



**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
OF DENMARK**  
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**HOW-TO NOTE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF “THE WORLD WE SHARE”  
DANISH SUPPORT FOR CIVIL SOCIETY**

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**Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark**

**August 2022**

This note is one of 12 notes developed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark to ensure the implementation of the strategy for development cooperation “The World We Share”

1. Fighting Poverty and Inequality
2. Energy Transition and Emission Reductions in Developing Countries
3. Climate adaptation, Nature and Environment
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## How-to note for implementation of “The World We Share”

# Danish Support for Civil Society

### 1. Purpose of the note

This note aims to provide specific guidelines on how to implement Denmark’s strategy for development cooperation “The World We Share”, the Government’s Priorities for Danish Development Cooperation 2021-2025 and the four-year plans. The two overall purposes of the note are:

- **To create consistency** between strategy, policy, planning and budgeting as a shared framework of reference for the implementation of “The World We Share” and its objectives.
- **To set the framework** for prioritising, selecting and deselecting in adherence to the principles of *Doing Development Differently*, which call for taking a holistic and adaptive approach.

The main target group for this note is employees at the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs responsible for implementing “The World We Share”. Furthermore, it may serve to inform external partners. The note will be available on the Aid Management Guidelines site as an internal guidance document. Specifically, the note is intended as a reference document in programming (including in Programme Committee meetings and on the Council for Development Policy (UPR), as well as in the monitoring (e.g. in appraisals and reviews), in the dialogue with partners, and in the work with international norms and standards.

In principle, the note will remain valid for the duration of “The World We Share”, and will be revised as required in response to changing contexts and priorities. The political priorities in the Finance Act will always have primacy to this note. The note complements the other thematic How-to-Notes and should therefore be read together with the other notes.

### 2. Strategic background and definitions

**This note outlines objectives and provides a thematic and geographical focus for Danish support for civil society** across all forms of development cooperation. It sets out the principles as well as the various modalities of support. The note is to serve as a reference document when entering into new partnerships with civil-society actors, as well as in the dialogue with partners and in Denmark’s normative work in international forums. The support covers a range of themes, such as climate change, human rights and democracy, LBGT+ persons, young people, girls, women and gender equality, as well as education and health.

**Denmark has a long tradition of supporting diverse and vigorous civil societies**, including, for many years, for civil society to take part in local, national and international debates, advocating for

democracy, human rights and good governance. Danish citizens are fond of organising for all sorts of activities and causes, with a tradition of popular movements engaging in public debate. Democracy, both as a form of government and as a way of life, is fundamental to Danish values. This is what gives us credibility in our partnerships around the globe.<sup>1</sup>

A diverse and independent civil society, with vibrant popular movements, is a cornerstone of democratic society along with political parties, cross-party parliamentary networks, human-rights institutions and free media. Civil-society actors generate change, think out of the box, develop communities and hold governments to account. Civil society thus contributes to meeting the totality of UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Apart from the obvious SDG 17 on partnerships, this is especially the case of SDG 1 on eliminating poverty, SDG 3 on health, SDG 4 on quality education, SDG 5 on gender equality, SDG 10 on reduced inequalities, and SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions.

**Support for civil society has a dual purpose.** Strengthening diverse and independent civil societies is an important goal in its own right, as civil society's capacity and space for action is the foundation for fostering democratisation and popular participation. At the same time, civil society is a key partner in the implementation of Danish development-policy priorities. Civil society addresses the rights of girls and women, champions persecuted minorities, such as LGBT+ people, advances climate adaptation and environmental protection, contributes to job creation and education, and delivers relief aid to the most vulnerable people. This gives rise to dividing support *for* into support *to* and *through* civil society. It is not always clear-cut, however, since a partnership will typically strengthen the implementing civil-society organisation as well as the primary target group, thus combining the *to* and the *through* aspect.

**Support to and through civil society favours effective and locally based solutions to development problems, while underpinning the Danish focus on democracy and human rights.** Civil society delivers local solutions to local problems, and can often address sensitive issues within the wider human-rights agenda, even in contexts where this may be a challenge to bilateral relations. Civil society has access to communities and is often anchored in the local population. This makes it easier for interventions to reach the poorest and most marginalised persons and to be effective and relevant to the target groups. Civil society can hold governments to account locally, nationally and globally. Accordingly, its voice can push agendas in a more democratic and inclusive direction.

#### **Danish support for civil society aims:**

- To contribute to the development of a strong, active, independent and diverse civil society, which is a cornerstone of a consolidated democracy and a goal in its own right.
- To strengthen locally based civil-society actors that have a local constituency and champion the cause of the poorest, most marginalised and vulnerable groups.
- To secure the defence of civic space, including online space, in developing countries, also by providing emergency assistance to human-rights advocates in danger. This encompasses efforts

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<sup>1</sup> Also see the how-to note on human rights and democracy being the foundation of Danish development cooperation.

to secure the overall conditions necessary for local actors to support vulnerable population groups in fragile contexts.

