



PARTNERSHIP POLICY FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

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Working in partnership and with partners is fundamental to the international work and cooperation of DanChurchAid (DCA). This policy spells out our ambition to strengthen our partnership relations in terms of mutual ownership and mutual accountability. The policy deals with our international partnerships. The partnership principles are to a large extent also valid for our partnerships in Denmark and throughout the organisation.

In this policy **Partners** refers to: civil society organisations that work with or have expressed a wish to work with DCA; organisations already funded by DCA or that wish to be supported with direct funding and with whom we share common values and principles.

The present policy presents DCA's vision on partnership. The purpose of this policy is to set a direction for better and increased dialogue with our partners - a direction that DCA will aim at together with our present and new partners. The policy also describes which organisations DCA will prioritise as partners, how we work with our partners, and when partnerships might have to end.

This policy is partly written for organisations which have, or wish to enter into, a partner relationship with DCA, including the partner group and partner platforms. It will also be used by DCA's management, advisors, consultants, and programme staff in the regional offices in their regular contact with DCA partners. Here, the policy is especially relevant before negotiations with new partners, for renewal of cooperation agreements, in the process of signing partnership agreements, and in programme development, reviews and evaluations.

VISION OF PARTNERSHIP

Partnership is a logical consequence of DanChurchAid's (DCA) Christian value base. This means that all our work/service for poor and neglected people (diakonia) is undertaken in a shared community or fellowship with various local partners (koinonia). DCA believes all human beings are created equal and that we are called by our various faiths to practice and realise equality in a non-discriminatory and all-inclusive way. Therefore DCA insists on mutuality in our partnerships where none are objects of help and service and all are fundamentally equal partners in mutual cooperation for development.

In many countries faith-based organisations have a strong voice and represent huge sections of the poorest and marginalised groups, not least in rural areas. DCA has a particular commitment to work with faith-based organisations. This is particularly reflected in DCA's commitment to and membership of the ACT Alliance but also in a commitment to work with faith-based organisations, whether these represent other faiths or are Christian.

Supporting and empowering progressive parts of civil society – a civil society aiming at transforming power structures to ensure development and eradication of poverty, injustice and insecurity – must be locally owned to be sustainable. Working in partnership is therefore our natural starting point.

DCA wants to build partner relationships through which we can contribute to a civil society that facilitates openness, dialogue, respect for and discussion of opinions. DCA wishes to strengthen a civil society that builds on participation and empowerment, for example in advocacy for improved service delivery, and a civil society that empowers and mobilizes marginalized and vulnerable groups. DCA wants to continue and scale up cooperation with progressive civil society actors that monitor, engage and interact with the state, the private sector and other stakeholders such as media and academia, both to empower and to keep them accountable.

DCA believes that civil society organisations (CSOs), including social movements and grassroots organisations, can transform

needs and rights of poor and marginalized groups into social and political power, and that this ultimately can lead to a positive change in the lives of poor, excluded and vulnerable people. In other words, DCA's aim is to assist these organisations to continue to be - or to become - strong, autonomous, vibrant, professional, accountable and transparent civil society organisations genuinely representing rights holders.

DCA envisions ideal partnerships with such civil society actors as mutually beneficial relationships. The vision is to build and strengthen horizontal – instead of vertical – relationships between DCA and its partners. DCA however acknowledges that time and trust are needed for genuine partnerships to develop and that inequality in size and access to resources are significant challenges to this happening. Overcoming these challenges needs constant effort.

Supporting the development of a diversified civil society and the partner relationship in itself has high value for DCA. It is, however, important to underline that this shall always be with the aim of supporting and ensuring lasting results for the poorest and most marginalised groups. DCA acknowledges that there may well be a conflict of interest between the process of building strong civil society actors (which can at times be very inward looking) and the need to document that such processes lead to real results and sustainable impact for poor and marginalised rights holders. By acknowledging this, DCA also commits to working with our partners to strike a reasonable balance where and when such tension appears.

DCA's partnership vision is to deepen and strengthen our relationship and mutual dialogue with key partners on issues that go beyond financial support and the traditional time-bound project approach. DCA wants to establish a mechanism that can ensure and facilitate an open dialogue and ensure mutual accountability between DCA and our key partners, and in this way strengthen a horizontal partner relationship to the largest possible extent.



