

ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE



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Mary is a community-based monitor in an impoverished local district in Uganda. She was chosen by her community to ensure that her government lives up to its obligations to its citizens, also the poorest. Mary, together with other community-based monitors, inspects local government programmes and services, such as agricultural programmes, local schools, local health clinics, infrastructure etc. She and the other monitors report back to the authorities on any deviations from budgets, plans, and provisions within Ugandan laws and policies.

In the country-side in Uganda not all people know who is responsible for ensuring that public services function properly and that their local school or health clinic is remembered in the government budget. But since Mary and the other monitors began their work many improvements have been documented.

The monitors' increased levels of empowerment, commitment to serve the community and tremendous performance in monitoring the quality of service delivery has led to a high level of gained trust. This often strengthens their position within their community and their possibilities for also accessing elected posts within their districts. Mary, herself, has now been elected as a member of the Town Council.

Mary says that over the years she and the other community-based monitors have developed closer working relations with the local government. Her District Chief says that "monitors keep us on our toes. Now we know that we are monitored and have to live up to our obligations. Monitors give us the possibility to correct those areas where we are lagging behind and where there are problems...."

When Mary was chosen in as a monitor, she feared that she would not be able to live up to the communities' expectations. Today she is all smiles. Now she dares to stand up and speak in front of a big group and even with politicians.

INTRODUCTION

Close to half of the world's population live in countries where their possibilities, individually or collectively, to influence their own development, the nature of their government and the provision of state services are severely restricted.

DanChurchAid (DCA) believes that it is inherent to the dignity of every human being to be able to enjoy one's equal right to participate and influence developments within one's community and country, regardless of one's religion, gender, ethnicity, caste, sexual orientation etc.

Change requires strengthening the relationship between the state and poor women and men. Creating links between the state and its poorer citizens is particularly important for securing an accountable state that lives up to its human rights obligations and effectively responds to the needs of its poorer citizens. It is crucial for combating the misuse of government funds and contributing to a more equitable distribution of resources and services.

DCA understands "citizens" as women and men with rights and responsibilities in relation to others and to the state. We strive through our support to strengthen relationships between a) the state and excluded and impoverished men and women within its territory or control, and b) between impoverished poor women and men.

DCA is a faith based organization working with a rights-based approach. Together with partners, we seek to eradicate hunger, poverty, destitution and oppression. Partnership is a founding principle of DanChurchAid. Not only a way of working but fundamental to our values and identity. We consider working within partnerships to be our most important comparative advantage for achieving our goals. This ensures a more lasting and locally owned development process. In many developing countries, faith-based organisations can play a crucial role in mobilizing for active and informed citizenship. DCA will support local ACT members and networks, and facilitate linkages with other faith-based and secular organisations and networks. Partners with

the necessary gender equality and human rights expertise on participation issues will be prioritized.

