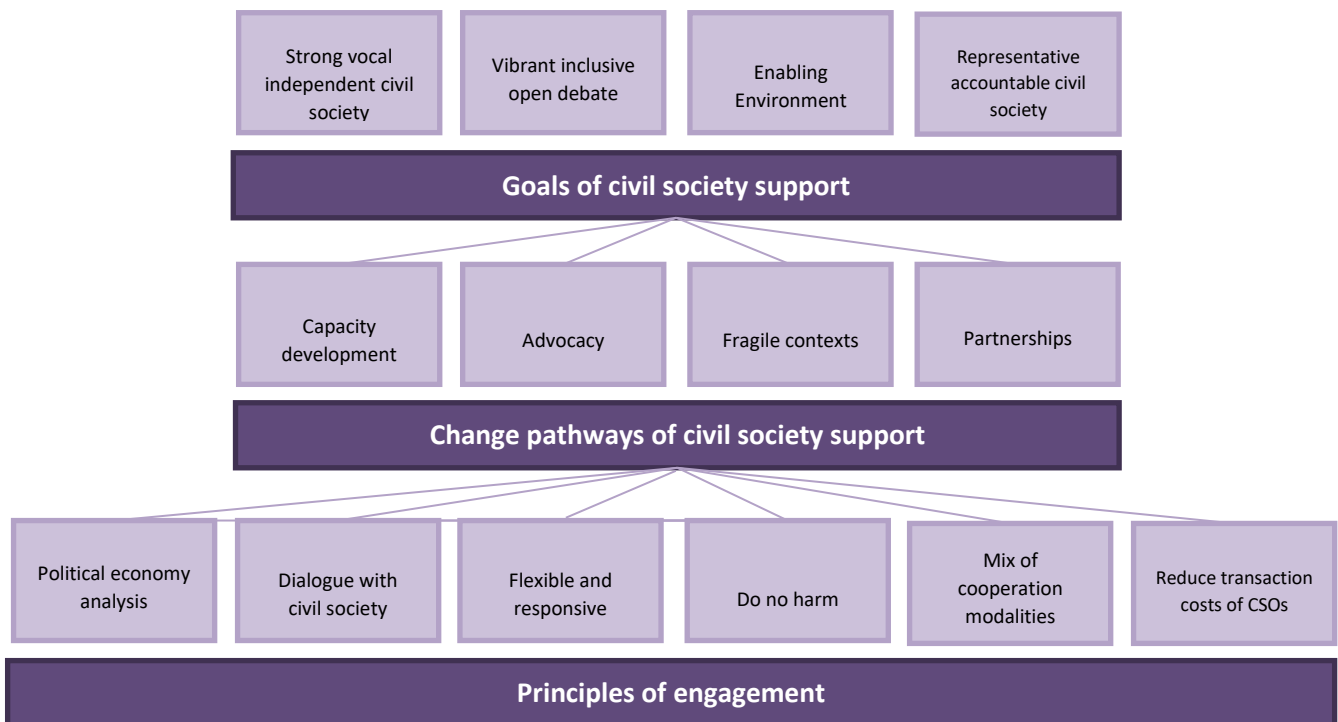
The Policy also sets out the four main ‘elements’¹ or building blocks of Danish civil society support – partnership, capacity development, advocacy and fragile contexts. These ‘building blocks’ can be seen as the ‘change pathways’ that contribute to the achievement of the Civil Society Policy goals. These principles, goals and ‘change pathways’, together with six principles of engagement that should underpin all Danish support to civil society, form an implicit intervention logic of how civil society support contributes to the Civil Society Policy goals.

It should be noted that fragile contexts has a different status than the other change pathways but is retained as a focus of learning since it presents special challenges for civil society support.

This synthesis report will focus on how different CSOs are tackling the challenge of tracking and documenting results in relation to these pathways. The intention is to facilitate discussion and learning about how to better document and demonstrate the effectiveness of support to civil society in Denmark and the global South as an integral element of Danish development cooperation.

¹ See Section 5 of Civil Society Policy on “Main elements of Danish support to civil society actors”

Diagram 1: Civil society support change pathways and goals



1.2 “A diverse civil society”: Danish Frameworks CSOs

In 2013 it was decided to fuse the programme and framework funding schemes and to increase the number of Danish CSOs in receipt of a framework agreement from 6 to 17 over a three year period. This increase has led to a diverse group of framework CSOs that range widely in terms of financial size, geographical range, scope of mission and organisational capacity. Some CSOs are well-established members of global con/federations while others are rapidly evolving from project to programme to strategic funding. This diversity in size, mandate and capacity has implications for monitoring and reporting.

Few framework CSOs now reflect the traditional model of a simple, bilateral partnership between a Danish CSO and its Southern partners. For example, seven of the 17 framework CSOs are affiliated to global con/federations, and an eighth is in the process of affiliating. Another belongs to a global alliance of Christian development CSOs. The ‘global’ nature of these CSOs has a number of implications with regard to how their support to Southern civil society is or can be monitored and reported on.

Demonstrating the Danish ‘footprint’

The immediate challenge is how a Danish CSO can reasonably report its contribution to results achieved by the con/federation. The primary relationship of a global CSO in a developing country is with a national affiliate or office of the con/federation that implements programmes funded from a variety of sources. This introduces another link in the results chain, which can

make it more difficult to assess a plausible contribution of the Danish CSOs to the reported results in-country.

Another challenge is that ‘global’ Danish CSOs often have to rely on the global M&E system of the confederation to monitor and report on programme achievements. This can have some advantages. Some global CSOs have or are developing sophisticated M&E systems and experimenting with different kinds of data gathering tools and methodologies. However, such systems may or may not be immediately adaptable to Danida’s reporting requirements.

One way in which these challenges are addressed is by maintaining a special relationship with a limited number of countries within the con/federation. Most global Danish CSOs retain programme level agreements with specific countries which they fund directly, and through which they can negotiate and agree the specific monitoring and reporting requirements of Danida. This helps to provide a clearer ‘audit trail’ by which to assess the contribution of Danish support to Southern civil society, although funds are not necessarily earmarked to specific programmes.

It is noticeable that global Danish CSOs often play a lead role as ‘first movers’ or ‘go to organisation’ within their con/federations in line with their distinctive programming competences. For example, ActionAid Denmark has a lead responsibility within the con/federation on governance, CARE Denmark on climate change adaption and right to food, Save the Children Denmark on Investment in Children, psycho-social support and others; and the Danish Red Cross leads on psycho-social issues in IFRC. Danish CSOs have frequently been influential in driving forward the con/federation’s approach within these areas of expertise. In addition, it is interesting to note that both Danish Red Cross and Save the Children Denmark used the Danida Innovation in Partnership Fund to spearhead change within their confederations.

Danish Red Cross – innovating for change in the IFRC

The Danish Red Cross, with the support of the Danida Innovation in Partnership Fund, is working with some national partners to promote a HRBA within the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). This is seen as innovative within the IFRC movement as there has been a reluctance to compromise the neutrality of the movement and to potentially bring national societies into overtly criticising the powers that be in the country.

Of particular interest is the role some Danish CSOs have played in championing the change pathways in their confederations. Save the Children Denmark, for example, has chosen to spearhead “partnership with civil society” as a way of working in SCI. ActionAid Denmark is the acknowledged centre of expertise on capacity development within AAI. Danish

CSOs, however, seem to have less comparative advantage on advocacy in relation to other affiliates. This preeminent and influential role of Danish CSOs within huge global CSOs has been recognised in a number of Danida reviews. This raises the issue of whether/how this ‘scaling up’ influence can be included in results frameworks.

Danish CSO diversity: learning questions

How can the Danish contribution best be monitored within global CSOs?

Should the impact of 'scaling up' in a global con/federation be included in results frameworks?

