

Annex B – Methodology

It is worth noting that Danish development cooperation is a complex system and one in which the policy **‘goalposts’ moved** quite considerably during the period. In simple terms, attention shifted from development cooperation effectiveness according to the Paris principles around 2005, to a focus on adaptive management and Doing Development Differently in the last few years, and priority given to global challenges such as climate change, migration and stability. Part of the analysis is therefore to specify what are the development cooperation management principles at different time periods.

The evaluation was informed by the **theory of change**¹ (see Figure 1). It articulates the interactions and cause and effect linkages across the system, lays out the starting assumptions, identifies external factors likely to impact the system, and lists the assumed connections between what the MFA supports and the intended outcomes. In summary, the MFA’s support to development cooperation is situated within a complex global system, where the MFA develops policies and tools for effective development cooperation, implements management arrangements at different levels, and delivers support in order to achieve the intended outcomes.

By considering the theory of change and system interactions, the most critical aspects of this system were focused on in the evaluation process. En route to assessing how appropriate and relevant the Danish approach to development cooperation management is, the interactions in the system between different elements were kept in mind, and certain path dependencies and assumptions were highlighted. A few examples are as follows:

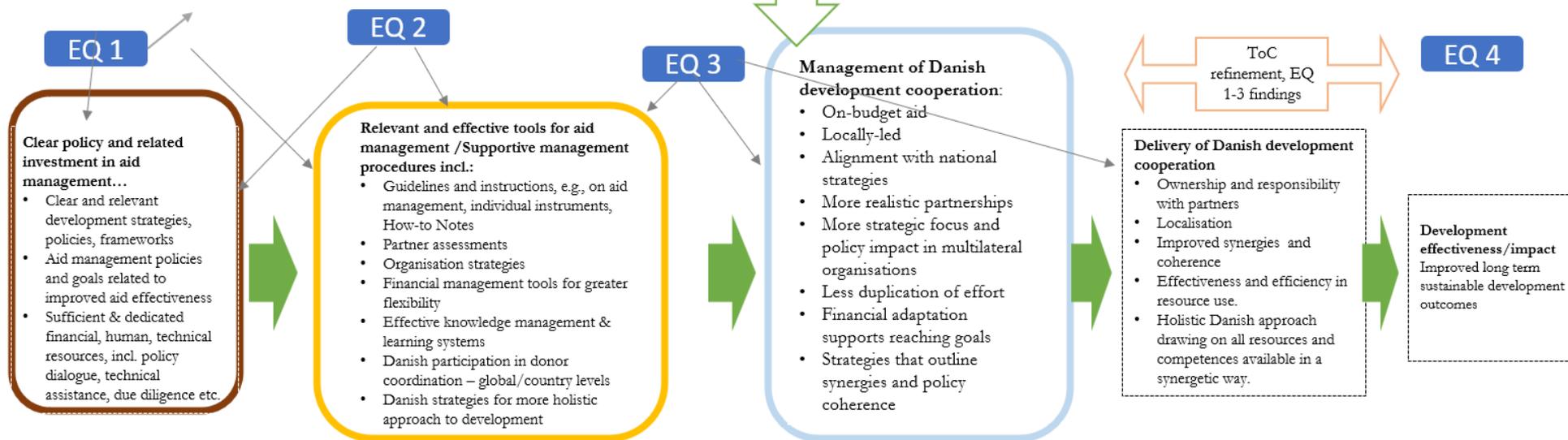
- A decentralised approach to development cooperation management relies on decision-making authority and resources moving to embassy level. Whether this happened in practice, during a period when overall resources for the MFA were declining until recently, was investigated.
- Use of different instruments and multilateral channels assumes that each instrument can be used effectively, but some are more direct than others. This is in turn affected by the quality of information sharing to allow embassies and missions to track how development cooperation is used.
- An adaptive approach to development cooperation management as per Doing Development Differently requires effective and fast-loop arrangements for lesson learning, with staff who are empowered and have the necessary skills to take decisions to adapt to lessons. One challenge identified was high transaction costs involved in gathering evidence for learning.
- Recent developments involve a more diverse range of contexts and a wider range of policy goals as compared with the situation when the focus was mainly driven by poverty reduction. Poverty reduction remains important but is now balanced alongside a focus on other major strategic goals that are becoming increasingly explicit, such as climate change, security, and migration. This raises the question of whether the number of instruments is sufficient to achieve the targets — or if one or more policy goal(s) has to be deprioritised in practice.

Theory of change

¹ The initial theory of change was developed by the evaluation team and included in the proposal for the evaluation. The (initial) theory of change has been further elaborated during the inception phase and was used as an analytical framework for the evaluation together with the evaluation matrix.

Figure 1: Theory of Change

External factors will be assessed as part of EQ1. In addition to providing context for evaluation, findings will be integrated within ToC as appropriate (e.g. enabling/constraining factors).
International influences: (i) The changing international context for aid: e.g., increased importance of other incomes sources for LICs and MICs, new, increasingly influential development actors, less support for traditional development aid & increasing use in national interest (ii) evolving international discourse on aid effectiveness, (iii) changes in country contexts, e.g., increased fragility, changes in political economies, democratic backsliding (global and regional trends), (iv) multilateralism ...
Domestic influences: Danish political context, e.g., evolving government priorities/stance on development aid, Economic situation, e.g., affected by pandemic, global economic downturns, Danish public support for aid.....



