



**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF DENMARK**
Danida

FEBRUARY 2022

EVALUATION OF THE DANISH SUPPORT TO CIVIL SOCIETY

*Synthesis report for three thematic
evaluations to support joint learning*





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Photo: Youth Democracy Festival in Copenhagen 2021/
Ungdommens Folkemøde. Photo: 2030 beyond
Women dancing in village outside Timbuktu in Mali.
Photo: Danida
Women collecting water in Dadaab refugee camp
in Kenya. Photo: Danida

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Responsibility for content and presentations of findings and recommendations rests with the authors.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CIV	Civil Society Strengthening funding line
CS	Civil Society
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DKK	Danish Kroner
EQ	Evaluation Question
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
HD	Humanitarian-Development
HDP	Humanitarian-Development-Peace
HUM	Humanitarian funding line
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
INTRAC	International NGO Training and Research Centre
LAB	Labour Markets funding line
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark
NCG	Nordic Consulting Group
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
ODA	Official Development Assistance
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SPA	Strategic Partnership Agreement
TE	Thematic Evaluation
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference

1. INTRODUCTION

This report summarises the key findings and recommendations from the Evaluation of Danish Support to Civil Society (CS). The evaluation comprised three thematic evaluations (TEs) carried out by INTRAC and Nordic Consulting Group (NCG). It covered the Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) period 2017-21, covering support through 16 SPA partners and six pooled funds.

As the Terms of Reference (ToR) explained, the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) recognised that there was a need to rethink how best to document the effectiveness of their support to civil society. The conclusion was that a full-scale evaluation of the whole portfolio would not produce the results necessary to stimulate learning and improved results. Therefore, the evaluation focussed on three thematic areas:

Thematic Evaluation 1: Public engagement in Denmark

Thematic Evaluation 2: Strengthening civil society in the Global South

Thematic Evaluation 3: Humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

The two overall evaluation objectives were:

- To capture outcome level results in selected thematic areas.
- To stimulate learning based on evidence of achieved results.

This synthesis document captures the main points from the three TEs (there is a full report available for each), while also drawing overall conclusions from across the portfolio.

Methodology

The evaluation aimed to be participatory and to promote evidence-based joint learning. It emphasised a utilisation-focused approach, using a case-based methodology. It took an adaptive approach to managing the evaluation – particularly necessary during the time of COVID-19. Each evaluation varied somewhat according to its specific circumstances, but all included:

- A literature review;
- Surveys to capture the perspectives of Danish Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and their Southern partners for TE2;
- In-depth case studies, based on themes which emerged from early discussions and literature reviews, and which addressed the evaluation questions (EQs) set out in the ToR;
- Interviews with Danish CSOs and their partners and beneficiaries;
- The establishment of, and repeated consultation with, Reference Groups of Danish CSOs;
- Regular discussion with relevant MFA staff.

Principal Constraints

- The COVID-19 pandemic prevented physical meetings and travel to the Global South and to Denmark (for the INTRAC team members). This was mitigated by using local consultants as well as online interactions.
- The MFA was launching a new round of SPAs, although the precise timetable was initially unclear. A new funding round in the offing potentially may have discouraged more critical comments from Danish CSOs and their Southern partners.

2. DANISH SUPPORT TO CIVIL SOCIETY

In 2019, Danish support to civil society amounted to 19.3% of total Danish overseas development assistance (ODA) or almost DKK 3.3 billion (according to openaid.um.dk). This share was up from 17.9% in 2017 and could be closer to 25% if CSO-related funding from other programmes is included. Just over a third of this (DKK 1.2 billion), was implemented through the SPAs between the MFA and 16 Danish NGOs. Support to strategic partners during this period was divided into three lots (funding windows): civil society (CIV), humanitarian activities (HUM), and labour markets (LAB), with some agencies receiving funding under both CIV and HUM. Another DKK 260 million was allocated through the six delegated pool funds. The MFA stipulated that SPAs could use up to 2% of the lot CIV/LAB (but not the HUM) budgets for public engagement in Denmark.

