

Final Country Case Study: Niger

Evaluation of Management of Danish Development Cooperation – 20 Years after Decentralisation

Date of submission: 26 June 2025

PEM

PEM A/S

Ny Carlsberg Vej 80
DK-1799 Copenhagen V
Denmark
Phone: +45 3295 2626
pem@pem.dk
www.pem.dk

iod
parc

Omega Court, 362
Cemetery Rd, Sharrow,
Sheffield S11 8FT,
United Kingdom

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	3
2	Key Findings across the Evaluation Questions	4
2.1	Main developments (EQ1)	4
2.2	Relevance and effectiveness (EQ2/EQ3)	4
2.3	Lessons learned (EQ4)	7
	Annex 1: Workplan	9
	Annex 2: References.....	10
	Annex 3: Additional Graphs/Portfolio Analysis	11

Abbreviations and Acronyms

CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DDD	Doing Development Differently
DE	Danish Embassy
DKK	Danish Krone (currency)
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
GIZ	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
IOM	International Organization for Immigration
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PECEA	Economic Growth in agriculture project
SEC	Suivi, Evaluation et communication
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WFP	World Food Programme

1 Introduction

The field phase of the case study in Niger took place from 13 to 17 May 2024. It entailed key informant interviews with Danish Embassy (DE) staff, lead partners LuxDev and Swiss Cooperation from the two previous delegated partnerships, former programme advisor posted to the agriculture programme in Niamey and the previous MEL unit (COWI contract). The two selected projects which the case study focused on were:

- 1) The Water and Sanitation sector programme, designed to support the implementation of the Government of Niger's strategic sector programme for water, hygiene, and sanitation (PASEAH 3) with focus on rural and disadvantaged areas.
- 2) The Economic growth in agriculture programme promotes improved private sector led sustainable economic growth and job creation, based on agricultural value chains (PECEA).

The Niger case study was selected as it presents an opportunity to assess an example of a Danish delegated cooperation in a fragile context since the Danish mission in Niamey closed in 2014 and the DE in Ouagadougou took over the management responsibility of the Niger country project portfolio. The focus has thus mainly been on how this shift has influenced management of Danish ODA to Niger and on how the portfolio has been managed from Ouagadougou in recent years.

It is noteworthy that Danish cooperation with Niger dates back to the 1970s, through a partnership with a strong emphasis on the bilateral development cooperation programme but also on cooperation through the EU, regional programmes, multilaterals, and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). Through its policy dialogue and approaches, Denmark played a leading role in the water sector. Understanding the delegated cooperation in this historical context is crucial. It has been an enduring partnership between Denmark and Niger, which has slowly lost its reputation since the closure of Denmark's representative office in Niamey, transitioning over a period with delegated cooperation and now with multilateral grants managed through UNICEF, the World Food Programme (WFP), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Furthermore, the 2023 coup d'état has dramatically altered the landscape of Danish development cooperation with Niger. As a result, the planned new bilateral development programme for 2023–2026 is currently on hold. Presently, support is thus primarily humanitarian in nature and will be channelled through UNICEF, WFP, and IOM amounting to DKK 305 million over a two-year period.

As outlined above, the Niger case study takes a closer look at two projects: The Water and sanitation project (PASEHA3) and the Economic growth in agriculture project (PECEA). These projects have been chosen since they both were implemented through a delegated partnership with LuxDev and Swiss Cooperation as lead partner and as it was possible to speak with the lead partners of the delegated cooperations (LuxDev and Swiss Cooperation). Likewise, the projects cover the cross-cutting themes for the evaluation on climate change and human rights but also have a significant historic trajectory and size of the Danish engagement in Niger.

Due to security constraints, the country visit was carried out virtually by a team based in Denmark and Niger. As part of the preparation, a number of interviews were conducted with staff from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (MFA) in Copenhagen. The difficult context and the whole security situation in the region also challenged the process. The virtual nature of the case study combined with sometimes unstable internet connections and connection issues posed some challenges which were partially mitigated by the use of alternative communication channels such as WhatsApp group calls. Staff at the DE in Ouagadougou provided invaluable input through interviews and assisted the team with facilitating contact to development partners, formerly employed technical assistance, and other key stakeholders.