- To help engage the Danish population at large in development policy.

The support for civil society builds on Danish strengths and experiences, and adheres to the principles and standards in force. Denmark's strategy for development cooperation "The World We Share" is the foundation for support for civil society.<sup>2</sup> It stresses that diverse and independent civil societies are important to enable sustainable democracies. The strategy's approach to civil-society support is in keeping with a recently published OECD-DAC Recommendation<sup>3</sup> on support for civil society, which has three interlinked pillars: 1) Respecting, protecting and promoting civic space. 2) Supporting and engaging with civil society. 3) Incentivising civil society's effectiveness, transparency and accountability.

## Definition

*Civil society* is defined in Danish support as the sphere lying outside both the state and the market, where people can take individual and collective steps to bring about change or address issues of common interest. This encompasses all forms of nationwide as well as community-based organisations, nationwide as well as local movements, trade unions, industrial associations, cooperatives, faith-based organisations, informal groups, research institutions, think tanks and media outlets.

Although a strong and diverse civil society is a value in its own right, civil society includes actors who do not share our democratic and rights-based set of values. Indeed, they may be working against democracy and human rights. This suggests dynamic criteria for the choice of partners. It takes a specific, well-founded and balanced analysis to map out potential civil-society partners' values, local constituency, independence and legitimacy in order to identify those wishing to cooperate on advancing democracy and human rights.

### How do we work with those who do not share our values?

In certain cases, it may be a separate priority to cooperate with local partners who do not necessarily share our values, but are considered amenable to being influenced in a more democratic direction. This can be particularly relevant in a fragile context. It will, however, hinge on a thorough analysis prior to any action being taken. This might be, for instance, cooperation with organisations that have a traditional view of women, or with religious organisations that take conservative positions on homosexuality.

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<sup>2</sup> Denmark's strategy for development cooperation 2021-2025 "The World We Share".

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.aics.gov.it/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/OECD-DAC-Recommendation-on-CSOs\\_june-2021.pdf](https://www.aics.gov.it/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/OECD-DAC-Recommendation-on-CSOs_june-2021.pdf)

### 3. Geographic scope and thematic priorities

The support for civil society is varied by nature, encompassing and pursuing a wide range of development and foreign-policy interests. Given the dual purpose of support *to* and *through* civil society, it spans a vast array of issues, from gender equality, girls' and women's rights and young people's participation to the fight against torture, climate-related work, humanitarian assistance, the wider agenda in favour of human rights and democracy, as well as conflict prevention.

The thematic priorities for the work carried out *through* civil society are laid down in "The World We Share", including, among others:

- **Climate and green solutions.** Denmark has a clear interest in expanding cooperation with civil society, whose knowledge, networking and environmental watchdog function are useful in playing the important role of developing sustainable green solutions and raising global ambitions, grounded in popular movements and locally driven efforts for climate-change adaptation and preparedness. Indigenous peoples and environmental activists, including women advocating for the environment, are among those at the forefront of this endeavour. This is necessary to meet the targets of the [Paris Agreement](#) and help the most climate-vulnerable groups in developing countries. Climate-related and environmental undertakings are also at the heart of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' strategic partnerships with Danish civil-society organisations. A democracy and rights-based approach to climate and environmental work is necessary to ensure that interventions are anchored in civil society and, for instance, among indigenous peoples fighting for their land rights, since we would otherwise run the risk of violating and restricting their rights and opportunities, both in adaptation and in mitigation work.<sup>4</sup>
- **Girls' and women's rights.** Denmark's strategic partners work extensively to integrate gender equality into their interventions. This includes ensuring and reporting on girls' and women's participation in programme activities. Likewise, a focus on girls' and women's rights has been mainstreamed into the strategic partnerships and will be aimed for in future partnerships. Finally, civil society is a key partner in the normative work to promote girls' and women's rights, e.g. under the Danish chairmanship of the [Call to Action on Protection from Gender Based Violence in Emergencies](#) and the [Danish UNSCR 1325 National Action Plan](#)
- **Meaningful participation of children and young people.** The work to give young people a voice involves a series of youth organisations and other entities that are, in a legitimate fashion, mobilising young people for meaningful participation and engagement, as well as developing young leadership with democratic values. In this area, Danish civil society is particularly capable. Many organisations are implementing Danish-funded development projects with emphasis on meaningful youth participation through strategic partnerships with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or through the Danish Youth Council (DUF). There is emphasis on also working with informal bodies, which tends to be how young people organise themselves. Furthermore, civil

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<sup>4</sup> See also "The World We Share", p. 14.

society is a key partner in the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs' youth agenda. A good example of this is the close cooperation with strategic partners and with DUF on the Danish UN Youth Delegate Programme and the international youth panel. Such partnerships and initiatives ensure that young people's views and inputs are fed into the ministry's work, both internally and in the UN.