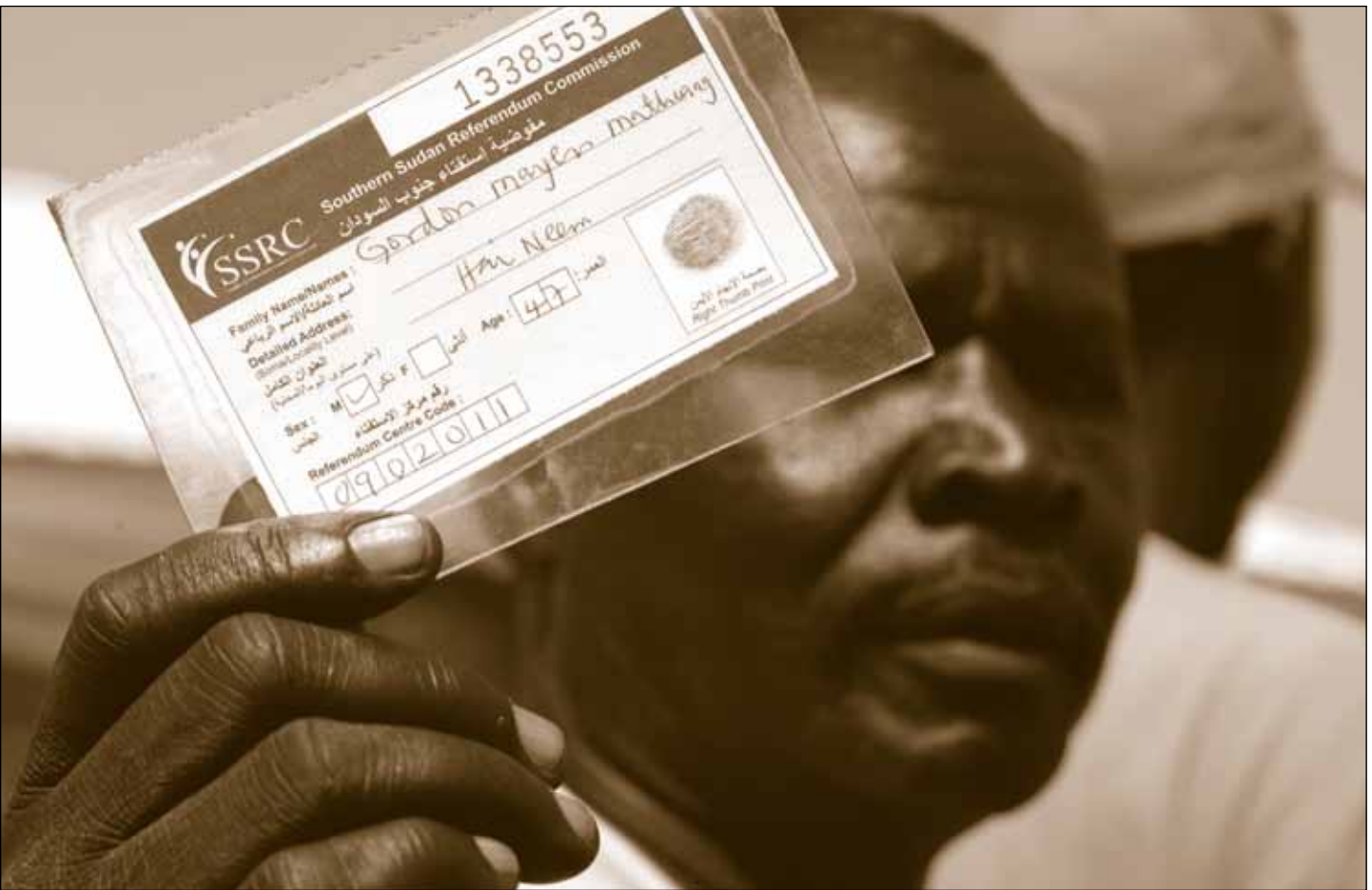
This policy provides a strategic framework for DCA's support under its future Active Citizenship Programmes. It will be contextualised in strategies that take into consideration different political contexts, space and opportunities. This policy has been formulated in consultation with DCA's partner group, local offices and staff.

DCA's thematic priorities in this policy are:

- Direct Participation of Poor Men and Women in Local Governance
- Women's Political Participation
- Equal Participation in Elections
- Space for Citizen Action
- Accountable and Equitable Public Services
- Dialogue between conflicting groups
- Equal Participation in Private Sector Funded Initiatives
- Strengthening Associations

Together with our partners, we will ensure that the key principles of participation, accountability, non-discrimination and equality, empowerment and link to human rights standards/mechanisms inform strategies and relationships with the groups with whom we work. We will particularly address gender inequalities. We will use the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership Principles to promote transparency and accountability towards our partners and local communities.

Our Active Citizenship policy is outlined below through the overall changes we seek, our entry points as DCA to Active Citizenship, our strategic and thematic priorities, and our proposed partnerships and networks.



THE CHANGES WE WISH TO SEE

DCA's overall policy goal is that poor women and men and representative civil society organisations enjoy their equal right to participate in order to further democratic, inclusive and accountable governance for equitable development.