How should we address the unequal M&E capacity within framework CSOs?

2 Creating a results framework

Danish CSO strategies reveal a variety of approaches to developing a framework to enable them to monitor and report on their programme achievements. A results framework should be appropriate to the diverse missions of Danish CSOs. Nonetheless, an effective framework needs to address three questions:

- What is our vision of success and how do we aim to achieve change?
- What kinds of change do we aim to achieve?
- How will we know when we have achieved the changes and communicate them to others?

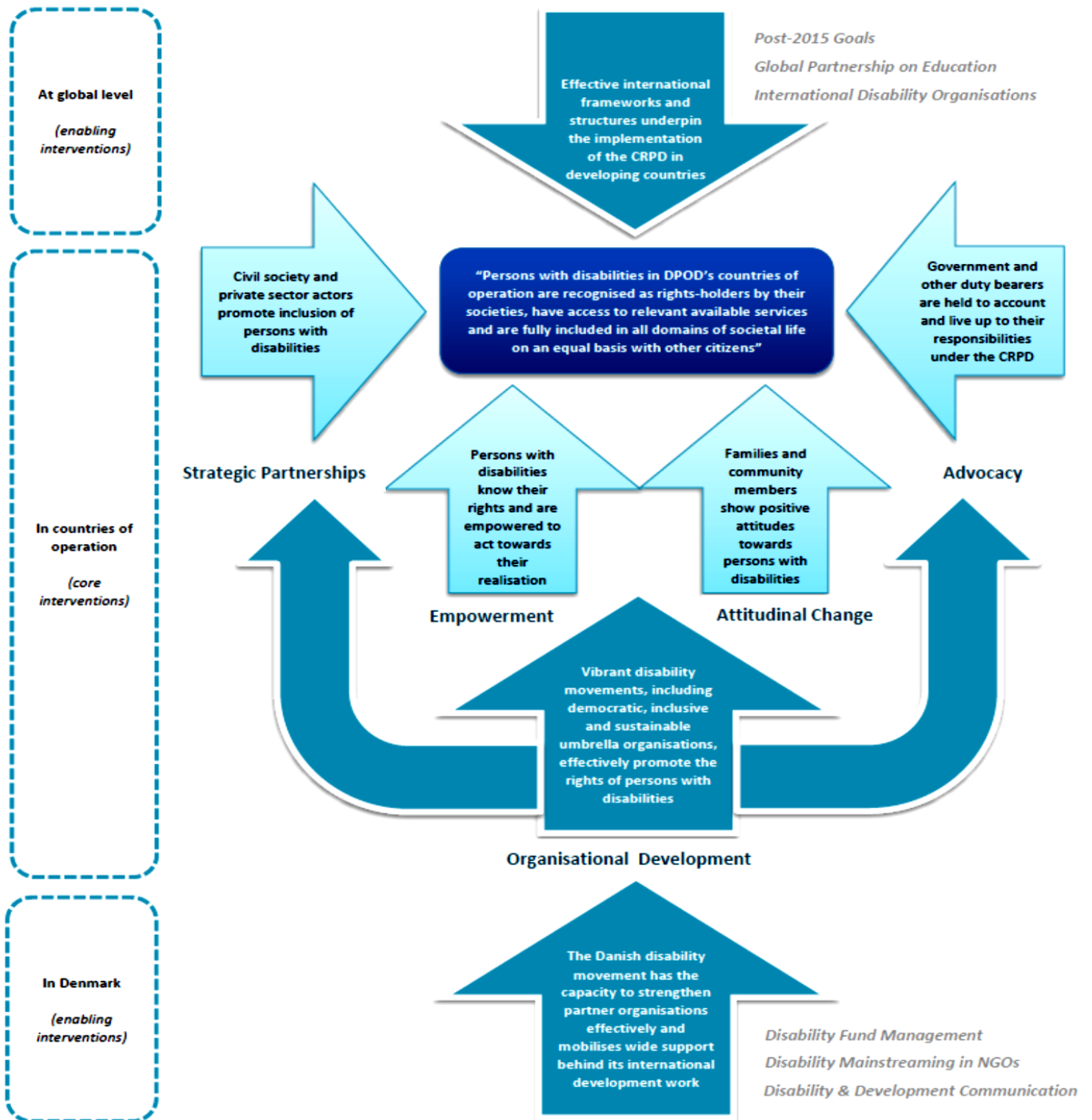
2.1 How do we aim to achieve change?

Many CSOs today set out how they plan to contribute to change in the world by developing a theory of change. For example, all Danish CSOs subscribe to a HRBA approach which lends itself to a rudimentary theory of change. This is based on the concept that concerned citizens can bring about lasting change by holding institutions to account. Most theories of change in Danish CSO strategy documents are a form of expression of this simple assumption.

How to use a theory of change?

Theories of change can be applied at different levels e.g. global, national or programmatic. The DPOD theory of change, for example, describes its levels of intervention (global, country and Denmark), its intervention approaches (empowerment, advocacy etc) and the generic outputs/outcomes they contribute to.

Diagram 2: The DPOD theory of change

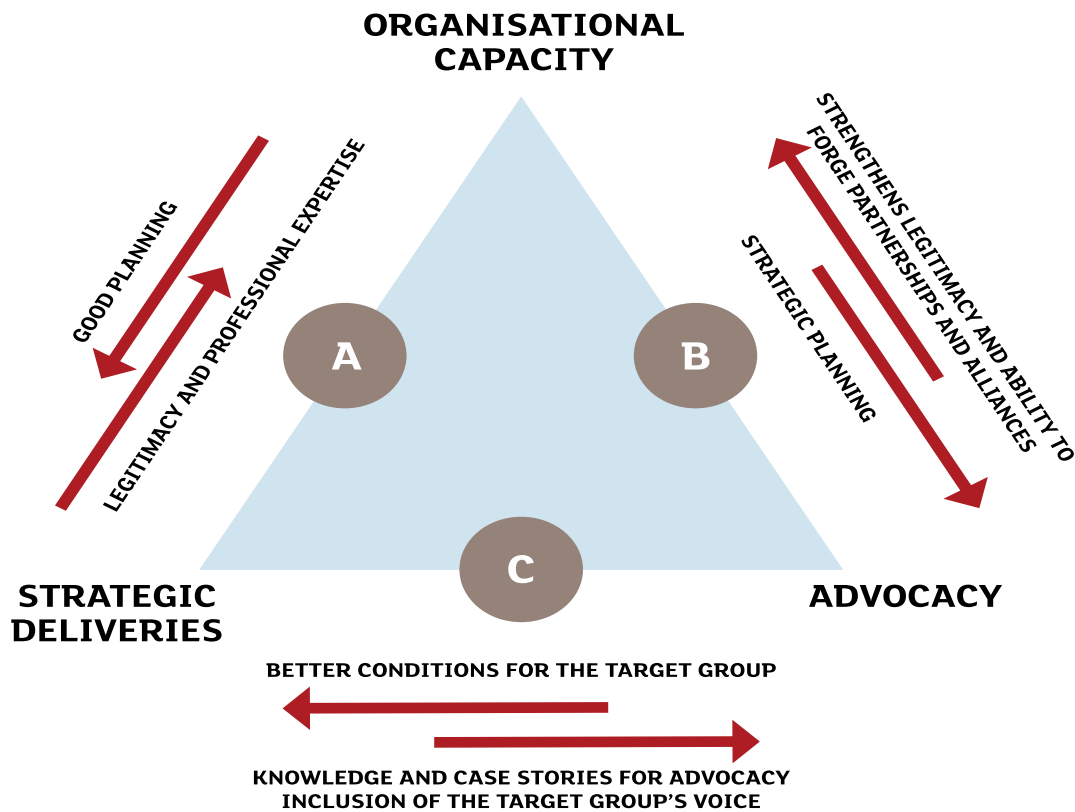


Other CSOs use a simpler schematic to communicate how change will be achieved. A number of CSOs refer to or include variations on the "Change Triangle"² to communicate a vision of

²This was developed by Thematic Forum in 2007 and into the finalisation of Danida's Civil Society Strategy in 2008. PATC

integrated programming that includes capacity development, thematic expertise and advocacy. This is helpful as an internal communications device but is not used operationally as a framework to test, review and report on how the organisation is achieving change.

