

Perception Study

(Final version)

for the

Joint Evaluation of the Ghana – Denmark Development Cooperation from 1990 to 2006

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Table of contents

Table of contents	i
List of tables.....	ii
List of acronyms.....	ii
1 INTRODUCTION	1
2 SOME INTERNATIONAL PERCEPTIONS OF DANIDA	3
2.1 A few facts.....	3
2.2 Perceptions of Danida by its peers.....	4
2.2.1 The OECD DAC 1995 Review	4
2.2.2 The OECD DAC 1999 Review	4
2.2.3 The OECD DAC 2003 Review	4
2.2.4 The OECD DAC 2007 Review	5
3 PERCEPTIONS OF DANISH AID TO GHANA.....	6
3.1 What kind of donor is Denmark / Danida perceived to be?	6
3.1.1 Perceptions of Danida staff / Embassy staff	6
3.1.2 Perceptions of other donors.....	6
3.1.3 Perceptions of Government and other implementers.....	7
3.1.4 Perceptions of civil society and civil society representatives	8
3.1.5 Perceptions of others, including TA, consultants on what kind of donor Danida is.....	8
3.1.6 Summary	9
3.2 What kind of organisation is Danida perceived to be: How are things done?	9
3.2.1 Professional quality of Danida.....	9
3.2.2 Stakeholder involvement and partnership forging by Danida.....	10
3.2.3 Dialogue and openness of Danida.....	10
3.2.4 Strategic thinking within Danida	11
3.2.5 Rigidity and flexibility.....	11
3.2.6 Summary	11
3.3 How is the Ghana-Denmark Co-operation perceived to have developed?.....	12
3.3.1 Danida comes usually for a longer term engagement.....	12
3.3.2 Danida takes risks and emphasises working and walking together	13
3.3.3 Summary	13
3.4 Sectoral strengths and weaknesses.....	14
3.4.1 General perceptions of strengths and weaknesses of Danida's sector presence	14

3.4.2	Technical assistance and capacity building	14
3.4.3	Exit and exit strategies	15
3.4.4	Summary	15
4	ANNEXES^	16
4.1	References	16
4.2	Interview guide for individual discussions with sector experts of other donors related to their perceptions of Danida support.....	17

List of tables

Table 1:	Interviews per sector	2
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List of acronyms

AG	Agency (independent, semi-autonomous, government)
BATUBM	Business Associations, Trade Unions and Business Media
BSPS	Business Sector Programme Support
CG	Central Government
CHRAJ	Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice
DA	District administration
Danida	Danish International Development Assistance
DFID	Department for International Development Cooperation
DKK	Danish Kroner
DO	Desk Officer
DWD	District Works Department
EC	European Commission
EVAL	Danida's Evaluation Department
GG	Good Governance
GHA	Ghana Highway Authority
GHS	Ghana Health Service
GOG	Government of Ghana
GPRS	Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy
G-RAP	Ghana's Research and Advocacy Programme
GTZ	German Technical Cooperation
HIV/AIDS	Human immunodeficiency virus/Acquired immune deficiency syndrome
HR	Human Rights
IGI	Independent Governance Institution
LG	Local Government
MDBS	Multi Donor Budget Support
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MLGRDE	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development
MoFEP	Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning
MOH	Ministry of Housing
MOLG	Ministry of Local Government
MOT	Ministry of Transport
MOWAC	Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs
MSME	Micro-, Small- and Medium Enterprises
NDPC	National Development Planning Commission
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance

OECD/DAC	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PS	Private Sector
PSPD	Private Sector Development Programme
RDE	Royal Danish Embassy
SPEED	Support Programme for Enterprise Empowerment and Development
SPS	Sector Programme Support
SWAp	Sector Wide Approach
TA	Technical Assistance
TOR	Terms of Reference
TSPS	Transport Sector Programme Support
Watsan	water & sanitation
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organisation
WID	Women in development

1 Introduction

The contract for this evaluation foresees the implementation of a so-called “perception study” and the production of this report. However, results of the interviews, focus groups, etc. that have been held with a considerable number of stakeholders at various levels was primarily integrated into the Thematic Papers (among other as boxes exemplifying details), and in the Final Report, underpinning and triangulating other sources of information. So we consider this present report as a kind of addendum that presents a number of the most striking perceptions obtained during the field mission. The latter took place from August 21 to September 14, 2007. Separate thematic papers and a synthesis report analyse the perceptions presented here, putting them into perspective, where relevant.

The perception study is part of the evidence base for the whole evaluation. The study team’s interviews were potential source material. Interview notes were systematically written up and shared among all team members. A total of **284 interviews** was conducted (be it individual or group interviews). The informants have been further classified by their most recent relationship vis-à-vis Danida (see Table 1).

Where possible, and with a view to maintaining accuracy and authenticity, interviews or focus groups were conducted by two team members. Notes were written up as soon as possible after the interview, and were checked by the team members who had been present. Only some village level interviews (focus groups) as well as the focus groups in Accra with representatives of the business sector and from ULG were tape-recorded; so there is not a complete verbatim record. However, phrases presented in quotation marks in this volume were noted at the time as direct speech or from the tape. Other paraphrases also follow the original notes very closely.