COMMON VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

For DanChurchAid (DCA) a healthy partnership between organisations must be a relationship founded on mutually respected values and a shared vision of the common goal of reaching out to the poor and the marginalized based on respect for human rights and gender equality.

Genuine partnerships take time to develop and are based on values such as mutual trust, respect and acknowledgement of our different strengths and weaknesses. DCA believes that such values are essential in our partnerships when facing a world of constantly changing problems, opportunities and priorities. In genuine partnerships, partners and DCA challenge the traditional donor-beneficiary relationship and are in dialogue on our values and principles (which also change over time).

DCA has signed up to values and principles endorsed by the ACT Alliance (in the ACT Code of Good Practice), the principles of the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP), and the Red Cross/Red Crescent and INGO Code of Conduct for Disaster Relief. All DCA's international work is based on a gender inclusive rights-based commitment.

In keeping with the obligations that derive from these, DCA commits to and will seek partners that also commit to:

- Acting in ways that respect, empower and protect the dignity, uniqueness, intrinsic worth and human rights of every woman, man, girl and boy;
- Working with communities and individuals on the basis of need and human rights without any form of discrimination;
- Ensuring that the capacities and capabilities of communities are considered at all times;
- Targeting those who suffer discrimination and those who are most vulnerable;
- Speaking out and acting against those conditions, structures and systems which increase vulnerability and perpetuate poverty, injustice, rights violations and the destruction of the environment;
- Working in ways that respect, strengthen and enable local and national-level capacity;
- Not using humanitarian or development assistance to further a particular religious or political standpoint;
- Upholding the highest professional, ethical and moral standards of accountability;
- Meeting the highest standards of truthfulness and integrity in all of our work;
- Endeavouring not to act as instruments of government foreign policy;
- Listening and responding to feedback from the groups with whom we work when planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating programmes;
- Enabling the groups with whom we work, organisational stakeholders and staff to raise complaints, and responding with appropriate action;
- Working as a responsible member of the aid community, co-ordinating with others to promote accountability to, and coherence for, impoverished communities and crisis-affected people.

PARTNERSHIP CRITERIA

DanChurchAid (DCA) works with a wide range of different stakeholders, including state actors and private business. However, in this policy those we refer to as partners are always – as we ourselves are – organisations from civil society. These are the organisations to which DCA may provide direct funding. It will always be from among civil society organisations that DCA will seek to establish partnerships based on the above-mentioned shared values and commitments.

The variety of civil society organisations with which DCA can form partnerships is broad and will vary within each country according to the specific context and what is relevant in the specific programme in question. It is important that partners know these criteria so that they can assess whether or not they wish to enter into cooperation with DCA. As a highly decentralised organisation it is also crucial that DCA is transparent and open about the criteria we apply when assessing and choosing whom to work with. With due respect to the relevant programme policy and technical demands, the following criteria guide DCA's selection of partners:

FAITH-BASED AND SECULAR ORGANISATIONS

As a church-related organisation, DCA has a special obligation to involve church and faith-based organisations, in particular those who are – or potentially could become – members of ACT. When applying for membership of the ACT Alliance, DCA also made a commitment to work closely with other ACT members. DCA therefore prioritises seeking partners within the ACT Alliance, whether this is for humanitarian action, mine action or long-term development work.

Where possible, it is DCA's ambition to partner with at least one or two local ACT members in each focus country – and always to work in coordination with all ACT members. Where there are no, or only few, local ACT members, DCA will seek to support potential organisations to become members.

DCA believes in inter-faith dialogue and therefore also prioritises partnerships with other Christian and other faith-based groups. DCA regards faith-based organisations as an important part of civil society, but also acknowledges that diversity is key in a vibrant civil society. DCA will therefore also seek partnerships with secular organisations relevant to our programmes.

ORGANISATIONS WITH A RIGHTS BASED PERSPECTIVE

As an organisation committed to the respect of human rights and gender equality, DCA will seek partners with those who share these values and wish to work with a rights-based commitment. DCA will therefore partner with organisations that facilitate the empowerment of marginalised groups to claim their rights. DCA also partners with organisations that sensitise and advocate for governments and other stakeholders to meet their obligations to these groups.

DCA will build and support partnerships with organisations that are committed to incorporating human rights and gender equality principles within their own organisations and in their interaction with rights holders. In DCA, we operationalise these principles by focusing on Participation, Accountability, Non-Discrimination, Empowerment and Linking to Rights (PANEL).