Diagram 3: The Development Triangle



The relevance of theories of change has been the focus of recent discussions among CSOs in Denmark³ and beyond. A recent ODI publication questions whether they are becoming increasingly top down exercises responding to donor requirements.⁴ Some of the issues highlighted in recent Danish discussions include the importance of a participatory approach and the need to review the theory of change and its assumptions on a regular basis so that our thinking about how we intend to achieve change remains relevant to the context.

‘We need to be more adaptive, iterative, and non-linear in the way we think so that we can be more coherent, nimble and effective in the way we act.’

CARE Theory of Change Guidance

The question of what level a theory of change is most relevant and useful is of particular interest. In general a theory of change is likely to be more useful the closer it is to the level of operations. Organisational theories of change, for example, tend to be at a level of generalisation that is

Position Paper

³ No 3, The Development Triangle.

⁴ Valters, C. (2015) Theories of Change: Time for a radical approach to learning in Development. ODI. See also Valters, C. Blogpost December 10, 2014 Can Theories of Change Help us Do Development Differently.

unlikely to be appropriate in all contexts. This represents a challenge for CSOs working on multiple themes in diverse contexts at a global level.

Developing a relevant global theory of change is easier if the CSO is working on a single issue in a small number of countries. The results framework of DPOD, for example, is closely aligned with its theory of change. The diagram below illustrates how it includes objectives at a country level (as one of their three levels of intervention) and that relate to the different intervention pathways identified in their theory of change (organisational development to achieve a more inclusive and democratic disability movement and advocacy to influence policies on CPRD).

Diagram 4: A DPOD objective and set of indicators

Long-term goal:		
<i>“Persons with disabilities in DPOD’s countries of operation are recognised as rights-holders by their societies, have access to relevant available services and are fully included in all domains of societal life on an equal basis with other citizens.”</i>		
Level of intervention	Specific Objectives 2014-18	Selected Indicators
In countries of operation “Vibrant disability movements, including democratic, inclusive and sustainable umbrella organisations, effectively promote the rights of persons with disabilities”	Ghana: 2.7) By 2018, GFD has promoted inclusion and participation of persons with disability at local and national levels, with a focus on enhancing economic possibilities and implementation of the existing policies, laws and the CRPD. 2.8) By 2018, GFD have developed and strengthened its position as disability umbrella organisation in Ghana at all levels but with particular emphasis on its district structures.	2.7.1) GFD has developed an employment programme for persons with disabilities and rolled this out effectively. 2.7.2) Research and policy analysis on disability issues is conducted and used in evidence-based advocacy. 2.8.1) GFD’s constitution, governance policies and organisational identity are revised and has facilitated increased membership at national level, strengthened local branches and expanded participation in local networks.

In contrast, Oxfam GB - one of the CSO pioneers in the use of theory of change – does not have an organisational theory of change. It develops a country strategy through discussions on power relationships and how change happens, and then develops theories of change at programme level in consultation with stakeholders.

The value of a theory of change is not to treat them as rigid frameworks but to learn from the interaction of different elements e.g. in the DPOD example, the relationship between attitudinal change, empowerment and advocacy in different contexts or the interplay between local and international change.

‘More useful than [thinking of TOC’s] as a ‘roadmap’ is the idea of a ‘compass for helping us find our way through the fog of complex system, discovering a path as we go along’

D. Green, 2015⁵

What do we aim to achieve? Learning questions:

How useful are theories of change in clarifying our assumptions about how we aim to achieve change?

What have Danish CSOs learned about their use at organisational and other levels?

2.2 What kinds of change do we aim to achieve?

A theory of change or a results framework begins with the desired long-term changes that the organisation aims to contribute to. Danish CSO framework documents normally include a long-term goal and a number of objectives (of varying levels of specificity) for their 2014-18 strategies. These are often accompanied by indicators or targets linked to each objective. These are not fully developed logframes, as Danida does not require them. This is in keeping with recommendations that have come out of the practice of other donors.⁶

Strengthening partnerships or end results?

A key question is at what level to set the strategy objectives. Should CSOs focus their objectives on what they do, much of which involves supporting or developing the capacity of southern partners? Or should they focus on the end results achieved by partners? At least one Danida thematic review recommended that the CSO should focus more explicitly on the former to demonstrate its ‘strategic value’ to Southern partnerships. In practice, most strategy documents include both kinds of objectives.

This highlights how developing a results framework for a ‘single issue’ CSO, working in a limited number of countries and often with one lead partner in-country, can be less complex than a CSO with a broader mission. DPOD, in the example given above, it is able to frame both its objectives and indicators at the level of its relationship with its lead partner.

Domains of change

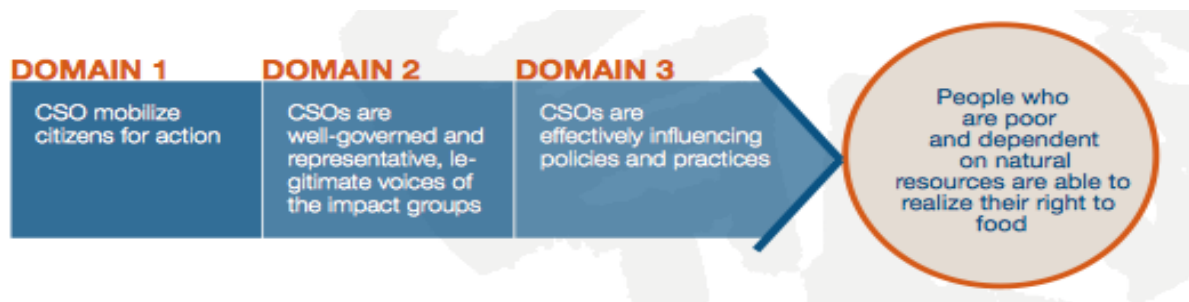
Some CSOs introduce domains of change in their theories of change to clarify what kinds of changes will contribute to longer-term objectives. These domains of change are frequently linked e.g. by Danmission and CARE Denmark, to the role of CSOs as facilitators of a rights based

⁵ Quoted in Valters, C. (2015) Theories of Change: Time for a radical approach to learning in Development. ODI p. 12.

⁶ See Independent Commission on Aid Effectiveness (2013) DFID support for CSOs through programme partnership agreements, p. 19

approach. CARE Denmark illustrates how this works in practice. CARE Denmark has identified three domains of change in relation to its work with civil society (see Diagram 5).