Following the 2013 Evaluation of Danish Support to Civil Society, the MFA published its Policy for Danish Support to Civil Society in June 2014, which officially ran up to the end of 2020. In 2016, the MFA launched the first Danish overall Strategy for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Action – ‘The World 2030’. This underlined the value Denmark sees in a strong, diverse civil society promoting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This strategy also confirmed the transition from ‘framework’ to ‘strategic’ partners, signifying that Danish CSOs are now expected to play a role in supporting Danish development and humanitarian priorities.

3. THEMATIC EVALUATION 1

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT IN DENMARK

Since a large-scale televised fundraising event marked the birth of Danida in 1962, public engagement has been a defining feature of Danish development cooperation. This has been underpinned by an assumption that better knowledge and improved understanding of development issues by the Danish public will contribute towards higher levels of public support for development cooperation.

The evaluation showed that public engagement is approached in very different ways by different Danish CSOs. While the longest-standing CSOs tend to emphasize fundraising for programming in the Global South, younger CSOs put a stronger emphasis on activism and changes at the policy level. The evaluation identified four dimensions of public engagement strategies: (i) Policy, (ii) Pragmatism, (iii) Fundraising and (iv) Awareness. Bearing these in mind, three main clusters of organisation were identified:

Classic: long-standing public engagement in Denmark with strong local roots and outreach. An inclination towards pre-defined constituencies such as faith-based groups and trade unions.

Issue-driven: typically strong attention to a particular issue or theme such as the rights of children or people with disabilities, climate change or refugees. Diverse target audiences.

Activist: highly focused on policy pressure and on advocacy with stronger participation in public engagement activities. A predominance of urban target audiences.

Reaching the Danish public

While solid baseline data against which to measure progress is lacking, the evaluation found evidence that CSOs are reaching large sections of the Danish public – estimated at approximately 2.4 million people, although there may be some double counting and the extent of engagement varies widely. Typical activities include second-hand shops, live events and digital engagement, with social media accounting for 51% of the total reach. Increasing collaboration with both private and public sector actors has helped to amplify the voices of Danish CSOs, although there is significant potential for more joint efforts.

The evaluation found some evidence that Danish CSOs are engaging diverse segments of the Danish public, attempting to reach those who

are often excluded from development debates. There are interesting examples of vocational students engaging with Nepali workers and Danish trade unions on migration issues and with non-traditional diaspora segments, notably from Somalia and Afghanistan, in recycling schemes.

However, the overall extent of outreach to segments labelled as 'marginally' or 'totally disengaged' remains limited. The overwhelming focus is on engagement with already established target groups, most often youth in schools, using digital content. Explicit attempts to reach genuinely new segments are relatively rare and strategies are uneven in this regard. Furthermore, public engagement often aims at profiling and fundraising for individual CSOs rather than achieving collective impact and long-term changes at the outcome level. A more strategic, collaborative approach is therefore required to move beyond the already converted familiar target groups. This should include groups who are more skeptical as to the scale and benefits of Danish ODA.

Impact on public support for development cooperation/ humanitarian action

An Annual Survey conducted by the MFA on the knowledge and attitudes of Danes on development cooperation in 2020 showed high levels of support at 63% – an increase on previous years, particularly amongst the 18-30 age group. At the same time, 51% agreed with the statement that development funds often end up in the wrong pockets due to corruption, suggesting some fragility in support.

The evaluation identified some positive examples of Danish CSOs seeking to influence the attitudes of the Danish public, but it is difficult to prove a causal link between such activities and changes in public attitudes. Other factors such as media exposure and activities in schools are also likely to play a role in influencing knowledge, attitudes and behaviour.

CSOs typically report on the success of these activities using process, output and reach indicators, rather than Danish public attitude and behaviour changes. While all organisations measure basic reach, only a minority use qualitative data, such as focus groups or questionnaires from event participants. Several organisations indicated that they do not carry out baseline studies or evaluation activities as this requires a lot of resources. The evaluation concludes that the documentation of outcomes and impact in public engagement is a major challenge that needs to be addressed in the future.

Contributions to policy change

CSOs' activities are frequently aimed at policy change in general terms. While there are examples of campaigns on fair taxation and migration policy with positive results, initiatives to mobilize Danes to influence policy on specific issues are less frequent. In fact, the case studies showed more appetite for fundraising than political activism. Agendas

are often set in the international confederations that several Danish CSOs belong to rather than having a Danish focus. The most frequent expression of policy pressure is public petitions. It is difficult to ascertain their effectiveness as other factors may contribute to desired outcomes. SPA partners tend to operate in silos in their public engagement on policy work. There were examples of fruitful joint efforts, but there is potential for greater collaboration on policy issues.