Therefore partnerships with organisations focused solely on service delivery will increasingly be limited to fragile and humanitarian crisis situations or where some service delivery is considered strategic and necessary for supporting the legal and political empowerment of the groups with whom the partner works.

ORGANISATION'S LEGITIMACY AMONGST RIGHTS HOLDERS

With DCA's focus on building and strengthening civil society, the issue of our partner's legitimacy in the communities or amongst particular groups of right holders is also a parameter to be considered in the selection of partners.

Constituency based CSOs are formed by rights holders themselves and thus represent them directly. **Intermediary** CSOs are formed to assist marginalised rights holders or to represent their interests – but may not have a direct mandate from them. In such cases, it is important to assess the legitimacy the CSO has among rights holders and the implications that it may have on accountability.

DCA prefers to work with partners with a strong representation of marginalised rights holders. Partners who are committed to work with strengthening their links to and mandate from rights holders will be prioritised. This applies both to intermediaries and also to networks that might not have a direct contact with rights holders but enjoy legitimacy through their membership base.

ORGANISATIONS WITH SPECIFIC TECHNICAL AND OPERATIONAL CAPACITIES

Partners' technical capacities also play an important role in determining the basis for partnership. In each focus country, DCA has a prerequisite to support partners with specific capacities to ensure resources are available in particular on gender equality, human rights, and humanitarian response. Depending on the specific thematic programme, other technical resources might also be required. For programmatic reasons, DCA may thus need to compromise on rootedness and instead may need to select organisations with particular technical resources where these are needed to ensure adequate technical capacities and achieve particular goals (i.e. where relevant and more well-rooted CSO's cannot be identified).

PARTNER PORTFOLIO CONSIDERATIONS

When preparing programme strategies, DanChurchAid (DCA) will analyse the country context and the status of the civil society and assess how to apply the above criteria. In some countries relevant CSOs might be difficult to find; in other countries there may be so many CSOs that it is almost impossible to do justice in the selection of partners. Additional country specific partner criteria and priorities may therefore also be included in programme strategies to ensure a suitable partner portfolio in the specific context.

DCA's partner portfolios will normally be a mix of local community based organisations (CBOs) and national NGOs, networks and resource agencies. Partners may be small, young or newly established organisations. In other countries, there are larger, older and more mature organisations. Some places, and in particular in humanitarian situations, it may also be necessary to include other international organisations than ACT members in a partner portfolio.

When balancing a partner portfolio, consideration should also be given to possible synergies between partners, their interest in participating in networking, as well as managerial aspects, potential and actual capacity to meet performance requirements, and available staff and partner resources (e.g. when working with many CBOs). A balanced partner portfolio is also a result of assessments of risks and potentials – and proper risk management.

A diversified partner portfolio is therefore also a means to ensure partners can support, complement, and compensate each other's strengths and weaknesses. In all key partner relationships, DCA will ensure that there is a well-defined added value to the given partner's capacity and/or project outcomes that goes beyond a mere financial contribution. This added value may for example be defined in a joint advocacy strategy, an organisational assessment and capacity development plan, an approved proposal, or a partnership agreement.