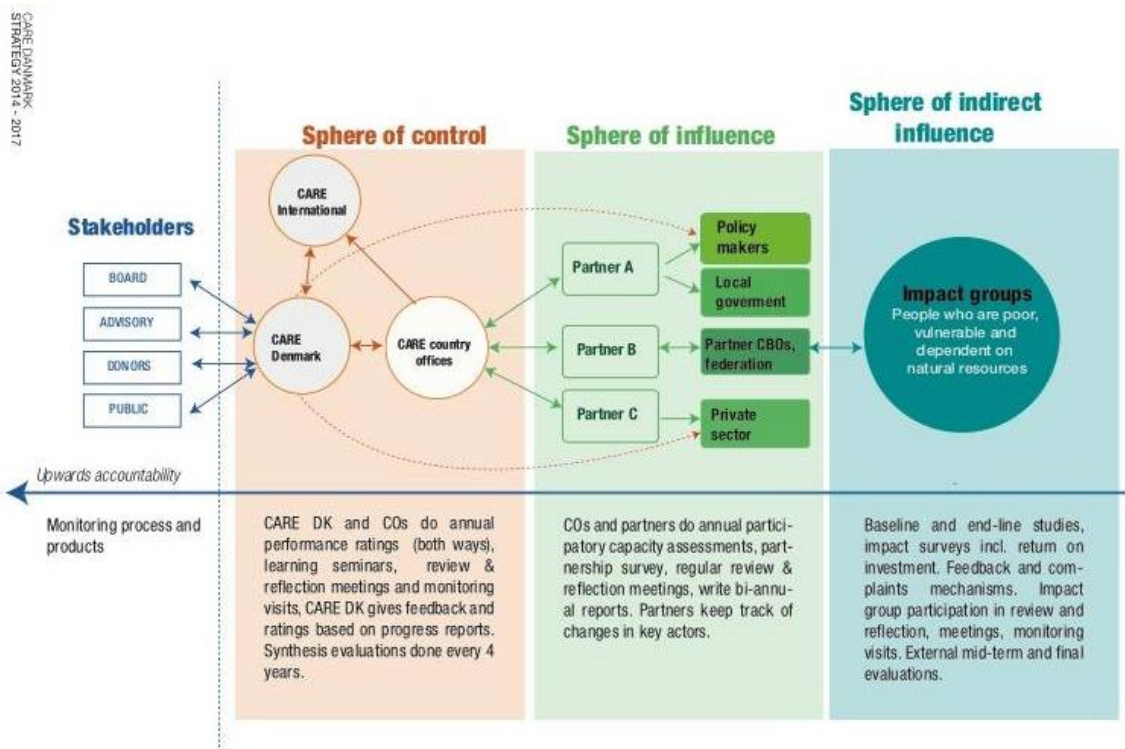
Diagram 5: CARE Denmark domains of change



Within each domain it then has identified different types of evidence that it will look for to demonstrate the change e.g. an indicator for Domain 2 above is “Evidence that accountability mechanisms enable solicited and unsolicited feedback and complaints from constituencies”.

In thinking about the results it can deliver CARE Denmark distinguishes between its ‘sphere of control’ which includes its relationship with CARE International and CARE country offices; its sphere of influence i.e. its work with partners, and its ‘sphere of indirect influence i.e. the outcomes of partners’ work.

Diagram 6: CARE spheres of influence and control



This helps to differentiate between the changes directly within its control e.g. within CARE International); those it can influence e.g. through the work with partners; and the end result which is the impact on client groups. The use of ‘spheres’ is illustrated in their thematic area Access and Right to Land.

Diagram 7: CARE Access and Right to Land theme

CARE <i>(sphere of control)</i>	PARTNERS <i>(sphere of influence)</i>	IMPACT GROUPS <i>(sphere of indirect influence)</i>
<p>By 2017, CARE have supported at least 10 partners in documenting land rights violation cases for use in advocacy</p>	<p>By 2017, at least 5 partners have demonstrated capacity in using the human rights mechanisms for political dialogue through stakeholder reporting and lobby</p> <p>By 2017, at least 5 partners have influenced land use policies, programmes and practices in favour of poor and marginalized people</p>	<p>By 2017, 5 partners have contributed to the reclaiming/ allocation of land or fair compensation for loss of land to poor and marginalized women and men</p> <p>This will contribute to the 2020 CARE International goal that 30 million women have greater access to and control over economic resources including land</p>

Some suggest CSOs that receive strategic funding should report not only the value they add to the work of their partners (sphere of influence) but also the strategic value they add within the sector or to the Danida portfolio. This might include, for example, their distinctive contribution to a global federation (sphere of control) or the value of their niche area e.g. a faith based organisation or on interfaith issues.

What kind of change do we aim to achieve: Learning questions:

How do we best focus on what we aim to achieve? By focusing on the achievements *in* our partnerships and/or the achievements *of* those partnerships?

What have we learned to date about the advantage and disadvantages of each?

2.3 How will we demonstrate the changes we have helped to achieve?

The results framework in each CSO strategy should provide the basis of annual results reporting to Danida. The results frameworks in most strategies set out longer term goals or objectives, intermediary change; the short or medium term change that contribute to these, and the means by which results will be tracked and reported on. Danida guidance requires CSOs to report their results in line with their immediate objectives and indicators. A results framework relies on its use of indicators to provide the basis for its “story of success”. Indicators are what we are going to monitor and report on as a measure of our achievement and, as such, should be measurable.

The range in quality and detail of the frameworks, however, provides a very unequal basis for learning and accountability across the sector. Good practice guidance on how to construct global results frameworks and the use of objectives and indicators might help ‘level up’ and achieve greater consistency in the quality of CSO results frameworks.

Reporting globally, respecting diversity

Perhaps the biggest challenge facing Danish CSOs currently in the reporting to Danida is how to meet the demands of global reporting while respecting the diversity of interventions, country contexts and partner systems. Danish CSOs are experimenting with a range of options:

- Use of standard indicators. Some CSOs are looking to standardise indicators across programmes. This is best suited to CSOs with unified global change goals. LO/FTF, for example, works to globally defined standards in terms of the ILO's decent work agenda and is experimenting with common indicators set around the implementation of this agenda at national level e.g. % increase in number of trade union members in partner countries from formal as well as informal economy. This emphasises end impact but may lead to challenges in identifying contribution. In other cases, DanChurchAid is using a set of predefined programme indicators (related to strategy implementation and intended effect). e.g. By 2014, more than 60% of partners in each Right to Food Programme have included strategic work on the structural causes of food insecurity, disaster risk reduction and the effect of climate change in their policies and plans and show evidence of the implementation of these policies in projects.
- Menu of indicators. Sustainable Energy, for example, has listed a number of possible specific indicators at output level e.g. # of households in the target area that have participated in Local Environmental Groups. It appears that country programmes are free to choose which of these are relevant to their context although how these will then be reported on is not clear. Data gathered on these indicators could only be aggregated if it is collected using the same definitions, timescales and quality levels.
- Broad framing indicators. This is perhaps the most common approach. Some CSOs e.g. DPOD, have identified broad themes or areas of change and then mapped specific country level objectives and indicators. This does not measure change at a programme level but provides a series of examples and illustrations under a common theme. It offers a common framework for structuring learning and reflection and potentially for evaluation.
- Ranking and rating scales. CARE Denmark has introduced a common ranking and rating scale. This will not permit aggregation but it provides a common scale that can indicate movement or change in a particular area or programme and offer a summarised indication of progress across the portfolio. It needs to be complemented by qualitative information to be meaningful.
- Dual but compatible systems. IBIS, for example, is considering a 'translation table' where partners' own indicators are cross referenced to programme or strategy indicators. This would allow country programmes to nest indicators within a global framework so as to allow for summarisation.

- Use of a shared M&E tool. Some CSOs have adopted a methodology such as outcome mapping to report on results across their programmes though this requires, for example, partners to agree to a common approach.

It is likely that global reporting will involve a mix of methods described above. What methods are appropriate for which CSOs under what circumstances is a critical area for shared learning in the sector.

Demonstrating our results: Learning questions:

How are CSOs facing the challenge of summarising global performance while respecting country and partner diversity?

How can CSOs best report on their own achievements and those of partners?

3 How do we contribute to change?

3.1 Partnership

Partnership is often seen as a core competence of Danish CSOs and features prominently in their strategies and theories of change.

Setting out partnership commitments

Most framework CSOs have Partnership Policies or strategies, some recently developed. Others are in the process of developing new policies, usually in consultation with partners themselves. Partnership policies are useful in that they provide a transparent statement of intent with regard to how the CSO intends to approach partnership. Most include, for example, a set of principles underpinning the CSO approach to partnership, a typology of CSOs partners and operational detail of the CSO's ways of working with partners.

