



MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF DENMARK
Danida

FEBRUARY 2022

EVALUATION OF THE DANISH SUPPORT TO CIVIL SOCIETY

*Thematic Evaluation 2:
Strengthening Civil Society in the Global South*





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Nordic Consulting Group

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Photo: Women dancing in village outside Timbuktu in Mali.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
C4C	Charter for Change
CBO	Community-based Organisation
CSF	Civil Society Fund
CISU	Civil Society in Development
CKU	Center for Church-based Development
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DCA	DanChurchAid
DFPA	Danish Family Planning Association
DH	Dansk Handicap
DKK	Danish Kroner
DMCDD	Danish Mission Council Development Department
DPOD	Disabled Peoples' Organisations Denmark
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
DTDA	Danish Trade Union Development Agency
DUF	Danish Youth Council
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
EQ	Evaluation Question
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
FBO	Faith-based Organisation

HRBA	Human Rights Based Approaches
IATI	International Aid Transparency Initiative
IMS	International Media Support
INGO	International Non-governmental Organisation
LMC	Labour Market Consortium
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
ODA	Official Development Assistance
SC	Save the Children
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SPA	Strategic Partnership Agreement
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
TE	Thematic Evaluation
ToR	Terms of Reference
WWF	Worldwide Fund for Nature

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report covers the second of three thematic evaluations carried out under the “Evaluation of Danish Support to Civil Society”. It is titled “Strengthening Civil Society in the Global South” and is the broadest of the three in terms of scope, going to the heart of Denmark’s support to civil society. The evaluation questions (EQs) for thematic evaluation 2 (TE2) cover three very specific subjects – the added-value of Danish CSOs, localisation, and work with new types of partnerships. Two broader subjects are Danish CSO support to Southern partners, and wider changes resulting from this support.

Methodology and constraints

TE2 was designed and implemented as a mixed methods evaluation, which included:

- introductory discussions and interviews with MFA representatives;
- a literature review;
- interviews with representatives of all CSOs in receipt of a Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA), and the six Danish-based pooled funds covered by the evaluation;
- a survey administered to 95 Southern partners of the pooled funds, meeting specified criteria;
- a survey involving a random sample of 104 partners of Danish CSOs in receipt of an SPA;
- 13 in-depth case studies, based on themes which emerged from the literature review and early discussions, and which closely mirrored the EQs; and
- a validation workshop carried out remotely in January 2022.

The most obvious constraint faced by the evaluation was the Covid-19 pandemic, which prevented half the evaluation team (those working for INTRAC) from visiting Denmark and prevented any travel to the South. Whilst the TE2 team was able to mitigate this through the use of local consultants in most cases, it meant that some planned activities could not be carried out. These included discussions with wider Southern stakeholders, and workshops with groups of different partners.

Structure and profile of partners

Southern partners of SPA agencies are predominantly based in East and West Africa, Asia and the Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA); and are generally well-established organisations with a known track-record of working in their respective countries. 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 total number of social movements supported in the wider portfolio is very low, probably less than 2%. Over half the Southern partners of SPA agencies have been receiving support from their Danish partners for less than four years, roughly corresponding to the current SPA period.

Southern partners of Danish CSOs receiving programmatic funding from a pooled fund are also well-established organisations but are more focused around East Africa and Latin America, and more likely to self-identify as national or sub-national NGOs. On average, they have been supported by their Danish partners over a longer time period, with fewer partnerships established in the past four years.

More than 75% of Southern partners receive over half of their income from international sources. By contrast, less than 15% receive over half their income from local or national sources. This demonstrates how reliant Southern partners are on funding from international sources.

Initial figures received from SPA agencies suggested that only around 100 of the 650 Southern partners across the portfolio were supported through HUM (Humanitarian) Lot funding. For a variety of reasons, the level of desired Southern partnership is sometimes different during emergencies, where there is often an urgent need to ensure that basic needs and human rights are met.

Impact on Southern civil society

The evaluation was asked to explore how well Danish CSOs had contributed to a strong, independent, representative, accountable and diverse civil society in the Global South?

- **Strong:** There is significant and abundant evidence from the two surveys and the 13 case studies conducted as part of the evaluation – all directly soliciting views from the South – that Danish CSOs have helped strengthen Southern partners over the past four years, both through the SPA agreements and the pooled funds. Over 500 directly supported Southern partners across the portfolio have seen their capacity enhanced significantly in at least one area of capacity support. Much of this enhanced capacity is in areas which directly improve partners' ability to support their own constituents, such as engaging in advocacy, strengthening gender equality and diversity, and developing mechanisms to support accountability to poor and excluded groups.

- **Independent:** Southern partners are still heavily reliant on Northern funding, and very little of their income is generated locally or nationally. Some Danish CSOs are supporting their Southern partners to better fundraise and communicate. However, Southern partners, on average, feel they are not receiving as much capacity support in this area as they would like.
- **Representative:** Evidence from the surveys demonstrates that Danish CSOs have supported many of their Southern partners to build better relations with their constituents and beneficiaries. However, evidence from the case studies and interviews suggests that the most representative Southern groups (such as social movements) can sometimes be the hardest to work with.
- **Accountable:** There is convincing evidence from the surveys that Danish CSOs are helping improve Southern partners' relationships with constituents and governments in many cases and are helping them to develop mechanisms to support accountability towards poor and excluded groups.
- **Diversity:** Danish CSOs still work largely through national or sub-national NGOs. There is some work with networks and private sector organisations, but still relatively little with social movements. In the absence of benchmarking, it is hard to tell whether diversity is increasing or not. Indications from interviews with some Danish CSOs suggest it is not increasing particularly rapidly, if at all.

Overall, the evaluation finds that the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) has succeeded in creating a nurturing environment in which Danish CSOs have been able to progress their partnership approaches. Many Danish CSOs have developed partnership policies and strategies that are in line with current MFA thinking and guidelines. In some cases, they are also acting as advocates within their respective alliances and federations.

However, there is evidence that Danish CSOs give insufficient attention to exit strategies for partnerships, in spite of one or two examples of good practice. Equally, there is an issue around helping partners diversify their income base or raise funds. According to both surveys, a majority of Southern partners want more support for fundraising, and feel it is an area where Danish CSOs are not always delivering sufficiently.

Added value

Danish CSOs add value to the work of their Southern partners in many ways. This includes tangible support such as providing formal capacity development, linking advocacy work at different levels, networking, and joint learning. Other areas of added value mentioned as part of the

evaluation included facilitating synergies; convening; strengthening the presence of partners at international events; promoting or disseminating research; developing, supporting, testing and mainstreaming pilot or innovation studies; developing and promoting methodologies and new practices; helping partners identify new sources of funding; providing protection from threats; and risk mitigation.

Several Danish CSOs mentioned less tangible features of added value such as accompaniment, caring, praying (within faith-based organisations (FBOs)), walking alongside, and generally being 'in solidarity with' Southern partners. These were also highly valued by Southern partners, who acknowledged during the surveys and case studies how much they felt Danish CSOs had added value to their development efforts. This is testimony to the way in which Danish CSOs work, and the way in which they interact with their Southern partners.

Some Danish CSOs add value within their respective alliances and federations, sometimes independently, and sometimes in alliance with other Nordic agencies. This often involves providing specialist support in defined areas of competence. Danish CSOs can also act as advocates within their alliances, which enables them 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.

Working through Danish CSOs also brings a number of benefits to the MFA and the wider Danish public. These include providing a 'line of sight' to where money gets spent; getting support to emergency sites 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.

Whilst it is possible to envisage many other ways of supporting development in the Global South, e.g. through pooled funds in-country, direct management of partners by the MFA, using consultancy companies to manage relationships, or bilateral funding to governments or multilaterals, the evaluation team considers that none of these is likely to offer the added-value benefits listed above. Furthermore, working through Danish CSOs helps build linkages with Danish society, which is valuable in terms of raising public awareness on development issues and maintaining support for development cooperation. The current approach of working through Danish CSOs therefore appears to be the right one for now.

Results at community, policy and environmental level

All Danish CSOs' work with Southern partners is designed to support long-term, sustainable change in communities. However, in some cases the linkages are stronger and more direct than in others. In some areas, for

instance, it is possible to draw direct, plausible linkages between Danish CSOs' support to Southern partners and results at community level. For example, it is possible to extrapolate from survey evidence that:

- At least 670 Southern partners have seen their relationships with their constituents or beneficiaries enhanced, leading to better, more relevant and/or more responsive programming;
- 650 partners have been able to reach and support more people;
- 550 partners have enhanced technical skills and expertise that should translate directly 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 case studies developed as part of TE2 also demonstrate how Danish CSO support to Southern partners has helped generate tangible benefits for poor and marginalised people living in communities across the world, as well as generating results at policy or environmental level. These range from short-term and vital benefits, such as improved health and livelihoods, to longer-term change resulting from advocacy efforts or social accountability. In many cases the ultimate results of this work are yet to be realised, and the chain of contribution is often long and complex.

It is difficult to summarise results at portfolio level since CSOs frequently work in highly complex and uncertain environments, and results are often highly context specific. To aggregate impact or show how combined MFA support affects pre-defined goals in the South, would require a degree of coherence of programming which is neither present nor desirable, since it would mean Danish CSOs and pooled funds imposing their views on Southern partners, and restricting the circumstances under which they offer support. It would also require the MFA to radically restructure its grant mechanisms and impose much more conditionality on the Danish CSOs and pooled funds, which would in turn undermine many of its policies on partnership and localisation.

However, there is a wide range of options available to better *summarise* and *communicate* wider results, some of which were recommended in a previous evaluation, and some of which have since been adopted.

How far the MFA, the Danish CSOs and pooled funds want to go further down this route depends on the relative costs and benefits of doing so. The evaluation considers 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.

The same challenges faced when summarising results also make it hard to establish the overall cost-effectiveness of Danish CSOs' work. At portfolio level, rather than focusing on narrow economic assessments, cost-effectiveness (or value for money more broadly) is more often about making a defensible case for why a chosen approach provides the best use of resources and is delivering value to poor and marginalised people. The critical question to ask is therefore whether Danish CSOs (and pooled funds) are genuinely considering value for money and cost-effectiveness issues when engaging in the overall design and planning of their programmes. To the extent that this evaluation has been able to judge it appears they are. When interviewed, representatives of Danish CSOs and pooled funds were able to provide convincing arguments outlining the benefits of their structures and operations, as well as the reasons behind recent changes. Ultimately, the cost-effectiveness of Danish CSO collaborations with Southern partners will be judged alongside the success or failure of the localisation agenda (see below). If Danish CSOs are successful in transferring skills, resources and opportunities to Southern partners then the investments made now are likely to result in more sustainable benefits for poor and marginalised people in the future.

Localisation

A great deal is being done by Danish CSOs, supported by the MFA, to promote localisation, and Denmark appears to be a powerful actor within the localisation agenda. There is significant momentum around localisation, partly as a result of external impetus, and partly because the working cultures of Danish CSOs dovetails with the localisation agenda. For Danish CSOs, this manifests itself in many ways, such as developing new policies on localisation, signing the Charter for Change, pushing for change within alliances and federations, and handing over control of global platforms.

At the same time, the first-hand views of Southern partners suggest that a lot more could be done to facilitate better power-sharing and more equality of relationships. Southern partners specifically cited more long-term funding that can be used flexibly; more support for fundraising and communications; more strategic capacity development; strengthened presence at national and international events; avoidance of funding gaps; and better-planned exit strategies for partnerships. Some Danish CSO staff commented that many Danish CSOs (maybe most) do not offer the same flexible conditions to their partners as they are getting from the MFA. This area needs urgent attention.

The diversity of different approaches within Danish CSOs and pooled funds is a strength and not a weakness. The evaluation finds that it is good that different CSOs pursue localisation seriously, but at their own pace, and with ownership of the process. This is why it is important that any targets (such as targets for funds transferred overseas) should apply across the portfolio of support and should not be directed at individual CSOs which work under very different structures and in very different contexts. Civil society is 'messy' and diverse, and therefore requires a diversity of responses.

Importantly, the most recent impetus for localisation has come through the humanitarian sector, although concepts of localisation have been around for many years in the social development sector. However, the professionalisation of humanitarian work has sometimes created entry barriers for new Southern organisations, as it is increasingly becoming harder to match up to all the required standards. Another issue is that many humanitarian donors do not support the kind of enabling environment which would allow Danish CSOs to do capacity development. These factors can inhibit Danish CSOs from engaging in desired localisation within the humanitarian sector and need to be addressed if possible.

New forms of partnership

Many Danish CSOs are working with new forms of partnerships, although traditional core or strategic NGOs remain the most common type of partner. Working with new types of groups or organisations can enable Danish CSOs to support hard-to-reach groups that they could not before, or those they were not even aware of. Danish CSOs further recognise and appreciate the fact that MFA funding is very flexible and allows a lot of leeway in the way they work with newer forms of partnership, or the way in which they convene different actors for common purposes. Nonetheless Danish CSOs do not always find it easy to support non-traditional partners.

Danish CSOs and pooled funds frequently raised the issue of compliance as a major challenge to working with newer partnerships. Many donor compliance requirements are designed with support to larger NGO partners with traditional structures in mind. Other kinds of Southern partners often find it difficult to manage compliance. In response, Danish CSOs carry out a lot of the compliance requirements for Southern partners or provide additional support for them to do it. This then makes it more difficult to achieve targets for resource transfer. The requirements for more localisation, to work with newer forms of partnerships, and to ensure compliance are all valid, but can be contradictory and need to be managed.

Conclusions and recommendations

Overall, the evaluation finds that, through the SPAs and pooled funds, the MFA has succeeded in creating a nurturing environment in which Danish CSOs have been able to progress their partnerships. This has

generated many benefits for Southern partners and the poor and marginalised communities they support or represent. There would appear to be no real need for the MFA to radically change advice or direction at the moment. Instead, the MFA and Danish CSOs should build on what is already there, rather than engaging in change for the sake of change: if it's not broken, don't try and fix it!

The evaluation also finds that the MFA should continue to convene and coordinate to generate ownership and buy-in to key ideas, vision and values around localisation. In particular, the MFA should strongly encourage Danish CSOs and pooled funds to pursue further localisation with their Southern partners at their own pace. This is best done through constant dialogue and support, engaging with CSOs, and seeking to understand how they are developing and pursuing their own localisation strategies, rather than developing one-size-fits-all rules which will never be able to handle all the multiple different contexts in which localisation needs to be applied. At the same time, the MFA also needs to continue to recognise and address the different localisation challenges faced by humanitarian organisations, or those working in humanitarian contexts.

The evaluation makes the following recommendations, which flow from the findings above.

- 1. The MFA should ensure that any localisation targets, such as those for money transferred overseas, should apply across the portfolio of support:** Danish CSOs work under different structures and in very different contexts. Rather than setting targets top-down, Danish CSOs and pooled funds should be asked to be explicit about what they are trying to achieve within localisation as individual entities and should be judged on that basis. To help Danish CSOs think through how best to strengthen localisation within their own context, it would be helpful to have external resource people to work with each Danish CSO on an individual basis to review the current situation, set objectives on localisation, make practical suggestions, and challenge.
- 2. 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:** In particular, MFA should consider whether it is possible to include some funding with fewer compliance requirements that would help Danish CSOs support newer forms of partnership.
- 3. The MFA should invest in building a small core team responsible for localisation, supported by representatives of CSOs, including Southern representatives as appropriate:** This team should be tasked with ensuring that new SPA and pooled fund policies and

practices around localisation, working with newer partnerships and compliance are consistent and coordinated. At the very least, no new policies or structures should be put in place without a very clear sense of how they will impact on existing policies and structures. Working through a small team with designated roles will mitigate the past tendency to outsource work when developing new processes (such as applications for SPAs etc.) to different people or groups who do not necessarily share the same views.

- 4. Danish CSOs should consider how best to develop, use and apply exit strategies for partnerships:** In the light of the survey findings, it would be useful for Danish CSOs to investigate and adapt existing tools to support exit strategies for partnerships, or develop new ones, whilst recognising that exit strategies will need to be highly context specific, particularly given the increased focus on work in fragile states in the new round of SPAs.
- 5. Danish CSOs and the MFA should jointly discuss how better to support Southern partners to diversify their income bases or raise funds:** This is something that Southern partners want; and feel their Danish partners are not currently delivering sufficiently.
- 6. The MFA should encourage and incentivise Danish CSOs to invest in institutional capacity strengthening of local and national partners:** This has been recommended by some Danish CSOs, in line with Grand Bargain commitments that more efforts should be invested in local and national actors' organisational development and institutional capacities. Institutional barriers to such capacity strengthening need to be discussed and mitigated.
- 7. 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:** This could be done in simple ways such as asking Danish CSOs to report on progress towards this ambition in annual reports, thereby ensuring that they know this is expected of them. This kind of light touch approach would also enable Danish CSOs to justify their decisions in cases where it was felt such flexibility was not possible or appropriate.
- 8. The MFA and Danish CSOs should have an early discussion on the costs and benefits of pursuing new approaches to summarising and communicating portfolio-level results, and different options for M&E under the new SPA arrangements:** If new approaches to summarising and communicating portfolio-level results are desired then various options need to be discussed, and a subset adopted. There is a large range of options available to better communicate portfolio-level results, some of which were recommended in a

previous evaluation, and some of which have already been adopted. These are listed in Box 7 in Chapter 6 of this report.

9. The MFA should seek opportunities to influence current practices within the humanitarian sector that inhibit localisation, alongside other like-minded donors if possible:

Many humanitarian donors do not create the conditions that allow humanitarian NGOs to do capacity development. Specifically, many work only in one-year cycles (e.g., European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)). Danish MFA is an exception, and representatives of Danish humanitarian organisations believe MFA should step-up, attempt to persuade other donors of the need for longer-term funding strategies, and thereby help enhance the potential for the kind of localisation they would like to see in humanitarian situations.

10. The MFA should develop a new Civil Society Policy to replace the previous one: This should go into more detail on Denmark's approach to supporting civil society than Denmark's new Strategy for Development Cooperation – 'The World We Share: Climate, fragility and human rights at the forefront' – and could be developed in a participatory way, incorporating the voices of the CSO sector in both the North and the South.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report covers the second of three thematic evaluations carried out under the “*Evaluation of Danish Support to Civil Society*”. The Terms of Reference (ToR) for the evaluation outlined three thematic areas that had been identified as priorities, both by CSOs during a previous evaluation process and also by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). These were structured as three separate thematic evaluations, designed to address the following:

- Danish Public engagement in the international cooperation agenda promoted by Danish CSOs;
- Civil society strengthening in the Global South; and
- The Humanitarian-Development-Nexus.

This report covers the second of these evaluations – strengthening civil society in the Global South. It is the broadest of the three in terms of scope. Consequently, the evaluation team has had to be careful not to allow thematic evaluation number 2 (TE2) to become a ‘catch-all’ encompassing all support not covered by the other thematic evaluations.

The evaluation questions

The evaluation questions (EQs) for TE2 cover three very specific subjects – the added-value of Danish CSOs, localisation, and work with new types of partnerships. Two broader subjects include Danish CSO support to Southern partners, and wider changes resulting from this support. The evaluation questions are contained in Box 1.

Although no evaluation questions were designed to cover the Innovation Fund supported by the MFA over the Strategic Partnership Agreement period, the ToR for the evaluation stated that *“With the introduction of the SPA agreements, the Strategic Partners have an opportunity to experiment and innovate with 10% of the allocated funds to seek improved outcomes, based on flexible and high-risk investments and new partnerships. The evaluation will seek to draw out any lessons learned from these initiatives.”*

Structure of the document

The structure of this document closely follows the evaluation questions. Both results and lessons are included within the different chapters of the report. These are as follows.

- Chapter 2 of the report outlines the methodology used in the evaluation.
- Chapter 3 covers the structure of the Danish CSOs in support of a Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) (hereafter known as SPA agencies) and the Danish pooled funds, and examines the profile of Southern partners.
- Chapter 4 looks at how Danish CSOs' work has influenced their Southern partners, and is designed to address EQ2.

BOX 1: EVALUATION QUESTIONS

1. To what extent do partnerships between Danish and Southern CSOs promote sustainable results in a cost-effective manner?
2. What evidence shows that CSOs contributed to a strong, independent, representative, accountable and diverse civil society in the Global South? What lessons can be learned? Are they applicable elsewhere?
3. Which different local partnerships are being supported, e.g., traditional structures, new forms of civil society? What challenges does this present, and how are the associated risks managed?
4. To what extent do the Danish CSOs add value directly or indirectly to the desired change process and results in the global south?
5. To what extent do the Danish CSOs contribute to the agenda of localisation (increased involvement of local partners in terms of decision-making, control of funds, etc. in humanitarian and development support)?
6. To what extent are the partnerships equal? (Is there evidence of re-balancing the partnership i.e. making it responsive and accountable to the partner and including the gradual transfer of financial and decision-making responsibility?)
7. What can be learned from different approaches to localisation in different contexts?

- Chapter 5 covers the added value of Danish CSOs and is designed to address EQ4.
- Chapter 6 assesses how changes in Southern partners have translated into wider changes at community, policy or environmental levels, and is based largely on a set of case studies carried out as part of the evaluation. It is designed to address EQ1.
- Chapter 7 looks at the important subject of localisation, and is intended to cover EQs 5, 6 and 7.
- Chapter 8 covers work with new kinds of partnership, and addresses EQ3.
- Chapter 9 contains some brief comments on innovation.
- The final chapter draws together the findings into one chapter presenting some conclusions, and a set of recommendations.

The evaluation was always intended to be flexible and utilisation-focused. Consequently, some evaluation products had already been developed and, in some cases, disseminated by the time this final report was developed. Indeed, had the evaluation team not done so the report would have been too late to feed into ongoing processes such as the development of guidelines for the new round of SPAs. These products are contained in the annexes.

The annexes contain two briefs on added value and the voice of the South, disseminated to the MFA in April and May 2021 (Annexes D and E). They also contain formal write ups of two partner surveys conducted during the evaluation (Annexes A and B) and a full set of case studies generated as part of the evaluation (Annex C). These documents provide much of the evidence on which the evaluation findings are based. Annex F is a technical document containing the methodology used to produce one of the partner surveys. It is included in case MFA wants to repeat the exercise at some stage in the future. Annex G describes the modalities through which Southern partners are supported.

2. METHODOLOGY

TE2 was designed as a mixed methods evaluation. This is defined as *“the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches in a single evaluation”*.¹ TE2 was primarily designed around two data collection approaches. First, a series of case studies, purposefully sampled, designed to address the EQs through in-depth qualitative inquiry. Second, online surveys submitted to Southern partners of Danish CSOs, designed to produce quantitative results that are representative of the overall portfolio of work. This combined approach allowed the evaluation to utilise the three main strengths of mixed methods analysis:

- **Triangulation:** comparing information generated through quantitative and qualitative methods to see if it reinforces or contradicts each other;
- **Sequencing:** enabling the findings of one kind of analysis to help shape the questions for another kind of analysis;² and
- **Cross-analysis:** using rating and scaling techniques to allow qualitative data to be analysed via qualitative methods.

TE2 was supported by an Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) comprising representatives from all SPA agencies and pooled funds, and a smaller Support Group with CSO and MFA representatives. The Support Group was used to help shape the survey questionnaires and case study templates, and comment on the initial findings arising out of the evaluation.

1 White, H (2009). Theory-Based Impact Evaluation: Principles and practice. Working paper no. 3. International Initiative for Impact Evaluation, June 2009.

2 Specifically, interviews with Danish CSOs at the start of the evaluation contributed to survey design. Some issues arising out of the survey findings were later explored in greater depth during the case studies.

Methods used

The following methods were used in TE2.

- **Introductory discussions** were held with MFA representatives to shape the scope of the evaluation. These discussions helped set the direction for the evaluation and resolved some of the contradictions and ambiguities in the ToR.
- A **literature review** was conducted.
- **Interviews with MFA staff** were conducted. A small number of interviews were postponed until the end of the evaluation as it was felt discussions would be more productive once the conclusions and recommendations had been developed.
- Interviews were also held with **representatives of all CSOs in receipt of an SPA**, and **representatives of the six pooled funds** covered by the evaluation. These were mostly held with senior staff, sometimes based in Denmark and sometimes based in other countries, although employed through Head Offices.
- Two **partners surveys** were conducted. The surveys used roughly the same structure. A set of initial questions sought to categorise Southern partners according to their location, history, size and type. Later sections were based around the EQs and used closed questions³ to assess how Southern partners felt about capacity support and change, the added value of Danish CSOs, localisation issues, and their partnerships with Danish CSOs. The surveys were primarily quantitative, with some limited options for adding additional information in places.
- The **pooled fund survey** was administered to 95 Southern partners. It was comprehensive, meaning that it was sent to all supported partners meeting the specified criteria. These were: a) Southern partners of Danish CSOs receiving over DKK 3 million per year from a pooled fund; and b) a further five Southern partners involved in a case study covered by TE2. The pooled funds covered were the Civil Society Fund/Pool (CSF) administered by CISU; the Center for Church-based Development (CKU) (formerly DMCCDD); and Dansk Handicap (DH) – Danish Disability. Responses were received from 75 out of 95 organisations. This marks a response rate of around 79%, which was well above that

3 Closed questions require rating and ranking scores, numbers, or tick box options, rather than narrative answers, which are generated through open-ended questions.

expected. A full explanation and methodology can be found in Annex B, pp1-2.

