

The Danish Regions of Origin Initiative

Part 1 Strategic Framework

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Table of contents

<i>I N T R O D U C T I O N</i>	3
<i>B A C K G R O U N D</i>	3
<i>S T R A T E G I C F R A M E W O R K</i>	4
Objectives.....	4
Main Principles.....	5
Partnerships.....	7
Geographic focus.....	8
Types of interventions.....	9
Annex 1 Abbreviations.....	12
Annex 2 Region of Origin Partnerships.....	13

I N T R O D U C T I O N

Forced migration is one of the most visible manifestations of armed conflict and human rights violations. Areas in and around conflict-ridden countries are due to their proximity to the conflicts, particularly exposed to massive problems of forced migration, being it the presence of refugees or internally displaced persons (IDPs). These areas, typically in the world's poorest regions, are in the following referred to as "*Regions of Origin*".

Experience has shown that access to effective international assistance during protracted emergencies in the Regions of Origin is often hampered by lack of flexibility in conventional aid modalities to address the real needs in the particular contexts. In such situations the required types of international aid often fall in a "grey zone between humanitarian action and development interventions". Furthermore, meeting the needs in these situations often requires the use of a range of other policy instruments in addition to aid. The Danish "*Regions of Origin Initiative (ROI)*" has been developed to address some of the particular issues pertaining to the delivery of aid in affected areas.

This strategic framework and related programme management arrangements (see part 2) have been developed to facilitate future planning, design, implementation and monitoring of the ROI for the next four year period: 2008 – 2012. The framework is based on experience gathered since the ROI's initiation in 2003.

B A C K G R O U N D

Issues of asylum and migration have for the past decade become increasingly important on the international political agenda and have sparked a number of domestic as well as foreign policy initiatives in Denmark and in a number of other EU countries.

Most international aid cooperation including Danish aid comes in the form of assistance towards priorities laid out in developing countries' national poverty reduction strategies (PRSs). Very rarely do refugee problems feature as priorities in the PRSs. Furthermore, bilateral assistance is increasingly being provided through budget and sector instruments which do not provide the opportunity to direct the assistance to particular geographical areas or groups of people. Thus, refugees and IDP's are very often exempted from the impact of development assistance.

On this background the ROI was initiated in 2003 as part of Danish International Development Assistance. In "*A World of Difference, the Danish Government's Vision for New Priorities in Danish Development Assistance 2004-2008*" the objective was outlined as a tool to assist "...refugees and internally displaced people as close to their home as possible, thus making it easier for them to return home while at the same time reducing political problems [caused by the large scale influx of returning persons] in the host countries". Further the importance of a Whole of Government approach was stressed, specifically in terms of "...ensuring maximum coordination with the repatriation efforts for refugees resident in Denmark, which are currently under consideration and prepa-

ration". The ROI was developed during the same period as UNHCR elaborated its "Framework for Durable Solutions", and it incorporated key elements of the new UNHCR approach.

The ROI is managed and implemented by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and includes cooperation with the Ministry of Refugees, Immigration and Integration Affairs (MRIIA) on the particular aspects pertaining to Danish refugee and asylum policies.

Presently the Initiative supports activities in twelve countries: Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia, which are all also priority programme countries for Danish bilateral assistance as well as in Angola, Somalia, Sudan, Burundi, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Iraq, and Kosovo. Furthermore a number of regional programmes are implemented in partnership with the EC and other EU Member States. Cumulatively, activities amounting to more than DKK 900 million have been initiated since 2003. It is expected that by 2012, more than DKK two billion will have been committed under the Initiative. The budget for 2008 is DKK 330 million.

A Desk Study was carried out in mid-2007 to look into the experiences of the first four years and to form the basis for updating the strategic framework and programme management. The Desk Study found that the rationale and relevance of the Initiative were clear and largely uncontested, and that programmes had to a great extent met their objectives. However it recommended that the overall strategic framework for the ROI should be revised in light of the study's findings and updated to address the new challenges in the global refugee situation. Also it recommended mainstreaming programme management for the ROI into the Aid Management Guidelines (AMG) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with due respect for the Initiative's unique character.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

OBJECTIVES

"A World for All" outlines the priorities of the Danish Government for Danish Development Assistance 2008-2012. It states that the Government will increase the already substantial Regions of Origin assistance in the poorest developing countries.