Meeting MFA financial requirements

Danish SPA partners are expected to raise 20% of their total financing independently, 5% of which is expected to be raised in Denmark (intended by the MFA to measure popular support). All 16 SPA partners were able to meet the 20% target in 2019. In contrast, 40% of SPA partners assessed failed, or only just met, the requirement the 5% target for fundraising in Denmark. Challenges in reaching this target were particularly pronounced for more issue-driven organisations, as demonstrated in two of the case studies.

4. THEMATIC EVALUATION 2 STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

This was the broadest of the three thematic evaluations in terms of scope, covering a large part of Denmark's support to civil society. The importance of such funding to Southern CSOs is illustrated by the fact that more than 75% of Southern partners of Danish CSOs surveyed indicated that they receive over half of their income from international sources.

Impact on Southern civil society

More than 500 Southern partners supported across the portfolio reported through a survey that Danish CSOs have significantly strengthened their capacity. Some key findings on how Danish CSOs contribute to the characteristics of Southern CS that the MFA wishes to support are summarised below.

Desired CS Characteristics	Evaluation Finding
Strong	Abundant evidence of how Danish CSOs have helped strengthen Southern partners over the past four years, improving their ability to support their constituents. However, there are several areas where this could be improved as indicated below.
Independent	Southern partners are still heavily reliant on Northern funding. Some Danish CSOs provide support for fundraising, but Southern partners would like this to go further.
Representative	Danish CSOs have helped partners build better relations with constituents. But some of the most representative (e.g., social movements) proved harder to work with.
Accountable	Convincing evidence that Danish CSOs are helping to strengthen Southern partners' relationships with constituents and governments in many cases.
Diversity	Danish CSOs still largely work with national or sub-national NGOs. There is some work with networks and private sector, but relatively little with social movements.

Added value

Danish CSOs add value to the work of their Southern partners in many ways. These include tangible support such as supporting formal capacity development, linking advocacy work at different levels, networking, and joint learning. Other areas of added value include convening CSOs and also with other stakeholders, such as private sector actors. There is also evidence of Danish CSOs supporting innovation, developing methodologies and promoting research. Some Danish CSOs are supporting their Southern partners to diversify income and fundraise. There are also examples of Danish CSOs providing partners with protection from threats and helping mitigate risks. Several Danish and Southern CSOs mentioned the importance of less tangible features of added value such as accompaniment, caring, and generally being 'in solidarity with' Southern partners.

Some Danish CSOs also add value within their respective alliances and federations (often in alliance with other Nordic agencies), which enables them to exert more influence over international development efforts than would be the case if they simply provided bilateral support to Southern partners.

Working through Danish CSOs also brings a number of benefits from the MFA perspective, including giving a 'line of sight' to where money gets spent; getting support to emergency locations very quickly; reaching partners that the MFA cannot; providing a bridge between Southern partners and donors, and communicating development efforts in the South to Danish audiences.

Localisation

The Danish CSOs are doing a great deal to promote localisation. There is significant momentum in this direction, partly due to external factors (e.g., the Shift the Power movement), and partly because the working cultures of Danish CSOs dovetails with the localisation agenda. This manifests itself in such ways as new policies on localisation, signing the Charter for Change, pushing for change within federations, and handing over control of global platforms.

Challenges

While appreciating their relationships with their Danish partners, Southern partners felt a lot more could be done to promote power-sharing and more equal relationships. They specifically mentioned the lack of long-term, flexible funding from Danish CSOs, a feature of MFA funding to Danish CSOs that does not get passed down the line. This was one of the lowest rated aspects by Southern partners in the survey. As Danish funding becomes increasingly focused on fragile contexts, there are important discussions to be had between MFA and Danish CSOs on how this should be managed. Funding gaps (between allocations within a project, or between projects) are also a concern, putting Southern

CSOs in a vulnerable position when they have to cover ongoing costs, but lack the necessary income.