2 Key Findings across the Evaluation Questions

2.1 Main developments (EQ1)

From a leading development partner in the water sector since the 1970s through a period of delegated cooperation from 2014 to 2023 and with multilateral grants to UNICEF, WFP, and IOM today in 2024.

Niger has been a privileged Danish partnership country since 2011, and the Danish development cooperation with Niger dates back to 1974. From 2013 to 2023, Denmark has disbursed around DKK 1.2 billion in ODA to Niger. The support increased from around DKK 100 million annually from 2013 to 2018 to around DKK 200 million in 2021. This reflects the Danish development cooperation's increased focus on Niger and the Sahel. The Danish bilateral development cooperation with Niger is centred around the following areas of intervention:

- i. Strengthen stability and prevent conflicts, displacement, and irregular migration.
- ii. Adapt to climate change and strengthen resilience.
- iii. Promote good governance, human rights, and gender equality.

In recent years, Denmark's development cooperation with Niger has focused on fragility, migration, and climate change and how to address underlying root causes to these issues where poverty is a key issue. According to the UN Human Development Index, Niger is one of the world's poorest countries, ranking 189 of 191, with approximately 41.4% of the population living below the national poverty line. Niger has been in a democratic transition since 2011, but a coup in 2023 has drastically changed the democratic perspectives for the country, and Niger has just recently resigned from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). In this context a new phase of the Danish bilateral development cooperation is currently on hold. Presently, support is primarily humanitarian and will be channelled through multilateral partners – UNICEF, WFP, and IOM – amounting to DKK 305 million for the period from 2023 to 2026.

2.2 Relevance and effectiveness (EQ2/EQ3)

The DE expressed satisfaction with the delegated cooperation arrangements and the quality of reporting provided by the lead partner.

Overall, the DE expressed satisfaction with the delegated cooperation arrangements and the quality of reporting provided by the lead partners. This indicates that the DE found the delegated cooperation model effective in achieving its objectives and appreciated the transparency and accountability demonstrated by the lead partners in their reporting practices and that they were productive and beneficial. Furthermore, the DE received timely and comprehensive information on project progress and results, mainly through the external consultant hired to assist with monitoring, evaluation, and communication. This arrangement enabled the DE to effectively monitor the implementation of projects, identify any challenges or issues that arose, and make informed decisions to address them.

Some challenges related to delegated cooperation were raised by the interviewees.

Establishing delegated partnerships presented certain challenges and trade-offs. The Danish MFA faced difficulties in defining its role, leading to occasional conflicts with various partners, with Switzerland being a notable exception. Transitioning from the traditional approach to managing country programmes

has been particularly challenging, especially in collaboration with UNDP. Additionally, there have been occasional discrepancies between LuxDev and the DE.

Since 1995, the High Authority for the Consolidation of Peace has played a key role in the implementation of different peace processes in Niger. The Danish involvement has not been as robust as expected. Consequently, over time, the visibility of Denmark's presence has diminished. While some projects have been delegated, others continue to be managed directly from the DE in Ouagadougou. One respondent mentioned an example, where Denmark did not participate in a high-level meeting which again was believed to have had an adverse effect on Denmark's reputation and visibility. The respondent stressed that high-level meetings between the DE and the Niger government are necessary to maintain dialogue and discuss priorities.

Since 2014, Denmark has not had permanent staff on the ground in Niger to participate in formal or informal consultation frameworks or to support joint formulations. As a result, when formal consultation mechanisms existed between TFPs, as in the agriculture and water and sanitation sectors, Denmark did not systematically take part in them (November 2019 evaluation). Some of the respondents mentioned that, even without a permanent Danish mission, being present is key to efficient monitoring of progress and influence. The DE in Ouagadougou mentioned that its staff participated in all important meetings in the water sector by traveling to Niamey. Further, there was a good political dialogue between PFI's and the government until the military coup in 2023.