- For the **SPA partner survey**, each Danish CSO in receipt of Lot CIV or HUM funding was asked to provide a comprehensive list of all its Southern partners according to set criteria.⁴ From the resulting list of 646 partners (the sample frame) a stratified random sample of 106 Southern partners was developed. Southern partners were then sent a link to the survey, which was conducted via SurveyMonkey. Options were provided to fill in the survey using English, French, Spanish or Arabic. Options were also provided to fill in an offline version of the survey. Repeated reminders were provided to named contacts, and on a small number of occasions Danish CSOs were asked to write to the Southern partners reminding them to complete the survey. However, the survey responses were only sent to the evaluation team, and it was made clear that results would be anonymous. Responses were eventually received from 96 out of the sampled 106 organisations (90.6%). This is an extremely high response rate for this kind of survey. This meant that results could be generalised across the entire portfolio with a high degree of accuracy. A full explanation and methodology can be found in Annex A, pp.1-3.
- Thirteen in-depth **case studies** were carried out as part of TE2. These were based on themes which emerged from the literature review and early discussions, and which closely mirrored the EQs. 23 potential case studies were suggested by 10 of the 15 eligible SPA agencies and all of the pooled funds, following an online workshop. From these, the TE2 team selected thirteen case studies based on a number of criteria, including a set of sampling questions (see Box 2) and achieving representation in terms of the CSOs (based partly on their own interests) and geographical areas. The selection was also designed to enable the TE2 team to carry out in-depth field work in two selected countries – Kenya and Ethiopia – although in the event this was not possible because of Covid-19. Thematically, most of the cases fell under the headings of localisation; working with new partners (including youth groups) or in new ways; and convening or supporting Southern networks, platforms and alliances. Many of the cases covered two or more of these themes. The cases were conducted through a number of methods including the review of secondary sources (such as videos, case studies, reports etc.), individual and group interviews, focus group discussions, email exchanges, and, in a limited number of circumstances, observation.

4 The Labour Market Consortium (LMC) had its own fund, known under a different name. LMC's partners were not included in the survey because they are very different than the other Southern partners.

BOX 2: SAMPLING QUESTIONS

- Which cases could address parts of Danida's Theory of Change or Strategy for civil society that are uncertain, or most need testing, or where the knowledge base is currently weak?
- Where is there new or innovative work which needs to be examined in further depth, with a view to potential upscaling, mainstreaming or replication across agencies/CSOs?
- Which cases include particular results which, if verified and communicated, would address issues of critical public interest or political debate?
- Which cases emphasise challenges affecting Danish CSOs' performance that require solutions?
- Which cases could generate key findings useful for informing /developing future strategies or policies, including the upcoming round of SPAs?
- Which cases are of particular interest that might generate valuable learning for others (e.g., other donors, multilaterals)?
- Which cases include results where more than one CSO has contributed over time, e.g. demonstrating development of a policy, a network, or a specific way of operation; or how several Danish CSOs have contributed over a period or even in several countries?

Wherever possible, local consultants were used to conduct physical or virtual interviews. Where not possible, the TE2 team tried to get the view of Southern partners directly in other ways, such as via email. In all circumstances Southern partners were given assurances that information could be kept confidential if necessary. The case studies are in Annex E.

- Some of the findings from the interviews, case studies and surveys were later validated through a virtual **workshop** with the MFA and Danish CSOs, held in January 2022. This enabled representatives of Danish CSOs and pooled funds not involved in the case studies to have the opportunity to compare findings against their own experiences, and to discuss implications.

Constraints

The most obvious constraint was the Covid-19 pandemic, which prevented half the evaluation team (those working for INTRAC) from visiting Denmark and prevented any travel to the South. Whilst the TE2 team was able to mitigate this through the use of local consultants in most cases, it meant that some planned activities could not be carried out. These included discussions with wider Southern stakeholders, and workshops with groups of different partners. Had it been known at the time that international travel would not be possible, it is likely that a slightly different set of cases would have been chosen, with less concentration on East Africa, and involving a more diverse range of countries.

In some ways the timing of the evaluation was not ideal. Whilst the evaluation was being conducted, MFA was embarking on a new round of SPAs, and was inviting Danish CSOs to apply, although the precise timetable only became apparent as the evaluation progressed. To mitigate this, the TE2 team attempted to provide information as soon as available, either through meetings with MFA representatives or through short briefs. Two of these briefs are included in Annexes D and E.

From a technical perspective, the evaluation has been successful in getting the views of a representative sample of Southern partners through the two surveys. However, their views (and the views of partners interviewed through the case studies) only represent the views of Southern partners that have been successful in forging partnerships with Danish CSOs.⁵ Views are not representative of Southern CSOs more generally. It may have been possible to interview unsuccessful applicants had the evaluation team been able to engage in field work in Kenya and Ethiopia, but this was not possible because of Covid-19.

It is important to note that the evaluation did not carry out any primary data collection concerning results at community level. It was agreed with the MFA that this was not feasible given the breadth of the evaluation and was best covered by individual project or agency evaluations. Hence comments on any changes at community level from the case studies necessarily derive from documentation and interviews with CSO respondents.

Notwithstanding these constraints, the evaluation team hopes that the findings within this evaluation report are interesting and can be used to stimulate discussion as well as contribute to decision-making at different levels. In particular the evaluation would draw attention to the very high response rates for the two partner surveys, and the involvement of the Southern 'voice' through the case studies, which means the views of the South are very strongly represented.

5 It should be noted that the SPA survey included some Southern CSOs that had been partners of SPA agencies over the course of the latest SPA period, but were no longer partners for one reason or another.

3. THE PROFILE OF PARTNERS

To understand the relationship between Danish CSOs and their Southern partners it is first important to understand how support is structured. Some SPA agencies have clear one-to-one relationships with their Southern partners (e.g., DanChurchAid, Mission East, International Media Support). For others the relationship is not always so obvious. For example, when asked to list direct partners for the SPA partner survey, some agencies listed national offices in the South (e.g., Caritas, ADRA, Danish Red Cross), whilst others listed a combination of country offices and traditional Southern-based CSOs (e.g., ActionAid). By contrast, Oxfam IBIS, Save the Children Denmark, Danish Family Planning Association (DFPA), PlanBørnefonden and World Wildlife Fund for Nature Denmark all listed CSO partners operating in countries where they provide support through national offices.

To an outsider, therefore, the relationships are not always clear. This makes it hard to accurately count or estimate the number of Southern partners supported by Danish CSOs. It is even harder when indirect partners are considered. For example, one of the case studies covered by the evaluation concerns ActionAid Denmark's support to an LGBTIQ+ social movement in Kenya. However, ActionAid Denmark's support is carried out alongside ActionAid International Kenya (AAIK). AAIK was listed as a direct Southern partner of ActionAid Denmark for the SPA partner survey, but the LGBTIQ+ social movement was not. Equally, support to a national office in the South, such as Caritas Jordan, may then be cascaded to multiple organisations at diocese and parish levels.

A brief summary of the different modalities of support used to reach Southern partners is contained in Annex G. For this evaluation, Southern organisations were considered direct partners of SPA agencies:

- if they had received funds directly from a Danish CSO, or had a legal contract such as an MOU;
- if they had been funded or supported over the most recent four-year funding period (even if they were no longer being funded or supported);
- if they had been funded or supported for at least a year; and
- if they were based in the global South.

For the pooled funds it is also important to distinguish between Danish members, and how they are supported, and how they in turn support Southern partners. The pooled funds are quite different in scope, values and practice. In some cases, rather than providing grant support, pooled funds such as CKU and the Disabled Peoples' Organisations Denmark (DPOD) implement projects directly with the Danish members and CSOs based in the South. The same is true of the Labour Market Consortium. Direct partners of pooled funds therefore also need to be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Partner profiles

Rough profiles of direct Southern partners were obtained from the SPA and pooled fund partner surveys. These are shown in Table 1 on the following page. Results are approximate but enable a useful comparison. It is important to recognise that figures for the pooled funds only include Southern partners of Danish CSOs receiving over DKK 3 million per year. The profile of Southern partners of Danish CSOs receiving smaller levels of funding is not known.

The largest difference is seen in the regions in which partners are based. SPA agency partners are mostly located in East Africa, West Africa, South or Southeast Asia and MENA. By contrast, a very large proportion of Southern partners of pooled fund agencies (60%) are based in East Africa (17 out of 75 Southern partners were based in Uganda alone) with very few based in West Africa or MENA, but a much higher proportion based in Latin America. Amongst SPA agencies, a much higher proportion of partners self-identified as humanitarian and relief organisations. Networks and alliances accounted for 8-9% of partners in both surveys, and social movements only accounted for three Southern partners across the two surveys.

TABLE 1: PROFILES OF SOUTHERN PARTNERS⁶

Profile	Partners of SPA agencies	Partners of Pooled Fund agencies
Regions in which partners are based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 32% East Africa • 24% West Africa • 21% South or Southeast Asia • 15% MENA • 8% spread across Latin America, Central Africa and Central or Eastern Europe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60% East Africa • 19% Latin America • 9% South or Southeast Asia • 12% spread across Central Asia, Central Europe, MENA and West Africa
Age of partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 78% of partners established over 10 years ago • 2% established in the last 4 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 77% of partners established over 10 years ago • 8% established in the last 4 years
Type of organisation ⁷	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 48% National NGO • 15% Humanitarian or relief organisation • 9% Network or coalition • 5% Private sector organisations • 5% CBO • 1% Social movement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 64% National NGO • 11% Sub-national NGO • 8% Network or coalition • 3% CBO • 3% Humanitarian or relief organisation • 3% Private sector organisation • 3% Social movement
Length of support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 32% of partners have been receiving support from Danish partner for more than 10 years • 52% have been receiving support for four years or less 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 27% of partners have been receiving support from Danish partner for more than 10 years • 35% have been receiving support for four years or less
Organisational income in the last financial year ⁸	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 53% of partners had an organisational income of over USD 500,000 • 13% of partners had an organisational income of less than USD 100,000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40% of partners had an organisational income of over USD 500,000 • 17% of partners had an organisational income of less than USD 100,000

6 Note that figures for SPA agencies are only based on direct partners.

7 Figures are based on self-identification from a closed list of options. Partners were asked to select one option only, although many partners could have chosen more than one option.

8 Based on estimated income in the last financial year for which the partner had full figures.

There was little noticeable difference across the age of partners. It was noticeable, however, that over half the partners of SPA agencies had been receiving support from their Danish partners for less than four years, indicating a significant handover of partners at the beginning of the current SPA period. When Alliance partners⁹ are stripped out the proportion is even higher at 65%, meaning that almost two-thirds of non-Alliance partners represent new partnerships forged within the current SPA period. This suggests the greater stability of funding allowed by the SPA funding mechanism has enabled many newer partnerships to be developed. Partnerships with West African partners were notably younger on average, which is partly explained by a shift in emphasis within the MFA from East to West Africa.

Based on the data in Table 1 it would appear that Southern partners of SPA agencies are predominantly based in East and West Africa, Asia and MENA; and are well-established organisations with a known track-record of working in their respective countries. If the sample is representative of the wider portfolio of partners it would suggest that SPA agencies are working overall with around 25-35 private sector organisations, and around 45-65 networks or coalitions.¹⁰ By contrast, only one organisation self-identified as a social movement. It is not possible to estimate the total number of social movements in the wider portfolio based on this evidence, but it is likely to be very low.

Southern partners of Danish CSOs receiving programmatic funding from a pooled fund are also well-established organisations but are more focused around East Africa and Latin America, and more likely to self-identify as national or sub-national NGOs. On average, they have been supported by their Danish partners over a longer time period, with fewer partnerships established in the past four years.

It is also interesting to look at where Southern partners get their funding from. In the surveys, nearly 80% of Southern partners of SPA agencies said they received over half of their income in the previous financial year for which they had records from international sources. By contrast, less than 10% received over half their income from local or national sources. For partners of pooled funds, 73% of partners that answered the question said that more than half their income came from international sources, and only 15% said that over half their income came from local or national sources.¹¹ This demonstrates how reliant Southern partners

9 Alliance partners are national CSOs with their own governance structure and legal registration that are members of the same federation or international alliance as the Danish CSO. Within this evaluation they are more narrowly defined as country office partners of ActionAid Denmark, ADRA Denmark, Caritas Denmark, and Danish Red Cross. This is because these Danish CSOs all listed their respective country offices as direct partners for the SPA survey.

10 There is potentially a large margin of error here as numbers are small.

11 Full details of responses, together with analyses can be found on p. 12 of Annex A and p. 9 of Annex B.

are on funding from international sources. However, only around 20% of Southern partners of SPA agencies received more than half of their income from their Danish partners, meaning they are not so reliant on Danish funding per se. The figure for pooled fund partners was slightly higher. Around a third of pooled fund partners received more than half of their income from their Danish partners.

Caution must be taken in drawing too many comparisons because of the high numbers of Alliance partners in the SPA survey. Based on the survey findings, Alliance partners, on average, receive a greater proportion of their money from local sources, are less dependent on Danish partners, and receive a lower proportion of their money from international sources. This is interesting given the debates on localisation (see Chapter 7) and some fears expressed that channelling support through Alliance partners could be undermining the representativeness of local civil society.

Humanitarian partners

Of the 96 Southern partners that completed the SPA partner survey, nine received HUM Lot funding and twelve received both CIV and HUM Lot funding. On the face of it this seems to be a low proportion, bearing in mind that the Lots were roughly equivalent in size.¹² Indeed, although the evaluation team did not have complete figures, the initial figures received from SPA agencies suggested that around 100 of 646 Southern partners across the portfolio were funded through HUM Lot. There are a number of reasons for the low proportion of humanitarian partners.

- First, around 33% of HUM Lot funding goes to Danish Refugee Council, and less than 3% of this funding is channelled through Southern partners.
- Second, a further 30% is channelled through agencies that work with a single Alliance partner in each country – ADRA, ActionAid, Caritas and the Danish Red Cross. The survey does not provide information about how this money is then channelled through further partners.
- This leaves only about a third of the money to be channelled through partners directly by DanChurchAid, Mission East, Oxfam IBIS and Save the Children. And some of this money may have been spent operationally.
- By contrast, virtually all CIV Lot money is designed to be used to support Southern partners.

¹² CIV Lot funding was DKK 664 million per year compared to HUM Lot funding of DKK 479 million per year.

During interviews, representatives of both Danish SPA agencies and pooled funds recognised that the level of desired partnership was sometimes different during emergencies. For example, Danish Refugee Council staff stated that the organisation's mandate was to find solutions for people affected by forced displacement, and whilst it was adapting its partnership approach it was not always possible to find appropriate partners to work through, particularly during early onsets of emergencies. There was also recognition that in some humanitarian work it is urgent to deliver results, and the imperative to work in partnership should not 'trump' the need to ensure that basic needs and human rights are met. There was no sense from the interviews that this was ever an issue at the start of an emergency, but there were some suggestions that organisations occasionally found it hard to know when to move towards more partnership-based approaches and could sometimes stay operational beyond the period necessary.

Another issue raised by more than one CSO representative with HUM Lot funding was the increased professionalisation of the humanitarian sector. Whilst on the one hand this is considered a good thing, on the other it makes it hard to find local organisations that can match up to international standards. In this sense the professionalisation of the sector has actually hampered new organisations from becoming involved and creates entry barriers that need to be addressed.

Finally, there was a feeling that the artificial barriers between CIV and HUM Lot funding have sometimes proved a barrier to work, as it meant having two separate and artificial Theories of Change in some countries. This issue is being addressed in the new round of SPA funding and may make it easier for CSOs to transition into long-term development from acute emergencies.

Conclusions

In the view of the evaluation, the difference in the way partners in the South are supported through different modalities (including the pooled funds) is a strength as it allows Danish CSOs to reach different constituencies. For example, ActionAid has worked to build up capacity in supporting social movements, Caritas has the ability to reach Catholic church organisations, and DPOD specialises in supporting organisations 'of' people with disabilities¹³. This diversity should be appreciated and carefully nurtured. It is a stated objective of MFA to contribute to a diverse civil society in the Global South, and this requires a diversity of approach.

13 As compared to organisations 'for' people with disabilities, which may or may not employ people with disabilities.

The only circumstances in which the diversity could be seen as an overall weakness is if the MFA wanted to encourage competitive tendering based on the achievement of pre-defined results. Members of the evaluation team have first-hand experience of how the UK Department for International Development (DFID) unsuccessfully tried to go down that route in the last round of UK core-funding for NGOs (2011-2016). However, there are some downsides to diversity that make it harder to manage. In particular, it may make it more difficult for MFA to set rigid rules and policies, as these will necessarily have to be interpreted in different ways by different organisations depending on how they view their partnerships. For example, it is relatively easy for Caritas to send 75% of its funding to its Southern partners as these are national Caritas offices. It is much harder for Oxfam IBIS or Save the Children Denmark to do the same as they don't operate in the same way. This means that each agency needs to be judged on its own merits, and it is not always useful to benchmark across different agencies.

It is outside the scope of the evaluation to comment on the pooled funds, and whether they should be continued in their present form. However, an important point is that they can to some extent mitigate any geographical or thematic limitations on SPA agencies. For example, a high proportion of SPA agency Southern partners are currently based in East Africa, and if the geographic focus of the new SPA round moves to West Africa a lot of partners may need to be picked up via the pooled funds. The pooled funds' extended geographical reach is also useful if the MFA needs direct information from a region where it has less coverage. A further added-value of the pooled funds is their existence as a conduit for direct peer-to-peer cooperation between smaller Danish CSOs and their Southern partners.

4. IMPACT ON SOUTHERN CIVIL SOCIETY

This chapter of the report addresses EQ2: *“What evidence shows that CSOs contributed to a strong, independent, representative, accountable and diverse civil society in the Global South? What lessons can be learned? Are they applicable elsewhere?”*. It is largely based on statistical information generated through the SPA and pooled fund surveys; qualitative information generated through the case studies, and especially through interviews with representatives of Southern partners; and interviews with SPA agencies and pooled fund representatives.

Overview of partnerships

There is a history within Nordic countries of seeing civil society as important in itself, not just as an instrument to achieve project or programme outcomes. In interviews with SPA agency and pooled fund representatives this was the dominant view. Most Danish CSOs support a mixture of different types of partnership. Some work predominantly with core partners at an organisational level, whilst others work with partners more on a project or programme basis. And, as mentioned previously, some (ActionAid, ADRA, Caritas and Danish Red Cross¹⁴) regard country offices as their direct partners.

Most of the SPA agencies and pooled funds have some kind of partnership policy, framework or strategy in place, or are in the process of developing one. Some agencies have evolved their approaches without necessarily changing the policy, and some partnership policies have more or less stayed the same over the past SPA period. But in most cases the policies (or strategies) have been introduced or updated, sometimes significantly so.

Some agencies (e.g., Caritas, WWF, ActionAid, Danish Red Cross, PlanBørnefonden) have based their partnership policies on wider international policies within alliances or federations. Sometimes this has worked in the other direction as well. For example, the partnership approach promoted by CARE Denmark has influenced other CARE members and country offices; other ADRA offices are beginning to take note of, and be influenced by, ADRA Denmark’s approach to partnership; and WWF Denmark has developed organisational development guidelines which are being used by the wider network.

14 For the remainder of this document, unless otherwise stated, it is assumed that references to international agencies such as CARE, Caritas, WWF etc. mean the Danish chapter, as in CARE Denmark, Caritas Denmark, WWF Denmark.

During interviews, there was no sense that CSOs or pooled funds have been influenced to develop policies by the MFA. (An exception was CISU, which has based many of its decisions over how to support Danish CSOs and their partners in the South on the Danish Government’s Civil Society Policy.) However, there was a general sense that the MFA, as a donor, has been very supportive of working in partnership, and has succeeded in creating a nurturing environment in which Danish CSOs and pooled funds have been able to progress their partnership approaches, and act as leaders internationally in some circumstances.

Much of the support provided to Southern Partners can be included broadly under capacity development. This is carried out using a variety of methods, such as those contained in Box 3. Few SPA agencies

BOX 3: 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 |

mentioned formal training, and in general there was a strong feeling that mentoring, accompaniment, working together, joint learning, being supportive and ‘being there for the duration’ were more important for sustained capacity development.

This mirrors findings in other evaluations that capacity development happens best when strong and relevant support is provided to organisations with the desire and ability to change, carried out within a supportive environment. Some of the case studies carried out through TE2 mentioned this kind of accompaniment, including those covering the work of Danmission in Cambodia, Mission East in Iraq, and Save the Children (see box opposite).¹⁵

15 All case studies in this document are taken from the set of 13 case studies carried out as a core part of TE2, with results validated by the evaluation team. The complete case studies can be found in Annex C.

CASE STUDY: ACCOMPANIMENT OF PARTNERS

Save the Children created the Horn of African Youth Network (HoAYN) to fill a perceived gap in support for older youth. HoAYN was highly dependent on Save the Children (SC) funding in its early years, which remains the case despite some (partially successful) efforts to diversify its resource base. SC has also played an important role in supporting capacity development in such areas as project design, proposal writing, advocacy, internal processes and systems, including strong financial management and resource mobilisation. An external observer interviewed as part of the evaluation noted that there had been a lot of 'hand-holding' from Save the Children's side, but not in a way which has diminished the agency of HoAYN.

Many SPA agency and pooled funds representatives complemented MFA on the flexibility of the four-year funding, which they believe has enabled better accompaniment of Southern partners. In the opinion of the evaluation these views appeared to be genuine, and SPA agencies in particular recognise how lucky they are compared to CSOs in non-Nordic regions of the world.

The main benefits of the four-year funding period mentioned were greater strategic planning and focus, more 'impact' at partner level, and greater opportunity for innovation and learning. Some of this was also put down to the MFA's Civil Society Policy, which has been in existence since well before the current SPA period. It was felt that its focus on capacity building, partnership and advocacy has given a lot of focus to Danish CSOs, as has its emphasis on partnership principles.

There is clearly a lot of synergy between the views of the MFA and Danish CSOs, and several MFA representatives interviewed stated that Danish CSOs share MFA's values around human rights-based approaches (HRBA), participation, accountability and empowerment. Danish civil society is often seen as an ambassador for these kinds of values, and there is a perceived 'brand value' in the Nordic approach. This manifests itself in a more adaptable kind of partnership approach, with more flexibility than is common outside of Scandinavian donors.

However, there were some concerns that the Civil Society Policy, which expired in December 2020, is not due to be replaced. Whilst there is a new Strategy for MFA's Development Cooperation¹⁶, this is not a direct

16 'The World We Share: Climate, fragility and human rights at the forefront'.

replacement, and was not developed with the active involvement of CSOs. One of this evaluation's recommendations is that the MFA should develop a new Civil Society Policy to replace the previous one. This should go into more depth (regarding the role of civil society in development cooperation) than the new Strategy, and could be developed in a participatory way, including soliciting the voices of the CSO sector in both the North and the South.

Key challenges with partnerships

Representatives of Danish CSOs were understandably keener to talk about positive aspects of partnerships. But it is also clear from the interviews and case studies that things can go wrong, and it is not always possible to sustain partnerships. Sometimes this happens because of financial imperatives (e.g., Oxfam had to terminate some partnerships following budget cuts in 2015), sometimes through changes in strategy, and sometimes because partners don't perform well, or the relationship breaks down. In addition, some partnerships simply run their course and need to be exited. However, few SPA agencies mentioned exit strategies when interviewed, and there were signs from both the interviews and the two partner surveys that exiting is not always handled well, and many Danish CSOs did not appear to have appropriate policies or practices in place.

CASE STUDY: EXITING PARTNERSHIPS

At least four longer-term partners have worked with **Mission East** over the course of its current programme in Iraq, but no longer work with it. There are a number of reasons for this. An initial interview with a member of Mission East staff revealed that one supported partner chose to move from distribution to mental health activities, so started to work with another donor. This meant it did not have the capacity or personnel to work with Mission East. Another partner failed to match up to the required international standards and expectations. A third underwent a restructuring in 2020, and then decided it wanted to develop in a different direction. Later comments received from Mission East's team based in Iraq revealed that it had decided not to work with two of the aforementioned partners following government instructions, as they are currently under investigation. One staff member said that organisations always start off wanting to build and develop a relationship with each other but, particularly in difficult or complex environments, can grow apart. Sometimes relationships can be salvaged, and sometimes it is best to part ways.

One of the exceptions was DanChurchAid, which has a guidance note on exiting partnerships. This is a practical tool for phasing out both when there is a well-planned, strategic process and also in situations where there are sudden problems (e.g., security, war, disasters) or in situations where either of the parties feel that the partnership must come to a stop. It may be useful to investigate this tool with a view to using it more widely, particularly if MFA priorities change in the new round of SPAs.

A number of other challenges were mentioned during interviews. One concerned the trade-off between working in partnership and ensuring that urgent needs are met. This is often a real issue when working in humanitarian settings.

