INTRAC
International NGO Training and Research Centre

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DANIDA FUND FOR INNOVATION IN CIVIL SOCIETY PARTNERSHIPS

A Learning Synthesis

Udenrigsministeriet

DANIDA | DANMARKS UDVIKLINGSSAMARBEJDE

1. THE CHANGING FACE OF CIVIL SOCIETY PARTNERSHIPS

Received Innovation Grant | Received Innovation Grant and is in top 35 ranking of the Failed States Index

19 countries where Innovation Projects are located

10 of which are in top 35 rankings of the Failed States Index

Evaluation of Danish Support to Civil Society

In light of the changing face of Southern Civil society and official aid patterns, the Evaluation of Danish Support to Civil Society (January 2013) concluded that Danish CSOs should re-appraise their partnerships with Southern CSOs in association with a new Danida Civil Society Policy. More specifically, the Evaluation recommended that Danida establish an Innovation in Partnership Fund to support proposals from Danish CSOs that *"enable their partners to more pro-actively and transparently influence the partnership"*.

A 'real-time' approach in the follow up phase

It has been decided to adopt a 'real-time' approach to the second or follow up phase of the Evaluation of Danish Support to Civil Society. A 'real-time approach' will facilitate, document and share learning through short-term evaluation inputs on innovation and change in taking forward the new Civil Society Policy. This will allow learning to take place in 'real time' and contribute to more effective Danish support to civil society.

> *"The evolving nature of Southern civil society and the increasing pressure to demonstrate results require Danish CSOs to experiment with new, more flexible partnership approaches…. Danida should… provide incentives to Danish NGOs to look for new ways of collaborating with Southern CSOs …. to anticipate a future role for themselves in a changing context."*
>
> **Evaluation of Danish Support to Civil Society April 2013, pp. 85-6**

A call for innovation in partnerships

In response to the Evaluation's recommendation, in October 2013 Danida invited the 15 Danish CSOs with current framework agreements, or agreements starting in January 2014, to submit proposals for innovative civil society partnership projects. The Call for Proposals identified three dimensions of innovation – selection of partners; partnership dynamics; and choice of methods. Priority was to be given to proposals with strong implications for future partnerships.

This is a short synthesis of some of the key features of the proposals and some suggestions on how innovation might be strengthened during their implementation.
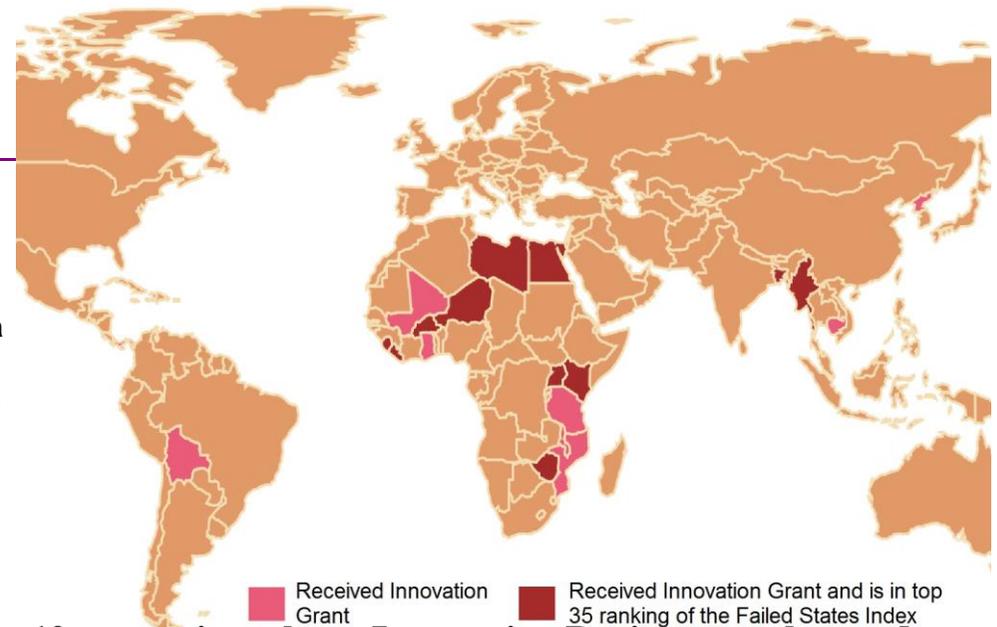
Wholly or partially funded | Unsuccessful

13 CSOs responded

12 proposals were wholly or partially funded.