It was believed that working with the World Bank has presented challenges due to differing procedures, and a perceived reluctance by the World Bank to provide visibility to other donors. According to the DE in Ouagadougou, Denmark contributed DKK 20 million to Niger's private sector in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The embassy noted that companies thought the support came from the World Bank and not from Denmark. Joint missions have been discussed and planned but never implemented.

Birds of a feather flock together

Several respondents suggested that the principle of 'birds of a feather flock together' played a crucial role in finding lead partners – partners that align with Denmark and share similar values, goals, cultures, or operational styles. This could also be similar cultures, procedures, shared interests, or comparable challenges.

During the closure of the Danish mission, it was analysed how to transfer responsibilities for the project portfolio to other trusted partners. Dialogue was initiated with GIZ because they follow a similar approach to Denmark, but a 15% management fee apparently discouraged the possibility. In collaboration with Switzerland, the implementation closely adhered to the terms of the agreement even though some of the respondents remarked that delegated cooperation sometimes reduces the visibility of Denmark's contributions.

Delegated cooperation has made Danish cooperation possible but gradually invisible.

As Denmark's decision to use delegated cooperation involves delegating the main aspects of development cooperation to other entities – in this case LuxDev, Swiss Cooperation, UNDP, and the World Bank – respondents suggest that the Danish cooperation efforts have become less visible or overshadowed by the activities of these other lead actors. This reflects the fact that Denmark's long-standing partnership with Niger has gradually diminished in prominence following the closure of the Danish representative office in Niamey.

Several reasons to explain this issue were highlighted. For example, when Denmark channels its assistance through multilateral organisations or lead partners, a trade-off is that the direct involvement and recognition of Danish support may not be evident to the recipients or observers. Additionally, delegated cooperation arrangements may involve joint initiatives or partnerships where the contributions of individual donors, including Denmark, might not be highlighted prominently. Overall, this highlights the trade-offs and potential challenges or implications of engaging in delegated cooperation, where the visibility and recognition of Denmark's specific contributions may be reduced compared to direct implementation. This view was shared by most of the respondents although it was articulated differently.

A perspective from one of the lead donors in a delegated partnership.

LuxDev found that the cooperation between LuxDev and Denmark had been exceptionally agile, characterised by simplicity and a strong foundation of trust, bolstering Denmark's reputation. This environment enabled LuxDev to invest confidently in the respective sector, which was practical for Denmark. Notably, Denmark was prepared to establish a water fund, closely aligning with the launch of the Common Financing Mechanism in Niger for water and sanitation initiatives.

Another area highlighted by LuxDev was the staff stability at the DE, which was pivotal and deeply valued. The DE's presence in meetings underscored their commitment to the partnership. Furthermore, Denmark's flexible approach to cooperation management and programme execution was highly appreciated. This included the contract for monitoring, evaluation, and communication.

It was stressed that Denmark refrained from requesting supplementary information regarding narrative and financial reports, reflecting trust in the partnership. The Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) system was praised, and LuxDev considers Denmark to have a team of highly skilled professionals who consistently demonstrated preparedness.

However, the absence of a final evaluation by Denmark raised some questions. Particularly regarding LuxDev's understanding of why this evaluation was not conducted for the water programme. Additionally, the absence of a formulated joint programme prompts reflection on the potential for enhanced collaboration, perhaps through the establishment of a joint programming or common fund.

Presently, LuxDev's cooperation has been suspended, underlining the critical importance of communication. Denmark's absence has impacted the potential for policy dialogue, emphasizing the necessity for engagement and communication.

The DE: If you want to do quality monitoring, you need staff resources and time.

While delegated cooperation offers the advantage of shared responsibilities and streamlined processes, it is important to recognise that successful implementation still requires careful attention and dedicated staff resources at the DE, in this case, in Ouagadougou. This includes allocating sufficient staff and expertise to oversee and manage programmes effectively. By acknowledging that 'it takes time, it is not automatic', 'it' being monitoring of Danish projects, the respondents emphasized the need for deliberate, proactive engagement to ensure the success of delegated cooperation. In other terms, this underscores the commitment to effective partnership management and the importance of investing resources in monitoring and coordination efforts. It also reflects an understanding of the complexities at several levels of a delegated partnership and the dynamics between the lead partner and the silent donor. The DE added that initially in 2015, the idea was to reduce travel to Niger (at least for PECEA), given that there was a trusted delegated partner, for reasons of limited human and financial resources. There is a clear trade-off between reduced staff resources and quality monitoring.

