

HOW DANISH CSOs ADD VALUE TO SOUTHERN CHANGE PROCESSES

This document summarises some of the ways in which Danish CSOs add value, directly or indirectly, to desired change processes in the global South. It is based on interviews with representatives of Danish CSOs and their Southern partners, two surveys carried out with Southern partners between February and April 2021, and interviews with MFA staff. These were conducted as part of a thematic evaluation on strengthening civil society in the Global South. The evaluation was carried out by INTRAC and the Nordic Consulting Group (NCG).

One of the main reasons why donors or governments choose to channel funds through International NGOs, rather than giving money directly to smaller CSOs based in the South, is their perceived added-value to the support and services offered to poor and disadvantaged communities (see diagram below).

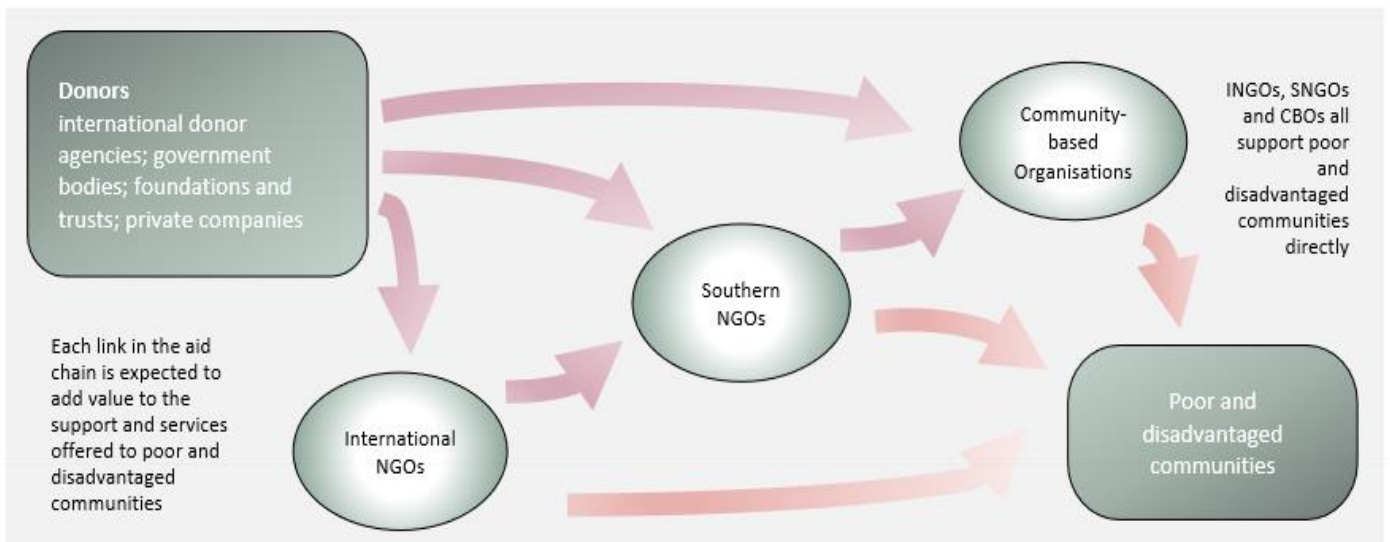
Danish CSOs add value directly or indirectly to desired change processes in the global South in several ways. These can be categorised at three main levels:

- the added-value of Danish CSOs to the work of their Southern partners;
- the added-value of some Danish CSOs within international alliances and federations; and
- the added-value of Danish CSOs to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in Denmark, and the wider Danish public.

Added-value also works in the opposite direction. Southern partners often add-value to the work of Danish CSOs, and through them to the MFA and the wider Danish public.

Added-value to the work of Southern partners

Southern partners were asked to comment on the added-value of their Danish CSO partners through two surveys. The first was administered to 95 Southern partners supported through Danish pooled funds. The second was sent to 106 Southern partners of 15 Danish CSOs in receipt of a Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA), chosen at random from a comprehensive list of around 646 partners. The surveys had a response rate of 79% and 91% respectively, which means that results are highly representative of all Southern partners.



One important area of added-value concerns capacity development. For Danish CSOs and their Southern partners, capacity development is not just about training (which can easily be outsourced). It also covers a large range of other mechanisms such as mentoring, accompaniment, logistical support, exchange visits, resource provision and workshops (see box opposite).

In the surveys, over three-quarters of Southern partners said they had been supported ‘a lot’ or ‘a moderate amount’ in the areas of strengthening gender equality and diversity (78%), enhancing technical skills and expertise (77%), and engaging in advocacy (76%). Over 70% of partners also said they had been supported ‘a lot’ or a ‘moderate’ amount to develop internal systems (e.g. finance or human resources), develop mechanisms to support accountability to poor and excluded groups, and engage in monitoring and evaluation.