Perceptions are subjective, if not put into perspective, cross-checked, challenged, etc. It is therefore clear that many interviewees have biases by virtue of their involvement in the Danish aid programme on one side or another. This report does not try to balance these views.

Please note that this study concerns an exceptionally long period and a wide range of activities in which Danish aid has been involved. Inevitably, perceptions of the early years are fewer and less certain than for the more recent period. Some areas of Danida focus are covered in considerable detail; for others there is only a smattering of observations.

We are grateful to our interviewees for their patience and candour. Georg Ladj has been the principal author of this report. All other team members provided their insights and records: Patience Agyare-Kwabi, Marilyn Aniwa, Emmanuel Boadi, Elijah Danso, John Clifton, Jørgen Estrup. Transcriptions of focus group interviews were produced by Victoria Wiafe, Johannes Ohnmacht, Christine Chapappria and Melinda Kovacs.

The report is organised as follows:

- Section 2 notes the international perspectives on Danida and Danish aid that appear in the donor peer reviews published by OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC).
- Chapter 3 presents overall perceptions of Danish aid in Ghana, compares the perceptions of Danida staff with those of other stakeholders, and highlights sectoral strengths and weaknesses of Danida support to Ghana.

The process of editing and analysis inevitably reflects the judgements and biases of the evaluation team as to what is relevant and interesting. The evaluation team’s own judgements and opinions are provided in the other volumes of this report. In this volume stakeholders’ voices are expressed.

Table 1: Interviews per sector

No. of interviews	Acronym	Transport	Health	Water & sanitation	Private & business sector	GGHR	Gender	Capacity building	Others, general
1) Danida									
RDE, Accra	RDE	1 (3)	2	3	7	3	4	1	1
MFA Danida, Copenhagen	MFA	1	1		4	2		1	6
Sub-total Danida interviews		2 (4)	3	3	11	5	4	2	7
2) Non-Danida individual									
• Central government	CG	2 (4)	13	6	1	4	6		
• Local government	LG	7 (24)	17	6		8	8		
• Agency (independent, semi-autonomous, government)	AG	9 (29)	16	3	4	4	6		
• Donors	DO	4 (5)	5	2	2	6	3		
• TA, Consultants	TA	4 (7)	1	3	4	2	5		
• NGOs and CSOs	NGO		1		1	7	15	1	
• Beneficiary population (individuals)	BE				1	3	3	2	
Sub-total non-Danida individual interviews		26 (69)	53	14	13	33	46	3	0
3) Non-Danida group interviews									
• NGOs and CSOs (no. of groups, not individuals)					2	5			
• Beneficiary population (no. of groups, not individuals)	BE	7	7	15	11	7	6	1 (8)	
• Other groups (no. of groups, not individuals)	OT		4			3	8		
Sub-total non-Danida interviews, considering 1 group as "1" interview		7	11	15	13	7	14	1 (8)	
Total number of interviews conducted		34	64	32	37	41	64	5	7

No of interviewees in brackets, if available

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2 Some international perceptions of Danida

2.1 A few facts

The Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) is responsible for the Danish aid programme. Until 1991, the Danish International Development Agency (Danida) had a distinct organisational identity. Subsequently the agency was thoroughly incorporated into MFA, and Danida (Danish International Development Assistance) is now simply a brand name for Danish aid.

Initiated by the Danish Strategic Action Plan of 1988 Ghana was among the first Danish 12 programme cooperation countries identified in 1989, and in 1991 the Danish Embassy was reopened in Accra. The Danish assistance (including NGO-support and technical assistance) has grown substantially from a modest contribution of DKK 6.9 million during 1990 reaching a high peak in 2002 of DKK 404 million to a reduced level of about DKK 340 million in 2005 and DKK 367 million in 2006. At the turn of the millennium Ghana was the fourth largest receiver of Danish bilateral assistance, and in 2002 even the second largest. Ghana also ranked second among recipients of Danish bilateral assistance in 2005, while in 2006 it ranked fourth. The total Danish funded assistance during 1990-2006 has been about DKK 3.8 billion.

Denmark has consistently been one of the most generous Western donors, with Official Development Assistance (ODA) reaching and even exceeding 1% of Denmark's Gross National Income (GNI). The majority of western donors fall well short of the official UN target of 0.7% (which was set in 1970 – 35 years ago).

2.2 Perceptions of Danida by its peers

The OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) acts as a forum for monitoring ODA and reviewing its effectiveness. Peer reviews of DAC member countries' aid programmes are conducted at regular intervals: Danish aid was reviewed in 1995, 1999 and 2003 and in 2006. The following excerpts from these reviews show what is seen as distinctive about Danish aid.

2.2.1 The OECD DAC 1995 Review

The 1995 Review (OECD Development Assistance Committee, 1995) provided a ringing endorsement: Danish development cooperation inspires confidence and optimism in the public mind, not only in Denmark, but elsewhere as well. The programme's achievements and efficiency could help to dispel confusion and cynicism regarding the role of aid and its effectiveness.