Support channelled to the strengthening of civil society and civic space starts from the objective of developing and strengthening democracy bottom-up with a focus on:

- **Support for human-rights activists subjected to harassment.** Violence against peaceful demonstrations is on the rise, and so are killings and attacks on human-rights activists.<sup>5</sup> We shall prioritise specific interventions that bolster security and protection of human-rights advocates and journalists. This includes whistle-blowers, indigenous peoples, trade-union leaders and members, female activists, sexual and ethnic minorities. It encompasses long-term preventative interventions as well as events-based interventions for an immediate cause.
- **Civic cyberspace, the digital civil society.** In recent years, the struggle for civic space has, like all other information exchange, been moving increasingly online. Around the globe, the new technologies and the internet have proved their usefulness in civil society's struggle for democracy and justice. However, the digital sphere has also been exploited by authoritarian regimes to oppress and monitor civil-society actors even more. In addition, it has become evident that vast population groups are cut off from the democratic dialogue taking place online. Danish civil-society support already encompasses a number of partners who operate on the frontline to have human rights respected in the development and legislation concerned with new technologies. They provide technical support to civil-society actors regarding digital hazards. They build civil-society actors' capacity to utilise new technologies in their work for human rights and justice. We will continue to ensure that these interventions interact closely with the struggle for civic space outside the digital sphere.
- **Civil society's role in strengthening good governance.** Local civil-society actors often play an important role as watchdogs holding those in power to account, both nationally and locally. This is made possible by strengthening civil society's participation in keeping an eye on the implementation of budgets and laws, and in controlling corruption and other abuse of public trust. It may, for instance, advocate for better access to information, campaign against corruption, support trade unions in standing up for workers' rights, and back investigative journalism. Denmark will support civil societies in pushing for good governance, as we are already doing through strategic partnerships, in many country programmes, through the UNDP and in the

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<sup>5</sup> In 2019, 304 activists were attacked or killed in 31 different countries as a result of their activism, according to Front Line Defenders. 85% of them had previously received threats. Journalists and trade unionists are among those most at risk. At least 250 journalists have been arbitrarily or unfairly imprisoned in 2019, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists. LGBTI+ persons are also exposed. Indigenous peoples, who make up 6% of the world population, accounted for 26% of killed rights activists in 2020. Female human-rights activists experience abuse and violence due to their gender (Front Line Defenders, 2020).

global anticorruption programme. We will continue to set store on the active participation of poor and marginalised groups, e.g. on school boards and in user groups (say, for access to water and energy).

- **Promotion of freedom of association and assembly.** The freedom to organise and assemble is a fundamental value in democratic societies. Therefore, support for a locally based civil society includes support for civil-society organisations working against restrictions on freedom of association and assembly and in favour of civic space. Accordingly, we will cooperate with partners that pursue such an agenda, for instance through our support for the South-based civil-society platform CIVICUS, which monitors civic space globally.
- **Free media and freedom of expression** are prerequisites for an active, free and diverse civil society. Promotion of freedom of expression, free media and independent journalism is an integral part of Danish civil-society support, just as access to information is prioritised, e.g. in relation to demonstrations and activity critical of the government.
- **Support for new (informal) actors and (global) campaigns/movements.** The new forms of organisation have led to a boom in global civil-society platforms and campaigns. Civil-society actors from the North and the South forge alliances to draw attention to global issues, such as climate, antiracism, discrimination, inequality, gender equality and other gender issues, sexual and reproductive health and rights, human rights and democracy, freedom of religion or belief, job creation and education. In order to channel Danish development aid to wherever it is best at boosting democratic change, we will strengthen Danish partners' cooperation with the informal part of civil society, including with social movements and with community leadership. This means we must be able to act flexibly and seek out new forms of cooperation.

### Dilemma: opportunities and challenges in the cooperation with informal civil society

Both in the North and the South, a drift towards more fluid forms of organising civil society can be observed. Younger generations in particular engage in informal movements and single-issue campaigns. This trend is bolstered by the digital development, in which mobile platforms and social media enable mobilisation across countries and vast distances. Young people are often active in informal setups. At the same time, more traditionally structured civil-society organisations are under pressure to make themselves relevant. Some experience a crisis of legitimacy and trust. Who do they represent and who gives them their legitimacy? Many of Denmark's partners support the informal civil society, but leave us with such thorny questions. It can be a challenge to reach the most significant agents of change, when there is also a grant that needs to be administered properly. We will continue to work alongside our partners to find new, flexible and administratively sensible setups that enable fast and effective support for new agents of change, and, simultaneously, guarantee appropriate spending of Danish funds.