2. MANAGING RISK

Workshop with partners during inception period to review contextual analysis (especially in those countries that are ranked in top 35 of failed states).

Review risk section in inception period to clarify assumptions, Develop simple theories of change for the programmes. Use the links in the results chain to monitor and record learning.

"We are willing to take the risks required to obtain results…..We will map out the risks and make clear how we intend to manage them"

The Right to a Better Life - June 2012, pp. 37

Navigating innovation, improvement and risk

Innovation is doing something different. Improvement is doing something better. Doing something new inevitably involves a higher degree of risk. How big the risk is depends on how the intervention is managed.

The first step is to understand how the context might influence the innovation proposed. Several proposals revealed a need to thoroughly analyse the local context; identify the drivers and obstacles to change; the actors involved; and the rationale for the project intervention -especially when the project will operate in a complex context or will seek to promote policy and practice change. This can provide the basis for a simple theory of change for the project. Some of the proposals had an explicit theory of change. More often it had to be inferred.

"In choosing partners, efforts must be made to….. conduct a political economy analysis to identify drivers of change and assess capacity constraints"

Policy for Danish Support to Civil Society - June 2014, pp. 19

Identifying risks

A good contextual analysis enables a full exploration of the risks to the project and the identification of mitigating measures. Two examples of where a further analysis of risk might be prudent are:

- Risks to social movements and informal citizen groups in advocacy activities in complex situations (DanChurchAid, AADK)
- Connectivity of target groups in relation to web-based applications (LO/FTF, AADK)

Some risks identified in the proposals will be fundamental to the success of the project and require prior or early consultation with partners and/or target groups – for example, the risk of partners not being open to experimenting with new partnership dynamics or target groups being unwilling to participate in project activities.

A theory of change : the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the formal labour market

The DPOD proposal has a theory of change with three hypotheses:

There is an untapped potential for mainstreaming employment of PWDs in the formal employment sector, both the public and the private sector.

This potential is not being realised due to a lack of awareness by employers of the range of PWD skills available and level of support required, and a lack of access to relevant PWD candidates.

Therefore, private sector employers with a strong CSR profile will be more likely to employ PWDs if disability organisations are better equipped to form partnerships with them to facilitate awareness and access to relevant PWD candidates.

3. MEASURING SUCCESS

"Innovation is a change that creates a new dimension of performance "

Peter F. Drucker

Assessing outputs and outcomes

Since these are short-term projects of between one and two years, their focus on results is more on outputs than outcomes. Most often these outputs refer to:

Activities implemented	e.g. mining-affected communities employ ICTs to access information and share community concerns through social media (Ibis)
External 'results'	e.g. strengthened accountability structures of school authorities (Save the Children);
Increased partner capacity	e.g. indigenous peoples' organisations have human resources and technical knowledge to monitor and defend their territories (Forests of the World);
Changes in partnership dynamics	e.g. implement new partner dynamics and learning for the future cooperation integrated into the partnership (DFPA)

In several cases, the intention is to adopt new methods, in particular the use of ICT, to achieve typical project outputs e.g. increased capacity, advocacy activities, corporate social responsibility, with new or marginalised target groups.

It is not always clear how projects will measure their success. DanChurchAid and AADK, for example, provide some measurable milestones. The challenge for most projects will be how to measure the success of new or different ways of working, particularly in relation to partnership relationships.

Workshop with partners to develop measurable indicators for outcomes/outputs. Develop methods for tracking partner/target group perceptions about changes in ways of working or partnership dynamics.