Above all, it is the care being taken to maximise the effectiveness of the Danish contribution in terms of the specific development needs and institutional capacities of each programme country that is the fundamental strength of Danish development cooperation.

It attributes many of the strengths of the Danish aid programme to its political roots: There are some particular features which distinguish the Danish aid system from others and contribute to its positive image with the public. One of these elements is the strong involvement of all components of Danish society in the conception of aid policy, also in its implementation. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs), consultancy firms, researchers, trade unions and the private business community form the so-called "Danish Resource Base" for the aid programme.

2.2.2 The OECD DAC 1999 Review

In the context of another very positive assessment, this review (OECD Development Assistance Committee, 1999) notes the fusion of aid and foreign policy: Denmark offers a long standing and positive example of the integration of the aid system with the handling of other aspects of foreign relations.

It comments favourably on Denmark's openness to coordination with other donors: Donor co-ordination is also considered as a key element for efficiency in aid delivery, which Danida is both willing and able to develop. This is favoured by a policy of great transparency regarding Danish ODA at large and Danida's activities and by active efforts for better local co-ordination in the field. Thus most of the documents produced by Danida are translated in English, and almost no document is regarded as confidential: for instance the minutes of the annual consultations with partner authorities are distributed to other donors, who generally rate highly Danida's openness to donor co-ordination, especially those who participate in SPS (Sector Programme Support) with Danida.

2.2.3 The OECD DAC 2003 Review

The 2003 OECD DAC review (OECD Development Assistance Committee, 2003) took place after the 2001 change of government in Denmark and the subsequent review of aid strategy and priorities. It again complimented the quality of Danish aid and remarked on its innovativeness: Learning from the Danish experience: Because of its longstanding interest in new, more effective approaches to development cooperation, Danida has been in the forefront of addressing and applying best practices of some of the leading development approaches, such as sector based approaches, when to use or not to use budget support modalities, and the use of private sector approaches to development, including those sup-

porting pro-poor growth. The DAC and its system of working groups and networks would benefit considerably from well documented feedback on the results of the Danish experience in these areas.

A field visit to Tanzania was part of the review, and yielded the following observation: Because of its visibility there, partner perceptions of Danish development co-operation were readily accessible. In the case of Tanzania, Denmark was widely viewed as conscientious and collaborative. The fact that competent Danish professionals implemented their aid programme through extensive interaction locally was highly appreciated, a fact which should be further reinforced by the current effort to completely decentralise Danida operations by later this year.

A couple of adverse comments are also offered:

(a) On Denmark's withdrawal from some programme countries:

"...growing political sensitivity concerning good governance and human rights recently led Denmark to withdraw unilaterally from three priority countries (Zimbabwe, Malawi, Eritrea) with which long-term partnership agreements had been established. While conditions in these countries had clearly deteriorated to a point where donors generally are revising their degree of engagement, the abrupt withdrawal by Denmark raised the question of its commitment to the longer-term partnership concept."

(b) On the linking of aid to Danish business interests:

"The short-term allocation of development funds essentially motivated by Danish domestic interests should be avoided wherever possible. This type of activity is often not sustainable, does not fit with Danish principles of partnership, and can be disruptive to carefully laid out country strategy."

2.2.4 The OECD DAC 2007 Review

The 2007 review confirms that Denmark is one of the DAC members which has consistently exceeded the United Nations' (UN) target of 0.7% of gross national income (GNI) allocated to official development assistance (ODA). It states that, since the last peer review, Denmark has secured political consensus for maintaining ODA at a minimum of 0.8% of GNI. It reaffirms that the key strengths of Denmark's development co-operation system are its legal basis, strategic framework, institutional system and emphasis on quality assurance. These assets derive from the long-standing support for development assistance, reaffirmed in 2003 by the current government, and backed up by real improvements in the system. The review emphasises that these strengths ensure Denmark is in a good position to address the challenges facing the donor community in pursuing the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) and in implementing the aid effectiveness agenda.

The peer review continues by confirming, that, since 2003, "Denmark has also developed a strong policy framework based on seven priority themes and three cross-cutting issues (gender equality, environmental sustainability, and human rights, democracy and governance). Like other DAC members, Denmark struggles to mainstream these cross-cutting issues, but is strengthening its approach in this regard. Denmark is also at the forefront of providing guidance for capacity development, considered to be a key element in its development assistance programme. Denmark is encouraged to continue to share the lessons learned in these areas with the donor community and to play an active role in the DAC debate on capacity development approaches."

The review also emphasizes that the final key feature of Denmark's development co-operation is its integrated institutional system within the MFA at headquarters and in part-

ner countries. Since 2003 this has been complemented by decentralising the bilateral aid programme from headquarters to 16 key partner countries (the “programme countries”), a key step in implementing the aid effectiveness agenda. In 2005, the Danish programme was also decentralised to four multilateral missions. This process has been accompanied by a strengthened approach to quality assurance, supported by a new results-based system and an emphasis on knowledge management.