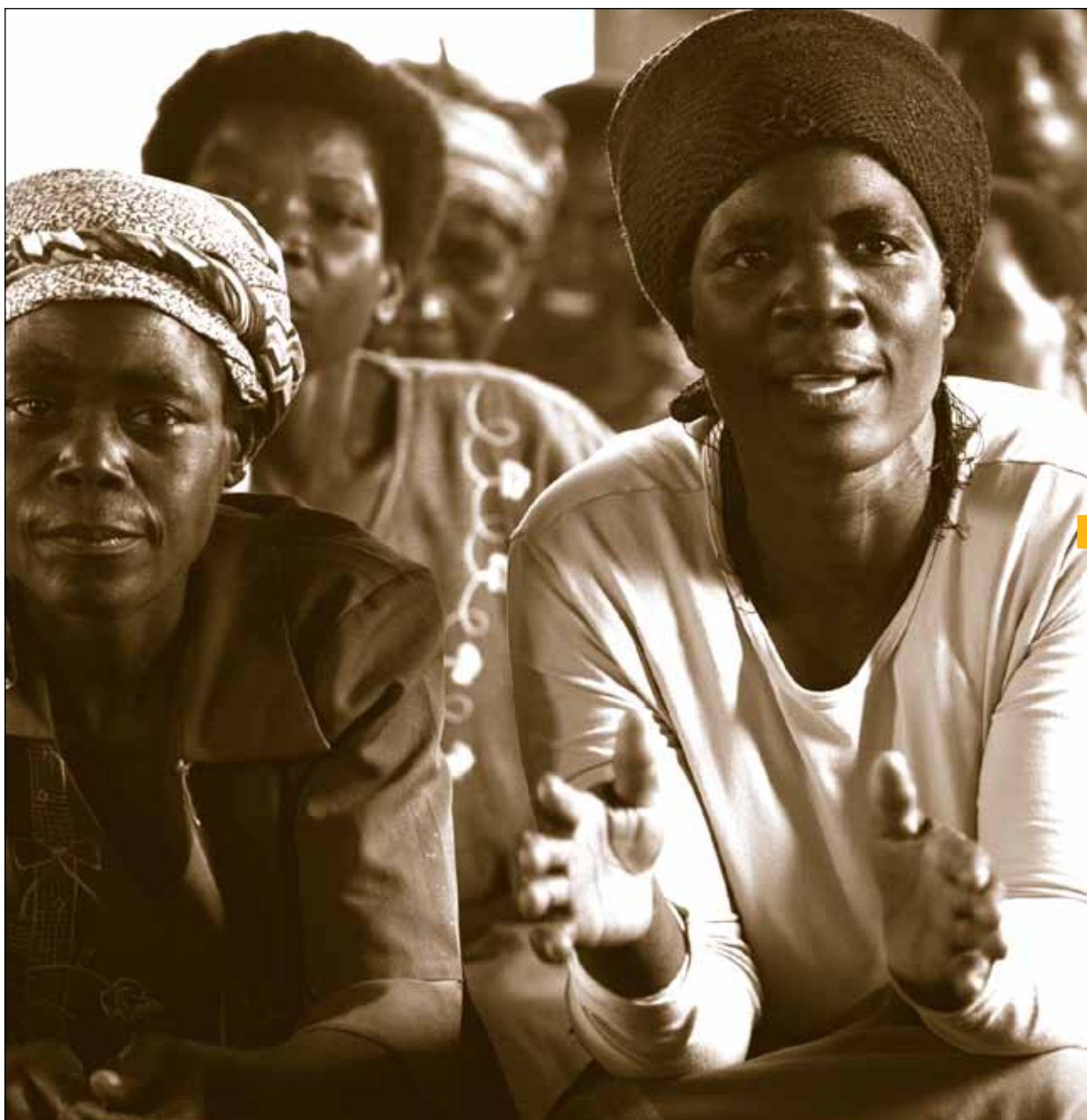
DCA, together with its partners, will work for the following changes:

- Institutions and norms are challenged and reformed so that poor and discriminated women and men can organize and express themselves, can have access to information and influence decision-making processes, and can hold governments accountable for equitable development
- Poor women and men and representative civil society organisations are meaningfully engaged in local and national decision-making processes and structures and have positively influenced outcomes
- Abused men and women and civil society actors at risk or persecuted have increased access to justice and other forms of protection
- DCA and its partner organisations are representative, transparent and accountable and have enhanced advocacy, networking and conflict-management skills

DCA'S ENTRY POINT ON ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

In view of its vision, identity and mandate, DCA's particular entry points with regard to active citizenship is as follows:

- DCA works for the equal participation and leadership of poor women and men, particularly at the community and district level where much of DCA's development support is focused.
- DCA supports dialogue and transformation of harmful social, cultural and religious norms that limit the participation of certain groups of men and women. Many of DCA's partners are well placed to work on these issues due to their deep understanding of the context and the trust and influence they enjoy within their communities.
- DCA supports gender equal participation, particularly within local governance structures and church-based institutions in accordance with its commitment to gender equality
- DCA develops clearer links between political governance and economic governance work, particularly around the equitable use of national resources for poverty reduction.
- DCA uses international human rights standards as a platform for facilitating increased networking between faith-based and secular groups and organizations.