Southern partners also feel there is insufficient strategic capacity development for their own organisations, going beyond support to implement projects. Only 14 out of 96 partners felt their capacity had been enhanced 'a lot' with respect to fundraising and communications, with a half in the survey saying it had only increased 'a small amount' or 'not at all'. Other weaker areas identified included support to participate in national and international events.

Only 64% of Southern partners surveyed felt there was a well-planned and communicated exit strategy for the partnership and only 22% strongly agreed. This was the lowest level of strong agreement for any of the statements in the survey and clearly merits attention. Without defined exit strategies Southern partners can struggle post-partnership, thereby undermining progress that has been achieved.

Wider results

There are direct, plausible linkages between support to Southern partners and results at community level, as reported by the partners themselves.

Results Affecting Communities (extrapolated from results of survey of Southern partners)

- At least 670 Southern partners have seen their relationships with their constituents or beneficiaries enhanced, leading to better, more relevant or more responsive programming;
- 650 partners have been able to reach and support more people;
- 550 partners have enhanced technical skills that should translate into improved programming;
- 550 partners have strengthened their capacity to address gender equality and diversity, making development efforts fairer and more inclusive;
- 410 partners can better adhere to humanitarian standards, which are designed to improve the services offered to communities in emergencies, disasters or reconstruction; and
- 330 partners have been significantly helped by Danish CSOs to pursue advocacy efforts on behalf of communities through linking efforts across different levels from international to local.

The evaluation provided a number of in-depth case studies that illustrate in more detail how Danish CSOs have helped generate tangible benefits for poor and marginalised people. These range from short-term and vital benefits, such as improved health and livelihoods to longer-term change resulting from advocacy.

Cost-effectiveness

Cost-effectiveness is generally defined as the extent of poverty reduction an intervention achieves relative to its benefits. One of the major reasons for working in partnership (and underpinning the associated localisation agenda) is to seek more cost-effective, long-term change. In the short-term, however, no reasonable comparison can be made between costs – which will be at their maximum value in a designated four-year period – and benefits (outcomes and impact) which one would expect would gradually increase with time if work is being conducted in a truly effective, sustainable way. Ultimately, since the Danish MFA and CSOs are committed to the localisation path, the cost-effectiveness of Danish CSO collaborations with Southern partners is likely to be judged alongside the overall success or failure of the localisation agenda. If Danish CSOs are successful in transferring skills, resources and opportunities to Southern partners, then investments made now may well result in substantial returns in the future. However, it will not be possible to make a judgement on this for many years, and MFA and Danish CSOs will therefore need to monitor this closely going forward over an extended period.

New forms of partnership

In principle, working with new types of organisations can enable Danish CSOs to reach groups that they could not reach before. Overall, while there is a lack of benchmarking, it seems that partner diversity is not increasing rapidly, if at all. MFA's funding is very flexible and allows a lot of leeway in the way Danish CSOs can work. However, Danish CSOs still work largely through national or sub-national non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Across the entire portfolio of 650 directly supported Southern partners, SPA agencies work with around 25-35 private sector organisations, and around 45-65 networks or coalitions. The number of social movements is probably less than 2% of the portfolio.

Danish CSOs and pooled funds frequently raised the issue of compliance as a major challenge to working with newer partnerships. Many donor requirements are designed with larger NGOs in mind and are harder for newer types of partners to manage. Danish CSOs carry out a lot of the compliance requirements for such Southern partners or provide additional support for them to do it. But this added burden makes it harder to achieve targets in terms of resource transfer.

The Administrative Guidelines for the new SPAs have not yet been finalised. Discussions between the MFA and Danish CSOs on this provide an opportunity to discuss compliance requirements and the appetite for risk on both sides. If a percentage of funding with lower compliance thresholds were to be devoted to innovative work with newer partnerships, this would enable more of them, which accepting an increased risk of failure, corruption, financial mismanagement, or abuse.

5. THEMATIC EVALUATION 3 HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT- PEACE NEXUS

With many of the world's most vulnerable people increasingly living in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, there has been a rethink in the way development assistance is delivered. The humanitarian-development (HD) 'double nexus' focuses on achieving coherence and complementarities between previously siloed ways of working. More recently, peacebuilding has been added to make the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) 'triple nexus' to address the root causes of complex crises. MFA civil society funding for the 2017-20 period had two main pillars (CIV and HUM), and both contained references to the double nexus, with the peace aspect being more implicit. Given that this is a relatively new working area, TE3 was more learning-oriented than the others, particularly with respect to unpacking what peace means within a nexus approach.