- Overall assumptions**
- 1) Learning from operational activities and what works and what does not work – search for new ways of working
 - 2) Trades off identified and managed (e.g., in view of changes in Danish national priorities for development cooperation, e.g., new objectives & focus countries)
 - 3) Sufficient flexibility and resource to adapt to changing contexts yet retain focus on core development outcomes (despite some trade-offs and competing pressures)
 - 3) Political and domestic support for development cooperation sufficient
 - 4) Sufficient behavioural and organisational incentives and cognitive incentives (at individual staff level) to enact policy changes etc
 - 5) Donors and partners provide support that is complementary to and coordinated with Danish aid (to contribute to overall impact).

- Key notes on tracing pathways:**
- Given the importance of the evolving contexts, the ToC is not designed to be linear. Also, different actors may be more important and different mechanisms/enablers/constraining factors may be more influential at different points within evaluation timeframe.
 - Pathways will be traced through different management levels (as reflected in ToC) – these may include: Government – MFA – MFA HQ (and levels within this, e.g., policy to programming HQ to embassies, embassies to partners (all types). Note pathways will work through different levels depending on modality/instrument.

Sampling

A purposive rather than a representative sampling approach was used. This included full coverage of the relevant policy and framework documents, including different iterations of the development cooperation management guidelines. For the case countries/studies, a review was undertaken of 1) the overall programming approach vis-a-vis the development cooperation management principles, and 2) selected projects/programmes, using an agreed template to ensure consistency for aggregation.

During the inception phase, the evaluation initiated a dialogue with the respective case country embassies and the UN mission in New York to identify specific case projects in each of the countries and to agree on the timing of the country visit. The identification of case projects considered several selection criteria, including:

- The case projects in each country should collectively cover climate change and governance/human rights/poverty alleviation
- Each project should be active, represent a significant volume, and preferably a longer-term development cooperation/partnership with good learning potential
- The relevant DE focal points should be available during the in-country visits
- Regarding the DAPP, Morocco was selected as a case country due to the presence of the DE and its engagement with the present programme phase.

Quality assurance

Five levels of quality assurance were used. First, the team's work was reviewed by the Team Leader to ensure consistency, data integrity, and methodological quality, using the agreed methodology from the inception report. Second, key deliverables were reviewed by a designated PEM partner who is an experienced senior evaluator. Third, key deliverables were reviewed by an external quality assurer. This experienced senior evaluator was separately appointed by PEM and provided advice to the evaluation team during the evaluation process, if required. Furthermore, in October 2024, LEARNING contracted an external evaluation manager with long-term experience in the management of development cooperation. Lastly, the evaluation reference group commented on deliverables in draft.

Ethical considerations

No major issues were encountered during the evaluation. Interviews were mainly, or solely, conducted with development professionals and not with beneficiaries or households. Informed consent was obtained in setting up and conducting interviews. The survey replies were handled confidentially. Data was securely held, and confidentiality protected using tested and reliable PEM standard procedures.

Portfolio analysis

Several steps were taken while conducting the portfolio analysis. Firstly, the data on all activity of the Danish MFA in the period of 2009–2023 was collected from different data sources. Secondly, the data was reorganised as needed for the analysis. Finally, the data was analysed against various criteria, including thematic areas, instruments, geographical distribution, etc., to show trends in the Danish Official Development Assistance over the past 15 years.

Data from the Danish MFA (Financial Management Department)

The Danish Development Assistance portfolio as collected and presented by the Danish MFA was the main data source for the portfolio analysis. It shows the most relevant categories (such as the management unit, the sectors, the channel of delivery, and the yearly disbursements) consolidated and organised by project. Some reorganisation was done where it was appropriate, e.g. for the sectors which were grouped under larger sectors due to the high number of categories. The data comes with some limitations to consider:

- It was not possible to track earmarked multilateral disbursements or ODA being channelled through regional programmes (e.g., long-term engagement in the Mekong, regional programmes on human rights and the environment in Central America, and a range of regional programmes in Africa). Therefore, it is not possible to establish the full amount of Danish ODA that reaches a country.

- Core funding to multilateral organisations was not included in the financial datasets received from the Financial Department in the Danish MFA. Graphs that show core funding are based on the OECD website.
- The data classifications under the Finance Act were changed in 2017. This has potentially shifted some classifications under different accounts which are difficult to trace now. This is especially relevant for classifications such as private sector and migration.

Data from the OECD.stat² website, the OECD Data Explorer³ and OECD iLibrary⁴

The OECD websites were used for parts of the portfolio analysis, mainly regarding graphs on the distribution of core, earmarked, and bilateral funding, the various channels of Danish ODA, and to compare Denmark to other donors. The sources for all tables and figures are provided in the report and annexes.

Data provided by the Human Resources Department of the Danish MFA

Data on the number of staff was provided by the Human Resources Department of the Danish MFA. This was relevant to review in relation to decentralisation and recentralisation trends. The data has been complemented by interviews with MFA staff in Copenhagen with a long-standing institutional background, who were therefore able to describe trends in staffing, as well as publicly available data through various sources.

Survey

The survey provides a systematic and accessible way to collect responses from a broader spectrum of people working with Danish development cooperation. Staff working at the MFA in Copenhagen as well as staff posted abroad or local staff in the countries where Denmark is represented can be easily reached, which enables the collection of a diverse sample of views of the respondents. Thus, the survey can collect a high number of responses in a comparatively short time. The survey collected useful information for triangulation and validation of the information gathered through the semi-structured interviews and to generally enrich the pool of data. The survey was conducted online using SurveyMonkey as a design and collection tool. It took approximately 15 minutes to complete. It was piloted with four selected respondents and was adapted based on their experiences and comments.

² <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=MULTISYSTEM>

³ <https://data-explorer.oecd.org/?lc=en>

⁴ https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/9b77239a-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/5e331623-en&_csp_=b14d4f60505d057b456dd1730d8fca3&itemIGO=oe.cd&itemContentType=chapter