MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF DENMARK

DANIDA | INTERNATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

EVALUATION OF THE STRATEGY
FOR DANISH HUMANITARIAN ACTION
2010-2015

Synthesis report

EVALUATION

2015.01

Evaluation of the strategy
for Danish humanitarian action
2010-2015

itad

May 2015

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Acronyms and abbreviations

ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance
AMA	Australian Multilateral Assessment
ASEAN	Association of South-East Asian Nations
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund (UN)
CHF	Common Humanitarian Fund
CRED	Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DACAAR	Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees
DFID	UK Department for International Development
DKK	Danish Krone
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ECHO	European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ERF	Emergency Response Fund
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
EU	European Union
EVAL	Evaluation Department
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GHD	Good Humanitarian Donorship
GNA	ECHO's Global Vulnerability and Crisis Assessment Index
HAP	Humanitarian Accountability Partnership
HCP	Humanitarian Action, Civil Society and Personnel Advisors
HCP-DB	Danida's Humanitarian and ROI database
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HLWG	Humanitarian Liaison Working Group
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross
KVA	Quality Assurance Department
LRRD	Linking Relief Rehabilitation and Development
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOPAN	Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODSG	OCHA Donor Support Group
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
oPT	occupied Palestinian Territories

TA	Transformative Agenda
ToR	Terms of Reference
UFT	Danida's Technical Advisory Service
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	UN Children's Fund
UNISDR	UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
WFP	World Food Programme
WHS	World Humanitarian Summit

Acknowledgments

Executive Summary

Between 2010 and 2014 Denmark provided almost DKK 9.2 billion in humanitarian assistance. During this period annual humanitarian funding increased by 47%, from DKK 1.5 billion in 2010 to DKK 2.2 billion in 2014. The Strategy for Danish Humanitarian Action 2010-2015 sets out the overall objectives, key directions and priorities underpinning this assistance, and the instruments used to implement the Strategy.

In 2014 Danida commissioned Itad to conduct the first comprehensive evaluation of Danida's humanitarian action since 1999. The evaluation has two specific objectives: to inform Danida's decision making and strategic direction when formulating its new strategy for humanitarian action after 2015; and to document the results achieved under the Strategy.

This synthesis report presents the findings of the evaluation against six overarching evaluation questions, drawing on case study interviews and data collection in South Sudan, Syria and Afghanistan, as well as interviews with Danida and its partners at headquarters level. One challenge with the current Strategy is that it does not include indicators or a results framework for monitoring implementation and measuring the achievement of objectives. This makes it difficult to assess Danida's implementation of the Strategy in detail.

Findings

Relevance and flexibility of the Humanitarian Strategy
The Humanitarian Strategy remains relevant despite changes in the humanitarian context, partly because the Strategy was far-sighted in including issues such as vulnerability, resilience and innovation, which have become increasingly important. It is broad in its scope, having 47 priorities, but the Humanitarian Action, Civil Society and Personnel Advisors department (HCP) has identified a hierarchy among them. Also, Danida has made the strategic decision to focus on three areas that have subsequently guided its funding decisions and approach. It has developed longer-term partnerships with a limited number of Danish NGOs and international organisations, focused on protection in conflict-affected contexts (rather than on the strategic direction on climate change and natural hazards), and committed to deeper engagement in selected chronic crises. The evaluation found this decision to be justifiable, particularly the focus on partnerships, which current partners strongly endorsed.

Although Danida is focusing on a limited number of protracted crises, it is able to ensure adequate coverage of its humanitarian assistance through four means: (a) by giving partners flexibility to respond within crisis-affected regions, rather than focusing on specific countries; (b) by allocating flexible funds to NGO partners and UNHCR to respond to sudden-onset crises outside the priority crises; (c) by providing additional funding outside framework agreements for new emergencies; and (d) by providing significant funding to the Central Emergency Response Fund, which responds to acute emergencies as well as under-funded crises.

The evaluation questions emphasised the strategic priorities of targeting assistance to the most vulnerable, gender-sensitive programming, promoting protection from gender-

based violence and accountability to affected populations. However, partner reporting on these issues is not consistent and do not specifically identify the results achieved. These priorities should be the foundation of good humanitarian programmes so it is not unreasonable for Danida to expect partners to incorporate them into their programming systematically and to demonstrate that they are doing this.

Despite substantial staff cuts, HCP is managing a growing proportion of the aid budget. It also engages in policy dialogue and with the governance of international organisations, and is providing increasing support to Ministers on humanitarian crises. It is able to do this due to the quality of its staff but stretched resources mean that it has not been able to follow up on results to the extent foreseen in the Strategy.

**Relevance and effectiveness of Danida's engagement
in humanitarian policy dialogue**
Denmark's level of engagement in global policy forums and on the boards of international organisations is impressive. As part of its commitment to multilateralism, Denmark has sought to strengthen the work of international organisations and the humanitarian system's effectiveness by taking on leadership roles. Its partnership with UNHCR is a good example of how a relatively small donor can exert considerable influence by combining funding with active involvement from both Copenhagen and Geneva. Denmark currently advocates on a broad range of humanitarian issues, including that of protection in specific crises, which it has raised in several forums, such as during its chairmanship of the Humanitarian Liaison Working Group in 2013. Other donor missions in Geneva and New York noted that it is difficult to identify the specific contribution of a single donor to policy discussions, but the Solutions Alliance is an interesting example of Denmark combining engagement on the issue of protracted displacement with support for UNHCR to address a particularly challenging problem. This demonstrates that Danida's strong partnerships, which go beyond funding agreements, support its policy work and advocacy role.

Danida promotes coordination between humanitarian actors through a range of mechanisms. It has also been active in the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) initiative. However, its limited humanitarian presence at field level has restricted its ability to participate actively in policy discussions and donor coordination at country level. In particular, partners responding to the Syria crisis called for Denmark to have a voice at country and/or regional level. This would enable it to promote the GHD principles in a highly politicised context.

Partnership as a key implementing modality
Danida's partners strongly endorsed its partnership approach and were highly appreciative of the quality of its funding (notably its flexibility and support for innovation and new approaches, so that Danida's funding plays a catalytic role). Partners also value the predictability of the framework agreements and emphasised that the quality of Danida's funding set it apart from other donors. While the partnership is based on trust, Danida works to ensure that partners have robust administrative, financial and reporting systems in place. It places less emphasis on independent verification of the results delivered for affected populations, particularly in the case of international organisations. This is a potential challenge because even strong systems do not always translate into effective programmes. It also makes it more difficult for Danida to base funding levels on performance criteria and to assess whether it is working with the most effective partners.

Danida has been active in promoting the adherence by NGO partners to humanitarian and accountability standards. Although partners do not have to report on their accountability to affected populations, they tend to have mechanisms in place. However, these are not always effective at providing clear information or responding to recipients' concerns. Danida's partners attempt to target humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable and use different tools for this; but they could refine their targeting through more systematic vulnerability analyses.

Follow-up, monitoring and reporting on performance
Danida has four potential mechanisms for assessing partner performance. One of these is engagement on the boards of international organisations, where it has used its position to advocate for the strengthening of systems for reporting results. Danida could, however, complement this with a range of mechanisms for assessing results at field level to go beyond partner self-reporting on the results achieved through its humanitarian funding.

A second mechanism for assessing partner performance is documented results such as annual reports, reviews and evaluations but this has been of limited value for a number of reasons. These include the variations in reporting that make it difficult for Danida to identify and aggregate the results achieved; the provision of NGO reports 11 months after the end of a financial year, which reduces their utility; and the length of some reports, which HCP staff do not have time to read in detail due to other demands.

Danida makes extensive use of the third mechanism of informal, verbal communication to gather information about partner programming and challenges. This is through frequent telephone conversations with NGO partners as well as information gathered through the Geneva and New York missions.

Danida has limited capacity for using the fourth mechanism, following-up on programme delivery at field level because it is difficult for HCP staff members to travel to the field to follow-up on projects owing to time constraints and a restricted travel budget. Embassies have little capacity for following up on humanitarian projects and all MFA staff have to comply with security restrictions that make it difficult to travel to project sites in insecure areas. However, it could make greater use of independent reviews and evaluations, whether commissioned by Danida or directly by partners.

Linking emergency and development objectives and activities
There are a number of areas of common ground between the Humanitarian Strategy and policy and strategy documents related to development assistance, including a commitment to respect humanitarian principles and to strengthen linkages between the two forms of assistance. The challenge is to ensure complementary and holistic programming in practice. Currently, humanitarian aid is managed in Copenhagen while embassies are responsible for development programmes but the programme managers provide input into each other's decision-making processes. This collaboration is facilitated by the fact that Danida focuses both its humanitarian and development assistance on fragile and conflict-affected contexts. But there are also several barriers to ensuring greater cooperation between HCP and the embassies. These include:

- stretched resources at both levels;

- a lack of clarity about the extent to which embassies are responsible for following-up on humanitarian activities;

- very little sense of joint responsibility for Danida's assistance to a country overall and to following- up on results;

- a lack of adequate humanitarian expertise at embassy level.

The country policy and country programme documents represent an opportunity to ensure synergies at programmatic level. While country policy papers cover the full spectrum of Denmark's engagement with a given country, country programme papers tend to cover only the development programme managed at embassy level. The recent Somalia country programme document is an exception and a potential example of how these could promote and reflect a more coordinated approach to the different forms of assistance.

Good Humanitarian Donorship Principles
Danida is highly respected as a donor that adheres to many of the GHD principles. In particular, partners appreciated the timeliness, flexibility and predictability of its funding and its willingness to accept global reports. The Strategy reflects several other GHD principles as well. Like other Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donors, Danida channels around 60% of its humanitarian funding through UN agencies and UN-managed pooled funds. However, these partners do not always adhere to the same GHD principles when passing funds on to NGO partners and Danida should take this into consideration during the Strategy revision process.

HCP works with its partners to ensure that they undertake needs assessments and that programming decisions are based on humanitarian needs. While it analyses information on humanitarian needs and funding when selecting priority crises and allocating additional funds to crises, it could document this decision making better to increase transparency.

Conclusions

Danida's partners were positive about the broad scope of the Strategy because it reflects their priorities and provides considerable flexibility. However, some interviewees felt that 47 strategic priorities are too many to guide Danida's humanitarian assistance effectively and, therefore, the revised Strategy should be more focused while also addressing emerging challenges in the humanitarian context; this includes the issues that have been raised in discussions around the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS). Danida could focus on areas where it has already built up experience but which are not addressed well by other donors (such as protection and coordination). It could also build on its comparative advantage of flexible funding and strategic partnerships.

Danida's current approach to following-up on the results delivered by partners has been to focus on whether they have adequate systems in place and to rely heavily on partner self-reporting. It has placed less emphasis on independent verification of the results delivered, particularly in the case of international organisations. This is in line with Danida's culture of trust as well as its view that it should support partners' own tracking of results and learning. However, even strong systems do not always translate into effective programmes and reviews have identified weaknesses in the reporting systems of a number of partners. This suggests that, as part of implementing the priority of a greater focus on results, it is important for Danida to use a variety of mechanisms to increase independent oversight of its partners' programmes.

Danida's partners are very appreciative of its approach to implementing the strategic direction on strengthening partnerships because they regard Danida as a genuine partner, not simply as a donor. However, it is currently challenging for Danida to base its funding levels on performance criteria and to assess whether it is working with the most effective partners. While Danida has made efforts to engage with non-DAC donors in policy dialogues, it channels its assistance through traditional partners – UN agencies, Danish NGOs and the International Committee of the Red Cross. However, local, national and regional actors are playing a greater role in humanitarian assistance and the consultations for the WHS have led to a strong call for supporting localised responses. Therefore, as part of the Strategy revision process, Danida needs to ensure that it is working with the most effective partners and identify how best to support more localised responses (whether through the networks of its NGO partners or more creative partnerships with non-DAC donors).

Danida, like other donors, is grappling with how best to strengthen the links between its humanitarian and development assistance without risking compromising its humanitarian principles, particularly since its assistance is focused on conflict-affected contexts. How humanitarian and development actors can work together better to deliver better results for affected populations is one of the questions being explored during consultations for the WHS. This is going to be increasingly important as humanitarian actors struggle to respond to rapidly growing humanitarian needs and development actors are more active in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. Therefore, Danida senior management will need to address the barriers highlighted by the evaluation and incentivise change.

Recommendations

There are four main recommendations listed below. Although the recommendations have been targeted at different actors according to who will have primary responsibility for implementation, it is expected that all the recommendations will be implemented through a collaborative approach across MFA departments.

1. Danida should undertake an inclusive consultation process to revise the Strategy and secure buy-in for a revised Strategy that is more focused on a limited set of priorities, which are based on its comparative advantage. It should be explicit about the outcomes that it seeks to achieve through each priority. Then, the priorities could act as an organising principle running through Danida's advocacy and policy engagement through partnership agreements to assessing the results achieved with its funding. The revised Strategy should also include indicators to help measure the implementation of key priorities and an action plan to guide Strategy implementation.

2. Danida should strengthen its focus on results, including field-level follow-up of programme delivery. This would involve defining clearly the results on which it expects partners to report, financing a help-desk function that would increase HCP's capacity for tracking results and analysis without requiring an increase in staffing, working with other donors on joint evaluations, and using a range of mechanisms to strengthen its follow-up at field level.

3. HCP should allocate funding to partners on the basis of performance and ensure that it works with the most effective partners. As part of this, it should review the programme delivery and results for affected populations achieved by all partners every three to four years and find alternative partners where necessary. Danida should also consider whether its level of humanitarian funding to UN agencies is appropriate, given efficiency considerations and that they often fail to pass on the benefits of Danida's adherence to the GHD principles to their implementing partners.

4. Danida should ensure greater complementarity between its humanitarian and development assistance. Actions to achieve this would include strengthening capacity within embassies to follow-up on Danida-funded humanitarian assistance and engage in field-level humanitarian policy dialogue and donor coordination in major crises; fostering greater collaboration between different actors in a particular crisis through the use of task forces to promote coordination and better follow-up of Danida-funded interventions; and ensuring that embassy staff working on development assistance in countries with humanitarian crises understand the interconnections between vulnerability, stability, strengthening state capacity, development assistance and humanitarian action so that they can work more effectively in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

1 Introduction

The Evaluation Department (EVAL) of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) commissioned Itad to conduct this first comprehensive evaluation of Danida's humanitarian action since 1999. This synthesis report presents the main findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation, drawing on case study interviews and data collection in South Sudan, Syria and Afghanistan, as well as interviews with Danida and its partners at headquarters level.

An Evaluation Reference Group (ERG), chaired by EVAL and consisting of representatives from relevant departments, including the Humanitarian Action, Civil Society and Personnel Advisors department (HCP) and the Technical Advisory Service (UFT), oversaw the evaluation. In addition, EVAL contracted a three-person expert panel as part of its quality assurance process. The members were Randolph Kent from the Humanitarian Futures Programme at King's College, Sara Pantuliano, Director of the Humanitarian Policy Group at the Overseas Development Institute, and Ed Schenkenberg, Executive Director of HERE-Geneva. The panel's role was to provide input into the evaluation process and help ensure that the evaluation is useful, relevant and of a high quality.

The evaluation team comprised Tasneem Mowjee (Team Leader), David Fleming, Erik Toft and Teresa Hanley.

1.1 Objectives and scope of the evaluation

The present Strategy for humanitarian action, launched in September 2009, sets out the overall objectives, key directions and priorities for Danish humanitarian action, and outlines the instruments that will be used to implement the Strategy. The Strategy stipulates that its implementation would be subject to an independent evaluation in 2015, in order to inform the formulation of a new humanitarian strategy. The MFA plans to develop the revised Strategy in 2015 and launch it in 2016 after the WHS so that the revised Strategy can reflect the outcomes of the summit. The MFA decided to begin the evaluation in 2014, with a follow-up phase in early 2016, to ensure that the evaluation contributed to the Strategy revision process and to improving Danida's ways of working even before the end of the strategy period.

The evaluation has two specific objectives. These are to:

1.   inform Danida's decision-making and strategic direction when it formulates its new Strategy for humanitarian action after 2015;

2.   document the results achieved through the implementation of the Strategy.

The second objective is important for helping Danida to understand whether its focus on implementing certain strategic priorities is delivering the desired results. It is particularly relevant because of the lack of a comprehensive and well-structured monitoring system within Danida to document and analyse the results of interventions (Kabell 2013: 8).

More specifically, the objective of the evaluation is to provide answers to six overarching evaluation questions specified by the Terms of Reference (ToR). Together these cover the seven criteria for the evaluation of humanitarian assistance – relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability, coherence and coverage – stipulated by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC). The six questions are as follows:

1.   How relevant and flexible is the Danish Humanitarian Strategy given the changing humanitarian context since 2010?

2.   How relevant and effective has Danida's engagement been in the international policy dialogue on humanitarian issues?

3.   What lessons can be drawn from relying on partnerships as the key implementing modality?

4.   How well does Danida support and ensure follow-up, monitoring and reporting of performance by partners, including ensuring reporting on the effects on affected populations?

5.   What are the lessons learned of linking emergency relief and development, that is, reconciling humanitarian and development objectives in specific contexts and settings?

6.   To what extent do the design, delivery and management of the Humanitarian Strategy align with the Principles and Practice of Good Humanitarian Donorship?

The evaluation scope is focused on gathering evidence of results across the entire period of implementation from 2010 to 2014. The evaluation covers both the policy and operational level in order to inform the development of the new strategy. At the policy level, the team reviewed the coherence and clarity of the strategic framework and its usefulness in guiding Danish international policy dialogue efforts as well as allocation and implementation decisions. At the operational level, the team assessed the implementation performance of partners and documented and analysed results across three selected case studies: two full field-level studies in South Sudan and Jordan/Lebanon (for the Syria crisis response), and one desk-based study of Danish assistance to Afghanistan. It has also drawn on lessons from other countries and crises where evaluative evidence exists.

The evaluation's primary users will be stakeholders at the MFA and Danida's implementing partners, while the Parliament and general public are likely to be secondary users. As described in Annex B, Danida has adopted an innovative approach to the evaluation by commissioning the main evaluation before the end of the Strategy's implementation period and then commissioning a follow-up on implementation of recommendations from this phase of the evaluation. The follow-up phase will take place in January-February 2016 to follow up on any changes to the management of humanitarian assistance. The team will conduct a participatory stakeholder workshop at the end of the follow-up phase that should contribute both to the finalisation of the revised Strategy and to Danida's preparation for the World Humanitarian Summit that will take place in Istanbul in May 2016.

1.2 Structure of the synthesis report

This synthesis report presents the main findings, conclusions and recommendations at the level of Danida's global strategy. It is based on document reviews and interviews conducted by the evaluation team at both the global level as well as through two in-depth field-level case studies (South Sudan and Syria crisis) and one more limited desk study (Afghanistan). These three case study reports are included as annexes to this report.

Chapter 2 of this report sets out the evaluation approach and methodology, including the main challenges and limitations. Chapter 3 provides an overview of Danida's Humanitarian Strategy and funding. Chapter 4 presents the main findings of the evaluation against each of the six overarching evaluation questions and 19 sub-questions. Finally, Chapter 5 sets out the evaluation's conclusions and recommendations.

2 Evaluation Approach and Methodology

This chapter sets out the team's overall approach to the evaluation. It is based on an analytical framework (presented in Section 2.1) to ensure systematic data collection and analysis of the evidence. It incorporates a case study approach, with two in-depth case studies of the response to the current humanitarian crises in South Sudan and Syria, and a desk-based case study of the Danish response in Afghanistan.

In addition to a review of policy, strategy, evaluative and reporting documentation,[1] the team conducted interviews with:

- 24 staff members from Danida's eight NGO partners in Copenhagen, as well as 56 staff members from the eight partners at field level;

- 31 staff members from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Danida's United Nations partners at headquarters level, as well as 52 staff members at field level;

- 24 staff members from the MFA, including the missions in Geneva and New York, the embassies in Rome, Addis Ababa, Nairobi and Yangon, and staff at field level for the case studies;

- 15 representatives of other donors, including from missions in Geneva and New York, as well as at field level;

- 19 informants from other NGOs and organisations at headquarters and field level;

- 13 gender-disaggregated focus group discussions with beneficiaries in South Sudan and Syria.[2]

Section 2.2 outlines the evaluation methodology and process, including approach to the case studies, as well as the data collection tools employed by the team. Section 2.3 describes how the team synthesised findings from the case studies with the findings from the desk review to generate conclusions and recommendations at the strategy level. Finally, Section 2.4 provides a detailed summary of the challenges and limitations faced by the evaluation team in conducting the evaluation and applying the approach and methodology set out below.

2.1 Evaluation approach and analytical framework

The evaluation has a dual purpose, to provide accountability to Danish taxpayers and aid recipients, and to learn lessons for the future implementation of the Strategy. Given the particular emphasis from Danida on the latter, the team devised an approach and methodology around the three core principles of utilisation, participation and learning.

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1   A full bibliography of documents consulted is provided in Annex I.
2   A full list of persons interviewed is provided in Annex H.

