



**UDENRIGSMINISTERIET**

**STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITH  
THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF DENMARK  
2022-2025**

**EXPRESSION OF INTEREST - INFORMATION NOTE**

10 February 2021

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## Introduction

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (MFA) is launching the first round of the call for Strategic Partnerships for the period of 2022-2025 (SPA 2022-2025) within civil society development and humanitarian action. The first round is an invitation to submit an Expression of Interest (EoI). Selected candidates will be invited to submit a full proposal for entering a Strategic Partnership in a second round.

The call builds upon the previous call for Strategic Partnerships for the period of 2018-2021 and wishes to draw on learnings from the current period in order to further strengthen Strategic Partnerships and delivery of results within Danish development and humanitarian priorities.

The overall framework for the SPA 2022-2025 will briefly be summarised here, however the final framework will be launched with an Information Note and invitation to submit full proposals for Strategic Partnerships later in 2021.

## Framework for Strategic Partnerships 2022-2025

The MFA wishes to engage in Strategic Partnerships with civil society organisations (CSOs) that have a strong focus on strategic alignment and results within the priorities of Danish development cooperation and humanitarian action as well as experience with engaging the Danish public in the CSO's and the MFA's shared agendas.

The Strategic Partnerships contribute to civil society development and humanitarian action within shared thematic and geographic priorities in order to promote strategic and operational synergies and strengthen results towards the fulfillment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The upcoming new Danish strategy for development cooperation will lay down the framework for the thematic and strategic priorities. The Strategic Partnerships will also be based on the CSOs' own vision, goals, strategies and specific core competencies and will build on a fundamental respect for the independent nature of CSOs and for the different roles and mandates of the strategic partners.

For the SPA 2022-2025 the MFA wishes to highlight some key principles:

- **Breaking down the silos.** The Strategic Partnerships will contribute to a strong strategic integration and coherence between strengthening of civil society, long-term development interventions and humanitarian action. In order to facilitate nexus programming, especially in fragile contexts and protracted humanitarian crises, the partnerships will contain a high degree of flexibility as well as a holistic approach to programming. For organisations wishing to contribute to both civil society development as well as humanitarian action, the MFA will have one grant encompassing the complete engagement of the strategic partner. Having one grant is by no means a reordering of priorities, and while there will no longer be a separate window for labour market support, it is still a priority alongside the civil society support and the humanitarian aid. A prerequisite will be separate financial reporting on funds allocated for humanitarian action and civil society support. The reporting requirements will be agreed upon when entering into a Strategic Partnership. Strategic partners will also be requested to report financially on Rio climate markers for the entire grant.



- **Strengthening local partners.** The Strategic Partnerships will have an increased focus on localisation and transfer of funds, ownership and leadership to local partner organisations, local civil society networks as well as informal civil society groupings in the global South. A clear strategy, developed by the strategic partner in cooperation with the MFA, is expected for how transfers to local partners in the global South can be increased.
- **Focus and dialogue around results.** The MFA wishes to further strengthen the dialogue and monitoring of results within key policy priorities and will introduce measures and systems for this. This will ensure cooperation and sharing of mutual learnings and best practices and focus the strategic dialogue on a number of key thematic and geographic priorities.
- **Opportunity to apply as a consortium.** It will be possible to apply as a consortium. Consortia will be represented by a lead organisation with overall responsibility for the grant. This provides an opportunity to benefit from members' overall knowledge and know-how within the focus areas. It is only possible to have one engagement as strategic partner with the MFA, hence organisations will have to either apply individually or as part of one consortium.
- **Access to additional funds.** The partnerships may include the possibility to access flexible funds, in addition to the Strategic Partnership grant, in specific areas in order to respond to new and emerging needs and priorities in situations where partners are well placed to act. This will ensure swift and flexible responses to immediate crises and shocks. The Strategic Partnership may also include access to apply in thematic NGO calls. Access to these additional funds will be based on transparent criteria which will be described in the Information Note for full proposal.

Annual budgets for individual strategic partners may be allocated in the range between DKK 15 million to a maximum of DKK 200 million per year.

### **Aim and nature of Strategic Partnerships**

*Predictability and stability.* The strategic partners will enter into 4-year agreements (2022-2025) with annual commitments (subject to annual parliamentary approval) allowing for a predictable, efficient and enabling working environment for the strategic partners as well as their partners in the global South.

*Focus on strategic outcomes.* Mutually agreed goals, agenda and dialogue modalities will be established at the onset of the partnership relation. The Strategic Partnerships will focus on delivering cost effective sustainable results, will seek to maximise outcomes and impact and further promote transparency through the use of the IATI standard. The MFA and the strategic partner can be mutually supportive in programme interventions and in relation to international policy agendas, including through leveraging of the strategic partners' participation in international and regional alliances and networks.

