MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF DENMARK

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS 2027-2031

with Danish Civil Society Organisations

BOX 1

DENMARK'S STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

"Civil society plays an important role in strengthening and protecting fundamental values such as democracy, the rule of law, and human rights. A strong and diverse civil society is an asset in itself."

"**Equal partnerships** are the key to better results and greater political influence. Denmark and the EU can only be seen as attractive partners in the countries where we are actively engaged if we do a better job of listening to the **needs and wishes of government partners, the local civil society, and businesses.** Where we explore the opportunities for cooperation, investment, and increased trade with each other. And where we strengthen **people-to-people engagement**. We must be honest about our interests and jointly identify areas where we can – and cannot – collaborate. We must engage broadly. More listening, less lecturing. (…)

The efforts we support are most often managed and run by **local actors**. We must strengthen their **leadership** and entrust them with more responsibility for translating development assistance into results. This means that the money must be channelled more directly of where it is to the greatest benefit. This is the essence of localisation. (…)

The **Danish civil society partners, big and small, and their local partners are crucial** in this respect. They are present in crises and fragile contexts where conditions are most challenging. We have a strong interest in making even better use of the full breadth of Danish civil society as part of Denmark's contribution to the world. We will continue to prioritise our efforts to **inform and engage** Danes in development cooperation. This is absolutely central to maintaining the support of the Danes. We can do this most effectively in collaboration with civil society organisations, foundations, educational institutions, and the business community."

– A Changing World - Partnerships in Development p. 28 and 9.

CONTENTS

BOXES AND ANNEXES

ABBREVIATIONS

CBO
Community-Based Organisation

CHS
Core Humanitarian Standard

CSO
Civil Society Organisation

DAC
OECD Development
Assistance Committee

DKK
Danish Kroner

EU
European Union

HRBA
Human Rights Based Approach

IASC
Inter-Agency Standing
Committee

ILO
The International Labour
Organization

IPE
Information and Public
Engagement

LGBT+
Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans,
queer, intersex, and asexual.
LGBT+ is an ever growing and
evolving acronym. It should
be seen as an inclusive term
covering people of all genders
and sexualities and allies.

LNOB
Leaving No One Behind

MFA
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

MHPSS
Mental Health and
Psychosocial Support

MSMEs
Micro, Small, and
Medium Enterprises

NGO
Non-Governmental Organisations

OECD
Organisation for Economic
Co-operation and Development

OPD
Organisations of Persons
with Disabilities

SME
Small and Medium Enterprises

SPA
Strategic Partnerships

SRH
Sexual and Reproductive Health

SRHR
Sexual Reproductive Health
and Rights

ToC
Theory of Change

TVET
Technical and Vocational
Education and Training

UN
United Nations

WASH
Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

WLO/WRO
Women, Women-Led
Organisations / Women's
Rights Organisations

1
INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (MFA) is planning a new cycle of Strategic Partnerships for the period 2027-2031 with Danish Civil Society Organisations (CSOs).

The overall purpose of the Strategic Partnerships 2027-2031 (SPA 2027-2031) is to implement the strategy for Danish development cooperation, "A Changing World – Partnerships in Development", with reference also to the Danish Strategy for strengthened Danish engagement with African countries, 'Africa's Century', through dynamic and mutually-reinforcing partnerships between independent Danish CSOs and their local partners. The Strategic Partnerships provide a framework for predictable funding over a five-year period where the annual commitment is subject to parliamentary approval.

The selection of new strategic partners is based on an open application process. The first phase was a prequalification round concluded in December 2025.

Prequalified organisations are now invited to submit a full proposal in this second phase. The full proposal phase has been designed to provide applicants and their local partners with clarity as early as possible on whether or not the applicant has been successful in achieving a Strategic Partnership for 2027-2031, including the expected grant level (subject to parliamentary approval). This will facilitate a thorough and efficient programming phase afterwards, including the ability to consult and engage with local partners in defining the specific country/regional/thematic engagements as part of SPA 2027-2031. The Application Form (Annex 1) describes the application process in more detail.

This Information Note outlines priorities and requirements for the full proposal for a Strategic Partnership for 2027-2031. While the prequalification was based on eligibility requirements and capacity criteria, the full proposals are assessed on applicants' strategic relevance towards prioritised approaches and thematic focus areas. These are described in general terms in this Information Note, while specific assessment criteria are contained in Annex 1B.

SPA 2027-2031 follows the main principles of the previous generations of Strategic Partnerships but has been adapted in line with lessons learned from previous phases and new strategic development priorities.

Cooperation with and support for civil society is a cornerstone in Danish development cooperation. Besides being an essential actor in development cooperation and humanitarian assistance, a strong and independent civil society is a main pillar of democratic societies and an asset in itself. Supporting and strengthening civil society in partner countries is thus a fundamental element of all programming throughout the SPA 2027-2031. Strategic Partnerships will strengthen the independence, space, diversity, and capacity of civil society in partner countries as a goal in itself and as means to realise development and humanitarian purposes.

A key strength of the Strategic Partnership modality lies in the diversity of strategic partners and their different roles and mandates. Like previous SPAs, SPA 2027-2031 will take its point of departure in the strategic partners' own mandate, vision, goals, strategies, and specific core competencies – and how they contribute to the Danish development priorities.

Applying for a Strategic Partnership entails a commitment to comply with the requirements outlined in this Information Note as well as the Administrative Guidelines.

**BOX 2
READING GUIDE**

> **Chapter 1** provides an overall introduction to SPA 2027-2031 and the application process.

> **Chapter 2** outlines the prioritised approaches.

> **Chapter 3** describes the five thematic priorities that applicants are expected to develop their proposal against and be aligned with.

> **Chapter 4** outlines the geographical focus and requirements.

> **Chapter 5** describes the flexible funding modalities.

> **Chapter 6** describes the principles behind the budgetary frames for proposals.

2
APPROACHES

This chapter outlines the prioritised overall approaches and key cross-cutting programmatic approaches that Strategic Partnerships are expected to apply in their engagements.

2.1
LOCAL LEADERSHIP AND DANISH ADDED VALUE

The Danish development strategy, "A Changing World – Partnerships in Development" is clear on the ambition to base Danish development cooperation on equal partnerships.

Through SPA 2027-2031, Denmark commits to advancing local leadership as a fundamental element of effective and sustainable development cooperation and humanitarian action. This entails that development efforts are managed and driven locally, aligned with locally identified needs, and responsive also to priorities articulated in local, regional, and national development plans. This commitment further entails actively listening to and engaging with communities and local authorities, ensuring that interventions reflect their demand and context. Decision making power, resources, and responsibilities should progressively be transferred so that national and community-based organisations shape priorities, influence policy, and lead core components of the work. Partnerships should be grounded in transparency and mutual accountability, ensuring that collaboration strengthens local systems rather than substituting them.

Based on guidance and requirements from the MFA, strategic partners are expected to submit a **Local Leadership** Strategy, adhering to the ambitious targets outlined in Box 4. Strategic partners' progress on their Local Leadership Strategy will furthermore be a focus area in reviews and annual consultations throughout the partnership period.