At country level most Danish CSOs agree the division of responsibilities between themselves and their partners through Partnership Agreements or Development Plans, which are sometimes preceded by an organisational assessment of partner needs.

The 2013 thematic reviews raised a number of issues with regard to Danish CSO partnership strategies and use of partnership agreements. These include the need for more explicit attention to the added value CSOs offer partners; the need for partner risk assessments; the inclusion of exit strategies and partnership in fragile contexts.

Types of partners

Danish CSOs operationalise the concept of partnership in different ways, and have a diverse range of partners. For example:

- Global CSOs normally have only one direct national partner – for example, the national affiliate to the confederation (ActionAid Denmark) or the national society of the international federation (Danish Red Cross). Their relationship with other national CSOs is most often an indirect one.
- This is true also for 'single issue' CSOs such as DPOD, DFPA and LO/FTF who partner with similar organisations in the South.
- Many CSOs retain the concept of core or strategic partners. These are usually comparatively small in number and may tend to be stronger or more well established organisations.
- The Civil Society Policy encourages Danish CSOs to diversity partnerships and to engage with emerging civil society actors. Several strategies make reference to working with such civic groups while acknowledging that this will require new ways of working and present some challenges for monitoring and reporting.

‘The explosion of social media and social movements mean that partnerships will need to be fluid, adaptable and dynamic to respond to these opportunities. This requires innovation and greater risk taking. Partnership will take new forms.’

ActionAid Denmark framework application 2014-17.

Each type of partnership presents a different set of challenges with regard to monitoring and reporting.

Influence of Civil Society Policy on partnership

Even prior to the recent budget cuts, a number of CSOs were in the process of reducing their number of partners. The increased expectations by Danida of monitoring and reporting are reported in at least one case as having driven this process. This illustrates a possible tension between encouraging diversity of partnership and the pressure to invest in demonstrating results. The Policy is encouraging other types of progress in programing. One CSO commented that they have become more professional in their approach since becoming a framework organisation, yet recognised that this has led them to become more closely involved in developing programmes with their partners. Similarly the emphasis on HRBA is influencing the design of partner programmes which some traditional partners e.g. churches, have sometimes struggled to adopt. Thus positive features may nonetheless indicate a more ‘interventionist’ approach by Danish CSOs.

Promoting partnership in a global federation

Some thematic reviews acknowledge that Danish CSOs are affiliated to global con/federations in which the principles and practices of mutual partnership are not as embedded as a way of working as they are in the Danish CSO. Save the Children Denmark is an example of a Danish CSO seeking to champion a more committed approach to partnership within its federation.

Save the Children the Children Denmark: Spearheading partnership within SCI

Save the Children the Children Denmark is spearheading ‘Partnerships with Civil Society’ as a way of working in Save the Children the Children International (SCI). The Danish vision of partnership has not previously been shared by all members of SCI but is now being mainstreamed with the understanding that a strong and vibrant civil society is an essential part of a democratic society and that civil society can assist in advocacy and hold duty-bearers accountable for the rights of children.

Save the Children the Children Denmark has seconded specialist staff to SCI HQ and regional offices to promote partnership principles; developed a network of partnership champions and ensured partnership tools and guidelines are included in the SCI Quality Framework which SCI’s country offices are obliged to use. It has also developed with INTRAC a partnership module for inclusion in the SCI partnership management course.

Power and partnership

The concept of mutuality features strongly in most CSO Partnership Policies. The Civil Society Policy, however, goes further and encourages Danish CSOs to reappraise and ‘re-balance’ their relationships with partners. This re-balancing of Northern/ Southern CSO partnerships is taking various forms:

- Partner representation in governance. DanChurchAid partners are directly represented in its system of governance through a Partner Group (PG). Partners in each focus country select a representative to the PG which has an advisory function to the DanChurchAid Board and Senior Management. The PG is consulted on DanChurchAid strategic directions and its advice is sought on all new policies and major revisions of existing policies. It is invited every second year to attend the DanChurchAid Annual Assembly in Denmark. At a country level, CARE is setting up programme coordination committees in which partners will have majority voting rights
- Transferring budgetary responsibilities. CARE has set targets for 2017 and 2020 to increase the percentage of country budgets which is managed and implemented by partners. (In association it has set a target for staff reductions in Denmark.)
- Greater transparency and accountability. A number of Danish CSOs have taken steps to improve the transparency and accountability of their partnership relations. Both IBIS and DanChurchAid have recently participated in a Keystone Performance Survey on Partnership in which partners comment and rate the partnership relationship on a number of dimensions. IBIS plans to use the results of the survey, for example, to inform the development of its new Partnership strategy. CARE Denmark is reviewed annually by its partners through a partnership survey which will be used as a baseline for the focus on partnership within the strategy. Targets relating to the partnership survey are incorporated into CARE’s overall programme objectives. Some CARE country programmes have also developed their own survey. CARE Tanzania has experimented with a “community score board model” in which partners formulate indicators and success criteria for the partnership with CARE and rate the partnership accordingly. The examples above illustrate how the principle of ‘mutuality’ can be translated into practice and enable Danish CSO’s own performance to be assessed as a basis for dialogue with partners.

Adding value through partnership

All Danish CSOs are exploring the how they formulate the value they add to the work of Southern Partners.

‘We have to acknowledge that partnership relation will change in the coming years. We have to be more precise about our added value in the partnership and strengthen our capacity to respond to the changing dynamics of civil society.’

DCA

A few have explicit sections of frameworks summarising their added value. The elements of added value most frequently cited:

- Capacity development, especially in HRBA.
- Supporting mutual and South-South learning
- Linking partners to national, regional and international fora
- Advocacy in the North and within appropriate networks

Moving beyond statements of intent, some Danish CSOs have tested the value of the support they offer directly with Southern partners through independent processes. As we have mentioned, a key issue is how the value Danish CSOs add to their partnerships should feature in their results frameworks.

Monitoring and reporting on partnership

Most Danish CSOs have incorporated objectives that relate directly to partnership in their results frameworks. ActionAid Denmark, for example, has a strategic objective to support partner capacity to implement a HRBA. Danmission has objectives that relate to the capacity development, mutual learning and networking of partners. DanChurchAid has a section in its strategy on Partnerships for Change where it commits to specific indicators in relation to different aspects of partnership including the implementation of their partnership policy, portfolio management, ACT alliance and alignment and harmonisation. Two examples of these are given below:

	2014 Indicator	2017 Indicator
Partnership Policy Implementation	All DCA Regional Offices and national partner platforms have been introduced to the new Partnership Policy. 3 Regional Offices have in-depth introduction and training in the implementation of the policy and related guidance notes	A review of the partnership policy indicates that DCA partnerships have become more strategic – showing clear added value by both parties
Alignment and harmonisation	DCA has developed a system to assess how funding to partners is provided and how much is a) project funding b) programme funding (supported by several donors) or c) organisational/core funding	20 % of partners are receiving programme or organisational support

Even when partnership is not an explicit objective, partners feature prominently at the indicator level in broader civil society objectives. For example, IBIS indicators of civil society influence over governance include the number of partnership agreements committed to improving advocacy capacity and the number of partner platforms implementing joint advocacy. The 2018

strategy indicator for DanChurchAid's Active Citizenship policy is that 80% of partners working on active citizenship have specific advocacy plans etc.

This raises the issue of the dependency of Danish CSOs on partners own M&E systems as the basis of their results reporting. Danish CSOs acknowledge the challenge of improving the quality of results reporting while respecting the partners' own M&E systems.

The challenge is being addressed in two ways, both of which are resource intensive. The first is to invest in their own M&E capacity e.g. at country level. The second is to invest in partner capacity. Both options may be affected by recent budget cuts.