*Strategic collaboration and complementarity.* In line with MFA's strategy on Doing Development Differently and adaptive management, strategic partners will as relevant develop and strengthen ongoing collaboration at country level between MFA (Danish representations) and strategic partners. This may include synergies and exchanges of knowledge in the development of context analysis, Country Strategic Frameworks and specific programming exercises, and through mutual support in ensuring relevant collaboration and coordination with



other relevant development and humanitarian actors, e.g. – in humanitarian settings – through the cluster system under the leadership of the UN Humanitarian Coordinator.

*Flexibility, humanitarian-development-peace nexus and twin-track approaches.* Strategic partners are encouraged to work in a nexus approach (multi-system, multi sectoral, multi-level, and multi-stakeholder). This requires a holistic and intersectional approach. The partnership gives opportunity for a twin-track approach linking emergency response and humanitarian action to sustainable development and civil society strengthening. This provides opportunities to address the immediate and acute needs in crisis and emergency situations alongside investing in long-term engagements to tackle the root causes of social, political and ecosystem vulnerabilities and inequalities. The humanitarian imperative will continue to guide all humanitarian interventions, while all interventions should seek to support civil society and human rights, where they are under pressure, and overall aim to build capacity of a free, independent and thriving civil society. Interventions in areas affected by armed conflict must be guided by the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

Applicants intending to carry out humanitarian interventions or engagements in areas affected by armed conflict, must be Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS) certified or verified. For partners in the process of being CHS certified/verified, an individual agreement will be made between MFA and the partner on the scope of their engagements until the finalisation of the certification/verification.

*Mobilisation and engagement of the Danish public.* In cooperation with the MFA and other relevant stakeholders, strategic partners will be expected to actively explore and propose new ways of engaging a wider segment of the Danish public around thematic priorities for the organisation and MFA. Up to two per cent of the partnership engagement budget can be allocated to this type of programme related information activities *in* Denmark.

Strategic partners will be expected to document own-financing of activities similar to those funded by MFA through other sources of funding, corresponding to at least 20 per cent of the entire partnership budget. Of these, an amount corresponding to minimum 5 per cent of the entire partnership budget should be raised in Denmark by the strategic partner in the form of cash contributions or similar (collections, donations) in order to ensure a strong public engagement. These funds should be spent within the proposed partnership engagement budget. The remaining co-financing may be comprised of funding from other donors, including the strategic partner's international alliance, for activities in DAC countries (including related global/thematic programmes). In-kind contributions are not valid.

### **Eligibility criteria and capacity assessment for selection of strategic partners**

Organisations interested in applying for a Strategic Partnership will have to submit an expression of interest (EoI) using the standard format enclosed in Annex 1, including submission of requested information and documentation all outlined in Annex 1. The requested documentation will serve to determine i) whether the organisation/consortium meets the eligibility criteria and capacity requirements for applying for a Strategic Partnership, and ii) establish a ceiling for funding for each applicant under a potential Strategic Partnership. Supporting documentation should preferably be provided in English, but will be accepted in Danish where the relevant documentation only exists in Danish.



**The eligibility criteria** (Annex 1, part B) pertain to governance and organisational capacity. Criteria to assess whether applicants are eligible for applying for a Strategic Partnership can be confirmed or rejected by a simple yes or no. 100 percent compliance is required, and applicants who do not meet all the eligibility criteria will not be considered further. The specific eligibility criteria are described in Annex B.

**The capacity assessment** (Annex 1, part C) pertain to the organisation's overall capacity to deliver results. Strategic partners are expected to demonstrate a strong and sustainable operational and financial capacity to manage substantial civil society development and/or humanitarian programmes and to deliver and document results. The capacity of applicants will be assessed on five parameters as outlined below on a 1 – 5 scale where all criteria need a minimum score of 2 (financial capacity minimum 3) and any application with a score below will be rejected. The capacity assessment at the EoI stage will determine if applicants have the necessary capacity. The score will be used again and weighted in the full application round.

The assessment will be based on recent, independent capacity assessments, inspections, reviews and evaluations of the applicant including follow-up on action plans based on the conclusions of such assessments. If the applicant has no prior direct funding engagement with the MFA, the assessment will be informed by similar assessments carried out under the auspices of other donors or systems (e.g. certification), including Danish pooled funds (e.g. CISU).