The emphasis on local leadership also entails that the **value added** by the Danish partners to local partners needs to be very clearly articulated and presented. Danish partners should clearly demonstrate their unique value addition vis-à-vis other partners – local, national, Danish, and international. This includes elements such as specific technical capacity or expertise also within wider international alliances or networks. It furthermore pertains to correspondence between national work in Denmark and the international engagement, as well as the ability – where relevant – to increase the value of the Danish contribution by drawing on other Danish competencies, actors, and stakeholders also beyond traditional civil society, including chambers of commerce, Danish companies, and their representative organisations, see also 2.4.

Recognising that building, sustaining, and coordinating in-demand technical capacity requires resources at head-office level, Danish strategic partners who receive a smaller annual SPA grant (below 50 million DKK annually – and individually in case of consortia) and are not part of an international federation or alliance (with the pool of technical capacities that this entails), and who transfer a large percentage of their overall development and humanitarian budget to local partners (35 pct. or above across 2022-2024 as indicated in the prequalification application) are allowed to use up to 25 pct. of the budget in Denmark, compared to the standard ceiling of 20 pct. This will be individually communicated to relevant applicants upon invitation to submit a full proposal.

BOX 4

LOCAL LEADERSHIP – SIX CORE ELEMENTS AND REQUIREMENTS

The Local Leadership strategy should demonstrate the value added by the Danish strategic partners towards strengthening local leadership, including their ability to facilitate strategic coordination, accompaniment, and accountability towards local leadership, ensuring that resources, decision-making power, and implementation progressively rest with local actors. The Local Leadership strategy is expected to be guided by the following six core elements. All core elements are followed by a set of requirements that strategic partners are expected to adhere to. Applicants must demonstrate in their strategy how progress will be reviewed annually and used for learning and adaptive measures. Finally, the strategy should apply a differentiated approach that responds to the diversity of local actors, reflecting varying capacities, roles, and contexts.

01
EQUITABLE PARTNERSHIPS

Strategic partners are expected to engage in equitable partnerships with local partners, based on locally identified needs and agreed mutual added value. This means forming partnerships in which power, resources, decision-making, and accountability are shared in ways that reflect local actors' leadership roles, capacities, and responsibilities. Equitable partnerships involve listening to and responding to local priorities, building trust and transparency, and fostering joint ownership of programmes and outcomes. Strategic partners must also support local actors in strengthening their influence, in shaping shared strategy, and in progressively taking the lead in programme design, implementation, and monitoring.

Partners are expected to include and adhere to the following in their Local Leadership strategy:

- *Co-leadership and strategic selection of local partners:* strategic partners must select local partners based on their strategic value, ensuring that partners bring complementary expertise, networks, and legitimacy to enhance the impact, relevance, and sustainability of the work. Strategic partners must demonstrate the equitable sharing of power between partners, address imbalances within local civil society and thus advance local leadership. This includes prioritising partners that bring relevant expertise, networks, legitimacy, or representativeness, and taking deliberate measures to include and strengthen underrepresented and marginalised actors, so that leadership is rooted in and driven by communities themselves.

- *Progressive local leadership:* strategic partners should ensure that local actors progressively assume more leadership, with increasing responsibility for planning, implementing, and monitoring programme components, including decision-making authority, resource management, and accountability for outcomes. Strategic partners will annually report on measurable progress in advancing local leadership in their Local Leadership strategy, demonstrating how local partners have strengthened their roles and responsibilities over time.

02
FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

Strategic partners are expected to transfer as large a proportion of the grant as implementable to local partners and support local ownership. This means that local partners should have meaningful control over the resources they receive, enabling them to plan, implement, and adapt programmes according to local priorities. Funding should be predictable, flexible, and multi-year where feasible, allowing organisations to strengthen their systems, professionalise, and sustain their work beyond the programme's lifespan. Transfers should also support organisational resilience, accountability, and long-term strategic planning rather than being tied solely to short-term outputs.

Partners are expected to include and adhere to the following in their Local Leadership strategy:

- *Direct funding:* by 2031, minimum 35 pct. of funds for programme and project activities (PPA) should flow directly to local partners. For partners already beyond that level, progression in direct funding should be anchored in relevant and ambitious targets.[1] Strategic partners are obliged to annually publish their level of transfers to local partners.

- *Quality of funding:* local partners receive 7 pct. overhead (unless justified otherwise), ensuring adequate organisational capacity for programme delivery and capacity-building activities. Furthermore, local partners have access to multi-year funding agreements (unless justified otherwise) to enable long-term planning and sustainability.

[1] If there is substantial reasoning behind a lower target or if applicants are already above 35 pct. in direct funding, applicants should consult and seek approval by the MFA on an individual target. This process will take place after the submission of the proposal. The proposal itself should present a suggested target by the applicant which will then afterwards be subject to discussion with and approval by the MFA.

03
CAPACITY

Strategic partners are expected to actively support local partners' organisational capacities and their ability to design, manage, and deliver effective people-centred projects and programmes with targeted and relevant capacity strengthening and capacity sharing. Where feasible, local partners lead capacity needs assessments and design their own development plans. Over time, they assume full leadership of selected programme components, supported by predictable and flexible financing that enables organisations to grow and sustain results beyond the programmatic lifespan. For organisations that cannot yet fully take on these responsibilities, engagement is structured to provide targeted support, fostering a gradual, planned, and sustainable transfer of leadership over time.

Partners are expected to include and adhere to the following in their Local Leadership strategy:

- *Meaningful participation processes:* strategic partners must ensure that programme processes are designed to enable meaningful, informed, and inclusive participation by local partners, including timely access to information, appropriate facilitation, and engagement formats that allow diverse local actors to contribute effectively throughout design, planning, and implementation. Strategic partners will provide technical support as needed, and organisations that are not yet able to assume full leadership will receive structured capacity-building support, with progress monitored annually.

- *Sustainable organisational growth:* local partners use flexible and predictable funding to strengthen organisational systems (finance, HR, governance) and sustain work beyond programme lifespans; they lead their own capacity needs assessments and co-design tailored capacity development plans.

04
PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP

Strategic partners are expected to support and promote local partners' participation and leadership in projects and programmes. This means that local partners are actively involved and, over time, progressively take the lead in decision-making at all stages of programme design, planning, and implementation. Leadership encompasses taking responsibility for programme outcomes, influencing priorities, and shaping strategies in line with local needs and contexts, including fostering accountability to communities, and ensuring that local community voices are heard and reflected in governance and coordination structures.

Partners are expected to include and adhere to the following in their Local Leadership strategy:

- *Co-decision structures:* strategic partners must ensure that programme governance includes documented co-decision mechanisms that enable local partners to actively participate in decision-making across programme design, planning, and implementation. These mechanisms support local partners' leadership by ensuring their perspectives and priorities are systematically reflected in decisions.

- *Locally-led programme ownership:* strategic partners should ensure that local partners take on increasing ownership of programme components across the programme cycle, from design through to implementation and review. Local partners should lead in shaping programme priorities, regularly revising components based on evolving contexts, and guiding cycles of planning, monitoring, or evaluation each year, ensuring that their priorities and feedback shape decision-making.

05
COORDINATION, POLICY AND ADVOCACY

Engagement in advocacy efforts informed by evidence, based on knowledge of the processes and stakeholders should involve and empower relevant local civil society actors and local partners. Such efforts also include holding duty bearers accountable. Strategic partners are expected to promote the greater presence and influence of local partners, and support local partner leadership, in coordination mechanisms and policy fora.