When asked how this had translated into enhanced capacity, over 80% of Southern partners said their capacity had been enhanced ‘a lot’ or ‘a moderate amount’ to engage in advocacy, manage internal systems and apply technical skills and expertise (see table 1 below). Extrapolated across the entire portfolio of Southern partners, this suggests around 550 Southern partners feel their capacity has been enhanced in these areas because of support received from Danish CSOs.

Southern partners were also asked to what extent Danish CSOs had added-value to their work in a number of pre-defined areas. These areas were chosen partly to reflect the purposes of Danish support, as outlined in the “Policy for Danish Support to Civil Society”. Options provided were ‘a lot’, ‘a moderate amount’, ‘a small amount’ or ‘not at all’. The areas of support were as follows:

- **Enhancing capacity through formal capacity building support:** This covers formal training and technical assistance to Southern partners, as opposed to more on-going methods of capacity development such as mentoring, accompaniment and joint programming.

Some capacity development methods	
Training	Communities of Practice
Coaching	Exposure / exchange visits
Mentoring	Internships
Accompaniment	Resource provision
Expert technical assistance	Facilitating knowledge access
Peer-to-peer support groups	Secondments
Brokering	Facilitated workshops
Logistical support	Seminars
Action learning sets	Funding

- **Facilitating synergies and cross learning with other agencies and networks:** Danish CSOs are often able to link up different Southern partners within programmes to engage in mutual support or cross learning. They also increasingly play a role in encouraging and convening different actors – such as CSOs, the private sector and government institutions – to come together and jointly address specific issues.
- **Linking advocacy work to the work of others at local, national and/or international levels:** Danish CSOs often help connect the advocacy work of Southern partners to international, regional or national campaigns. This helps to increase the impact of advocacy work by making sure it is joined up across localities and sectors.
- **Supporting partners to adopt best global practice:** Danish CSOs can introduce new ideas to Southern partners, or support them to comply with international standards and guidelines.
- **Strengthening partner presence at national or international events:** Danish CSOs may help Southern partners access platforms and spaces, and encourage them to take on a higher profile. This is considered particularly important under the localisation agenda.
- **Introducing partners to new research, tools, methodologies or ways of working:** Danish CSOs often transfer knowledge of how others work, and support Southern partners’ ability to adopt new approaches.

Table 1: Percentage of Southern partners that said their capacity has been enhanced ‘a lot’ or ‘a moderate amount’ in defined areas of capacity

Area of capacity	Percentage
Engaging in advocacy	81.3
Internal systems (e.g. finance, human resources)	80.7
Technical skills and expertise	80.1
Strengthening gender equality and diversity	79.5
Leadership and governance	75.4
Compliance (e.g. anti-corruption mechanisms, safeguarding)	73.1
Mechanisms to support accountability to poor and excluded groups	72.5
Monitoring and evaluation	71.3
Fundraising and communications	60.8
Adherence to humanitarian standards	54.4

- **Helping partners to identify new sources of funding and/or providing access to donors:** Danish CSOs can support Southern partners in this area through a variety of methods, such as introducing them to new donors, writing letters of recommendation, developing joint proposals, or enhancing their capacity to raise funds.
- **Providing protection from threats or intimidation:** At times, Southern partners can feel threatened, particularly in areas where there is conflict or shrinking civil society space. Danish CSOs can provide a degree of protection through their international standing and profile.

As shown in table 2 below, the highest scores were achieved for enhancing capacity through formal capacity support. Over 90% of Southern partners said their capacity had been enhanced ‘a lot’ or ‘a moderate amount’ in this area. In addition, over 80% of Southern partners said Danish CSOs had added-value ‘a lot’ or ‘a moderate amount’ through:

- facilitating synergies and cross learning with other agencies or networks;
- linking their advocacy work to the work of others at local, national and/or international levels;
- supporting them to adopt best global practice; and
- strengthening their presence at national or international events.

A number of other areas of added-value were mentioned by different Danish CSOs during interviews. These included the following.

- Some Danish CSOs said they had been able to use their own experiences to support their Southern partners through practical advice. For example, the Disabled People’s Organisations Denmark (DPOD) had been able to share their experiences as an umbrella organisation working on disability, whilst the United federation of Danish Workers had shared their experiences as a trade union.
- One Danish CSO said it had been encouraging local partners to move out of their comfort zones,

specifically by seeking to change the viewpoints or habits of conservative churches.

- Several Danish CSOs had been able to support Southern partners to manage grant compliance requirements, which would otherwise mean they would have been unable to access international funding.
- Many Danish CSOs (including Danish Refugee Council, International Media Support, Oxfam IBIS, Save the Children DK and DanchurchAid) said they had been able to provide protection to CSOs during difficult periods, or in areas where there was shrinking civil society space.
- Finally, some CSOs said they had been able to present a neutral face in areas where Southern partners are part of local power structures, and are therefore treated with suspicion by some parts of local civil society.