The overall objective of the ROI is to help secure access to protection and durable solutions for refugees and internally displaced persons as close to their home as possible.

The link between national refugee and asylum policy and initiatives in regions of origin will continue to be assigned high priority in the intensified efforts. Cooperation regarding migration will be incorporated as a priority element in the Region of Origin assistance initially in East Africa. The special focus on Iraq and its neighbouring countries will also be maintained in 2008. Furthermore, after the elections in 2007, the Government adopted "Society of Opportunity - Government Platform 2007". As a concrete new initiative it states, "The Government wishes to strengthen the effort to assist refugees in regions of origin. Up to 2010, the Government will reinforce the Regions of Origin Initiative by DKK 100 million."

New migratory patterns makes it necessary to give attention to mixed migratory flows whereby refugees increasingly end up moving side-by-side with groups of illegal or irregular migrants. This has a direct bearing on refugees' access to protection. Protection and durable solutions therefore also involves building capacities to address regulation of migration. In order to have a comprehensive Government response it may also involve questions of local integration or naturalization of migrants and refugees.

The specific objectives of the ROI are to:

- i. Improve living conditions and protection for targeted groups of forced migrants including refugees, IDPs, rejected asylumseekers and host populations.
- ii. Support the safe and dignified return of forced migrants to their place of origin and assist their reintegration.
- iii. Assist with support to self reliance or local integration in the country of asylum where possible in line with existing integration/resettlement policies.
- iv. Strengthen capacities of asylum and migration authorities in developing countries to address mixed migratory flows.
- v. Promote, primarily through the EU and innovative pilots, international cooperation within the field of migration and development.

Durable solutions

Durable solutions for displaced persons includes: a) voluntary repatriation to the place of origin; b) local integration in the country of asylum, typically when smaller residual groups of refugees remain after repatriation programmes have ended, or c) resettlement to a third country. All three are regarded as durable because they promise an end to displacement and to the need for international protection and dependence on humanitarian assistance

MAIN PRINCIPLES

Working with refugees, IDPs and host populations requires maximum sensitivity regarding the often fragile and volatile political, socio-economic and human rights context in which the target groups find themselves as well as to the individual trauma which may have been experienced by those seeking protection. The following principles therefore apply when designing and implementing activities of the ROI:

- Focus on protection and human rights. Interventions under the ROI adhere to the UN Refugee Convention and associated instruments as well as the UN Guiding Principles for IDPs. Protection of civilians and their rights is at the heart of all activities. Special attention is given to the rights of women, children and disabled. Where activities involve movement of persons, e.g. repatriation or resettlement, this takes place only on a voluntary basis. This also applies to support to repatriation of rejected asylum seekers, which will be undertaken under the auspices of assisted voluntary return programmes.