RTE develop an evaluation method and matrix to measure the performance of the proposals as a portfolio in relation to key dimensions of innovation (see Diagram below). This could include survey of partner and target group perspectives on key aspects of innovation, including partnership dynamics, in years 1 and 2 of the projects drawing upon partner and target group perspectives.

"Denmark will …...require documentation on innovative, equal and mutually beneficial partnerships."

**Policy for Danish Support to Civil Society - June 2014, pp. 36**

4. INNOVATION THROUGH CHOICE OF METHODS

RTE to conduct short literature review of comparable use of ICTs in development initiatives to inform the implementation and reporting on the project.

Investigate how Northern ICT partners might transfer relevant skills with local counterpart organisations.

Establish virtual 'communities of practice' e.g. through NGO Forum, to share learning in use of ICTs (see 8. Innovation in Learning).
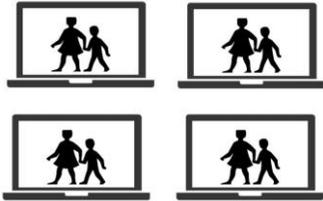
Four ICT projects principally target the use of ICTs with youth and/or children *(SustainableEnergy, LO/FTF, Action Aid, Save the Children).*

Three are environmentally focused e.g.

monitoring of forest protection and the extractive industries *(Danmission, Forests of the World, Ibis).*

One is focused on social movements *(DanChurchAid)*

Innovation through the use of ICTs

8 out of 12 proposals focus on the use of ICTs with partners and/or target groups. The key premise in these proposals is that the use of ICTs can inform, empower and give voice to marginalised groups e.g. children, urban youth, and forest dwellers, to change policies and practices that affect them.

It will be interesting to see how much value ICTs add to advocacy with marginalised groups. One of most highly ranked proposals is the CARE advocacy project with pastoralist groups. This seeks to collect and monitor data with pastoralists to support advocacy with extractive industries, the judicial system and government agencies using existing networks more than ICTs.

While the innovation is mostly in the methods adopted i.e. the use of ICTs, the specialist expertise is 'imported' into the project through Northern partners e.g. AADK/Beautiful Trouble; IBIS/RUC. In some cases it is not clear where expertise is coming from. While there is a focus on building the capacity of the end-users of the application there seems to be an opportunity lost for specialist Northern providers to work with a local partner to help build local ICT capacity.

Some projects have web-based platform as a key resource (LO/FTF; AADK; SE; SAVE) while others focus more on the use of mobile telephony and social media (DanChurchAid; Danmission; SAVE).

A typical series of activity outputs for an ICT project which constitutes a simple theory of change revolves around access, capacity and activity i.e. the target group has *access* to ICT; develops appropriate ICT and advocacy *capacity*; conducts advocacy *activities*.

There is little reference to extensive case study literature on the use of ICTs in development.

The IBIS Theory of Change for Community E-powerment

Local mine watchers employ ICT to document and publish human rights violations

Social media platforms are actively used by communities

On-line evidence is used by civil society coalitions to advocate for fair and responsible mining

5. INNOVATION THROUGH CHOICE OF PARTNERS

""Readiness to change is key in order to respond to new challenges and to adapt to local circumstances. Danish partners worldwide will increasingly relate to new types of civil society actors….."

Policy for Danish Support to Civil Society - June 2014, pp. 19

Innovating with new and/or old partners?

Most proposals seek to contribute to a strong, diverse civil society by building the capacity of local CBOs, marginalised or emerging social groups. These include urban youth (SE, LO/FTF); movements, campaigns, umbrella bodies (AADK); child and youth-led organisations (SAVE); and tuk-tuk drivers, street vendors, garbage collectors and religious activists (DanChurchAid).

Many, however, target informal or marginalised civil society groups through partnerships with well-established partners or institutions rather than partner directly with new or marginalised civic actors. The majority try to do new things or work with new groups with 'old' partners, building on previous programmes or experience. This raises the question: Is it better to innovate with partners you know and trust? Or will there be a tendency to do things as you have done them before?