3 Perceptions of Danish aid to Ghana

Personal opinions about a donor are inextricably linked to the way a donor is organised, which rules it sets, how it approaches issues, how people in the organisation work and establish relationships, how they deal with problems, etc. All these issues together form an image of a donor, with light and, usually also, some shadow.

To start with the overall image: the image of Danish aid is definitely positive. Ghanaian informants, be it government or non-government, almost unanimously have a positive view of Danida. Most of the following quotes will underpin this summary, while others will shed light on areas where further improvements are possible.

Perceptions are organised under the following main headings (which, admittedly, are sometimes difficult to differentiate):

- What kind of donor is Denmark / Danida perceived to be?
- What kind of organisation is Danida perceived to be: How are things done?
- How is the Denmark-Ghana Programme perceived to have developed?
- What are sectoral strengths and weaknesses?

3.1 What kind of donor is Denmark / Danida perceived to be?

This section explicitly starts with self-perceptions by Danida / Embassy staff, be it current or former staff, followed by perceptions other donors have at a general level of Danida. This is then contrasted by the views of the local stakeholders, from various levels.

3.1.1 Perceptions of Danida staff / Embassy staff

Danida staff / Embassy staff is self-assured about the reliability and effectiveness of Danish development cooperation:

- *“We get things done.” (RDE)*
- *“We’re more predictable than most (donors).” (RDE)*

3.1.2 Perceptions of other donors

Danida enjoys a generally quite positive reputation from other donors with respect to personal work relationships with Danida staff, Danida’s efforts to implement requests from the Paris Declaration like alignment and donor harmonisation and Danida’s strategies in some sectors like governance:

- *“We have good relations (on an individual basis) with RDE sector personnel.” (DO)*
- *“Danida is doing very well, having success in moving upstream with alignment and harmonisation.” (Private sector donor group)*
- *“Danida was one of the key donors that we looked to, because we like their way of strategic, thinking around their governance strategy. We have learnt from that.... A*

lot of dialogue with Danida, and as I said from education point of view, in terms of their broad governance strategy we have also looked to them as a good example, in the way they lay out their strategy, the way they think.” (DO)

- *“Danida was one of the key donors that we looked to, because we like their way of strategic, thinking around their governance strategy. We have learnt from that. A lot of constructive dialogue is going on with Danida, and as I said from the education point of view, in terms of their broad governance strategy, we have also looked to them as a good example, in the way they lay out their strategy, the way they think.” (DO)*

The positive overall assessment of Danida’s reputation was also confirmed by OECD/DAC 2007 assignment, which came to the following conclusion:

- *“During the team’s visit to Ghana, various interlocutors expressed their appreciation for Denmark’s strong commitment to development and its sizeable programme in Ghana.”*

The generally very positive esteem gives Danida a role and influence among the donor community, which goes beyond the importance of Danida’s financial contribution to the different funding sectors:

- *“Danida is sometimes more influential than its contribution to budgets might imply, e.g. for the MDBS: “Danida has clearly more influence than the financial contribution (appr. 5 %) would justify.” (DO)*

However, there are also some areas that leave space for improvement. In some sectors, the strategies are seen as being not focused enough and a general strain is felt with regard to the available work force, which has to cope with additional tasks due to decentralisation of responsibilities within Danish development co-operation:

- *“However, some times going too much into details and being overstretched due to low number of staff. Do appreciate the differences in relation to Danish government, but the approach could be more strategic. Apparently, decentralisation to local Danish embassies has for the private sector implementation in Ghana not meant parallel increases in staff resources. An issue also raised in the DAC review.” (DO)*
- *“Danida is a good partner – there are no major differences but there is discussion on some issues.” (DO)*

The perception was not always positive as reflected in the following comments by a donor:

- *“Danida is a good partner, technically sound, always at the helms of affairs and an active participant in policy dialogue. However, sometimes they over do their support for pro-poor interventions by creating the impression and presenting themselves as the most “holier” of the donors. All of us support pro-poor activities in one way or the other.” (DO)*

3.1.3 Perceptions of Government and other implementers

Danida’s self-perception that Danida has a good reputation in Ghana is mostly also confirmed by the positive statements gathered from government and other implementers. It is much appreciated that Danida staff also is regularly visiting remote areas with difficult access conditions, and is willing to take risks:

- *“We’re comfortable with Danida support.” (AG – transport sector)*
- *“We seem to see more Danida people visiting also the remote areas, more often in any case than staff from other donors.” (LG – transport sector)*

- *“Danida is a reliable and dependable partner. Unlike others, they are flexible and willing to dialogue on issues. Other donors rigid (CG)*
- *“They (Danida) are risk takers and are willing to support programmes where others have completely shy away from. They were one of the few donors that took the risk and entrusted their money in our care under SWAP” (CG)*
- *“They are supporters of innovative ideas” (LG)*