It was clear from initial consultations during the inception phase that, for the evaluation process as well as the report to be truly useful for Danida and its partners, the team needed to build a strong sense of ownership of the evaluation's findings and recommendations within Danida and its strategic partners. This was achieved through setting out a participatory process with ongoing dialogue and engagement with the main evaluation stakeholders at critical stages of the evaluation.

The team had originally proposed a theory-based approach to the evaluation. Its aim was to develop a theory of change for the Strategy with Danida staff during the inception phase, and use this to guide data collection and an analysis of the contribution made by Danida and its partners to the results identified during the evaluation. However, based on findings from the theory of change exercise conducted with stakeholders during the inception phase, the team felt that it would be inappropriate to construct a theory retrospectively where no single underlying rationale behind the Strategy exists, and which would require the evaluation team to make a number of major assumptions.

In the absence of a theory of change to guide data collection and analysis, the team developed an analytical framework as the basis for conducting the evaluation. This consisted of two tools: an evaluation matrix, and an evidence assessment framework. These were designed to ensure that the evaluation took a rigorous and systematic approach to answering the evaluation questions.

2.1.1 Evaluation matrix
The evaluation matrix guided the team's data collection during the evaluation and helped to ensure that it took a coherent and comprehensive approach to answering the questions in the ToR. The matrix is included in Annex C of this report.

The evaluation matrix sets out the six overarching evaluation questions from the ToR, divided into a total of 19 sub-questions. Each sub-question has a number of indicators against which the team gathered evidence during the desk and field phases of the evaluation. These include the critical assumptions that Danida staff identified during the theory of change exercise at the stakeholder workshop. The matrix also identifies the analytical methods used to answer each sub-question and the sources of data for each indicator. Section 2.2 below describes these analytical methods in greater detail.

2.1.2 Evidence assessment framework
The team developed an evidence assessment framework to organise and analyse the data gathered during the evaluation. The team used this during the desk review phase to document the evidence gathered against each indicator by data source (e.g. Danida interviews, partner interviews, documents, etc.). This enabled the team to identify the emerging findings from the evaluation to help focus data collection during the field visits. The framework was then used together with the field-level findings as part of the evaluation synthesis process to identify the final findings from the evaluation that are underpinned by strong evidence. See Section 2.3 for more details.

The tool also allowed the team to eschew the risk of excluding relevant issues that are not covered by the evaluation questions through the inclusion of a section under each sub-question to capture any additional relevant evidence.

2.2 Evaluation process and methodology

This section outlines the key components of the evaluation methodology and the main stages in the evaluation process. A more detailed description of the methodological building blocks and evaluation process is included in Annex B.

Evaluation methodology

The participatory and learning-focused approach described above was underpinned by a number of core methodological building blocks. Figure 1 below summarises these while Annex B describes each tool.

Figure 1: Methodological building blocks

Policy/Strategy Analysis

Analysis of Danida policy and strategy documents

Analysis of strategy against GHD Principles

Context Analysis

Analysis of global context in which assistance is provided

Identification of strategic priorities that remain relevant

Identification of key challenges that have emerged

Portfolio Analysis

Analysis of Danida's humanitarian portfolio to understand budget allocations

Assessment of extent to which the strategy has guided budget allocation decisions

Results Tracking

Assessment of the adequacy and quality of results documentation and monitoring by partners

Review of partner reports, evaluation reports and capacity assessments

Partner Analysis

Comparative analysis of Danida's strategic humanitarian partners

Assessment of effectiveness of partnership approach in delivering against strategy priorities

Online Survey

Address evidence gaps through targeting partner organisation staff in field locations not covered by the case studies

Evaluation process

As summarised in Figure 2 below, the evaluation has comprised three phases so far: an inception phase (May-June 2014), the desk review and field study phase (July-September 2014) and the analysis and reporting phase (October 2014-February 2015). In addition, there will be a follow-up and update phase, currently planned for January-February 2016. Annex B describes the main activities that the team undertook in each phase.

Figure 2: Key phases and activities of the evaluation

Inception	**Desk review and field study**	**Analysis & reporting**	**Follow-up and update**
Initial stakeholder consultations	Policy & strategy analysis	Case study reports	Interviews with stakeholders
Evaluation design	Context analysis	Evaluation synthesis	Document review
Design of tools for data collection and analysis	Comparative partner analysis	Draft evaluation report	Update of findings
Inception report	Portfolio analysis	Findings and validation workshop	Follow-up report
	Results tracking	Final evaluation report	Follow-up phase workshop
	Detailed stakeholder consultations		
	Online survey		
	Case study visits		
	Debriefing notes		

2.3   Approach to evaluation synthesis

Once the team had produced draft case study reports, it convened over Skype to discuss emerging findings at the synthesis level. This approach has been important to ensure that evidence from the three individual case studies feeds into global conclusions and recommendations. To guide a systematic approach to analysis, the team used the evidence assessment framework to derive emerging findings from the desk review phase against each evaluation sub-question. This was used in conjunction with an additional Excel-based mapping tool to critically interpret the findings and conclusions from the three case studies and generate an understanding of their applicability at the global level. Table 1 below presents a sample of the framework, showing the analysis and synthesis of findings against the first sub-question.

Once the team had recorded conclusions from each case study, it arrived at an overall interpretation for each evaluation sub-question, which aimed to present a balanced picture across the studies and triangulate with findings and conclusions drawn from desk-based methods. This synthesised interpretation then formed the basis for the main findings in this synthesis report.

Table 1: Outline of evaluation synthesis mapping framework

EQ 1

How relevant and flexible is the Danish Humanitarian Strategy given the changing humanitarian context since 2010?

	Summary of conclusions				Synthesis
	South Sudan	**Syria**	**Afghanistan**	**Desk methods**	**Overall interpretation**
EQ 1.1 Have the strategic priorities been relevant, given changing humanitarian challenges?	The interventions supported in South Sudan have been relevant to the context. Partners found Danish support to be very flexible, and more so than some other donors, particularly due to the possibility of accessing additional funds and shifting funds from planned development activities	Danida's Humanitarian Strategy remains relevant to the Syria crisis response, particularly the focus on vulnerability, protection, linking emergency and longer-term approaches, and the promotion of innovation. Partner capacity for scanning the environment to ensure that their responses remain relevant or can adapt to changing circumstances tended to be limited to short-term planning exercises	There is a clear strategic focus for engagement in Afghanistan, particularly focus on vulnerability through combination of longer-term support to refugees and IDPs and emergency assistance to those at risk of natural disasters and conflict	The Context Analysis shows that priorities such as resilience remain relevant while urbanisation presents a new challenge to humanitarian actors, and technology and innovation represent new opportunities. The range of new actors in the humanitarian field also has implications for Danida	Overall, partners felt that the priorities in the Strategy have been relevant even though changes in the humanitarian context mean that there are new challenges that the revised Strategy will need to address. Although the humanitarian context has been changing rapidly during the Strategy implementation period, aid agencies tend to be more focused on responding to immediate needs and risks rather than scanning the environment for future threats

2.4 Methodological challenges and limitations

The following section sets out the key limitations to data collection throughout the evaluation, and how the team's approach, methods and tools have affected the accuracy of findings, confidence in findings, and the reliability of conclusions.

Use of a theory-based approach: As discussed above, the team originally planned to develop a theory of change behind the Strategy, with the idea that it would be tested and reconstructed during the evaluation in order to assess Danida's contribution to results. However, the team judged early in the evaluation that this approach was not feasible on the basis of findings from the first stakeholder workshop with Danida staff in the inception phase, which showed that there were different views about how the Strategy would bring about change and how these changes might look. The team, therefore, felt that it would be inappropriate to construct a theory retrospectively where no single underlying rationale behind the Strategy existed, and which would require the evaluation team to make a substantial number of assumptions. The team subsequently adapted its overarching evaluation approach to focus instead on participation and learning while maintaining a robust approach to evidence assessment through the use of an evaluation matrix and evidence assessment framework. As part of the inception report, the team did not completely rule out using a theory-based approach and aimed to explore the option of developing theories of change at the country level (i.e. thinking about how the Strategy is applied in a particular context) to provide a focus for field-level evidence gathering. However, this was also deemed unworkable owing to insufficient empirical evidence from the field on which to base a retrospective construction of a theory of change.

Identifying results of Strategy implementation from partner reporting: Consultations during the inception phase made it clear that Danida and its framework agreement NGO partners have struggled with reporting against the 47 strategic priorities in the current Strategy. Also, as part of its partnership approach and adherence to the GHD principles, Danida does not require its partners to use a specific reporting format if they already have an internal format or one that they use for other donors. This means that it is has been difficult to get an overview of results and to compare these across partners and, in the case of multiple sources of funding for a programme, to identify Danida's contribution to results. This is particularly the case since Danida provides a large proportion of flexible funding, not earmarked to specific projects.[3] The team dealt with this challenge by (1) using the comparative partner analysis to identify which of the strategic priorities each partner is addressing through its programmes and how this contributes to the overall implementation of the Strategy; and (2) by focusing on evaluating the Strategy rather than individual partner interventions to examine whether Danida's decisions and strategic choices have been effective for implementing the Strategy, and whether partners have effective monitoring and reporting systems in place to inform Danida of results.

Access to documentation: Access to documentation from Danida was a challenge for the evaluation team. The team was reliant on Danida to provide the full range of documents relating to its strategic partners (such as reports on reviews by the Technical Advisory Service and NGO capacity assessments) as well as other relevant reports. However, during the course of the evaluation, the team identified that several documents

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3   In the case of UN partners, which have received regional funding for the Syria crisis, for example, and country-based pooled funds.

were missing.[4] Although it was able to locate public documents, such as the annual reports of international organisation partners, and Danida provided some additional documentation following the presentation of the draft report, some non-public documents were unavailable.

Field site access: The case study teams encountered some drawbacks related to field site accessibility. A limited number of partners were using Danida's funding in Jordan as well as in Lebanon because they found the flexibility of Danida's funding more helpful for operations within Syria or cross-border operations. As a result, the team's ability to gather a wide range of evidence from multiple project site visits was less than expected; but the team was still able to gather sufficient evidence to answer the evaluation questions. In South Sudan, logistical and security constraints meant that the team was not able to visit all of Danida's partner projects. However, given that this is not a project evaluation but rather an evaluation focused at the strategic level, this was not found to constitute a major bias. For the Afghanistan desk study, due to high staff turnover, Danida initially identified only three key informants within the MFA for interview. The team was later able to interview two Danida partners. The desk report makes this limitation very clear when presenting findings and conclusions.

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4   For example, it did not have capacity assessment reports for two NGO partners and was missing at least one review report.

3 Danida's Humanitarian Strategy and Funding

This chapter provides an overview of Danida's humanitarian strategy (Section 3.1) and a summary of how humanitarian assistance is managed with Danida (Section 3.2). This is followed in Section 3.3 by a summary assessment of how Danish humanitarian funding was allocated between 2010 and 2014, with a more detailed portfolio analysis included in Annex E. It is important to note that at the time of conducting the portfolio analysis figures were only available for 2010-13. While Section 3.3 has been partially updated to include figures from 2014 for the total annual allocation of Danish humanitarian funding as well as annual allocations to priority crises, the evaluation is based primarily on information from 2010-13.[5]

3.1 Danida's Humanitarian Strategy

According to Danida's Humanitarian Strategy, the objectives of Denmark's humanitarian action are to:

• save and protect lives

• alleviate suffering

• promote the dignity and rights of civilians in crisis situations

• initiate recovery

• build resilience to, and prevent, future crises by breaking the cycle between crises and vulnerability.

Through these objectives, Denmark aims to contribute to improving human security and reducing poverty.

The Strategy distinguishes between meeting the immediate and early recovery needs of those affected by natural disasters (and promoting disaster risk reduction (DRR)) on one hand, and responding to the needs of people affected by armed conflict (which includes supporting prevention, resilience and early recovery) on the other.

The Strategy outlines the following six strategic directions:

• vulnerability

• climate change and natural hazards

• protecting conflict-affected populations

• coordinated, principled and informed humanitarian action

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5   The portfolio analysis in Annex E has not been updated to include 2014 figures and remains
     an analysis of funding from 2010-13.

- strengthening partnerships

- focus on results, innovation and communications.

Each strategic direction has a number of priorities, leading to a total of 47 strategic priorities. Partners have commended the strategy development process for its inclusivity and applauded the Strategy itself for its comprehensive coverage of the key issues raised by partners during consultations. However, the challenge is that the Strategy does not provide guidance on prioritising between issues (Kabell 2013). Section 4.1.1 further discusses the challenge of balancing inclusivity with strategic focus. Also, the Strategy does not include indicators or a results framework for monitoring implementation and measuring whether Danida has achieved the objectives.

3.2   Management of Danish humanitarian assistance

The Department for Humanitarian Action, Civil Society and Personnel Advisors (HCP) within the MFA in Copenhagen manages Danish humanitarian assistance. It reports to the Under-Secretary of State and Secretary of State for Development and through them to the Minister for Development and Trade. The annual Finance Bill outlines humanitarian funding by budget line. The head of department approves grants up to DKK 5 million while the Minister approves grants between DKK 5 and 35 million as well as the list of priority crises for humanitarian funding each year. Parliament needs to approve grants over DKK 35 million.

HCP receives support from other departments within the MFA. It commissions the Technical Advisory Service (UFT) to undertake capacity assessments of NGO partners as well as reviews of specific projects at field level. The quality assurance department (KVA) is tasked with overall financial management of Danish development assistance. While HCP has a finance officer, approval of all accounts and audits rests with finance staff in KVA. KVA staff members undertake announced visits to NGO partners every two to three years in order to check their finances. Although they could be part of the capacity assessments of NGO partners, Danida usually involves an external financial expert in the capacity assessments, so KVA assesses NGO partner finances at different times. KVA is also involved in the administrative section of HCP's annual technical negotiations with NGO partners, providing input on audits and dealing with any cases of misappropriation.

The MFA has decentralised the management of development country programmes to embassies. The embassies and Danida staff in Copenhagen produce a country policy paper that provides an overview of all forms of engagement between Denmark and the country in question – development and humanitarian assistance, stabilisation funding, trade, etc. The embassies then develop a specific country programme document that focuses on the development assistance that they manage. HCP is consulted on the development of both the policy paper and programme document. It also engages the embassies in its annual technical negotiations with NGO partners (see Section 4.5 for further details of the engagement with embassies).

The Minister for Development and Trade is responsible to Parliament (and therefore the Danish public) for Danida's humanitarian assistance. The government presents the Finance Bill, which includes details of Danida's humanitarian funding, to Parliament each year so this is open to public scrutiny. To provide information on the use of aid funding for the purpose of both facilitating parliamentary insight and general public transparency, an open-access programme database was put in place, which is managed by Danida and into which Danida is responsible for inputting all data based on NGO and UN annual reports. However, the database is difficult to use so the government, in line with agreements in Busan in 2011, is working to make data on development and humanitarian funding more accessible.

3.3   Danida's humanitarian funding

Danish humanitarian funding is part of the state's annual budget, the Finance Bill. The budget for humanitarian funding is grouped together under humanitarian assistance activity code 06.39.03. This activity code is divided into two sub-lines – 06.39.03.10: Strategic partnership agreements; and 06.39.03.11: Other contributions to sudden and protracted humanitarian crises. Danida used to finance the Regions of Origin Initiative separately from the humanitarian budget but merged this with its regular humanitarian funding in 2012, with implementation starting in 2013.

While the core humanitarian budget has been stable at around DKK 1.5 billion per year, it is usually increased due to budget adjustment processes within the MFA. The Finance Bill team undertakes a budget adjustment process four times a year. This tends to result in additional allocations to the humanitarian budget because HCP disburses a substantial portion of the budget very early in the year to its partners through the framework agreements and is able to absorb funds unspent by other budget lines. In addition to this, a reserve is put aside to allow for response to new humanitarian emergencies during the year. In 2014, HCP had committed a significant proportion of its budget early in the year so it received an additional DKK 250 million, approved by the Parliamentary Finance Committee in September 2014. Supplementary allocations from other budget lines and from the general reserve brought the total amount of funding in 2014 to DKK 2.241 billion.

Danida began to develop a longer-term partnership approach with a limited number of humanitarian organisations in 2010. It undertook capacity assessments of five potential Danish NGO partners in 2011 in order to identify suitable candidates. It established the first Humanitarian Partnership Agreements with the Danish Red Cross and Danish Refugee Council (DRC) in 2011, while DanChurchAid and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) followed in 2012. Danida currently has eight NGO partners: ADRA, Caritas, DanChurchAid, Danish Red Cross, Danish Refugee Council, Mission East, MSF and Save the Children Denmark. In addition, it has strategic relationships with five UN agencies: the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP). It also has a strategic relationship with the ICRC while channelling funding through the Danish Red Cross. Furthermore, Danida has a framework agreement with the Danish Emergency Management Agency that includes pre-positioned funding so that it can deploy personnel and equipment quickly to respond to sudden-onset natural disasters.

The Humanitarian Partnership Agreements with the NGOs comprise two amounts of funding: framework funding that the partners can use for programmes in a selected number of priority crises; and flexible funds that partners can use to respond quickly to a new emergency, including outside the priority crises. UNHCR also has DKK 50 million as an Emergency Response Fund that it can use to respond to acute emergencies.[6]

In line with the EU directive on competitive tendering, Danida allocates humanitarian funding to NGOs outside the framework agreements on the basis of a competitive call for proposals. It publishes criteria with which the NGOs need to comply and then scores proposals against the criteria in order to allocate funding. Danida has phased out funding to non-partner NGOs so they do not receive humanitarian funding except in a few very well argued cases. Therefore, only framework partner NGOs can apply for the special calls for proposals, thereby limiting Danida's choice of partners.

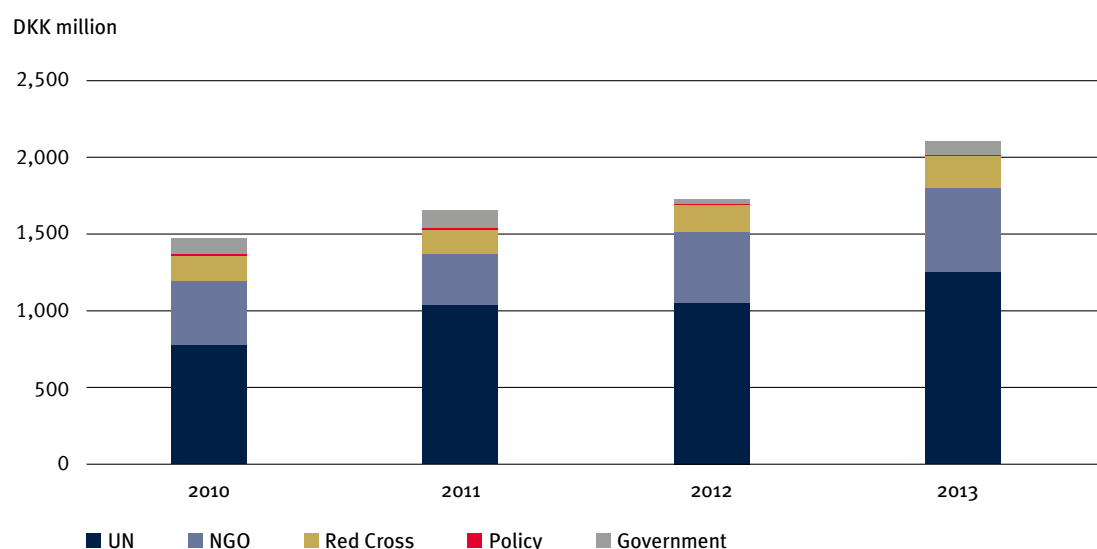**Danish humanitarian funding 2010-14**
Between 2010 and 2014, Denmark provided approximately DKK 9.2 billion in humanitarian assistance. Table 2 breaks this down by annual allocations for the period and shows an increase of 47% in humanitarian funding from DKK 1.5 billion in 2010 to DKK 2.2 billion in 2014. Over the same period the total Danish development assistance has remained more or less stable, ranging from DKK 15.5 to 17 billion. Therefore, humanitarian assistance as a share of total assistance has increased from 9 to 13%.

Table 2: Annual allocations

Year	Amount (DKK billion)
2010	1.5
2011	1.7
2012	1.7
2013	2.1
2014	2.2
Total	9.2

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6   According to Denmark's humanitarian partnership framework agreement with UNHCR, the latter will not allocate less than USD 1 million from the Fund. UNHCR can allocate between USD 1 and 2.5 million without consulting Danida but inform it once it has made a decision. UNHCR must consult Danida before allocating amounts over USD 2.5 million.

Figure 3: Recipients of Danish humanitarian funding by category

DKK million

The recipients of Danish humanitarian funding can be divided into five main categories: (1) UN agencies, (2) NGOs, (3) Government agencies,[7] (4) Red Cross Movement and the Danish Red Cross, and (5) policy initiatives. Figure 3 shows the amount of funding by category of partner. The distribution between the different types of recipients has been relatively stable since Danida strives to maintain a balance of funding across partners. Table B in Annex E shows that Danida channelled approximately 60% of its humanitarian funding through the UN between 2010 and 2013 and around 25% of its funding through NGOs. Other DAC donors also channel around 60% of their humanitarian assistance through multilateral organisations, primarily the UN (including the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and country-based pooled funds). However, Danida provides more funding to NGOs than the DAC average (25 versus 19%). WFP and UNHCR have been the largest single recipients of Danida's funding, following by the DRC and OCHA.