Staff of one SPA agency pointed out that it is much easier to work with partners in stable countries such as Bangladesh or Nepal than Iraq or Afghanistan, where it is not always possible to support partners and help beneficiaries at the same time, and the emphasis sometimes needs to be on the context rather than the principle. More than one SPA agency also said they would work directly with beneficiaries if capacity to work at scale was not present in local partners.

Another challenge is more nuanced, and concerns the value placed on working with very small Community-based Organisations (CBOs). Some CSOs (e.g., Danmission, Danish Refugee Council) emphasised the work they were doing directly with smaller CBOs, such as women and youth groups, Parent Teachers Associations, or local volunteers. However, there is a discrepancy here as many NGOs used to work this way 33 years ago and have now moved away from what was seen as direct implementation. The Danish CSO community needs to decide whether working directly with these kind of CBOs counts towards working in partnership, or whether it is classed as direct implementation. The evaluation believes it should be the former but recognises that Danish CSOs need to provide a suitable rationale in each case in order to justify their approach.

One SPA agency also mentioned a potential trade-off between growth and working in partnership. Staff from DanChurchAid felt that it would be easier to work in true partnership with a smaller number of partners in-country – maybe 5-10 rather than 20. DanChurchAid is a bit of an outlier in this respect because it works with a very large number of direct partners.

Overall, it is clear that representatives of all SPA agencies and pooled funds believe that working in partnership is desirable and beneficial. However, it is not always easy. And when things do not work out it can take an enormous amount of time and energy (see case study above). As the staff of one SPA agency put it, *“It is not necessarily cheaper to work with local partners. But if partners are more embedded, then the sustainability is stronger. In the long term, it makes sense. But it is a heavy burden on staff”*.

Of course, no current evaluation can address challenges without at least mentioning the Covid-19 pandemic, and it is certainly true that Danish agencies' capacity development efforts have been severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic over the past 18 months. However, the effects of Covid-19 have not all been negative. For example, some SPA agency representatives said it had forced them to re-think power relations, especially in the context of grassroots partners often having been first-responders, providing life-saving support in the absence of international organisations. Some also mentioned that innovative IT solutions (e.g., distance monitoring or remote capacity support) had emerged as a result of the lack of international travel. As a more specific example, representatives of the Labour Market Consortium mentioned that impressive results had been achieved through social dialogue across regions and countries, and that tackling Covid-19 as part of occupational health and safety, and between social partners, had been key to first response in several countries.

Results at partner level

Whilst the interviews with MFA officials and Danish CSO representatives enabled an overview of how partnerships are viewed, the two Southern partner surveys provided the opportunity to quantify some of the results at partner level. These results focused on the capacity support provided to Southern partners; enhanced capacity; impact at organisational level; and basic satisfaction. These will be dealt with in turn.

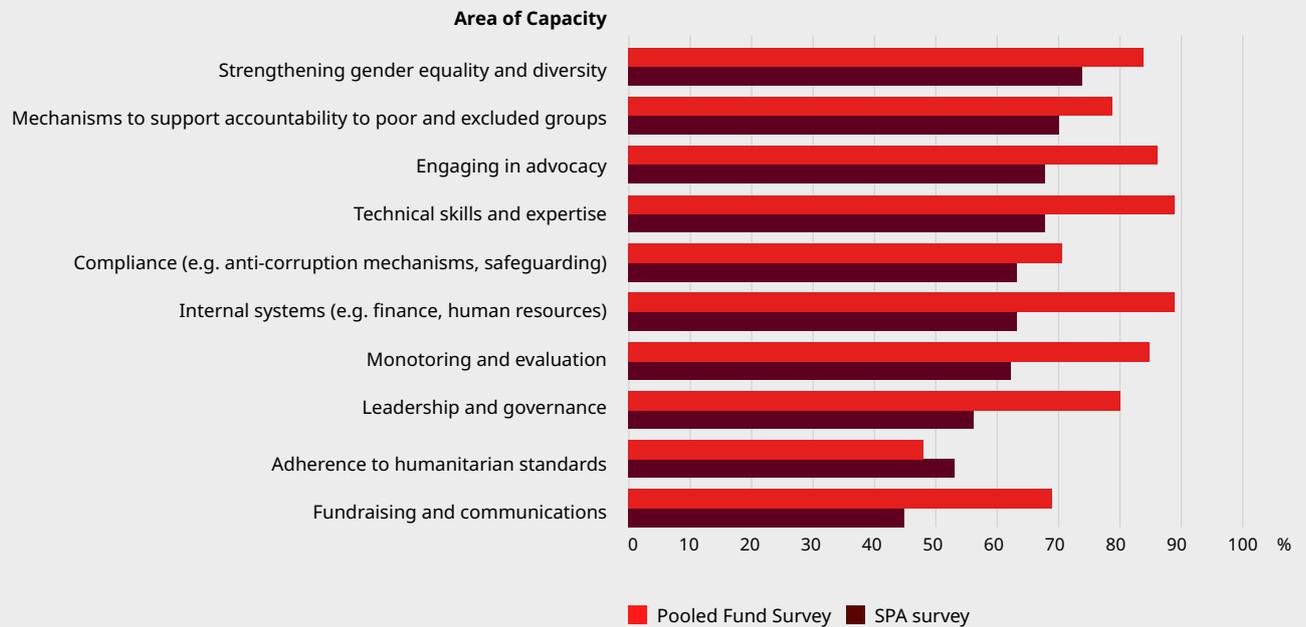
Capacity support

First, Southern partners were asked to state how much capacity support¹⁷ they had received from their Danish partner(s) in the last four years in 10 pre-defined areas of capacity. This question was intended to establish what kind of capacity development support is provided to Southern partners. The results are contained in Table 2 below.

For **SPA partners**, the highest amount of support was provided to strengthen gender equality and diversity. This was followed by two other externally-focused areas – engaging in advocacy, and the development of mechanisms to support accountability to poor and excluded groups. All three areas have a direct influence on how Southern partners support their constituents. Southern partners had received least support for

17 Capacity is defined by the OECD as the 'ability of people, organisations and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully'. Capacity building, or capacity strengthening, is a deliberate process in which people and/or organisations are provided with external support to enhance their capacity. Capacity building may be known by many different names, all meaning roughly the same thing (e.g. institution building, organisational development, capacity enhancement, capacity development). Terminology is used inconsistently in international development.

TABLE 2: PERCENTAGE OF SOUTHERN PARTNERS THAT SAY THEY HAVE RECEIVED 'A LOT' OR A MODERATE AMOUNT' OF SUPPORT IN DEFINED AREAS OF CAPACITY



fundraising and communications. Only 19 partners had received ‘a lot of support’ in this area, and only 24 had received ‘a moderate amount of support’. Taken together, this represents less than half of Southern partners in the survey. Overall, 71 out of 96 organisations (74%) said they had received ‘a lot of support’ in at least one of the pre-identified areas of capacity.¹⁸

Organisations funded only under HUM Lot funding had, in general, received less support on internal systems, leadership and governance, monitoring and evaluation, and fundraising and communications. Unsurprisingly, they had, on average, received more support on adherence to humanitarian standards. Interestingly, only six out of 21 Southern partners (28%) receiving HUM Lot funding had received ‘a lot of support’ or ‘a moderate amount of support’ to engage in advocacy. This compares to 55 out of 70 (79%) of organisations funded only under CIV Lot funding. Perhaps surprisingly, however, nearly 50% of Southern partners funded only under CIV Lot funding had also received at least ‘a moderate amount of support’ on adherence to humanitarian standards.

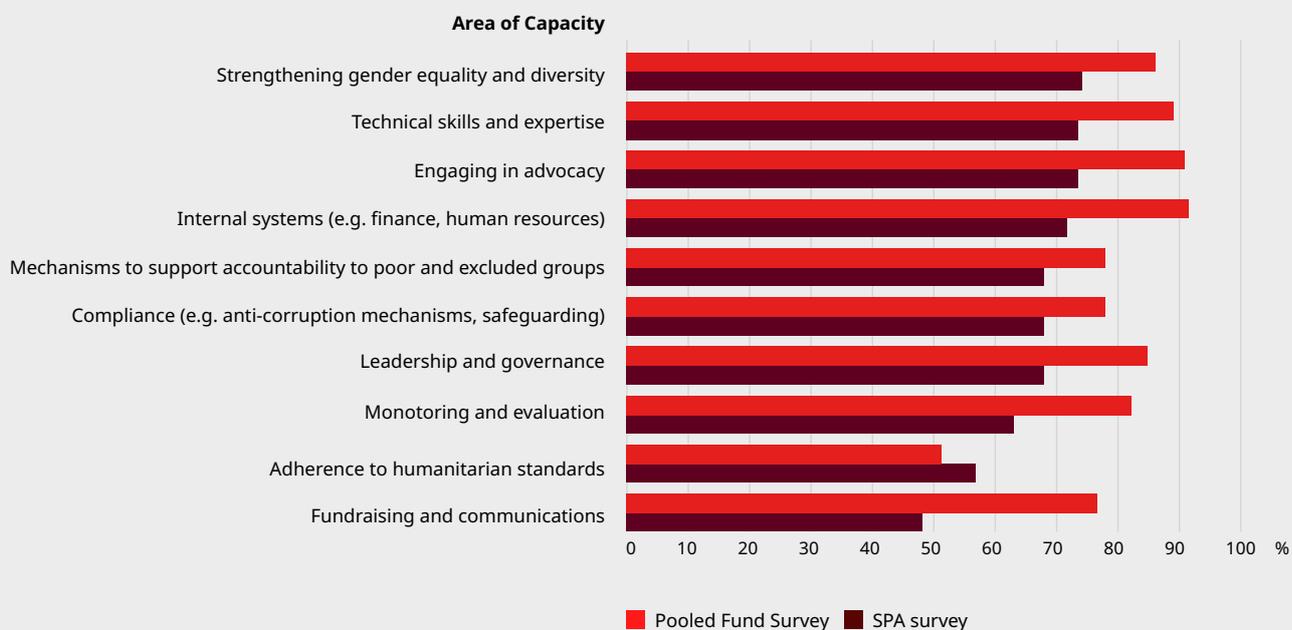
18 A full breakdown and analysis of the data can be found on pp. 16-17 of Annex A.

For **pooled fund partners**, the highest levels of support were received for internal skills (e.g., finance and human resources) and for technical skills and expertise. On average, more pooled fund partners had received at least a moderate amount of capacity support in each of the areas, except for adherence to humanitarian standards.¹⁹

Enhanced capacity

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, strengthen gender equality and diversity, manage internal systems and apply technical skills and expertise (see Table 3). For the **SPA partners**, the highest scoring area was strengthening gender equality and diversity. 45 out of 96 Southern partners said their capacity had been enhanced ‘a lot’ in this area, with a further 26 saying it had been enhanced ‘a moderate amount’. This means three quarters of SPA agency partners think their capacity has been enhanced at least a moderate amount in the area of strengthening gender equality and diversity over the past four years. One member of

TABLE 3: PERCENTAGE OF SOUTHERN PARTNERS THAT SAY THEIR CAPACITY HAS BEEN ENHANCED ‘A LOT’ OR ‘A MODERATE AMOUNT’ IN DEFINED AREAS OF CAPACITY



19 A full breakdown and analysis of the data can be found on pp. 14-15 of Annex B.

the TE2 Support Group explained this particularly high score by stating that in the past couple of years there has been a push from the MFA on Gender-Based Violence and gender equality.

Also notable is the low percentage of partners that feel their capacity to engage in fundraising and communications has been enhanced. Only 14 out of 96 partners of SPA agencies felt their capacity had been enhanced 'a lot' in this area, with exactly half of all partners in the survey saying it had increased only 'a small amount' or 'not at all'.²⁰

Pooled fund partners, on average, were more likely to say their capacity had been enhanced 'a lot' or 'a moderate amount' in each area except for adherence to humanitarian standards. Advocacy scored very highly, with an extremely high 56 out of 75 of Southern partners (75%) saying their advocacy capacity had increased 'a lot' over the past four years, and a further 12 saying it had increased a 'moderate amount'. Over 50% of partners also said their capacity had increased 'a lot' in each of the areas of internal systems, technical skills and expertise, strengthening gender equality and diversity, development of mechanisms to support accountability to poor and excluded groups, and leadership and governance.²¹

Overall, the evaluation finds there is extremely strong evidence to show that Southern partners' capacity has been enhanced a great deal through their partnerships with Danish CSOs. Much of this enhanced capacity is around areas which directly relate to partners' ability to support their own constituents, such as engaging in advocacy, strengthening gender equality and diversity, and developing mechanisms to support accountability to poor and excluded groups, rather than more compliance-based areas of work. Two examples showing how Southern partners have been supported to engage in advocacy work are detailed in the case studies above.

Broadly, the evidence from the surveys is backed up by the evidence from the case studies and from interviews with representatives of SPA agencies and pooled funds. For example, a rudimentary investigation of the case studies shows that support was provided to enhance partners' internal systems in eight out of 13 cases; whilst support for advocacy was provided in seven cases.

20 A full breakdown and analysis of the data can be found on pp. 18-20 of Annex A.

21 A full breakdown and analysis of the data can be found on pp. 16-17 of Annex B.

CASE STUDY: ENHANCED CAPACITY FOR ADVOCACY

Since 2016, **Center for Church-based Development (CKU)** and its partner the Organisation of African Instituted Churches (OAIC), through national partners in East Africa, have cooperated on engaging clusters of churches and interfaith networks in social accountability, as a means for religious leaders and their congregations to become more vocal and active in advocacy at local and national government level. Social accountability has facilitated a stronger focus on advocacy, with partners becoming more vocal, where they had previously been very reactive. CKU staff have noted increased collaboration and shared responsibility between pastors and their congregations and activists on advocacy, and local partners' ability to engage with both local authorities and community members has been strengthened. Religious leaders originally feared that advocacy would bring about conflict between government and churches, but the programme has used a 'collaborative approach' to advocacy where faith communities engage constructively with local authorities on shared concerns – rather than a 'combative approach' claiming rights to services not provided by local authorities – which religious leaders have embraced.

Global Aktion (GA), supported under CISU, has been empowering local communities in Mozambique who are affected by the extraction of natural resources. In one initiative, GA has helped Associação de Apoio e Assistência Jurídica as Comunidades (AAAJC) to develop a strong proposal, which provides a good basis for an advocacy strategy. GA initially visited Tete in Mozambique to understand AAAJC as an organisation, including its gaps and where it needs to improve. The current phase of the project has involved helping AAAJC set up an office in Maputo (it was previously just in Tete), from where it can relate to Ministries, and participate in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) and other meetings related to natural resource management. GA has also helped in providing international linkages and platforms on which AAAJC could advocate.

BOX 4: EXTRAPOLATING RESULTS

Because of the high response levels for the SPA survey, it is possible to extrapolate the data for SPA agencies across the portfolio to achieve an estimate of how many Southern partners have had their capacity enhanced across the entire portfolio of support. However, it is important to remember that the figures do not include indirect partners, nor partners of many smaller pooled fund agencies. The extrapolation shows that:

- about 450 Southern partners have seen their capacity enhanced 'a lot' over the past four years in at least one of the ten capacity areas, because of support from Danish partner(s).
- around 600 Southern partners have seen their capacity enhanced 'a lot' or 'a moderate amount' over the past four years in at least one of the ten capacity areas, because of support from Danish partner(s).
- about 480 Southern partners have seen their capacity enhanced 'a lot' or 'a moderate amount' in engaging in advocacy over the past four years because of support from Danish partner(s).

Table 4 below shows how the figures are calculated, for those who are interested in the mathematics behind the calculations.

TABLE 4: PROJECTED NUMBER OF SPA PARTNERS ACROSS THE PORTFOLIO WITH ENHANCED CAPACITY

	Percentage of partners in sample	Projected number of partners	Margin of error	Range of partners
Southern partners that say their capacity has been enhanced 'A lot' over the past four years in at least one of the ten capacity areas, because of support from Danish partner(s).	69.8%	451	± 8.49%	413-489
Southern partners that say their capacity has been enhanced 'A lot' or 'A moderate amount' over the past four years in at least one of the ten capacity areas, because of support from Danish partner(s)	92.7%	599	± 4.81%	570-628
Southern partners that say their capacity has been enhanced 'a lot' or 'a moderate amount' in defined areas of capacity				
Strengthening gender equality and diversity	75.0%	485	± 8.00%	446-523
Engaging in advocacy	74.0%	478	± 8.11%	439-517
Technical skills and expertise	74.0%	478	± 8.11%	439-517
Internal systems (e.g., finance, human resources)	71.9%	464	± 8.31%	426-503
Leadership and governance	68.8%	444	± 8.56%	406-482
Compliance (e.g., anti-corruption mechanisms, safeguarding)	68.8%	444	± 8.45%	406-482
Mechanisms to support accountability to poor and excluded groups	68.8%	444	± 8.45%	406-482
Monitoring and evaluation	63.5%	410	± 8.90%	374-447
Adherence to humanitarian standards	57.3%	370	± 9.14%	336-404
Fundraising and communications	47.9%	310	± 9.23%	281-338

Explanation

The highlighted number in bold represents the projected number of Southern partners across the portfolio, based on the percentages shown in the second column, and presuming the sample was completely representative of the wider portfolio. The range of partners in the fifth column shows how this number might vary based on the margins of error shown in the fourth column.

All margins of error are based on a total population of 646 (the complete number of Southern partners supplied by Danish SPA agencies), a confidence level of 95%, and a sample size of 96. The actual margin of error is different for each finding. For example, if 90% of Southern partners express a view the margin for error is around 5.5%. If 50% say something the margin is around 9.2%.

The same calculations have been used for all similar tables in this document.

Impact at organisational level

Southern partners were also asked to what extent Danish CSOs had influenced them in a number of areas, including their ideas, values, capacities and reach. Table 5 on the following page shows the percentage of Southern partners that felt that Danish CSOs had 'strongly influenced' them in these areas. (The options were 'negative influence', 'no influence', 'moderately positive influence', 'strongly positive influence', and 'don't know or N/A').

It is noticeable that two of the areas in which Southern partners feel they have been most influenced are in the quality of their relationships with their constituents or beneficiaries, and in their reach (i.e., the number of these constituents they can support). This means that well over two-thirds of all supported Southern partners (respectively) think that their Danish partners have had a strongly positive influence on both the quality and the quantity of their work over the past four years. By contrast, fewer partners believe that Danish CSOs have had as profound an influence around their values and the way they apply them, or their ideas and the way they communicate them. Although many Southern partners did state they had been influenced in these areas, either 'strongly' or 'moderately', the overall view was that the influence of Danish CSOs is stronger over the way they work (e.g., strategies, policies, practices and reach) than over their values, ideals and ideas.

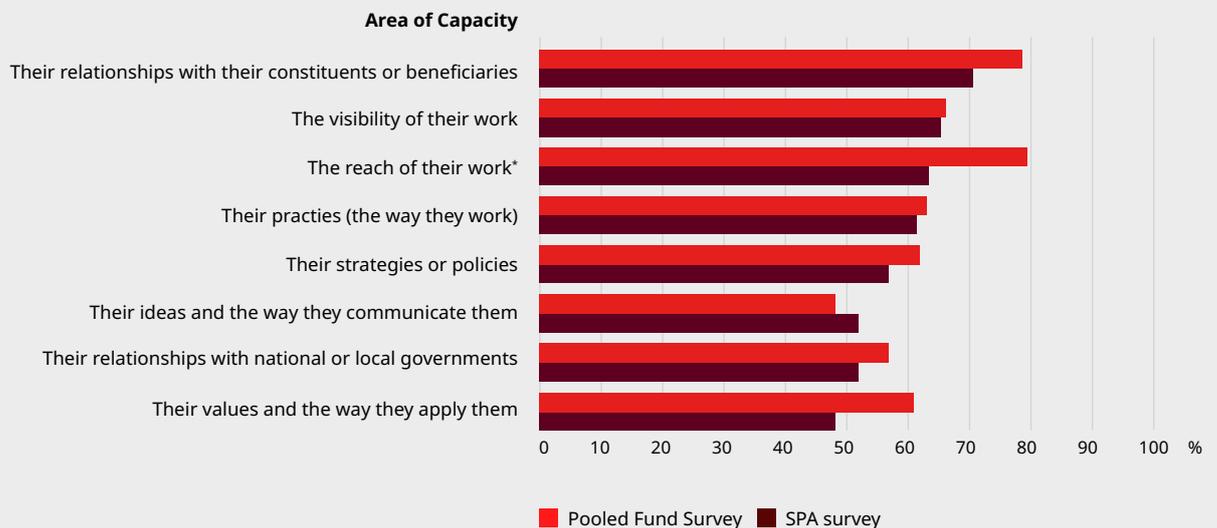
For the **SPA partners**, the highest area of influence was over Southern partners' relationships with their constituents or beneficiaries. 71% of Southern partners said their Danish partners had had a 'strongly positive influence' in this area. Overall, 94% of Southern partners said there had been at least a 'moderately positive influence' in this area. This is a very high score indeed, perhaps reflecting the fact that SPA agencies and pooled funds have very strong policies around participation and inclusion.

Overall, there were five indications of ‘negative influence’ in the survey. These came from two different organisations – one based in the MENA region and the other in South Asia. Neither organisation provided qualitative comments, so it is not possible to know what their particular grievances were.

Interestingly, Alliance partners were much more likely to feel that their Danish partners had had a ‘strongly positive influence’ in the following areas than non-Alliance partners. (In other areas the results were approximately the same).

- their values and the ways they are applied (63% compared to 42% for non-Alliance partners)
- their strategies and policies (78% compared to 49%)
- their practices and the ways they work (74% compared to 57%)
- the reach of their work (85% compared to 55%)

TABLE 5: PERCENTAGE OF SOUTHERN PARTNERS THAT SAY THEIR DANISH PARTNERS HAVE HAD A ‘STRONGLY POSITIVE INFLUENCE’ OVER DIFFERENT AREAS OF THEIR WORK



* the number of communities or beneficiaries they can support

BOX 5: EXTRAPOLATING RESULTS

Because of the high response levels for the SPA survey, it is possible to extrapolate the data for SPA agencies across the portfolio to achieve an estimate of how many Southern partners have been influenced across the entire portfolio of support. The extrapolation shows that:

- about 460 Southern partners of SPA agencies have been strongly positively influenced by their Danish partner(s) in their relationships with their constituents or beneficiaries over the past four years.
- around 600 Southern partners have been strongly or moderately positively influenced by their Danish partner(s) in their relationships with their constituents or beneficiaries over the past four years.
- about 580 Southern partners have been strongly positively influenced by their Danish partner(s) in at least one of the eight defined areas over the past four years.

The calculations follow the same method as explained in Table 4. The full calculations can be found in Annex A.

For the **pooled fund** partners, the two areas of influence which saw the highest scores for 'strongly positive influence' were the reach of Southern partners' work and their relationships with constituents or beneficiaries. Visibility also scored highly, which is interesting given the current debates on localisation. Overall, 70 out of 75 Southern partners said that their Danish partners had had a 'strongly positive influence' over at least one of the eight areas of influence. The other five did not.²²

Basic satisfaction

Southern partners were asked how far they agreed or disagreed with a range of statements regarding different aspects of their practical relationships with their Danish partner(s). The results are summarised in Table 6 on the following page.²³

²² A full breakdown and analysis of the data can be found on pp. 18-19 of Annex B.

²³ Full breakdowns can be found on pp. 40-41 of Annex A and on pp. 35-56 of Annex B.

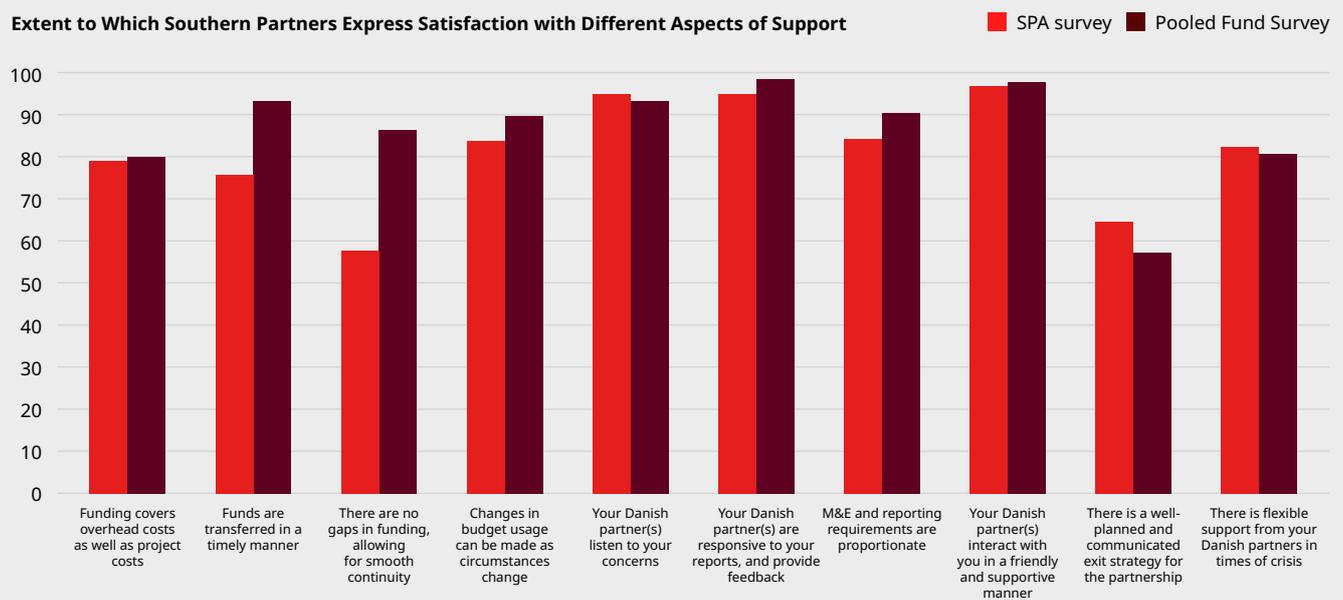
Most striking was the extremely high agreement that their Danish partner(s) are responsive to their reports and provide feedback; interact with them in a friendly and supportive manner; and listen to their concerns. In all three areas, agreement was well over 90% in both surveys. This is to the credit of the Danish CSOs and shows a very strong level of affinity between Danish CSOs and their Southern partners, on average.