Partnership: learning questions:

How are CSOs exploring and pushing real shifts in power relations and new ways of working with southern partners

How far are CSOs managing to reach out to new types of partner?

How are CSOs monitoring & measuring the quality of partnership as an objective in its own right?

How to achieve a balance between robust reporting and respect for partner M&E systems?

3.2 Capacity Development

Capacity development is almost a universal element of Danish CSO support to Southern civil society and features prominently in their definitions of their added value. Some CSO e.g. LO/FTF and 3F, have capacity development at the heart of their mission.

A more systematic approach

However, the Danida thematic reviews in 2013 highlighted the need for Danish CSOs to adopt a more systematic approach to capacity development e.g. by adopting more explicit capacity development frameworks; and more systematic evaluation of capacity development outcomes as well as outputs and activities. The thematic review of IBIS in 2013, for example, suggested that it highlight its capacity development more explicitly to demonstrate its strategic value. IBIS is now including its capacity development with partners as special section in its 2015 Results Report although it does not feature prominently in the results framework of its strategy.

More generally, Danish CSOs are being more explicit about their role in capacity building in their results frameworks although there is room for improvement in their objectives and indicators. However, only a few offer explicit guidance on their overall approach to and understanding of capacity development. CARE Denmark has recently developed a short guide which sets out their approach. LO/FTF have what they call the 'three generation model' which details different types of capacity building support based on the maturity of the union (see below under 'Sustainability'). Others have developed guidance on specific aspects of capacity building. For example, ActionAid Denmark has a detailed "6 Step Pathway for Training Development";

DanChurchAid Aid has a partner development guideline that focuses on its approach to organisational assessment.

A demand –led approach

Most CSOs subscribe to the idea that capacity building interventions should be demand led i.e. identified by partners. This is likely to be the part of a dialogue in which Danish CSOs also promote their own capacity agenda e.g. HRBA and M&E. Many CSOs jointly conduct organisational or capacity assessments of their partners and integrate a capacity development plan into partner agreements or MOUs.

IBIS: partnership development plans

IBIS Ghana develops capacity development plans for partners based on shared organisational assessments which are incorporated into Partnership Development Plans. These are delivered in shared and individual, tailor-made trainings. Shared training events include programme and financial management as well as internal governance, gender, fundraising and strategic planning. Individual training includes training on thematic issues, support to organisational development initiatives and encouraging synergies in thematic areas or networks. IBIS also provides technical coaching and mentoring to partner through the outreach work of its Programme Facilitators.

It is often observed that capacity development within the aid sector has tended to focus on the “compliance needs” of donors e.g. project cycle and financial management. It is interesting that many Danish CSOs are beginning to incorporate into their capacity assessments a focus on other aspects of capacity such as legitimacy, downwards accountability, networking and advocacy. It will be interesting to explore the results of this going forward.

Standard assessment tools may not be adapted sufficiently to context or the type of organisation. For example, one CSO commented on the challenge of adapting assessment tools to networks. CARE is currently hoping to pilot a more open-ended process based on appreciative enquiry and ladders of change to better tailor support to the partner’s needs and demands.

The challenge of sustainability

The recent reduction in budgets for Danish CSO funding will have profound implications. Many CSOs independently are consolidating their programmes and considering working in fewer countries. Several strategic plans mention exit from programmes and countries. Yet relatively few CSOs explicitly invest in the sustainability of partner organisations. DPOD and LO/FTF with their focused missions adopt a phased approach to partnership and capacity development, adjusting the type of support offered to partners stage of organisational development and with a perspective of exit included from the start.

LO/FTF: tailoring support to organisational maturity

LO/FTF have an explicit focus on developing trade unions to a point where they are independent and self-sustaining. Trade Unions are classified according to a scale towards sustainability – the three generations model. The type of support they give is then tailored to where the unions are on the scale. For example, a new emerging union may need more support on organisational development, negotiation and leadership. The focus of support to a more mature union may be more on being a critical friend; providing technical advice; or links to the wider trade union movement. LO/FTF have developed a “Sustainability Assessment Tool” which focuses on:

- Organizational sustainability
- Democratic sustainability
- Political sustainability
- Financial sustainability

LO/FTF accept that the process of development of a union may take over a decade but they keep a focus on their own exit, encouraging forward movement with regular conversations around sustainability issues.

Monitoring and reporting

Danish CSOs support the capacity development of their partners in many different ways ranging from ‘learning by doing’ peer learning to formal training. Monitoring the impact of different forms of capacity development presents different sets of challenges. This will require some innovation when working with more informal groups of civic actors. A more formal approach, perhaps lends itself to more systematic approach to delivering, monitoring and reporting on capacity development, as illustrated in the experience of ActionAid Denmark.

ActionAid Denmark: a global training organization

ActionAid Denmark delivers 400-500 trainings a year has a comprehensive training management manual “The 6 Step Pathway for Training Development”. The manual guides trainers and course developers training planning through delivery to evaluation. This also includes a clear definition of its approach and guiding principles. The framework includes four levels of learning and development and focuses on three domains of change: individual, organizational and community.

The manual includes a framework to evaluate individual trainings and to aggregate evaluation data for reporting and organizational learning. Three to six months after the training, participants get a survey asking how they have used what they learned and what has come out of it. They are also piloting a survey for the managers/organisations of the participants so that organisational

outcomes can be identified. Data is managed through an on-line tool Podio which also contains relevant materials.

There is an urgent need for CSOs to share learning about what kinds of tools are appropriate to monitor and report on the effectiveness of different kinds of capacity development. For example, a number of organisations are exploring the use of outcome mapping to track changes in capacity at partner, CBO and community level. CARE Denmark is conducting a piece of action research on this over the coming months which could provide useful learning on this approach.

Capacity development, as does advocacy, can present the challenge of contribution/ attribution when more than one provider is involved. This is particularly an issue for organisations with a smaller number of ‘strategic partners’ who, as well-established organisations, may well have other donors. Trying to harmonise capacity development efforts can be difficult and may be best approached in a phased way starting with the minimum of shared assessments before moving on to joint plans and finally basket funding and shared reporting.

The main challenge for Danish CSOs is simply to be clearer and more explicit about their approach to capacity development with partners and how they will assess its effectiveness. In particular, baseline information needs to be gathered more effectively whether through organisational assessments or other methods; and monitoring and reporting needs to move beyond activity outputs to outcomes. Since capacity development is integral to much of Danish CSO support to partners, improvements in this area will contribute significantly to results reporting. However, several Danish CSOs have pointed out, improved monitoring and reporting will require increased investment at a time when budgets are being reduced.

Capacity development: learning questions:

How can we best design, implement and monitor capacity development so as to report on outcomes as well as outputs?

What tools and methods are best suited to providing a stronger evidence base for the effectiveness of capacity building interventions?

3.3 Advocacy

Advocacy, like partnership and capacity development, is a key pathway to change in CSO strategies. All framework CSOs now seek to contribute to policy or practice change within the confines of their mission, even those that historically had more a service delivery approach. Danish CSOs support advocacy initiatives at many different levels – from global campaigning to community level initiatives. Global CSOs have the resources and reach to campaign globally and frequently have advocacy offices, for example, in Brussels, Geneva or New York. All framework CSOs are obliged to build public awareness on development issues in Denmark. Most frequently Danish CSOs support national-level advocacy through national partners or networks. Many support community level advocacy with local duty bearers.

CSOs support advocacy in different ways. CSOs provide capacity development to partners; conduct policy-related research; facilitate access to policy makers or policy making fora; and conduct advocacy activities jointly with partners.

As a result, advocacy features prominently but diversely in CSO results frameworks. Strategy objectives on advocacy are sometimes expressed as an:

- Activity e.g. “will lobby towards...”; “will play an active role...”
- Output e.g. “to strengthen civil society advocacy...”, develop an advocacy strategy”
- Outcome e.g.” to improve equitable access to natural resources...”, “to contribute to the quality and accessibility of public services of the poor and marginalised”.