Danida provides a substantial amount of its funding as core contributions to UN agencies and contributions to pooled funds managed by OCHA – the CERF and country-based pooled funds (Common Humanitarian Funds (CHFs) and Emergency Response Funds (ERFs)). This highly flexible funding increased between 2010 and 2012 before decreasing slightly in 2013. Table 3 below sets out Danida's core contributions to international organisations (UN agencies and ICRC) and funding to the pooled funds. Over the 2010-13 period, Danida provided almost 40% of its funding as core funding to international organisations or contributions to pooled funds.[8]

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7   The term government agencies refers to government departments dealing with refugees
      in Afghanistan and Kenya as well as Beredskabsstyrelsen in Denmark.
8   The total amount of core contributions to UN organisations is less than the total contributions
      to the UN as shown in Figure 4 because not all funding is provided as core contributions. Some
      funding is provided to UN organisations that do not receive any core funding and funding is also
      provided to specific country programmes, emergency appeals, specific programmes such as risk
      management, education and other specific sectoral or thematic programmes.

Table 3: Core contributions to international organisations and pooled funds (DKK million)

Organisation	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total
WFP	155	185	185	185	710
UNHCR	130	130	160	160	580
UNRWA	70	70	90	90	320
OCHA	20	20	30	30	100
ICRC	20	20	20	20	80
CERF	60	50	131	135	376
CHFs and ERFs	87	95	156	116	454
Total	542	570	772	736	2,620

Table 4 (below) provides an overview of Danida's humanitarian funding to priority crises between 2010 and 2014. By focusing on crises rather than countries, Danida supports not only the countries in which crises are occurring but also affected communities and refugees in neighbouring countries (for example the Syria crisis, which forms one of the evaluation case studies). As the table demonstrates, nearly 60% of Denmark's humanitarian assistance was allocated to priority crisis situations in 2013 and 2014 (54% of total allocations for 2010-14). The top five crises supported between 2010 and 2014 were Afghanistan, South Sudan, Syria, Somalia and Sudan, for which over two-thirds of the prioritised crisis funds was allocated. In addition, as noted above, Danida provides partners with flexible funds to respond to crises outside of the priority crises (for further details see Annex E).

Danida also has a part of the humanitarian budget available for acute emergencies outside the priority crises. It was able to use this, for example, to respond to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines and to the conflict-related emergency in the Central African Republic. HCP maintains an emergency reserve fund in order to respond to new emergencies that might occur at the end of the year. In the first half of December, it conducts a detailed analysis to identify under-funded crises, which includes examining European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department's (ECHO) Global Vulnerability and Crisis Assessment Index. HCP then obtains permission from the Minister for the allocation of the emergency reserve if it does not need to use it for a new crisis. If there is no emergency as of 30 December, the funding is disbursed to international organisations according to the agreed plan since this does not require additional grant agreements.

Table 4: Funding allocated to priority crises (DKK million)[9]

	Crisis	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Total	% Allocated
1	Afghanistan crisis including Pakistan and Iran	45	222	143	267	108	785	16
2	South Sudan crisis including Uganda and Ethiopia	156	43	181	152	233	764	15
3	Syria crisis including Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Turkey	0	1	124	330	307	763	15
4	Somalia crisis including Kenya, Ethiopia and Yemen	122	275	100	119	133	748	15
5	Sudan crisis including Chad and South Sudan	27	69	132	121	55	404	8
6	Pakistan crisis	126	42	45	27	20	259	5
7	Mano River crisis covering Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast (Mano River)[10]	0	74	11	26	131	243	5
8	Palestine crisis	27	35	21	40	63	183	4
9	Mali crisis including Mauritania, Niger and Burkina Faso	0	0	47	76	59	181	4
10	Yemen crisis	5	11	33	23	40	170	3
11	Myanmar crisis including Thailand	12	20	42	41	40	154	3
12	Ethiopia crisis[11]	28	89	0	0	5	123	2
13	Iraq crisis including Jordan	12	55	25	9	70	111	2
14	Central African Republic crisis including Cameroon	0	0	0	34	61	95	2
	Total amount allocated	560	936	904	1,230	1,307	4,937	
	Total unallocated	915	717	826	871	946	4,275	
	% allocated of total	38%	57%	52%	59%	58%	54%	

As the portfolio analysis in Annex E explains, data on the allocation of funding to specific elements of the Humanitarian Strategy – for example, gender-sensitive approaches, protection against gender-based violence (GBV), disaster risk reduction (DRR) and resilience – is only available to a limited extent on the Danida and OCHA funding databases, due to a lack of specificity in the sectoral allocation of interventions. Therefore, it is not possible to assess the allocation of funds to the strategy objectives.

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9 Note that this includes funding to UN agencies as well as NGO funding.
10 In the process of being phased out.
11 In the process of being phased out.

4　Findings

This chapter presents the findings from the evaluation, organised under each sub-question from the evaluation matrix (Annex C). There is a summary of findings under the overarching evaluation question.

How relevant and flexible is the Danish Humanitarian Strategy given the changing humanitarian context since 2010?

Summary of findings

The strategic priorities of vulnerability and resilience remain particularly relevant despite changes in the humanitarian context. This is partly because the Strategy was far-sighted in including these issues, which have become increasingly important. Danida's inclusive approach to developing the Strategy has meant that it reflects the priorities of partners well (and so remains relevant for them) but this has also led to 47 priorities. While some regard this as too broad, HCP has identified a hierarchy of priorities within the Strategy. It has also made three key strategic choices regarding the implementation of the Strategy: (1) to establish longer-term partnerships with a limited number of Danish and international organisations; (2) to focus on protection in conflict-affected contexts rather than the strategic direction on climate change and natural hazards; and (3) to commit to deeper engagement in selected priority crises (see Table 4). These choices have guided its funding decisions and are justifiable, particularly the focus on partnerships, which current partners strongly endorsed. Danida is delivering on many of the other strategic priorities through its partners and by engaging on the governance bodies of international organisations and groups. To ensure that they implement the strategic priorities consistently, partners need to be cognisant of them and to demonstrate implementation.

In addition to managing a growing proportion of Danida's aid budget, HCP engages in global policy dialogue and is increasingly providing support to Ministers on humanitarian crises. It has been able to do this despite substantial staff cuts due to the quality of staff members. However, the limited capacity and range of responsibilities has meant that it has not been able to focus on results to the extent anticipated in the Strategy.

Although Danida is focusing on a limited number of protracted crises, it is able to ensure adequate coverage of its humanitarian assistance through four means: (1) by giving partners flexibility to respond within regions affected by specific crises, rather than focusing on specific countries; (2) by allocating flexible funds to NGO partners and UNHCR to respond to sudden-onset crises outside the priority crises; (3) by providing additional funding outside framework agreements for new emergencies; and (4) by providing significant funding to the CERF, which responds to acute emergencies as well as under-funded crises. With regard to the priorities on gender, there is evidence that partners undertake gender-sensitive humanitarian programmes but, with some exceptions, they do not report specifically on the results achieved. In particular, there was limited documentation of the extent to which NGO partners are addressing gender. The evaluation found that partners collect gender-disaggregated data but gender analysis is a weakness even though this should underpin effective humanitarian and protection programmes. While UNFPA (2014) and UNHCR (2014) report on their efforts to address GBV, the evaluation did not identify clear evidence of other partners' efforts.

4.1 Relevance and flexibility of the Humanitarian Strategy

4.1.1 Have the strategic priorities been relevant, given the changing humanitarian challenges?

The evaluation found evidence that the Humanitarian Strategy remains relevant to the current humanitarian context. One indication is that, despite Danida granting its partners considerable flexibility in making programming decisions, in the comparative partner analysis, each organisation reported implementing a large number of the priorities (see Annex F).[12] The case studies also provided evidence of the relevance of the Strategy. For example, planning documents for the response to the Syria crisis reflect a number of the priorities, particularly the focus on vulnerability, protection, linking emergency and longer-term approaches, and the promotion of innovation. The focus on vulnerability has been relevant in Afghanistan, enabling Danida to combine longer-term assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) with emergency assistance to those affected by natural disasters and conflict. In addition, the initial broad consultations in preparation for the WHS have identified targeting assistance to the most vulnerable, resilience and respect for international humanitarian law as some of the critical issues to be addressed (see Section 3.4 in Annex D).

Children at school in refugee settlement, Lebanon
Photograph: © Tasneem Mowjee

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12 The exercise asked partners to indicate the priorities under the strategic directions on vulnerability, climate change and natural hazards, protecting conflict-affected populations, focus on results, innovation and communication. The exercise did not cover the strategic directions on coordinated, principled and informed humanitarian action, and on strengthening partnerships as these are for Danida to implement.

One reason why partners found the strategic priorities to be relevant is that the process for developing the Strategy was very inclusive and partners contributed to it based on their own priorities. For example, an OCHA interviewee pointed out that the section on civil-military coordination in the Strategy was a close reflection of the organisation's own document and thus seemed very relevant. Another reason that the priorities remain relevant is perhaps because, as one partner pointed out, the Strategy's inclusion of vulnerability, resilience and innovation was 'ahead of its time' when it was developed in 2008-09, but the issues have become increasingly important.

Although Danida partners were positive about the scope of the Strategy because it reflects their priorities and provides considerable flexibility, there was a view among some external actors as well as a few MFA interviewees that in having 47 priorities the Strategy is too broad.[13] The Strategy document appears to give equal weight to all the priorities but HCP has interpreted the section on 'objectives of Danish humanitarian action' as providing a hierarchy of priorities (MFA 2009: 9). This states that Denmark and its partners will reach out to the most vulnerable people in crisis situations by addressing the needs of those affected by natural disasters, and responding to the needs of those affected by armed conflict. Thus, the strategic direction on vulnerability would be the top priority followed by the strategic directions on climate change and natural hazards and on protecting conflict-affected populations. The Strategy goes on to state that Denmark will actively promote the GHD principles (including the humanitarian principles) as the basis for building partnerships and for providing appropriate, timely, coordinated and effective humanitarian assistance. HCP has interpreted this as indicating that the strategic directions on strengthening partnerships and on coordinated, principled and informed humanitarian action would be the next stages in the hierarchy. The one strategic direction not mentioned in this section is that on 'focus on results, innovation and communications'. As discussed in Section 4.1.2 below, HCP has emphasised the implementation of particular strategic directions.

While the priorities of vulnerability, resilience and innovation remain particularly relevant and there is a growing focus on gender in emergencies, the humanitarian context has changed considerably since Danida developed the current Strategy, and other challenges and issues have emerged. The Context Analysis in Annex D is intended to be a background document for the Strategy revision process by describing some of the current trends and key changes since the development of the current strategy. It includes the issues that have been raised during the consultation process for the WHS.

Danida intends to take account of the outcomes of the discussions at the WHS although the summit will not result in a negotiated inter-governmental statement or set of agreements. The direction of these discussions should be clear by the summer of 2015 so Danida will have time to incorporate the issues and have its own set of consultations before launching the revised Strategy in 2016. One issue that has already emerged strongly in the WHS consultations is that of localising preparedness and response. A growing range of local, national and regional actors are now involved in providing humanitarian assistance, and contexts such as Somalia and Syria have highlighted the fact that international organisations have to work through local partners in order to access those affected. This has implications for Danida, given its emphasis on strong partner-

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13   In particular, the expert panel questioned whether the strategy could be deemed strategic when it included so many priorities.

ships, and is discussed in Chapter 5. Other issues that Danida should take into consideration during the Strategy revision process include how to meet major increases in humanitarian needs with limited resources, the challenge of rapid urbanisation (which increases the risk of large-scale urban disasters) and fast-paced developments in technology.

Despite the rapidly changing environment in which aid agencies are operating, the evaluation found that they tend not to focus on anticipating new threats or risks and ways of mitigating these. UN agencies, in particular, participate in joint contingency planning exercises at country level but these tend to be short-term exercises. This may be because humanitarian organisations have short planning horizons, driven by short-term funding. Also, the focus of the system is on responding to emergencies and there are few incentives for scanning the horizon and planning ahead. This is borne out by the finding from the consultations for the WHS that, 'The constant struggle to keep up with new crises, as well as the demands from protracted ones, detracts from keeping a forward looking agenda, such as preparing for the new sets of risks, such as urban crises' (OCHA 2014d: 3). In light of this finding, it is positive that Danida is financing a two-year study aimed at supporting the humanitarian system to be prepared for an increasingly complex and uncertain future.[14]

4.1.2 To what extent has Danida been able to implement the Strategy, given the resources available?

HCP has made three key strategic choices relating to the implementation of the Humanitarian Strategy. The first of these was to develop its partnership approach, in line with the strategic direction on strengthening partnerships. As described in Section 3.3, HCP decided to establish strategic relationships with a limited number of Danish NGOs, select UN agencies and ICRC. Its aim was to develop partnerships that would free up staff time for more strategic analysis, field monitoring and a 'greater emphasis on results', which is a priority (MFA 2009: 35).

The second strategic choice was to focus its funding and advocacy efforts on protection and conflict contexts rather than the strategic direction on climate change and natural hazards. While HCP does finance immediate responses to natural disasters, it believed that activities such as strengthening local disaster management capacities and DRR were better addressed by longer-term development funding. It therefore began discussions with senior management in the MFA in 2012 about which department was the most appropriate for financing and managing climate change-related and DRR interventions. The development strategy, *The Right to a Better Life*, launched in 2012, committed the Danish government to including climate interventions as an integral part of development cooperation. Therefore, in 2013, senior management agreed that HCP would deprioritise this aspect of the Humanitarian Strategy (although it continues to fund the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction – UNISDR). However, the challenge has been to ensure that the development side of Danida addresses climate change and DRR programming adequately. This responsibility now rests with the development policy department.

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14   Titled 'Planning from the Future: Crisis, challenge, change in humanitarian action' – the study is being undertaken by King's College London; the Feinstein International Center, Tufts University; and the Humanitarian Policy Group, Overseas Development Institute.

The third choice has been to implement the strategic priority to undertake 'more selective and deeper engagement in protracted crises' (MFA 2009: 30). The rationale is that HCP can ensure more predictable funding to its partners if it engages long term in a limited number of protracted crises. It should also enable Danida and its partners to develop a more planned and sustained approach in these contexts.

The partnership approach is certainly the right one for HCP to pursue. The DAC Peer Review commended Danida for establishing 'more strategic relationships with a smaller number of partners' and shifting away from 'ad hoc proposals and traditional inputs-driven approaches' (Development Assistance Committee 2011: 71). Partners were unanimously supportive and appreciative of the approach. Engaging with a smaller number of organisations has enabled Danida to be a partner, not simply a donor (see Section 4.2.1 for examples of how Danida has influenced and supported its partners). It has also helped to reduce the administrative burden on HCP. The challenge for the current small team is to be able to engage sufficiently, even with a limited number of partners. NGO partners had the impression that HCP was overstretched and this limited its capacity to engage in strategic dialogue or provide feedback on reports. HCP also felt that it had less engagement with UN partners based in New York than with other international organisation partners.

The focus on protection is also justifiable since this is a priority in the conflict contexts on which Danida has decided to focus but receives limited attention from other donors. Section 4.1.4 below comments on the appropriateness of the decision to focus on a limited number of protracted crises.

As demonstrated by the comparative partner analysis exercise, Danida is delivering on a large number of the strategic priorities through its partners (see Annex F). In November 2012, HCP and its partners undertook a results monitoring exercise to assess the extent to which the latter were implementing the strategic priorities. The aim was to set a baseline and then monitor against this in November 2013 and in 2015. However, the general view was that this was not a particularly helpful exercise for HCP or its partners and it was not repeated. Another way to track the implementation of strategic priorities by partners would be through their annual reporting. However, since Danida does not require partners to report against the priorities, only three NGO partners report on their contribution to addressing the strategic priorities.[15]

Danida also promotes the implementation of strategic priorities through its engagement on the governance bodies of international organisations and through engagement in humanitarian policy dialogue and advocacy at the global level. Section 4.2 provides further details.

Substantial staff cuts have been one major challenge for HCP when implementing the large number of priorities in the Strategy. In 2008, when the Strategy was developed, the humanitarian policy and assistance section had 10 staff members and one person as

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15   Danida does not have set reporting formats or requirements that would require partners to report against the strategic priorities because, in line with the Good Humanitarian Donorship principles, it accepts partners' own reporting formats.

a management secretary.[16] In addition, the Strategy stated the MFA's aim to 'assign up to five humanitarian experts to selected representations or field offices to strengthen Denmark's capacity for local engagement with partners' (MFA 2014: 33-34). However, when the Strategy was launched in September 2009, owing to staff cuts across the MFA, the humanitarian section was reduced substantially. The 2011 DAC Peer Review noted a humanitarian team of five and three humanitarian advisor posts created at embassy level (Development Assistance Committee 2011). Despite the peer review's recommendation to deploy humanitarian specialists to embassies in all partner countries with humanitarian programmes, these advisor posts were converted into normal civil service posts that did not require humanitarian expertise. In Afghanistan, this reduced the embassy's capacity for engagement in policy dialogues on humanitarian issues and, potentially, meant that Denmark did not make the maximum use of its Regions of Origin Initiative funding to promote a solutions-based approach to managing the return of Afghan refugees. Section 4.5.2 discusses the issue of a lack of humanitarian capacity at embassy level further. Recently, the humanitarian team within HCP has had five full-time staff members and one part-time in Copenhagen with a sixth full-time person appointed in summer 2014.

One effect of the drastic reduction in staff capacity after the launch of an ambitious Strategy has been that the strategic partnerships did not deliver the benefit of freeing up staff time to focus on results and follow-up.[17] This has included capacity for tracking the implementation of the strategic priorities, as noted above. It has also meant limited capacity for clearly documenting that the selection of priority crises, the allocation of funding across these priority crises and the allocation of additional funds to crises are based on a robust needs analysis (although the allocation of funding on the basis of humanitarian needs is a key GHD principle).[18] The DAC Peer Review pointed out that, 'There is no particular objective model to determine the severity of crisis and fix the funding allocation' (Development Assistance Committee 2011: 71). It is important to document the basis for funding decisions for transparency and to avoid perceptions that funding decisions are driven by political considerations or factors other than needs and the capacity of the selected partners to deliver assistance. Two of Danida's NGO partners believed that the selection of priority crises was a political decision even though HCP discusses the selection with its NGO partners.

Despite challenges, HCP has been able to implement a broad range of the strategic priorities and the quality of its staff members has contributed to significant achievements. It is managing a growing budget that increased by 47% between 2010 and 2014 in absolute terms and from 9 to 13% as a proportion of Danida's total aid budget.

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16   Eight staff members were divided into two teams – one working on humanitarian policy, the comprehensive approach and mine action, and the other focusing on refugees and IDPs, protection of civilians, human rights and democratisation. The two humanitarian teams focused on policy-related tasks, multilateral grants and grants to the Danish Refugee Council. An NGO/ civil society team with seven staff members managed humanitarian grants to other Danish NGOs. The humanitarian teams also received support from a financial management team with one full time head and three part time staff that dealt with all aspects of financial management/accounts for humanitarian grants.

17   An evaluation of the Peace and Stabilisation Fund also found that Denmark needed to match the political ambition of being a key actor in the stabilisation arena with appropriate human resources (Coffey 2014).

18   The evaluation recognises that defining and assessing humanitarian needs, and ensuring funding according to needs assessments can be challenging, as highlighted by Poole (2014), Poole and Primrose (2010), and Darcy and Hoffman (2003).

In 2014, it managed DKK 2.2 billion and, in 2015, its base budget (without additions from other budget lines) is set to increase by DKK 250 million.

To understand staffing capacity, it is important to examine staff-budget ratios (i.e. the size of budget managed by a team) as well as the responsibilities they have. HCP not only administers grants but also engages in global policy dialogues and takes on leadership roles on the boards of partners and in other groups (see Section 4.2.1). In addition, it provides support to Ministers (speaking notes, briefings, facilitating visits). While it works with the missions in Geneva and New York and the embassy in Rome on engagement in policy dialogues and leadership roles, it still has to provide inputs and feedback. Thus, it has to contend with substantial responsibilities outside of grant management and there is a perception that supporting Ministers is taking up an increasing amount of time, leaving less time for following up on funding.

The fact that the quality of the humanitarian staff matters is demonstrated by the Netherlands having roughly the same humanitarian budget as Denmark in 2013 and approximately the same number of staff at headquarters level (seven).[19] However, there are indications that staff members in The Hague are less engaged in international policy forums than Danida staff based in Copenhagen. The Hague also had limited engagement with NGOs because the Netherlands channelled its funding through multilateral entities (although this was going to change). According to the *Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2014* (Development Initiatives 2014) Sweden's humanitarian budget was almost double that of Denmark's in 2013 (USD 785 million compared with Denmark's USD 409 million). This is managed by Sweden's development agency, Sida, which has a humanitarian team in Stockholm comprising 19 full-time staff members and three part-time staff as well as a small team in the MFA, which manages core grants to UN agencies and support to the Minister. As a result, Sweden is able to focus much more on needs analyses and following up on implementation by partners (particularly as there are staff within embassies to monitor humanitarian assistance as well).