Satisfaction was noticeably lower in two areas. One was the statement “there are no gaps in funding, allowing for smooth continuity”. Only 57% of SPA Southern partners agreed with this statement, although 86% of pooled fund Southern partners did so. The other area was around exit strategies, where only 60% of partners feel there is a “well-planned and communicated exit strategy for the partnership”.

In two areas – “there are no gaps in funding, allowing for smooth continuity” and “funds are transferred in a timely manner” – satisfaction for SPA agency partners was well below that for pooled fund partners. These issues were explored during the validation workshop, and a

TABLE 6: SATISFACTION WITH DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF SUPPORT

For both surveys, Southern partners were asked “Please state how far you agree or disagree with the following statements about your relationship with your Danish partner(s)”. The statements were designed to explore some of the more traditional aspects of partnership, similar to a basic satisfaction survey. The questions were only asked of Southern partners receiving money from Danish CSOs. The table below shows the percentage of Southern partners that either ‘strongly agreed’ or ‘agreed’ with the relevant statements.



number of reasons were provided. These included annual delays to funds released to Danish CSOs by the MFA, the nature of single-year contracts, requirements for Southern partners to have completed annual reports and financial forecasting before fund disbursement, the project-based nature of some partnerships, and banking compliance requirements for money transfers in some fragile states, such as Syria and Myanmar. The conclusion of the workshop was that these challenges have been going on for many years, and that a small working group should be formed to try and resolve them.

As far as **SPA partners** are concerned, the first four statements in Table 13 concerned budgets and finance. In all four areas there was at least some level of dissatisfaction. This was most pronounced for gaps in funding. 33 out of 79 Southern partners expressing an opinion (42%) did not agree with the statement that ‘there are no gaps in funding, allowing for smooth continuity’. Clearly, this is an area of concern for many Southern partners of SPA agencies. After that, 20 Southern partners did not agree that funds were transferred in a timely manner, 17 did not agree that funding covered overhead costs as well as projects costs, and 13 did not agree that budgets could change along with circumstances.

Only 52 out of 81 Southern partners (64%) felt there was a well-planned and communicated exit strategy for the partnership, and of those only 18 strongly agreed. This was the lowest level of strong agreement for any of the statements. Overall, nine out of 81 Southern partners strongly disagreed with at least one of the 10 statements.

Alliance partners were generally much more satisfied than non-Alliance partners across the board. For example, 79% of Alliance partners agreed or strongly agreed there were no gaps in funding, allowing for smooth continuity, compared to only 48% of non-Alliance partners. In most other areas the difference was around 15 percentage points, indicating that processes for finance, M&E and reporting are generally easier between Danish CSOs and their Alliance partners than they are between Danish CSOs and non-Alliance partners.

For **pooled fund partners**, concerns about the exit strategies were even higher than for SPA agency partners. Seven partners disagreed with the statement that ‘there is a well-planned and communicated exit strategy for the partnership’, three strongly disagreed, and a very high number of 18 neither agreed nor disagreed. There was also some dissatisfaction (around 20%) for the extent to which funding covered overhead costs as well as project costs, and flexibility of support in times of crisis.

Conclusions

The main evaluation question for this chapter is “to what extent CSOs contributed to a strong, independent, representative, accountable and diverse civil society in the Global South?” These are slightly separate issues, and need to be dealt with individually, as below.

- **Strong:** There is significant and abundant evidence from the two surveys and the 13 case studies conducted as part of the evaluation – both directly soliciting views from the South – that Danish CSOs have helped strengthen Southern partners over the past four years, both through the SPA agreements and through the pooled funds. Over 500 directly supported Southern partners across the portfolio have seen their capacity enhanced significantly in at least one area of capacity support. Much of this enhanced capacity is in areas which directly improve partners' ability to support their own constituents, such as engaging in advocacy, strengthening gender equality and diversity, and developing mechanisms to support accountability to poor and excluded groups. And these figures only cover direct partners of SPA agencies, and Southern partners matching the criteria laid down for the pooled fund survey. The number of Southern partners benefiting indirectly is potentially much higher.
- **Independent:** There is evidence that some Danish CSOs are supporting their Southern partners to better fundraise and communicate. However, Southern partners, on average, feel they are not receiving as much capacity support in this area as they would like. They are still heavily reliant on Northern funding, and very little of their income is generated locally or nationally. Further discussion on independence is contained within the 'localisation' section of this report. It suffices here to state that supported partners cannot wholly be cushioned from the overall influence of the aid industry, and changing that environment is outside of Danish CSOs' control.
- **Representative:** There is evidence from the surveys that Danish CSOs have supported many of their Southern partners to build better relations with their constituents and beneficiaries – indeed this is the area where Southern partners felt Danish CSOs had had the most influence. However, evidence from the case studies and interviews suggests that the most representative Southern groups can sometimes be the hardest to work with. This is covered in the chapter on working with new forms of partnership.
- **Accountable:** There is convincing evidence through the surveys that Danish CSOs are helping improve Southern partners' relationships with constituents and governments in many cases and are successfully helping partners to develop mechanisms to support accountability towards poor and excluded groups (as shown through both surveys). Most CSOs are expected to be accountable on multiple fronts: upwards to donors, funders and host governments; downwards to beneficiaries or funded partners; sideways to sister organisations working in coalitions, programmes or networks; and inwardly towards their own boards, trustees, staff, volunteers and members. Danish CSOs support their Southern partners in many ways, but it is a complex picture and hard to quantify.

- **Diversity:** Arguably, this is the area where evidence is weakest. Danish CSOs still work largely through national or sub-national NGOs. There is a scattering of work with networks and private sector organisations, but – based on the survey findings – still relatively little work with social movements. In the absence of benchmarking it is hard to tell whether diversity is increasing or not. Indications from interviews with some Danish CSOs suggest it is not increasing particularly rapidly, if at all. There are very real reasons why more diverse kinds of organisations are harder to work with, and these are explored in the chapter on working with new forms of partnership.

Overall, the evaluation finds that MFA has succeeded in creating a nurturing environment in which Danish CSOs have been able to progress their partnership approaches. To the extent that the evaluation team is able to make a judgement it would appear that the Danish CSOs have developed partnership policies and strategies that are in line with current MFA thinking and guidelines. Danish CSOs are not only progressing their own partnerships but, in some cases, are also acting as advocates within their alliances and federations. The benefits of the four-year SPA funding were constantly mentioned by Danish CSO and pooled fund representatives. There would appear to be no real need for MFA radically to change advice or direction at the moment. **If it's not broken, don't try and fix it!**

Importantly, there is some evidence of a lack of thinking on exit strategies for partnerships, in spite of one or two examples of good practice. Equally, Southern partners would like more support to diversify their income base or raise funds. According to both surveys this is something that a majority of Southern partners want, but an area where they feel Danish CSOs are not always delivering sufficiently. It may be that there are valid reasons why Danish CSOs are not doing this, but if so, it should be acknowledged and maybe articulated better. Support for fundraising is further covered in the chapter on added value.

The evaluation recognises that there are trade-offs, and that sometimes a full partnership approach is not possible or desirable, especially in humanitarian work (e.g., where partners do not exist, where it is dangerous for them to work, where urgent needs are not being met, etc.) Even when a partnership is desirable, there may be trade-offs between results achieved at partner level, and wider results at community level, at least in the short-term. If the MFA wants stronger Southern partners, then it needs to accept that working in partnership may deliver more sustainable change in the long run but is not always the quickest or most effective way of achieving short-term results. And the sheer time, energy and effort required to maintain good relationships with Southern partners – especially when things go wrong – should never be underestimated.

5. ADDED VALUE

This chapter addresses EQ4: *“To what extent do the Danish CSOs add value directly or indirectly to the desired change process and results in the global south?”*. It is largely based on qualitative evidence generated through the case studies; statistical evidence generated through the SPA and pooled fund surveys; and interviews with SPA agencies and pooled fund representatives.

One of the main reasons why donors or governments choose to channel funds through International NGOs (INGOs), 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 can 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 MFA in Denmark, and the wider Danish public.

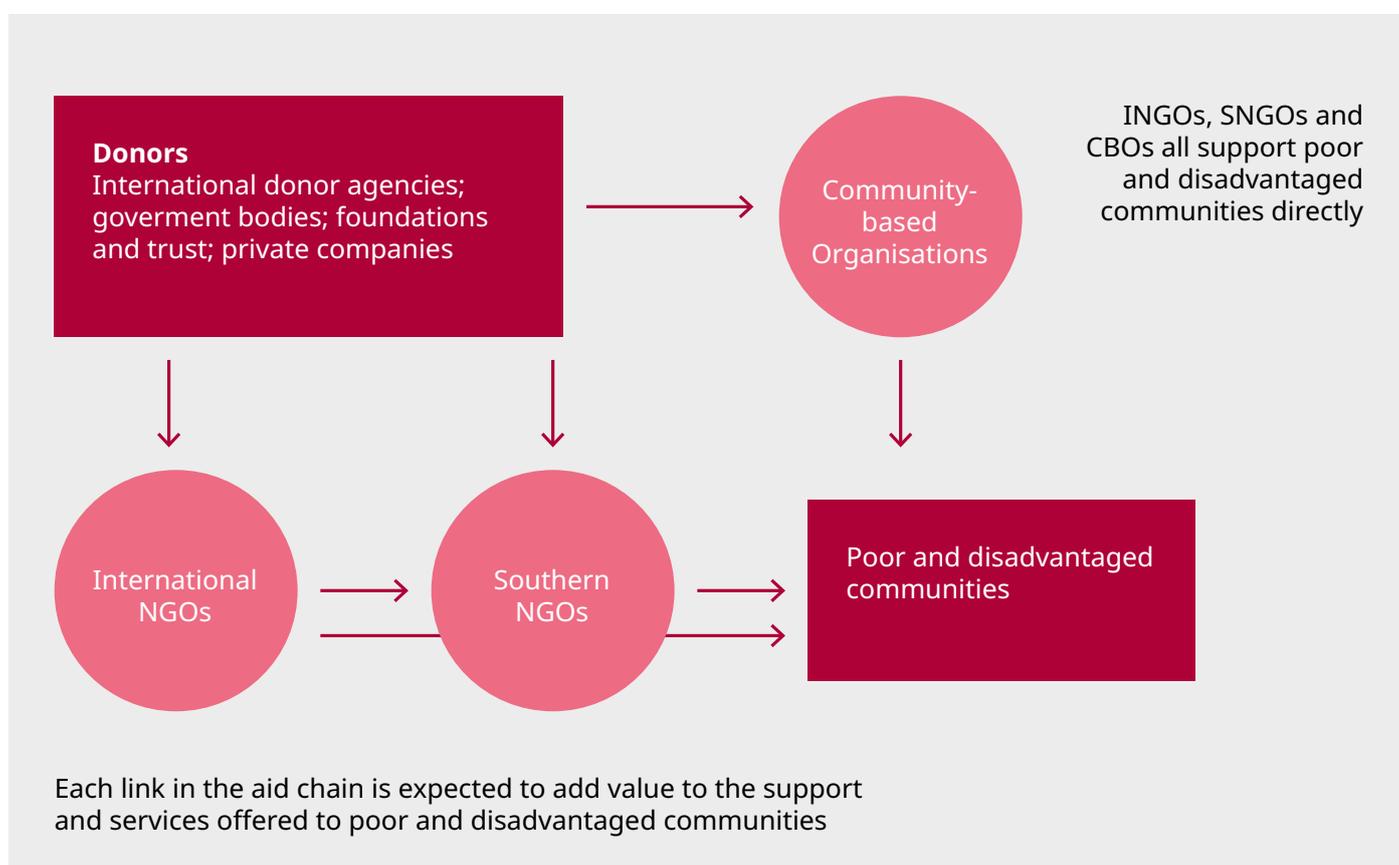
Added value also works in the opposite direction. Southern partners often add-value to the work of Danish CSOs, and through them to the MFA and the wider Danish public.

Added value to Southern partners

Danish CSOs are able to add value to the work of Southern partners in many ways. One of them is **formal capacity building support**, such as training or technical assistance. This has already been covered in Chapter 4. However, there are many other ways that Danish CSOs can add value that do not necessarily involve attempting to strengthen Southern partners directly. Instead, they involve using Danish CSOs’ knowledge, experiences and linkages to facilitate improved programming in the South.

One such way is by **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. A majority of the case studies carried out as part of this evaluation involved some form of convening or networking. The case studies showed that Danish CSOs have, thanks to their network, profile and connections, enabled local partners to expand their own networks and connect with other organisations. One example is covered in the case study box on the next page.



Another way of adding value is to **link Southern partners' advocacy work** to the work of others at local, national and/or international levels. This is designed to help increase the impact of advocacy work by making sure it is joined up across localities and sectors. Linking advocacy in this way was a common factor in the majority of the case studies. This included the following.

CASE STUDY: FACILITATING LINKAGES

Members of the Horn of Africa Youth Network (HoAYN), supported by **Save the Children Denmark (SCD)**, said they appreciated the support that SCD has provided, which enabled new network initiatives that would not otherwise have been possible. A major benefit cited by HoAYN members is their ability to relate to each other. For example, Kenyan members of the network stated that they had now established useful contacts with counterparts in Somalia and Uganda.

- Danmission has been able to link the work of a supported social network involved in forest protection to the University of Copenhagen. The University regularly publishes information on the Prey Lang Forest in Cambodia, collected by the Prey Lang Community Network (PLCN). This supports PLCN's efforts to influence the Government of Cambodia to halt the activities of illegal loggers.
- Arranged by Danish Refugee Council, the Syrian Civil Society Networks Platform conducted an advocacy tour in November 2019. A small team went to Paris, Berlin, Copenhagen, and Oslo to meet with policymakers and present talking points and 'asks' based on the situation in Syria. The team held meetings with the foreign ministries of each country, as well as other officials and INGO stakeholders. As the first of its kind, the advocacy tour was perceived as successful in both reaching decision-makers and yielding learning that could be addressed in future tours.
- An initiative supported by International Medical Cooperation Committee, a member of Danish Youth Council (DUF), has established several Volunteer Advocacy teams to lobby and influence decision-makers at community level, while being quite active in providing inputs and seeking influence on the formal curriculum with the Ministry of Education in Kenya.

CASE STUDY: LINKING ADVOCACY WORK

Two partners of **Global Aktion** (GA) in Mozambique are involved in work to empower local communities that are affected by the extraction of natural resources, linked with international advocacy. One partner said they appreciated the fact that **Global Aktion** understands the unique nature of the industry they are seeking to influence, which is inherently unpredictable and carries the threat of violence. Both partners appreciate the solidarity of GA as they work in these difficult conditions.

One partner, AAAJC, particularly appreciated the recognition the partnership has helped bring in being accepted as a significant actor by the mining company Vale in Tete, in developing a national profile in Maputo, and providing access to international platforms. The connections that GA staff can bring were also recognised by both partners.

GA in turn appreciates the information and legitimacy provided by its links with what is happening on the ground. Partners are able to verify a claim quickly and accurately (e.g. that community members have been allocated new land), which even some of the companies have appreciated.

Danish CSOs are also able to add value by **supporting partners to adopt best global practice**. Danish CSOs often introduce new ideas to Southern partners or support them to comply with international standards and guidelines. Danish CSOs are able to do this when they have built up significant expertise in an area of work. Two examples are contained in the case studies in the box on the following page.

Danish CSOs can add-value by **strengthening partner presence at national or international events**. This sometimes involves Danish CSOs helping Southern partners access platforms and spaces and encouraging them to take on a higher profile. This is considered particularly important under the localisation agenda and is discussed further in the section on localisation.

A key area of importance for many partners is helping them to **identify new sources of funding** and/or provide 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 or developing joint proposals, or enhancing their capacity to raise funds.

CASE STUDIES: SUPPORTING BEST GLOBAL PRACTICE

The **Danish Family Planning Association (DFPA)** brings well recognised expertise on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), and different methods to address it, from their international experience in countries like Kenya and Uganda. DFPA are using this expertise to support partners working in the floriculture industry within Ethiopia, including an Ethiopian Employers Federation, an Export Association, the Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions, and multiple private farms.

According to Oxfam Mali and local partners interviewed, **Oxfam IBIS** has added value to a programme on young people's rights to education in Mali through its expertise in peacebuilding and gender-sensitive approaches. There has been a lot of demand from partners and country offices across Africa to strengthen their capacity on peacebuilding in the face of challenges related to violent conflict. Oxfam IBIS has a peacebuilding team with specialists, and they elaborate different tools for conflict sensitive analysis and contextual analysis. One supported partner – Action Mali Youth Association (AJA) – felt this had significantly added value to its work, and staff said the organisation now integrates peacebuilding approaches in other areas of its work.

As outlined in the previous chapter, this is an area in which Southern partners, on average, feel they receive less support. Nonetheless, there were examples from the case studies of where this had happened. For example, the Peace Bridges Organisation (PBO) in Cambodia pointed out that Danmission has helped them seek other funding, including via a new Danida initiative. Under a project funded through the DUF in Kenya, the Medical Students' Association of Kenya has been able to attract additional funding, such as funding for another project on SRHR and a mental health project, using the DUF-supported programme as a main reference. And two Refugee Leader Organisation (RLO) representatives in Uganda interviewed as part of the case studies stated that as a result of Oxfam's support, they have been able to receive increased funding. This is partly because funders such as the EU are confident that the RLOs can manage larger funds, having seen them do so successfully under the Oxfam-supported programme. These examples show that it is possible for Danish CSOs to help Southern partners access new sources of funding or donors without necessarily engaging in capacity development directly.

An important area of support for a small number of Southern Partners is **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. This aspect of added-value work was not very evident in the case studies, with the exception of Danmission's support to the Prey Lang Community Network (PLCN) in Cambodia (see case study box opposite).

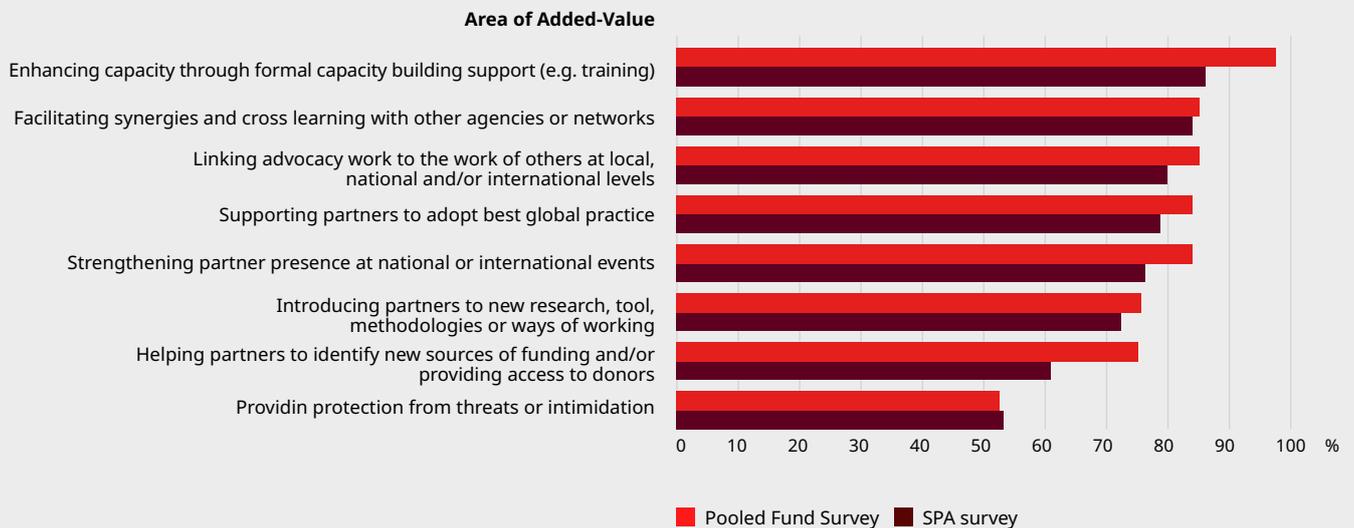
Evidence from the surveys

Evidence from the case studies was supplemented by evidence from the SPA and pooled fund partner surveys. In these surveys, Southern partners were 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'. As shown in Table 7 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.

CASE STUDY: OFFERING PROTECTION

The Prey Lang Community Network (PLCN) in Cambodia works in a very sensitive area – opposing illegal logging – and without **Danmission** support it would be extremely vulnerable. Staff of another partner in the project – Peace Bridges Organisation (PBO) – believe that PLCN's relationship with key actors like Danmission and the University of Copenhagen is making some government stakeholders think about how they treat people and react to issues. The fact that Danmission has put forward PLCN for international awards also makes it harder for government to oppress them. One telling quote from PBO staff is that *"In Prey Lang – it is like an elephant stamping on a mouse. Everyone knows it but Danmission are the only one's brave enough to say it."* Accordingly, Danmission staff believe that there is a need to assess risks on an ongoing basis. To an extent, the fact that Cambodia is a Buddhist country mitigates direct confrontation. However, there is always a risk that Danmission will not have its MoU renewed, or will face restrictions in the future.

TABLE 7: PERCENTAGE OF SOUTHERN PARTNERS THAT SAY THEIR DANISH PARTNERS HAVE ADDED VALUE 'A LOT' OR 'A MODERATE AMOUNT' TO THEIR WORK IN DEFINED AREAS



For the **SPA partners** 51 out of 96 Southern partners (53%) said Danish CSOs had added value 'a lot' in the area of enhancing partner capacity through formal capacity building support, and 48 out of 96 (50%) said the same for facilitating synergies and cross learning with other agencies or networks. Other highly scoring areas were linking advocacy work to the work of others at local, national and/or international levels; strengthening partners' presence at national or international events; and supporting them to adopt best global practice. At least three quarters of Southern partners felt their Danish partner(s) had added value 'a lot' or 'a moderate amount' in each of these areas. These are very strong scores overall that show a high level of added value in multiple areas.

By contrast, only 17% of Southern partners felt Danish CSOs had added value 'a lot' in providing protection from threats or intimidation. However, there are a limited number of partners who would feel the need for this kind of protection. Helping partners identify new sources of funding also scored low compared to the other areas.

Five out of 96 Southern partners felt their Danish partners had added value either not at all, or only a small amount in any of the eight areas. Based on the qualitative comments received, one organisation was clearly unhappy with the way it was treated as a project partner, and the lack of a proper exit strategy; another had issues with fund

disbursement; and a third was concerned with a lack of strategic purpose for the partnership. Three of the five organisations were based in the MENA region, and four out of the five had received some level of HUM Lot funding.

In general, Alliance partners were much more likely to feel that their Danish partners had added value 'a lot' in the following areas than non-Alliance partners:

- Enhancing capacity through formal capacity building support (70% compared to 46% for non-Alliance partners).
- Facilitating synergies and cross learning with other agencies (63% compared to 45%).
- Strengthening their presence at national or international events (59% compared to 33%).
- Introducing them to new research, tools, methodologies or ways of working (52% compared to 20%).
- Supporting them to adopt best global practice (56% compared to 32%).
- Providing them with protection from threats or intimidation (41% compared to 7%).
- Helping them identify new sources of funding and/or providing access to donors (67% compared to 23%).

These are quite stark differences. It could be because Danish CSOs only partner with Alliance partners where it is believed they can add significant value. It is also possible that Alliance partners tend to be especially positive, maybe through loyalty, regarding the performance of federation or family offices.