3.1.4 Perceptions of civil society and civil society representatives

Views expressed by civil society and its representatives, who were interviewed in focus groups and in individual interviews were, besides a generally positive assessment, more critical. One doubt concerned the insufficient duration and follow-up of activities, which impacts negatively on sustainability of Danida’s interventions. Another weakness was seen in the indirect approaches used to target people, which generally address leaders and executive staff of civil society organisations but which do not ensure that benefits are really handed on to their members and the target population they are serving. Some reference was also made to the insufficient focus of the private sector programme:

- *“I think Danida essentially provides funding for private sector programme which is quite commendable, but I have always wondered if Danida is concerned about the sustainability of the activities. I think Danida does not concern itself principally with sustainability.” (Private sector focus group)*
- *“I see Danida assisting in both the private and the public sector. My earlier involvement with them had to do with the pilot phase of the decentralisation programme together with DFID. They tried to address so many issues in the private sector. The point is that they do not follow up on the sustainability of the project.” (NGO)*
- *“The perception among some representatives of BATUBM is that Danida has an approach that is too much short term, not following up on the results of interventions.” (NGO)*
- *“My problem is those to whom the services are directed to. Who are those, who get the chance to be involved with Danida programmes? If you look at the cross-section of people here, it is about the various associations who are here and how do we pass it on to them? If you invite the chief executive here and if he does not pass the message on, it becomes a program in his office. How do we ensure that the people, who need the services, benefit from the activities? I think about 80% of them do not get the benefit.” (Private sector focus group)*
- *“We are concerned about the possibility of reaching out to target group members through the indirect measures used in the BSPS.” (NGO)*

3.1.5 Perceptions of others, including TA, consultants on what kind of donor Danida is

Danida is generally positively assessed by its technical assistance, which appreciate the generally well defined objectives and approaches. Some problems are seen with project steering and guidance, which are only carried out after problems have been encountered:

- *“Danida is good client because they know what they want in broad terms. But they operate a sort of hands off approach unless something goes wrong. Then it tends to become hands on.” (TA)*

- *“Danida gives consideration to the poor – always in contact with them and always for the people. We champion decentralization and ensure that resources get to the district level for implementation of activities. We are known by the districts for this and we receive telephone calls of complains (from District Directors) when disbursements to the districts either delay or are not sent to them at all”. Sometimes they will complain that “you people (referring to Danida) have abandoned us and have stopped fighting for our course” (TA)*

3.1.6 Summary

Danida perceives itself to be a predictable, efficient and open-minded institution, which is generally confirmed by other donors, stakeholders and development partners. They appreciate the mostly good working relationships with Danida staff and their efforts to promote alignment and donor harmonisation. The positive reputation allows Danida to participate as fully recognized partner in the relevant sector processes and influence them prominently despite a sometimes moderate share in funding.

Government and other implementers are satisfied with their collaboration with Danida and attest Danida’s staff to be more present in remote areas than other donors notably in the transport sector.

With regard to strategy development, some qualitative differences exist between sectors. Strategic thinking around the governance programme was highly appreciated while the strategy in the private sector development is judged little focused, not targeted enough towards the end-beneficiaries and with a risk of being unsustainable. Partners see – in the context of decentralised responsibilities - a strain in human resources available to Danida.

Views expressed by civil society were more critical, notably with regard to private sector development where some doubts were expressed as to the sustainability and correct targeting by indirect Danida interventions via intermediaries.

TAs appreciate Danida as a good client with rather clear ideas about objectives and approaches but a sometimes ‘light’ preventive project steering, which becomes active after problems have turned up.

3.2 What kind of organisation is Danida perceived to be: How are things done?

Under this heading, we consider the implementation and administration of Danish aid, as seen by those involved. Hence it is concerned with:

- Perceptions of personal and organisational partnerships that Danida builds with other stakeholders. These place the formal processes and structures in the context of Danida’s working relationships;
- The way Danida dialogues and participates in dialogues and discussions, and to what extent Danida can be considered as a frontrunner or spearhead;
- Danida’s programme management: to what degree this is seen as efficient and flexible, how Danida applies policies in practice, and how it deals with issues of accountability and corruption;
- Perceptions of the evolution of the management of the programme, particularly decentralisation of management to the Royal Danish Embassy, Accra (RDE).

3.2.1 Professional quality of Danida

There is generally a good perception of RDE staff, its professional quality, comportment, commitment and communication skills:

- *“We have a healthy relationship with Danida.” (CG – transport sector)*
- *“There is direct involvement of their people. Some other donors don’t have the same involvement.” (LG)*
- *“And really, I mean when you see these people coming into the room, you think of them as very good colleagues. You are happy to see them; you think they are going to offer something interesting to the conversation, to the dialogue. Danida is very much a team player in the MDBS group and is often moderating different opinions.” (DO- GGHR as for Danida’s participation in the MDBS)*
- *“They are technically sound and well organized and this is because they have a technical wing, the HSSO. Because of this they are actively involved in policy dialogue meetings and make useful contributions. This has created the erroneous impressions at times that Danida is hijacking the policy dialogue. Also, because they are well organized they sometimes tend to do some of the the work of MOH. This does not help in the building the capacity of MOH” (DO)*