4.1.3 To what extent has the Strategy guided allocation decisions of the humanitarian budget? Have the funded interventions been in line with the strategic priorities?

As noted in the previous section, Danida has decided to focus on three strategic areas in particular and these influence its funding decisions. Its development of a limited number of partnerships means that it channels funding through these partners. The decision to focus on a limited number of protracted crises and conflict-affected contexts has also clearly guided its allocation decisions though it does finance responses to natural disasters through its budget line for new emergencies and by providing NGO partners and UNHCR with flexible funds as part of their framework agreements.

Within the partnership approach, though, Danida has also decided to trust partners to identify the interventions that address the most urgent needs and priorities in a given context. In HCP's view, it is not for Danida to programme funding in a detailed way as this contravenes the Principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship. In addition, Danida does not have the field presence and capacity to make informed allocation decisions at

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19   According to the *Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2014* (Development Initiatives 2014) the Netherlands had a humanitarian budget of USD 410 million in 2013 while Denmark's humanitarian budget was USD 409 million.

programme level. Therefore, it relies on its partners to implement the strategic priorities. Given this reliance on partners, Danida should ensure that its partners understand the priorities and give them due importance in their programming. The strategic priorities emphasised in the evaluation questions – focusing assistance on the most vulnerable, gender-sensitive programming, protection and accountability to affected populations – should be the foundation of all good humanitarian programmes so it is not unreasonable for Danida to expect that partners implement them. However, Danida has not really emphasised these in its partnership discussions (although it has strongly encouraged WFP and UNICEF to strengthen their gender focus). As noted in the previous section, partners are not required to report on the implementation of the strategic priorities in their annual reports, which makes it challenging for Danida to track the extent to which they are implemented.

The findings from the case studies indicate that the Strategy is so broad that it is not difficult for partners to justify that the interventions for which they have used Danida's funding are within it. During interviews at headquarters, as well, one NGO partner pointed out that it refers to the strategic priorities in its proposals and reports but has no need to check whether what it is proposing is in the Strategy because 'it's all in there'. If Danida intends the revised Strategy to provide more guidance to its partners about its priorities, this will need to emphasise a limited number of key priorities.

4.1.4 Do the Strategy and the interventions under it provide sufficient coverage, taking into consideration the strategic choice of focusing on a number of longer-term engagements in specific crises?

As highlighted in Section 3.3, and in line with the Strategy, Danida has decided to focus its funding on around 10 protracted crises and build longer-term engagement in these (Table 4 shows that there are currently 14 priority crises but Danida is phasing out two of these). The level of funding to the priority crises increased from 38% of Danida's humanitarian funding in 2010 to 59% in 2013. HCP prepares an annual list of priority crises. ECHO's Global Vulnerability and Crisis Assessment Index is part of the justification for the selection of the crises. Ensuring continuity and predictability is also a factor because Danida is committed to providing humanitarian assistance for as long as there is a demonstrable need. HCP discusses the list with its NGO partners and other MFA departments prior to submitting it to the Minister for approval. The NGOs were appreciative of the consultation process, particularly because they had been able to persuade HCP to reverse its decision to remove Myanmar as a priority crisis.[20] However, it was not always clear to them why particular crises were on the list or excluded from it.

By focusing on crises rather than countries, Danida gives its partners flexibility to respond to conflict-related displacement in neighbouring countries. So, for example, partners can respond to the needs of refugees from Sudan and South Sudan in Chad and Uganda or to the needs of refugees from Mali in Mauritania. Thus, the actual number of countries in which partners can operate is much higher than the 11 crises that the team

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20   The Danish embassy in Myanmar also engaged in the discussion, arguing that it was too early for Denmark to end its humanitarian assistance.

prioritised in 2014.[21] According to partners, in 2014, they were using Danida funding in 35 countries (including countries outside the priority crises where they were responding with flexible funds).[22]

Za'atari Refugee Camp, Jordan
Photograph: © Tasneem Mowjee

The decision to focus on protracted crises is justifiable since a large proportion of global humanitarian funding is spent in these contexts. According to the *Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2014*, 78% of humanitarian funding from DAC donors goes to protracted emergencies with a few countries repeatedly in the list of top 10 recipients. A review of humanitarian challenges in preparation for the WHS also highlights that most of the funding requested in UN-led appeals is to address the humanitarian consequences of armed conflict and that humanitarian needs in fragile and conflict-affected states will continue to increase (OCHA 2014d).

There are currently 12 countries covered by the priority crisis list (see Table 4) that are also development priorities, which could be seen as an opportunity to link Danida's humanitarian and development assistance.[23] Another potential advantage of longer-term engagement in a limited set of crises is that it should enable Danida partners to pro-

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21   In 2014, three crises were added to the list – Mali, Syria and Yemen; seven were continuing priorities – Pakistan, Afghanistan, occupied Palestinian Territories (oPT), Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Iraq; while three were to be phased out gradually – Myanmar, Ethiopia and Mano River countries. However, following discussions with NGO partners and the embassy in Myanmar, the country is now on the list of continuing priorities.

22   The evaluation asked partners to provide a list of countries in which they were operating in order to circulate the online survey but this also enabled the team to develop a full list of the countries in which 13 partners were operating with Danida funds. The exercise did not include OCHA because it does not implement programmes.

23   Danida has a list of 22 countries that are a priority for its development assistance. Of these, 12 overlap with the countries covered by the humanitarian priority crises – Myanmar, Pakistan, Afghanistan, oPT, Somalia, Kenya, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Uganda, Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. However, Danida is phasing out humanitarian assistance to Ethiopia.

gramme on a multiannual basis, which is more appropriate. However, the evaluation found little evidence that partners had moved away from the humanitarian mind-set of annual planning and taken advantage of the predictability offered by Danida's approach. This may be because Danida provides annual funding within the framework of a multi-annual partnership arrangement; but since it strives to provide predictable levels of funding year-on-year, this should not be a major barrier.

While Danida focuses on a limited number of protracted crises through its framework agreements with partners, it is able to respond to new or under-funded emergencies outside these priority crises. As noted in Section 3.3, one way is by including a percentage of flexible funding within framework agreements with partners so that they have funding available to respond immediately to an acute emergency.[24] Depending on their size, NGO partners can use up to DKK 2 million for each emergency. The proportion of the flexible fund allocated to each partner was set at the beginning of the Humanitarian Partnership Agreements, based on their size and capacity, and some argued that their funding was insufficient to ensure an adequate response to large-scale natural disasters.[25] HCP also has a part of its budget available for acute emergencies outside the priority crises (see Section 3.3).

In addition, Danida is one of the top 10 donors to the CERF, which allocates funds to new acute emergencies as well as under-funded crises. The CERF finances 45-50 countries per year, allowing Danida to ensure coverage and build HCP's knowledge and engagement in a limited number of crises at the same time. Finally, Danida provides core funding to its UN partners, which they can use to respond to emergencies outside the priority crises.

4.1.5 Has the implementation of the Strategy prioritised gender-sensitive approaches and women's empowerment and has the implementation focused on protection issues, including the protection from gender-based violence?

Gender-sensitive programming and women's empowerment is a priority under the strategic direction on vulnerability, while promoting protection from GBV is a priority under the direction on protecting conflict-affected populations. Danida relies on its partners to implement these priorities. The evaluation found that, of Danida's UN operational partners, UNHCR (2014), UNFPA (2014) and UNICEF (2014), report on these two areas in their annual reports. UNHCR's reporting is the most specific, measuring progress against set targets for improved support for survivors of GBV.[26] ICRC's annual report (2014) describes its specific approach to gender in an annex but, due to the structuring of ICRC's reporting format, it does not report specifically on how its programmes

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24 For example, FTS data shows that DanChurchAid and the Danish Red Cross responded relatively quickly to floods in Nepal in August 2014.

25 However, HCP does have the flexibility to top up the amount of flexible funds for NGO partners. At the end of 2012, since the NGOs had spent all their flexible funds and HCP received additional funding, it gave them DKK 39 million. Since the funds were provided in December 2012, the NGOs were able to transfer this amount for use in 2013, increasing their flexible funding allocation for that year.

26 UNFPA and UNICEF provide examples from their programmes but not aggregated data. WFP's 2013 annual report only provides headline figures on its assistance, which include the number of women beneficiaries. OCHA promotes a focus on gender-sensitive programming through the use of the gender marker in all UN-led appeals, but this is generally a self-assessment rather than independently verified.

have addressed gender issues. However, it does provide gender-disaggregated figures for some of its programming achievements.[27]

There was less documented evidence of the extent to which NGO partners are focusing on gender issues although, in the comparative partner analysis, six of the eight NGO partners reported that gender-sensitive programming and women's empowerment were a programming priority (see Annex F). Five NGO partners made no mention of how they incorporate gender into their humanitarian programming. This may be because Danida does not require partners to report on this issue.[28] Of the NGO capacity assessments reviewed by the evaluation, only the three conducted in 2013 and 2014 focus on partner capacity for gender-sensitive programming.[29]

There is more evidence of gender-sensitive programming from the case studies and online survey (although the survey cannot provide information on the quality of programmes). An evaluation of Danish assistance to Afghanistan identified a strong gender focus in humanitarian programmes operating within the difficult context for working for women's rights (Danida 2012). The desk review also found several examples of gender-sensitive programmes implemented by Danida partners, although there was insufficient attention to assessing the impact of these programmes (Danida 2012). Findings from the other case studies showed that most partners collected age- and gender-disaggregated data and this was confirmed by findings from the online survey (with 31 out of 35 respondents stating that they collected this data). However, the Syria case study identified a tendency to focus on women as a vulnerable group, rather than addressing the needs of both men and women.[30] This demonstrates that partners are undertaking gender-sensitive programming but that Danida receives limited reporting on the results being achieved in this area.

Some of Danida's UN partners have developed policy documents or strategies to promote gender-sensitive approaches within their organisations. For example, WFP has had a gender policy since 2009. Although an evaluation of this found that it was limited as an instrument for fostering a strong focus on gender within the organisation, there was evidence of a growing amount of gender-focused work and gender-sensitive programming at the country level (Betts et al. 2014). The focus on gender has been supported by Denmark's strong advocacy on the subject in its engagement with WFP. UNICEF has

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27 For example, it reports on the percentage of outpatients and community health consultation patients that were men, women and children in the supplement to the annual report.

28 There were three partners that addressed gender to varying extents. DRC's summary annual reports for 2012 and 2013 do not mention gender but some of its country completion reports provide examples of how it takes account of gender issues. For example, the Somalia 2013 report on the Danish Demining Group's activities notes that all education activities are targeted at both genders and the South Sudan report on armed violence reduction provides gender-disaggregated data. MSF's 2012 annual report briefly describes addressing women's reproductive health and gender-based violence. Mission East's 2013 annual report highlights the programmes where it has supported women, including in its Afghanistan programmes, for which it receives Danida funding.

29 Of these, the assessment of Mission East in 2013 provides examples of the inclusion of gender in its country programmes while the assessment of DRC was also generally positive, though it noted that DRC could do more to include men more systematically in its women's empowerment and GBV programming (RDC 2013; Danida 2014b). The assessment of Save the Children noted that there was room for improvement (Danida 2014c).

30 A review of key lessons learned from Danida's experience and results on gender equality also found a tendency to refer to women and gender equality synonymously (Danida 2014g).

developed a gender action plan for 2014-17 that includes a section on addressing GBV in emergencies. This is encouraging and Danida should continue to engage with these partners to ensure that the policies and action plans translate into consistent gender-sensitive humanitarian programmes.

Gender analysis is a weakness among partners. Less than 50% of the respondents to the online survey (14 out of 35) confirmed conducting a gender analysis within the last two years. While a few organisations mentioned tools for their analysis, others pointed to very general approaches to taking account of gender concerns in their programmes. This raises concerns because gender analyses are integral to understanding how gender inequalities and differences affect people's vulnerability and capacity to cope, and therefore to designing effective humanitarian programmes (Byrne and Baden 1995; Foran 2008).

For the same reasons, understanding gender issues in a given context is also crucial for protection programming. Danida's main partners for protection are UNHCR, ICRC, DRC, Danish Red Cross and UNICEF (on child protection). With the exception of UNHCR, these provide limited reporting on gender considerations within their protection activities. The link between gender and protection is clearest in the area of addressing GBV. In the comparative partner assessment, each of Danida's partners reported that protection against GBV was a programming priority (see Annex F). However, only four of the eight NGOs provide information on how they are addressing GBV in their annual reports, with three of these providing specific examples. Under its reporting on global strategic priorities, UNHCR reported improving support to GBV survivors in 84 refugee situations (against its target of 87), in 15 out of its target of 17 contexts where UNHCR is operationally involved in working with IDPs, and in four out of its target of seven returnee situations.

Addressing GBV is an important part of UNFPA's activities. Its 2013 annual report highlights its response to survivors of GBV in the Syria crisis, its partnership with UN women on a joint global programme for 'Essential Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence' and a range of other initiatives on developing policies and strategies to address GBV. However, an evaluation and reviews of CERF funding have identified challenges with the organisation's timeliness and ability to deliver in emergencies (Columbia University 2011; Mowjee 2012; Mowjee 2013). An evaluation of an information management system for GBV developed by UNFPA in partnership with other UN agencies and an international NGO was largely positive about the introduction of the system (International Solutions Group 2014).

The case studies identified very limited evidence of Danida partners undertaking programming to address GBV. Since UNFPA was not using Danida funding for the Syria response (only indirectly for training and capacity building of its regional and country offices), the case study did not cover its activities. In South Sudan, however, the case study identified serious concerns about the agency's leadership of the GBV sub-cluster and some concerns about its capacity to deliver humanitarian assistance.

The lack of clear identification by most partners about how they are ensuring that their programmes are gender-sensitive and the extent to which they are addressing GBV suggests that, if Danida wants to ensure that the strategic priorities around gender are implemented clearly, it will need to work more closely with its partners to follow up on effective delivery at field level and ensure reporting back on the results achieved.

4.2   Relevance and effectiveness of Danida's engagement in international humanitarian policy dialogue

How relevant and effective has Danida's engagement been in the international policy dialogue on humanitarian issues?

Summary of findings

Denmark is very active in global policy forums and the boards of international organisations. This is impressive in light of the small number of staff in Copenhagen as well as in Geneva, New York and Rome. As part of its commitment to multilateralism, Denmark's approach has been to seek to improve the work of international organisations by engaging actively on their boards. UNHCR is a good example of how it has been able to combine funding with active engagement from both Copenhagen and Geneva to exert considerable influence. Currently, Denmark engages actively on a broad range of humanitarian issues and other donor governments appreciate its contribution. It has placed particular emphasis on the issue of protection, for example, during its chairmanship of the Humanitarian Liaison Working Group (HLWG) in 2013 and through Nordic statements in thematic debates in the Security Council. While it is challenging to assess the specific achievements of any donor in the policy discussions in New York and Geneva, there have been suggestions that Denmark could be more effective by focusing on a smaller set of issues. Its support for the Solutions Alliance, which combines engagement on the issue of protracted displacement with active support for UNHCR, is an example of how it is adding value by taking the lead on a particularly challenging issue.

Danida has promoted better coordination between humanitarian actors through a range of mechanisms and has been active in the GHD initiative (leading a process of reviewing its future direction). With a very limited humanitarian presence at field level, however, it has had far less engagement in policy forums and donor coordination groups at country level. In the Syria crisis in particular, partners called for Danida to have a voice at country and/or regional level.

4.2.1 What are the results of Denmark's role in international humanitarian policy dialogue?

Denmark engages in a broad number of policy forums and, between 2012 and 2014, took a leadership role in several organisations and groups. These include the GHD initiative, the European Council Working Group on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid during Denmark's presidency of the EU, the HLWG in New York, ICRC's donor support group, the Bureau of UNHCR, and OCHA's Donor Support Group (ODSG).[31] In addition, in April 2014, Danida hosted a roundtable in Copenhagen and launched the Solutions Alliance to develop new approaches to finding solutions to forced displacement. Danida has also been active on the issue of NGO certification by the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) and supported the Steering Committee on Humanitarian Response's certification project as well as the development of a Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (with the launch of the standard in Copenhagen

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31   Denmark was elected to the Bureau in 2013, becoming one of the two vice-presidents. This means that it will take on the presidency of the Bureau in 2015-16.

on 12 December 2014).[32] This level of engagement is impressive given the size of HCP and the limited capacity for focusing on humanitarian issues in the missions in Geneva and New York, and the embassy in Rome.

Denmark's aim in engaging with international organisations is to make the humanitarian system more effective. This reflects Denmark's commitment to multilateralism.[33] It has used its leadership roles to strengthen the work of its main international humanitarian partners and to promote priorities in the Humanitarian Strategy. As the DAC Peer Review pointed out, decentralising authority to the missions in Geneva and New York, and the embassy in Rome, has helped Denmark to strengthen its cooperation with key multilateral partners (Development Assistance Committee 2011). WFP interviewees highlighted the positive role of the embassy in Rome on its Executive Board, particularly its focus on gender, the Transformative Agenda and results reporting. Denmark's emphasis on gender had supported the Executive Director's push to make this a priority within the organisation. The New York mission has been using its position on the Executive Board of UNICEF to advocate on gender (UNICEF 2014a) as well as a closer link between the agency's emergency and development programming, in line with Danida's Humanitarian Strategy. A UNICEF interviewee argued that pressure at board level was necessary to ensure that senior management prioritised humanitarian aid and the links with development assistance. The Danish ambassador in Geneva is a member of UNHCR's Bureau (holding the post of Vice-President at the time of the evaluation and due to assume the presidency as of October 2015). The Geneva mission was also active during Denmark's chairing of ICRC's donor support group.

Danida's strategic partnership with UNHCR is stronger than with any other international organisation and it has been able to have a significant influence on the agency by engaging from both Copenhagen and Geneva. In line with the focus on the links between humanitarian and development assistance, Danida is supporting UNHCR to adopt a longer-term approach to displacement. For example, it has provided catalytic funding for a more robust approach to livelihood programming that should help to address the issue of aid dependency of long-term refugees and also enable UNHCR to engage with governments on how refugees can contribute to economic growth. HCP has also provided funding for innovation, which is enabling UNHCR to try different approaches and learn lessons that it can apply to its programming. In addition, it is funding and shaping a strong focus on durable solutions to displacement within UNHCR, leading to significant internal changes. One UNHCR interviewee pointed out that by combining catalytic funding with strong engagement, Danida is able to punch above its weight and have an influence over the agency that exceeds the amounts of funding involved. This is an excellent example of how a relatively small donor such as Denmark can influence a major humanitarian organisation by working closely with it. However, the approach requires a very high level of engagement and, in light of the limited capacity within HCP and the missions, it would be difficult to replicate this with other international organisations.

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32   See http://www.hapinternational.org/what-we-do.aspx, http://schr.info/certification and
        http://www.corehumanitarianstandard.org/
33   As outlined in Danida's development cooperation strategy. See also Danida (2013a) Danish
        Multilateral Development Cooperation Analysis: An assessment of Denmark's multilateral
        engagement in light of The Right to a Better Life, the strategy for Danish development
        cooperation.

HCP also works with the missions in New York and Geneva on a broad range of policy issues related to priorities in the Humanitarian Strategy. For example, they are working together on chairing the ODSG (since OCHA has offices in both New York and Geneva) – an example of coordinated efforts between different parts of the MFA. As ODSG chair, Denmark's areas of focus include budgeting and resourcing, field performance and a range of policy issues, including the WHS, vulnerability and risk, and responding to the needs of IDPs. Since vulnerability is an important strategic direction, the New York mission plans to host a meeting on vulnerability and the post-2015 development agenda. In June 2014, it co-hosted a side event at the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) with OCHA on 'risk-informed leadership for crisis prevention' in support of the strategic direction on vulnerability and the focus on risk management in Danida's development engagement in fragile states.[34] HCP has also worked with the New York mission during Denmark's chairing of the HLWG in 2013 to promote the issue of protection, with a particular focus on Syria, South Sudan, Sudan, Central African Republic, Mali, Somalia and Afghanistan. Denmark has also emphasised the need for protection of vulnerable populations through Nordic statements in thematic debates in the UN Security Council. A donor mission in New York noted that it was important that Denmark was active in organising side events, not just around the General Assembly but also throughout the year because this sent a clear message about its priorities and engagement on specific topics. The mission was also working with OCHA in New York on how to take forward the issue of response to IDPs since there was a high level of political interest from other governments.

In addition, the New York mission supports HCP by following Security Council and other political discussions of humanitarian crises. The mission argued that it is important for Denmark to engage proactively in the formulation of humanitarian resolutions because these provide a framework for operations on the ground (one example being Security Council Resolution 2165 authorising UN agencies and their partners to undertake cross-border operations into Syria without requiring the government's consent). Furthermore, Denmark should advocate for principled humanitarian action and humanitarian access. In 2011, the mission made a financial contribution to a study by the Humanitarian Policy Group and the Stimson Center on UN integration and humanitarian space and followed this up by hosting a high-level event in New York, with participation from the Emergency Relief Coordinator, the UN Department of Political Affairs and the Department for Peacekeeping Operations (Metcalfe et al. 2011).