Elsewhere, 61% of partners based in West Africa said their Danish partners had added value 'a lot' to their enhanced capacity, and 91% said at least 'a moderate amount'. This was much higher than the overall average. Similarly, 70% of West African partners said their Danish partners had added value 'a lot' in the area of linking their advocacy work to the work of others at local, national and/or international levels, and a further 26% said 'a moderate amount'. This was also a lot higher than the average across all regions.²⁴

24 A full breakdown and analysis of the data can be found on pp. 24-26 of Annex A.

BOX 6: EXTRAPOLATING RESULTS

Because of the high response levels for the SPA survey it is possible to extrapolate the data for SPA agencies across the portfolio to achieve an estimate of how many Southern partners have been influenced across the entire portfolio of support. The extrapolation shows that:

- Danish partners have added-value 'a lot' in at least one of the eight areas of added-value to around 525 Southern partners.
- Danish partner(s) have added value 'a lot' to around 290 Southern partners in the area of linking advocacy work to the work of others at local, national and/or international levels.
- Danish partner(s) have added value 'a lot' to around 320 Southern partners in the area of facilitating synergies and cross learning with other agencies or networks.

The calculations follow the same method as explained in Table 4. The full calculations can be found in Annex A.

On average, Southern partners of pooled funds tended to score Danish CSOs more highly. "Enhancing partner capacity through formal capacity building support" and "facilitating synergies and cross learning with other agencies or networks" scored the highest, with 47 and 46 Southern partners (around 60%) respectively saying Danish CSOs added 'a lot' of value to their work in these areas. By contrast, many fewer Southern partners said they had been supported to identify new sources of funding and/or provided with access to donors. Overall, 64 out of 75 Southern partners (85%) said their Danish CSO partners had added-value 'a lot' to at least one of the eight areas of added-value support. The remaining 11 did not.²⁵

A number of other areas of added value were mentioned by different Danish CSOs during interviews. For example, some Danish CSOs said they had been able to use their own experiences to support their Southern partners through practical advice. For example, 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

25 A full breakdown and analysis of the data can be found on pp. 20-21 of Annex B.

encouraging local partners to move out of their comfort zones, specifically by seeking to change the viewpoints or habits of conservative churches; and 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.

Future support

Southern partners of both SPA agencies and pooled funds were asked to identify in which three areas they would like to receive further support in the future (using the same categories of added value as in Table 7).²⁶ In both surveys, the highest numbers of partners wanted more support to identify new sources of funding and/or provide access to donors. This included 68 out of 96 SPA agency partners and 64 out of 75 pooled fund partners. In second place in both surveys was the desire to receive more formal capacity support (meaning training) (65% of SPA agency partners and 72% of pooled fund partners).

Thereafter, Southern partners of SPA agencies wished to see more support in introducing them to new research (52 out of 96), strengthening their presence at national and international events (49 out of 96) and linking their advocacy work to the work of others (48 out of 96). The third option for pooled fund Southern partners was linking advocacy work to the work of others (49 out of 75).

Overall, Southern partners generally wished to see more added-value support in areas where they feel they are already receiving significant support. The exception was in the area of helping them identify new sources of funding, where some Southern partners clearly feel that a) they are not receiving that much support at present; and b) they would like to receive more in the future. This reinforces the low scores on enhanced capacity in this area mentioned in the previous chapter and is backed up by comments received from Southern partners in three of the case studies.

When the issue was raised in the validation workshop, representatives of Danish CSOs and pooled funds generally agreed that more could and should be done to support Southern partners to identify new sources of funding. Nonetheless, a number of institutional barriers were mentioned. These included the difficulty of raising funds to cover core costs; an over-emphasis on the delivery of short-term results; the fact that fundraising objectives are rarely included in project or programme results frameworks; eligibility requirements of some donors; lack of knowledge of the local fundraising context for Danish CSOs with no presence in a country; and sometimes over-expectations from Southern partners of what is feasible given their experience and maturity as an organisation. Some practical solutions for improvement were also put forward.

²⁶ The restrictions on three options was difficult to enforce in the survey, and many Southern partners chose more than three options.

For the **SPA survey**, it is interesting to note that 91% of Southern partners in West Africa wanted more formal capacity building support, compared to an average of 70% overall. However, they had less desire to receive support to link their advocacy work to the work of others (43% compared to 55% overall), or to adopt best global practice (33% compared to 55% overall). All 21 West African partners wanted more help to identify new sources of funding and/or provide access to donors. Clearly this is a big issue in the region. By comparison, in East Africa 22 out of 28 Southern partners wanted the same kind of help (79%). These results suggest that the needs of West African Southern partners may be more basic than partners in other parts of the world.

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 Denmark and Oxfam IBIS. Sometimes this work is done independently, and sometimes in alliance with other Nordic agencies.

As outlined earlier, 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 transformative education and inclusive peacebuilding in many country offices within the Oxfam confederation; whilst the Danish Red Cross specialises in mental health and psychosocial support.

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

27 Note that this subject is covered much more fully in thematic evaluation number one, which deals with Danish CSO activities within Denmark. The comments in the chapter are a summary only.

more effective support for CSOs in the Global South.²⁷ Some examples are provided below.

- 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 the 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 receive funds directly from donors, as they may not be able to handle compliance mechanisms or may not be registered to receive direct foreign funding in their countries.
- A key part of the Danish CSOs' role is the selection of partners in the Global South, based on Danish CSOs' strategic interests, local knowledge, contacts and assessment processes. From interviews, the Danish CSOs were in general able to give a good explanation of the choices they had made and partner portfolios they had built over time.
- Danish CSOs also provide a bridge between Southern partners and donors. Civil society partnerships are rarely straightforward and require a lot of management. 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. This is covered in much further detail in Thematic Evaluation 1.
- Although not all Danish CSOs share the viewpoint, some pointed out that linkages between different Danish CSOs were important. For example, DPOD is trying to influence major Danish CSOs on disability. Representatives of CISU also pointed out how important it was for Danish CSOs to network with each other to share lessons and experiences.

Above all else, Danish CSOs feel it is important that they and their supporters are able to work in solidarity with Southern partners. They feel 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; sister unions supporting each other; journalists supporting journalists; 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 South to North

Through the pooled fund survey, Southern partners were able to express 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.²⁸ Some examples are as follows:

- The most common view was that they contributed to Danish CSOs' (and therefore Danish MFA) institutional and strategic objectives, thereby providing enhanced opportunities for longer-term sustainability – frequently elusive in development interventions.
- 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 local environments and contexts; connect Danish partners with other local organisations through contacts and social networks; and act as advocates or mediators for Danish partners 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.

In addition, there are sometimes double learning loops between Danish and Southern partners. For example, when interviewed, staff of 3F – a member of the LMC – mentioned their partners are key to informing them on how markets are structured (production processes and value chains).

28 The question was not asked in the SPA partner survey.

There were also many examples provided during the case studies that demonstrate how Southern partners feel they add value to their Danish counterparts. For example:

- In Oxfam's Mali's project on education, Southern partners CAEB and AJA had introduced their own approaches to education work, based on their area of expertise.
- In Iraq, Mission East's partner EADE said it had been able to facilitate access to areas where Mission East faces challenges.
- In East Africa, the Heads of Tanzania and Kenya clusters of churches view their own role as providing learning to CKU on how to use the faith community, especially churches, as trustworthy partners for both community and country development.
- WWF Kenya staff believe it has offered WWF Denmark a partner with high implementation competence and outreach to try out, and report on, innovative approaches to environmental conservation.
- And in Cambodia, information supplied by local partner PLCN as part of a Danmission-supported project has sometimes allowed major legal cases to be addressed. For example, a case on a land grab in Cambodia was recently brought to the international criminal court. This was only possible because the legal team was able to acquire vital information from a PLCN member who had gone out on a motor bike to stop illegal logging.

It is very clear from the surveys and case studies conducted as part of the evaluation that Southern partners increasingly see themselves as 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.

Conclusions

Added value is not an end in itself. Rather, it is a means to help support a strong, independent, representative, accountable and diverse civil society in the Global South, and thereby help bring about real and sustainable change for poor and disadvantaged communities. Supporting civil society can therefore be seen as both a 'means' to improve developmental effectiveness, but also as an 'end', contributing to the development of a strong, vibrant civil society that is a key part of a democratic society.

There are clearly a great many examples where Danish CSOs add-value to development processes at different levels. Much added value can be seen in 'hard' areas such as formal capacity development, linking advocacy work at different levels, networking and joint learning.

However, there was a sense from interviews with Danish CSOs that many also felt some of the 'softer' attributes of accompaniment, caring, praying (within FBOs), walking alongside, and generally being 'in solidarity with' Southern partners were also important, and were highly valued by Southern partners.

The views of Danish CSOs on how they add value are by and large consistent with the views of MFA personnel and – more importantly – the views of Southern partners as expressed in the two surveys and many of the case studies. The fact that so many Southern partners of both SPA agencies and the pooled funds stated during the surveys how much they felt Danish CSOs had added value to their development efforts is testimony to the way in which Danish CSOs work, and the way in which they interact with their Southern partners.

Both Danish CSOs and Southern partners can also point to many reciprocal areas in which Southern partners are able to add-value to the work of Danish CSOs, and through them to the Danish government and society. A key word often mentioned is complementarity. Rather than being seen as equal partners (something that is not really possible given the financial imbalances between the North and the South) in the best cases partners from Denmark and the South complement each other's work.

Overall, it is possible to envisage many other ways of doing development, e.g., pooled funds in-country, direct management of partners by the MFA, employing consultancy companies to manage relationships, transfer of all funding to host governments, transfer of funding to multilaterals, etc. In the opinion of the evaluation, none of these, however, would hold out much potential of replicating the kinds of added-value benefits listed above.

Furthermore, working through the Danish CSOs helps build linkages with Danish society, which is valuable in terms of raising public awareness on development issues and maintaining support for development cooperation. If the MFA continues to want to foster partnership, localisation and support to civil society in the South then the current approach of working through Danish CSOs would appear to be the right one for now. Of course, this does not stop the MFA piloting some of the other modalities (as it is now) in the hope that they can be more relevant in the future.

The view of the evaluation is that Danish MFA and Danish CSOs should recognise and appreciate how rare and valuable the Danish approach is.

6. RESULTS AT COMMUNITY, POLICY AND ENVIRONMENTAL LEVEL

This chapter of the report addresses EQ1: *“To what extent do partnerships between Danish and Southern CSOs promote sustainable results in a cost-effective manner?”*. It is largely based on the qualitative evidence generated through the case studies, supplemented by statistical evidence generated through the SPA and pooled fund surveys.

Chapters 4 and 5 of this report have already addressed the many ways in which Danish CSOs have supported change at organisational level within their Southern partners, either through capacity development or adding value to their work in other ways such as facilitating linkages, providing protection, or linking advocacy work at different levels. All of this work is designed to support long-term, sustainable change in communities. However, in some cases the linkages are stronger and more direct than in others.

One way of looking at an organisation is to think of the three main areas of capacity that it needs in order to be effective. INTRAC’s three-circles model of capacity development divides this into the capacities ‘to be’, ‘to relate’ and ‘to do’, referring to internal organisational matters, linkages with external agencies, and programme development respectively. Of these, it is hardest to draw direct linkages between strengthened organisations and community change in the ‘to be’ dimension, and easiest in the ‘to do’ dimension. This implies that some of the results obtained at organisational level, detailed in Chapters 4 and 5, will have had a direct and immediate impact on wider, community-level results. For example, this evaluation has shown that, based on their own testimonies:²⁹

- At least 670 Southern partners have seen their relationships with their constituents or beneficiaries enhanced, leading to better, more relevant and/or more responsive programming;
- 650 partners have been able to reach and support more people;

²⁹ All calculations for SPA agencies are based on the methodology for extrapolation explained in Table 4. In this chapter, the raw numbers of pooled fund agencies have been added to give a picture across both surveys. Figures are approximate, and usually fall within an 8% margin of error for the SPA agency partners.

- 550 partners have enhanced technical skills and expertise that should translate directly into improved programming;
- 550 partners have strengthened 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 crises, emergencies 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.

In all of these areas it is possible to draw direct, plausible linkages between the work of Danish CSOs and results at community level. In individual cases it is possible to go further and directly assess the results of Danish CSOs' efforts beyond organisational level. This evaluation conducted 13 case studies. These are a purposeful sample and are not intended to be representative. Nevertheless, in many ways they can be seen as a microcosm of the entirety of MFA support through Danish CSOs.

Brief descriptions of these case studies, including realised and anticipated results, can be found in Table 8 on the following page. The full 4-5 page case studies are included in Annex C, and describe the evidence behind the findings. In almost all cases, information was accessed through supported Southern partners as well as representatives of Danish CSOs.

TABLE 8: WIDER RESULTS IN CASE STUDIES

In 2017, **ActionAid** Denmark and ActionAid International Kenya initiated a project providing capacity development support to LGBTIQ activists in Kenya, Uganda and Nigeria, with the partner All Out. A “Bridges of Love” Alliance was formed in Kenya, comprised of LGBTIQ activists and Christian and Muslim leaders. The work has brought about changes at individual and institutional levels, including a shift in social norms and practices within some FBOs, LGBTIQ members gaining confidence to engage with opponents, and some religious leaders and LGBTIQ members building personal understanding and relationships. Efforts are ongoing to contribute to wider systemic changes in Kenya. Longer-term change could include reduced discrimination and violence, fewer arrests motivated by blackmail or extortion, and less rejection of LGBTIQ people by their own religious leaders. The Alliance is advocating for the repeal of an anti-homosexual law. If successful, this could result in the avoidance of prison for many LGBTIQ people.

In 2014, **Danmission** began a project with multiple partners, including the Prey Lang Community Network (PLCN), which builds on a tradition of patrolling, and operates as a loosely structured network inside Prey Lang Forest – the last major lowland rain forest on the Southeast Asian mainland. PLCN patrols have sometimes been able to prevent illegal logging, although they have recently been banned by the government. Delays to illegal deforestation have helped saved parts of the forest that would otherwise have disappeared, thereby adversely affecting the livelihoods of indigenous people. This has been important in maintaining their cash income from resin trees and fisheries. On a more macro-level, any mitigation in deforestation – an important part of the Paris Agreement – could be of benefit if future governments invest in increased forestry protection, or begin to enforce

existing policies. To the extent that the project has helped delay deforestation, there will be that much more forest left to conserve in the future. There is also a potential multiplier effect, with enhanced cooperation between different forest communities.

Arla Foods Ingredients, the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), **DanChurchAid**, the Confederation of Danish Industry, and several other partners established GAIN Access to Better Dairy partnership in 2017, with support from Danida. In Ethiopia, the partnership aims to improve diets among children and mothers by introducing an innovative, locally produced, safe and fortified dairy product to the market. Training on feed and hygiene for local farmers has already led to increasing milk yields, reduced spoilage, and improvements in the quality of milk. Two new flavours for fortified yoghurt have now been passed for market launch. It is not yet clear to what extent the promotion of the yoghurt will translate into increased public consumption and long-term viability. If successful, the project could enable improved diets and health among children and mothers, and improved livelihoods among Ethiopia’s smallholder farmers, as well as generating other benefits at different points along the dairy value chain.

The floriculture industry in Ethiopia employs many women who face challenges including Gender Based Violence (GBV), sexual harassment, and occupational health and safety inequality. To address these issues, **Danish Family Planning Association** brought together a range of different actors representing private sector employers, trade unions, and an NGO with SRHR expertise. Some activities had to be delayed because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, following trainings, some farms are developing their own action plans to implement SRHR and gender policies, and some employers have

committed to reviewing relevant policies. As a result of awareness training with individuals, workers are more likely to wear safety clothing, and take better care while spraying and during fertilizer distribution. There is also some evidence of increased employee attendance. Eventual impacts could include less work-related illness and injury, better working conditions for women, less GBV and sexual harassment, and greater sustainable profits for private sector organisations, with a resulting improvement in the livelihoods of employees.

Since 2016, **Center for Church-based Development (CKU)** and its partner the Organisation of African Instituted Churches (OAIC), through national partners in Burundi, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda, have engaged clusters of churches and interfaith networks in social accountability. Tanzanian clusters appear to have been very active in influencing policies and practices at local levels, whilst in Uganda and Kenya the clusters are building alliances with Inter-Religious Councils at a national level, creating opportunities to bring a collective voice of faith communities to national public institutions. A lot of engagement is concerned with public budget tracking and monitoring. At a wider level, there has been impact on a broad range of issues including street lighting (safety), reduction in teenage pregnancies (SRHR), curriculum development in Bible college (training), micro enterprises (financial empowerment), community contracts (accountability of politicians), and some first steps in climate adaptation.

Danish Refugee Council's work with Syrian diaspora organisations is currently carried out through three independent programme strands: the establishment of a Syrian Civil Society Networks Platform; support for Turkish and Syrian refugee-led CSOs in Turkey; and support for a gathering of 36 Syrian NGOs which are active in protecting and improving the quality of

life of displaced Syrians within and outside Syria. The work has contributed to many tangible gains for displaced people in sectors such as safety, livelihoods, shelter and health. During Covid-19, having reliable, local CSOs with the capacity to understand refugees' rights and claim their entitlements saved lives, especially in the initial period where professionals could not access the field. On a wider level, without Danish Refugee Council's support there may have been much more frustration with the overall situation. Now, even if refugees cannot directly change the policies that affect them, they at least know that someone outside is listening. Reduced frustration may in turn have helped reduce conflict and radicalisation amongst disaffected youth.

The Medical Students' Association of Kenya (MSAKE) and the International Medical Cooperation Committee (IMCC) – with **Danish Youth Council** support – implemented a RESPEKT project focused on capacitating 70 MSAKE youth volunteers at nine different universities to conduct SRHR training and events at local secondary schools. RESPEKT has since facilitated gender-based violence training and campus festivals to increase capacity and awareness on SRHR for University students across Kenya. MSAKE has been invited on numerous occasions by national and district governments to present the RESPEKT project to various official functions. The project is beginning to impact the behaviour of teachers and teenagers and has contributed to a reduction in teenage pregnancies in a number of targeted secondary schools, thereby potentially reducing unsafe abortion, obstructed labour, fistulas, and death.

Two distinct projects implemented by partners of **Global Aktion (GA)** in Mozambique involve empowering local communities which are affected by the extraction of natural resources, so they can represent their own case with respect to fossil fuel extraction. One partner – AAAJC – seeks to use Mozambican law and policies to secure

benefits for affected communities. Another – JA! – has less of a focus within Mozambique – partly because the key players on gas extraction are based internationally, and partly due to the associated risks of working on such a sensitive issue. A key aspect of both interventions is international advocacy and obtaining reliable information from the ground is a vital element. The two Mozambican partners are well networked but appreciate the contacts and linkages that GA can bring within international fora. There are some concrete indications of progress, even if the fundamental problem of extraction negatively affecting local communities remains largely unresolved as yet.

Mission East relaunched activities in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq in 2014. Much of its current activities are based around supporting youth. It tries to provide protected spaces, which can be vital for young people, especially adolescent girls and young women who may otherwise be unable to access needed services and support. The provision of basic needs serves as an entry point to do other things; such as addressing domestic violence, disability, mental health, GBV and coping with trauma. Short-term results include improved livelihoods, education, health and mental wellbeing. Longer-term results involve enabling youth to become strong advocates and agents of change, helping to bridge silos between humanitarian, development and peace work. This will hopefully develop a cadre of young people who will remain active in developmental efforts in Iraq in the future.

Since 2018, **Oxfam** has supported a growing number of organisations led by South Sudanese refugees in the West Nile, Uganda. Support includes peacebuilding, social cohesion, effective humanitarian responses, resilience, refugee leadership and facilitation of meaningful participation. Oxfam currently supports five refugee-led organisations (RLOs). Many results for refugees are tangible and immediate,

e.g., enhanced income, better sanitation and improved health. For work related to enhancing the ‘voice and access’ of refugees, it is harder to draw direct links with results at community level. However, there has been increased media attention within Uganda on refugees, because of their involvement in different events. As well as material benefits, direct benefits to refugees have also included increased awareness of conflict resolution methods and processes, and less transmission of Covid-19. It is hoped that some of the new conflict resolution skills can be taken back and applied in South Sudan.

An **Oxfam** project in Mali supports youth to build capacities for peacebuilding in secondary schools, engage in accelerated learning and vocational training, and engage in economic activities. Oxfam IBIS adds value to the programme through its expertise in peacebuilding and gender-sensitive approaches. Advocacy carried out through the project has influenced the Ministry of Education in several areas, including the introduction of a new module on peace education – developed together with local partners and including key elements around active citizenship and the participation of youth – into Mali’s national curriculum. The module has been rolled out in schools, with the active support of the Ministry. The project has reportedly encouraged some young people to stay in their villages rather than joining Jihadi groups. Local partners and Oxfam Mali staff believe that several conflicts in communities have been resolved thanks to the mediation carried out by young people involved in the project.

A programme supported by **Save the Children** aimed to enable youth in the region to engage in regional decisions that affect them. It did this by establishing a Horn of Africa Youth Network (HoAYN) and engaging with CSOs and youth networks in countries of the region. HoAYN and youth network partners have since lobbied for the adoption of a Youth

Engagement Strategy, which is a framework for driving youth empowerment in the Horn of Africa. Once adopted, the Strategy is intended to provide a practical guide and framework for accountability for key stakeholders working on youth empowerment in the region. HoAYN is now recognised in Intergovernmental Authority on Development meetings and has been brought in to discuss issues such as migration. Where youth participation was previously tokenistic, there is now more scope for meaningful engagement. It is hoped that in the future practical impacts for youth will be manifested through policies at national levels.

Since 2018, **World Wildlife Fund for Nature** Denmark has been supporting an Innovation

Programme in Kenya. The programme involves an end-to-end process of problem identification through to solution implementation. A set of Greenhouse Sessions run as part of the programme have spurred significant interest from social and non-profit enterprises, which are becoming new partners to WWF Kenya. The programme has to-date supported more than 25 innovations, with organisations offered technical support as well as seed funding. If successful, some of these innovations could lead to more widespread scaling of novel approaches to conservation, and eventually sustainable impacts in peoples' lives resulting from changes in areas such as urban development, food security, renewable energy, forestry protection, and treatment of plastic waste.

Summarising wider results

The table above shows a large variety of results at different levels, including changes in peoples' lives, changes at policy level, and environmental impact. Some of the changes are immediate and tangible. For example, Danish Refugee Council's work with Syrian diaspora partners has contributed to tangible gains for displaced people in areas such as safety, livelihoods, shelter, WASH and health. Mission East supports work in Iraq involving the provision of basic needs such as water, sanitation and housing, which also serves as an entry point to tackle the other things it wants to address, including domestic violence, disability, mental health issues, GBV and coping with trauma. And the CKU-supported partnerships in East Africa with faith-based organisations have led to small-scale impact on a range of issues such as improved street lighting, a reduction in teenage pregnancies and financial empowerment.

However, the sheer variety of impacts makes it very hard to summarise achievements. In a previous evaluation of Danish MFA support to civil society carried out by INTRAC, a concept paper was developed, explaining why aggregation and summarisation is very difficult across a broad portfolio of work, and why no donor has successfully tackled the issue. Specifically, it introduced the concept of six tests, which are **all** needed for either effective aggregation, or to assess collective impact. The Danish MFA portfolio of support fails three of these tests: namely, the same indicator definitions are not used across different agencies,

results cannot be addressed over similar timescales, and contributions to change are widely different. These are explained below.

Indicator definitions: As can be seen from the case studies, even the more immediate and tangible results at community level vary hugely. It would be effectively impossible to insist on common indicators as the work of partners is so different and is carried out in different contexts. The only way the MFA could resolve this would be to insist that Southern partners are only supported to work in narrowly defined areas of work, such as sexual and reproductive rights or economic development. This would be unduly limiting for a civil society support programme.

Timescales: It is (relatively) easier to aggregate outputs and short-term outcomes, as these tend to occur in the same time period as activities carried out. But many wider results can take much longer to occur. This means that wider results cannot always be assessed in the same time period as support was provided. It is worth noting that all of the case studies were developed at the end of the current SPA period, albeit one that had been adversely affected by Covid-19. Yet many of the wider results are as yet inconclusive or have only been partially achieved. For example, thanks to DFPAs work supporting the floriculture industry in Ethiopia, some farms are developing their own action plans to implement SRHR and gender policies. However, it was considered too soon to see much impact in terms of concrete improvements for employees. Similarly, if some of the innovations supported by WWF are successful, they could lead to more widespread scaling of novel approaches to conservation, and eventually sustainable impacts in peoples' lives resulting from changes in areas such as food security, renewable energy, and treatment of plastic waste. However, this may take many years. More examples could be provided from the case studies, and these only represent a tiny sample of the hundreds of pieces of work carried out in the South, supported by Danish CSOs. Assessing the wider results of work carried out during a 4-year strategic period can only scratch the surface. Much longer time horizons would be needed to properly evaluate these results.

Contributions to wider change: Similarly, there are huge differences in the contributions to change. CSOs are rarely in a position to attribute social change as a direct result of their own interventions. This is because they work in complex situations with multiple external factors affecting change, and they often work collaboratively. For example, in Kenya, ActionAid Denmark provides advice to ActionAid International Kenya, which then leads on the work with the LGBTIQ Alliance. ActionAid Denmark may also contribute to changes within other social movements in Kenya, sometimes directly and sometimes indirectly (e.g., ActionAid International Kenya may apply ActionAid Denmark's advice in other projects they support). And in Mozambique, international advocacy is carried out by both Global Aktion and its partners. The two Mozambican

partners are well networked but appreciate the contacts and linkages that Global Aktion can bring within international fora. Where advocacy work of this kind is successful it is notoriously difficult to disentangle the contributions of a project from the contributions of other factors, let alone establish the relative contributions within an alliance.