Nexus approach amongst Danish CSOs

The evaluation showed that a substantial number and wide variety of HD nexus approaches are being implemented by Danish CSOs, without necessarily being labelled in those terms. HDP nexus approaches are embryonic and quite loosely defined in most Danish CSOs. However, the evaluation found that over half the organisations are in fact carrying out work that is peace-related (applying local understandings of peace), such as promoting economic opportunities or seeking durable solutions where there is forced displacement and supporting institutions that prevent and mediate conflict over resources.

Linkages and coherence

Context matters and defines the scope of potential nexus approaches. Uganda is a positive example of a conducive environment, with the government supporting joint analysis, planning and coordination, leading to a proliferation of organisations adopting a nexus approach. By contrast, in countries with a volatile security situation (e.g., Afghanistan) or where the political will is lacking (e.g., Sudan), a nexus approach is more challenging and comparatively fewer Danish CSOs are engaged. The evaluation provides a number of examples where strategic service delivery (e.g., education, water, sanitation and health) has proved relevant when it is necessary to shift between humanitarian and development activities.

Vulnerability and marginalisation

The evaluation looked at vulnerability and marginalisation in the context of 'Leaving No One Behind' (LNOB). This conceptual framing

can add value to nexus approaches and open doors in sensitive conflict-affected situations: language around prioritising the poorest and most marginalised can be more acceptable than talking of peacebuilding, which may be seen as too 'political'.

Adaptiveness to changing risk patterns

Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and, increasingly, climate change related projects have been core areas for many of the organisations during the funding period. With the flexibility of SPA funding, organisations have been able to build their expertise and deliver more projects that strengthen resilience at the local level. Nexus approaches have been at the core of such projects. COVID-19 also meant that CSOs had to adapt their approaches, which SPA funding facilitated.

Internal organisations and partnerships

While some larger organisations still have a degree of separation between their humanitarian and development departments, overall Danish CSOs are well set up to adopt nexus approaches. There is evidence of partnerships between organisations with particular humanitarian and development expertise, but less engagement with peacebuilding specialists. Local actors are often left out of fora where coordination occurs, but some Danish CSOs are working to promote their greater involvement.

Results and sustainability in nexus work

In evaluation interviews, Danish CSOs recognised the value of nexus approaches in strengthening comprehensive analysis and planning (involving a range of relevant actors), adding quality to projects and likely results.

A successful nexus approach joins up previously separated elements. Prospects for sustainability are enhanced by addressing the underlying causes of humanitarian crises ('better to have a hook than a fish', as one interviewee in Uganda put it). Where earlier interventions have had primarily a humanitarian focus, nexus approaches have therefore contributed to longer term and, more effective, thinking and planning. In Mali a local committee interviewed felt that their project was more likely to be sustainable because it has a strong synergy between different actors – CSO partners, local authorities, state technical services and beneficiary groups. The different actors that could be brought together include complementary Danish CSOs with distinctive areas of expertise, but currently there is little evidence that this is occurring. It is important to build stronger linkages with peacebuilding actors in conflict-affected situations to achieve better outcomes.

Overall, the evaluation found that the flexibility allowed by the SPA funding modality is conducive for promoting both HD and HDP nexus approaches. The new funding round should improve that further by

merging the CIV and HUM funding pillars contributing to more relevant and effective programming, which is particularly important given the increasing focus on fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

Many organisations face challenges in *how* to measure results that can be attributed to a nexus approach. However, they could give narrative examples of how nexus approaches improved outcomes in terms of durable solutions, building community resilience and mitigating the impact of climate change.

6. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

This chapter examines some key issues across all three thematic evaluations.

Collaboration between Danish CSOs

Collaboration amongst Danish CSOs in appropriate ways is desired by the MFA and is echoed by the CSOs themselves. While there are positive examples such as the umbrella body Global Focus' technical working groups, overall collaboration falls short of its potential in practice.