HCP also works with its NGO partners on international policy and advocacy; two partners cited being given the opportunity to contribute to discussions when Denmark was chairing the European Council Working Group on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid. However, NGO partners felt that Danida could use their input into policy discussions and advocacy more systematically but that it lacked the capacity for this. They also felt that their dialogues with HCP could focus more on strategic issues, rather than programmatic ones.

Other government missions in New York and Geneva praised Denmark for being so active on a range of humanitarian issues despite having a limited number of staff

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34   Concept note on 2014 ECOSOC side event: Saving Lives Today and Tomorrow. Risk-informed leadership for crisis prevention. Available from: https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/SLTTconceptnote.pdf.

members and highlighted the quality of its staff.[35] One interviewee noted that Denmark had been successful at initiating two technical level policy discussions with ICRC while it was chair of the donor support group; donors found this helpful for engaging with ICRC on policy issues in more detail. Representatives from Geneva missions also felt that Danida's support for the Solutions Alliance was a good initiative. It is clear that Denmark makes a strong contribution to global humanitarian discussions in both Geneva and New York but, as interviewees pointed out, it is difficult to identify specific achievements by any donor. As one interviewee explained, policy processes in Geneva are like 'a very slow turning ship' so it is a challenge to pinpoint a particular contribution that changed the ship's direction. An interviewee from New York also highlighted that members of the European Union (EU) negotiate humanitarian resolutions in New York as a group. While Denmark is one of a small group of donors that is active in EU coordination meetings, it is not possible to identify its influence or that of any member state over a particular resolution.[36] As a result, the Danish mission in New York was unable to provide concrete examples of Denmark's achievements.[37]

One perspective from the interviews with missions in New York and Geneva was that Denmark could perhaps focus on a smaller set of humanitarian issues rather than covering the full breadth. In the absence of a counterfactual it is not possible to assess whether Denmark would have been more effective by focusing its limited resources on a few issues. However, a single government can successfully raise the profile of an intractable issue and create momentum behind it. The UK has initiated a high profile campaign, for example, the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative.[38] Denmark is doing the same with the issue of protracted displacement through the Solutions Alliance, which links clearly to its policy engagement with UNHCR. This is a good example of bringing together a range of resources to tackle a long-term challenge and Denmark's leadership could make a measurable difference. There are a few other issues where it could add particular value, which are also in line with the Humanitarian Strategy. These include gender in emergencies, links between humanitarian and development assistance, and vulnerability.

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35   Interviewees in Geneva particularly commended the role of the ambassador on the ODSG, which had raised discussions from a technical to a strategic level, and at meetings of UNHCR's Bureau.

36   One interviewee felt that, due to the EU negotiating as a group, Denmark's influence was not visible to governments outside the EU.

37   For example, the mission works with the G77 countries on General Assembly Resolution 46/182 on 'Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations'. Adopted in 1991, this is re-negotiated each year and there is debate on fundamental issues such as the humanitarian principles. While Denmark contributes to this each year, it is difficult to identify the influence of any individual government.

38   For further details, see https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/preventing-sexual-violence-in-conflict.

School in refugee settlement, Lebanon
Photograph: © Tasneem Mowjee

Although Denmark has been extremely engaged in global-level policy discussions and with the boards of international organisations, currently, it does not have the capacity to be similarly active at field level.[39] The Syria case study highlighted that a lack of humanitarian field presence means that it was not engaged at country or regional level, even in the largest humanitarian crisis (although this is starting to change). Although Denmark has advocated on humanitarian issues during high-level visits to the region, partners strongly emphasised the need for it to engage in policy discussions and advocacy at country and/or regional level in order to balance the voices of more political donors. This would be an opportunity for Denmark to promote the principles of GHD, including the humanitarian principles and counter-balance the voices of more politicised donors. By contrast, Denmark was active in policy discussions and donor groups in South Sudan because there is a fragile states advisor with humanitarian expertise based in the country. This is an excellent example of what it can achieve with just one person, as long as the person has the right experience and profile. The Nairobi embassy also participates in humanitarian donor groups, focusing on Somalia and refugee issues in the Horn of Africa region, which is helpful.

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39   This is similar to the finding of a recent evaluation of the Danish strategy for the promotion of sexual and reproductive health rights, which stated that Denmark's position as a leading advocate internationally has not been translated into a similar position at country level (Danida 2014).

4.2.2 What has been the Danish contribution to promoting the implementation of better coordination of international humanitarian response, including promoting the UN's central role and coordination between donors?

Coordinated, principled and informed humanitarian action is a strategic direction and Danida promotes improved coordination in a number of ways. It is supportive of the cluster system and encourages NGO partners to be active in clusters at both national and international levels. For example, it has contributed to the ability of one NGO partner to co-lead a cluster at global level. Danida's funding to the CERF and country-based pooled funds (noted in Section 3.3) also promotes coordination.[40] This is because they allocate funds to projects prioritised through the clusters and humanitarian country teams and OCHA uses them to actively encourage both coordination and the leadership role of Humanitarian Coordinators.[41] Danida has been a strong supporter of OCHA and its role in coordinating humanitarian assistance for a long time.[42] In addition to providing core funding, as noted in the previous section, it is chairing the ODSG and engaging actively with OCHA on a range of humanitarian and organisational issues, including OCHA's field performance.[43]

However, its lack of a field presence hinders its ability to promote coordination at country level. The Syria case study highlighted that Danida was unable to participate in, and influence, debates about the most appropriate coordination structures in Jordan and Lebanon (whether these should remain under UNHCR because of its refugee mandate or whether they should transition to being led by the cluster lead agencies).

As noted in the previous section, Denmark has been active in the GHD group, where donors coordinate their approaches to humanitarian assistance in general, rather than coordinating their funding. An interviewee from a donor mission in Geneva highlighted as an achievement the fact that when it was co-chair of the initiative, Denmark drew attention to the urgent need to take a strategic decision about the initiative's future. It supported this process through the development of a reflection paper. This served as 'a wake-up call' to GHD members and has influenced the work plan of the current co-chairs of the initiative, the USA and Canada.

Denmark has also made efforts to reach out beyond the traditional donor group. While co-chairing the GHD group, it engaged with Eastern European donors and shared good practice. As chair of the HLWG in New York, it cooperated with emerging donors such as Turkey, Russia, Mexico and Qatar. Since the ODSG includes donors such as Russia, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates, Denmark will have an opportunity to engage with them during its chairing of the group.

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40 Denmark has been one of the top 10 donors to the CERF since its inception in 2006 but its funding increased significantly in 2012, from approximately USD 9 million in 2011 to USD 23 million in 2012 and USD 24 million in 2013 (see http://www.unocha.org/cerf/our-donors/funding/cerf-pledges-and-contributions-2006–14).

41 See http://www.unocha.org/cerf/about-us/humanitarian-financing and http://www.unocha.org/what-we-do/humanitarian-financing/common-humanitarian-funds-chfs

42 The previous evaluation of Danish humanitarian assistance highlighted Danida's support for coordination through OCHA (ETC UK 1999).

43 Danida's core funding to OCHA increased from USD 3.7 million in 2011 to USD 5.4 million in 2012 and 2013 (financial analysis sections of OCHA annual reports for 2011, 2012 and 2013 – available from: http://www.unocha.org/about-us/publications/flagship-publications/*/77).

Danida also coordinates with Nordic donors on key messages, including joint annual Nordic and OCHA commitments. Also, as noted in the previous section, it has raised the issue of protection through Nordic statements in thematic debates in the UN Security Council. However, donors tend to coordinate their humanitarian funding at country level. The Syria case study showed that Danish representatives attended donor coordination meetings in Jordan and Lebanon but did not feel that they had sufficient information on Denmark's contributions to participate actively. However, Danida is much more actively engaged in South Sudan, which was much appreciated by partners and other donors. A representative from the embassy in Nairobi also attends donor coordination meetings on Somalia, providing information on Danida's funding and reporting back to HCP on discussions.

What lessons can be drawn from relying on partnerships as the key implementing modality?

Summary of findings

Danida's partners were very positive about the partnership approach and appreciative of the quality of Danida funding. In particular, they value its flexibility and support for new approaches. The partnership is based on trust but Danida seeks to ensure that partners have robust financial, administrative and reporting systems in place. It uses three main forms of quality assurance for its NGO partners: capacity assessments, adherence to humanitarian and accountability standards, and project reviews undertaken by UFT. For its international organisation partners, it uses two key forms of quality assurance: participation on their governing boards and documentary evidence. It also gathers information on their performance at field level from pooled funds, other donors and NGOs.

Danida's greater emphasis on appropriate systems rather than independent verification of results is a potential challenge because strong systems do not necessarily translate into effective programming on the ground. It also makes it difficult for Danida to allocate funding on the basis of performance criteria and assess whether it has the most effective partners.

Although the rationale for working with a limited set of partners is clear in the Humanitarian Strategy and makes administrative sense, HCP is aware that having only Danish NGOs and international organisations as framework partners runs the risk of excluding partners that could add value in specific contexts. In particular, local and national actors are playing a greater role in providing humanitarian assistance, so Danida could consider how to support these actors better; for example, through Danish NGO partners that are part of networks with national members.

While Danida expects NGO partners to demonstrate that they are adhering to HAP or other accountability and humanitarian standards, they do not have to report on accountability to affected populations. Its partners do tend to have accountability mechanisms in place but they are not always effective at providing clear information or responding to recipients' concerns. Danida's partners attempt to target humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable and use different tools for this. However, they could refine their targeting through more systematic vulnerability analyses.

4.3 Partnership as the key implementing modality

4.3.1 How efficient has the chosen mode of delivery, through partnerships, been in achieving results and ensuring accountability to affected populations?

This section outlines the findings on Danida's use of partnerships as a key implementation modality and addresses the issue of accountability to affected populations. Section 4.4 deals with the question of assessing the results achieved with Danida's funding.

In interviews, every single Danida partner was very positive about the partnership approach. Danida enjoys a close, informal relationship with its NGO partners, with several giving examples of calling HCP to provide information on their projects or to discuss specific issues of concern. HCP also has an extremely close working relationship with UNHCR, which was highlighted by almost all UNHCR interviewees. They strongly emphasised that Danida was a true partner, supporting important organisational change, not simply a donor. WFP and UNICEF also felt that Danida was very consultative and engaged with them as a partner.

From the partners' perspective, Danida's partnership approach has several advantages. The first is the flexibility of Danida's funding because partners decide where and how best to use it.[44] This has enabled partners to direct funding to areas of greatest need and where it is more challenging to obtain other donor funding (although they are restricted to the selected protracted crises, there is some scope for responding outside these, as explained in Section 4.1.4). This flexibility made it very valuable and, for many partners, the quality of Danida's funding mattered more than its quantity because they could use even relatively small amounts to leverage other funding. In particular, they appreciate Danida's support for innovation and new approaches. UNHCR provided several examples of how the funding that Danida has provided for innovation had been extremely useful for trying different approaches, leveraging additional funding or developing partnerships with the private sector.[45] Thus, Danida's funding has played a catalytic role for UNHCR. One NGO partner described Danida's funding as the 'skeleton' on which it builds its country programmes. Another advantage of the partnership approach is that the longer-term framework provides an opportunity for building the capacity, not only of Danida's direct NGO partners, but also that of members of their networks/alliances. The Danish Red Cross gave the example of supporting the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) to develop its capacity for cash programming. A third advantage is that the predictability of a framework agreement should enable partners to plan their interventions better and take a longer-term approach in protracted crises. During the annual technical negotiations with partners, HCP's focus is on testing the intervention logic of partners to ensure that their programmes are appropriate for the context.

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44   As shown by Table 2 in Section 3.3, between 2010 and 2013 Danida provided almost 40% of its humanitarian funding as core contributions to international organisations or to pooled funds that have very high levels of discretion over the use of donor funding.

45   One example was using Danida funding to hire an economist to strengthen the agency's use of data and undertake cost-benefit analyses, etc. Once agency management recognised the value of having this skill set within the organisation, they funded the position internally. Danida funding has also enabled UNHCR to involve the private sector in livelihoods programmes for refugees and in housing solutions for refugees.

The rationale for HCP to engage in strategic relationships with a limited number of partners is laid out in the Humanitarian Strategy.[46] This is also practical for a small donor with a very small number of staff. Overall, Danida's partnership approach is based on ensuring that partners have appropriate systems in place and then trusting them to deliver timely and appropriate humanitarian assistance. Danida uses three main forms of quality assurance for its NGO partners: capacity assessments, certification in humanitarian standards, and project reviews conducted by UFT. Seven of the eight NGO partners also have framework partnership agreements with ECHO, which have rigorous selection processes, which offers further assurance.

The capacity assessments aim to ensure that NGOs have adequate financial, administrative and programmatic systems in place. The evaluation was able to review eight assessments.[47] Of these, five were undertaken in 2011 and, on the basis of these, HCP did not offer framework agreements to two NGOs (Danish People's Aid and International Aid Services). Although these five assessments did not focus on programme delivery by partners, the capacity assessments conducted in 2013 and 2014 include project reviews and site visits. They also provide more information on strategic priorities such as gender and mechanisms for accountability to affected populations. In addition, the capacity assessments conducted in 2014 examined accountability mechanisms during field visits. This is a positive indication that Danida has strengthened the assessments.

Section 4.2.1 highlighted that Danida has been active in supporting initiatives aiming to strengthen NGO accountability to affected populations and uphold standards in humanitarian assistance. It expects NGO partners to demonstrate that they are adhering to accepted standards and has asked them to initiate HAP certification or a similar standard by 2015. The capacity assessments check on whether partners are HAP certified.[48]

HCP also commissions UFT to review partner projects at field level.[49] These tend to focus on NGO partners although a couple included UNHCR and UNFPA, and UFT also conducted a review of support to the Kenya Department of Refugee Affairs.[50]

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46   'Denmark aims to build mutually beneficial partnerships with a range of partners and at the same time reduce the total number of partnerships for enhanced dialogue and support' (MFA 2009:31).

47   HCP provided the capacity assessment reports for ADRA, Caritas, Danish People's Aid, International Aid Services, MSF (all of which were undertaken in 2011), Mission East (undertaken in 2013) and Danish Refugee Council and Save the Children Denmark (conducted in 2014). Therefore, the evaluation team did not review capacity assessments for two current NGO framework partners – DanChurchAid and Danish Red Cross.

48   Of the five NGOs that underwent capacity assessments in 2011, none were HAP certified. Of the three NGOs that were assessed in 2013 and 2014, only one (DRC) is HAP certified as part of its broader accountability and quality assurance framework. Save the Children Denmark is supporting Save the Children International to undertake HAP certification. Mission East expected to obtain HAP certification in 2014.

49   Danida made available reports on the review of the Regions of Origin Initiative in response to the Iraq displacement crisis from 2009-11, humanitarian support to oPT in 2012, humanitarian assistance to IDPs in Myanmar and Myanmar refugees in Thailand in 2012, capacity building of the Kenyan Refugees and Asylum System in 2013, and humanitarian assistance to Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon in 2013.

50   UFT conducted the review of UNHCR as part of a broader review of the Somalia country programme (MFA 2014). The review of humanitarian assistance to Myanmar covered UNFPA (Jensen, Andersen and Jespersen 2012).

The UFT reviews provide helpful insights into programme delivery by partners and the results they are achieving.

In addition, HCP rigorously reviews NGO programme proposals during the annual technical negotiations or when they respond to special calls for proposals for additional funding. In the latter case, HCP scores the proposals received against a published set of criteria in order to identify the best projects for funding.

To ensure the quality of the international organisations' work, Danida uses two mechanisms. One is active engagement with the governing bodies of international organisations. This offers an important form of quality assurance because the boards are an integral part of the UN's accountability system and a key channel for Denmark to push for improvements on reporting results and performance issues. The second is documentary evidence, particularly external reviews – discussed further in Section 4.4.1. In addition, the missions in Geneva and New York receive information from other donors and NGOs as well as through participation in the CERF Advisory Group and the Pooled Funds Working Group about the performance of UN agencies at field level. They then use this to promote improvements through the agency boards.

Although Danida uses these mechanisms to assure the quality and performance of its UN partners, some NGO partners and external actors questioned the effectiveness and value for money of providing around 60% of Danida's funding through UN channels, particularly when they do not implement directly, are often slower than NGOs at delivering humanitarian assistance and their implementing partners face extremely high transaction costs.[51] One NGO partner also questioned why NGOs were held to different accountability standards than UN agencies although this is standard practice across donors. From Danida's perspective, UN agencies are essential for their normative role and scale of operation and the Development Cooperation Strategy makes its commitment to multilateralism clear.[52] The amount of funding channelled through UN agencies is also partly a factor of Danida maintaining a balance between partners and to partly due to administrative practicality. Since it cannot provide additional funding to NGO partners through their framework agreements without a separate grant agreement, allocating additional funding for a priority crisis or new emergency through UN partners can enable Danida to respond faster.[53]

Currently, Danida works with Danish NGOs and international organisations as its main humanitarian partners. It is aware of the risk of working only with the 'usual suspects' and excluding NGOs that may add value in specific contexts, for example, because of their access or established relationship with affected communities. Therefore, it has

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51   It should be noted that Danida's level of funding to UN agencies is in line with the DAC donor average (see Figure 4 in Section 3.3). However, it provides a higher percentage of its humanitarian funding through NGOs than other DAC donors – 25% versus 19%.

52   http://amg.um.dk/en/multilateral-cooperation/

53   In the case of existing priority crises, to comply with EU regulations on competitive tendering, Danida issues a call for proposals when allocating additional funds to NGO partners. This can take time because partners have to prepare proposals and Danida has to review and assess them, although it can use fast track procedures as it did in August 2014 to facilitate a quick response to the IDP crisis in Iraq.

funded non-framework NGOs in Afghanistan and the Syria crisis.[54] However, it needs to manage the administrative burden of providing grants outside the framework agreements. One opportunity for financing the most appropriate NGO partners in a given context is the special calls, where Danida invites partners to submit proposals and then undertakes a rigorous review process to select the best projects. At present, these calls are restricted to framework agreement NGOs but Danida has to administer the grants separately from the framework agreements. Therefore, it could finance non-framework international NGOs although there is an issue of quality assurance since the framework partners have been vetted in advance and Danida would not have the time or resources to assess new partners. Therefore, HCP's view is that it does not have the capacity to increase the number of partners but it could consider funding international NGOs that have ECHO framework agreements (since these undergo a rigorous assessment process that includes regular field-level monitoring) when they offer specific expertise or access.

As noted in Section 4.1.1, a much larger number of local and national actors are now involved in providing humanitarian assistance, and international organisations have had to work through local partners in contexts such as Somalia and Syria in order to access those affected (finding ways to monitor the work of partners remotely and ensure accountability).[55] Local and national NGOs are usually the first to respond to a crisis and can often provide assistance in areas inaccessible to international organisations. Yet a recent study has found that bilateral donors provide very little direct funding to national NGOs, providing indirect funding through UN agencies, international NGOs and country-based pooled funds instead (Caritas 2013). It presents the range of challenges that bilateral donors face with funding national and local NGOs, including that donors who fund these organisations directly tend to have a network of staff physically present in crisis-affected countries to identify and verify prospective partners (Caritas 2013: 20). Danida faces many of the same limitations as other donors, but some of its Danish NGO partners (such as ADRA and Caritas) are part of networks with national members while the Danish Red Cross supports national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies. This presents an opportunity for greater support to national NGOs.

Even with its current set of partners, Danida needs to ensure that they are the most effective and can be changed when organisations fail to deliver results. Section 4.4 discusses the difficulties of documenting results in greater detail but, as one NGO partner pointed out, Danida's focus is on ensuring that partners have appropriate systems in place so that it can undertake lighter monitoring of programme delivery and results on the ground. One challenge with relying heavily on partners' own systems is that strong systems do not always translate into effective programming at field level because a range of factors might affect the quality of programming. It also makes it more difficult to have in place procedures to allocate funding and adjust funding levels on the basis of performance criteria.[56]

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54   In Afghanistan, Danida has been funding DACAAR and Norwegian Refugee Council while, for the Syria crisis, it funded DanMission and Development and Regeneration Association in 2013.

55   A recent study examines the nature of partnership is remote management settings – see Howe et al. (2015).

56   The previous evaluation of Danish humanitarian assistance also argued that Danida's funding to NGO partners should be based on performance, using iterative assessments of capacity and performance (ETC UK 1999).

Currently, partners have a high degree of predictability because funding levels do not change much from year to year (unless they increase, as has been the case for the CERF, OCHA and ICRC). While this is positive, it also limits incentives to strengthen performance.

Since Danida does not require its partners to report on accountability to affected populations and has very little humanitarian capacity at field level to monitor partner projects, it is difficult for it to ensure that partners have effective mechanisms in place. Therefore, as mentioned, it has asked NGO partners to demonstrate that they are adhering to accountability standards, including by obtaining HAP certification or an equivalent.