- **Geographical scope.** Danish civil-society support is not restricted geographically, but is implemented where it is needed the most and where we can make a difference. Accordingly, its engagements take place in countries that have an expanded partnership with Denmark, as part of multilateral cooperation, including in countries without any presence of Danish aid actors, as well as in areas where our civil-society partners have the desired knowledge and constituency. Therefore, Danish support for civil society is implemented in countries in Latin America, Africa, the EU's eastern neighbourhood, the Middle East and Asia.

#### 4. Approach

- **Distinction and interplay between support *to* and *through* civil society.** In any type of civil-society support, empowering locally led civil-society entities must be an ambition and objective in its own right. This goes hand in hand with the wish for civil-society partners delivering effective interventions in pursuit of a series of Danish development-policy priorities.
- **Long-term partnerships.** The principles behind *Doing Development Differently* put the spotlight on locally defined problems and possible solutions. This means that partnerships are flexible and based on the organisations' own priorities, strategies and objectives. To the extent possible, partnerships are long-term, i.e. with multiyear time horizons and the possibility of adjusting objectives along the way. Partnerships rest on the understanding that change takes time and does not always move forward in a linear fashion. However, in certain cases partnerships may be entered into without a long-term commitment. This could be in order to try out cooperation with informal civil-society actors, or if a sudden need arises to support new organisations or movements that are based on a single issue or mobilise for particular events.
- **Focus on localisation and local leadership.** Partnerships should be reciprocal and in keeping with the localisation agenda. Accordingly, they need to underpin local leadership. This calls for paying attention to the various dimensions of local leadership, including the South partners' ownership, as well as coordination, capacity development and financial transfers to local partners. This applies to all of Denmark's partnerships with civil society, and has been integrated into, for instance, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' new four-year Strategic Partnership Agreements (SPAs) with Danish civil-society organisations. It implies that the Danish organisations' role vis-à-vis partners in the South must be clarified, and in some cases reimagined. Danish and international civil-society organisations have networks, can express solidarity, and have competencies and knowledge that they share with partners in the South. This is important for the quality of the partnerships. We will set conditions and enter into a dialogue with Danish and international organisations about their new role in the partnerships and to ensure that the development cooperation brings results and is cost-effective.
- **Maximising impact.** We will concentrate our support where our analyses show that agents of change are at work and where the needs are greatest. This may include a variety of support modalities that are better suited to reach the more informally organised civil society, such as

protest movements and human-rights activists gathered in networks or local citizens' groups. It remains important to support organisations that are *anchored in the local context*, which may include human-rights organisations that do not fall within the traditional definition of civil society. The support is not confined to financial assistance, but may also consist of solidarity and lobbying, improvement of capacity, physical premises or online platforms, as well as help regarding documentation. This calls for attention to demonstrating the effects and results of the partnerships. In particular, it must be clear what a Danish (or international) partner's imprint on the interventions and contributions to the partnership consist of, and how this serves to deliver results.<sup>6</sup> We will also set more stringent requirements for our Danish partners to produce documentation about interventions, including in regard to localisation and local leadership of civil society.

- **Rights-based civil-society support (the human-right-based approach: HRBA).** All civil-society partnerships must be rights-based. The partners must document how they are taking a rights-based approach, and there is emphasis on the principle of *Leaving no-one behind* (LNOB) and on the PANT principles (participation, accountability, non-discrimination and transparency). Implementing the rights-based approach highlights both the capacity of duty-bearing authorities to uphold human rights and the ability of rights-holders to demand such compliance<sup>7</sup>. Civil society plays a crucial role as a rights advocate towards duty-bearers and in using its capacity to secure protection of human rights. In fragile contexts, where the proper authorities lack the capacity to realise such rights, civil society may also deliver essential services.
- **Support for service delivery must have a strategic perspective.** Support for service delivery cannot stand alone. It must serve the strategic purpose of underpinning advocacy and capacity development, and also have a strategic goal of engaging the authorities in a dialogue on their duties. Services play a part in bolstering advocacy by delivering specialised inputs, particularly in fragile contexts. This could be, for instance, reproductive healthcare, mental healthcare, protection against gender-based violence, agricultural development, micro credit, or urgent and life-saving relief aid. In fragile and conflict-affected contexts, civil society will typically focus more on service delivery, until the situation allows for civil society entering into a dialogue with the authorities about their role and responsibilities. In such cases, services lay the groundwork for promoting organisation, capacity development and advocacy. In fragile contexts, service delivery may also be an important tool to create a space in which civil-society organisations may address more sensitive subjects, such as protection of vulnerable groups, conflict management, building of resilience to prevent and alleviate crises, as well as advocacy.