The use of indicators is similarly variable reflecting how the objective is framed. Currently, activity or output-based indicators are being used for outcome-related objectives. Danida guidance suggests that results against immediate goals or objectives should be reported at output level which is appropriate to an early stage of the strategic funding period. However, the expectation should be to report at outcome level by the end of the strategy period. Thinking through intermediate results may allow for a way of tracking and reporting on progress even when the end outcome has not yet been reached. Constructing these around different stages or aspects of the advocacy process could be helpful e.g.

- Raising awareness
- Creating a constituency for change;
- Getting issue on the agenda;
- Changing policy;
- Changing policy implementation;
- Achieving change in people’s lives

When reporting on advocacy outcomes the universal challenge is how to demonstrate the organisation’s contribution to, for example, the policy or practice change. Advocacy is most frequently conducted jointly with others and many other factors beyond the organisations’ control can contribute to policy change. One interviewee, mentioned that assessing contribution often involves feedback from other stakeholders and this can be tricky if they are advocacy targets. They also commented on the difficulty of matching results to reporting periods as often outcomes are the cumulative result of years of partners work. Section 4 explores approaches to thinking about contribution further. This should be a fruitful focus of mutual learning given the increase in advocacy activity associated with a rights-based approach.

In addition to this there are a number of areas which seem relatively under developed in the frameworks such as how to track: the results of networks or the participation of partners in networks; the learning around the experience of Danish CSOs in promoting the adoption of rights based approaches with partners.

Advocacy: learning questions:

What tools, indicators or progress markers might be useful to assess the Danish CSO's contributions to advocacy?

What are Danish CSOs learning from their experiences of promoting the adoption of rights based approaches with partners?

3.4 Fragility

Fragility features prominently in the Civil Society Policy and the recent draft Finance Act commits Denmark to prioritise fragile contexts.

'We want to ...especially contribute to efforts in areas affected by conflict and displacement in the Middle East and Africa'

Overlap of Humanitarian and Framework support. [Kristian Jensen, Minister of Foreign Affairs, 29.09.15.](#)

Most framework CSOs work in at least one fragile context. Some work in several, including South Sudan and Somalia. CSOs are supported to work in fragile contexts by both the Humanitarian and Civil Society Sections in HCP. Five Framework CSOs, for example, receive strategic funding through Humanitarian Partnership Agreements (HAP). There is often an overlap in the countries and activities supported by each funding stream. Community-based recovery and resilience work, for example, is supported by both Humanitarian Partnership and Framework Agreements. Whereas Framework CSOs are expected to report globally at output and outcome level Humanitarian Partnerships report on project outputs.

Recent evaluations of the Civil Society and Humanitarian strategies have commented on the opportunity costs of the lack of coordination between the humanitarian and civil society department partnerships with Danish CSOs. Several Danish CSOs, including DanChurchAid and Danish Red Cross, explicitly link their humanitarian and development work in their strategies though it is likely that the work supported by Humanitarian Partnerships may not be fully integrated into their organisation-wide M&E systems.

Danish Red Cross: Building a LRRD approach in practice.

Danish Red Cross works in 19 countries with its Framework Agreement and 14 with its Humanitarian Partnership. 12 of the countries are the same.

Danish Red Cross has recently approved a new 5-years international strategy with resilience as a central theme. The new strategy aims to develop one M&E system and strives in the future to provide one application and one report for both Framework and Humanitarian funding to the extent that Danida timelines and regulations will allow. Danish Red Cross would then be able to use Danida funding more flexibly in accordance with a Linking Relief, Rehabilitation to Development (LRRD) approach.

The Civil Society Policy highlights the need for support to civil society in fragile contexts to be based on a careful situation analysis; to building/ rebuilding community level structures and to strengthening the voice of the poor, marginalised and excluded in local and national planning processes.

The importance of contextual analysis

The challenges of working in fragile contexts are not always explicitly addressed in the CSO framework strategies though some highlight their approach.

‘Denmark will engage with partners ... who operate on the basis of a solid and careful situational analysis including political and political-economy aspects identifying drivers of change; gender, power and legitimacy aspects, localised fragility assessments; conflict analysis and systematic risk assessments.’

Civil Society Policy, p. 19

The strategies contain relatively broad context analyses, sometimes on a regional level and very seldom on a country level. In contrast, the HAP applications tend to include country-level context analyses.

There are various relatively simple guidelines and examples of political-economy/context/conflict analyses, which may serve as reference for the CSO community. Danida has been leading in developing a tool for risk identification and management which may also inspire CSOs.

Strengthening local community level structures

The DanChurchAid strategy includes a humanitarian goal which focuses on its response to acute crises in partnership with local partners and to strengthen their preparedness and capacity to respond to humanitarian crisis and to reduce risks from natural hazards and conflicts. The strategy includes a specific indicator on improved community resilience by 2018 in 80% of rural areas where DanChurchAid works.

Danmission is working on conflict resolution and peaceful co-existence at a community level. This includes religious conflict and inter-faith work but also other forms of conflict that may arise through the unequal distribution of resources or ethnic or cultural differences. As part of this they are doing innovative work with partners to explore how better to monitor and evaluate this type of work, in particular the inter-faith dimension.

Strengthening voice of the poor and marginalised

The CSO Policy speaks of strengthening the voice of the marginalised. The ActionAid Denmark approach to fragility is to strengthen the voice of those affected by disaster to participate in the planning of relief work and hold the relevant organisations to account. More generally, CSOs acknowledge that it can be very difficult to adopt a HRBA in fragile contexts. For example, strengthening the capacity of communities to hold duty bearers to account in South Sudan where power can be fragmented and unstable can pose a real risk to partners living locally and heighten

tensions. It is important to combine advocacy in relation to a weak state with support to state and peace-building.

The challenge for monitoring and reporting

CSOs recognise that working in a fragile context presents special challenges with regard to planning, monitoring and reporting. The operational context can be subject to unpredictable changes that require rapid revisions to pre-established plans and make monitoring and reporting more difficult. For example, access to communities is more difficult e.g. where security is an issue and/or where government requires advance notice to access certain areas. This requires flexibility on the part of donors and CSOs alike. CSOs report that Danida has been very understanding under these circumstances.

There are also some more systemic challenges regarding the monitoring and reporting of programmes in a fragile context.⁷ The lack of coordination between Humanitarian and Framework agreements may encourage the separation of humanitarian and framework reporting although some work may overlap.

Fragility: learning questions:

How can CSOs improve on more structured context and conflict analyses?

How can CSOs be better at analysing, mitigating and managing risks?

⁷ Danida, 2015. Evaluation of the Strategy of Danish Humanitarian Action 2010-2015: Synthesis Report

4 How do we demonstrate our success?

There was considerable overlap in the 2013 thematic reviews on Danish CSO capacity and performance in monitoring and reporting. The reviews tended to acknowledge the progress that had been made in both monitoring and reporting and that most framework CSOs had developed and improved (or were in the process of doing so) their M&E systems. Many CSOs have developed and improved their M&E frameworks since the thematic reviews or are in the process of developing new frameworks.

Improving the quality of monitoring and reporting has had, and will continue to have, resource implications and broader consequences in the light of reduced budgets. Some CSOs report their programme staff already find it difficult to meet increased monitoring and reporting expectations e.g. re. frequency of monitoring visits. In addition, as we have noted, a number of CSOs are making a conscious decision to reduce the number of countries they work in; to review the geographical dispersion of country programmes; the size of their project portfolio; and the number of partners.