HAP certification remains the subject of ongoing debate among Danish NGOs, including within the Humanitarian Committee of the NGO Forum, which started a capacity-building project called 'Accountability in Action' to develop and strengthen the capacity of Danish NGOs through a number of workshops on accountability. Since most of the Danida NGO partners work through network/alliance members or implementing partners, it can be a challenge even for HAP-certified organisations to ensure effective accountability to affected populations. For UN agencies, the inclusion of accountability to affected populations in the Transformative Agenda has put it high on the agenda and the procedures for reviews or evaluations of level three crises routinely include an assessment of accountability. However, operational peer reviews have often highlighted weaknesses with accountability to affected populations.[57]

The case studies found that partners tend to have mechanisms in place to ensure accountability to affected populations but not all of them are effective at providing clear information on assistance and responding to recipients' concerns. In South Sudan, DRC had put in place a comprehensive system in a refugee camp, combining community participation in coordination committees with community outreach volunteers. This is an example of good practice. In Jordan and Lebanon, it was more challenging for agencies to reach out to refugees outside camps or informal settlements though UNHCR had set up a network of community outreach volunteers. It was also difficult for aid agencies to respond to the complaints and concerns of refugees, leading to frustration among refugee representatives. In Afghanistan, Mission East and Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DACAAR) have worked closely with Community Development Councils (established under the National Solidarity Programme) to organise consultation meetings with community members and to provide accountability to local communities.

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57   The evaluation had access to reports from operational peer reviews from the Philippines and South Sudan and a Senior Transformative Agenda Implementation Team Mission to Sudan. Of these, the reports on Sudan and South Sudan both found accountability to affected populations to be weak while the Philippines report found that improvements could be made.

Registration at supplementary feeding programme, Wau, South Sudan
Photograph: © Tasneem Mowjee

4.3.2 To what extent did Danish humanitarian assistance meet the different needs of men and women and the needs of the most vulnerable among affected populations?

Section 4.1.5 addressed the issue of gender-sensitive programming but this section focuses on the extent to which partners target the most vulnerable of those affected by crises. The evaluation found that Danida's partners seek to target assistance to the most vulnerable. Responding to a survey question about undertaking a vulnerability analysis, 29 out of 40 respondents stated that their organisation had conducted one in the last two years. Household surveys and vulnerability mapping were the most common tools listed: 32 out of 37 respondents stated that their organisations use specific criteria to target assistance to the most vulnerable. The most common criteria used were female-headed households, the disabled, the elderly, unaccompanied minors/children and those with chronic illnesses. The case studies support these findings. In particular, focus group participants in the Syria case study felt that assistance was targeted at the most vulnerable even if the criteria were not always clear to them.

While it is encouraging that Danida's partners are targeting their assistance at vulnerable groups, the Syria case study highlighted the need for more detailed vulnerability analyses because not everyone within a particular group is equally vulnerable, and also because focusing on particular groups can lead agencies to ignore groups that they may not think of as vulnerable, such as unemployed men. Only two survey respondents were using criteria or methods that indicated a more nuanced understanding of vulnerability. One focused on whether target groups had access to basic services, such as health, education and water and sanitation, as well as whether this access to services was equal for both genders. This is good practice (see ACAPS and UNHCR 2013). The second noted that they took account of negative coping mechanisms when identifying vulnerable individuals.

4.4 Danida's added value, and follow-up and monitoring of results

How well does Danida support and ensure follow-up, monitoring and reporting of performance by partners, including ensuring reporting on the effects on affected populations?

Summary of findings

Danida has four potential mechanisms for following up and monitoring partner performance. These are: (1) engagement on the board on international organisations; (2) documented results (annual reports, reviews and evaluations); (3) informal communications; and (4) field-level monitoring. According to interviewees, its active engagement on the boards of international organisations has contributed to strengthening the reporting systems of international organisations. The evaluation identified a number of challenges with the documenting of results in partner reports. Danida makes some use of other forms of documented results such as review and evaluation reports but relies more on informal, verbal communication to gather information about partner programming and challenges. Danida's capacity for following up on humanitarian projects at field level has been reduced and HCP staff members lack both the time and an adequate travel budget to visit partner projects. As a result, Danida is heavily reliant on partner self-reporting at present so it needs to strengthen field-level mechanisms for assessing results independently.

Currently, HCP makes very little use of independent evaluations and there is no mechanism to track the implementation of the strategic priorities across the board. Partners have their own monitoring systems in place but tended to be weaker at having systems for independent evaluations that informed their programme cycle.

Danida's added value as a donor is clearly the flexibility of its funding, which has proved beneficial for partner programmes in a variety of ways. Partners also value the predictability of the framework agreements and emphasised that the quality of Danida's funding set it apart from other donors.

4.4.1 What mechanisms does Danida have in place to follow up on results and how effective are they?

Donors generally have four mechanisms for following up with partners on results: engagement in the governance structures of international organisations, documentation, informal communication, and field-level information.

As described in Section 4.2.1, Denmark is very active on the boards of international organisations. According to WFP, UNICEF, OCHA and UNHCR, it has used its position to advocate for the strengthening of systems for reporting results. In the case of UNICEF, this has led to the creation of a new executive director post focusing on results reporting. WFP also felt that Denmark's focus on results-based management through its membership of the Executive Board had contributed to improved systems for capturing results. Denmark, together with other donors, contributed to the development of OCHA's new four-year strategic framework. As part of this process, OCHA has elaborated a monitoring and evaluation plan that aims to provide timely, credible and reliable information and analysis on OCHA's progress across its whole portfolio of activities and operations. When chairing ICRC's donor support group, Denmark worked with a small group of donors to reflect on how ICRC could strengthen its reporting, even though this was challenging because donors have very different requirements. Thus, international

organisation interviewees felt that this engagement was an effective mechanism for strengthening their reporting systems. However, it needs to be complemented by mechanisms for assessing results at the field level. Currently, Danida does not independently verify whether international organisations are delivering humanitarian assistance effectively, relying instead on partners' own reports and information from pooled funds, other donors and NGOs (channelled through the missions in New York and Geneva).

To document results, Danida relies to a great extent on partner self-reporting. International organisations provide their global reports at times during the year when these become available while NGO partners submit reports, also according to their own formats, 10 months after the end of a calendar year, that is, they presented their reports for 2013 on 1 November 2014. The evaluation identified the following challenges with this approach to documenting results:

- Since Danida has no set format for reporting, partner reports range from detailed output reports (e.g. DRC) to very general programme level reports (e.g. DanChurchAid and UN agencies), and it is very difficult to compare across them or to aggregate results (even outputs such as the number of people assisted).[58] Danida asks its NGO partners to provide output reporting for the project and programme database that is publicly available online but there was general agreement within HCP that this is not particularly useful.

- It is challenging to track implementation of the strategic priorities. Only three NGOs report in any detail on their contributions to implementing the strategic priorities (although others mention the broad strategic directions). As Section 4.1.5 noted, reporting on the incorporation of gender into humanitarian programming is limited and only three NGO partners include evidence to demonstrate that they have effective mechanisms in place to ensure accountability to affected populations.

- Some NGO partners were not clear about what Danida meant by results beyond outputs. For some partners, it is difficult to move from reporting on outputs to longer-term outcomes because they plan and report on an annual basis, even though the framework agreement gives them the opportunity to use Danida funding over a three-year period and to start assessing longer-term outcomes.[59] Results-based management and reporting are also problematic for some international organisations.[60]

- Some partners submit extremely long reports that HCP does not have the time to read in detail. In the case of NGO partners, HCP receives the reports at the same

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58   The fact that Danida's funding database does not contain data on the number of beneficiaries and limited data on funding by sector also makes it difficult to relate funding to results – see Annex E.

59   See, for example, the capacity assessments of the Danish Refugee Council (Danida 2014b) and Save the Children Denmark (Danida 2014c).

60   For example, MOPAN's assessment of UNICEF identified this as an issue and Denmark's organisational strategy with UNICEF lists other reviews that have found results reporting as a weakness (MOPAN 2012; Danida 2014a). A review of Danish support to Somalia and the region identified challenges with UNHCR's reporting (MFA 2014) and one interviewee reported that a recent MOPAN assessment of UNHCR had identified weaknesses in its reporting. ICRC also mentioned that it has been grappling with capturing outcome and impact in its reporting.

time as applications for the following year's funding and their focus is on reviewing the NGO proposals. There is also little incentive for HCP to examine NGO partner reports closely because, after 10 months, it is too late to correct the course of any projects that may be facing challenges, particularly because humanitarian contexts often change rapidly. The Danish Red Cross and Danish Refugee Council found 10 months too long a time frame for reporting because, with staff turnover and changes to a programme in the intervening period, it was difficult to ensure that reporting is accurate. As a result, they complete their reports around April and then submit them in November.

Reports are obviously not the only way to document results. As described in Section 4.1.3, Danida attempted to assess the results of the implementation of the strategic priorities across the partners but did not find this a helpful approach.

Section 4.3.1 mentioned that HCP uses capacity assessments of NGO partners as one way to ensure the quality of their work. However, these have not examined programme delivery until recently. The five assessments conducted in 2011 did not undertake field visits or individual project reviews. The capacity assessment of Mission East in 2013 was due to include a field visit to Afghanistan, where the NGO is working with Danida funding, but this was cancelled for security reasons. Nevertheless, the assessment team did review project documents. Therefore, only the two capacity assessments in 2014 examined the extent to which the partners were delivering results on the ground and, of these, the assessment of Save the Children was a thematic review with a limited focus on its humanitarian programming.[61]

HCP also commissions UFT to conduct reviews of selected projects or of its assistance to specific crises. These are very helpful for identifying results and challenges but, based on the evidence available, there have only been approximately one or two reviews per year between 2011 and 2014, partly due to UFT's limited capacity.[62] Furthermore, HCP does not commission reviews of UN agencies, although the Myanmar review covered UNFPA activities, while the Somalia review included a UNHCR project (Jensen, Andersen and Jespersen 2012; MFA 2014). Independent evaluations are another way of identifying and documenting the results delivered by partners and these are discussed in the next section.

Danida has access to documentary evidence relating to the performance of international organisation partners apart from annual reports. Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) assessments are one major source of evidence although some interviewees questioned the robustness of these and the Australian Multilateral Assessment (AMA) noted that 'MOPAN's approach has limitations that are driving donors towards undertaking their own assessments' (Australian Government 2012: xiii). It has also used the UK's Humanitarian Emergency Response Review and Multilateral Aid Review as well as the AMA as background information and to validate internal assessments. For example, it has used findings from the AMA in its discussions with

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61   As a result, the review of Save the Children's humanitarian capacity was annexed to the main report (Save the Children 2012).

62   There is an agreement between HCP and UFT that the former can request six to seven reviews a year, including capacity assessments. This is based on UFT's current capacity.

UNHCR on results-based management.[63] The limitation of these assessments is that, apart from the Humanitarian Emergency Response Review and the AMA, they focus very little on the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

Owing to the nature of Danida's partnership approach and its engagement with a limited number of organisations, it makes extensive use of informal communication on the performance of partners. This is ad hoc, with NGO partners calling HCP staff members to discuss contextual or programmatic issues relating to the countries in which they are operating. One HCP staff member felt that this provided much better insight into partner performance than written reports. HCP also has very close informal communication with UNHCR, which is reinforced by the Geneva mission. In addition, the Geneva mission maintains communication with OCHA and ICRC while the Rome embassy has close links with WFP. The relationship with UNICEF and UNFPA was less close perhaps because Denmark's relationship encompasses both development and humanitarian programming and there seems to be a greater focus on development issues. For the partners, informal communication is a useful channel for highlighting challenges with which they may be grappling and, from HCP's perspective, it is a useful way to learn about difficulties as well as 'good news' stories.

One way to gather field-level information on partner performance is through a presence at country or regional level. The DAC Peer Review highlighted the benefits of the field presence that Danida had through dedicated humanitarian advisors in Ethiopia, Somalia (based in the Nairobi embassy) and Afghanistan. It argued that 'their expertise has meant that they can engage at a high level with all stakeholders, and partners see this as a major strength. They are also able to relay field-level issues to staff dealing with the multilateral organisations' (Development Assistance Committee 2011: 73). However, with the loss of these positions, Danida has very few staff members with humanitarian experience at field level to monitor partner projects. The fragile states advisor in South Sudan and the Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia have humanitarian expertise as well as responsibility for following up on Danida's humanitarian funding but they also have development responsibilities and are under pressure to focus on the latter. Other embassy staff members engage on humanitarian issues in a variety of ways but there are serious constraints on their capacity to follow up on humanitarian projects (see Section 4.5.2 below). HCP staff members occasionally travel to the field – for example, as part of a review team with UFT – but they lack both time and a sufficient travel budget for this.[64] In addition, all MFA staff members have to abide by security guidelines that mean that they cannot visit project sites in insecure areas. This makes it challenging for staff from Copenhagen and those based in embassies to follow up on humanitarian projects systematically.

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63   It should be noted that the Humanitarian Emergency Response Review dates from 2010 and the Multilateral Aid Review from 2011, though it was updated in 2013, while the AMA was conducted in 2012, so these are not up-to-date assessments.

64   An HCP staff member of the humanitarian department participated in the reviews of humanitarian assistance to Gaza and the West Bank in 2012 and of humanitarian assistance to Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon in 2013. See Jensen, Petersen and Jespersen 2012 and Jespersen, Jensen and Petersen 2013. Also, in March 2013, the desk officer responsible for the relationship with MSF Denmark visited a Danida-funded project in Ethiopia as part of a broader work trip to Ethiopia and Kenya.

The lack of field-level monitoring capacity increases Danida's reliance on partner self-reporting.[65] This points to a risk that partners will report the 'good news' rather than being honest about challenges.[66] This is perhaps less of a risk with partners with whom HCP has a close working relationship and where it complements reporting with informal communication, but it is not able to work equally closely with all partners. MOPAN reviews have identified weaknesses in the reporting systems of some UN agencies. A few reviews of CERF funding have also found that there can be discrepancies between what is reported and field reality as well as other weaknesses with UN agency reporting (Featherstone 2013; Mowjee 2012; 2014). This suggests that Danida should exercise a degree of independent oversight of implementation at field level, including of UN partners, whether through the greater use of UFT reviews, field-level follow-up by HCP and embassies or through the use of independent evaluations.

4.4.2 What have been the implications of implementation through partnerships, including on the documentation and monitoring of results?

The previous section discussed the issues relating to the documentation of results; this section will focus on monitoring and evaluation. As highlighted in Section 4.3.1, Danida's emphasis is on ensuring that its partners have adequate systems and capacity for delivering humanitarian assistance, including for monitoring. The case studies identified that partners generally did have monitoring mechanisms in place. For example, in Afghanistan, a couple of Danida's NGO partners have focused on impact monitoring and the National Solidarity Programme has been working with Harvard University on monitoring. UN agencies monitor their implementing partners and there were a couple of examples of online monitoring mechanisms in Lebanon that humanitarian agencies could use jointly. Even with good monitoring mechanisms in place, aid agencies find it a challenge to capture monitoring data and convert it into meaningful reporting to donors. However, during interviews at headquarters level, two out of Danida's four operational UN agency partners noted that their monitoring systems were works in progress.

At present, Danida relies almost entirely on partners to decide whether to commission evaluations or not, even though these could provide good information about performance at field level.[67] It also has a policy of not commissioning independent evaluations of UN agencies on the principle that they have their own internal systems, even though these may be weak.[68] A few partners do evaluate Danida-funded programmes but, even

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65   This is not a new challenge. The evaluation of Danish humanitarian assistance from 1992-98 found that there was 'weak quality control of implementing partners' performance because of the lack of monitoring and evaluation standards' (ETC UK 1999).

66   Through its reviews, UFT found that the projects visited did not always match with proposals or reports provided to Danida, highlighting challenges with channelling information from the field into donor reports.

67   Danida has only commissioned one independent evaluation of its humanitarian assistance, which was of the Regions of Origin Initiative programme in Afghanistan in 2012.

68   For example, the Office of Internal Oversight Services identified that UNHCR's evaluation function did not meet the norms and standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group in terms of independence, utility and credibility. It found that the credibility of the evaluation function suffered from methodological limitations in assessing organisational results (ECOSOC 2013). The UK's Multilateral Aid Review in 2011 found that UNFPA's evaluation culture was weak (DFID 2011). This is reflected in the fact that the agency has commissioned very few external evaluations of its humanitarian assistance even though this is a priority area for the agency. Of Danida's UN partners, WFP is the strongest on commissioning independent evaluations.

if they share the reports with HCP, it does not have the staffing capacity to follow up on results and challenges.

The monitoring and evaluation of results should inform future programme designs and decisions if partners are to learn lessons and improve their programming. Some partners, such as WFP, have been investing in this and reviews of its evaluation function found that its evaluations had influenced programmes, policy and strategy even though learning was constrained by the lack of a corporate knowledge management function (MOPAN 2013; OECD/DAC and UNEG 2014). UNICEF has started using a wiki platform to capture lessons in real time, which can then be used for reviews and evaluations. UNHCR, however, is currently much weaker at ensuring that evaluation results feed into the programme cycle and, like WFP, lacks a clear knowledge management function. Two of Danida's NGO partners felt that it should be more demanding in requiring them to conduct evaluations in order to support lesson learning.

4.4.3 Can Denmark's added value and comparative advantage within humanitarian assistance be inferred from the results of implementation?

Section 4.4.1 discussed the variations in reporting by Danida's partners, which makes it difficult to identify and aggregate results clearly. This also made it challenging to infer Denmark's added value and comparative advantage as a donor from the results of programme implementation. However, Danida's partners were clear about its added value and provided numerous examples, at both headquarter and country levels.

Partners cited the flexibility of Danida's funding as perhaps its greatest added value and this was also clear from the case studies. They have used the flexibility in different ways:

- From the stakeholder workshop and South Sudan case study it was clear that Danida gives partners the flexibility to adapt their programmes to a changing context rather than insisting that they keep to a plan that may be out of date.

- The flexible funds incorporated in the NGO Humanitarian Partnership Agreements help them to respond quickly to a new emergency and then use that as a base for raising additional funds.

- The case studies found that partners had been able to use Danida funding to fill gaps and cover activities that other donors were unwilling to cover. In some cases, without this, it would have been difficult for the organisations to deliver their programmes.

- The case studies highlighted that Danida's flexibility in allowing partners to use its funding for operational support costs had been valuable in strengthening an overall response. UNFPA also highlighted that it had used Danida funds for training and capacity building of regional and country offices for the Syria response. This enabled it to undertake core interventions and raise additional funds.

- Danida has provided UNHCR with DKK 20 million to use flexibly for innovation, explicitly to experiment with different approaches. Section 4.3.1 described some of the ways in which this has been a catalyst for changes within UNHCR. In addition, it has used the funding to try different alternatives to camps and to experiment with a new approach to livelihoods for Syrian refugees in Lebanon (e.g. supporting Syrian artisans to work with Lebanese businesses and sell their products internationally). ADRA also gave the example of Danida's flexibility in enabling it to test new approaches through pilot projects in Yemen and adapt projects on the basis of the findings.

As a result of this flexibility, partners argued that even small contributions from Danida could make a significant difference to their ability to deliver humanitarian assistance.

The predictability of the multiannual framework agreements is also valuable for partners, particularly as most humanitarian agencies respond in protracted crises but their funding is usually very short-term. For UNFPA, the predictable funding had been catalytic in strengthening its humanitarian response capacity and to develop normative work on reproductive health and GBV.

Finally, partners value the fact that Danida is not simply a donor but a partner with which they can have honest discussions because its staff members are experienced and understand field realities and challenges.

Dentist at Caritas Centre for Refugees, Amman, Jordan
Photograph: © Tasneem Mowjee

What are the lessons learned of linking emergency relief and development, i.e. reconciling humanitarian and development objectives in specific contexts and settings?

Summary of findings

There are a number of areas of common ground between the humanitarian strategy, and development policy and strategy documents. One of these is the need to link humanitarian and development assistance to address the causes of vulnerability. The challenge is to ensure complementary and holistic programming in practice.

Danida has experimented with different organisational structures to support more holistic programming but, like other donors, it has not found a successful one. The lesson learned from this is that combining departments or budget lines alone does not promote complementarity and it is necessary to find additional ways of encouraging humanitarian and development staff members to share information and collaborate. One example of joint programming demonstrates that humanitarian and development staff members can find ways to combine their funding and work together when they have shared interests.

Currently, the embassies are responsible for development programmes but humanitarian aid is still centrally managed from Copenhagen. Although the two forms of assistance are administered and managed separately, humanitarian and development programme managers provide input into each other's decision-making processes and this is an important step in promoting linkages. This collaboration is facilitated by the fact that Danida focuses both its humanitarian and development assistance on fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

The country policy and country programme documents represent an opportunity to ensure synergies at programmatic level. However, while country policy papers cover the full range of instruments that apply in a given context, country programme documents tend to focus only on the development activities managed at embassy level. Often, country programmes only partially build on and reflect Danida's humanitarian assistance. The new Somalia country programme document is an exception and a potential example of how these could promote and reflect a more coordinated approach to the different forms of assistance that Danida is providing to a particular country.