The five criteria for capacity are as follows:

*Capacity for analysis, learning and innovation.* Applicants will be assessed on their capacity to undertake comprehensive context analyses and risk assessments, and to utilise evidence-based learning to inform analysis, planning and innovation of strategies and operational approaches.

*Delivering and documenting results.* Applicants will be assessed on the degree to which they have demonstrated ability to deliver results at outcome level in a cost-effective manner and the degree to which the applicant has documented and functioning results-based management systems in place for planning, implementing, monitoring and reporting on results.

*Organisation and human resources.* Applicants will be assessed on the extent to which they organise and manage their human resources in a manner, which optimises the development effectiveness of the organisation, through maintaining a satisfactory internal level of professional competency and technical capacity, managed at appropriate levels. This part of the assessment involves the organisational structure, the technical expertise relevant to the proposed partnership engagement, as well as human resource management and development. The organisation will also be assessed on their climate footprint (in line with the MFA's Sustainability Initiative), and reduction targets.

*Financial management.* Applicants will be assessed on their ability to maintain a satisfactory level of financial management and administrative capacity, adequate for meeting the overall responsibilities related to management of MFA grants. This involves the presence of ade-



quate internal financial management and administration control systems at all levels, sufficient capacity to monitor local partners' financial management systems, as well as sufficient integrity systems.

*Partnership approach.* Partners will be assessed on their ability to demonstrate a satisfactory approach to implementing through and working with local partner organisations in the global South and satisfactorily describe how the organisation works with transfer of funds, ownership and leadership to partner organisations in the global South. As strategic partners have very different organisational set-ups, the partnership approaches are likewise expected to be different but none the less comprehensive. Strategic partners are encouraged to work with a multi-stakeholder approach covering a wide range of actors. Emphasis will be put on non-state actors with civil society as a corner stone.

### **Assessment procedures and scoring**

The EoI will be assessed based on the documents submitted, assessments from relevant departments and representations in the MFA, and (where relevant) from other donors with a recent, substantial funding engagement with the applicant. The MFA may also request supplementary documentation or clarifications from the applicant.

EoIs will be assessed by a designated assessment team in the MFA. Assessments will be based on the criteria listed above and detailed in Annex B.

The technical assessment of the EoI will be shared with the applicant in the form of a draft assessment note, which the applicant has 5 days to submit a written response to, giving the applicant an opportunity to comment on the assessment if relevant. The MFA will follow up and may adjust the assessment and score(s) on this basis if relevant. If the applicant does not submit a written response within 5 days, the MFA will consider the draft assessment note final.

### **Budget ceilings**

The MFA will assess the submitted documentation, and if eligibility criteria are met and capacity assessment scored at a satisfactorily level, the CSO/consortium will be shortlisted and invited to submit a full proposal with an indication of a budget ceiling for which funding can be applied.

The modality for calculating budget ceilings will be communicated when shortlisted CSOs/consortia are invited to apply for a full Strategic Partnership.

All shortlisted applicants will as a minimum be able to apply for total funding corresponding to the lower limit of a Strategic Partnership (DKK 15 million), even if the calculated ceiling amount falls below this level.

The established ceilings represent a maximum level of funding that in no way commits the MFA. The actual levels of funding under each partnership will in all likelihood be below the indicated ceiling as the accumulated value of eligible full proposals is likely to exceed the available budget.



## Timeline for Eol

The call for Eols is launched on the MFA website 10 February 2021.

A Q&A session about the Eol will be held on 26 February 2021 at 10am-12pm. Questions must be submitted to the MFA ([hce@um.dk](mailto:hce@um.dk) with copy to [kirsut@um.dk](mailto:kirsut@um.dk) and [guntho@um.dk](mailto:guntho@um.dk)) beforehand and no later than 24 February 2021 at 12pm. Only questions submitted in writing within the deadline will be answered at the Q&A session.

Deadline for submission of the Eol is **17 March 2021 at 12pm (CET)**. The Eol should be submitted by e-mail to [hce@um.dk](mailto:hce@um.dk) with copy to [kirsut@um.dk](mailto:kirsut@um.dk) and [guntho@um.dk](mailto:guntho@um.dk).

The MFA will inform the applicants if they have qualified to submit a full proposal for a Strategic Partnership or not by the end of April 2021.

Organisations that through the Eol have qualified to submit a full proposal for a Strategic Partnership will be invited to do so when the second round of the call for SPA 2022-2025 is launched later this year. The invitation to submit a full proposal for a Strategic Partnership, and submission of such an application itself, does not guarantee that the applicant will be selected for a Strategic Partnership. Deadline for submitting the full proposal for a Strategic Partnership will be announced as soon as possible.