Partners are expected to include and adhere to the following in their Local Leadership strategy:

- *Locally-led advocacy:* strategic partners must, where feasible and contextually relevant, ensure that local partners lead or co-lead a number of advocacy initiatives, demonstrating tangible influence on policy decisions, whether local, national, regional, or international, and that local partners are represented in all relevant coordination forums.

- *Advocacy impact and accountability:* strategic partners must ensure that local partners are able to measure and communicate the impact of their advocacy efforts, demonstrating how their leadership influences policy at local, national, and international levels. This includes ensuring that local partners can hold duty bearers accountable for policy commitments and practical outcomes of advocacy. This necessitates an approach that is context-appropriate.

06
ACCOUNTABILITY TO COMMUNITIES

Accountability to communities ensures that programme design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation remain grounded in the lived realities of those most affected. Strategic partners are expected to systematically listen to, respond to, and incorporate community feedback, guided by recognised standards such as the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS).

Partners are expected to include and adhere to the following in their Local Leadership strategy:

- *Participation in monitoring and evaluation:* strategic partners should ensure and document community consultations in addition to participatory monitoring exercises with affected communities across programme interventions. Local partners of Danish strategic partners will furthermore be invited to partner dialogues/consultations with the MFA focusing on accountability and the effectiveness of partnerships and programmes.

- *Local assessment of the Danish partner:* every second year, as a minimum, strategic partners will ensure that local partners will be invited to conduct a formal assessment of the strategic partner, evaluating how well the partner supports local leadership, including ensuring accountability to affected people and communities, sharing power and resources, and responding to local priorities, with findings that are being implemented to improve partnership practices.

2.2
INFORMATION AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT (IPE)

Strategic partners are expected to play a proactive role in engaging the Danish public and strengthening the general level of understanding of – and support for – Danish development cooperation. Public engagement has long been a strong dimension of Danish civil society's development cooperation. SPA 2027-2031 will strengthen partners' opportunities to build public awareness of, and public engagement in, development issues in Denmark.

The overall target group for all IPE activities is the general Danish population, and within this target group strategic partners are encouraged to engage a larger and more diverse segment of the Danish public, including sub-target groups and stakeholders not traditionally involved in development issues. Innovation in new methods and/or target groups is encouraged.

In line with the new Danish development cooperation strategy, engagement efforts should increasingly:

- Engage various groups in Denmark, such as youth, diaspora communities, private sector actors, municipalities, educational institutions, faith-based groups, and volunteer networks; facilitate people-to-people exchanges and encounters and strengthen two-way learning, where Danes gain insight into local innovation and community-driven solutions while local partners benefit from Danish competencies and networks;

- Integrate and highlight local voices, leadership and representation in information and public engagement activities;

- Demonstrate clear synergies between the international development engagement and Danish information and public engagement activities.

Partners are expected to be ambitious in their IPE focus and are allowed to use up to 3 pct. of the grant on IPE. Half of the IPE budget can be used for people-to-people exchange activities to foster mutual learning and cross-border collaboration. As part of their reporting, organisations are required to document how engagement activities meaningfully include and promote the leadership of local and national partners, and how they contribute to strengthened public support for development cooperation in Denmark. In line with this, partners are expected to define targets and ways of measuring reach and effect both in terms of numbers (quantity) and impact (quality).

Partners are expected to have clear safeguarding guidelines, including procedures to ensure informed consent and respect for intellectual property rights, when developing communication and engagement activities and material with local partners.

2.3
GEARING OF RESOURCES

Strategic partners are expected to contribute to the mobilisation of additional/alternative funding towards humanitarian and development purposes beyond MFA funding.

Own-financing

Strategic partners are expected to ensure "own-financing" of activities similar to those funded by the MFA through other sources of funding, corresponding to at least 25 pct. of the Strategic Partnership budget throughout the partnership period.

Co-financing

Strategic partners will have the flexibility to allocate SPA funds towards co-financing and mobilisation of funding from other institutional donors or other sources, provided that the engagement reasonably falls within the overall objectives of the partnership. This includes the possibility of using MFA funds strategically towards co-financing, basket funds, joint programmes, and matching funding of local partners to enhance scale, influence, and promote harmonisation in countries and regions.

Financial Mobilisation

Strategic partners may, as part of their SPA 2027-2031 grant, work towards mobilising private impact investments in support of agreed humanitarian and development objectives, e.g. through engaging in innovative and blended finance. Such programming requires specific, specialised capacity at strategic partner level.

It is the expectation of the MFA that strategic partners who decide to engage in the use of innovative and blended finance will – in almost all cases – adopt one or more of the value-adding roles outlined in Box 5.

Strategic partners who decide to engage in the use of innovative and blended finance are expected to make use of their expertise to also ensure high programming standards especially within the following areas: accountability, monitoring and evaluation, local leadership, use of local expertise, facilitation of stakeholder engagement, alignment with development goals, alignment with SPA objectives, safeguarding of human rights and humanitarian principles, and safeguarding of social and environmental standards.

Strategic partners must thus have a sophisticated, multi-disciplinary skillset that bridges the traditional divide between humanitarian and development support and commercial financing. The transition from grant-making to financial intermediation introduces novel integrity risks and complex operational demands that require specific capacity and skill sets. This includes competencies within the five domains outlined in the administrative guidelines, section 11.3.

It is the sole responsibility of the strategic partner to ensure that all activities funded by the SPA grant – under all circumstances – must be eligible for ODA reporting as per OECD-DAC criteria and as such will be assessed as part of the review processes during the partnership period.

A thematic review across the SPA 2027-2031 portfolio specifically assessing innovative and blended finance activities will be conducted in the early stage of SPA 2027-2031.

BOX 5
ROLES IN INNOVATIVE AND BLENDED FINANCE

Level	Role & Contribution	Examples
1. Awareness raiser & educator	Safeguards the interests of the poor, vulnerable, and marginalised against commercial exploitation and predator lending	Providing financial & digital literacy to prevent e.g. over-indebtedness & informed consent; implementing "graduation" models for the poor.
2. Watchdog	Monitors use of financial instruments to address the accountability deficits, transparency, and social justice.	Tracking ESG performance, debt sustainability, "do no harm" principles, grievance redress mechanisms (GRMs), ODA diversion, responsible blended finance.
3. Knowledge Partner	Provides local context, social due diligence, and local insight to strengthen financial institutions' decision-making.	Inputs to feasibility studies, social risk analyses, gender and inclusion assessments.
4. Facilitator	Connects local actors, capital, and policy frameworks — making projects more bankable and inclusive.	Partnerships in blended-finance facilities, linking communities, municipalities, and investors.
5. Incubator	Designs or manages its own financing instruments or provides funds to support local partner development/implementation of instruments.	Revolving funds, micro-loan schemes, community-based impact investment vehicles.
6. Policy Influencer	Influences the broader enabling environment for development finance and sustainable private capital mobilisation at local, country, or international level.	Policy dialogue on responsible investment principles, debt sustainability, or blended finance standards. Advocate for regulatory frameworks that protect consumers and promote fair competition.

2.4
CROSS-CUTTING PROGRAMMING APPROACHES

CIVIL SOCIETY AND MULTI-STAKEHOLDER APPROACH

A strong and independent civil society is a main pillar of democratic societies and a goal in itself for Danish development cooperation. Supporting civil society in partner countries is a fundamental element of all programming throughout the SPA 2027-2031. Strategic Partnerships will strengthen the independence, space, diversity, and capacity of civil society in partner countries to influence and promote sustainable development efforts.