Monitoring of results and progress by third-party MEL consultancy.

The MEL team, or Suivi, Evaluation et communication (SEC), served as an effective mechanism for providing valuable information directly from the field through a compilation and synthesis of information from the lead donor. This team played a crucial role in collecting, analysing, and disseminating data and insights that contributed to informed decision-making and improvement of the project. In this context, the responsibility for managing the MEL activities rested with the company COWI. As the company responsible, COWI was tasked with overseeing the implementation of monitoring and evaluation processes, ensuring the quality and accuracy of data collection, and facilitating learning initiatives within the project or programme. According to the respondents, having a dedicated team and a responsible organisation like COWI ensured that the MEL framework was effectively implemented, leading to enhanced project outcomes, accountability, and continuous improvement. The only issue mentioned was a request from the lead donors for more feedback from the MEL team.

The implementation and management of actions are based on a logical framework and a monitoring and evaluation system. However, baselines have not always been available to allow better assessing of impact

and, according to the 2019 evaluation, “some indicators are poorly documented (in the case of the PECEA) or of low quality (whatever the sector)” and insufficiently disaggregated by gender.

On pp 26–27 of the Denmark–Niger Strategic Framework 2023–2027 it is outlined how the DE in Ouagadougou will monitor and evaluate progress and results of the Danish Cooperation with Niger: *“Reviews and evaluation found that several of the delegated partnerships are efficient and effective but also that some come with relatively high transactions costs for the Danish embassy in Ouagadougou. The modality of delegated partnerships makes sense in a context with no permanent Danish presence in Niger, but it also creates more distance to national stakeholders and limits the visibility of Denmark”*. Furthermore, it deprived the DE of the opportunity to use close diplomacy and direct contacts to strengthen political dialogue, which was relevant before the coup d’état. However, the DE adds that there have been bilateral consultations between the government of Denmark represented by the embassy and the government of Niger represented by the Ministry of foreign affairs. This has helped to resolve certain situations. An example is the PECEA project that initially had a single steering committee. This arrangement was a source of delay in the implementation of the delegated partnership component with Switzerland. Bilateral consultations led to a decision to set up a steering committee for each delegated partner. This also represents a clear trade-off between a wish for political dialogue and influence on the one hand and no presence and reduced staff resources on the other.

No specific procedures or guidelines were elaborated to support Denmark’s delegated cooperation, but Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) between lead and silent partner governed the agreements and cooperation.

There are no specific procedures or guidelines currently established to support the framework of delegated cooperation. Initially, the idea was to follow the guidelines of the delegated partner and thus, agreements between the lead and silent partners have been governed by MoUs. These MoUs outline the responsibilities, expectations, and operational frameworks agreed upon by both parties, ensuring that the cooperation is effectively managed, and the objectives are met. This could be a recommendation to prepare more specific guidelines or a how-to note.

Some respondents noted that, e.g., the fact that the results frameworks differed and were specific for Denmark was one obstacle for smooth and effective monitoring. In this context it is, however, important to mention that formulating a project with Swiss cooperation was planned, but the change in context resulted in it not being realised. This indicates that further alignment between the lead and the silent donor was envisioned also related to a shared results framework.

2.3 Lessons learned (EQ4)

Denmark did not get more development assistance on the ground through delegated partnerships.

A key finding is that, Denmark did not get more development assistance on the ground through delegated partnerships due to additional direct and indirect costs such as overheads of the implementing organisations (lead donor), additional costs of third-party monitoring and allocated staff from the DE in Ouagadougou¹ which must be considered when comparing the expenses of delegated cooperation to the expenses associated with maintaining a more permanent presence. If Denmark wants to have a country/bilateral programme, Denmark needs to have a representation office, even a small office, as recognition fades with the absence of an office and other (hidden) costs increases. This also represents a clear trade-off.