"SustainableEnergy wants to take the opportunity to explore a revitalization of old partnerships ……. to alter the role of the current partner organization from 'project implementer' to 'mentor of CBOs."

SustainabileEnergy Project Document March 2014, pp. 2

Some projects explicitly anticipate new roles for old partners. The DRC proposes radically to pilot a rights-based 'humanitarian diplomacy' with national RC in Malawi, Liberia and Rwanda. Others expect national partners to extend work that has been piloted in other countries. Sometimes the project involves a Danish CSO working with a partner for the first time e.g. a social movement or setting up a collaboration between local partners and other sectors.

Innovation through cross-sectoral partnerships

Several projects propose partnership arrangements with private, public or academic institutions. Private sector partnerships appear in only three proposals. DPOD and DFPA have a clear focus on working with the private sector to influence their corporate social responsibility. The private sector features elsewhere, without the status of partnership, as means of leveraging skills e.g. ICTs, or as a focus for advocacy dialogue e.g. Chinese mining companies. Danish Universities also feature a source of technical expertise. There is a challenge as to how the skills leveraged through such partnerships might be transferred to local partners.

Two projects aim to work with private sector companies to promote corporate social responsibility (DPOD, DPFA).

Only one project involves a local private sector company as an implementing partner (Danmission/Web Essentials,

Three projects plan pro-bono private sector support (SustainableEnergy/ Kollison; Save the Children/Accenture; and Forests of the World.

Two projects involve academic partnerships (Ibis/RUC; Danmission/KU)

6. INNOVATIONS IN PARTNERSHIPS:
Rebalancing power relationships

"Denmark will….. continue to support partnerships between Danish CSOs and CSOs in the global South emphasising gradual transfer of more responsibility to partners in the global South….."

Policy for Danish Support to Civil Society Policy - June 2014, pp. 18

"The partners in the global South – and not the Danish partners – must assume primary responsibility for management and implementation of interventions and activities"

Policy for Danish Support to Civil Society - June 2014, pp. 19

Defining new partner dynamics

Several proposals refer to changes in partner dynamics or include new partner dynamics as an outcome of the project – for example, making reference to 'new ways of project management' or 'South-driven prioritisation'. There are few specific references to partners being involved in the design of the proposal and consulted on the proposed management arrangements (CARE is one exception), or how new accountabilities might be exercised.

This not a bad thing if there is opportunity at the beginning of the project for partners to suggest the kinds of changes they would like to see. DanChurchAid, for example, anticipates an initial period when the consortium members will jointly develop the management arrangements for the project and the Social Action Fund. SustainableEnergy also plans a six-month inception phase to develop the concept of the on-line platform; build the capacity of CBOs; and establish the relationship between partner NGOs and CBOs. DFPA plans to use a process consultant to facilitate/stimulate change in partner dynamics and document learning.

An interesting dimension of innovation is the concept of peer assessment. SustainableEnergy, for example, anticipates that partners/CBOs will vote for best campaign at end of project.

Project management

Some Danish CSOs will manage the project through their branch office/s e.g. AADK and Danmission. Others propose to delegate in-country project management, or some aspects of it, to a local partner - for example, LO/FTF & Ghana TUC, Forests of the World & APCOB Bolivia; DPOD and NUDIPU and GFD. In these cases the Danish CSO retains responsibility for contract management and quality assurance.

Several projects propose to set up Steering Committees in some form to monitor progress and share learning. Most Steering Committees involve the NGO partners and chaired by the Danish CSO, although there one example of the chair rotating between the Danish CSO and local partners. The CARE project seems to be the only one to explicitly propose a Management Committee in which partners will have control through a majority vote.

Downward accountability

Few project management arrangements directly involve the participation of CSO target groups e.g. CBOs. Although several projects make general references to target groups taking the lead e.g. CBOs defining campaigns, or children and youth having a lead role in all phases of the project, there is an opportunity to develop more specific mechanisms of 'downward' accountability, .