STRATEGIC AND THEMATIC FOCUS

DCA'S COMMITMENT TO GENDER EQUALITY AND RIGHTS-BASED DEVELOPMENT

In keeping with DCA's commitment to rights-based development and gender equality, DCA will adhere to the following:

- **PARTICIPATION** DCA will support efforts for the real and meaningful participation of discriminated men and women in decision-making processes and forums by addressing relevant barriers and norms within both formal and informal spaces. We will support citizens' right to vote and elect their representatives, and citizens' right to directly participate in decision-making forums.
- **ACCOUNTABILITY** In all programs, DCA will support advocacy and capacity-building of relevant state actors in order to further their obligations to respect, protect and fulfill the equal right to participate of poor women and men. DCA will particularly seek to support the role of faith-based leaders in the promotion and protection of space for citizen action and democratic governance.
- **NON-DISCRIMINATION AND EQUALITY** DCA will support strategies that particularly facilitate the increased participation of poor and discriminated women and men in decision-making processes and electoral processes. This will include a focus, on discriminated and abused non-citizens, such as external migrants, refugees and stateless persons. DCA will support partner advocacy for changes in discriminatory laws,

policies, practices and norms that limit the participation of certain groups of women and men. Structures and gender discriminatory norms and limiting women's participation will always be addressed.

- **EMPOWERMENT** DCA will support partner activities that help build within discriminated women and men the necessary self-esteem, skills, and knowledge for increased participation in decision-making fora, citizen monitoring initiatives and electoral processes. We will support their organization, alliances and access to broad networks to strengthen their influence and agenda-setting within these decision-making structures and processes at different levels (local, national and international).
- **LINK TO HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS AND INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW** DCA will support the use of relevant international human rights standards in analyses, advocacy and action carried out under this policy. The primary focus will be the key standards within the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights on the right to participate, including freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly, and the right to information. In addition, human rights instruments developed to address discrimination/abuses for certain groups will also be drawn upon. In countries in conflict and/or under occupation, DCA will draw on the Geneva Convention relative to the protection of civilian persons in time of war. We will support work on improved access to justice/remedies when the participation rights of certain individuals and groups are abused or violated. We will support submissions to relevant UN treaty bodies, to relevant Special Rapporteurs, and the use of the UN Universal Periodic Review Mechanism. We will not advocate for explicitly naming human rights norms and standards in all contexts. DCA will adapt strategies to local contexts and based on regularly updated risks assessments.
- **POWER** Understanding power relationships are key to addressing inequalities, abuses in and of participation rights and discriminatory structures and practices. To strengthen our strategies, we will ensure that our stakeholder analyses assess the interests and power of different actors (both formal and informal). We will be informed by analyses of the prevailing political settlement in a country in order to better capture the interests and motivations of political and economic elites in relation to the problems to be addressed. We will among other things work at developing alliances with progressive elements within the elite for more accountable and equitable political settlements. These alliances will be used to hold those that abuse power and rights to account.

THEMATIC PRIORITIES

DCA will support partners' work that fall within the following DCA thematic priorities:

- **DIRECT PARTICIPATION OF POOR MEN AND WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE** DCA will promote and strengthen the participation of poor women and men within relevant decentralized mechanisms and processes, as inter alia established under Decentralization Policies, Local Government Acts etc. We will support skills building for community members, particularly from among discriminated groups (minority groups, migrants, rural women etc.) to meaningfully participate and to influence local development plans and programs.

Examples of activities

- Support meetings between communities and decentralized government structures and other actors
- Support capacity building of local councils and government structures, where needed, for participatory planning
- Encourage the development of broad-based alliances for facilitating change
- Build awareness within decentralized local government structures on their responsibilities
- Support functional literacy, assertiveness, negotiation and conflict-management skills among poor and excluded groups to facilitate their influence in decision-making processes and forums
- Monitor implementation of Decentralisation Policies, Local Government Acts etc. and advocate for reforms where relevant

- **WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION** DCA will support partners that strengthen women's political participation, primarily within local decision-making and governance structures. DCA will encourage the use of temporary special measures to challenge gender stereotypes. However, DCA is aware that an increase in numbers alone will not lead to meaningful participation of women within decision-making structures. Capacity-building of women candidates, knowledge sharing and alliance building etc. are also essential. Furthermore, we also need to challenge the social, religious and cultural norms that limit women's effective participation. We will do this by raising awareness among key religious and opinion leaders. Gender-based violence that limits women's participation will be addressed within an overall strategy to strengthen women's political participation. Political parties can play a key role in furthering women's participation and gender equality interests. Through experienced partners, DCA can support targeted capacity building of political parties on issues such as gender sensitivity and human rights. However, DCA will not support the funding of political parties.