A less satisfying dialogue and collaboration seems to have existed with some of the players in the health sector after introduction of GHS:

- *“In collaboration, a lot has to do with people.... In the early times of support we had good teams on the Ghanaian and the Danish side, with a complicated play but flexible. After the introduction of GHS, everything went into a vacuum between the two institutions, which also made policy dialogue difficult.” (MFA)*

3.2.2 Stakeholder involvement and partnership forging by Danida

Involvement of staff from both sides, Danida and the Ghanaian partners, is generally intensive and in an integrating manner. Danida builds good partnerships with many stakeholders, at numerous levels:

- *“I’m more involved than I expected.” (RDE)*
- *“Danida is pushing towards more integrated planning in transport. We are very happy to coordinate with Danida but the macro-economic issues may complicate things.” (DO)*
- *“Danida have people resident in the country, unlike some donors.” (AG)*

3.2.3 Dialogue and openness of Danida

Danida openly and critically participates in dialogue and policy discussions and is responsive to urgent requests. It also submits its own strategies to external inputs from local stakeholders and reviews them accordingly:

- *“At the Donor Conference Danida always points out at any inconsistencies between agency figures in presentations. (CG – transport sector)*
- *Danida is very comprehensive and will listen to you. Some donors don’t listen but they expect us to.” (CG – transport sector)*
- *“They are doing their share, they are not taking up more space than they need to, but they are certainly pulling their share and they are offering valuable contribution to that dialogue.” (MDBS – GGHR)*
- *“In donor coordination meetings the problem with some donors is getting them to say something. With Danida it’s just the opposite.” (DO)*

- *“Danida sector strategies are open for dialogue and review. E.g. consultations were made with chiefs on the country strategy, consultations with civil society and members of state.” (i.e. the strategy 2004-2008) (TA).*
- *“Danida is an objective bilateral partner, transparent and straightforward on issues. They are very dependable when it comes to supporting systems”,(CG)*

3.2.4 Strategic thinking within Danida

Danida is not always in line with GoG because it sometimes takes on new themes and approaches not yet covered by Government policy. However, besides being innovative, funding, implementation and follow-up of such new initiatives may suffer from lack of operationalisation, financial investment and focus:

- *“Danida is out of step with government. It may be supporting things that are not covered.” (CG-transport - with reference to decentralisation)*
- *“Danida takes on issues that are brand new before they are operationalised. However, the down side is that the accompanying implementation process / funding and investment is lacking. For example, Danida went ahead in the early stages to deepen decentralisation beyond the districts by taking on government’s intention to decentralise beyond the districts, i.e. also taking for serious the revenue basis that government needs.” (GGHR)*
- *“...targeting and focusing are missing. The focus on the vulnerable and the poor seems to get lost in the whole process of harmonisation and MDBS. There seems no space left in Danida Country strategy for targeting. In the past, CIDA and Danida stood up in donor decisions for community contribution.” (Others)*

3.2.5 Rigidity and flexibility

Danida is seen as rigid, at least sometimes, but also as very flexible in finding solutions to difficult situations:

- *“With respect to tied aid (i.e. Danish contractors and consultants), we are not partners, we are only recipients, so we can’t say too much.” (AG – transport sector)*
- *“Danida is very good at resolving difficulties that arise during the course of a project. This has been an excellent contribution.” (AG – transport sector)*
- *“They are committed, with relatively flexible and adequate funding – they have been less intrusive of support and reliable. However, on the other side Danida may be unyielding, unbending, unforgiving and in-flexible with no room for negotiation once a decision has been made.” (TA)*

3.2.6 Summary

Danida staff is generally appreciated for its professional attitude, commitment and its ability to work in good relationship with the local partners. Personal relationships played a key role especially in the early years. Non-Danida informants generally respect Danida staff (although some negative perceptions were reported) and the involvement of Ghanaian staff in programme management is valued.

Informants stress that Danida is a plain-speaking donor. Danida informants perceive that Danida is not a “silent partner”; rather the added value is that Danida appropriately uses the influence that goes with funding and is vocal and constructively critical. Danida infor-

informants view Danida's policy dialogue with Ghana as being a key element of its strategy in promoting governance, and through which Danida has made a difference in Ghana:

Danida informants hold the perception that Danida is in a position to be constructively critical of the GoG, because Danida is a small non-political country, considered to have no hidden agendas. The early relationship with the Government is seen as important. From the start Danida established a good, close dialogue with key individuals in the Ghanaian government.

Danida, in general, provides support in the context of GOG policy and strategy and does not impose its will on GOG. The importance of this is highlighted by explicit comparisons with the less favoured behaviour of other donors.

However, Danida is sometimes a front-runner, which is tackling new innovative subjects not yet covered by Government policy. Danida is seen to be willing to sustain support in difficult areas, very often focusing on the poorest areas and regions.