Greater collaboration between HCP and the embassies should yield not only the benefit of better linkages between Danida's humanitarian and development assistance but also help to ensure better follow-up of Danida's humanitarian funding at field level. At present, there are a number of barriers to achieving this. This includes extremely stretched resources at both embassy and HCP levels but also issues around priorities and ownership that Danida senior management need to address.

One potential barrier to strengthening linkages between humanitarian and development assistance is concern within Danida and among its humanitarian partners that this would compromise humanitarian principles. However, the evaluation did not identify any evidence that this had happened. In fact, HCP has been able to ensure that development and stabilisation policy and Strategy documents include a commitment to the humanitarian principles. Therefore, it can refer to this if there is a risk of Danida's development or stabilisation funding undermining the principled basis of its humanitarian assistance.

4.5 Linking emergency and development objectives and activities

4.5.1 How clear is the Strategy in terms of guiding humanitarian activities and ensuring coherence with other strategic priorities in Danish foreign and aid policy, such as a human rights-based approach?

There is commonality between the humanitarian strategy and strategy and policy documents relating to other Danish assistance. Danida's Humanitarian Strategy clearly bases assistance on the humanitarian principles, arguing at the very beginning that what is required is 'a continued strong commitment to humanitarianism and international humanitarian principles' (MFA 2009: 5). HCP has been able to position this commitment to humanitarian principles within other related strategies and policies, such as the development strategy (*The Right to a Better Life*), the Fragile States Policy (MFA 2010), and the strategy for integrated stabilisation engagement. This is a significant achievement in promoting respect for the humanitarian principles.

The Humanitarian Strategy also links to the Development Cooperation strategy on the basis of human rights. The Strategy's introduction states that, 'Denmark is committed to working with partners around the world to … save lives, preserve people's dignity, protect human rights, prevent abuse and assist in breaking the cycle linking crises, vulnerability and poverty' (MFA 2009: 5). The Development Cooperation Strategy argues that support for a strong civil society, which fights for the most vulnerable and marginalised people, is at the heart of a rights-based approach. This focus on the most vulnerable is a common thread between the humanitarian and development strategies. The development strategy highlights the right to food, education and healthcare. This emphasis on basic services aligns with the focus of humanitarian interventions. Other areas of commonality between the two strategies include:

- a shared emphasis on gender;

- the need to address climate change in the green growth priority of the development strategy;

- social protection for the poor and vulnerable;

- contributing to the improved protection of those affected by conflict and disasters, while respecting the humanitarian principles (under the priority of stability and protection);

- a commitment to strengthening resilience among vulnerable groups as well as efforts for disaster prevention under the stability and protection priority of the development strategy.

The Fragile States Policy argues that linking humanitarian and development assistance can address the causes of vulnerability (MFA 2010). The Humanitarian Strategy's statement that strengthening the resilience of the most vulnerable requires a holistic approach reflects this view. Also, under the strategic direction of vulnerability, it states that, 'Denmark will address the underlying causes of vulnerability through building better links between relief and development' (MFA 2009: 13). However, there is no specific strategic priority on linkages with Development Cooperation and the Strategy does not provide guidance on how to promote synergies between humanitarian and development assistance in practice. There is also no mention of the role of embassies in implementing

Danida's assistance at country level. The next section discusses the challenge of ensuring that the two forms of assistance work in a complementary and holistic manner in practice.

4.5.2 How does the humanitarian assistance supported under the Strategy relate to other Danish-funded engagements in conflict-affected and fragile states?
Danida has tried to ensure linkages between the different forms of assistance to conflict-affected and fragile states through different approaches, including its organisational structure. When the Humanitarian Strategy was developed (in 2008/09), it incorporated the humanitarian section into the development policy department as a way of ensuring better linkages. According to staff reports to the DAC Peer Review, this promoted a closer working relationship with development staff and greater cross-programme linkages in countries to which Danida was providing assistance (Development Assistance Committee 2011). However, there were also challenges. From the development policy department's perspective, this was partly because the humanitarian team was keen to keep its funding separate in order to protect principles and to avoid politicisation. Also, the development policy department was focused on policy planning while the humanitarian section was focused on grant management and humanitarian action. In addition, the merged humanitarian and development policy departments were too large for management purposes. Thus, for a variety of reasons, Danida decided to separate the humanitarian section again. It merged the development policy department with the multilateral department instead, and the humanitarian section, civil society team and advisory team were merged into the current HCP.

In 2010, Danida transferred parts of the humanitarian budget line (06.39.02) to country-specific budget lines. This was implemented in the 2011 Finance Bill and was intended to provide a more comprehensive overview of Danish assistance to priority countries. From HCP's perspective, this led to greater administrative complexity but not greater transparency about the assistance flowing to a particular country because the Humanitarian Department had to move funding between country budget lines to respond to changing humanitarian priorities. This led to frustrations and some tension between the Humanitarian Department and some embassies. It has also been suggested that, since humanitarian aid is programmed centrally and implemented through partners, including it in the country-specific budget lines did not lead to greater engagement with humanitarian assistance at embassy level. In light of these considerations, the MFA reversed its decision and removed humanitarian funding from the country-specific budget lines.

Danida has refrained from decentralising the management of humanitarian assistance to the embassies, perhaps due to a number of concerns. According to the DAC Peer Review, partners expressed fears about the risk of compromising humanitarian principles under the whole-of-government approach (Development Assistance Committee 2011).[69] This was particularly the case in those states where Denmark had a military presence, such as Afghanistan, although the DAC Peer Review found no evidence of breaches of humanitarian principles. There were also worries within Danida that humanitarian aid would

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69   Concern about protecting humanitarian aid from politicisation is a potential barrier to building synergies between humanitarian and development assistance. However, HCP has argued that locating Danida within the MFA facilitates communication on the political aspects of crises and that it can exert greater influence on ensuring that humanitarian principles are respected from within the Ministry than it could from outside.

be used for more 'political' programmes or that the needs of humanitarian caseloads, such as refugees, would be ignored by embassies traditionally used to dealing with development cooperation.[70] Finally, some felt that it might be more difficult to ensure connections between country-level discussions (such as adopting a developmental approach to displacement in Afghanistan) and global level initiatives and policy dialogues.

Danida is not alone in struggling to find an appropriate organisational structure or approach – no donor has found a successful way to integrate the management of humanitarian and development budget lines. At present, the main structural challenge for Danida is that the humanitarian budget is managed from Copenhagen (as is civil society funding and the Peace and Stabilisation Fund) while development country programmes are decentralised to the embassies. Danida has addressed this by getting humanitarian and development programme managers to provide input into each other's decision-making processes. HCP involves relevant embassies during the annual negotiations with NGO partners and also when it puts together a package of additional funding for a crisis that needs to be approved by the Minister. It felt that this had led to greater engagement on humanitarian issues in recent years. According to embassy interviewees, the level of engagement depends to a large extent on capacity. For example, the Myanmar embassy provides input on the political context rather than the substance of programmes because it does not have the capacity to visit project sites. The Addis Ababa embassy (which manages development assistance to South Sudan) participates in selected negotiations where it can add value, particularly in terms of putting the proposed partner programmes into the context of Denmark's broader engagement.[71] Both the Addis Ababa and Nairobi embassies mentioned being consulted on the allocation of special funds to South Sudan and Somalia, although the Nairobi embassy felt there was much less opportunity to influence funding allocated through framework agreements.

The fact that Danida focuses both its humanitarian and development assistance on protracted (conflict-related) crises is an opportunity to ensure synergies at programmatic level, and HCP participates in consultations on the country policy and programme documents developed by the embassies with support from the development policy and political departments. Danida's country policy papers for countries that are a priority for development assistance mention the full range of instruments that apply in a given country, including humanitarian assistance where applicable (the Afghanistan and new Somalia policy documents are examples). However, the country programme document details only the development activities for which the embassy is responsible and country programmes might only partially build on, or take account of, Danida's humanitarian assistance. This is demonstrated by the review of humanitarian assistance to Myanmar (Jensen, Andersen and Jespersen 2012) and was also the case in South Sudan prior to the crisis in December 2013 (see Section 4.5.3). Combined with the separation in the management of humanitarian and development programming, this creates a risk that the two forms of programmes operate in isolation. But the new Somalia country programme document is an exception and an example of how future country programme papers could promote and reflect a more coordinated approach to the different aid instruments

70   A concern about refugees being left out of development planning was also raised during online consultations for the WHS on how humanitarian and development actors should deliver together for better overall results. Comment from Amanda Gray, Urban Displacement Advisor from UK on http://www.worldhumanitariansummit.org/node/465870

71   Since HCP is phasing out humanitarian funding to Ethiopia, there is much less focus on this – see the following section.

that Danida is employing in contexts that are a priority for both its humanitarian and development funding.[72]

HCP and the embassies working together should yield two major benefits for Danida's assistance. The first is greater complementarity between humanitarian and development funding (which should lead to better outcomes for the poorest and most vulnerable in the fragile contexts where Danida is providing assistance). The second is better follow-up of humanitarian programme delivery by Danida's partners (to balance the current heavy reliance on self-reporting). Interviews with embassy staff members and HCP revealed that they have a good relationship but the following challenges (identified through interviews, the case studies and UFT reviews) prevent them from achieving these two major benefits:

• Resources at embassy level are extremely stretched, leaving limited capacity for following up on humanitarian funding (MFA 2014, embassy interviews). Even where there are staff members with humanitarian experience, as in South Sudan and Somalia, they have development responsibilities.[73] This is positive because it gives them an overview of Danida's assistance to these countries. They are also well integrated into the embassies where they are based so they should be able to identify opportunities for synergy between the humanitarian and development programmes. However, it does result in a very heavy workload.[74]

• Danida senior management has instructed embassies to prioritise development assistance when deciding how best to make use of their limited time (embassy interview). This ties in to the finding by the UFT that there is a lack of clarity about the extent to which embassies are responsible for monitoring humanitarian projects (MFA 2014).

• There is a lack of ownership of humanitarian programming at embassy level because financial responsibility rests with HCP in Copenhagen (MFA 2014). Thus, there is very little sense of joint responsibility for Danida's assistance to a country overall and to following up on results. This was reflected in the view that it is a challenge to get some embassies interested in humanitarian issues and recognise the relevance of Danida's humanitarian assistance for their own work (interviews).

• In some cases, embassies lack an overview of HCP's grants to partners, which makes it more difficult for them to follow up on the results that partners are achieving with Danish funding (embassy interviews; Syria case study; Jensen,

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72   The Somalia country programme document outlines three instruments that Denmark will use to channel assistance to the country – development support managed by the Danish embassy in Nairobi through a bilateral country framework, humanitarian assistance channelled through Danish NGOs and international organisations, and stabilisation efforts financed by the Peace and Stabilisation Fund. It also refers to the Solutions Alliance and the need to see the search for durable solutions to displacement as a cross-cutting, overriding objective. See Danida (2015).

73   In South Sudan, the advisor is funded from the development budget line and so expected to prioritise following up on this. In Somalia, the humanitarian coordinator also coordinates development assistance and was heavily involved in the development of the new Somalia country programme at the time of the evaluation.

74   This is one of the reasons why the Nairobi embassy has been unable to implement the recommendation from the UFT review of Component 3 of the Somalia country programme to establish a Task Force or working group involving the embassy, HCP and humanitarian partners.

Petersen and Jespersen 2012; MFA 2014). The Myanmar and Ethiopian embassies organise meetings with Danish NGO partners approximately every six months and get updates from them on their humanitarian activities. Embassies also get information on NGO humanitarian programmes when they participate in the annual technical negotiations. However, they have far less information on UN agency activities and therefore tend to lack an overview of all humanitarian grants for a particular crisis. While HCP had provided a list of humanitarian grants for the Syria crisis with the embassy in Lebanon, the embassy in Myanmar did not have a similar up-to-date list of humanitarian grants.[75] The Nairobi embassy requests funding updates from HCP every few months in order to be able to share these in humanitarian donor meetings on Somalia. The Humanitarian Coordinator at the embassy meets key Danida partners (such as OCHA, UNHCR and DRC) more than once a week and sees other partners fairly frequently as well. Nevertheless, it is easy for the embassy to lose track of exactly what Danida is funding in Somalia, particularly if UN agencies are using their core grants.

- The review of the Somalia programme identified a lack of humanitarian experience within embassies as a barrier to following up on humanitarian interventions (MFA 2014).

- HCP, for its part, has limited time to engage with the embassies because it is so thinly stretched. For example, one embassy interviewee mentioned providing updates on the humanitarian situation but rarely received feedback.

If Danida's senior management wants to promote synergies between humanitarian and development assistance and ensure field-level oversight of humanitarian assistance (which is now approximately 12% of the aid budget), it needs to introduce targeted procedures and incentives that will address the barriers outlined above. It also needs to ensure adequate human resources at both embassy and HCP level otherwise it will be extremely difficult to deliver these two outcomes.

4.5.3 How well does Danida handle phasing out of crises and how is this related to long-term development assistance taking over?

Since Danida has made a strategic decision to focus its humanitarian assistance on a limited number of crises, its aim is to gradually phase countries out as the need for humanitarian aid decreases, and focus on newer protracted crises, if necessary. By placing countries on a phasing out list, Danida gives its partners adequate notice of a reduction in humanitarian funding, which is in line with its policy of providing predictable funding and not simply switching between crises. During the phase out period, Danida allows existing partners to continue and complete their activities with its funding but does not finance new partners or activities.

According to the note to the Minister, in 2014, it was going to phase humanitarian assistance out of three crises: Myanmar, Ethiopia and the Mano River countries (Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea). However, when Danida made the decision to start phasing out

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75 Prior to the establishment of the new embassy in Myanmar in 2014, HCP provided a complete briefing pack including a detailed note on the humanitarian situation along with full details of humanitarian grants at the time to the incoming ambassador. However, the issue for the embassy was one of having access to updated information.

of Myanmar in 2012, partners argued that it was too soon to remove it from the list of priority crises. The Myanmar embassy and a review by UFT concurred with this (Jensen, Andersen and Jespersen 2012). Therefore, in 2014, Danida reversed its decision and will continue to provide humanitarian assistance to Myanmar. Although Danida is providing humanitarian and development assistance to Myanmar, the UFT review highlighted the challenge of ensuring complementarity between the two instruments. It recommended that the MFA 'pursue functional synergies between Denmark's humanitarian aid and development assistance, e.g. by having good governance and livelihood programmes also including measures that will pave the way for and facilitate a possible future repatriation and reintegration process' (Jensen, Andersen and Jespersen 2012: 24-25).

At present, Ethiopia has the only crisis where Danida is gradually ending humanitarian assistance but engaging with development assistance. HCP involved the embassy in Addis Ababa in the discussion around phasing out humanitarian assistance. The embassy agreed with the decision because it recognised that Danida has to prioritise and that humanitarian needs were greater in other contexts. Also, the decision to phase out humanitarian funding was linked to a Danida decision to finance the Productive Safety Net Programme in Ethiopia, in recognition of the need to strengthen food security in order to prevent future crises. There have also been discussions about whether the Productive Safety Net Programme could be made flexible enough to expand during times of crisis, thereby reducing the need for humanitarian assistance (CaLP 2014). In the context of Ethiopia, this is a logical approach to breaking the cycle between crises and vulnerability, as envisaged in the Humanitarian Strategy.

Rather than one instrument taking over from another, the evaluation identified an example of joint programming and several examples of Danida using its humanitarian and development funding flexibly. HCP and the Green Growth Department have contributed DKK 100 million each from the humanitarian and development budget lines to finance a three-year (2012-15) food security programme for the Horn of Africa. In South Sudan, Danida was providing humanitarian assistance quite separately from development assistance, which was focused on the New Deal discussions. When violent conflict erupted in December 2013, the embassy in Addis Ababa decided to redirect DKK 45 million of development funding to a food security programme to address the threat of famine. The Humanitarian Coordinator's advocacy with donors to 'play the resilience card' became a catch phrase that helped with this shift of funding. The embassy made its decision in consultation with HCP because there is a close relationship between them, facilitated by the presence of a fragile states advisor with humanitarian expertise in South Sudan. During the crisis in the Central African Republic, Denmark was one of the first donors to respond to a UN appeal with USD 2 million for rule of law activities and support to basic state functions (such as the police and civil service salaries) using non-humanitarian funds. Danida is financing an innovation facility for UNICEF from the development budget line but the agency can use this for innovations that support its emergency response as well, such as a 'school in a box' for emergency education. In the case of the Syria response, Jordan and Lebanon – which are hosting the largest numbers of refugees – are deemed to be middle-income countries and therefore not eligible for development assistance. Danida, like most other donors, was not undertaking development programming at the time of the field visit even though both country governments

were advocating strongly for longer-term assistance.[76] Instead, HCP allocated humanitarian funding to a multi-donor regional development and protection programme, where most of the other donors, including the EU, are contributing funds from their development budgets.

This flexibility in the use of funding instruments is important because, in the fragile states where Danida is focusing its humanitarian and development assistance, the issue is less one of phasing out humanitarian funding as development assistance takes over and more that of being able to work with both instruments simultaneously and flexibly. Examples include Afghanistan, South Sudan and Somalia. However, a recent review of Danish assistance to Somalia and the South Sudan case study have found that Danida's humanitarian and development assistance tend to operate very separately (MFA 2014).

4.5.4 What are the lessons learned from the Strategy's approach of integrating relief with disaster risk reduction, resilience building and early recovery? How has Danida made decisions when needing to reconcile humanitarian and development priorities?

Danida has chosen to deprioritise the strategic direction on climate change and natural disasters and shift the responsibility to the development side, as described in Section 4.1.2. For HCP, the main lesson learned from this experience has been that it is challenging to follow up and ensure that development colleagues prioritise DRR and resilience adequately. The other lesson learned is that the predictability and flexibility of Danida's framework agreements with humanitarian NGO partners are important in supporting them to link their emergency relief activities with disaster preparedness, resilience building and early recovery.

Danida funds its humanitarian partners to build resilience by supporting communities at household level to cope with shocks. For example, Mission East has been working with remote communities in Afghanistan that are vulnerable to recurrent natural disasters in order to build local preparedness capacities. Danida's framework agreement enables the NGO to adopt a longer-term approach with the communities. As indicated by the comparative partner analysis, a number of partners are undertaking emergency preparedness and DRR activities. The Danish Red Cross gave the example of setting aside DKK 2 million of its flexible funding for responding to early warning signs. The guidelines for the use of the flexible funds allow partners to use the money for preparedness as long as they obtain Danida's permission. This is perhaps due to concerns that if partners use their flexible funding for preparedness activities, they will not have sufficient funds left for their responses. Since the Danish Red Cross also has a development framework agreement with Danida, it tends to use its development funding for longer-term preparedness activities.

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76   Danida decided to contribute DKK 50 million from the development budget to Jordan and Lebanon in December 2014.

Since Danida relies on its humanitarian partners to make programming decisions, its flexible humanitarian funding and longer-term approach through the framework agreements can help them to address early recovery and make linkages within their own programmes. In Afghanistan, Danida partners such as DACAAR and Mission East are working on activities that cut across the humanitarian-development divide (such as livelihoods or natural resources management). Since Danida has been providing partners with longer-term support, they have been able to link humanitarian and development activities from an early stage and work towards longer-term goals and durable solutions. As a result, one respondent described the linkages as 'uncomplicated'. NGO partners such as ADRA and the Danish Red Cross, which also have Danida development framework agreements, believed that an established development programme with local partners was a useful basis for launching humanitarian responses and, conversely, ensuring a shift from emergency to development programming.

Section 4.5.2 described how Danida has attempted to create linkages between its humanitarian and development funding. It also encourages humanitarian partners to think about how their work links to longer-term development. For example, as chair of ICRC's donor support group, the Geneva mission led a donor field visit to Côte d'Ivoire. This was an opportunity to urge ICRC to engage with development actors on taking over responsibility for the clinics that it had been running. A Geneva mission interviewee also pointed to Denmark's active promotion of resilience and links between humanitarian and development programming as chair of the ODSG. Perhaps HCP's greatest focus in terms of links between humanitarian and development work has been its advocacy for a development approach to long-term displacement through support to UNHCR for durable solutions as well as the establishment of the Solutions Alliance.

The question of reconciling humanitarian and development priorities points to concerns within Danida and among its humanitarian partners that the whole-of-government approach would compromise humanitarian principles, particularly in Afghanistan. However, the DAC Peer Review found no evidence of this and partners interviewed for this evaluation did not raise any concerns. In fact, Denmark's strategy for integrated stabilisation engagement in fragile and conflict-affected situations acknowledges the operational risks of compromising humanitarian principles. As a result, it states that, 'Danish humanitarian assistance rests squarely on humanitarian principles which underline, i.e. that complete neutrality and independence are preconditions for being able to reach all groups in need of help' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Justice 2013: 11). It is helpful that this has been stated in a strategy document and HCP can refer to it if there is a risk of development or stabilisation funding undermining the principled basis of Denmark's humanitarian assistance.

To what extent do the design, delivery and management of the Humanitarian Strategy align with the Principles and Practices of Good Humanitarian Donorship?