- Holistic and inclusive interventions. The ROI targets refugees, returnees, IDPs as well as the resident/host population. Such a holistic approach contributes to stabilisation and decreases tensions, which may arise if only the displaced were targets of the interventions. The Initiative is inclusive by ensuring that target groups (or their representatives) and relevant partners are involved in planning as well as implementation. And it is comprehensive by working across borders where possible and with high attention to regional dimensions.
- Temporary assistance with an aim to return. Situations with large groups of refugees and internally displaced persons are by default considered temporary. The displaced persons themselves would want to go home when possible just as the hosting communities – however generous - will expect that repatriation will happen. Interventions in these situations are therefore often of a *short term and temporary nature*. Care is required when planning longer term interventions as this could risk opposition from some hosting communities and authorities. The same goes for the classic developmental approach to sustainability.
- Context specific and flexible. Each intervention should build on detailed knowledge of the specific socio-, economic and political situation in the target area, and baseline studies should be undertaken to the extent possible. Flexibility as well as a degree of willingness to risk taking are crucial to the success of interventions in transitory environments. At the same time predictability has proven to be a key quality - therefore, multi annual financial commitments are made and modalities will be used that also strengthen this predictability.
- Use of international principles of good donor engagement. The ROI adheres to the OECD Principles of good international engagement in fragile states. The initiative builds to the extent possible on partnerships and national ownership and draws on the principles enshrined in the Paris Declaration, as well as the principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship.
- Closing the gap where possible. The ROI often operates in the so-called ‘grey zone’ between humanitarian and development assistance. This implies a move from a short-term “assisted” humanitarian approach to a “participative” development approach. Working in areas where there is a possibility for strategic cooperation between humanitarian and development assistance receives particular attention. Special emphasis will be given to inter-agency coordination and aid-coordination.
- Linking with broader national/international efforts. Activities financed should to the extent possible be integral or complementary to national/international efforts to support displaced and host communities in a particular country or region. In line with discussions of donor harmonization and aid effectiveness, this implies that the various components of a ROI country program may link to different aspects and locations of a broader international effort.
- Working with trusted and professional partners. Given the complex environment in which assistance is provided great attention has to be paid to the choice of partners.
- Pursuit of the Whole of Government Approach. Planning of activities will uphold the *Whole of Government* approach by ensuring relevant links between the Danish national refugee and asylum policies and aid initiatives. E.g. reintegration assistance which will be available to persons returning from Denmark including rejected asylum seekers.

PARTNERSHIPS

The choice of partners is, as always, important for reasons of effective programme implementation. More importantly however, the partners whom the MFA cooperate with must adhere to the principles outlined above. A demonstrated commitment to build trust and address the specific needs of the ROI target groups as well as to act in accordance with international law and local sensitivities in complex situations is imperative to achieving tangible results under the ROI. An integrated part of the strategic framework and programme management approach is therefore a strong emphasis on partner selection and partnership building.

Many interventions require fast action in the formulation and approval stages. In order to reduce the need for time-consuming capacity assessments and appraisal of proposals and appeals from potential partners the programme operates with pre-selected strategic and operational partnerships based on the partner's demonstrated relevance and performance in target areas.

Some strategic partnerships are described below and a full list of partners under the ROI can be found in Annex 2.

As an integrated part of Danish foreign policy, the ROI builds on different aspects of Danish international cooperation. In particular, cooperation with UNHCR is central to the Initiative, just as it draws on aspects of the cooperation within the European Union.

UNHCR's *Framework for Durable Solutions* has been a key foundation of the ROI. The Framework has been instrumental in strengthening international responses to refugee crises, by promoting a more even sharing of responsibilities and burdens connected with these crises. More importantly it has developed tools, complementing the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol, focusing on a) development activities in refugee hosting areas and countries of origin when refugees started to return; b) possibilities of resettlement of refugees, either locally in the host countries or in third countries and c) clarify roles and responsibilities of countries of origin, transit and destination in situations of "onward movements". As situations change, the Framework for Durable Solutions continues to be subject to reviews and adaptations of the concrete modalities for its implementation. This ongoing process of revision is reflected in the revised strategic framework of the ROI.

The ongoing reform of the international architecture for humanitarian intervention has opened new avenues for collaboration and accountability in crises and post-crisis situations, including for activities aimed at refugees, IDPs and host communities. Work through the UN humanitarian clusters, in particular those related to protection and early recovery, is promoted where it is possible, thereby working towards a functional cooperation and coordination between international organizations. This includes the NGOs and civil society organisations which play a key role in the Initiatives.

Since the late 1990's the Asylum - Migration Nexus as well as Migration - Development connections have increasingly formed part of the EUs agenda. In this context links between the European Union's economic and political cooperation with Third Countries and issues of migration have been developed. This process was accelerated with the Council Conclusions in Tampere in 1999, and the 2006 Council Conclusions took it further, by presenting the "Comprehensive Approach to Migration". This is also reflected in the Regions of Origin Initiative, in particular in connection with issues of mixed migratory movements. It involves i.a. direct cooperation between the Euro-

pean Commission and EU Member States on refugee and migrant protection as well as support to voluntary repatriation, local integration or resettlement. The 2007 “Thematic Programme of Cooperation with Third Countries in the Areas of Migration and Asylum” is the main financial instrument to be utilized for this cooperation.

GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

Fragile situations/states. The ROI targets areas hosting refugee and IDPs as well as areas of return for the refugees and IDPs. The ROI is an effective aid instrument in different types of fragile situations/states where forced migration is prominent, protection challenges are large or in situations where states lack the capacity or will to address the needs of forced migrants, returnees or host communities.

Cross-border engagement. To the extent possible refugee crises are approached regionally, by addressing the issues on both sides of the border; i.e. support to the refugee hosting areas while initiating as soon as it is feasible activities that can make possible return and reintegration in the country of origin.

High vulnerability areas have priority. Areas where the capacity to absorb IDPs or refugees is very low are given priority. These regions are likely to suffer most, simply because of the inability of existing structures to deal effectively with the problems arising as a result of the influx. An intervention at this level therefore may have a very immediate impact.

Areas where the presence of refugees and IDPs constitute a potential crisis are also a priority because of the human and financial costs of a crisis are enormous. Particular peace and confidence building measures in such areas are given priority.

Areas/countries coming out of conflict is a third priority as experience has shown that a decade is needed to move from post-crisis to development and that there is a need for streams of action to converge.

Areas affected by mixed migratory movements where refugees and asylum seekers increasingly move alongside other people whose reasons for moving are not protection-related. More often than not such movements are irregular, in the sense that they take place without the requisite documentation and frequently involve human smugglers and traffickers. This leads to the importance of establishing systems able to identify persons with international protection needs in order to provide appropriate and differentiated solutions for them – meanwhile also enabling solutions pursued for other groups involved in mixed movements.

Focusing on Africa. The programme has a global geographical coverage. In keeping with the Danish Governments overall Africa focus, at least 2/3 of the interventions will be in Africa. The particular attention to people displaced by the armed conflicts and on interventions in fragile states in Africa will - given the present situation – continue the approach of including programs in non-programme countries.

Some ongoing activities in Africa are currently phasing out as refugees have returned from e.g. Zambia to Angola and from Tanzania to Burundi just as reintegration efforts of IDPs in Liberia are coming to a close. In parallel new reintegration activities are being initiated in e.g. Burundi, just as

the forced migration situation in and around the Horn of Africa is giving rise to concern, including the situation in Sudan.

In East Africa cooperation on migration issue are now included in the ROI, initially in Kenya. In the context of addressing issues of mixed migratory movements, targeted interventions are envisaged in West and North Africa. In West Africa synergies may be developed with other types of Danish cooperation with e.g. with the EC and/or ECOWAS on migration issues.

Iraqi refugees in focus. The Iraqi refugee crisis continues to constitute a major component of the programme. The challenges facing the large groups of Iraqi refugees as well as their hosting communities in mainly Syria and Jordan demand continued attention. Support to these groups as well as efforts targeting the IDPs and communities receiving returnees continues to be a priority.

Afghanistan. In Afghanistan the Initiative has been a key component in Denmark's engagement in the reconstruction of the country through supporting repatriation and reintegration of the millions of refugees returning home. Some activities are integrated in the Tri-Partite Agreement on Readmission of rejected asylum seekers. The Regions of Origin activities will be fully integrated in the next strategy for Danish support to Afghanistan due to start in 2009.

Regions of Origin assistance provided under the Neighbourhood Programme, mainly to Kosovo, will be maintained.

Areas and countries of transit for irregular migrants. Interventions in countries where large groups of refugees and irregular migrants are transiting constitutes a particular challenge. Interventions can i.a. involve following displacement patterns, e.g. through supporting studies of migration-routes and cooperation with relevant authorities on e.g. registration and protection.

TYPES OF INTERVENTIONS

The Study of the Regions of Origin Initiative revealed a very broad palette of themes and sectors within the Initiative, and it underlined that the decision on the types of interventions should be guided by needs as well as be guided by geographical priorities.