One alternative to a permanent Danish representation could be a consortium or a company that can oversee the project implementation and communicate and make the embassy aware of when ambassadors or deputies *must* participate in high-level meetings; otherwise, there is a real risk of losing influence, and

¹ Delegated cooperation requires a great deal of monitoring and presence in Niger. According to one DE informant, it takes almost 25% of his colleagues' working time.

policy dialogue can become rudimentary. Normally, the Niger Ministry of Foreign Affairs would share a Note Verbale for this purpose.

Find a lead partner for the delegated cooperation which resembles the Danish MFA.

It is important to find a lead partner for delegated cooperation which resembles the Danish MFA, especially in terms of size of grant, modality, and general way of working as one of the respondents noted: *“birds of a feather flock together”* It is key to have the same vision of the sector as the lead of the delegated partnership. Likeminded donors also tend to provide more flexibility.

Danish support channelled through institutions with weak logistical and organisational capacity challenged the attainment of sustainable results in the field.

The SEC evaluation confirms that the experience of channelling Danish support through institutions with weak logistical and organisational capacity, including international NGOs, does not always enable Danish development cooperation to achieve the desired results in the field. This conclusion is supported by the experience with UAT (OXFAM/IBIS) in the context of strengthening democratic governance and human rights.

Delegated partnerships through multilaterals are also not uncomplicated.

Establishing delegated cooperation with a multilateral partner is more complex to manage because of the greater differences in disbursement procedures and mechanisms and in the management of steering bodies, as in the case of the World Bank in the PECEA under the coordination of HC3N. Lengthy and cumbersome closing procedures were also an issue. It was also noted that the UNFPA, supported by Danish cooperation as part of its commitment to controlling population growth, revised the indicators without prior consultation with the embassy.

Try to adapt Danish project documents to a joint project that would benefit from being formulated together with the lead donor.

Focus on cofinanced programmes with joint formulation and shared management tools and mechanisms - compensate for the lack of close monitoring by representing the DE at country main reviews and donor programming sessions, and above all by attending meetings of the Government–Donor Concertation Framework to take part in policy dialogue and in Doing Development Differently (DDD).

Additional selected lessons learned from delegated partnerships in Niger

On this basis, several lessons learned from the current setup are relevant to highlight:

- 1) If Denmark wants to do quality monitoring of the delegated cooperation, it is vital to allocate sufficient time for staff to follow up on the ground. Being a silent partner also requires resources.
- 2) Be explicit about tasks and responsibilities in an MoU.
- 3) It is of crucial importance to have an already established programme. For example, delegated cooperation within the water sector is built upon a robust foundation, with significant contributions from Denmark. This contextualises the effective functioning of the water program as crucial.
- 4) Personal contact is important to achieve an effective implementation of a delegated partnership.
- 5) Share feedback and information from the Monitoring, evaluation, and communication team with lead partners as it is imperative to fully utilise and harness the third party's analyses for enhanced effectiveness and efficiency. It could even be considered to establish a joint MEL contract if and when relevant.
- 6) With a longer perspective, it would have been relevant to collaboratively formulate a new programme under delegated cooperation, especially when supporting similar activities with daily programme implementation resembling each other.

Finally, it is important to note the observations and recommendation from the 2019 evaluation of the Danish development cooperation with Niger, while keeping in mind that the coup d'état in 2023 has radically changed the perspective for the Danish development cooperation with Niger.