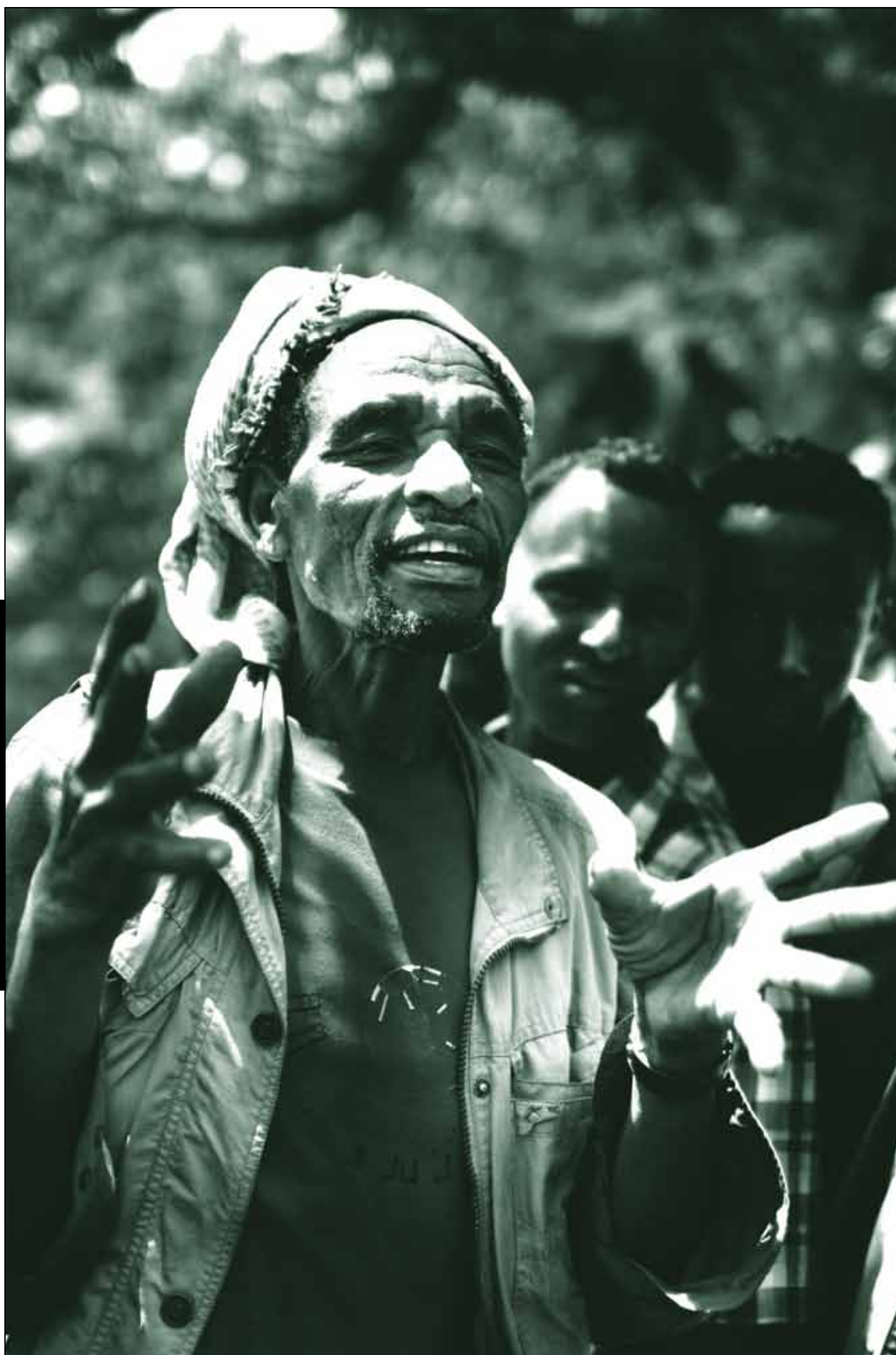
With so many aspects to consider there are no simple rules that can determine exactly which partners DCA should work with, and the guidance can be summarised as follows:

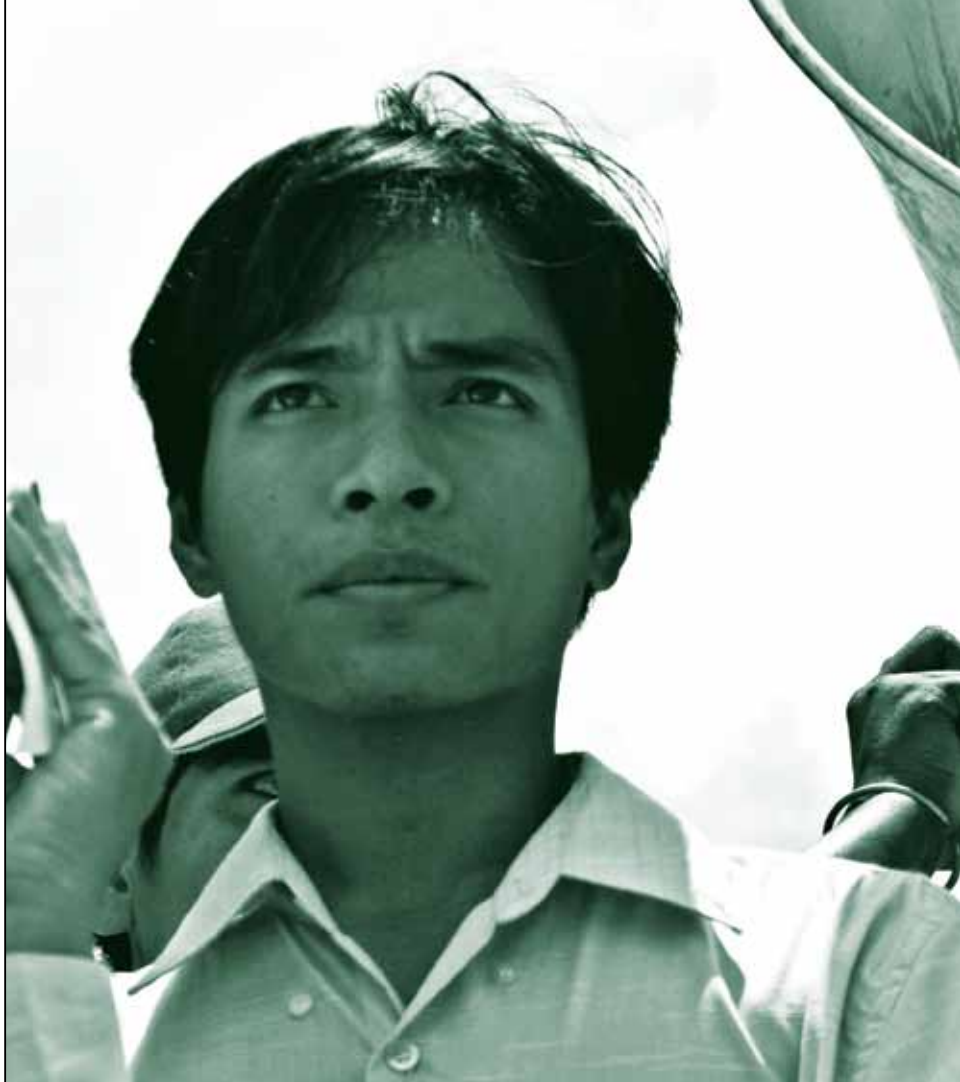
The organisation must be relevant to the programme; there is agreement on common values and principles; systems are or can be put in place to ensure minimum standards and performance requirements. When these criteria are fulfilled, then DCA has a **preference** to work with organisations and networks that:

- A. are (potential) members of ACT Alliance – and other faith-based organisations
- B. have a high degree of rights-based internalisation (PANEL principles)
- C. have strong legitimacy amongst rights-holders (either CBO's or Intermediaries with CBO mandate)
- D. are national civil society organisations (rather than INGOs)
- E. have specific technical capacities

To say this is DCA's **preference** is also to underline that these points should not be taken dogmatically. As mentioned earlier, choices must always be based on an analysis of the local context and in particular on the status of the civil society in the relevant country/region. Due to huge contextual variations, DCA has chosen not to set specific targets for the partner portfolios in each country. Instead, DCA will monitor the balance and development of partner portfolios over the years through the partner portfolio overviews for each focus country.

In addition to the above, it is obviously also perfectly legitimate to have non-funding relationships in the different programmes, where this can be of value to the programme(s) or partners. This could for example be joint advocacy and other networking, or working with other agencies around harmonisation of requirements in relation to partners.





HOW DO WE WORK WITH PARTNERS?

The resources offered to partners are spaces for dialogue, funding and/or fundraising capacity, support for organisational development and capacity building, cooperation on communication and connecting local to international advocacy.

DanChurchAid's (DCA) support to partners usually begins as support to specific projects or larger programmes – as defined by the partner – or in some cases even the partner's entire strategic plan. But collaboration with partners can also be support for events, research, single-issue alliances, or participation in Consortia. As partners we may together agree to sign several different agreements. As a rule of thumb, however, it is recommended to work towards more long-term and comprehensive agreements. We believe that this will contribute to strengthening the stability and predictability for partners – and to decreased bureaucracy.

When a partner's **development work** is supported financially it will – in almost all cases – be within a programme strategy approved by DCA. The programme provides a framework for the individual projects that can be supported in any given country. Such DCA programmes define the overall strategic goals within which partners' individual projects will be funded. For the **Humanitarian Action** projects, overall strategic frameworks are mainly developed as part of country programmes or as a component of

Right to Food programmes but many Humanitarian Actions are funded as projects outside of long-term programmes.

When a project proposal from a partner is approved, it will be formalised in a cooperation agreement. Before final approval DCA will engage in a thorough dialogue with the partner about the project proposal. Among other things this is to ensure that it is in accordance with DCA's values and principles and, where relevant, is aligned with the relevant DCA programme strategy.