Strategic partners are encouraged to apply a multi-stakeholder approach and engage with a broad range of partners, including civil society actors, business associations, private foundations, companies, public authorities, private sector actors, finance institutions, universities, governments, think tanks, and multilateral agencies to strengthen collective impact. This also relates to all thematic priority areas and may for example cover innovative partnerships on sustainable growth and job creation, climate change adaptation, and green and just transition.

Partnerships are dynamic and though many partnerships are strong after many years of investment, qualitative development is expected, including exit strategies from long-running partnerships and strategies for entering into new partnerships.

HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH AND LEAVING NO-ONE BEHIND

All engagements must build on a Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) and focus on Leaving No-One Behind (LNOB). Where the HRBA is expected to inform the entire Strategic Partnership engagement, including the focus on rights-holders and duty-bearers across activities, LNOB specifically points to a strong focus on marginalised groups' rights and dignity, e.g. the rights of Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities, minorities, LGBT+ persons, and vulnerable groups. It includes faith-based and other actors' role in the promotion of human rights and democracy, including the promotion of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion for all religious communities, non-believers, and minorities. It includes fighting discrimination, stigma, and persecution of minority groups, and ensuring equal rights and a voice for persons living with disabilities. In humanitarian action, a HRBA/LNOB approach emphasises the centrality of protection, working in hard-to-reach areas, working with those most in need, and through an evidence-informed approach to vulnerability and needs.

GENDER EQUALITY, GIRLS' AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

All engagements must integrate a focus on gender equality, and girls' and women's rights. This entails a specific focus on girls' and women's social, economic, and political rights, including participation, representation, and leadership. Gender equality is not just about girls and women having equal access, but also about tackling harmful gender roles, norms, and power relations, including in and through social services, and through advancing women's participation in peacebuilding under UNSC 1325 (ref. Denmark's Women Peace Security National Action plan 2025-29). Women, women-led organisations, and women's rights organisations (WLO/WRO) are central partners in this effort and must be involved in planning, decision-making, and implementation of actions and as direct local partners where possible and relevant. In humanitarian contexts, strategic partners are expected to work with relevant global guidelines, including the IASC Policy on Gender equality and Empowerment of women and girls in Humanitarian action, which sets out key priority areas, roles, and responsibilities for ensuring system-wide, inter-agency, and collaborative efforts on gender.

RIGHTS AND MEANINGFUL INCLUSION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

All engagements are expected to consider the meaningful inclusion of children and young people. This entails a focus on the rights, empowerment, voice, and specific vulnerabilities of children and youth, as well as their role as partners and agents of change. The question of representation is crucial. Specifically for youth, it is vital that development cooperation is done by and with young people, and not just for young people. In humanitarian contexts, strategic partners are expected to work with relevant global guidelines on children and youth, including child protection standards and IASC Guidelines on Working with and for Young People in Humanitarian and Protracted Crises, which emphasises

systematic inclusion and engagement with youth in all phases of humanitarian action as a core principle.

RIGHTS AND MEANINGFUL INCLUSION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

All engagements are expected to consider meaningful inclusion of persons with disabilities and their representative organisations. This entails a focus on rights, empowerment, voice, and addressing the specific barriers that persons with disabilities face, including limited access to essential services such as education, health, including sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and opportunities for participation in society. Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) are central partners in this and should, where possible and relevant, be involved in planning, decision-making, and implementation of actions and as direct local partners. This also applies to humanitarian action in line with the IASC Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, which define inclusion of persons with disabilities as a 'must-do action', and DG ECHO Operational Guidance on "The Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in EU-funded Humanitarian Aid Operations".

INTEGRATED (NEXUS) APPROACHES

In fragile contexts and emergency situations, Strategic Partnerships must contribute to strengthening wider and longer-term multisectoral approaches to development and crisis response that sustainably reduces vulnerabilities and increases resilience. This does not mean that all partners and all projects must contribute to peace, development, and humanitarian objectives, but rather that partners and their activities must apply a solutions-oriented perspective from the beginning, adapt to changes in circumstances, and find ways to work with others towards shared outcomes, based on their unique added value, and with a continuing focus on a progressive transition towards locally-led and locally-owned action.

The Strategic Partnership provides an opportunity for linking and ensuring coherence between emergency response and development; climate change adaptation and peace building. Through an integrated approach, strategic partners and their local partners should address and reduce acute humanitarian needs, strengthen resilience, and support conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts, while investing in long-term development to address the root causes of conflict, displacement, irregular migration, and vulnerability.

The humanitarian principles of impartiality, neutrality, and independence will continue to guide all humanitarian interventions with an emphasis on the centrality of protection, while all interventions – including humanitarian interventions – should seek to strengthen civil society and promote and protect human rights, where these are under pressure, and overall aim to build capacity of a free, independent, and thriving civil society.

CLIMATE, NATURE, AND BIODIVERSITY

Strategic partners are expected to consider and integrate climate, nature, and biodiversity concerns and elements in their programming. This entails reflections on how their activities address climate and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, and how they are coherent with the goals of the Paris Agreement, the Global Biodiversity Framework, and other global environmental agreements.

While some strategic partners may have climate, nature, and biodiversity as the main focus of their engagements, others may address it as a cross-cutting consideration, ensuring that activities do not harm the environment and that possible synergies and co-benefits with environment and climate goals are considered. The level of integration of green engagements will thus depend on the strategic partners' core competencies and preconditions for working with climate, nature, and biodiversity, e.g. in terms of green jobs and just transition, locally-led adaptation, nature-based solutions, or access to sustainable energy sources in humanitarian contexts.

GLOBAL AND LOCAL CONNECTEDNESS AND COORDINATION

Strategic partners are expected to develop and strengthen strategic dialogue, collaboration, and coordination with the MFA, other strategic partners, and relevant stakeholders at country, regional, and international level. This may include the promotion of learning, synergies, and knowledge exchange in the development of context analysis, country programmes, and specific programming exercises. It may also include mutual support in ensuring relevant collaboration and coordination with other development and humanitarian actors.

Furthermore, the MFA and the strategic partners can be mutually supportive and reinforcing in programme interventions and in relation to international policy agendas. Strategic partners are expected to demonstrate added value and contribute to Danish strategic development priorities also through leveraging their networks, alliances, and partnerships. Such networks can take the shape of formal alliances and federations, but may also include loose networks and ad-hoc fora.

3
THEMATIC PRIORITIES

This chapter describes the five thematic priorities against which the Strategic Partnerships are expected to develop their proposals and ensure alignment. The weight/presence of the thematic priorities is expected to be different across the portfolio of the various Strategic Partnerships, depending on partners' core competencies and mandates.

3.1
JOB CREATION, ECONOMIC GROWTH, TRADE, AND INVESTMENT

"Creating decent jobs, where workers' rights are respected, is and will remain crucial for sustainable economic development, poverty reduction, and political stability – not least in light of the large and growing number of young people in developing countries. (...) Wages, workers' rights, and decent labour market conditions are crucial to ensuring that growth is sustainable and inclusive."

– A Changing World - Partnerships in Development p. 21-22.

As part of fostering equal partnerships based on interests, the Danish Development Strategy "A Changing World – Partnerships in Development" highlights job creation, economic growth, trade, and investment as central pillars of Danish development cooperation. A strong private sector in Denmark and abroad is key. Denmark must mobilise private investments in partner countries and we must strengthen sustainable value chains, including capacity building for companies in partner countries. In keeping with the focus on sustainability in global value chains in the Government's Action Plan for Active and Effective Economic Diplomacy (June 2025), Danish actors should engage with partners to meet requirements for sustainable and responsible production and create a basis for increased export, growth, and employment.