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<sup>6</sup> Danish partners' roles in the cooperation with partners from the South, as well as the results of Danish support for civil society, have recently been evaluated by an independent team of consultants from INTRAC. This exercise showed that Danish civil-society organisations bring important knowledge, networking and competencies to the partnership, but also that there is room for greater involvement of local partners. [Evaluation of development cooperation \(website of Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, um.dk\)](#).

<sup>7</sup> See also the how-to note on human rights and democracy (HRD).

- **Gender and equality.** Cooperation with civil society serves to bolster Denmark’s strong focus on gender equality and on girls’ and women’s rights. This encompasses interventions for LGBT+ persons who experience discrimination and attacks. Civil-society partners are widely engaged in integrating gender equality into their work, including steps to ensure and report on the participation of girls and women in activities. Gender equality and girls’ and women’s rights are a cross-cutting priority in humanitarian as well as in development interventions. It has been mainstreamed into all engagements and, in some cases, it features as the primary objective.
- **Synergy across humanitarian, development and peace (HDP) interventions.** Civil-society support is at the heart of conflict prevention in areas affected by nearby conflict and an influx of refugees. Local organisations can, by virtue of their constituencies in and access to communities, deliver important contributions towards mediation and reconciliation, boosting resilience and counteracting radicalisation by promoting respect for each other’s freedom to think, believe and express themselves. Local faith-based organisations are among those engaged in fostering dialogue, peace and reconciliation. However, not all civil-society actors share our values and, for instance, oppose extremism and radicalisation. Thus, engaging with civil society in conflict-affected contexts requires particular attention to examining potential partners’ local constituency and legitimacy. These interventions cut across the HDP nexus,<sup>8</sup> and we will ensure that Danish support for civil-society organisations enable close interaction between humanitarian aid and long-term civil-society support, deploying a degree of flexibility that few other donors can match. This is reflected, for instance, in the new strategic partnerships for 2022-2025, which integrate support for local civil-society actors into a wide-ranging portfolio of engagements, including humanitarian interventions and conflict prevention, in accordance with the partners’ roles and mandates as well as with humanitarian principles. This adaptive approach also adds to the requirements for learning and documentation of results.
- **Pro-poor orientation.** Civil-society support has the potential to reach the most marginalised and vulnerable, and hence to adhere to the principle of leaving no-one behind. The four dimensions of the poverty concept<sup>9</sup> that are addressed through civil-society support are: access to resources, opportunities and choices, voice and influence, and personal security. This applies, for instance, to interventions for those in the world population who live with a disability in a developing country. They are typically limited in their participation in society, have a lower level of education and employment, poorer health and higher poverty rates. It also applies to those who have been displaced due to conflict or disaster. Other vulnerable and marginalised groups, such as indigenous peoples, LGBT+ persons, religious minorities, vulnerable young people, as well as girls and women, can often be reached through civil-society support too, as this has historically taken a markedly pro-poor approach. Thus, the reporting of civil-society partners to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs always contains reflections on how interventions are helping to fight poverty in the widest sense.

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<sup>8</sup> Also see the how-to note on Humanitarian, Development, Peace nexus (HDP).

<sup>9</sup> The four dimensions of poverty are fleshed out in more detail in the how-to note on fighting poverty and inequality.

## 5. Modalities of support

### **Bilateral support for civil society through country programmes based on expanded partnerships.**

In the countries with which Denmark has an expanded partnership, it is an obvious idea to include, within the bilateral aid package, an element of support for human rights and democracy, including for the building of a strong civil society. Civil-society organisations under local leadership may contribute towards Danish priorities. This applies, for instance, to health and climate, but also to the struggle for democracy and rights. In several countries with expanded partnerships, such support has been integrated into the interventions, interacting with strengthening of good governance and a general focus on human rights and democracy. Among the modalities used are multi-donor funds and grants for NGO platforms.

#### **The FAMOC fund in Mali**

Denmark's bilateral programme in Mali supports a diverse civil society and promotes democracy and citizen participation. To this end, a fund, using the acronym FAMOC, has been set up to support catalysts for change, focusing on those between 18 and 35 years of age. The fund supports small-scale projects, such as free legal aid for local populations, access to the court system, popular mobilisation, information about elections (including during the ongoing transition period in Mali), and better tax systems at the level of local government. The latter is done by encouraging people to pay their taxes, while ensuring the accountability of local authorities, for instance by obliging them to document that tax revenue is spent for the benefit of local citizens.