Examples of activities

- Advocate for relevant changes in electoral laws e.g. introduction of quota systems within political parties, parliament, local government structures etc.
- Create networks and linkages with women in political office and gender equality organisations
- Capacity-building of political parties across the political

spectrum for gender-sensitive manifestos and on the value of fielding women candidates

- Support legal services for abused women

- **EQUAL PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIONS** DCA is not a specialized electoral reform institution. However, we will support electoral reforms that have a direct bearing on the participation of marginalized communities and women in local and national electoral processes. We will also support long-term civic education aimed at raising awareness among poor women and men on their citizenship rights and responsibilities, including their right to vote, and the roles and responsibilities of parliament, government, election candidates etc.

Examples of activities

- Advocacy for inclusive voter registration systems
- Mainstreaming long-term participatory civic education and targeting poor and remote communities and excluded groups, including women.
- Leadership training for potential candidates across party lines for local government elections
- Use of community-based and social media for voter sensitization
- Support for necessary constitutional reforms
- Access to justice for election-related human rights abuses

- **SPACE FOR CITIZEN ACTION** DCA will focus on promoting and protecting the space available for civil society and equal citizen participation. This includes upholding the freedoms of association and peaceful assembly, the freedom of expression and the right to information in a non-discriminatory way. In this regard, DCA will be conscious of the specific needs and challenges of human rights defenders, women rights defenders and defenders of other discriminated/excluded groups (marginalized religious minorities, Dalits, indigenous people, people under occupation), including any systematic weaknesses within the judiciary for ensuring their adequate protection.

Examples of activities

- Regularly monitor and document violations or restrictions in participation rights, and advocate for the necessary changes in policies, laws and practices at national level
- Monitor existing donor policies and advocate for increased protection of citizen and civil society space
- Support access to justice and protection measures for abused or persecuted civil society actors
- Support advocacy and public interest litigation on NGO laws that are not in compliance with human rights standards
- Support reporting to relevant UN Special Rapporteurs, treaty-bodies and the UN Universal Periodic Review mechanism, which inter alia monitor the implementation of states' adherence to participation rights
- Explore alternative ways to support advocacy and human

rights organisations who monitor and advocate for citizen participation and civil society space in sensitive environments

- Create and develop platforms for civil society to meet, strategize and exchange knowledge and skills, using new communication technologies when relevant
- Support migrants' rights to associate both through informal networks in recipient countries but also through trade unions. Furthermore, support migrants' rights to an identity, ensuring that they have the necessary documentation and that their identity documents are not arbitrarily confiscated

- **ACCOUNTABLE AND EQUITABLE PUBLIC SERVICES** DCA will support partner activities for a more equitable distribution of public services and resources. We will support partners who address barriers preventing certain excluded groups from accessing public services e.g. discriminatory registration systems, inequitable budget allocations, discriminatory social norms etc. We will support work aimed at ensuring that national budgets, both the revenue and the expenditure, are fair and effectively distributed. We will support strategies aimed at challenging corrupt norms and practices. We will encourage support for the development and the use of public service delivery standards in relevant sectors and for furthering the use of these standards by excluded groups in holding governments to account.

Examples of activities

- Capacity building of rights holders on claiming their rights and entitlements and on how to access government resources and services
- Community-based monitoring and tracking of relevant government programs, budgets and expenditure
- Promoting advocacy and monitoring of the national budget, including human rights and gender budgeting and tracking
- Mobilization and advocacy for Right to Information Laws and the use of these laws in advocacy and monitoring work
- Documentation, litigation and advocacy on corruption issues
- Supporting poor migrant communities to monitor and advocate for adequate services for migrants in keeping with relevant human rights standards

- **DIALOGUE BETWEEN CONFLICTING GROUPS** Particularly in fragile situations, DCA will promote dialogue and constructive engagement between conflicting groups. DCA will explore how this focus can include more church and faith-based organizations and the capacity building needed within DCA and relevant DCA partners.

Examples of activities

- Support interfaith and inter-ethnic dialogue and consensus building among different ethnic and religious groups to promote religious and ethnic tolerance
- Combat negative stereotypes through media and other strategies

- Support faith-based leaders and other key actors to mediate conflicts e.g. between migrants and nationals, between conflicting ethnic and religious groups.

- **EQUAL PARTICIPATION IN PRIVATE SECTOR FUNDED INITIATIVES** In view of the increasing role of multi-nationals and private sector in development initiatives and financing, DCA will seek to uphold the right of poor women and men to be consulted on programmes and initiatives within their communities and to receive their rightful entitlements.