Annex 1: Workplan

Fonction	Date	Heure	Lieu
ARD – chargé de programme eau et Assainissement (PASEHA3) Ouaga	15 mai	10H CET 9H de Niamey	Teams
ARD – chargée de programme agriculture, Ouaga	16 mai	10H CET 9H de Niamey	Teams ou WhatsApp
Ouaga	15 mai	11H CET	Teams
Assistant technique national pour le programme bilatéral 2017–2022 au Niger	16 mai	16H CET	
Chargé de Programme Développement Rural à la Coopération suisse au Niger	16 mai	10H CET	
COWI, responsable for the SEC (Suivi, Evaluation, Communication) team for the bilateral program 2017–2022 in Niger	16 mai	9H CET	
Représentante LuxDev Niger	15 mai	16h CET	
Première secrétaire, cheffe de coopération, GRAND-DUCHÉ DE LUXEMBOURG	15 mai	16H CET	

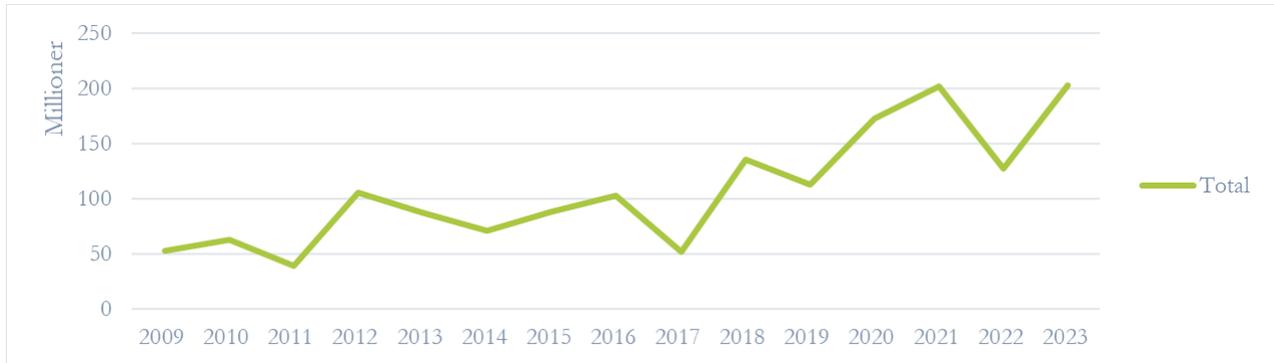
Annex 2: References

- Niger–Denmark Country policy paper 2016–2020
- Suivi, Evaluation et Communication de la Coopération Bilatérale Danemark–Niger, RAPPORT FINANCIER ET NARRATIF FINAL, Juin 2023
- Stocktaking report
- Country Programme for Niger (2017–2022)
- Bilateral/country development programmes (especially 2017–2022 and 2023–2027 but also previous programmes)
- Desk appraisal, Niger – Programme d'Appui à la Stabilité et à la Démocratie, PASD 2014–2017
- Appraisals and midterm reviews during the period
- EVALUATION CONJOINTE DE LA COOPERATION DE LA COMMISSION EUROPEENNE, DE LA BELGIQUE, DU DANEMARK, DE LA FRANCE ET DU LUXEMBOURG AVEC LE NIGER 2000–2008
- DOCUMENT DE LA STRATEGIE NATIONALE DE L'HYDRAULIQUE PASTORALE, 2014
- Programme d'Appui au Secteur Eau, Hygiène et Assainissement, Phase 2, 2012–2016 (PASEHA 2)
- PROGRAMME SECTORIEL EAU HYGIENE ET ASSAINISSEMENT PROSEHA 2016–2030
- Evaluation de la coopération au développement du Danemark avec le Niger, novembre 2019
- UM_Niger_StrategiskRamme_2023–2027
- Inception report on decentralisation, Evaluation of Danish Aid Management 20 years after Decentralisation, February 2024