In fragile contexts, where social cohesion is threatened by fragmentation, support for civil society may play an important role in bolstering social cohesion. Various types of support for civil-society actors involved in fostering dialogue between social groups (say, political, religious or ethnic) may help deescalate conflict, destigmatise people and cement the relationship between certain social groups and the state.

#### **Myanmar: cooperation with civil society after the military coup in 2021**

Shortly after the military coup in February 2021 in Myanmar, a new civil-society fund was set up under the existing country programme with emphasis on supporting local civil-society organisations in the area of democracy and human rights, including protection from and documentation of human-rights violations. DKK 10 million was allocated to the fund, which is managed by a secretariat under the existing programme for human-rights education. To ensure synergy with the work of Danish SPA holders, an advisory board was appointed with representatives of NGOs receiving Danish support. The board has been tasked with exchanging professional views with the secretariat and with assisting in identifying suitable local partners. The fund has succeeded in channelling support to 11 local organisations, which continue to work, under tough conditions and at a high risk, within the shrinking space for protection of human rights and democratic activism in Myanmar. This direct support for local partners on the frontline has required close and continuous dialogue and advice, as well as flexible support modalities in order to reduce the partners' security risks.

In countries with targeted partnerships, the support channelled to and through civil society is also an important element in fulfilling Danish objectives and in ensuring that the cooperation between Danish and local civil society takes root and builds knowledge at the local level.

### **Multilateral support for civil society: the UN, EU, OECD, OSCE and European Council**

In countries without any presence of Danish bilateral aid or engagement channelled through Danish civil-society organisations and/or their local partners, support through the EU and other multilateral partners may serve to place democracy and human rights higher on the agenda, including by supporting civil society. At the country level, EU cooperation is an effective platform for entering into dialogue with governments and for exerting pressure, whenever necessary, for instance in response to a shrinking civic space, attacks on human-rights activists or persecution of minorities. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Council are other platforms where Denmark, alongside likeminded countries and through the EU, shines the spotlight on human rights and space for civil society.

Danish core contributions to UN organisations include elements of support for civil society, just as Danish support for the development banks is complemented by civil-society support to ensure citizen participation and accountability. In many cases, civil-society organisations act as implementing partners in multilateral programmes, since they have legitimacy, access and popular constituencies. This can be observed in the support for the UNDP, UNFPA and UNHCR, to name some examples, but also in the contributions towards the humanitarian country funds managed by the OCHA, in which it is a clear Danish priority to enhance the involvement and leadership role of local civil-society actors in the humanitarian response. Finally, there are significant multilateral undertakings in Danish country programmes, several of which have a civil-society component.

#### **Somalia: support for civil society through the OHCHR**

Danish support for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Somalia is helping to expand civil society's capacity to engage constructively with the authorities in Somalia on human-rights issues. The Danish-sponsored undertaking focuses specifically on capacity building of civil society with regard to coordination mechanisms, monitoring and documentation of human-rights violations in a fragile state like Somalia. The work is directly linked to the Universal Periodic Review process under the UN Human Rights Council and to Somalia's obligations thereunder.

Furthermore, Denmark is deeply involved in protecting and promoting civic space in the thematic debates and negotiations of resolutions in the UN General Assembly, the UN Human Rights Council, the UN Commission on Population and Development (CPD), the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and in the open meetings of the UN Security Councils. We also work at the overall level to allow civil-society organisations' meaningful participation in UN work and to protect human-rights advocates against reprisals for their cooperation with the UN system. Likewise, Denmark actively

champions the UN system's own mechanisms and mandates, which aim to protect and promote the space for civil society.

As part of a wider effort for Danish leadership in areas such as civic space, human rights, democracy and gender equality, Denmark has, in the course of 2020-2021 and in reaction to the Secretary General's [Call to Action for Human Rights](#), taken the lead in promoting meaningful civil-society participation in UN processes. The Danish initiative 'UNmute' focuses on civil-society participation in UN processes and in international forums generally. Likewise, Denmark's candidacy to and possible membership of the UN Security Council should be used to promote the work for democracy and human rights.

### **UNmute Civil Society**

Denmark has forged an alliance with Costa Rica in the deliberations between member states and civil societies on greater participation in UN processes. To avoid muting civil society, in 2020, Denmark and Costa Rica launched an '#UNmute Civil Society Action Coalition' alongside civil-society actors. The intention is to cooperate on digital and hybrid formats for civil society's participation in the UN's online activities during and after Covid-19.

Along with Costa Rica and in cooperation with the UN Foundation, CIVICUS, Action for Sustainable Development, ActionAid International, Forus and the Danish NGO Global Focus, in 2020, Denmark issued a series of recommendations for the promotion of meaningful civil-society participation, to which over 50 countries and 250 civil-society entities have subscribed.