7. INNOVATION IN PARTNERSHIPS:
Rebalancing budget-holding responsibilities

"Mutual partnerships imply that both Danish partners and their global South partners are equally informed about the funding of activities, and the decisions behind this. Both partners should aim for full transparency in the use of resources."

Policy for Danish Support to Civil Society - June 2014, pp. 19

- RTE to survey and feed back partner perspectives on partnership dynamics (see 3. Measuring Success).

- Ensure inception phase enables partners and/or target groups to review and refine the modus operandi of the project.

- Clarify and monitor role of Steering Groups. Write up and share Steering Group procedures and minutes through e.g. an email group or Dropbox

Partnership dynamics

A key element to North/South CSO partnership dynamics centres on who holds the budget and contracts the services. In some cases, the pattern seems to be that the Danish CSO manages the project finances and, for example, disburses funds to partners on receipt of satisfactory reports. In other cases, the administration of some project funds is delegated to local partners in support of in-country project activities.

Devolving funds to partners

The fact that Danish CSOs are the contract holders for the projects does not mean necessarily that they should have control of all the project finances. There are two significant examples of a project devolving funds to partners. CARE and DanChurchAid, for example, delegate most of budget holding responsibilities to partners - 76% and 72% of the funds respectively. In addition, DanChurchAid has also created a USD $72,000 Social Action Fund to be implemented jointly by a Consortium to test out how NGOs can support less formal, more 'high risk' groups through, for example, joint campaigns, networking and training.

Rebalancing Partnership: CARE Denmark

CARE's proposal tries to experiment with a new model of partnership:

Participation. The project is based on partner's strategic plans and responds to specific requests from them.

Money. The partners will be directly responsible for the management of the budget in this proportion AREN 71%; Billital Maroobe 5% and CARE 24%.

Control. The project will establish a Management Board, which will meet every three months to monitor progress. The Board consists of CARE Niger, CARE Denmark, AREN and Billital Maroobe in which partners will have the majority of the votes.

Role. The proposal makes an explicit commitment to *"move away from local decision making towards a role of service provider for the southern partners based on value addition".*

8. ADDING VALUE TO INNOVATION

RTE to survey and feed back partner perspectives on the added value of Danish CSOs to the project (see 3. Measuring Success).

Adding value to innovation: the role of Danish CSOs in the proposals

Overseeing donor interaction — Accessing the funds and overseeing final reporting of the project as contract manager to the donor

Convening the talents — Forming a consortium of local and Northern partners with the skills sets to innovate

Knowledge beyond the partnership — Brokering contacts and knowledge beyond the partner consortium

Experience of the sector — Regional or international experience of the sector and ability to facilitate access of partner to regional/international fora

Replicating project innovation — Potential to 'diffuse' or replicate project innovation by influencing the policy/practice of the global Federation or 'family' of which it is a member

Brokering contact with Embassies — Facilitate contacts with Embassies and their business units

Facilitating peer-to-peer learning — Facilitating capacity development through peer-to-peer learning

The role of specialist expertise

Although Danish CSOs have distinctive competences in key areas e.g. Save the Children Denmark's distinctive competence in child rights governance, the added-value of their specialist expertise in local partnerships is less prominent than might be expected. For example, although there is a preponderance of ICT-linked projects, it is more often Northern or Southern partners who appear to add value in this area in the form of technical assistance or knowledge sharing methodologies.

The role of local consultants

Danish CSOs that do not have a network of country offices sometimes rely on local consultants for key activities e.g. to map national private sector, involve relevant stakeholders and document research results (DPOD); and to drive learning and change, and document learning (DFPA). These are critical dependencies.

9. INNOVATION IN LEARNING

"The mutual learning benefits, as well as complementary strengths, of the partnership should be documented"

Policy for Danish Support to Civil Society - June 2014, pp. 19

Innovate to learn

A lack of a learning agenda

The common rationale for innovation is to test and learn from new methods or ways of working in order to improve or scale up programmes. Many projects refer to a 'strong focus on learning' but do not specify how learning will be encouraged and shared throughout the project. A number of projects would benefit from a clear learning agenda e.g. in the form of working hypotheses to be tested. A more innovative approach to documenting learning (in addition to the conventional final report to Danida) would be welcome.