Civil society can play a key role by representing workers, advocating for rights and responsible business conduct, fostering social dialogue, and ensuring that interventions reach vulnerable groups. At the same time, civil society can help spur sustainable and inclusive growth, trade, and investments by engaging with the private sector and leveraging local context knowledge and networks, whilst upholding and reinforcing equality, anti-corruption, sustainable value-chains, and fair-trade.

Support for market-based approaches, private-sector partnerships, and local economic ecosystems can contribute significantly to generating local economic growth and thereby enhance resilience and contribute to sustainable outcomes. It is therefore often not only about engaging with civil society and public institutions; it is also crucial to partner with local markets and the private sector, who play a central role in enabling self-reliance, restoring economic activity, securing a demand driven focus, and the creation of sustainable jobs. This intention also applies in fragile and refugee-hosting contexts.

Engagements may, for instance, include the following (along with other relevant approaches and activities):

- Promoting private-sector growth and job creation by supporting **sustainable value chains**, including adherence to corporate sustainability.

- Engaging with the Danish private sector and **mobilising targeted business instruments** that provide improved financing opportunities to local SMEs and contribute towards sustainable sourcing and consumptions.

- Supporting the **most vulnerable communities and societies** is critical as local livelihoods are threatened by climate change. Civil society can help spur local and community-based investment, trade, and growth, while building resilience and strengthening adaptation and environmental protection through e.g. nature-based solutions.

- Supporting **trade unions and workers' organisations in promoting labour rights, labour market framework conditions, and health & safety** e.g. by facilitating tripartite dialogue between government, employers, and workers on labour-market reforms as well as building social partners' capacity for performing social dialogue at national, sectoral, and workplace level. Promoting compliance with ILO standards, especially in high-risk sectors (textiles, agribusiness, construction).

- Supporting **sustainable, inclusive, and decent livelihoods** and decent jobs in both the formal and informal economy, especially for young people.

- Supporting **innovative entrepreneurship, MSMEs, and increased trade** to increase development impact through financing instruments, capacity building, and integration into value chains to stimulate local innovation and growth.

- Addressing **gender-based barriers** in labour markets and workplace discrimination and fostering women's economic empowerment, e.g. through access to credit, land, markets, and leadership roles as well as women-led MSMEs and cooperatives with business training and financial inclusion.

- Promoting **economic development and labour market participation inclusive of persons with disabilities** by removing physical, digital and other barriers, strengthening access to decent work, skills development, entrepreneurship, finance; supporting inclusive workplace practices and reasonable accommodation.

- Promoting **digital transformation and new technologies** which can accelerate responsible economic growth by increasing productivity and creating new decent jobs. Access to free information and knowledge can democratise innovation and technological development. Civil society can support digital literacy and access for youth and marginalised groups and promote digital entrepreneurship.

- Supporting **civil society as accountability stakeholders** and the use of digital tools and innovation in civic tech to strengthen transparency, participation, worker protection, anti-corruption, and accountability.

- Promoting the **strengthening of enabling business environments**, including transparency through institutional capacity building, training, advocacy, and private-public partnership at the local level.

3.2
RESPONSE TO CONFLICT, FORCED DISPLACEMENT AND IRREGULAR MIGRATION

"Preventing conflict and ensuring lasting solutions requires local leadership and a clear role for women, young people, and the local civil society. (...) Denmark must continue to fight for respect for international humanitarian law, international refugee law, and human rights. Our humanitarian support must remain neutral, independent, and needs-based. We must also maintain the necessary flexibility and work even more through national and local actors."

– A Changing World - Partnerships in Development p. 24.

As humanitarian needs grow in scale and severity due to escalating conflicts, disasters, and forced displacement, there is a need for strong commitment to neutral, independent, impartial, and effective humanitarian action. This will be reflected in emergency responses under the SPA 2027-2031 as well as in consistent advocacy for international humanitarian law, refugee law, and human rights, and in the active use of policy platforms, including within the UN system, the EU, and other international fora. This also entails active engagement in global, regional, and local policy dialogues aimed at improving humanitarian strategies, coordination, and delivery mechanisms.

Strategic partners engaged in humanitarian action are expected to respond to conflict, forced displacement, and irregular migration, while maintaining focus on

longer-term resilience building, including contributing to the prevention and reduction of violent conflict, as a means to sustainably reduce vulnerability in protracted crises and displacement situations. Interventions should be programmed according to analyses of needs and context, integrating conflict-sensitivity and a gender/diversity approach to programming as well as ensuring protection from harm and respect for IHL and humanitarian principles. Partners should coordinate and align with global standards within the humanitarian system, like the cluster-system, IASC framework, and the Core Humanitarian Standards.

Addressing irregular migration in a safe, orderly, and rights-based manner is essential. Irregular migration should be addressed in a whole-of-route approach,

including with an aim to fight migrant smuggling and trafficking in persons as well as protection of migrants on the move. In addition, ensuring the sustainable reintegration of returnees to their countries of origin should also be integrated into livelihood interventions.

Recognising that violent conflict is at an all-time high and significantly drives increasing humanitarian needs and forced displacement globally, it is critical to integrate conflict prevention and peacebuilding objectives into longer-term programming. This includes strengthening local capacities and mechanisms for dialogue and conflict resolution with a strong focus on women and youth leadership (ref. Women Peace Security and Youth Peace Security agendas).

Engagements may, for instance, include the following (along with other relevant activities):

- Supporting and ensuring **effective humanitarian response**, including access to protection and life-saving assistance for people and affected communities when conflict, crisis, or disaster has struck.

- Providing **essential services**, including shelter, food, cash, education, and health services, including water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), SRHR, and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) etc., delivered in ways that respond to acute needs and reduces vulnerability while also building stronger systems over time.

- Promoting **inclusive access to national services**, such as health care, including SRH, education, and justice.

- Preventing and responding to **sexual and gender-based violence**, including harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriages and female genital mutilation.

- **Preventing crises and disasters and risk reduction**, including early warning systems and early action, anticipatory action, capacity-strengthening of disaster management systems, adaptation (multi-hazard approach, e.g. conflict and natural hazards) as well as support to national social safety nets.

- Contributing to **protection** from harm and respect for international law (such as humanitarian law, human rights law and refugee law) through protection mainstreaming as well as stand-alone protection programming. This also includes efforts addressing sexual and gender-based violence.

- Strengthening **self-reliance and resilience**, including through livelihoods, multi-purpose cash assistance and market-based approaches.

- Supporting **reintegration efforts** for returnees, such as livelihood and social services interventions.

- Supporting a **cash & market-based approach** as a multi-sector modality (multi-purpose cash transfers, "Cash for X", group cash transfers, etc.).

- Strengthening the **coherence between humanitarian, development and peace efforts** by incorporating an integrated resilience focus in programmes (e.g. focus on resilience to the multiple interlinked factors that drive fragility and vulnerability, including climate change, displacement, and conflict).

- Contributing to the **prevention and reduction of violent conflict** through inclusive peacebuilding efforts. This includes support for community-driven social cohesion, dialogue, mediation and conflict management efforts, as well as strengthening the capacity of local peacebuilding actors and mechanisms. In such work, ensuring a strong focus on the meaningful participation of women and youth, like considering any climate-related impacts on peace and conflict is key.