Summary of findings

Danida has ensured that the humanitarian principles are embedded in strategy and policy documents guiding other forms of assistance. Its partners held it up as an example of a good humanitarian donor because its funding is timely, extremely flexible and predictable, and it is willing to accept global reporting from all partners. The Humanitarian Strategy reflects several other GHD principles as well. Although Danida adheres to the GHD principles, its UN partners in particular do not pass on the benefits of timely, flexible and predictable funding to their implementing partners.

Danida has contributed to the promotion of the GHD principles by leading by example and also by playing an active role in the GHD group in Geneva. This included co-chairing the initiative in 2013.

Since Danida relies on its partners to make programming decisions, it is also reliant on them to ensure that its funding is allocated on the basis of needs. Although it analyses humanitarian needs when selecting its list of priority crises and the amount of additional funds that it allocates to certain crises in a year, it could make this analysis more explicit.

4.6 The Strategy and Good Humanitarian Donorship principles

4.6.1 How does Danida ensure adherence to the humanitarian principles and principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship?

As highlighted in Section 4.5.1, HCP has been successful at incorporating the humanitarian principles into strategy and policy documents guiding other Danish assistance. This is helpful in ensuring adherence to them because HCP can refer to these documents if there is a risk of compromising the principles. However, the DAC Peer Review did not identify any breaches of the humanitarian principles and partners consulted for this evaluation did not raise concerns about Danida's adherence to the principles.

From the case studies as well as interviews with Danida partners (particularly international organisations), it was clear that partners regard Danida as a good humanitarian donor. This is because its funding is timely, with the majority of funding disbursed early in the year or some funding allocated in December for the following year. As already mentioned, Danida also supports a timely response by including flexible funds into its framework agreement with NGO partners and UNHCR, enabling them to respond to sudden emergencies without having to secure additional funds from Danida.

As described in Section 4.4.3, Danida's funding is also very flexible and, as highlighted in Section 3.3, a substantial portion is provided as core contributions or through pooled funds. Through the framework agreements and by making a longer-term commitment to working in protracted crises, its funding is also relatively predictable even though the funding decisions are annual. The longer-term approach to humanitarian funding is in accordance with GHD principles.

Danida does not have a standard reporting format and accepts global reporting from partners. Its agreements with international organisations include indicators that Danida tracks but these are selected from the results frameworks of the agencies, rather than being additional indicators that would increase reporting requirements. These light-touch requirements are in line with the GHD principles and partners were very appreciative of them since not many donors adhere to this principle. However, this can make it difficult for Danida to aggregate results, even at output level.[77]

In addition, the Humanitarian Strategy reflects many of the GHD principles: for example, promoting international humanitarian law and human rights; supporting resilience and links between emergency and development assistance; recognising the roles of different partners (the UN, the Red Cross Movement and NGOs); and promoting the use of relevant guidelines on civil-military cooperation.

HCP's NGO partners are part of networks that include national members or work with local partners and strengthen their capacities. A few NGO partners also build community-level resilience (e.g. Mission East in Afghanistan). However, perhaps because DRR and building resilience in natural disasters are not priorities for HCP, there is less emphasis on the principle of strengthening the capacities of affected countries to deal with crises. Sections 4.2.1 and 4.4.1 described Danida's focus on strengthening partner systems, including for reporting on results. However, it has placed less emphasis on the supervision of programme delivery, which should be part of ensuring that implementing partners are committed to efficiency and effectiveness in implementing humanitarian action (Principle 15).

Also, the case studies and other reviews have highlighted the variation in the extent to which Danida partners pass on the benefits of timeliness, predictability and light reporting requirements to their implementing partners. Most of Danida's NGO partners belong to a network or alliance or implement through national NGOs. The Syria case study found that a couple of the Danish NGOs worked closely with national partners, which was highly appreciated. However, in a couple of other cases, the NGOs were providing funding without any indication of predictability. In South Sudan, NGO implementing partners of two UN agencies receiving Danida funding identified delays, short-term funding and heavy reporting requirements as challenges. This is also reflected in some reviews of CERF funding, which have identified delays with onward funding by UN agencies to NGOs as well as demands for detailed and frequent reporting according to different formats from implementing partners (Mowjee 2010; 2014).[78] In addition, a study on funding to national NGOs highlights the challenges that national and international NGOs face in accessing funding from UN agencies and country-based pooled funds (Caritas 2013). Thus, although Danida adheres to the GHD principles, its UN partners, in particular, often do not. This has implications for bilateral donors, including Danida, who adhere to the GHD principles but channel around 60% of their humanitarian funding to UN agencies.

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77   For example, it is not possible for Danida to calculate how many people benefitted from its assistance because partners do not report this systematically and, as noted in Annex E, funding databases do not track the number of beneficiaries either.

78   Preliminary analysis of onward funding by CERF recipient agencies to implementing partners in 2013 showed that, on average, agencies took 47 to 77 working days to provide the first instalment of funding to partners (CERF 2014).

4.6.2 What has been Denmark's contribution to promoting the Good Humanitarian Donorship principles?

There are two main ways in which Denmark has contributed to promoting the GHD principles. The first is to lead by example. By adhering to the principles, it demonstrates what is possible to other donors. The second is to play an active role in the GHD initiative, based in Geneva. As mentioned in Section 4.2.1, Denmark co-chaired the GHD group in 2013 but engages actively in the group in general. One of the more recent members of the initiative suggested that, if Danida had more capacity, it would be a valuable mentor to newer donors. Also, if Danida had greater humanitarian capacity at field level, this would offer an opportunity to promote the GHD principles, particularly in highly politicised contexts such as Syria.

4.6.3 Is Danish humanitarian assistance allocated on the basis of thorough needs assessments and based on needs alone (i.e. regardless of nationality, age, ethnicity and gender)?

Since Danida allows its partners to allocate funding to geographical areas and specific activities, it is reliant on them to ensure that they do this on the basis of thorough needs assessments. During the annual technical negotiations with NGOs as well as the special calls for proposals for additional funds to a crisis, Danida scrutinises proposals to ensure that the NGOs have analysed the context and that the proposed programmes respond to the identified needs. In the case of UN agencies, Danida does not formally assess whether their use of its funding is based on needs assessments – the assumption is that this is the case.

Partners are also largely responsible for deciding on how much of their framework funding to allocate to a particular crisis. However, Danida decides on the list of priority crises (in discussion with NGO partners). As noted in Section 4.1.2, it does not have an explicit decision-making model but HCP undertakes an analysis to decide on the list. One indication that the priority crises are selected on the basis of humanitarian needs is that all the crises that Danida has funded over the 2010-13 period have received the highest score (3) on ECHO's Global Vulnerability and Crisis Assessment Index in at least two of the four years (see Annex E). However, this is not well reflected in the note to the Minister, which has to be brief. Therefore, it would be more transparent if Danida documented its analysis of needs for the selection of crises.

During the year, Danida may allocate additional funds to some of the priority crises. In these cases, it decides on which crises and how much to allocate. HCP takes into account the amount of funding received for the crisis (i.e. the level of needs already met) but there is a tendency to maintain a balance of funding across partners.[79] Again, Danida's decision making would be more transparent if it documented clearly the analysis of needs and other factors that underpin its decisions.

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79   Figure 4 demonstrates that the proportion of funding to partners by category (UN agencies, NGOs and the Red Cross) has remained stable across the period evaluated. Danida's funding database also shows that individual organisations tend to receive roughly the same amount of funding year on year, although there have been increases as Danida's humanitarian budget has increased.

Children's artwork at informal learning centre, Lebanon
Photograph: © Tasneem Mowjee

5 Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter presents the conclusions from the evaluation before going on to list the recommendations. Rather than summarising all the main findings of the evaluation, many of which are very positive, the conclusions concentrate on highlighting the implications of key findings, both for Danida's future work and the Strategy revision process. They form the basis for the recommendations that follow, which focus both on the Strategy revision process and on improving Danida's current ways of working. One of the reasons for commissioning the evaluation before the end of the Strategy implementation period was to start improving working practices as soon as possible. Also, there will be a second phase of the evaluation in early 2016 to assess the extent to which the recommendations have been implemented. Therefore, the evaluation team believed that it would be helpful to make recommendations that the MFA can begin implementing in the next 12 months, before the revised Strategy comes into effect.

5.1 Conclusions

The evaluation has highlighted that Danida's inclusive approach to developing the Strategy perhaps contributed to the development of a visionary Strategy. It also means that it reflects partners' priorities well and remains relevant for them but this has also resulted in a very broad strategy. Although Danida has made a strategic choice to focus on three broad areas of the Strategy, that have then guided its funding decisions and approach, some regarded 47 priorities as too many to provide strategic direction. One indication of this is that, while the scope of the Strategy gives Danida's partners a great deal of flexibility, it also means that they can fit almost any programme into it. Therefore, there is a view both within and outside the MFA that Danida should reduce the number of priorities in order to be more strategic. This implies that the process for revising the Strategy will need to balance inclusivity, which is necessary for creating buy-in to the Strategy among its partners, with maintaining a focus to underpin a strategic approach to humanitarian assistance.

Danida's current Strategy focuses on three main aspects. It outlines what Danida seeks to achieve (e.g. coordinated, principled and informed humanitarian action), focus areas (such as vulnerability, protection, gender, and climate change and natural hazards) and how Danida will deliver its humanitarian assistance (i.e. strengthening partnerships and through a focus on results, innovation and communications). Danida has the opportunity to be more strategic and focused in each of these areas. For example, coordinated, principled and informed humanitarian action is a laudable objective that other donors also seek to support. Therefore, Danida could consider how to cover areas not addressed by others donors as a basis for reducing the current eight strategic priorities. For example, supporting the UN's coordinating role may be an area where Danida can add value, particularly since the growing number of humanitarian actors poses a challenge to the UN's coordinating role. Similarly, in the case of the focus areas, it could build on its comparative advantage by focusing on issues that receive limited funding and attention from other donors, such as protection, gender and vulnerability. Flexible funding and strategic partnerships are also an area of comparative advantage for Danida in terms of how it delivers its humanitarian assistance. Thus, Danida could focus its revised Strategy by addressing gaps not covered by other donors and building on its comparative advantage.

The revised Strategy will also need to reflect emerging challenges in the humanitarian context, including those raised in discussions around the WHS. One of these is the issue of supporting localised responses, for which there has been a strong call during consultations for the WHS. Danida's partners are very appreciative of its approach to implementing the strategic direction on strengthening partnerships because they regard Danida as a genuine partner, not simply as a donor. The focus on building strategic relationships with a small number of partners also makes administrative sense in light of the limited capacity within HCP. While Danida has made efforts to engage with non-DAC donors in policy dialogues, it channels its assistance through traditional partners – UN agencies, Danish NGOs and the ICRC. However, local, national and regional actors are playing a greater role in humanitarian assistance. When revising the Strategy, Danida will need to consider how best to work with, and strengthen, local partners. It faces many of the same challenges with funding national NGOs directly as other bilateral donors but some of its NGO partners belong to networks with national members while others work with national NGOs. This could be one route to greater support for more localised responses. It could also consider more creative partnerships through its engagement with non-DAC donors, who work with a much broader range of partners.

Another question that Danida will need to consider during the Strategy revision process is whether it continues to support incremental changes to the existing humanitarian system or whether it advocates for more radical reform. Danida's engagement in global policy discussions and leadership on the boards of international organisations is impressive, particularly in light of the limited capacity across the MFA. In line with Denmark's commitment to multilateralism, the aim of taking on these leadership roles is to strengthen the humanitarian system. However, despite a lengthy process of reform, including the Transformative Agenda, the system faces major challenges with responding effectively to humanitarian crises and there has been growing questioning of whether it is fit for purpose.[80] Furthermore, many of the more recent humanitarian actors (donors and national and regional organisations) tend to operate outside this system. Danida's decision will have implications for its engagement with the boards of international organisations as well as its strategic partnerships. The discussions around the WHS will also reflect on this question so there will be points for Danida to take into account.

The evaluation found that it is challenging to identify and document results at two levels: that of the strategic priorities and that of individual partner programme delivery. One reason why it has been difficult to track the implementation of the full range of strategic priorities is that Danida has not established measurable targets or results that it is seeking to obtain through the strategic priorities. Another is that Danida does not ask its partners systematically to report on their implementation of the strategic priorities. The evaluation questions emphasised the priorities of targeting assistance to the most vulnerable, gender-sensitive programming, addressing GBV and accountability to affected populations, but partner reporting on these issues was not consistent. These priorities should be the foundation of good humanitarian programmes, so it is not unreasonable for Danida to expect partners to systematically incorporate them into their programming and to demonstrate that they are doing this.

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80   See Scott (2014), Caritas (2013) and http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2014/may/22/david-miliband-humanitarian-response-goals-crises

With regard to ensuring that partners deliver appropriate results with its funding, Danida's current approach has been to place greater emphasis on whether they have adequate systems in place (particularly through capacity assessments for NGO partners and engaging on the boards of international organisations). It relies heavily on partner self-reporting (both documented and through informal communication) and has placed less emphasis on independent verification of the results delivered for affected populations, particularly in the case of international organisations. This is in spite of there being a number of difficulties with making effective use of the reports that partners provide (as highlighted in Section 4.4.1). So, for example, until recently, NGO capacity assessments did not examine programme delivery. This is in line with Danida's culture of trust as well as its view that it should support partners' own tracking of results and learning. However, even strong systems do not always translate into effective programmes and reviews of UN agencies and some of Danida's own NGO capacity assessments have identified weaknesses in the reporting systems of a number of partners. Also, very few partners have robust mechanisms in place to conduct independent evaluations and ensure learning from them. This suggests that, as part of implementing the strategic priority of a greater focus on results, it is important for Danida to use a variety of mechanisms to increase independent oversight of how partners are delivering results for affected populations in order to ensure the effective use of its funding.

The challenges with documenting and verifying results have also made it difficult for Danida to allocate funding on the basis of partner performance and ensure that it is working with the most effective partners (including finding alternative partners if existing partners fail to deliver). Given limited staff capacity within HCP, it needs to find the balance between selecting the most effective partners and keeping the administrative burden of grant management at a manageable level. Options for doing this include making use of the vetting processes of other donors, such as ECHO, rather than relying on Danida's own capacity assessments alone.

As part of selecting the most effective partners, Danida should consider whether its funding levels to UN partners and pooled funds are appropriate. Danida is highly respected as a good humanitarian donor because of its adherence to many of the GHD principles, particularly for the timeliness, flexibility and predictability of its funding and its willingness to accept global reports. However, UN agencies do not abide by these principles even though they are donors to their implementing partners or through country-based pooled funds. As a result, partners are subject to heavy reporting requirements and may experience delays and other challenges with receiving funding. This has implications for all DAC donors, including Danida, because they channel around 60% of their humanitarian funding through UN agencies and UN-managed pooled funds.

Both Danida's humanitarian and development strategies state a commitment to strengthening the links between the two forms of assistance. However, like other donors, Danida is grappling with how best to achieve this without compromising its humanitarian principles, particularly since its assistance is focused on conflict-affected contexts. Since HCP manages humanitarian aid from Copenhagen while responsibility for development country programmes is decentralised to embassies, close cooperation between them should lead to synergies between the two forms of assistance. The embassies could also support HCP with follow-up on humanitarian funding and policy engagement at field level (the case studies demonstrated that a staff member with humanitarian experience at field level can make a significant different to Danida's engagement in policy discussions and donor coordination groups).

HCP and the embassies contribute to each other's decision-making processes and HCP has made efforts to involve embassies in the annual technical negotiations with NGO partners. However, there are a number of barriers that hinder closer cooperation, including limited capacity on both sides. How humanitarian and development actors can work together better to deliver better results for affected populations is one of the questions being explored during consultations for the WHS and is going to be increasingly important as humanitarian actors struggle to respond to rapidly growing humanitarian needs and development actors are more active in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. Therefore, Danida will need to address this issue going forward.

5.2 Recommendations

This section lists four main recommendations with sub-recommendations to assist the MFA with implementation. The sub-recommendations under each overarching recommendation are listed in order of priority. Although the recommendations have been targeted at different actors according to who will have primary responsibility for implementation, it is expected that all the recommendations will be implemented through a collaborative approach across MFA departments.

1. **Danida should undertake an inclusive consultation process to revise the Strategy and secure buy-in for a revised Strategy that is more focused on a limited set of priorities, which would provide stronger guidance to its humanitarian assistance.**

   a. To focus on a limited set of strategic priorities, Danida could select areas that are not being addressed by other donors and build on its comparative advantage. It should also be explicit about what it seeks to achieve through each strategic priority. For example, it could aim to achieve more inclusive or efficient coordination systems by supporting the UN's coordinating role. Then, the strategic priorities could be an organising principle that runs through Danida's advocacy and policy dialogues through its partnership agreements to assessing the results achieved with its funding.

   b. During the Strategy revision process, Danida should consider how to address emerging issues, particularly from the discussions around the WHS, such as supporting a more localised response, whether incremental change is sufficient to make the current humanitarian system fit for purpose or whether it requires more radical reform, how the humanitarian system can be more adaptable and responsive to new risks and challenges, and how humanitarian and development actors can work together more effectively.

   c. Danida should include indicators in the revised Strategy to help measure the implementation of key priorities. It should also develop an action plan to guide Strategy implementation.

2. **Danida should strengthen its focus on results, including field-level follow-up of programme delivery.**

   a. HCP needs to define clearly the results on which it expects partners to report. This does not require it to establish a set format for partner reporting but to make it clear to partners if it expects them report at output or outcome level, and whether it expects them to include reporting on how they are targeting assistance to the most vulnerable, ensuring gender-sensitive programming and being accountable to affected populations within their own formats.

   b. Since HCP does not have the capacity at present to review evaluation reports to identify lessons and issues for follow-up, it should finance a help-desk function. This would involve commissioning consulting organisations and/or academic institutions capable of supporting HCP with analytical and research tasks. HCP could use this for short tasks such as synthesising evaluation findings. It would only pay for the consultants' time that it uses so this would be a cost-effective way to increase its analytical capacity.

   c. Danida should work with other donors on joint evaluations, particularly of UN partners and the response to large-scale crises. It should also encourage partners to commission more independent evaluations to support their internal learning.[81]

   d. Apart from a greater use of evaluations, Danida should strengthen its field-level follow-up on partner performance through a variety of mechanisms. These could include more UFT reviews, ensuring that HCP has greater capacity to travel to the field, working with other donors that have a field presence and fund the same partners, and ensuring that embassies take responsibility for follow-up on humanitarian assistance.

   e. HCP could increase the utility of NGO reports by requiring them to be submitted earlier in the year, setting a page limit on the humanitarian component of reports, and requesting the inclusion of short sections on key issues, such as lessons learned or the implementation of specific strategic priorities.

3. **HCP should allocate funding to partners on the basis of performance and ensure that it works with the most effective partners.**

   a. HCP should review the programme delivery and results for affected populations achieved by all partners every three to four years (through reviews, independent evaluations and capacity assessments that include programme delivery). Where it identifies problems, it should support partners to improve but also set a clear timetable so that, if partners fail to meet standards within the given time frame, it can find alternative partners.

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81 This would be in line with the existing strategic priority of 'initiating and supporting relevant evaluations and joint thematic reviews'. The previous evaluation of Danish humanitarian assistance also recommended that monitoring and evaluation be strengthened and used for learning (ETC UK 1999).

b. HCP should consider opening up its special calls for proposals to non-framework NGOs that have been quality assured by another reliable donor in order to ensure that it is working with the most appropriate NGO partners in a given crisis.

c. As part of the Strategy revision process, Danida should consider whether its level of humanitarian funding to UN agencies is appropriate, given that they often fail to pass on the benefits of Danida's adherence to the GHD principles to their implementing partners.

4. **Danida should ensure greater complementarity between its humanitarian and development assistance.**

a. Danida should strengthen capacity within embassies to follow up on Danida-funded humanitarian assistance and engage in field-level humanitarian policy dialogue and donor coordination in major crises. It should implement the ambassadors' recommendations for fragile states on promoting synergies between its different forms of assistance and could consider mechanisms such as posting programme managers or advisors funded or co-funded by the humanitarian budget line to embassies in countries or regions with major humanitarian crises.

b. Danida should consider fostering greater collaboration between different actors working in a particular crisis through the use of task forces, such as the Afghanistan Task Force. The task forces should not be used simply as an information-sharing mechanism but to promote coordination and better follow-up of Danida-funded interventions.

c. MFA senior management should make it clear to ambassadors and embassy staff if it expects them to take responsibility for monitoring humanitarian projects and ensure that humanitarian responsibilities are included in the job description of at least one staff member. This would address the challenge of a lack of clarity about the extent to which embassies have this responsibility.

d. HCP should share information on funding to humanitarian partners consistently with embassies in countries covered by the priority crises to facilitate follow-up of Danida-funded humanitarian interventions.

e. The MFA should ensure that embassy staff working on development assistance in countries with humanitarian crises understand the interconnections between vulnerability, stability, strengthening state capacity, development assistance and humanitarian action, through training if necessary. This would support them to work more effectively in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

EVALUATION OF THE STRATEGY
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2010-2015