In the OECD, Denmark is also active in rolling out the OECD-DAC's civil-society recommendation, passed in July 201. It sets the framework for supporting civil society, focusing on civic space and effective partnerships with the global South.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, the civil-society support is closely linked to many of Denmark's normative priorities in the area of human rights. Accordingly, there is a close dialogue between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Danish NGOs about policy proposals and analysis, for instance in the fight against torture and in relation to indigenous peoples.

### **Cooperation with the private sector on support for civil society**

Many civil-society organisations receive support from businesses, typically via private foundations. This gives the organisations broader financial underpinnings, thus boosting their resilience. Strong, independent civil-society organisations are a goal in its own right for Danish support, which is why Danish support is flexible, enabling the organisations to fundraise far and wide to secure this independence.

Denmark enters into dialogue with businesses and foundations in order to facilitate contact between civil society and the private sector. Partnerships between businesses and civil-society organisations are formed,

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<sup>10</sup> [OECD Legal Instruments](#)

for instance, to create innovative and sustainable solutions to development problems. Many civil-society organisations also take part in initiatives to promote commercial joint ventures between businesses and non-commercial actors, e.g. through the Danish ‘Danida Market Development Partnerships’ (DMDP).<sup>11</sup>

### **DanChurchAid: Partnership with the private sector on climate adaptation of small-scale farming**

Through the project ‘Agri-Tech Solutions’, investment capital and digital tools are increasing the production of 3,000 small-scale farmers in Kenya. The success of this undertaking stems from the expertise of both Danish and Kenyan partners. The goal is to enable climate adaptation and hence secure the incomes of farmers.

This broad cooperation involves DanChurchAid, a Danish company and a Kenyan micro-credit institution.

At the heart of the project is the drought-resistant chia seed and a newly developed app. The activities equip the numerous small-scale farmers of Kenya to grow chia, which is both highly nutritious and able to withstand drought. The farmers are taught about agricultural methods in order to raise their incomes by producing climate-change-resistant crops and by adhering to organic principles. The use of drought-tolerant crops will help create jobs and secure incomes and access to food.

### **Support to and through Danish civil-society organisations**

A significant share of Danish development aid is implemented through civil society. In 2021, Denmark channelled 19.4% of its total aid to and through civil-society partners<sup>12</sup>. The lion’s share of this goes to and through Danish partners<sup>13</sup>. The support channelled through Danish civil-society organisations serves the dual purpose of civil-society support, that is, it serves both as a channel through which Danish support is implemented and as a contribution *per se* towards strong and diverse civil societies in the global South (support to and through).

A substantial part of the support is fleshed out through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ four-year Strategic Partnership Agreements (SPAs) with Danish civil-society organisations. These agreements are closely linked to Danish development-policy priorities, and there is a continuous strategic dialogue between the ministry, embassies and civil society. At the same time, it upholds the arm’s length principle and the respect for partners’ own priorities and objectives by means of a flexibility that enables adjustment of interventions in response to changes in the operational context. Significantly, the SPAs have a strong emphasis on partnerships between organisations in Denmark and in the South. Although Danish

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<sup>11</sup> Under the item of ‘Partnerships for sustainable development and green transition’, Denmark has, for some years, been supporting initiatives under ‘Danida Market Development Partnerships’ (DMDP) [DMDP – Danida Market Development Partnerships](#)

<sup>12</sup> The OpenAid site establishes that approximately DKK 3.5 billion a year is spent on support for civil society. [Organisations \(um.dk\)](#).

<sup>13</sup> The OpenAid site establishes that 85% of the combined Danish civil-society support goes to ‘donor country-based NGOs’, of which the top-ten recipients are Danish civil-society organisations and their funds open for applications [Organisations \(um.dk\)](#).



organisations deliver significant added value (i.e. beyond the funding) to their partners in the South, recent studies indicate the usefulness of transferring more money and decision-making powers to some partners in the South so as to strengthen local leadership<sup>14</sup>. Finally, another priority in the support for civil society is to listen to those who are directly affected by Danish development aid, and to decentralise decision-making to the local level in the global South.

Another part of the civil-society support is managed by Danish networks and organisations in charge of administering funds open for applications, such as Disabled People's Organisations Denmark (DPOD), Danish Youth Council (DUF), Civil Society in Development (CISU) and Centre for Church-Based Development (CKU). This enables a wide array of popular and often volunteer-run organisations to engage in specific projects, thus favouring the diversity of civil society and the results of development work. It also gives rise to involving the Danish population at large in development cooperation. Finally, it creates a Danish presence and insight into a long list of developing countries where Denmark is not always represented.