- Strengthening the **engagement and capacity of crisis-affected communities** to respond to both immediate and long-term consequences of crises and conflicts. This includes communities hosting displaced people, local CSOs, as well as local and national authorities and other relevant actors. It entails the prevention of conflict and strengthening local conflict resolution mechanisms related to e.g. land use and natural resource management.

- Enhancing **protection of civilians through advocacy** for international humanitarian law, international humanitarian principles and human rights as a basis for humanitarian action and work in fragile contexts.

- Supporting **migrant protection and information services** along migratory routes, including to address irregular migration and prevent migrant smuggling and trafficking in persons.

- Strengthening the **ability of local and national governments to ensure economic and social protection** and development in fragile countries, regions, and regions of origin impacted by conflict, irregular migration, and disaster.

3.3
A JUST, SUSTAINABLE, AND GREEN TRANSITION

"Climate change has local impacts and is already a matter of survival for many countries. Climate adaptation prevents poverty, migration, and instability (...) A guiding principle in our climate adaptation efforts is that we listen and let efforts be guided by local needs. The protection and involvement of Indigenous Peoples, with respect for their rights (...) as well as the involvement of local civil societies, is essential for sustainable efforts. (...) Especially in Africa, there is enormous potential in green energy and raw materials that are crucial for the green transition. Renewable energy is not only good for the climate and air pollution in the vast majority of cases, it is also the cheapest solution. Green transition in our partner countries is thereby in their own interest."

– A Changing World - Partnerships in Development p. 26.

The global challenges of climate change, drought, floods, pandemics, reduced biodiversity, increased pollution, and food insecurity reinforce each other. Without investments in a just, sustainable. and green transition along with climate adaptation, health, upskilling, and reskilling, there is a risk of seeing development move in the wrong direction. Green initiatives must be more integrated across climate, water, environment, and nature, and should be closely aligned with other development goals such as health, food security, and job creation. The Sustainable Development Goals will not be achieved without addressing the climate crisis, and we cannot solve the climate crisis without addressing poverty. Adaptation and resilience-building efforts in fragile and conflict-affected contexts remain a priority, and the elements below could all be considered in fragile and displacement contexts.

Engagements may, for instance, include the following (along with other relevant approaches and activities):

- Strengthening **adaptation to climate change and building resilience** locally, before and after disaster strikes. This includes working through innovative approaches to avoiding, minimising, and addressing the risk of loss and damage due to climate change.

- Reduce and mitigate **climate-related disaster risks**, based on enhanced preparedness and response, including through anticipatory action and early warning.

- Strengthening **green solutions, biodiversity and promoting nature-based solutions**, partly through support to protecting, preserving, and restoring ecosystems and conserving forest and freshwater systems, coastal and wetland areas as well as ensuring sustainable management and use of ecosystems. This may also contribute to the prevention of conflict and food insecurity and the creation of green jobs and income opportunities.

- Contributing to **fossil fuel energy phase out** (prevention of lock-into fossil fuel dependency) and tripling of renewable energy and doubling of energy efficiency in a just and inclusive energy transition. Contributing to access to energy and clean cooking.

- Promoting a **green development pathway** that is consistent with the goals of the Paris Agreement. This entails integration of climate and environment concerns into local and national development planning processes, including Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

- Strengthening **water resource management and access to clean water** in rural and urban areas to improve resilience towards changes in precipitation patterns as well as health and sanitary conditions. This includes drinking water, water for production and crops, sanitation, and management and recycling of wastewater.

- Strengthening **climate-adapted agriculture and sustainable food systems** in order to build resilience, improve food insecurity, and promote agro-organic cultivation methods to strengthen green value chains.

- Strengthening **civil society capacity to engage in advocacy efforts** that promote ambitious action plans at community level, nationally, and globally. The aim is to strengthen impact, accountability, and governance on responsible business, climate, nature, and biodiversity issues.

- Strengthening the **voice, protection, and rights** of Indigenous Peoples as well as e.g. activists, women environmental human rights defenders, trade unions, local communities, social movements, communities most at risk, including persons with disabilities in climate, nature, and biodiversity-related situations.

- Promotion of inclusive and meaningful **participation of women** in decision-making and climate action and implementation.

- Supporting the **business community's inclusive and green engagement,** including encouraging business associations to introduce new green technologies within areas such as energy, water, environment, food, and health. Maintaining a focus on business and human rights (the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights), and the environmental responsibility of companies within sustainable global value and supplier chains, including decent jobs and living conditions in developing countries.

- Developing **green skills and jobs at all levels** through skills upgrading, education, and training relevant for the green transition, with a special emphasis on a just and inclusive transition.

3.4
DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

"With a human rights-based approach to development, we must support strong, independent, and diverse civil societies, free media, independent judicial systems, responsible political parties, and independent state actors such as national human rights and ombudsman institutions. We must support those who fight for democratic self-determination. (...) We must also create room for democracy to take root and become resilient. This is about ensuring that all people are free to express themselves, think, believe, and assemble freely. Civil society plays an important role in strengthening and protecting fundamental values such as democracy, the rule of law, and human rights. A strong and diverse civil society is an asset in itself."

– A Changing World - Partnerships in Development p. 28.

The global human rights system is under significant strain. The rise of authoritarian regimes, restrictions on civic space, and an erosion of international legal norms threaten the foundations of democracy, human rights, and sustainable development. Over the past 20 years, there has been a gradual democratic decline and increasing autocratisation globally. According to the V-Dem Institute, more than a third of the world's population lives under authoritarian regimes, and well over half of the world's population lives in societies where civil society is restricted, suppressed, or closed. These challenges are further compounded by climate change and digital transformation which disproportionately affect marginalised groups. Authoritarian regimes exploit technological developments and, as an example, use digital platforms to monitor and suppress dissent, thus curbing freedom of expression and assembly. Civic space and human rights are equally under pressure, perhaps even more so, in times of conflict and crisis. It is expected that partners actively consider civic space and rights as part of crisis response, just as human rights and democracy actors are expected to engage in situations characterised by fragility, violence, and conflict.

Engagements may, for instance, include the following (along with other relevant approaches and activities):

- Strengthening **a strong, independent, vocal, and diversified civil society** that is representative, accountable, and locally-based; offering enhanced opportunities for poor, vulnerable, and marginalised communities to participate in public life.

- Promoting an **open and enabling civic space** in partner countries including i) basic legal guarantees, such as the freedom of expression and the right to assembly, association and registration, ii) appropriate measures for CSOs' financial viability and sustainability, and iii) appropriate spaces for local, national, and international participation, including in the digital sphere.

- Strengthening and promoting **the rights and dignity of vulnerable and marginalised groups** with a focus on freedom, inclusion, non-discrimination, the right of a person to participate in the political system, to organise themselves, and to hold those in power accountable. This includes Indigenous Peoples, LGBT+ persons, religious minorities, and persons with disabilities, including their representative organisations.

- Supporting **girls' and women's rights** with a focus on promoting gender equality and economic and political rights, including participation, representation, and leadership.

- Strengthening the **democratic participation and influence of young people** through partnerships with youth-led organisations and movements supporting their organising, advocacy, and civic engagement in partner countries. With a focus on creating meaningful opportunities for young people to participate in and shape political processes at local, national, and global levels, recognising young people as a driving force for democratic change, peace, and sustainable development.