Annex 3: Additional Graphs/Portfolio Analysis

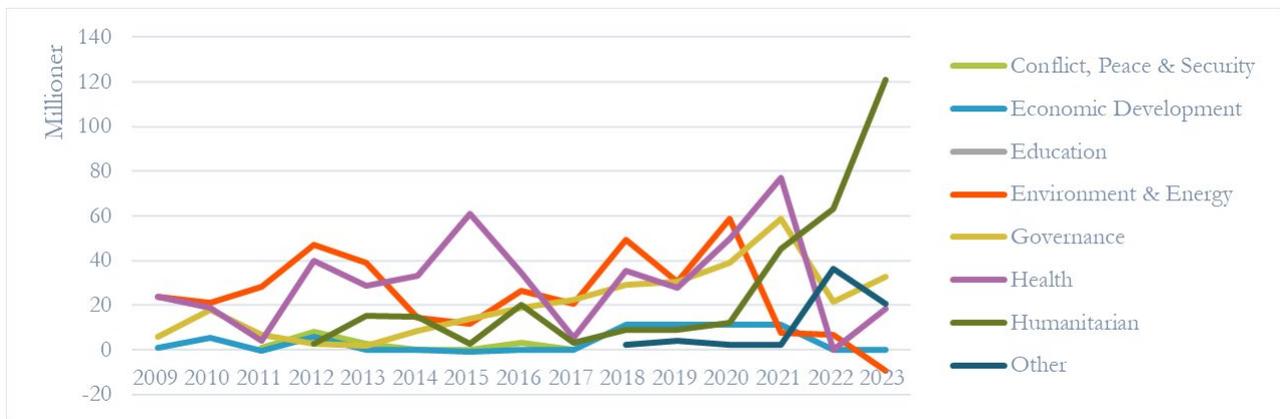
The following graphs give an overview of the portfolio budget disbursements 2009–2023.

Figure 1: Bilateral (including earmarked multilateral) ODA to Niger 2009–2023



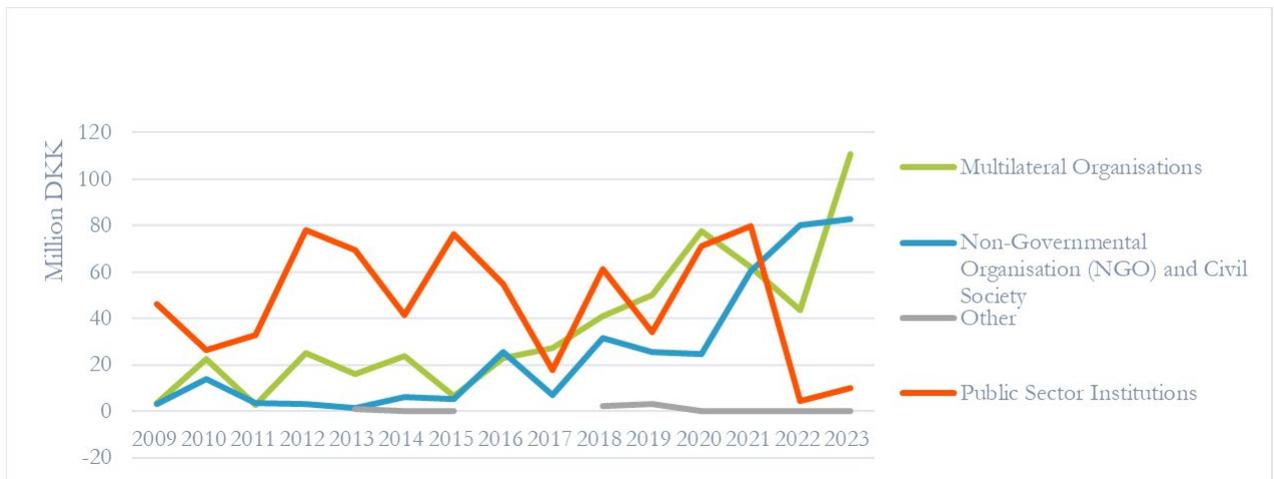
Source: Danish MFA, internal note

Figure 2: Bilateral (including earmarked multilateral) ODA to Niger over main sectors 2009–2023