Examples of activities

- Monitoring and advocating for the right of indigenous people to be consulted in development programmes, as per ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples
- Monitoring human rights abuses committed by multi-nationals or private sector service delivers/migrant recruitment agencies
- Advocacy and sensitization of migrant recruitment companies for protecting migrants rights

- **STRENGTHENING ASSOCIATIONS** DCA will support the organizational development of local associations, faith-based organizations, and other local civil society organisations, particularly of their internal democratic practices, their rootedness in their societies, their links with their constituencies, their respect for human rights, and their participatory practices and methodologies. It will promote respect for the Istanbul Principles on CSO Development Effectiveness, the Siem Reap Consensus and relevant HAP standard principles. In fragile situations, facilitating and building effective associations that promote inclusiveness, tolerance, dialogue and respect for human rights and women's rights will be a key intervention area under this policy.

Examples of activities

- Support organizational development processes
- Organizational capacity building based on organizational development plans
- Capacity-building for local associations





PARTNERSHIPS, NETWORKS AND ALLIANCES

PARTNERS

DCA will work with ACT and other faith-based partners and networks, and key secular organisations and networks. Within this program type, DCA will particularly aim to support organisations and networks that are either made up of particularly discriminated groups or effectively represent them e.g. women's organisations, Dalit organisations, indigenous peoples' organisations, migrant organisations, religious minority organisations. DCA will be alert to the existence of faith-based organizations that are keen to uphold and mobilize citizen participation, supporting and strengthening their responses. DCA will ensure that partnerships are established with at least one organization with gender equality and human rights expertise. Furthermore, DCA will support strategic advocacy capacity-building among partners to strengthen constructive and strategic engagement with the state. DCA will work with its partners to establish mutually agreed frameworks and benchmarks for reliable assessments of performance, and for increased transparency and accountability. DCA will support partners' capacity-development for the respect of Humanitarian Accountability Partnership principles, including effective participation of rights-holders in partner work, adequate distribution of information, and the establishment of grievance mechanisms where complaints from target groups and other stakeholders can be handled.

NETWORKS AND ALLIANCES

DCA is committed to working within the ACT Alliance and will support and actively participate in ACT coordinated initiatives around citizen participation, human rights and accountable governance at national, regional and international levels. DCA will also seek to develop, support and facilitate broad and multi-stakeholder networks at national, regional and international level on governance and citizen participation issues. DCA, together with the ACT Alliance, will proactively seek opportunities for networking and building relationships with CIVICUS, CIDSE, Transparency International, FrontLine Defenders, ICNL and other initiatives, focusing on policy analysis and advocacy towards strengthening and monitoring an enabling environment for citizen action. DCA will further strengthen links with CONCORD, a network of European NGOs, and APRODEV (Association of World Council of Churches Related Development Organisations in Europe) for advocacy work towards European Union Institutions around the protection of civil society space.

LIST OF INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS AND PARTNERSHIPS

ACT ALLIANCE (ACTION BY CHURCHES TOGETHER) is composed of more than 130 member organisations working in long-term development, humanitarian assistance and advocacy with members in 140 countries. DCA is a member of the ACT Alliance.

CONCORD is a network of 27 European networks representing about 1600 European development and humanitarian organisations. Its primary objective is to influence policies within the EU in order to promote development, social justice, gender equality and human rights.

APRODEV is the Association of World Council of Churches related Development Organisations in Europe. The main objective of APRODEV is to influence decision-making processes in the European Union institutions as these affect developing countries, in order to promote justice and peace, and the eradication of poverty. APRODEV pursues rights-based development from a faith-based perspective.

FRONT LINE DEFENDERS is an Irish-based human rights organisation founded in 2001 to protect human rights defenders at risk, i.e. those who work non-violently to uphold the human rights of others as outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

ICNL (INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR NOT-FOR-PROFIT LAW) is the leading source for information on the legal environment for civil society, philanthropy, and public participation. Since 1992, ICNL has served as a resource to civil society leaders, government officials, and the donor community in over 100 countries.

CIVICUS (WORLD ALLIANCE FOR CITIZEN PARTICIPATION) is an international alliance of members and partners which constitutes an influential network of organisations at the local, national, regional and international levels. CIVICUS has worked for nearly two decades to strengthen citizen action and civil society throughout the world, especially in areas where participatory democracy and citizens' freedom of association are threatened.

TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL is an international organization working to stop corruption and promote transparency, accountability and integrity at all levels and across all sectors of society.

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