With respect to public engagement within Denmark, individual organisational profiling and fundraising imperatives tend to determine the approach, rather than a desire for greater collective impact and achieving long-term attitudinal changes. Joint fundraising events and outreach in schools are positive examples of collaboration between CSOs. In terms of advocacy for policy change, the evaluation found evidence of a degree of cooperation between agencies, but only a few concrete joint activities. There is also untapped potential in public engagement involving both CSOs and the MFA.

There are isolated examples of Danish CSOs collaborating in their programme countries in the Global South, but they tend to place greater emphasis on working with their Southern partners and (where applicable) relations within their international federations and alliances. There are instances of Danish CSOs working with other INGOs, but there is no particular bias towards other Danish CSOs. There does not seem a good reason to have more collaboration between Danish CSOs, unless there is a specific rationale in terms of working together with a Danish embassy or seeking to influence a Danish advocacy target (e.g., a Danish company).

In relation to nexus approaches, given this is an emerging area of work, it is particularly important to share learning between agencies, and Global Focus has facilitated a number of joint learning events. There is potential for collaboration between organisations with complementary specialisms (e.g., peacebuilding skills), but few of the Danish CSOs are currently doing this.

Monitoring and Evaluation and Communicating Results

The sheer variety of impacts achieved by CSOs makes it very hard to summarise achievements across the entire range of MFA support to civil society. In previous evaluations, INTRAC produced papers explaining why aggregation and summarisation is very difficult across a broad portfolio

of work, and why no donor has successfully tackled the issue. Key challenges are that:

- the same indicator definitions are not used across different agencies (often for good reason);
- the chains of support through which results are achieved are often long and complex;
- results occur over very different timescales – some long after activities are conducted.

During the last evaluation, it was recommended to map wider results onto a set of outcomes, outputs and indicators based on a defined Theory of Change. In addition, some key evaluation questions and/or aggregated output results could be added to a results framework. This would allow the MFA and CSOs to demonstrate their aggregated efforts, alongside illustrations of some of the wider results, in a coherent way. This recommendation was accompanied by an illustrative results framework. However, this option was rejected by Danish CSOs as they did not want to align their results frameworks with an overall results framework. But this was not what was proposed – the suggestion was to map results from Danish CSOs' own results frameworks onto the portfolio results framework.

There is a range of options available to better communicate portfolio level results:

Options for Communicating Results

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Map wider results onto a Theory of Change. | 7. More consistent annual reporting formats. |
| 2. Map wider results onto a series of dimensions of change. | 8. Develop learning or evaluation questions. |
| 3. Develop a portfolio results framework. | 9. Develop communication-focused interactive guides. |
| 4. Produce purposeful case studies on a regular basis. | 10. Carry out a tracer study. |
| 5. Partner surveys. | 11. Joint in-country studies. |
| 6. Use of common methodologies. | 12. Joint humanitarian evaluations. |

None of these options would require additional prescriptions and limitations on what Danish CSOs and their Southern partners can do in terms of support to Southern communities, and most would enable additional learning that could enhance programming. However, all would involve some additional costs and resources. These options are not mutually exclusive. A selection could be used to examine different kinds of complex change from different viewpoints. How far MFA and the Danish CSOs want to go down this route depends on the relative costs and benefits of doing so. Each of the above options have their merits, but the evaluation team feels that Options 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8 are most worth considering.

The evaluation team suggests that Danish CSOs and the MFA should renew discussions around which options are plausible and desirable. Danish CSOs have indicated what they are not prepared to accept. It is perhaps time they were more explicit about what they are prepared to do.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There is no recent, comprehensive Theory of Change (ToC) setting out the framework for what the Danish MFA is trying to achieve through its support to civil society. However, there is an implicit ToC in The World 2030 (Denmark's Strategy for Development Cooperation, 2016), the Information Note for strategic partnerships (2017) and the earlier ToC in the Policy for Danish Support to Civil Society (2014). These documents provide objectives and priorities against which to assess the overall validity of the approach (although it would be helpful to articulate a new ToC more explicitly now that the Policy for Danish Support to Civil Society has expired).