Overall, a large variety of results have been achieved through the case studies, including results at policy and environmental level, and those directly affecting communities. Some of the results are known, and some are hoped for over longer timescales. The chains of support through which results have been achieved are usually long and complex. None of this is unwelcome. It reinforces the points often made that CSOs frequently work in highly complex and uncertain environments, and that results are often hugely context-specific. This makes the results even more impressive in some ways but does not remove the challenge of summarising them.

Cost-effectiveness of results

The main evaluation question for this chapter is *“to what extent do partnerships between Danish and Southern CSOs promote sustainable results in a cost-effective manner?”* Cost-effectiveness is generally defined as the extent of poverty reduction an intervention achieves relative to its inputs. Cost-effectiveness is usually considered as part of a wider value-for-money (VfM) agenda.

There are broadly two ways of establishing cost-effectiveness. The first is to focus on economic analysis methods such as Cost-Benefit Analysis, Cost-Effectiveness Analysis or Social Return on Investment, each of which is used for slightly different purposes. These methods are easiest to use within projects or programmes with clear, defined, timebound objectives that enable real or potential benefits to be measured or assessed with a degree of accuracy.

Whilst it might be possible to carry out Cost-Effectiveness Analysis within individual projects and programmes supported by Danish CSOs and their partners – for example using the DanChurchAid case study on dairy partnerships to examine the costs and benefits of introducing an innovative, locally produced, safe and fortified dairy product to the market – it is much harder to do this at the broader level of Danish CSO support to Southern partners. This is for two reasons. Firstly, whilst costs are relatively straightforward to assess over a short period, it is harder to draw boundaries around benefits. For example, one result of productive partnerships between Danish CSOs and their Southern partners is to boost wider engagement with the Danish public, which could ultimately lead to higher levels of aid spending. Another could be the ability of Danish CSOs to influence within wider alliances and federations, which might also result in outcomes and impacts that would need to be quantified in order to build up a full picture of benefits.

Secondly, benefits usually last beyond the period in which costs can be established. Many of the case studies developed as part of TE2 demonstrated how Danish CSO support to Southern partners can help generate real and important benefits for poor and marginalised people living in communities across the world. But in many cases the ultimate results of this work have yet to be realised, and the chain of contribution is long and complex. A true assessment of the benefits might have to wait several years. In essence, one of the major reasons for working in partnership (and the point of the wider localisation agenda) is to seek greater, sustainable long-term change. In the short-term, therefore, 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 hope would gradually increase with time if work is being conducted in a truly sustainable way.

Whilst economic assessments of cost-effectiveness may be useful in limited circumstances, at higher levels cost-effectiveness, or VfM more broadly, is more often about making a defensible case for why a chosen approach provides the best use of resources and has delivered value to poor and marginalised people. This is expressed by BOND as follows: *“When designing and implementing an intervention, [CSOs should] compare the costs and benefits of different options and make a defensible case for why the chosen approach provides the best use of resources and delivers the most value to poor and marginalised people”*.³⁰

The critical question to ask is therefore whether Danish CSOs (and pooled funds) are genuinely considering VfM and cost-effectiveness issues when engaging in the overall design and planning of their programmes. To the extent that this evaluation has been able to judge it appears they are. For example, Oxfam International has considered very carefully over the last few years how to maximise its impact through supporting joint offices, whilst making efficiency and economy savings, and avoiding duplication of work. During interviews, staff of Oxfam IBIS were able to provide convincing arguments outlining the benefits of the Oxfam confederation system, whilst recognising that this, at times, made it harder for them to engage directly with some of their Southern partners. Equally, DanChurchAid provided a convincing explanation for why working through Southern partners may not be cost-effective if measured in the short term, but was likely to derive much more sustainable benefits eventually, and therefore would be more cost-effective in the longer term.

30 “Value for Money. What it means for UK NGOs”. BOND, London, 2012.

Ultimately, the cost-effectiveness of Danish CSO collaborations with Southern partners is likely to be judged alongside the success or failure of the localisation agenda (see next chapter). If Danish CSOs are successful in transferring skills, resources and opportunities to Southern partners then the investments made now are likely to result in substantial returns in the future. However, it will not be possible to make a judgement on this for many years.

Communicating wider results

The chapter above has outlined some major difficulties faced by MFA – or indeed any major donor or INGO – in capturing portfolio-level results over short- to medium-term time periods. Short of being more prescriptive about the kind of work Danish CSOs can support, or promoting more immediate results (e.g., by encouraging more operational service delivery), there is little the MFA can do to better *measure* wider results at an aggregate level. However, there is a large range of options available to better *communicate* wider results, some of which were recommended in the previous evaluation, and some of which have since been adopted. How far MFA and the Danish CSOs and pooled funds want to go down this route depends on the relative costs and benefits of doing so.

In the end, the choice faced by MFA and Danish CSOs is stark. Either invest in further M&E activities at a portfolio level that better enable Danish CSOs to communicate wider results, or carry on with current processes and practices, and hope that this decision does not adversely affect funding and/or support from government and the public. If the latter course is taken it will probably be based around a judgement either that there is no real likelihood of funding and support to Danish NGOs being cut in the foreseeable future, or that if funding or support is cut then it is unlikely that an enhanced ability to communicate portfolio-level results would significantly affect the decision. In the end, this is a political judgement the MFA and Danish CSOs need to make, and the evaluation team cannot make firm recommendations. However, if the decision is to further invest in methods to communicate wider results across the portfolio, then there are plenty of options the evaluation team can put forward for consideration. Some of these are contained in Box 7. None of these options would require additional prescriptions on what Danish CSOs and their Southern partners can and cannot do in terms of support to Southern communities. And most would enable some additional learning that could be used to enhance programming. However, all would involve additional costs and resources, either for the MFA and/or Danish CSOs and their partners.

BOX 7: SOME OPTIONS FOR BETTER COMMUNICATING WIDER RESULTS

Note that none of these methods are comprehensive in themselves, and they are not mutually exclusive. A selection could be used jointly to examine different kinds of complex change from different viewpoints.

Map wider results onto a Theory of Change

(ToC): It would be possible to map wider results onto a jointly agreed theory of change. This is done by many large INGOs. Whilst not enabling an absolute measurement of results at different levels, it would enable a heat map to be built up, showing where results had been achieved. This would require an agreed ToC and efforts to conduct the mapping. This suggestion was made in the last evaluation and was rejected by Danish CSOs.

Map wider results into Dimensions of Change

(DoC): A simpler solution would be to define a few key dimensions of change (e.g., policy change, capacity change, changes in community mobilisation) and map wider results onto these. Mapping could be done via annual reporting. However, a more robust option would be to investigate a few 'claims' arising through Danish CSOs and pooled funds reporting each year using an approved research method such as process tracing or contribution analysis. Over time, this could generate a significant portfolio of verified changes.

Develop a portfolio results framework: Similar to the options above, this would involve mapping wider results onto a pre-defined ToC or set of DoC. In addition, some key evaluation questions and/or aggregated output results could be added to the results framework. This would allow MFA and CSOs to demonstrate their aggregated efforts, alongside illustrations of some of the wider results, in a coherent way. Again, this recommendation was rejected after the previous evaluation.

Develop purposeful case studies on a regular basis:

Following previous advice, this current evaluation is based partly upon purposefully sampled case studies. Arguably, work within Denmark and the humanitarian-development nexus were valid subjects for this approach, whilst the subject for TE2 – partnership – was too broad. Narrower subjects such as localisation or working with new forms of partnership might have been better. Case studies could be pursued on an annual basis, rather than waiting for an evaluation.

Partner surveys: The partner surveys used in this evaluation, or alternatives such as the Keystone partner survey, could be used to build up a picture over time of the evolving nature of partnership, added-value, capacity support and localisation. Each survey would effectively be the baseline for the next survey.

Common methodologies: A common methodology, such as Outcome Harvesting, could be applied at portfolio level. Danish CSOs have developed some competency in Outcome Harvesting, and it is well suited to looking at disparate results across a large portfolio. In the opinion of the Evaluation Team this would need to be backed up with a robust methodology for investigating and validating individual claims of impact.

Regular reporting: At the moment, Danish CSOs have a lot of leeway in how they produce their annual reports, and the reports do not lend themselves to synthesis. One idea would be to have a few compulsory sections, outlining how Danish CSOs and pooled funds report on topical or ongoing themes, such as localisation, innovation, or working with new forms of partnership. Using consistent headings for these chapters would help with cross analysis. Some different themes could be selected each year, and some could be consistent.

Learning or evaluation questions: As above, key evaluation or learning questions could be developed. Danish CSOs and pooled funds could be asked – jointly or collaboratively – to invest resources in addressing these questions. Findings could be brought together and recorded in regular sense-making exercises, such as workshops.

Communication-focused interactive guides: Requiring slightly more investment, validated stories of impact could be mapped onto an interactive tool that could be used to showcase wider results to the public. It should not be difficult to develop a tool that the public could search, using geographic or thematic keywords. Results could be mapped onto a joint ToC, dimensions of change, or even a map of the world.

Joint in-country studies to assess contribution to SDGs: The MFA could invest in joint in-country studies to see how Danish CSOs are contributing to SDGs in specific countries. These could even be arranged with other donors so that the joint influence of civil society could be seen in specific countries of interest to the Danish MFA and/or other donors.

Tracer studies: Tracer studies could focus on a few projects of interest, such as innovation projects, projects explicitly experimenting with new forms of localisation, major advocacy projects, or projects involving social movements. Light touch reports could be developed at discrete intervals to paint a picture of how things are changing over time, thereby highlighting the fluid and evolving nature of complex change.

Conclusions

The case studies developed as part of TE2 have demonstrated how Danish CSO support to Southern partners can help generate real and important benefits for poor and marginalised people living in communities across the world. These range from short-term and vital benefits, such as improved health and livelihoods, to longer-term change resulting from advocacy efforts or social accountability. In many cases the ultimate results of this work are yet to be realised, and the chain of contribution is often long and complex.

The main evaluation question – “To what extent do partnerships between Danish and Southern CSOs promote sustainable results in a cost-effective manner?” – cannot be answered easily except by using examples and illustrations. It is obvious from the case studies that much of Danish CSOs’ work does result in important benefits for poor and disadvantaged populations, but the lack of any counterfactual means it is impossible to judge to what extent working through Danish and Southern CSOs achieves this in a cost-effective manner. There are always trade-offs – short-term versus long-term results; working operationally or with partners; engaging in top-down decision-making versus emphasising localisation – and if nothing else the case studies demonstrate how dependent these decisions are on the context in which programmes operate.

In essence, one of the major reasons for working in partnership (and the point of the wider localisation agenda) is to seek greater, sustainable long-term change. To assess whether results are cost-effective or not requires some basic comparison of costs (inputs) and eventual outcomes or impact. However, the costs of working in partnership are often immediate, whereas benefits are spread out over time, and constantly need to be reassessed. Benefits also sometimes require an opportunity to realise change. For example, some supported CSOs are currently demonstrating the advance of civil society in Myanmar at great personal cost, but this would not have been known without the unrest in Myanmar.

To either aggregate impact or show how combined MFA support affects pre-defined goals in the South, would require a degree of coherence of programming which is neither present nor desirable, largely because it would mean Danish CSOs and pooled funds imposing their views on Southern partners, and restricting the circumstances under which they offer support. This would mean the MFA vastly restructuring its grant structures and imposing much more conditionality on the Danish CSOs and pooled funds. In turn, this would effectively undermine many of its policies on partnership and localisation, as well as going against the Nordic ethos of supporting civil society. It would also significantly reduce the value-added by Danish CSOs as outlined in Chapter 5 of this report.

However, there is a large range of options available to better *communicate* wider results, some of which were recommended in a previous evaluation, and some of which have since been adopted. How far the MFA and the Danish CSOs and pooled funds want to go further down this route depends on the relative costs and benefits of doing so. The Danish CSOs and MFA have already had one discussion around these options at the end of the previous evaluation, and it is probably time to have another. 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. LOCALISATION

This chapter addresses EQs 5, 6 and 7. These are:

- *“To what extent do the Danish CSOs contribute to the agenda of localisation (increased involvement of local partners in terms of decision-making, control of funds, etc. in humanitarian and development support)?”*
- *“To what extent are the partnerships equal? (Is there evidence of re-balancing the partnership i.e. making it responsive and accountable to the partner and including the gradual transfer of financial and decision-making responsibility?)”*
- *“What can be learned from different approaches to localisation in different contexts?”*

It is largely based on interviews with SPA agencies and pooled fund representatives; qualitative evidence generated through the case studies; and statistical evidence generated through the SPA and pooled fund surveys.

Progress on the localisation agenda

A “Grand Bargain” was launched at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016. This was an agreement between some of the world’s largest donors and humanitarian agencies. The Grand Bargain is designed to get more resources into the hands of people in need and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian action. Currently 63 signatories (25 member states, 22 NGOs, 12 UN agencies, two Red Cross movements, and two inter-governmental organisations) are working across nine workstreams to implement the commitments.³¹

Part of the Grand Bargain involves greater localisation. Localisation is a process where international development actors shift power and responsibilities of development and humanitarian aid efforts towards local and national actors. Although the term originated in the humanitarian sector, many of the core concepts have been pursued by INGOs working in mainstream development for a long time.

31 Information retrieved from The Grand Bargain (Official Website), Inter-Agency Standing Committee, <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain>, November 2021.

Localisation can be manifested as the provision of more money to Southern organisations. However, it also incorporates a set of wider dimensions that include fully engaging partners in the planning and design of programmes; giving Southern partners visibility and credit for their work; supporting them to engage in national or international fora and debates; and the provision of long-term and flexible funding and capacity development. These concepts are embedded in the Charter for Change (C4C). This is an initiative, led by both national and international NGOs, to practically implement changes to the way the humanitarian system operates to enable more locally led response.

Based largely on interviews with representatives of SPA agencies and pooled funds, together with MFA officials, it seems clear that over the past SPA period many Danish CSOs have made progress on the localisation agenda and/or alignment to Grand Bargain commitments. Some have introduced new policies on localisation or have adapted existing partnership policies to cover localisation. Others have engaged in diverse activities in support of the localisation agenda. These include signing the C4C, organising C4C events, boosting capacity development work, planning handover and exit strategies, setting up accountability mechanisms for handling direct donor funds, pushing localisation within alliances or federations, paying for learning pots that benefit Southern partners, facilitating independent partner meetings, building local offices with local staff, handing over control of global platforms to partners, and de-registering international organisations as local organisations.

Not all Danish CSOs have done significant, additional work in this area. For example, staff of Danish Red Cross felt that it would not be appropriate to develop a separate localisation agenda, as Danish Red Cross values and practices are already aligned. Other Danish CSOs also felt that localisation was not a driver of change (e.g., DPOD, Mission East, International Media Support (IMS)). This is not because anyone thinks localisation is a bad idea per se, but instead because agencies feel that either they are following localisation principles already, or that it is hard to make them practical given the way they operate. This view was confirmed in many of the case studies where organisations felt they did not need to pursue an explicit localisation agenda as projects were already conforming to the key principles (see case study opposite).

There were some divergent views. For example, staff of Global Fokus reported that there has been some pushback from its members, complaining that localisation is largely a humanitarian concept, and should not be pushed onto development organisations more than necessary. Another key concern was expressed by representatives of CISU. This was that many of the current elements of localisation within Danish CSOs are linked to MFA's Civil Society Policy, which has recently expired, and there are no current plans for a direct replacement.

CASE STUDY: CONFORMING TO THE LOCALISATION AGENDA

The **DUF**-supported project in Kenya is based on volunteerism. Staff of the International Medical Cooperation Committee (IMCC) – a member of DUF - believe that localisation is an end in itself. Funds are mostly used in Kenya by the local partner, MSAKE, while a smaller part is used for exchange visits, monitoring and a nominal administration fee for IMCC. A Project Steering Group is reported to make all decisions jointly, including on the use of funds. The intention has been to capacitate and empower MSAKE to have increasing independence. Staff of MSAKE partially confirmed this, although the extent to which it has actually happened is unclear, and there have been some conflicts which needed to be resolved.

MFA representatives interviewed stated that over the past SPA period there has been a new drive to incentivise Danish CSOs to go down the localisation path, whilst also acknowledging that many Danish CSOs have been engaged in partnership and capacity development for many years. Their view is that progress is patchy, with some Danish CSOs lagging behind. Nevertheless, they agreed that some Danish CSOs are pushing ahead on the issue, and indeed, some Danish CSOs have criticised MFA for not being ambitious enough!

Overall, the consensus from the Danish CSOs interviewed was that much of their work – especially around civil society – is already in line with localisation, and their incentives to move further come from within. A typical view was that localisation is ingrained within their way of thinking, and that there was not much need for the MFA to push the agenda. Some Danish CSOs also felt they were in the vanguard of pushing the localisation agenda, including within their respective alliances and federations. As one staff member of a Danish CSO put it, *“Localisation is a train that is moving – we have to get on it.”*

Rightly or wrongly, there was a perception that MFA is mostly concerned with direct money transfers, and some organisations had reservations about the target of 25% of funds going to Southern partners. Currently, the proportion of overall funding going to Southern partners varies widely from 76% (Caritas) to 45% (DFPA) to 5% (Mission East in Afghanistan and Iraq) to less than 2% for Danish Refugee Council work funded through the HUM Lot.³² These proportions are highly dependent

32 These are all estimates provided during interviews, and are not based on verified figures. They should be treated as illustrative only.

on how Danish CSOs are structured vis-à-vis partners in the South. It is much easier to send money to the South when working through one like-minded Alliance partner in a country where you know they have the capacity to absorb the funds.

One Danish CSO in particular expressed reservations that the localisation agenda and the transfer of funds to local partners had become conflated in an unhealthy way. Other organisations also discussed this in terms of the difficulties of funding smaller or more unusual organisations (see next section) where Danish CSOs cannot easily transfer money directly, and indeed often need to spend a higher proportion of funding on managing the relationship.

Another issue raised was how the Covid-19 pandemic had supported the push for localisation; firstly, by emphasising that remote monitoring was possible, and secondly, by demonstrating how Southern partners had stepped up when international staff retreated.

The view from the South

The evaluation was obviously keen to get the views of as wide a cross-section of Southern partners on localisation as possible. Primarily, this was done through the two surveys. This section focuses first on the views expressed by Southern partners of SPA agencies, remembering that these are representative of the views of over 600 Southern partners.

Localisation is a complex concept to handle in a quantitative survey. It was therefore decided to develop a series of nine dimensions of localisation, using resources and papers supplied by Danish CSOs. Two statements were developed for each dimension. One was a positive statement expressing a more equal (or at least more mutually beneficial) partnership, and one was a negative statement expressing a less equal partnership. This was to avoid the well-known tendency of people to prefer to 'agree' than to 'disagree' with statements.³³ Southern partners were randomly allocated one of the two questions for each of the nine dimensions – either through SurveyMonkey software, or through a random number generator for those who filled in offline versions.

In order to analyse the statements, an index was developed.³⁴ The higher the index score for each dimension of localisation, the more positively Southern partners felt about it. The strength of feeling on localisation

33 The framing of the statements did indeed have a large influence on individual responses. Across all localisation questions, respondents were far more likely to agree than to disagree with statements, even when these statements were mirror opposites of each other.

34 The method used to develop the index was as follows. Positively framed statements were coded as: strongly agree = 2, agree = 1, neutral = 0, disagree = -1, strongly disagree = -2. For negatively framed statements the coding was reversed. This made it possible to form a combined score (index) on a scale of -2 to +2.

is summarised in Table 9 on the following page. The table shows that there was only one dimension where Southern partners, on average, felt negatively. This was their involvement in communications and discussions with donors.

Five of the localisation dimensions scored most positively across all Southern partners. These were:

- early and full engagement of Southern partners in project design and planning;
- recognition and use of Southern partner full capacities;
- visibility of Southern partners, and giving credit for their work;
- consultation of Southern partners around major decisions; and
- treatment of Southern partners as equal partners rather than grantees or sub-contractors.

Four of the localisation dimensions scored less positively across all Southern partners. These were:

- engagement of Southern partners in international fora and debates;
- the provision of long-term, strategic capacity development support;
- the provision of flexible, long-term funding; and
- involvement of Southern partners in communications and discussions with donors.

One way to explain these findings would be to consider that the first set of five dimensions – those that scored most positively – reflect behaviours that may be achievable through changes in practices and behaviour at staff level, but do not necessarily require additional resources or fundamental changes to financial or contractual arrangements. The latter four dimensions reflect behaviours that may require additional resources (e.g., international travel, money and time for capacity development); willingness to change contractual arrangements and accept greater risk in the partnership on the side of the Danish CSOs (e.g. longer-term, flexible funding and greater involvement of Southern partners with donors); or changes in donor behaviours (such as allowing more security of funding over longer timescales). These more material aspects of localisation appear more difficult to achieve overall, particularly when working with independent CSOs in the south (the non-Alliance partners).

TABLE 9: SOUTHERN PARTNER VIEWS ON LOCALISATION (SPA SURVEY)

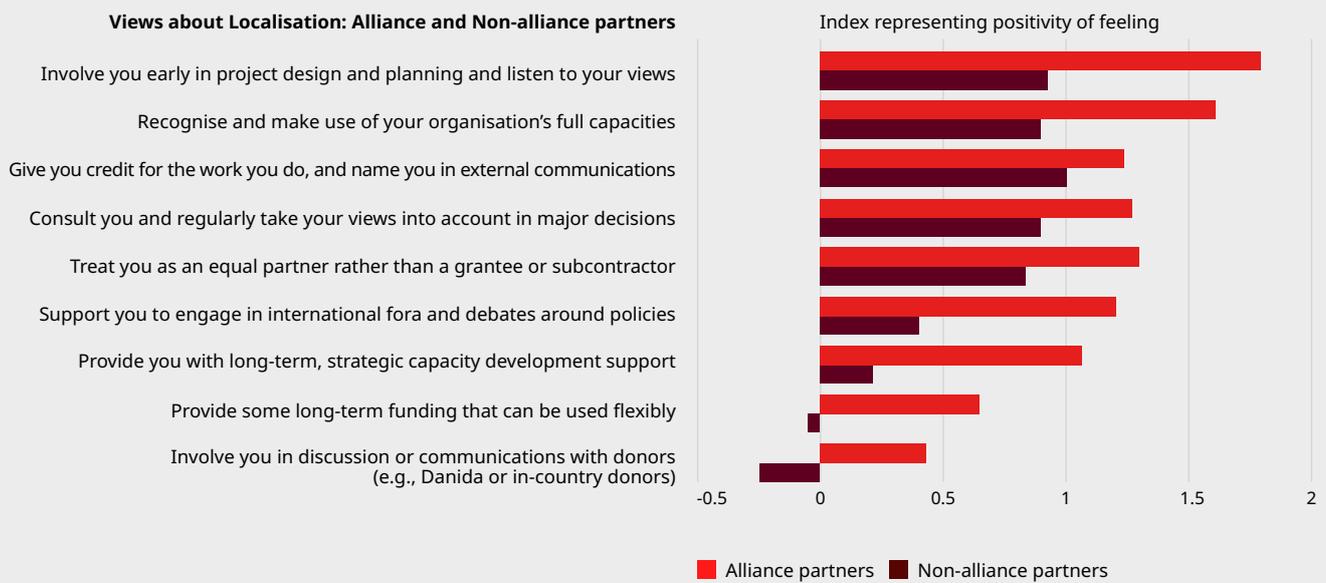
When different groups of Southern partners were considered, some interesting findings emerged. For example, Alliance partners had more favourable views about localisation than non-Alliance partners. Non-alliance partners scored four aspects particularly low when compared to Alliance partners (see Table 10 on the following page). These were:

- the involvement of Southern partners in communications and discussions with donors;
- the provision of flexible, long-term funding;
- the provision of long-term, strategic capacity development support; and
- the engagement of Southern partners in international fora and debates.

In fact, non-Alliance partners had (on average) a negative view about the provision of flexible, long-term funding, as well as their involvement in communications and discussions with donors. They were also much more inclined to agree with negatively worded statements in some cases. For example, 60% of non-Alliance partners agreed that capacity development support was short-term and project based rather than long-term and strategic. Other disaggregated findings were as follows:

- Southern partners funded only through HUM Lot funding had less favourable views about localisation than those funded under the CIV Lot funding, or those funded under both lots. However, this was only based on the views of nine organisations, which is too small a sample to draw many conclusions.
- Partners with lower organisational incomes (smaller organisations) had less favourable views about localisation than those with higher incomes.
- Longer-established partners had more favourable views about localisation than newer partners.

TABLE 10: VIEWS OF ALLIANCE AND NON-ALLIANCE PARTNERS ON LOCALISATION, DISAGGREGATED (SPA SURVEY)



It was also possible, using the data, to look at the overall views of individual Southern partners. Generally, Southern partners were positive about localisation. 81 of 94 Southern partners (86%) had, on average, positive views across the localisation dimensions, while the remaining 13 (14%) had negative views overall. The small number of Southern CSOs in the sample that were no longer partners of Danish CSOs had more negative views about localisation. This was only based on the views of five organisations. However, considering the different reasons why some Southern partners are no longer partners of Danish CSOs, it is likely that these views would be mirrored across the wider portfolio.