One CSO proposes to engage a process consultant to facilitate and document learning. A small number explicitly seek to learn from changes in the partnership dynamics but only CARE identifies specific learning questions regarding the partnership model e.g. the role of the Board and their own role in adding value. DPOD is the only CSO that explicitly refers to incorporating learning from the project in its Framework agreement.

A focus on peer-to-peer learning

There is strong emphasis on peer-to-peer learning during the life of the projects. A number of proposals include face-to-face peer learning initiatives including regional exchange visits. Some ICT projects propose web-based learning and, for example, the use of audio-visual materials to share learning between CBOs so that levels of literacy are not a barrier.

Using learning to improve performance

Most proposals highlight the intention of sharing learning from the project more broadly. Ibis, for example, refers to sharing learning with partners in other countries. Most frequently, learning will be disseminated within a global federation or network e.g. Save the Children Global Initiatives; with other members of the SCRC (DRC); regional and global TU meetings (LO/FTF); International Disability for a (DPOD); IPPF members (DFPA).

Use inception period to identify how project will learn from local communities and target groups e.g. focus groups; perception studies.

Establish innovation learning groups or 'communities of practice' so that groups could be 'mainstreamed' in the arrangements for Framework agreements, in key areas where projects overlap e.g.

- The use of ICTs, both web-based applications and social media, as a tool for learning, monitoring and/or mobilisation e.g. LO/FTF; AADK; SE; SAVE; DanChurchAid; Danmission.
- Measuring change in partnership dynamics e.g. Sustainable Energy, CARE, DanChurchAid. This could include specific initiatives to devolve financial responsibility as well as the use of Steering Committees to share project management responsibilities with partners.

A focus on learning: the DanChurchAid learning agenda

Social Action Fund as a means of funding smaller and more informal groups and actors within a movement.

Stakeholder perceptions on role and dynamics of the Consortium in relation to the DCA project management.

The level and quality of participation of more marginalised actors in the movement.

10. STRENGTHENING INNOVATION

SECTION 2. Strengthening the management of innovation and risk

Workshop with partners during inception period to review contextual analysis (especially in those countries that are ranked in top 35 of failed states).

Review risk section in inception period to clarify assumptions, Develop simple theories of change for the programmes. Use the links in the results chain to monitor and record learning.

SECTION 3. Strengthening the measurement of success in innovation

Workshop with partners to develop measurable indicators for outcomes/outputs. Develop methods for tracking partner/target group perceptions about changes in ways of working or partnership dynamics.

RTE develop an evaluation method and matrix to measure the performance of the proposals as a portfolio in relation to key dimensions of innovation. This could include survey of partner and target group perspectives on key aspects of innovation, including partnership dynamics, in years 1 and 2 of the projects drawing upon partner and target group perspectives.

SECTION 4. Strengthening support to innovation through ICT

Conduct short literature review of comparable use of ICTs in development initiatives to inform the implementation and reporting on the project.

Investigate how Northern ICT partners might transfer relevant skills with local counterpart organisations.

Establish virtual 'communities of practice' e.g. through NGO Forum, to share learning (see 8. Innovation in Learning).

SECTIONS 5, 6 & 7. Strengthening rebalanced partnerships

RTE to survey and feed back partner perspectives on partnership dynamics (see 3. Measuring Success).

Ensure inception phase enables partners and/or target groups to review and refine the modus operandi of the project.
Clarify and monitor role of Steering Groups. Write up and share Steering Group procedures and minutes through email group or Dropbox

SECTION 8. Strengthening adding value to innovation

RTE to survey and feed back partner perspectives on the added value of Danish CSOs to the project (see 3. Measuring Success).