### **Regional and international programmes**

A series of regional programmes implement support through civil-society organisations to advance human rights, democracy and good governance. These programmes pursue priorities of development policy as well as foreign policy. They include:

- The Danish-Arab Partnership Programme (DAPP) is Denmark's programme of cooperation with the Middle East and North Africa. It contributes to strengthening good governance and securing economic opportunities, especially for young people and women in the region.
- The European Neighbourhood Programme promotes democracy, human rights and green transition in the eastern neighbourhood with a strong emphasis on support for civil society.
- The programme for Syria's neighbourhood for Syrian refugees and vulnerable host communities, including the Regional Development and Protection Programme (RDPP), implements some of its support through local civil-society organisations to improve the living conditions of refugees and host communities.
- NGO support for climate interventions aims to pursue Danish priorities in the areas of climate adaptation and green job creation.
- Support for a number of NGOs as part of the global anticorruption programme (starting from 2023, this will become a combined anticorruption and tax programme).

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<sup>14</sup> Evaluation of Danish support to civil society, 2021; Study on Danish Support to Informally Organised Civil Society and Social Movements in Developing Countries, 2021 [Evaluation of development cooperation \(um.dk\)](#).



## Supporting funds open for applications and networks of civil-society organisations

### Civil Society in Development, CISU

Our work with CISU ensures that Danish development cooperation is rooted in the wider Danish population. As of today, CISU has 276 member organisations, which account for a combined total of 1.8 million individual members, over 500,000 financial contributors and more than 300,000 volunteers. CISU's 'Civil Society Fund' supports rights-based interventions that are implemented in people-to-people cooperation between Danish organisations and their partners in developing countries in order to promote, among other aims, strong, independent and diverse civil societies at all levels from community groups to global alliances. The fund finances projects that, for instance, help children in prison in Zambia, improve the sexual health of sex workers and transgender people in Malawi and Uganda, strengthen resilience to climate change in Nepal, and ensure access to school in Bolivia.

### Disabled People's Organisations Denmark (DPOD)

Danish support channelled through DPOD addresses the need for meaningful participation of persons with disabilities, both through DPOD's direct cooperation with fellow umbrella organisations for persons with disabilities, e.g. in Rwanda and Nepal, and through 'the Disability Fund'. DPOD's member organisation can apply to the Disability Fund for grants for direct cooperation with partners in the South. For instance, the Danish Association of the Blind is working with counterpart organisations in Gambia, Sierra Leone and Liberia in order to bolster democratic structures within the disability organisations, while SIND (Danish Association for Mental Health) is working with psychosocial counselling in Uganda.

## Support for international NGOs

Apart from the transfers to and through Danish civil-society organisations, Denmark supports a number of international NGOs, each of which contributes to important policy agendas, e.g. in the area of *sexual and reproductive health and rights* (SRHR). These international NGOs have special expertise and networks that enables them to address particularly sensitive issues, such as SRHR. These big organisations reach large numbers of people in many countries, have local partners and are capable of delivering innovative models of healthcare and of engaging in international advocacy. One example is the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), which supports national clinics around the globe in providing counselling on contraception, sex education, pregnancy and birth, safe abortion, etc. These partners' target groups include the most vulnerable people in society, which is always a priority for Denmark's in the choice of partnerships with international NGOs.

We also support a number of international NGOs through the Danish initiative 'DK4CivicSpace', which promotes, among other causes, emergency assistance for human-rights activists, building of digital resilience, defence of freedom of association, assembly and expression, and support for free media. This support is implemented through a series of international NGOs that are leaders in this field. They include CIVICUS, Front Line Defenders, Digital Defenders Partnership and Access Now, among others. The Danish initiative 'Tech for Democracy' also focuses on expanding the digital civic space, online inclusion

and online democracy. Finally, Denmark supports mechanisms to protect human-rights advocates in danger, including ‘Claim Your Space’, which is administered by the Danish NGO Global Focus and can be used by Danish civil-society organisations and their partners.

### **Claim Your Space – support for human-rights activists in acute danger**

The Claim Your Space fund aims to provide urgent help for activists and civil-society organisations in the global South. Moreover, it supports local initiatives to protect and maintain civic space. The fund is accessible to the partners of Danish civil-society organisations in a host of countries, such as Myanmar, Bangladesh, Palestine, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya.

Since its foundation in 2020, the fund has awarded grants to a vast variety of actors with activities in a wide array of fields. It has benefited groups involved in youth and student activism, women’s rights, indigenous peoples’ rights and LGBT+ rights. The applicants have received funding for items such as emergency evacuation and safe-housing, lawyers and bails, hospital stays and psychological counselling.