- Supporting **effective, democratic, and responsible states** with respect for human rights, freedom of expression, association, assembly and religion, freedom from child- and forced labour, who provide healthcare, education, and social protection for their citizens. With a focus on activities that strengthen the accountability of the state, enable political participation, and fight corruption.

- Supporting **domestic resource mobilisation** to strengthen development financing, nation building, and the social contract. With a focus on fair and progressive taxation, combatting tax evasion and avoidance, illicit financial flows and corruption, and supporting developing countries' participation in international tax cooperation.

- Supporting and protecting **democracy and human right defenders** who are subjected to harassment and attack – both online and physically. This applies, for example, to human rights advocates, journalists, trade union representatives, faith-based actors, environmental activists, etc.

- Supporting **freedom of expression, access to information and safeguarding information integrity** with specific focus on free media, combatting misinformation and disinformation, holding states accountable, promoting digital rights and online freedom.

- Supporting representative and legitimate **civil society actors in fragile and conflict-ridden** contexts offering enhanced opportunities for poor, vulnerable and marginalised communities to participate in conflict prevention, conflict management, and peacebuilding through strengthening resilience and promoting dialogue, peace, and reconciliation.

- Supporting **new and emerging civil society actors** as a more dynamic concept with more fluid, informal, and community-oriented activism in partner countries. This includes non-formalised actors, such as community-based networks, local committees, activists and social movements, women and youth groups.

3.5
EDUCATION AND HEALTH

"Access to quality education is crucial to breaking the negative spiral and is also a prerequisite for economic growth and democratic participation. (...) More than half of the world's population remains without access to essential health services (...) We will continue to support organisations that work globally to ensure SRHR, and that deliver sexual and reproductive health services locally. (...) Our civil society is also making significant contributions, especially in fragile and conflict-affected areas."

– A Changing World - Partnerships in Development p. 30-31.

Education and health are both crucial vehicles for fighting poverty and inequality. Education and health are about people's access to affordable and quality resources in a wider sense, and are prerequisites for their exercise of human rights, political participation, and contribution to economic growth. Engagements in education and health will continue to be implemented in close synergy with the gender-equality agenda. Access to quality education and particularly the right to quality education is both a goal in itself and a means of creating a richer, less unequal society. Quality education is essential for the development of children's and youth's holistic skills, including social-emotional, literacy, numeracy, and life skills. Education is also a crucial lever to address social and gender norms that prevent equality as well as girls' and women's access to education.

Access to healthcare is a right linked to people's physical, mental, and social well-being. This calls for health services being available, free of prejudice (e.g. against LGBT+), and affordable. In particular, access to sexual and reproductive health and rights remains a priority challenge under the SPA 2027-2031.

Education and health are equally important during times of crisis, and partners are expected to consider their education and health efforts before, during, and after a crisis.

Engagements may, for instance, include the following (along with other relevant approaches and activities):

- Strengthening **equity and equal access to education and health** for all, including women and girls, marginalised groups, as well as displaced and refugee children and young people. Precisely these groups tend to be cut off from access to social sectors. Moreover, gender equality activities can also be effectuated in and through education and health services.

- Supporting **sustainable, scalable, and systemic education interventions**; to the extent that this is possible, implementing quality basic and secondary education programmes with education authorities and local partners, including the inclusion of refugee education into national education systems. Activities can also support climate resilience in and through education.

- Supporting the **quality of education with a focus on outcomes for children**. This could include activities that improve curricula, ensure the quality and safety of the learning environment, as well as support teachers' instruction, development, and wellbeing.

- Promoting sustainable and decent **livelihoods through quality education and health initiatives**, vocational skills, entrepreneurship, decent jobs, and sustainable economic growth in fragile contexts.

- Providing **Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and support for youth** to access the labour market.

- Providing **access to essential health services**, specifically primary healthcare, including maternal and infant health.

- Strengthening prevention and control of **communicable and non-communicable diseases**, and providing support to building strong and effective health systems, both within long-term development aid and in humanitarian crises.

- Supporting **sustainable, scalable, and systemic health interventions**. To the extent possible, to be carried out through and by strengthening national health authorities and local partners' health systems and services, without building parallel structures.

- Supporting **the continuity of health and education interventions** when the state is unable to cover the needs.

- Strengthening **mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)** through close collaboration with civil society through civil-society organisations' unique access to communities and their familiarity with the local context, including generalised MHPSS and social-emotional learning in schools. This also includes supporting safe and inclusive spaces, culture, sport, and community engagement as important entry points for strengthening psychosocial wellbeing, social connectedness, and a sense of belonging, particularly among children and young people.

- Supporting **SRHR** interventions, including promoting bodily autonomy, increasing access to comprehensive sexuality education and counselling, modern contraception, safe abortion, and strengthening protection against sexual and gender-based violence, including child, early and forced marriage, and female genital mutilation.

4
GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS AND REQUIREMENTS

The geographical focus of SPA 2027-2031 will be on Africa, Ukraine and the European Eastern neighbourhood, and the Middle East, where a minimum of 50 pct. of strategic partners' programme and project activities must be implemented. Beyond that, engagements can take place in all OECD DAC eligible countries, incl. Asia, the Pacific region, and Latin America.

The strategic partners may have thematic, country, regional and global programmes. The allocation of programme funds must be specified at country level in the budget in order to count towards the geographical requirements. Regional activities may be included as well, as long as the regional activities falls within the geographical requirement. Beyond this, partners may reserve up to 30 pct. of the main grant as unallocated flexible funds (see section 5.2).