Pooled Fund survey

Exactly the same questions on localisation were asked in the pooled fund survey, with almost the same results overall. On average, pooled fund partners were slightly more positive about all aspects of localisation, but there was very little difference across almost all dimensions. It is possible that the slightly lower response rate (79% for the pooled fund survey compared to 91% for the SPA survey) could account for any differences. Less effort was made to chase up respondents for the pooled fund survey, and it is possible that the non-respondents were, on average, less positive than the respondents.³⁵

An example of where a Southern partner has been supported to engage in international fora and debates around policies is contained in the case study on the following page.

Localisation trends

In both surveys, Southern partners were presented with the statement, *“Danish CSOs have an ambition to change how they work with partners so that the relationship is more equal, longer-term, and enables national partners to have more of a say in key decisions. By equality, we mean increased trust and accountability between partners, more transparency in decision making, and more empowerment of partners.”* They were then provided with a series of four statements and were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statements. As with the previous question, the statements were designed to be analysed in pairs.

Overall, 71% of Southern partners agreed that they were ‘satisfied with their current relationship with their Danish partners and would like things to stay as they are’, although a sizeable minority (15%) disagreed. However, over two-thirds of Southern partners (68%) also said they ‘would like to have more equality with their Danish partners’. This suggests a level of satisfaction with the current status quo, but a strong desire to have more equality in future. In other words, things are good but could be better.

³⁵ A more detailed breakdown and analysis of views across the nine dimensions can be found on pp. 29-39 of Annex A (SPA survey) and pp. 25-29 of Annex B (pooled fund survey).

CASE STUDY: SUPPORTING ENGAGEMENT IN INTERNATIONAL FORA

In East Africa, **Oxfam** has tried to identify opportunities for refugee-led organisations and refugee activists to access regional and global advocacy spaces and other events which would have otherwise been unlikely or impossible. As an example, Oxfam passed space on a panel at a Global Refugee Forum (GRF) conference to a refugee leader. As another example, the GRF in December 2019 contained an exhibit called “Refugees as Agents of Peace”. This was organised collaboratively by Oxfam Uganda, and nine partner organisations doing peacebuilding work with South Sudanese refugees in Uganda. Victoria Nyoka, a South Sudanese refugee living in Uganda and working with an Oxfam Uganda partner organisation, travelled to Geneva to host the exhibit. The exhibit provided an opportunity for Victoria and the participating organisations to share their work within a global platform and increase awareness of the importance of refugee peacebuilding. Oxfam has also sought to engage refugee leaders in other kinds of international fora wherever possible. For example, when Oxfam IBIS (in collaboration with ActionAid Denmark and Save the Children Denmark) organised two Localisation in Practice workshops for all Danish NGOs in 2019, representatives of one RLO partner – Youth Social Advocacy Team (YSAT) – were invited to attend.

Interestingly, a higher proportion of Alliance partners (19%) disagreed that they were satisfied with the current relationship compared to non-Alliance partners (13%). Usually, in the SPA survey, Alliance partners tended to rate the partnerships more highly than non-Alliance partners. So, it is telling that some clearly want to move the relationships on. Dissatisfaction with the current relationship was higher in West African partners (33%) than in other regions of the world. However, it was markedly less for Southern partners that have been supported for more than 10 years.

As far as the direction of travel going forward is concerned, 74% of SPA Southern partners and 89% of pooled fund Southern partners agreed that their ‘relationship with their Danish partners was getting more equal’ although this tended to be ‘agreement’ rather than ‘strong agreement’. However, around 29% of SPA Southern partners felt their relationship with their Danish partners had not changed much since it began.

In the SPA survey, Alliance partners were more likely to strongly agree or agree that their relationship with their Danish partners was getting

BOX 8: SOME QUOTES FROM SOUTHERN PARTNERS ON LOCALISATION

“They [the Danish partner] have changed in the sense that they tend to degrade more. They are more focused on control, procedures become cumbersome, trust crumbles. Relations take place in a climate of growing mistrust. Procedures become dogmas.”

“Our institution needs full autonomy in the development of its actions; We are aware that a fair and democratic relationship with the Danish partner would substantially improve the achievement of positive results.”

“The relationship with the Danish partner has changed a small amount. Ten years ago, the Danish partner placed the emphasis on the organisational and operational development ... But today more and more the relationship is based mainly on the implementation of projects.”

“Danish organisations should build the capacity of the local organisations ... and wherever they work, they should not use them to collect data and then given a small amount of funding ... they should be proud of their partners because we are the ones who go and work in the field and we are the ones who are taking the risk and managing the anger of the beneficiaries and dealing with local authorities ... Danish organisations should make sure their international staff are familiar with the countries and cultures they work with, not take the credit for the hard work the local organisations do, we worked for several years ... yet we are not mentioned in their reports and website and in public.”

“While we have an excellent relationship with our Danish partner, we often face difficulties together in securing funding from back donors for relevant long-term projects, especially the ones that are related to organisational development. It is unfortunate that we often have to make proposals very complicated, thereby diluting their meaning, to meet back donor requirements. We wish for more opportunities to discuss directly with back donors and reduce misunderstandings.”

The calculations follow the same method as explained in Table 4. The full calculations can be found in Annex A.

more equal (88% compared to 71% for non-Alliance partners). However, partners based in West Africa were less likely to agree (only 61% agreed with the statement) compared to other regions. Most interestingly, 90% of Southern partners who have been supported for their Danish partners for over 10 years felt the relationship was getting more equal. This proportion was much lower for organisations supported for less than five years. This may be because it is harder to see real change over short time periods.

Overall, a mixed picture emerges. There is plenty of evidence from the partner surveys that many Southern partners are satisfied with their current relationship(s) with their Danish partners. Yet there is also plenty of evidence that many of the same Southern partners would like the relationship to become more equal. A few Southern partners are clearly unhappy with some aspects of their relationships with Danish CSOs, and some of the quotes taken from the surveys are presented in box 8 below.³⁶ If the surveys were to be repeated at some stage in the future it would be much easier to compare views about localisation on a timeline, and thereby draw useful comparisons.

By and large, the case studies tended to back up the opinions of Southern partners as expressed in the two surveys. For example, partners of Mission East and IMCC (DUF) expressed the hope that their relationships with Danish CSOs could be deepened and expanded, including more decision-making and more funds being managed locally. Partners of Global Aktion and ActionAid wished for more support in diversifying income sources or wished for more autonomy. And partners of CKU in Tanzania, and Oxfam in Mali requested more capacity development support in areas such as advocacy and technical skills.

Danish CSOs' views on the localisation process

Many of the representatives of the Danish CSOs and pooled funds were concerned about the push for money transfers to the South as a key indicator, and how that could potentially produce perverse incentives or distort the debate away from wider issues of localisation, such as partnership, capacities, the role of national actors in coordination, visibility, changes in power relationships and policy influence.

One issue that came up repeatedly during interviews was that of having to spend more money when genuinely supporting smaller or more unusual organisations, rather than simply transferring money to larger, capital-based NGOs with the capacity to absorb it. There are fears that if Danish CSOs feel obliged to transfer more money directly, this is not compatible

36 It should be noted that many positive quotes were received. The quotes in this box are designed to show the depth of feeling from some Southern partners to counter-balance the majority positive views.

with the MFA's desire to work with different kinds of organisations. It could also potentially lead to more sub-contracting. This also relates to the question of how to measure localisation, and whether there was a risk of concentrating on simplistic indicators, such as money transfers, as opposed to more meaningful changes that are harder to assess.

Importantly, the issue of compliance was raised again and again as an issue that inhibits true localisation. This is partly because supported organisations based in the South have to conform to many rules and regulations developed and mandated by Northern institutions. This is discussed further in Chapter 8 on new partnerships. Suffice to say here that Danish CSOs feel they are having to deal with more and more compliance issues, which undermines their desire to work with smaller or more unusual organisations in the South. This inevitably means having to either work with large Southern partners with the capacity to conform to the compliance requirements or spend lots of money as an agency doing the compliance on their behalf.

Danish CSOs can only localise to the extent they are allowed to within the system. Power can only be given away if you have it to start with! There was a lot of discussion during interviews about the level of flexibility needed from the MFA. The consensus was that the more constraints the MFA puts on Danish CSOs, the less they will actually be able to facilitate localisation.

There was also widespread agreement that localisation is not, and cannot be, a monolithic concept (see case study). It varies across different organisations, organisational structures, partners, countries, contexts, types of work, and even personalities. It has long been recognised in international development that a high degree of difference at local level makes it much harder to impose rigid, common rules that

CASE STUDY: DILEMMAS ON LOCALISATION

As far as the broader localisation agenda is concerned, **Danish Refugee Council** (DRC) staff engaged in work with Syrian refugee organisations believe it is always important to justify why you are doing things. However, in the last resort localisation needs to be localised, and cannot be reduced to top-down directives. For example, the situation is not the same in Syria as in a new crisis. In the current Syrian context, 10-year old NGOs exist that can meet the requirements of donors whilst still supporting displaced people. 10 years ago that would not have been true.

are applicable in all circumstances. Localisation needs to be flexible and adaptable, and therefore the rules and guidelines supporting it need to be as well.

Another factor that tends to inhibit localisation is the desire to ensure that Danish CSOs do not commit above and beyond what they know they can get in terms of funding. Some Danish CSO staff also worried that many Danish CSOs (maybe most) are not passing on the same flexible conditions to their partners as they are getting from the MFA.

This issue was explored during the validation workshop, and there was general agreement amongst representatives of Danish CSOs and pooled funds that more could be done in this area. Some of the challenges are systemic. These include the need for Southern partners to align with Danish MFA themes and strategies; low risk thresholds for both MFA and Danish CSOs; and the perceived need for detailed plans and budgets from Southern partners above and beyond what Danish CSOs need to deliver to the MFA. The issue of co-funding was also raised. Southern partners often have multiple donors, and if donor requirements need to be coordinated (which in itself is considered good practice) then this usually defaults to the most stringent requirements.

Nonetheless, there are some things that Danish CSOs could do immediately to make the situation easier. These include encouraging more adaptive programming alongside Southern partners, minimising compliance requirements emanating from Danish CSOs' own systems, and providing increasing levels of flexibility to Southern partners once trust has been built.

As a wider point, localisation has tended to be applied at the level of registered NGOs and CSOs, but one or two agencies pointed out that civil society is also about other kinds of organisations, and registered NGOs do not always fit into that space, especially in countries which have experienced emergencies or conflicts.

Importantly, the renewed drive for localisation came through the humanitarian sector (although the drive to devolve power and resources has been around for decades in the development sector). Yet staff of humanitarian-focused CSOs point out that the humanitarian world has professionalised itself, and that whilst that is seen as a good thing for obvious reasons, it has nonetheless hampered new organisations from getting involved as it is becoming very hard to match up to all the standards. Local partners often work in the fields that are necessary for the contexts they are in, and may do advocacy, development, and humanitarian work at different stages. This means they can move in and out of the humanitarian 'sector'. That becomes a bit of a barrier when donors are very focused on core humanitarian standards.

Another issue is that many humanitarian donors do not invest enough in allowing Danish CSOs to do capacity development. For example, ECHO works in 12-month cycles and launches new plans every year, which prevents INGOs from building up more equal partnerships. The MFA is an exception to this, and Danish CSO representatives of humanitarian organisations believe it is part of MFA's role to step-up, persuade other donors of the need for longer-term funding strategies, and thereby enhance the potential for the kind of localisation they would like to see in humanitarian situations.

Conclusions

A great deal is being done by Danish CSOs, supported by the MFA, and Denmark appears to be a powerful actor within the localisation agenda. It is clear there is significant momentum around localisation, sometimes as a result of external impetus, and sometimes because the natural working patterns of Danish CSOs and the localisation agenda dovetail.

At the same time, the first-hand views of Southern partners suggest that a lot more could be done to facilitate better power-sharing and more equality of relationships. Specific desires of Southern partners include more long-term funding that can be used flexibly; more support for fundraising and communications; more strategic capacity development; strengthened presence at national and international events; avoidance of funding gaps; and better-planned exit strategies.

Localisation receives almost unanimous approval as the way to proceed in terms of promoting legitimacy and sustainability. Therefore, the task is how best to support the movement amongst Danish CSOs. This is not straightforward, as localisation cannot easily be categorised or standardised, and is hugely dependent on local context. Indeed, a simple answer to the evaluation question *"What can be learned from different approaches to localisation in different contexts?"* is that a huge amount can be learned, but much of it is not valid outside of the particular context in which lessons are learned.

The diversity of different approaches within Danish CSOs and pooled funds should be seen as a strength and not a weakness. In the opinion of the evaluation it is good that different CSOs pursue localisation at their own pace and have ownership of the process. This is why it is important that any targets (such as targets for money transferred overseas) should apply across the portfolio of support and should not be directed at individual CSOs which work under very different structures and in massively different contexts. Civil society is 'messy' and diverse, and therefore requires a diversity of responses.

The evaluation team feels that the MFA should continue to strongly encourage Danish CSOs and pooled funds to pursue further localisation with their Southern partners at their own pace. This is best done through

constant dialogue and support, engaging with CSOs, and seeking to understand how they are developing and pursuing their own localisation strategies, rather than developing one-size-fits-all rules which will never be able to handle all the multiple different contexts in which localisation needs to be applied. Rather than setting targets top-down, Danish CSOs and pooled funds should be asked to be explicit about what they are trying to achieve as individual entities within the localisation debate and should then be judged on that basis. To help Danish CSOs think through how best to strengthen localisation within their own context, it might be helpful to have external resource people to work with each Danish CSO on an individual basis to review the current situation, to set objectives as to where they want to get to over specified periods, to make practical suggestions, and to challenge.

A major reason for this approach is to encourage the waverers within agencies (remembering that the evaluation team was often interviewing the people within organisations who are the keenest on localisation). Some of the movements towards localisation within CSOs are still fragile, and a certain degree of external pressure can be useful when advocating from within. In particular, the MFA needs to recognise and address the different challenges faced by humanitarian organisations, or those working in humanitarian contexts. Whilst the most recent impetus for localisation has come through the humanitarian sector, the challenges are often very different, and so too need be the solutions.³⁷

One big contradiction appears to be demands for increased localisation alongside ever increasing demands for more compliance. MFA could go in one of three directions here.

- First, accept that localisation is the most important thing and seek to reduce compliance requirements wherever possible and appropriate (recognising that many compliance requirements come from outside MFA). This might require an acceptance of greater risk on behalf of the MFA.
- Second, maintain the compliance requirements, and accept that at times this reduces the potential for localisation.
- Third, maintain both the localisation demands and compliance requirements, but seek to actively manage the contradictions. This means ensuring that strategies, policies and guidelines are properly coordinated, and that there are not conflicting requirements.

37 Localisation in the context of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus is covered extensively in Chapter 7 of the final report for Thematic Evaluation 3.

Whichever option is chosen it will still be important to ensure that new SPA (and pooled fund) policies and practices are consistent and coordinated. As an evaluation team we cannot necessarily advise MFA how to go about this, but at the very least no new policies or structures should be put in place without a very clear sense of how they will impact on existing policies and structures. Localisation policies and requirements need to sit alongside auditing, safeguarding, M&E, transparency, budgeting, results-based management, humanitarian standards, etc. in a coordinated manner.

It would probably be easier to do this if MFA had a small core team responsible for localisation, supported by representatives of Danish CSOs and pooled funds, and including Southern representatives as appropriate. This team should be tasked with ensuring that new SPA and pooled fund policies and practices around localisation, working with newer partnerships, and compliance are consistent and coordinated. At the very least, no new policies or structures should be put in place without a very clear sense of how they will impact on existing policies and structures. Working through a small team with designated roles will mitigate the tendency in the past to outsource work when developing new processes (such as applications for SPAs etc.) to different people or groups who do not necessarily share the same views.

Essentially, the MFA is tasked both with being ambitious and flexible. Its main role is to understand the barriers that may inhibit localisation and mitigate these where possible. The task of the Danish CSOs and pooled funds is to live up to their rhetoric, pursue localisation approaches suitable to their own structures and contexts, constantly adapt where necessary, pass on flexibility to partners, and be prepared to constantly justify approaches within agreed frameworks of ambition.

8. NEW FORMS OF PARTNERSHIP

This chapter addresses EQ3: *“Which different local partnerships are being supported, e.g. traditional structures, new forms of civil society? What challenges does this present, and how are the associated risks managed?”*

It is largely based on interviews with representatives of Danish CSOs and the pooled funds, supplemented by qualitative information from the case studies and from the validation workshop. This section relies more heavily than other sections on the case studies, which have been used extensively to illustrate support to newer forms of partnerships.

It is first important to return to the issue of direct and indirect partners. The SPA and pooled fund surveys revealed that networks and alliances accounted for 8-9% of Southern partners across both SPA and pooled fund partners, with private sector organisations accounting for between 3-5%. Social movements only accounted for around 1.5% of Southern partners (see Table 1 in Chapter 3). However, this might mask realities, as some partners are indirect. For example, ActionAid works with the LGBTIQ+ social movement in Kenya. But it is ActionAid Kenya that works with the movement itself, and ActionAid Denmark supports ActionAid Kenya as the direct partner. This makes it harder to get accurate figures on the types of partner Danish CSOs work with. It also means there is a limit to how far Danish CSOs can choose to support new forms of partnership, particularly Danish CSOs operating within alliances and federations. A lot depends on the degree of influence they have over country offices.

Nevertheless, whilst the bulk of partners are still national NGOs, including Alliance members, across both the civil society and humanitarian divides it is clear that a lot of work is being carried out with non-traditional partners.

Different types of partnership

When interviewed, many Danish CSO representatives talked about links with **private sector organisations**. Within Denmark, this is covered under TE1. In the South, at least six Danish CSOs (Caritas, CARE, ADRA, WWF, ActionAid and DanChurchAid) said they had increased their work with private sector organisations over the past SPA period. CARE, for example, has gone from 1-2 private sector partners to around 10 over the past SPA period. Some of this increase has been boosted by the Innovation Fund, which has encouraged collaboration with the private sector.

Partnerships are obviously about generating benefits for poor or marginalised people but may also be about – for example – introducing and strengthening human rights standards within the private sector. In interviews, Danmission and ActionAid also mentioned working with new forms of social enterprises. Danmission has trialled this in Myanmar and Lebanon, and ActionAid has done work in Kenya on social entrepreneurship, linking enterprises to ActionAid campaigns. Two examples of work with private sector organisations are shown in the case studies opposite.

CASE STUDIES: WORKING WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR

The **DanChurchAid** (DCA) supported project in Ethiopia on developing new dairy products is distinctive in that it involves a large number of different stakeholders. The project profiles the role of the private sector in achieving social development objectives and conveys to businesses that working in the sector can be viable and sustainable. DCA's principal partner, the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), played a key role in bringing the different actors together, while DCA's role was focussed more on production of yoghurt in the rural areas. A review mission in 2019 found that all partners were highly appreciative of the partnership model at that point.

DFPA's work in the floriculture industry, also in Ethiopia, is part of a growing portfolio of engagements with the private sector. However, a new aspect is to involve trade unions and to convene several partners working towards the same objectives. The partnership required a considerable effort from DFPA to get it off the ground. In spite of Covid-19 and the delays it led to, the partnership has made considerable progress and there is now increasing ownership from the Ethiopian partners, even though they all come from different perspectives.

Several CSOs also mentioned working with **youth groups** – sometimes formal groups registered as NGOs, and sometimes informal. These included Oxfam IBIS, Mission East, Save the Children, ActionAid, WWF and DFPA. Youth work is, of course, a key focus of DUF, which insists that youth are involved at all stages of supported projects as a core value. Working with youth also forms a large part of Mission East's work in Iraq, as described in the case study opposite.

Many CSOs mentioned increasingly working with **networks, coalitions or platforms** based in the South. These included Save the Children, CKU,

CASE STUDY: WORKING WITH INFORMAL YOUTH GROUPS

Since 2018, part of **Mission East's** programme in Iraq has involved increased cooperation with informal youth groups. Part of this cooperation involved supporting youth-led initiatives with micro-grants and capacity development. The youth groups are not legal partners of Mission East, but they work in close coordination. Mission East has developed a series of recommendations and principles for engaging youth in projects throughout the project cycle. These include empowering young people through meaningful engagement, recognising and developing their capacities and skills, supporting their physical and emotional wellbeing, and involving them in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes. However, Mission East staff also point out that working with youth groups can be challenging. For example, they can be transient in nature. One year there could be a big youth group base with lots of members, but the next year these could be lost, for a variety of reasons. Regularly, Mission East works with a core group of 6-7 youth within groups. Sometimes this is because these are the only people that can speak English (which is required for reporting and budgeting). Consequently, Mission East often attempts to raise capacity within a group (e.g., leadership training) but then finds participants get a job, or move on in other ways, and the capacity is lost to the youth group (although not of course to the wider environment). Another challenge is that youth groups can have different agendas, which can often cause serious security concerns. Mission East staff state that they are intentionally careful while working with youth groups. Recently, Mission East has decided to work with youth groups who have been formally registered by the government, in the belief that this will help it to hold them accountable and formalise the partnerships. The implications of this are yet to be worked through.

ActionAid, Plan-Boernefonden, and DPOD. An interesting example was Save the Children's ecosystem influencing, where they support a South Sudanese NGO Forum – a local umbrella body that supports its own members. Caritas also described an interesting project in Uganda where 180 members have come together to form an influential national platform.

Many of the case studies covered different forms of networks, and some of these are described in the section on convening below.

A few Danish CSOs mentioned working with **social movements**, but not as many as expected. ActionAid Denmark specialises in working with

social movements within the ActionAid family, and a case study (below) focuses on the LGBTIQ+ Alliance in Kenya. Oxfam IBIS, Mission East, Plan-Børnefonden (working with slum dwellers), WWF and DanChurchAid also mentioned working with social movements. However, discussions often focused on future plans rather than existing work.

Danish Refugee Council (DRC) has carried out a lot of work around **diaspora organisations**, including many based in Denmark. DRC argues that diaspora organisations, wherever they are based, are actually core parts of Southern civil society in their countries of origin. This is because they are integral to local civil society and can contribute far more than remittances. It is an interesting concept, and one worth exploring further in the next round of SPAs.

Other newer kinds of partnerships mentioned by representatives of CSOs and pooled funds included:

- **Refugee-Led Organisations (RLOs).** Two of the case studies carried out as part of this evaluation focused on RLOs – the work of DRC with Syrian diaspora, and the work of Oxfam with South Sudanese RLOs. These have been covered elsewhere.
- **Media organisations:** IMS has been working on facilitating new media organisations where none previously existed, as well as working more with organisations using digital media.
- **Organisations ‘of’ groups:** Some of the pooled funds were keen to point out that they worked with organisations ‘of’ groups (e.g., disability, youth) rather than organisations ‘for’ groups. Whilst not necessarily new, as this has been the case in previous SPA periods, these kinds of organisations paint a different face of partnership. The case studies carried out as part of this evaluation included work with many partners who were organisations of different constituencies, including youth (Mission East, Oxfam in Mali, Save the Children), refugees (DRC and Oxfam in Uganda), LGBTIQ people (ActionAid), forest activists (Danmission), churches (CKU) and medical students (DUF).
- **Trade unions and employers’ agencies.** The Labour Market Consortium continues to work with trade unions and employers’ agencies, as these are institutionalised in the labour market structures (making partners mainly long-term). The DFPA case study also covers some work with trade unions and an employers’ federation.
- **Informal groups:** Many Danish CSOs (e.g., Oxfam IBIS, Mission East, Save the Children, ActionAid, WWF and DFPA) mentioned a stronger trend of working with informal groups of youth or women, or working with self-help groups, micro-credit groups,

water committees, PTAs etc. However, NGOs have always worked with these kind of groups – indeed it was accepted practice in the 1980s and 1990s – and there is a question over whether this is a new development or simply a reversion to former practice when INGOs were more operational.

- **Research institutes and universities:** These were mentioned by one or two people during interviews.

Whilst there is a considerable range of different types of organisations, it remains the case that the bulk of Danish CSO partners are traditional NGOs or humanitarian and relief organisations. This finding mirrors the work of one Danish CSO – Save the Children Denmark – which recently carried out a survey and found its partners were less diverse than it thought. Other CSOs have also expressed the same opinion.

Convening

The sense of the evaluation is that Danish CSOs, along with many other INGOs, are increasingly seeing their role and added value as convening other organisations to come together. This involves bringing together partners that do not typically work together. Several of the case studies – indeed the majority – involved convening in one form or another, and brief snapshots of a selection are provided on the following page. The convening examples tend to fall into two groups. One group involves bringing groups together to work towards their mutual advantage. These groups may have different motivations and ways of working, but ultimately stand to benefit materially from greater cooperation. A second (smaller) group involves bringing people together who are traditionally hostile to each other.