3.3 How is the Ghana-Denmark Co-operation perceived to have developed?

Under this heading we report perceptions on:

- The early development of Denmark-Ghana co-operation, and how it came to focus on particular sectors and activities.
- The aid modalities it has adopted, e.g. the evolution from project focus to sector approaches.

3.3.1 Danida comes usually for a longer term engagement

Denmark is seen as an early supporter of the Ghanaian government. Denmark was one of the first donor countries to come to Ghana end of the 1980s. Danida informants from the period emphasise the importance of this early support. They report that Danida's representatives on the ground were given considerable flexibility in setting up the initial programme, and that this was instrumental in enabling them to move rapidly and to establish a genuine partnership with the government. The same informants consider that with today's rules and regulations such rapidity would not be possible.

At the time, it was considered important to come in and show that Denmark was supporting the Ghanaian government. Thus from the beginning of the programme Danida was concerned to have some highly visible projects.

- *"Danida is our only continuous support." (AG)*

Both Danida and non-Danida informants believe that Danida was the first donor to provide support to a number of sectors. Water, decentralisation and governance, in particular, are highlighted as an early important component of the country programme:

- *Danida has been very strategic in its support for decentralisation and the Bankd has found her to be a ver constructive partner to deal with (DO – Water and Sanitation Sector)*

It is generally appreciated that, whenever Danida goes into a sector, it envisages a long-term investment and support, but it is also strict in saying "no" if a sector does not move:

- *Danida has been the only donor that has supported reseach in the water sector and is not only one-off but has done so long term (DS – Water and Sanitation Sector)*

- *“Danida is consistent in staying with a sector for a long haul, thus allowing them to lead in sectors such as decentralisation. They were one donor that supported decentralisation through MLGRDE and other existing structures.” (TA)*
- *“Danida support to a sector is holistic. They take on board all components of a programme that will address all the issues. This is unlike other donors that normally will focus on an aspect of a programme e.g. with the CHPS programme, other donors will decide either to support construction of CHPS compounds or the training of CHOs, but not both. In the case of Danida, she will normally support fully all aspects of the CHPS concept.” (LG)*

3.3.2 Danida takes risks and emphasises working and walking together

All interviewees very much appreciate the fact that Danida took the risk already in the 1990s to opt for sector-wide approaches, and to take the sector lead when feasible:

- *“Danida is flexible in dealing with MOH, compared with other partners. she is very generous and willing to support the poor and the vulnerable” (CG)*
- *“They are system builders and have supported the sector to develop such systems as human development, financial, procurement and transport (LG)*
- *“Danida support is with a “heart” and it is genuine which is very unique to them. When they decide to support you they make sure that the funds come to the country for the intended purposes” (BE).*

Danida has a strong reputation for listening to the government:

- *“Danida is a listener and willing to discuss issues. They have good intentions and they are all out to bring about positive changes in the lives of the people they support, especially the poor and the vulnerable” (AG).*

As for the Multi-Donor Budget Support, interviewees perceive Danida as a good partner in this framework, which fulfils all expectations, except that human resources seem to be more stretched during recent times:

- *“I think they used to have two people who used to come to the meetings and they have seemed just a little short, in terms of staff just in the last 6 months or so. So they’ll be stretched to make some at the meeting but they get there and they were always useful. But that would be the only thing. I think you could say the same thing about any donor, because they ever flow according to what’s on their plate. Otherwise no, I think Danida is a fine partner in that.” (DO)*

3.3.3 Summary

Denmark was one of the first donor countries to come to Ghana end of the 1980s. Today, Danida is regarded as a reliable and important player in several sectors where it was one of the first bilateral donors taking the risk of being the frontrunner. From the early stages, a high degree of procedural flexibility is known for Danida. Especially its long-term engagement in sectors once selected for funding is well appreciated. However, Danida is also strict in its decisions if no progress is made.

The early Danida support for sector-wide approaches, coordination and harmonisation was innovative and needed courage. Today Danida is a well valued partner in the Multi-Donor Budget Support framework.

3.4 Sectoral strengths and weaknesses

This section tries to highlight Danida's strengths and weaknesses in individual sectors, comparing them, where possible, with perceptions raised regarding other donors.

3.4.1 General perceptions of strengths and weaknesses of Danida's sector presence

One of Danida's strengths is that experiences from the implementation level are fed into GoG policy and are consequently used for designing and programming new activities:

- *"In other areas of Danida sector support, there has been some good success where policy lessons have been translated into programming. For example lessons from the Volta Region water and sanitation project fed into the GoG policy in the creation of the district works departments at the decentralised level."* (Water & Sanitation)
- *"Now finally decentralisation is moving faster and the risk seems to be acceptable to put sectors together."* (MFA)

However, despite increasing efforts to integrate different sectors, some obstacles for inter-sectoral exchange seem to persist:

- As for Danida's support to the decentralisation process, *"there seem to be optimists and pessimists, therefore the decision to be taken is a strategic one rather, saying: yes it could work. As for civil society, there exist opinions indicating that no cross-fertilisation takes place between sub-sectors, and no sharing of information."* (MFA)