Validity of Denmark's approach to supporting civil society

Denmark's approach to supporting civil society to help achieve its vision (a more secure and sustainable world free from poverty) makes sense in broad terms. Supporting Danish CSOs and pooled funds, who then support Southern CSOs to address issues of poverty reduction, human rights and humanitarian needs is logical, valid and based on reasonable assumptions. Combining work in the Global South with awareness and policy work in Denmark is appropriate, given how important it is to maintain public awareness and support for development cooperation. Seeking to link humanitarian, development and peace work by encouraging nexus approaches addresses previous obstacles, which will be taken further in the next period as the funding lines are merged.

The Danish way of supporting CSOs is distinctive from many other donors in that funds are predictable, longer term and 'softly earmarked', but in practice can be used quite flexibly. There is recognition of the importance of a strong, diverse, independent civil society as a desirable end in itself, rather than just an instrument through which to achieve specific outcomes. This approach is valid and in line with current thinking around principles of good donorship.

Realisation of the objectives of Denmark's support to civil society

The evaluation has provided significant evidence that the objectives of Denmark's support to civil society are being achieved in practice. Danish CSOs are engaging with the Danish public in multiple ways, raising awareness of development issues and promoting public support for development cooperation. They have been able to generate many benefits for their partners in the Global South and the marginalised communities they represent. In the emerging area of the humanitarian-development peace-nexus, CSOs are increasing their capacity to develop new approaches, which move beyond previous more siloed ways of working.

Danish CSOs generally appreciate the MFA approach and recognise its value in comparison to many other donors. The duration and flexibility of funding is particularly appreciated. They recognise the high levels of mutual trust between CSOs and the MFA, underpinned by strong working relationships. Danish CSOs understand the need for thorough proposals and recognise the importance of accountability, but some question the need for, and use of, the lengthy documentation generated as a result. Southern partners are also generally appreciative of the support they receive from the Danish CSOs, albeit with some reservations (e.g., the capacity support for their strategic development).

MFA and Danish CSOs should build on what is already there, rather than engaging in wholesale change for the sake of change.

Nevertheless, there are some important challenges that have emerged in relation to all three thematic evaluations as have been articulated in the relevant sections. These point to areas for improvement, which are encapsulated in the following top ten recommendations.

Key Recommendations from Evaluation

Recommendation 1: CSOs working on public engagement in Denmark for international policy change should engage in more joint campaigning platforms in order to achieve greater impact on attitudes and practice. The MFA should also allocate funds for engagement consortia for 'Collective Impact', consisting of at least two strategic partners and one media or event partner.

Recommendation 2: The MFA and CSOs should explore options for targeted public engagement partnerships between the MFA and CSOs with a group of 2-3 partners per year where government development priorities coincide with priority issues for partners.

Recommendation 3: The MFA should strongly encourage Danish CSOs and pooled funds to pursue further localisation with their Southern partners, but at their own pace. This is best done through constant dialogue and support, engaging with CSOs and helping them to pursue their own localisation strategies, rather than imposing one-size-fits-all rules.

Recommendation 4: The MFA and Danish CSOs should jointly discuss the contradiction between demands for increased localisation, requests to work with newer forms of partnership, and demands for more compliance, and identify appropriate solutions.

Recommendation 5: The MFA should encourage CSOs to ensure that trusted and approved local partners receive the same level of flexibility as Danish CSOs in respect to multi-year and flexible funding agreements, including core granting.

Recommendation 6: The MFA should encourage and incentivise Danish CSOs to invest in institutional capacity strengthening of local and national partners. This should include how better to support Southern partners to diversify their income bases and raise funds.

Recommendation 7: Danish CSOs should reflect upon their understanding of peace and how they can operationalise it in their work, using the 'peace spectrum' presented in the evaluation to determine the appropriate approach in each context.

Recommendation 8: Danish CSOs should engage in nexus approaches in more challenging contexts (e.g., where the security situation is more volatile or there is a lack of political will). Strategic service delivery is a useful mechanism in fragile and context-affected situations.

Recommendation 9: Danish CSOs and the MFA should strengthen their dialogue to develop joint learnings on nexus approaches, and in particular the peace dimension. There is also scope for greater collaboration between Danish CSOs and others with complementary skills.

Recommendation 10: The MFA and Danish CSOs should discuss and prioritise preferred options for M&E and new approaches to summarising and communicating portfolio-level results. The list of options indicated earlier could provide the basis for this discussion.

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