Some of the challenges experienced in convening work are similar. These include working with different groups with different motivations and values, the time (and energy) needed to build up relations, the possible stop-start nature of progress (which is seldom linear) and the fact that progress often depends on working at the pace of the slowest members. Another key challenge is knowing where responsibility starts and ends. If a Danish CSO supports work to bring groups together then how long or how far should it take responsibility for the outcomes?

These challenges are exacerbated when convening aims to bring together groups which are fragmented, hostile, or have extremely different values, such as in the case of the alliance between religious leaders and LGBTIQ activists in Kenya, supported by ActionAid, or – to a lesser extent – work to bring together different religious groups supported by CDK. At some stage organisations need to decide how far to let partnerships and relationships run their own course, and/or whether they continue to take some responsibility for progress. This may be an easier task when working with groups with mutual interests, where ultimately they all benefit from

CASE STUDIES: CONVENING DIFFERENT ACTORS

In Kenya, the convening of religious leaders and LGBTIQ members is an important element of the LGBTIQ Alliance. Starting up an Alliance between two groups that **ActionAid** had limited experience of working with (and where both groups belong to fragmented organisational landscapes marked by strong opinion-makers) turned out to be a great challenge for growing a social movement. Building a network between two parties with mutually strong feelings against one another has involved encouraging positive relations between some individuals, yet at the same time addressing emergent challenges that stem from different values and deep-seated opposition. A key lesson for convening is that bringing together different groups is only the start of the challenge. A further challenge is to support and maintain relationships over time.

DanChurchAid's work in supporting the dairy sector in Ethiopia is distinctive in involving a large number of different stakeholders in developing new products. However, such multi-stakeholder partnerships can be complex. The partners come with different motivations and values, even though working under the same overall objective. Clear roles and a division of work streams makes a partnership more efficient, but also requires close alignment and coordination. Given the differing values and motivations of the various partners, this takes longer than when, for example, building collaborations between NGOs, which are more similar in nature. In this case,

the departure midway through the project of a commercial dairy producer demonstrated that, even after lengthy work to build the partnership, the private sector can take quite radical actions in responding to contextual changes, which affects its perceived interests.

According to **CKU** and partner sources, faith communities have come together in East Africa at local level to identify and push advocacy agendas. The 'collaborative approach' to advocacy has provided a good platform for networking between faith communities and government offices, including local government, police, and social sector offices. The programme has demonstrated that faith communities can drive social accountability agendas when they have the capacity to do so and use an approach that can enhance relationships with government offices. A key feature of the programme has been the engagement of religious leaders in joint advocacy to their governments. Interfaith networks and groups have been formed, and in some areas an improvement in relations between Muslims and Christians has been reported as a result. Whilst convening and networking across faith-based organisations, and in interfaith fora, have overall been positive, there has been a tendency to avoid emphasising differences between denominations and faiths, and to concentrate on what unites them, such as social accountability, reducing conflicts, and the role of leaders in being good role models for youth.

closer collaboration, compared to groups which have been brought together to overcome traditional hostility.

In all cases, there are two common elements. First, a great deal of energy, time and resources are required to bring different kinds of organisations together to work for common aims, especially when things go wrong. Second, Danish CSOs cannot guarantee success, and in the end a lot of the responsibility for sustaining and maintaining the relationships comes down to the participating partners. The failure

rate of this kind of work may be high, and this needs to be accepted by Danish CSOs and their partners.

Challenges of working with newer forms of partnership

By far the most frequent challenge raised in interviews with representatives of Danish CSOs and pooled funds was the issue of **compliance** (see case study).³⁸ Many donor compliance requirements are designed with support to larger NGO partners with traditional structures in mind. Where Danish CSOs work with newer forms of partnership it is often difficult for partners to manage compliance. In response, Danish CSOs carry out a lot of the compliance requirements for Southern partners or provide additional support for them to do it. This then makes it more difficult to achieve targets for resource transfer. As one member of a CSO put it in an interview, *“it is easy to give a big organisation three million dollars; it is hard to give a small organisation three thousand dollars”*.

CASE STUDY: CHALLENGES WITH COMPLIANCE

It is part of the remit of **Oxfam** Uganda’s programme to work with local structures such as women’s groups, youth groups, churches, and PTAs, in order to promote community ownership and mitigate conflict. However, Oxfam finds it much easier to partner with well-established NGOs that mirror its own organisational structure. The local structures Oxfam wants to support have legitimacy but are not necessarily registered. Oxfam Uganda staff still see big risks in involving Oxfam with small organisations. When working with Refugee Led Organisations (RLOs), some of the same challenges apply. In the past, Oxfam has tended to implement humanitarian work directly. But if it wants to transfer power and resources to local organisations it needs to work in different ways. This can be difficult. Challenges may include language barriers, weak internal compliance systems, particularly around finance, high

turnover of staff, bureaucratic issues required by government, and limited ability for RLOs to match funding if this is a condition of the donor. Consequently, in the initial stages of the programme, a lot of effort was focused on learning about ways of working with RLOs, understanding how best to handle accountability, and thinking about how to take advantage of the environment within Uganda. The formalisation (NGO-isation) of community activists, although sometimes a good thing, can also swamp well-intentioned people in mountains of paperwork, and in one or two situations that happened during the programme. On the peacebuilding side Oxfam has tried to enable flexibility, but the RLOs want even more. As a large confederation, Oxfam is not necessarily set up for that degree of flexibility. According to staff it sometimes resembles an oil tanker rather than a speedboat.

38 Oxfam IBIS’s work with South Sudanese refugees in Uganda, covered in the case study, is further discussed in Section 3.3.2 of “Thematic Evaluation 3: Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus.”

Compliance measures mentioned during the interviews included auditing, safeguarding, M&E, aggregation of results, transparency and accountability systems, outcome-focused budgeting, the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI), results-based management, Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS), value-for-money assessments, and even counterterrorism (a new USAID requirement). Representatives of MFA were keen to point out that much work has been carried out recently to reduce compliance within the pooled funds, and not all of the compliance regulations come from MFA – many come from alliances and federations or from other donors. However, it is clear that compliance is seen as an important issue that can undermine support for newer forms of partnership in many cases. This was discussed at the validation workshop, and some of the main issues arising are contained in Box 9 on the following page.

One Danish CSO discussed the idea of stepping back from some partnerships – allowing partners more freedom etc. – and stepping forward for others that needed much more hands-on help. Essentially, this is about having balanced portfolios, with decisions made on a case-by-case basis. This kind of balanced portfolio would enable Danish CSOs to combine low-risk work with strong partners and national alliance partners with some new, informal, high-risk partnerships that require more direct support.

Another CSO mentioned that it was surprising how much red tape and requirements are necessary for engaging with youth alliances and other organisations that cannot follow an INGO's regular structures and requirements. This especially included narrative and financial reporting. Another issue is that the need for compliance means that Danish CSOs often take on the attributes of a donor – bringing in the money and asking for compliance – which undermines the creation of equal partnerships and inhibits the development of new kinds of partnership. The easiest life is to back the strong, well-spoken, urban, well-established, capital-city NGOs rather than the embryonic ones that work well in the local communities.

Various other challenges were mentioned, as follows.

- A challenge frequently mentioned, and linked to the above issues, is the greater level of **human resources** needed to support different forms of partnerships, as well as the recognition that this will inevitably result in higher overheads. Representatives of many CSOs pointed out how good they thought Danish MFA was as a donor and how useful the flexible funding was. (Comments are not attributable, and the sentiments appeared to be genuine). But some also pointed out that

BOX 9: DISCUSSIONS AROUND COMPLIANCE AT THE VALIDATION WORKSHOP

At the validation workshop held in January 2022, 17 representatives of Danish CSOs and pooled funds were asked to vote on a range of statements covering compliance. Results were as follows:

- 12 out of the 17 agreed that current compliance requirements are a barrier to working with some kinds of newer partnerships. Only two disagreed.
- Slightly fewer (10 out of 17) agreed that compliance requirements were a serious barrier to localisation, although, again, only two disagreed.
- 15 out of 17 agreed that a significant amount of current compliance requirements emanate from the MFA.
- 13 out of 17 agreed that a significant amount of current compliance requirements emanate from Danish CSOs or pooled funds own internal systems. three disagreed.
- There were mixed views on how far compliance requirements came from third parties (e.g., other donors). Seven agreed, three disagreed, and seven neither agreed nor disagreed, or said they didn't know.
- Eight agreed and six disagreed with the statement that compliance requirements prevented CSOs from working with some kinds of partners altogether.

The consensus from the discussions was that a large amount of compliance requirements come from MFA. Danish CSOs, too, required a lot of compliance. Some of this naturally came

from their own desire to hold partner to high standards, but a lot was derived from the need to facilitate compliance requirements both from the MFA and third party donors (recognising that compliance often defaults to the most stringent requirements where co-financing is concerned).

When asked which compliance requirements could conceivably be reduced or removed, different representatives listed a range of issues such as auditing requirements for small CBOs, CHS or ECHO standards in some cases, written applications or proposals for smaller organisations, and cross-cutting indicators. Particular concerns were raised around current anti-terror compliance requirements, which have become a major issue for some CSOs and Southern partners, for example in Palestine. It was acknowledged that these do not come from the MFA, but representatives of CSOs were keen to emphasise that the MFA should not adopt them and should encourage other donors to refrain from them as well.

Potential solutions suggested included the encouragement of country-based pool funds as a way for local actors to tap into funding; simplification of systems for smaller organisations – perhaps involving a set of minimum compliance standards; fast-track passport checks for local partners to become CHS verified; and increased use of more flexible funds. A clear recommendation was that the MFA should produce a formal set of guidelines, outlining when full compliance is required and under which circumstances it is possible to be more flexible, especially when working with non-traditional forms of partners. Some of these issues will be covered in the forthcoming Administrative Guidelines for the next round of SPA funding.

in the wider development world there is a systemic donor picture and as soon as a line is crossed from a big, neutral, dispassionate actor to a smaller, localised one, things immediately become more difficult.

- **Shared values** were also mentioned as a challenge. This was discussed in terms of private sector organisations, but also in connection with social movements. After all, the foxhunting lobby in the UK or the gun lobby in the US are social movements of sorts. And many 'people of faith' have abhorrent views on sexuality. So, who decides what a good social movement is?
- Working with youth groups can also raise similar issues. Just because someone is young and motivated does not always mean they are on the right side of an argument or have other peoples' interests at heart. An issue mentioned on more than one occasion was that youth can tend to engage in endeavours that may put themselves and/or others at **risk**. These risks then need to be recognised and mitigated (if possible). Youth groups may also have different agendas and may become easily politicised. Another specific issue with youth groups is the tendency for very **high turnover**, as youth lose interest, acquire jobs etc.
- There may also be challenges associated with **volunteer groups**. For example, Global Aktion's work to support communities in Mozambique who are suffering for the extraction of natural resources is mostly implemented using activist volunteers to manage relationships and carry out work that would be done by professional staff in other organisations. There are advantages and disadvantages to this. The Mozambican partners appreciate the energy of the activists and feel they have the capacity to learn quite quickly, and it helps create a more equal relationship based on shared values. However, there is a high turnover resulting in a lack of continuity and activists lack some skills (e.g., knowing less about some of the issues, not being fluent in Portuguese).
- The risks associated with working with **human rights defenders** and civic space activists were also mentioned by some CSOs, including ActionAid, PlanBørnefonden and IMS. As a representative of PlanBørnefonden put it *"do-no-harm is difficult when working with youth activists involved in both HUM response and CIV activisms – many have a lot of problems with local authorities, and they have their own adaptation strategies, and are often placing themselves in harms-way. But they are our partners, and we intend to continue this path"*.
- Finally, it needs to be acknowledged that some kinds of organisations simply **do not want to work** with large, organised international NGOs, and/or are unwilling to accept the bureaucratic constraints associated. As one CSO representative put it, *"we take it for granted that everyone wants to work with us, but it isn't always true"*.

Conclusions

Many Danish CSOs are working with new forms of partnerships, although work with traditional core or strategic NGOs remains the most common type of partnership. Danish CSOs recognise that working with new forms of groups and organisations can enable them to support hard-to-reach groups that they could not before, or those they were not even aware of. Danish CSOs recognise and appreciate the fact that MFA funding is very flexible and allows a lot of leeway in the way they work with newer forms of partnership, or the way in which they convene different actors to come together for common purposes.

However, whilst the MFA has a long-standing commitment to encourage newer forms of partnerships, there are sometimes contradictions with other aspects of development they wish to promote. The desire for ever more compliance, the desire for more localisation (especially funding transfer targets), and the desire to work with newer forms of partnerships are all to some extent complementary, but at times contradictory as well. For example, many CSOs (and pooled funds) are increasing their work around convening – getting different agencies and different types of agencies to work together. This may be work that takes a lot of time and energy but does not necessarily result in greater money transfer to the South.

There are ways in which these contradictions could be managed, but most involve a greater appetite for risk on behalf of both Danish CSOs and MFA. One suggestion is to include some funding with fewer compliance requirements. A possibility is to have a more flexible threshold where Danish CSOs could justify increasing the percentage of income devoted to innovative work by including work with newer partnerships under this banner. This would enable Danish CSOs to support newer forms of partnership better (or at least more easily) but might involve an increased risk of corruption, financial mismanagement, or, worse, abuse. Whether this could be adopted as a solution is partly down to the appetite for risk within the MFA and the Danish government.

In some ways, requirements are inconsistent, and can be seen as being unfair on Danish CSOs. As the representative of one CSO pointed out, *“We had to submit 600 pages of proposals for the SPA. Does MFA apply the same rules to funding for the UN?” It is clearly possible to disburse money with very few strings attached.*

Of course, it is not possible to totally eliminate risk in any situation. Nevertheless, a higher level of risk needs to be accepted if channels are bypassed. MFA representatives interviewed as part of this evaluation felt that the appetite for risk-taking is high in Denmark, and most Danish CSOs and pooled funds have demonstrated their willingness to work with newer forms of partnership in spite of the many difficulties and obstacles. The key challenge, therefore, is to find mechanisms and structures that facilitate this kind of work – or at the least do not inhibit it.

CASE STUDY: BUILDING UP TRUST FOR NEW PARTNERSHIPS

Case Study: Building up trust for new partnerships

Working with diaspora networks, brings about a number of challenges for **Danish Refugee Council**. One is around capacity and resources. Trust at the start of the relationship between DRC and the Syrian Civil Society Networks Platform (SCNP) was a challenge identified by both parties. For example, early on, some Syrian CSO representatives expressed concern that DRC maintained a presence in Damascus and sought assurances that their work with DRC would remain confidential. Trust was also a key challenge for work with the Voices for Displaced Syrians Forum (VDSF). This was partly because of the large variety of CSOs engaged in the Forum – for example, Damascus-based NGOs, CSOs with civic or human rights backgrounds, humanitarian CSOs, and CSOs representing very localised communities all within the same network. Agencies needed to work together under the assumption that there was no hidden agenda. And of course, there was an ongoing challenge of finding consensus within the platforms, as priorities and goals naturally shifted over time. As with other cases covered under this evaluation, the sheer amount of staff time and resources needed is a huge issue when dealing with any newer forms of partnership. Whilst complimenting DRC staff on the ‘incredible’ work they have done, the SCNP coordinator, when interviewed, reported that DRC staff are often stretched very thinly, and have too much to do, hampering them from providing their full support. There are also risks when working with networks. On the one hand it can foster increasing levels of agency and ownership. On the other it requires a higher appetite for risk on DRC’s part. Indeed, some DRC staff felt that at times DRC has been too risk averse. Initially, some DRC staff expressed concerns that its engagement with Syrian civil society, governed only by the trust built up between DRC staff in the region and the network coordinators, could jeopardise DRC’s operations inside Syria. Current programme staff believe that DRC’s commitment to increasingly work with civil society means it may need to become less risk averse.

9. INNOVATION

There is no associated evaluation question linked with innovation. However, the ToR stated that *“the evaluation will seek to draw out any lessons learned from these [innovative] initiatives. The recent review of the innovation funds will be an important background source.”* This short section is mostly based on interviews with MFA officials and representatives of Danish CSOs and pooled funds, supplemented by information generated through the case studies.

MFA and Danish CSOs do not have a consistent definition of ‘innovation’. This is perhaps one of the reasons why some MFA officials were slightly disappointed with how innovation funding was used over the past SPA period, with too much emphasis on technical innovations. Even the pooled funds that request information on innovation at the application stage do not use consistent definitions. Such definitions as do exist amongst the CSOs interviewed range from “finding more effective, efficient and/or sustainable ways of reaching goals” (PlanBørnefonden) to “the implementation of novel ideas to make something substantially better for people and the planet” (WWF Denmark).

One representative of MFA who had been closely involved in the Innovation Fund felt that it had been useful and had led to behaviour change amongst some CSOs – particularly around mainstreaming innovation rather than just having an innovation department. However, they felt that by-and-large the pieces of work funded had been too focused on ‘tech’ issues, without always being problem oriented (i.e., focussed on addressing priority problems of poor and marginalised people). As another representative of MFA put it, *“do we need ten different versions of improved stoves in Tanzania?”*

There were many examples of innovation in the case studies carried out as part of this evaluation, some of which were linked to innovation funding, and some weren’t. Projects with a direct link to current or previous innovation funding rounds included WWF’s work on innovation in Kenya, Danmission’s work in Cambodia, and Oxfam IBIS’ work in support of South Sudanese refugees. However, a number of other case studies highlighted innovative work in different forms. Some of these are included, along with funded work, in the box opposite. It is clear from the examples that there are many different potential elements to innovation, and a wider or more consistent definition of what falls under innovation may be beneficial in the future.

CASE STUDIES: INNOVATIVE WORK

DanChurchAid supported a project in Ethiopia to develop a prototype of a fortified yoghurt which, if successful, could be scaled up for wider production and consumption. This fortified yoghurt is, according to GAIN, the first of its kind to be developed in Ethiopia. A high-value nutritious product at an affordable price is a new concept for the market. A related issue is that there was previously a lack of standards in terms of regulation for such a product in Ethiopia. This is being addressed in parallel with product development through engagement with the appropriate policymakers and authorities.

A mobile App was created in 2014 as part of a previous Danish MFA innovation initiative. The App (known as the Prey Lang App) was born of collaboration between **Danmission**, activists from PLCN – a social network of forest activists – another partner (PBO), the University of Copenhagen, and a Cambodian IT company (Web Essentials). The App enables local patrols to geo-reference, document, and upload information about forest resources, threatened biodiversity, illegal activities, and threats to environmental defenders. The data generated is then used to document and communicate the importance of the forest to local livelihoods and international biodiversity conservation, and to report illegal activities to the authorities.

Supported by WWF Denmark, the Kenya Innovation Programme is part of **WWF** Kenya's (WWF KE) Biodiversity, Research and Innovation (BRI) Department, and has been supported by an innovation strategist, two project officers (part-time on innovation), an intern (full-time), as well as the heads of BRI and Conservation. According to WWF Denmark staff, this small team has helped build capacity within WWF KE and has created a more innovative lens on project design. This has led to some inspiring results, such as prototyping and co-creation, and has manifested, for example, in the design of two new funded projects which have introduced innovative solutions to create value from plastic waste and provide access to new off-grid refrigeration solutions to communities in coastal areas.

During interviews, representatives of SPA agencies were asked a question about whether or not the 10% funding for innovation should continue in its present form. Of those that answered, by far the majority felt that it should continue, and that it had been an extremely useful exercise. One organisation pointed out how vital it was to have flexibility of funding to try new things out with other donors becoming increasingly regulated. Nobody felt that the Innovation Fund should be discontinued. Indeed, none felt the level of funding should be reduced either.

Suggestions for improvement included developing a clearer definition of innovation; having a small forum where ideas could be discussed with other agencies (because innovation is often developed on the intersection of different ideas); allocating more money in some cases (e.g., investing in proper research studies to really test out whether things are working); and improving the expectations and guidance around what counts as innovation.

A specific suggestion from the evaluation is to conduct a study in the next round of SPAs, looking at the last round of innovation funding and assessing what worked, and what was sustainable. This ought to be relatively simple as people will know how much of their innovation work has borne fruit by that stage, in terms of being replicated, adapted, scaled up, mainstreamed, etc. This would help with decision-making going forward and should help with ongoing management of innovation funding.

10. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Three clear themes emerge from this evaluation. First, **there is a great deal that is positive about Danish CSOs' support to civil society in the global South.** Overall, the evaluation finds that the MFA has succeeded in creating a positive, nurturing environment in which Danish CSOs have been able to progress their partnership approaches, and, in some cases act as advocates within their respective alliances and federations.

There is significant and abundant evidence from the two surveys and the 13 case studies conducted as part of the evaluation – all directly soliciting views from the Global South – that Danish CSOs have helped strengthen Southern partners over the past four years, both through the SPA agreements and the pooled funds. Much of this enhanced capacity is in areas which directly improve partners' ability to support their own constituents, such as engaging in advocacy, strengthening gender equality and diversity, and developing mechanisms to support accountability to poor and excluded groups.

Danish CSOs also add value to the work of their Southern partners in other tangible ways, such as linking advocacy work at different levels, networking, and promoting best practice. Some of the less tangible attributes of support such as accompaniment, caring, praying, walking alongside, and generally being 'in solidarity with' Southern partners are also highly valued by Southern partners.

The 13 in-depth case studies carried out as part of this evaluation reveal that Danish CSO support to Southern partners has helped generate diverse, tangible benefits for poor and marginalised people living in communities across the world, as well as generating results at policy and environmental level. These range from short-term and vital benefits, such as improved health and livelihoods, to longer-term change resulting from advocacy efforts or social accountability. In many of the case studies the ultimate results of this work are yet to be realised.

Denmark appears to be a powerful actor within the localisation agenda, and a great deal is being done by Danish CSOs, supported by the MFA. It is clear there is significant momentum around localisation, sometimes as a result of external impetus, and sometimes because the natural working patterns of Danish CSOs and the localisation agenda dovetail.

Working through Danish CSOs also brings a number of other benefits to the MFA and the wider Danish public. These directly contribute to

more effective support for CSOs in the Global South. Benefits include providing a 'line of sight' to where money gets spent; getting support to emergency sites 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.

However, **there are many areas where things could be improved.**

The first-hand views of Southern partners suggest that a lot more could be done to facilitate better power-sharing and more equality of relationships. Specific desires of Southern partners include more long-term funding that can be used flexibly; more support for fundraising and communications; more strategic capacity development; strengthened presence at national and international events; avoidance of funding gaps; and better-planned exit strategies. There are concerns that many Danish CSOs (maybe most) are not passing on the same flexible conditions to their partners as they are getting from the MFA. The recommendations below address some of these issues.

Importantly, MFA and Danish CSOs need to find a **balance between localisation, working with newer forms of partnerships, and ensuring compliance.** These are all good things in themselves. Localisation currently receives almost unanimous approval as the way to proceed in terms of promoting legitimacy and sustainability. Work with newer forms of partnership enables Danish CSOs to support hard-to-reach groups that they could not before, or those they were not even aware of. And compliance helps ensure, amongst other things, that money is not wasted, standards are adhered to, and supported communities are kept safe.

However, to some extent these are three competing areas, and it is not always easy to find an appropriate balance between them. This is partly because current donor compliance requirements are designed with support to larger NGO partners with traditional structures in mind, rather than newer forms of partnerships such as networks or social movements. Evidence from this evaluation suggests that the most representative Southern groups can sometimes be the hardest to work with. And the desire for ever more localisation is sometimes inhibited by compliance requirements. Finding an appropriate balance between the three areas requires constant management and adjustment to ensure that expectations are consistent and coordinated.

Recommendations

Overall, there would appear to be no real need for the MFA to radically change advice or direction at the moment. Instead, the MFA and Danish CSOs should build on what is already there, rather than engaging in change for the sake of change. Specifically, the evaluation finds that the MFA should continue to convene and coordinate to generate ownership and buy-in to key ideas, vision and values around localisation. This is best done through constant dialogue and support, engaging with CSOs, and seeking

to understand how they are developing and pursuing their own localisation strategies, rather than developing one-size-fits-all rules which will never be able to handle all the multiple different contexts in which localisation needs to be applied. At the same time, the MFA also needs to continue to recognise and address the different localisation challenges faced by humanitarian organisations, or those working in humanitarian contexts.

The evaluation makes the following recommendations.

1. The MFA should ensure that any localisation targets, such as those for money transferred overseas, should apply across the portfolio of support.
2. 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.
3. The MFA should invest in building a small core team responsible for localisation, supported by representatives of CSOs, including Southern representatives as appropriate.
4. Danish CSOs should consider how best to develop, use and apply exit strategies.
5. Danish CSOs and the MFA should jointly discuss how better to support Southern partners to diversify their income bases or raise funds.
6. The MFA should encourage and incentivise Danish CSOs to invest in institutional capacity strengthening of local and national partners.
7. 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.
8. The MFA and Danish CSOs should have an early discussion on the costs and benefits of pursuing new approaches to summarising and communicating portfolio-level results, and different options for M&E under the new SPA arrangements.
9. The MFA should seek opportunities to influence current practices within the humanitarian sector that inhibit localisation, alongside other like-minded donors if possible.
10. The MFA should develop a new Civil Society Policy to replace the previous one.

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