BOX 6
WORLD MAP WITH GEOGRAPHIC REQUIREMENTS
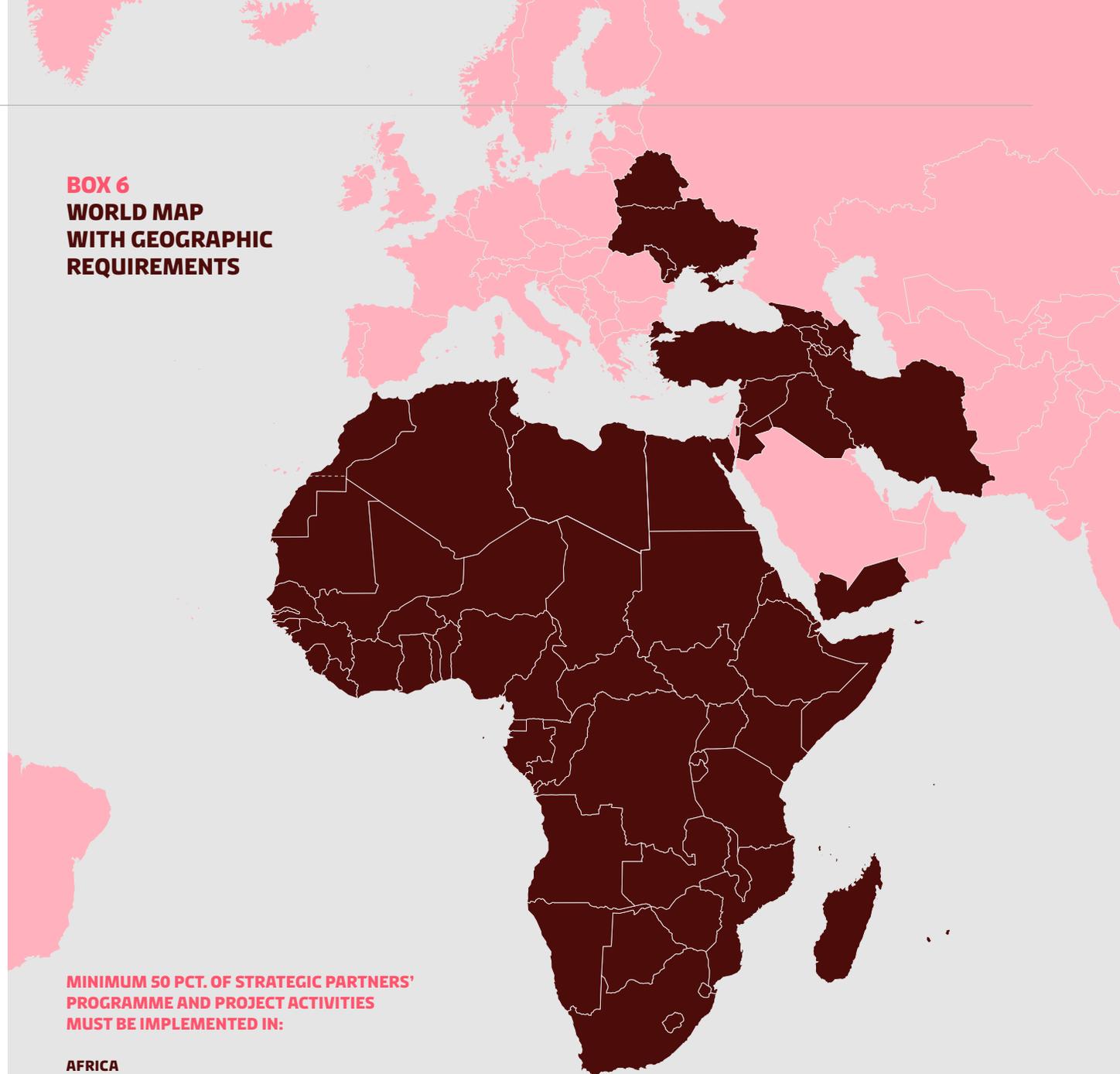
MINIMUM 50 PCT. OF STRATEGIC PARTNERS' PROGRAMME AND PROJECT ACTIVITIES MUST BE IMPLEMENTED IN:

AFRICA

UKRAINE AND EUROPEAN EASTERN NEIGBOURHOOD
Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, and Moldova

MIDDLE EAST
Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Türkiye, and Yemen

5
FLEXIBLE FUNDING

This section describes the flexible funding aspect of the Strategic Partnerships related to having one commitment, having flexible funds as part of that commitment, and having access to additional funding opportunities.

5.1
ONE COMMITMENT

The strategic partners will receive one commitment from the MFA that will allow for a flexible approach to programming across humanitarian and development purposes. It is expected that a total of 50 pct. across all Strategic Partnerships will be allocated towards humanitarian purposes. In the application format, the strategic partners intending to engage in humanitarian activities should therefore indicate how much of their individual applied budget will be targeting humanitarian or development purposes. If the received applications and related budget share for humanitarian purposes in total across applications fall below the expected level of 50 pct., the MFA will reserve the right to revert back to applicants with a request to adjust budget levels and possibly increase the humanitarian share.

Strategic partners will, within the partnership period, have the flexibility to adjust and adapt their programmes throughout the period due to changes in contexts and needs. It is, however, up to the strategic partners to make sure they meet their individual specific budget target for funds allocated to humanitarian purposes each year, and this must be clearly reflected in the budget and reporting. This is for the purpose of MFA commitments in the Finance Act as well as reporting on Danish humanitarian and development assistance.

5.2
UNALLOCATED FLEXIBLE FUNDS

The Strategic Partnerships will include unallocated flexible funds to enable the strategic partners to react rapidly and flexibly to an immediate crisis, and beyond crisis situations to respond to new or changing needs, or seize opportunities for and follow new and innovative partnerships and/or ways of working. The budget for unallocated flexible funds may amount to up to 30 pct. of the main grant and can be programmed throughout each year.

5.3
ACCESS TO ADDITIONAL FUNDING

The strategic partners will have access to receiving or applying for potential additional funding as part of their Strategic Partnership with the MFA. The additional funding must be reflected subsequently in budgets and in reporting. The additional funds will follow their own specific thematic and geographic requirements.

Top-up funds to respond to new and changing needs
The MFA can allocate top-up funds to relevant strategic partners in order to ensure a swift and flexible response to new and changing needs. This modality can be used to respond to a broad range of crises (humanitarian crises,

democracy- and human rights crises as well as climate- and nature crises) or changing needs, where strategic partners are well placed to act. The allocation of top-up funds may be based on partners' level of presence and/or thematic expertise, according to the latest updated SPA ToCs, SPA budget allocations, as well as other MFA-funded activities. The MFA's existing knowledge of the partners presence, capacity, and ability to deliver the proposed results in the given geographic context/thematic focus area may also be considered in the allocation decision process.

Thematic call for proposals
The MFA may launch thematic calls for proposals in line with specific development priorities. The strategic partners may have direct access to apply under the call for proposals. The calls may be open to other actors as well depending on theme and context. The allocation of funding will be based on the assessment and scoring of the proposals received.

5.4
COMPLEMENTARITY WITH OTHER ENGAGEMENTS AND FUNDING

Organisations are required to ensure relevant distinction, complementarity, and synergies between the Strategic Partnership and other engagements in its portfolio, including programmes financed by other MFA funding (non-SPA).

6
BUDGET FRAMES FOR THE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS 2027-2031

In order to minimise the gap between the amount applied for and the final grant size, the following principles have been applied to establish budget frames within which applicants can apply for a Strategic Partnership:

• Applicants will as minimum be able to apply for the same amount as their current SPA 2022-2026 grant size and no applicant will be able to apply for approximately more than 100 pct. above current SPA-level. In case of new applicants, the minimum amount to apply for is DKK 15 million. Furthermore, a maximum ceiling of DKK 210 million has been established for budget frames.

• Two factors have further been applied in determining which budget frame applicants can apply within:
1. Applicants' overall budgetary volume of development and/or humanitarian action (from MFA or other sources as an average across 2022-2024) as a reflection of applicants' capacity to mobilise funds from other sources and their general capacity to absorb funds for development and humanitarian purposes.
2. Applicants' prequalification score as an indicator for applicants' strategic capacity, programmatic and operational capacity, partnership capacity, organisational and administrative capacity as well as financial management capacity.

Budget frames are solely indicative and by no means binding. The final grant allocation may de- or increase from the indicative budget frame and will be determined e.g. by the approved overall allocation for SPA 2027-2031 on the 2027 Finance Act, the final number of successful SPA 2027-2031 applicants, the score of the applicants' full proposals, the applicants' prequalification scores, the applicants' overall budgetary volume of development and/or humanitarian action (from MFA or other sources as an average across 2022-2024) as well as any needs to adjust portfolios across coming strategic partners, so that there is a reasonable spread across the strategic priorities of the strategy for development cooperation.

Upon invitation to submit a full proposal, each prequalified applicant will be informed directly of which budget frame they are invited to apply within. Budget frames are defined as follows:

• DKK 140-210 million
• DKK 100-140 million
• DKK 70-100 million
• DKK 45-70 million
• DKK 25-45 million
• DKK 15-25 million