We would like to highlight four key areas where Danish CSOs can learn from each other to continue to improve how they demonstrate their achievements over the strategy period:

- Strengthen results frameworks
- Strengthen the evidence base
- Involve beneficiaries
- Link resources to results

Strengthen results frameworks

There are a number of areas where CSOs can continue to strengthen their results frameworks. These include:

- The inclusion of baseline information as the basis for measuring progress.
- A move beyond activity-based indicators to indicators relevant to the outputs or outcome of the activity e.g. the impact of individual trainings on organisational capacity.
- The development of annual targets or milestones to enable CSOs to monitor progress and make any adjustments to plans.
- The inclusion of adequate indicators to monitor CSO change pathways and report on achievements directly within their sphere of influence to demonstrate their added value.
- The systematic capture of data across countries to report on results at a global level.

While all these areas are important, the main challenge is this last one - how to summarise or aggregate results at a global level. Many CSOs, for example, have a portfolio of diverse programmes at a country level which are on broad common themes but have different objectives

specific to their country context. The challenge is to identify in what areas and at what levels it is appropriate to summarise or aggregate results.

Section 2.3 has identified some of the ways Danish CSOs are responding to the demands of global reporting and the need to share learning on how to construct appropriate global results frameworks.

Strengthen the evidence base

The plausibility of reported results is dependent on the quality of evidence that supports it. This will become more challenging through the strategy period when reporting to outcomes becomes more relevant.

The capacity of Southern partners to generate good evidence will be key as they are the primary source from which Danish CSOs draw their evidence. Many CSOs are working to support or also to develop capacity of partners on M&E. To summarise results across their portfolio it is much easier if Danish CSOs and partners use a similar methodology. This may produce a tension between the Danish CSO's need to report consistently across its portfolio and a respect for the diversity of context and of partners.

For Danmission to monitor the progress of the programme, it is fundamental that the partners are able to provide good quality and focused data.

Annex 2b to framework application, Danmission p. 20

Many Danish CSOs currently collect evidence under themes or strategic objectives highlighting specific stories of change to illustrate achievements. This can provide a rich tapestry of what has been happening or has been achieved across a programme portfolio but it is often difficult to assess their significance. The following are some ideas of how to move stories beyond the anecdotal:

- *Use a common and defined methodology for collecting them.* The Most Significant Change (MSC) methodology seeks to produce information-rich stories representing the best cases of an NGO through a transparent and replicable method of story-telling. Stories are deliberately acknowledged to be the best cases.
- *Random selection of cases.* For example, ten cases of farmers, chosen at random, in a livelihoods programme could be used to illustrate in-depth changes across the programme whereas ten stories chosen for communication purposes could not.
- *Simple story telling.* This can be used for to summarise results if, for example, stories are divided into best, worst, learning, representative or comparative cases.
- *Qualitative research* methods can also be used to draw trends or generate assessments from a wide variety of narratives. For example, a programme report can seek to draw trends across twenty project reports.

Assessing contribution

Another aspect of strengthening the evidence base that Danish CSOs face is the challenge of how to identify their contribution to change. It is rarely possible to prove a definitive contribution to a development outcome but it is possible to provide plausible evidence linking activities and outputs to an observed change.

This can be done in two main ways. The first is to hypothesise the desired changes through a logic model such as a logical or results framework or some other form of impact pathway. This sets out the anticipated changes as a result of activities and outputs given a set of assumptions. It is increasingly recognised that such an approach can struggle to cope with complexity and unpredicted outcomes. Some Danish CSOs are beginning to experiment with methods that allow more flexibility such as Outcome Mapping and Most Significant Change. These approaches place the emphasis on tracking and identifying changes as they emerge. They then work backwards from the changes to identify the CSO contribution along with the contribution of others and the influence of the external environment. This is often referred to as contribution analysis. Specific methods such as process tracing are also used to try to more rigorously identify contribution.

It is important to note that these options are not mutually exclusive. There is a wealth of methods, developed by CSOs in Europe and elsewhere that can be used to help demonstrate results.⁸ Each CSO will assess what kinds of methods are best suited to its programmes but may well want to combine approaches. The important thing is to be rigorous and systematic about applying them. This is an area where a learning network or community of practice can fast track learning across the sector in Denmark so as to provide a robust evidence base for the effectiveness of support to civil society.

Involve beneficiaries

Donors increasingly expect Northern CSOs to demonstrate how beneficiaries have been consulted or involved in the programmes they support. At least one thematic review suggested that the CSO adopt an empowering approach to M&E to more actively include beneficiaries in data gathering that can also be used for monitoring government commitments and evidence-based advocacy.

A number of CSOs are beginning to pilot systems of community monitoring. Danmission is piloting a community development monitoring system with partners to build a stronger evidence base about what is being achieved at community level. It is looking at using a KAP survey system to look at how community based groups are evolving and a self-assessment process combined with focus groups to look at how groups are affecting the community. Responding to a recommendation that there should be greater congruence between their nature as a faith based organisation and how they view or measure success, the system will also incorporate a strong focus on values. IBIS is also studying different approaches with regard to how partners can involve their constituencies in community-based monitoring in relation to local advocacy. DCA is also committed to improving the links between community-based documentation and

⁸ See, for example, <https://my.bond.org.uk/impact-builder>

advocacy activities. There is an opportunity to share learning and experiences as these initiatives involving partners and beneficiaries in improving community-level data move forward.

Link resources to results

Donors are under increasing public and political pressure to demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of the programmes they support. Some thematic reviews commented, for example, on the need to better link resources to results in reports in order to be able to assess whether the investment was proportionate to the reward. CSOs should begin to examine how to link costs to results in their annual reports e.g. by programme, country, objectives, and what cost categories would be appropriate.

Communicating our results: learning questions:

How can we best share learning on how best to summarise our achievements at a global level and how to support these with a robust evidence base?

How best to fast track our learning on appropriate tools for

How community monitoring systems can strengthen our evidence base?

How best to link costs to results in our annual reporting?

How can we improve our monitoring and reporting most cost-effectively – invest in our staff and/or partners?

Annex A Learning Questions

Danish CSO diversity:

- How can the Danish contribution best be monitored within global CSOs?
- Should the impact of ‘scaling up’ in a global con/federation be included in results frameworks?
- How should we address the unequal M&E capacity within framework CSOs?
- What do we aim to achieve?
- How useful are theories of change in clarifying our assumptions about how we aim to achieve change?
- What have Danish CSOs learned about their use at organisational and other levels?

What kind of change do we aim to achieve:

- How do we best focus on what we aim to achieve? By focusing on the achievements in our partnerships and/or the achievements of those partnerships?
- What have we learned to date about the advantage and disadvantages of each?

Demonstrating our results:

- How are CSOs facing the challenge of summarising global performance while respecting country and partner diversity?
- How can CSOs best report on their own achievements and those of partners?

Partnership:

- How are CSOs exploring and pushing real shifts in power relations and new ways of working with southern partners
- How far are CSOs managing to reach out to new types of partner?
- How are CSOs monitoring and measuring the quality of partnership as an objective in its own right?
- How to achieve a balance between robust reporting and respect for partner M&E systems?

Capacity development:

- How can we best design, implement and monitor capacity development so as to report on outcomes as well as outputs?
- What tools and methods are best suited to providing a stronger evidence base for the effectiveness of capacity building interventions?

Advocacy:

- What tools, indicators or progress markers might be useful to assess the Danish CSO's contributions to advocacy?
- What are Danish CSOs learning from their experiences of promoting the adoption of rights based approaches with partners?

Fragility:

- How can CSO's improve on more structured context and conflict analyses?
- How can CSOs be better at analysing, mitigating and managing risks?

Communicating our results:

- How can we best share learning on how best to summarise our achievements at a global level and how to support these with a robust evidence base?
- How best to fast track our learning on appropriate tools for
- How community monitoring systems can strengthen our evidence base?
- How best to link costs to results in our annual reporting?
- How can we improve our monitoring and reporting most cost-effectively – invest in our staff and/or partners?