At the same time individual programmes should be focussed and limited to few components. Interventions must be context specific, i.e. tailored to the specific circumstances and the context in which it intervenes.

Priority types of interventions are:

- Strong efforts to ensure *livelihoods* through immediate-term as well as mid-to-long term interventions.
- Facilitate access to *protection* through cooperation with relevant national and local authorities, UNHCR, international organisations and civil society organisations.
- Overall support to *return and reintegration* for returnees and *early recovery* activities. Key areas will be support to initiating reestablishment of *social infrastructure* (e.g. access to education, ac-

cess to health facilities, basic physical infrastructure and accommodation) and *economic recovery* (e.g. access to employment, access to farm inputs and basic extension services, support with start up cash grants), in order to prepare for local partners to take over.

- *Capacity building in general of local authorities*, both at central and decentralized levels. In countries of asylum it is important that authorities can provide basic services and protection. The same applies in the country of origin, if authorities cannot deliver services and protection, people will not return. It is crucial to help develop and provide incentives in both situations in the form of an enabling environment (protection, basic service delivery, food security, small business development).
- Increasingly refugees are located in *urban areas* among local residents, as opposed to encampment or settlements. The situation surrounding the Iraqi refugee crisis in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon has underlined this issue. The situation requires new types of support to refugees as well as local residents. The ROI will support efforts improving local and international aid responses in a situation with an increased urbanisation in the profile of new refugee caseloads.
- *Advocacy and policy interventions* to place Refugees and IDPs on national (and international) agendas. With development assistance increasingly based on the principles of the Paris Declaration and on PRSPs, there is a need to work towards the inclusion of these groups in the international development policy architecture. This may also facilitate a dialogue on possibilities for *local integration* of individuals or groups.
- A particular set of interventions pertains to ensuring *relevant and functional links* between the *Regions of Origin Initiative* and *Danish asylum and migration priorities*. E.g. different types of cooperation on migration and asylum with authorities in selected countries of origin, asylum and/or transit, constituting particular migration or asylum challenges in a specific Danish or in a broader EU context. On these interventions there will be close cooperation with the Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs, thereby also ensuring coherence between the Danish national refugee and asylum policies and the relevant aid initiatives.

It could include *capacity building* of local migration and asylum authorities or support to schemes for reintegration of returnees relevant for returnees coming back from Denmark. Further it could involve *participation in international efforts* in transit countries – e.g. migratory movement studies, capacity building of migration and asylum authorities, establishment of dialogue forums etc. Such activities are only implemented in countries where there are *ongoing Danish aid activities already*, or in cases where Denmark can participate in a *co-funding arrangement* with other donors – e.g. under the auspices of EU's *Thematic Programme of Cooperation with Countries in the Areas of Migration and Asylum*.

In general the provision of assistance to refugees and the host communities during the refugee crisis may also have indirect effect on Danish and European migration and asylum priorities, as these efforts help preventing irregular onward movement towards richer and more stable countries further afar, just as it helps creating favourable conditions for the return of rejected asylum seekers.

- Piloting *migration and development initiatives*, e.g. through cooperation with Diaspora groups, innovative approaches towards engaging remittances in development efforts or support to targeted return programs of skilled persons.
- *Technical assistance* to national or local authorities as well as to organizations can be considered, either through direct funding arrangements or through linking to other types of programs supported by Danish Development assistance.

ANNEX 1 ABBREVIATIONS

AENEAS	EC programme for financial and technical assistance to third countries in the areas of migration and asylum
AMG	Aid Management Guidelines – www.amg.um.dk
EU	European Union
FKN	Folkekirkens Nødhjælp
HUM	Department for Humanitarian Policy and Assistance and NGO Co-operation
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
KVA	Department for Quality Assurance of Development Assistance
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
ROI	Regions of Origin Initiative
UNHCR	The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

ANNEX 2 REGION OF ORIGIN PARTNERSHIPS

Strategic and operational partnerships of the ROI:

UNHCR

UNICEF

UNDP

European Commission

IOM

Danish Refugee Council

Dan Church Aid

MS

Save the Children Denmark

Dansk Røde Kors