SECTION 9. Strengthening learning on innovation

Use inception period to identify how project will learn from local communities and target groups e.g. focus groups; perception studies.
Establish innovation learning groups or 'communities of practice' so that groups could be 'mainstreamed' in the arrangements for Framework agreements, in key areas where projects overlap e.g.

The use of ICTs, both web-based applications and social media, as a tool for learning, monitoring and/or mobilisation e.g. LO/FTF; AADK; SE; SAVE; DanChurchAid; Danmission.

Measuring change in partnership dynamics e.g. Sustainable Energy, CARE, DanChurchAid. This could include specific initiatives to devolve financial responsibility as well as the use of steering committees to share project management responsibilities with partners.

ANNEX 1: INNOVATION PROPOSALS

	CSO	Proposal title	Theme	Countries	Grant (DKK)
AADK	ActionAid Denmark	Networked toolbox: fuelling creative activism in partnership with social movements in global South	To create a web-based platform that can be sued by activists in the Global South to access strategies, tactics and knowledge about advocacy, campaigning and popular mobilisation.	Bangladesh, Uganda, Myanmar, Zimbabwe and Egypt	2..2m
CARE	CARE	Insecure Lands: New Alliances for the promotion of Universal Values	Support to pastoralist networks, civil society actors and other bodies to protect pastoral land against illegal occupation and land grabbing through evidence-based advocacy.	Niger (and Kenya, Tanzania)	3m
	Danmission	It's our forest too: engagement of vulnerable communities in peaceful dialogue for forest protection	Support to rights-based and peace-building approaches to natural resource management based on the use of ICTs to aid community-based monitoring of rights and resources in the Prey Ling Forest.	Cambodia	1.45m
DCA	Danchurchaid	Social Movements in Cyber-Age	To contribute to a strong social movement for justice and pro-poor development by building capacity and providing access to ICT for citizen groups in support of digital activism.	Cambodia	3m
DRC	Danish Red Cross	Innovative Partnerships and Humanitarian Democracy	To support National Societies to develop new, strategic partnerships to explore the added-value of a rights-based approach to humanitarian diplomacy to improve of vulnerable target groups to access to health services, protection and care.	Malawi, Liberia and Rwanda	2.6m
DFPA	Danish Family Planning Association	Sexual and reproductive health and rights as part of private sector corporate social responsibility	To support three NGO partners to establish partnerships with private sector companies to promote sustainable sexual and reproductive health policies and services in workplace settings.	Kenya, Uganda	2.5m
DPOD	Disabled Peoples Organisations Denmark	Promoting inclusion of persons with disabilities in the formal labour market through innovative partnerships between disability movement and the private and public sector	To increase the inclusion of people with disabilities in the formal labour market through new partnerships with selected private and public sectors actors.	Ghana, Uganda	1.65m
	Forests of the World	Eyes in the sky and feet on the ground: participatory forest monitoring	Support to indigenous peoples' organisations, and other CSOs, to use earth observation technology to monitor and defend their territories and support sustainable livelihoods.	Panama, Bolivia	3m
Ibis	Ibis	Community E-powerment for Responsible and Accountable Mining	Support to mining communities to use ICTs to monitor rights violations; hold mining companies and government accountable for tax revenues; and mobilise civil society support for responsible, accountable mining.	Ghana	2.2m
LO/FTF	LO/FTF	Building capacity of selected Africa TUs in the use of information technology and social media in mobilising and communicating with youth	Build the capacity of three nation TU organisations to use IT and social media in mobilising and communicating with young workers.	Ghana, Sierra Leone, Kenya, Rwanda and Malawi	2.2m
SC	Save the Children	ICT and innovative partnerships: Responding to well-known challenges for children in new ways	Improve WASH facilities in targeted schools through increased spending and improved accountability, using of ICT and innovative partnerships with children, youth and their organisations.	Bangladesh	3m
SE	SustainableEnergy	Youth takes the Baton for a Green Future	Develop new, innovative partnerships between youth CBOs and more established NGOs to implement 16 environmental campaigns with the help of a new on-line platform.	Mali, Burkina Faso, Kenya and Mozambique	2.2.m