3.4.2 Technical assistance and capacity building

In general, Danida's investment in technical assistance and capacity building is highly appreciated. However, perceptions regarding Technical Advisers (TAs) are rather mixed. There are occasional cases where non-Danida informants felt a TA did not have the appropriate background or skills, or where the TA was regarded as a difficult personality to work with:

- *Some Danida programmes are dependent upon technical assistance acting as a (semi)autonomous project management unit. Although they are physically based in a sector agency or institution there is an 'us and them' apartness."* (AG)

However, in such cases it was perceived that Danida will replace TAs that are not functioning well:

- *TA staff had to leave the Kumasi-Konongo supervision team. In the previous TA to TSPS 1 at least one member of the team was replaced whilst the present TA to TSPS 2 was shown a very 'reddish yellow' card before the present TL arrived.*

There are various criticisms specifically related to TAs that point to a common perception that Danish technical assistance is not always put to the best use. In particular, the criticisms focus on the problems that arise when TAs manage funds in addition to their advisory role and when there is poor integration of the TAs with GOG counterparts:

- *"TA teams are well paid, have all the necessary resources and have specific access to senior people. Thus they are able to manage a project. If we had the same salaries and resources we could do the same."* (AG)

The most intensive district level capacity-building support was provided to the Upper West and Volta Districts. The huge investment in capacity building is noted and is perceived by non-Danida informants to have had considerable success:

- *“We want Danida (district) capacity building to continue. For how long? For ever!” (LG).*

3.4.3 Exit and exit strategies

Generally, informants have special interest in the continuation of Danida funding, as it secures or helps complementing scarce resources. Therefore, it is not surprising that the generally perceived lack of exit strategies is not seen as a major obstacle because Danida presence in a sector is rather a long-term engagement.

- *“Danida, like most donors, does not have an exit strategy as such but usually it will be in a sector for a long time. And in this sector, the time scale will be long.” (AG)*

However, other voices equally exist that see the issue of exit strategies rather positive:

- *“Danida normally will exit from an intervention with a strategy that will sustain most of these interventions. In the case of the transport support, an equipment and regional medical stores of UWR, revolving funds were established with Danida providing the seed”. National level has replicated the revolving fund concept for transport developed in the UWR. Unfortunately, most of these revolving funds could not be managed well” (CG)*

3.4.4 Summary

Danida’s long standing experience and good working relationships with GoG allow that Danida field experiences are fed into Government policies and from there implemented in the design of new programmes. Its investment in technical assistance and capacity building are valued in most cases. However, perception of TAs was sometimes mixed notably if Technical Advisors with inappropriate skills and experience are assigned or autonomous project management units with insufficient relationships to the partner institutions are established. In cases where problems turn up, Danida is well known for its fast decision-taking including exchange of TA-staff. The fact that few exit strategies are part of the projects is not felt as a major weakness as Danida’s engagements are long-term.

4 Annexes^

4.1 References

OECD Development Assistance Committee. (1995). Denmark 1995 No.10. Development Co-operation Review Series. Paris: OECD.

OECD Development Assistance Committee. (1999). Denmark Peer Review. Development Co-operation Review Series. Paris: OECD.

OECD Development Assistance Committee. (2003). Denmark Peer Review. Development Co-operation Review Series. Paris: OECD.

OECD Development Assistance Committee. (2007). Peer Review. Review of the development co-operation policies and programmes of Denmark DAC's main findings and recommendations (Note by the Secretariat), 19 June 2007.

4.2 Interview guide for individual discussions with sector experts of other donors related to their perceptions of Danida support

Basics and modalities

- o What type of programmes are you supporting/financing, in which regions?
- o What is the difference between you and Danida?
- o What do you think about Danida's choice of regions of support?
- o What do you think about Danida's way of doing things? Sector support, project type support, MDBS support.... What do you think about differences in how you and Danida do things?
- o What would be the best type of support / aid modality for your sector?

Alignment, co-ordination, harmonisation, policy dialogue

- o How do you interact with the other donors? What changes / trends can you observe in this interaction?
- o How would you describe harmonisation between your organisation and Danida, in the sector in general, and alignment?
- o How do you qualify the policy dialogue with the government in the sector?
- o How often were issues relating to capacity-building discussed? And taken on board by government?
- o How do you perceive Danida's role in policy dialogue?
- o How would you rate Denmark's contribution to policy development in sectors and in general? What do you think about the priorities they set for themselves?

Capacity development and service delivery

- o What changes are you aware of in terms of improvement of local capacity due to Danida support?
- o How do you see them in comparison to your organisation's efforts? Could you identify any way of doing capacity support that has more prospects than other ways, e.g. TA versus long-term training abroad?
- o What are the major changes in service delivery in your sector in Ghana during the past years?
- o In your perception, which of them are at least partly due to Danida support?
- o What do you think about Danida's overall contribution to organisational changes, improvement of performance of institutions and service delivery?

Conclusions

- o What would you rate as success in Danida support to Ghana? What have been weaknesses? Opportunities? Threats?
- o What characteristics of Danida support would you like being considered more by your organisation?