DCA also has a strong ambition both to learn from partners as well as to provide partners with opportunities to influence our ways of working. At a more overall level, the following structures exist for joint reflection and learning, and for ensuring partners have opportunities to contribute to and influence the development and formulation of DCA policies and programme strategies:

- In each focus country, partners elect a representative for DCA's **partner group**. This partner group, of approximately 10 members, is consulted in the development of new DCA policies and overall DCA strategies and will advise DCA's board.
- In each thematic (or country) programme, a **partner platform** is established. This is composed of those partners participating in a particular programme. The



partner platform is a forum for dialogue between partners (incl. DCA). The platform will be strongly involved in the development, monitoring, mid-term review, and evaluation of programmes. In older and more well-established programmes, the partner platform will also be part of defining which additional new types of partners would be beneficial to the programme. Partner platforms might also decide to network more broadly and involve organisations that are not funded by DCA.

In addition to these project and programme-related fora, DCA will institutionalise **annual bi-lateral partnership** meetings with key partners. Such meetings shall ensure that, at least once a year, management staff from DCA's regional office and the partner organisation systematically discuss the state of the partnership. The following levels should be covered:

- Our mutual relationship as well as the future strategic perspective for this, including the contribution each of us brings and expects to receive;
- the status of the organisations and plans for organisational development;
- the joint external relations e.g. plans and agreements for joint external communication (such as visits from media, volunteers etc.) and identification of areas for joint advocacy, e.g. linking national and international advocacy.

It is DCA's ambition to reduce the earmarking to projects where DCA is the only donor, and move towards more programme or organisational budget support. Therefore the annual bilateral partnership meeting is also an opportunity for ensuring maximum alignment between DCA and the partner's set-up, as well as to identify needs for harmonisation with other donors.

The annual meetings are documented and the documented decisions taken during such meeting are what we regard as **Partnership Agreements**. This means that partnership agreements can vary from simple signed minutes of the meeting to more thorough Memorandum of Understandings, for example when the partnership involves organisational budget support for an organisations with a broad mandate.

If partners feel that the above mentioned dialogue mechanisms are not working, the partner may call for members of DCA's International Management Team at Head Quarters to provide mediation between the parties. A second option is to use DCA's Complaints Handling Mechanism* where partners, in confidence, can also provide feedback and complaints. This mechanism must also be used if partners experience misconduct by DCA staff.

***www.danchurchaid.org/complaints**

INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

DCA has a strong wish to explore new ways of working in partnership together with both our present and potential partners in response to global changes. DCA is keen to test non-traditional ways of partnership with Southern actors where we look into new, more flexible and potentially also more risky relations. This could for example be through support to social movements with very loose structures or handing over larger responsibility for the entire programme management to Southern partners.

Where DCA's procedures and requirements are obstacles to innovative ways of working, DCA's regional offices are strongly encouraged to request derogations and to obtain a mandate from the responsible director at HQ to test new types of partnerships. In these situations DCA will apply a mutual action-learning approach including: testing of the new innovative approaches; discussion and documentation between the partner(s) and DCA of learning; and proper follow-up/adjustment. DCA HQ will in each case appoint a contact person to ensure support, learning and documentation.

EXIT FROM OR PHASING OUT OF PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships typically begin as time-bound initiatives and not all partnerships develop into long-term partnerships. In general, however, DCA believes in long-term and constantly evolving partnerships. Consequently, we do not operate with an end-state for partner organisations, where a point for phase-out will automatically be reached. However, phasing out can be for "Strategic, Programmatic or Contextual Reasons" and good practice in such cases includes:

- Written information for the partner and oral dialogue
- Agreement on a minimum phase-out period
- A phasing out strategy (eg. support for organisational development, fundraising, etc.)

Phasing out can also be initiated because of "Difficulties in the relationship" (e.g. conflict of fundamental values, fraud, abuse of power). Phasing out in such cases will typically happen at short notice and follow-up action might include steps to recover funds or appropriate legal procedures. More advice is provided in a guidance note called "Phasing Out of Partnerships". This is a practical tool for phasing out of partnerships both when it is a well-planned, strategic process but also in situations where there are sudden problems (security, war, disasters) or in situations where either of the parties feel that the partnership must come to a stop due to conflicts in values, serious financial fraud etc.



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