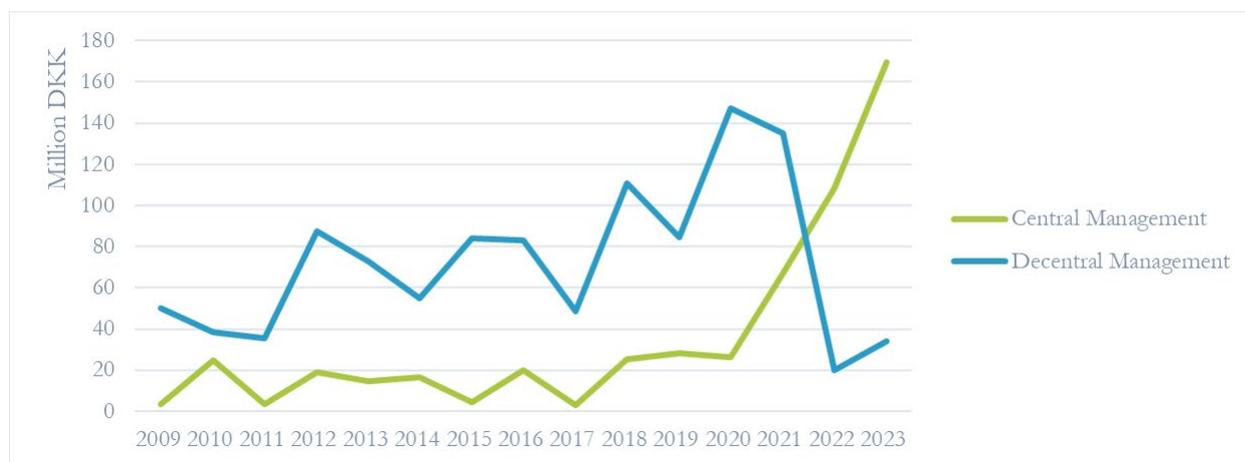
Source: Danish MFA, internal note

Figure 3: Bilateral (including earmarked multilateral) ODA to Niger by channel of delivery 2009–2023



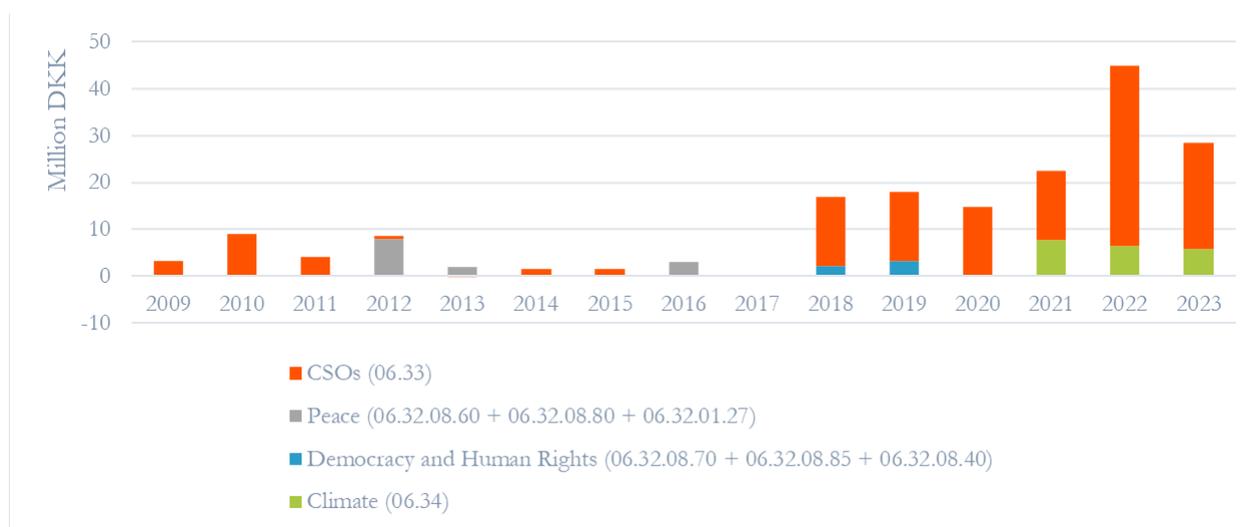
Source: Danish MFA, internal note

Figure 4: Bilateral (including earmarked multilateral) ODA to Niger managed centrally vs. decentrally 2009–2023



Source: Danish MFA, internal note

Figure 5: Selected thematic areas based on the Finance Act Classifications (disbursements) 2009–2023



Source: Danish MFA, internal note