Added-value within alliances

Some Danish CSOs are able to add value within their respective alliances and federations. This includes Danish CSOs that support locally registered offices in the South (e.g. ActionAid, ADRA, Caritas, and the Danish Red Cross) and those that support federated country offices, such as Save the Children DK and Oxfam IBIS. Sometimes this work is done independently, and sometimes in alliance with other Nordic agencies.

Danish CSOs often add value in alliances and federations through their ability to specialise in technical areas of support. For example, Oxfam IBIS plays a lead role in peacebuilding in many country offices within the Oxfam confederation; whilst the Danish Red Cross specialises in mental health and psychosocial support.

Danish CSOs also act as advocates within their alliances. For example, Save the Children Denmark advocates on localisation and partnership, whilst the Labour Market Consortium partners influence others within their own confederations (such as the United Federation of Danish Workers and the Danish Trade Union Development Agency

Table 2: Percentage of Southern partners that said their Danish partners have added-value ‘a lot’ of ‘a moderate amount’ to their work in defined areas

Area of influence	Percentage
Enhancing capacity through formal capacity building support (e.g. training)	91.2
Facilitating synergies and cross learning with other agencies or networks	84.7
Linking advocacy work to the work of others at local, national and/or international levels	83.3
Supporting partners to adopt best global practice	82.1
Strengthening partner presence at national or international events	81.4
Introducing partners to new research, tools, methodologies or ways of working	74.7
Helping partners to identify new sources of funding and/or providing access to donors	68.6
Providing protection from threats or intimidation	54.0

towards the ILO or the International Confederation of Trade Unions).

Danish CSOs' ability to influence within wider alliances and federations means they are often able to exert far more influence over international development efforts than would be the case if they simply provided bilateral support to Southern partners via Danish development aid funding.

Added-value within Denmark

According to MFA officials and representatives of Danish CSOs and pooled funds, working through Danish CSOs brings a number of benefits to the MFA and the wider Danish public. These directly contribute to more effective support for CSOs in the Global South.ⁱ

- Working through Danish CSOs enables a 'line of sight' to where money gets spent. This enables the MFA and the Danish public to know where and how funds are being used. This is not always possible when money is transferred in other ways, for example through bilateral agencies.
- Many Danish CSOs have very localised relationships with Southern partners. This means that support can get to emergency sites very quickly. For example, in the recent conflict in Northern Ethiopia, when refugees began to spill over into Sudan, the Red Crescent Society had eyes on the ground within hours, and was able to channel Danish funds almost immediately.
- Danish CSOs are able to reach partners that MFA cannot, and are able to work with a diversity of Southern-based organisations. Organisations such as social movements and informal youth groups are not always able to manage funds directly from a donor, as they may not be able to handle the required compliance mechanisms, or may not be registered to receive direct foreign funding in their countries.
- Danish CSOs also provide a bridge between Southern partners and donors. Civil society partnerships are rarely straightforward, and require a lot of management and support. Danish CSOs are able to manage and reconcile local partner needs and donor priorities through close relationships with both.
- Danish CSOs play an important role in communicating development efforts in the South to the Danish public. This helps to maintain public awareness of, and support for, Denmark's contribution to international development.

Above all else, Danish CSOs feel it is important that they and their supporters are able to work in solidarity with Southern partners. It is important for partners to know that people on the other side of the world are thinking of them, empathising with them, and – in the case of Faith Based Organisations – praying for them.

This solidarity manifests itself in different ways. These include, for example, partners in the North and the South recognising they are all working to move the world in a better direction; direct engagement between youth activists in the North and the South; Danish CSOs supporting partners in times of difficulty; and peer-to-peer contacts, where people from different parts of the world can meet and gain an understanding of how each other live. Sometimes, solidarity also involves raising a voice on behalf of Southern institutions or individuals, or bringing issues of rights' violations or oppression to the attention of the Danish public.

Added-value of Southern partners

Finally, Southern partners also expressed their own views on how they add value to the work of Danish CSOs, and through them to the Danish MFA and the broader public in Denmark. The most common view was that they contributed to Danish CSOs' (and therefore Danish MFA) institutional and strategic objectives.

Southern partners also felt they had an important role to play in facilitating access to communities. For example, they were able to provide updated information on beneficiaries, areas of intervention and the local environments and contexts; connect Danish partners with other local organisations through contacts and social networks; and act as an advocate or mediator for the Danish partner with local communities.

Southern partners also stated that they regularly provided stories of change for fundraising (or for development education in Denmark), and provided evidence to support regional, international or national advocacy work.

It is clear from the surveys and case studies conducted as part of the evaluation that Southern partners increasingly wish to see themselves as equal partners in a two-way relationship with their Danish partners, based around mutual added-value, rather than seeing themselves as the passive recipients of project-based funding.

ⁱ Added-value within Denmark is covered in more detail in thematic evaluation 1, which covers the Danish Public engagement in the international cooperation agenda promoted by Danish CSOs.