



Evaluation

MS at the Crossroads

Danish Association for International Cooperation



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*Danish Association
for International
Cooperation*



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- Annex 3 Kenya Country Study: Getting Real About Partnership
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- Annex 7 Financial Management System of MS
- Annex 8 Former Development Workers – Contribution to Intercultural Cooperation and to The Resource Base for Development Cooperation

Abbreviations

| | |
|------|---|
| BASE | Backward Society Education (MS partner-NGO in Nepal) |
| COs | MS Country Offices |
| DVS | Danish Volunteer Service |
| DW | Development Worker |
| EVAM | En Verden af Muligheder (A World of Opportunities) cooperation between Danish schools and NGOs to strengthen global dimensions in education |
| MSC | Most Significant Changes (MS approach to continuous monitoring and evaluation) |
| MSiS | MS in the South (Successor to the DVS-programme since 1993) |
| PAB | Policy Advisory Board |
| TCDC | MS' Training Centre for Development Cooperation in Arusha, Tanzania |

Executive Summary

1. Purpose

Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke (in English: The Danish Association for International Cooperation) was conceived during World War II (1944) and has, over the years, moved from concerns with the rehabilitation of war-torn Europe to the situation of the developing countries. MS, as it is popularly known, actively helped spearhead the establishment of a Danish bilateral aid programme in the 1960s. The main objectives of this Evaluation are (a) to assess the relevance, effectiveness and impact of Danish development assistance administered by MS; and (b) to make recommendations for possible improvements of MS' performance as well as Danida's mode of cooperation with MS.

2. Overall assessment

MS continues to be a key actor in Danish development cooperation. The organisation has made progress in several areas since its *MS in the South* (MSiS) Programme was reviewed in 2000, and it continues to play an important role in the larger Danish NGO community, as catalyst, coordinator and service provider. In the area of development education, MS' special position needs to be further nurtured and developed, particularly with reference to the rapidly changing demands of the Danish school system. MS' financial management is basically sound, but some further effort is required to allow the organisation to measure its own performance in terms of financial effectiveness and efficiency. While the impact of MS' activities may be uneven, their relevance is not an issue. MS deals with problems and challenges that are important to all of us. Overall, it does so in a vibrant and professional way.

This is not to say that there is no scope for improvement. Thus, MS must continue to address a number of important issues that were also raised by the MSiS Review 2000. These include: Intercultural cooperation; the role of Danish Development Workers (DWs); the issue of mutuality in partnerships; the status of the South and the lack of adequate South-South synergies; monitoring and evaluation; and the impact on poverty of activities under the programme. While MS presently gives high priority to achieving synergies between different activities and departments, there remains a potential for further improvement. Prioritisation remains a weakness, also in the sense that there is a feeling among staff that too many things are initiated without the necessary assessment of costs or consequences for ongoing activities. Hence, MS appears to be overstretched in terms of competence and capacity. Particularly in the important area of public information, there is a need for MS to focus its resources and energies better than today. The Evaluation also argues that MS is in need of a reformulated vision of the purposes that drive the organisation.

3. Context

Close to 15% of Danish bilateral aid is channelled through Danish NGOs. Danida is concerned with enhancing its quality and has, for this purpose, prepared a "*Strategy for Danish Support to Civil Society – including Cooperation with the Danish NGOs*". This strategy

emphasises the role of Danish NGOs in capacity building among partner institutions, poverty reduction, advocacy, empowerment and network building. However, it is also concerned with enhancing their popular base in Denmark. This comes at a time of reduced Danida contributions to NGOs following reductions of the foreign aid budget. In 2002, total Danida funding to MS amounted to DKK 198.5 million or 84% of the total MS budget. Reduced support from Danida and other government ministries has forced MS to lay off several staff members and close one department (dealing with ethnic minorities in Denmark). Further budget reductions for 2004-2006 have recently been announced by Danida.

This Evaluation, then, is carried out at a time when MS, like other Danish NGOs, is facing a number of challenges.

4. Nature of activities undertaken by MS

MS has a broad agenda. Activities can be grouped in the following manner:

- MSiS which was introduced in 1993 as the successor to the Danish Volunteer Service (DVS). Its two main themes are: Poverty eradication and intercultural cooperation. Partnership with organisations in the South is the centrepiece of the programme, including the placement of DWs.
- Humanitarian assistance, currently limited to participation in two consortia assisting Afghan and Sudanese refugees.
- Three different programmes involving renovation and shipment of used technical equipment.
- International exchange (MS Travels), involving international work camps for young people, in Denmark, in other countries in the North as well as in the South.
- A programme for ethnic minorities in Denmark, including a Documentation Centre (from 1979) as well as counselling, training, lobbying and campaigning.
- Public information and development education, involving a comprehensive programme of activities since 1948, targeting broad sectors of the Danish population. This activity is supported by a Danida framework agreement.
- Finally, advocacy and lobbying at local, national and global level, which constitute an important part of the MS agenda, involving MS in a wide range of campaigns, conferences and other events dealing with development and global issues.

This ambitious scope puts demands on the organisation and, according to MS itself, requires quality, focus and coherence in the work as well as the structures. For such reasons, MS is in the midst of a process of self-critical reflection, aimed at further developing and consolidating the organisation while retaining its overall objective, which is *“to promote understanding and solidarity between people and, by cooperation across national and cultural boundaries, to contribute to sustainable global development and an equitable distribution of the earth’s resources”*.

5. Scope of the Evaluation

The Evaluation does not provide a complete documentation of MS and its different activities. Its main subject is the implementation of the MSiS program as well as some other issues that have not been sufficiently covered by previous reviews and studies, including the special role of MS and its special arrangements with Danida.

As part of this Evaluation, six separate studies have been carried out: Three separate field studies of the MSiS programmes in Kenya, Zambia and Nepal; a study of MS' financial management; a study on development education; and a study of returned Development Workers.

6. MS in The South

MSiS was launched in 1993 as a successor to the Danish Volunteer Service. It operates in seven countries and has two regional programmes – in Africa, Asia (Nepal) and Central America.

An external review of the programme was commissioned by MS in 2000. While giving MS credit for being a pioneer of partner-based development strategies, the review identified a number of problems that MSiS needed to address. Based on its recommendations, MS produced a new policy document: *“Solidarity through Partnership”* (2001).

The three field studies of this Evaluation (in Kenya, Zambia and Nepal) all found that progress has been made in several areas. A notable feature is that MS enjoys a reputation for taking partnership seriously and for actively working to overcome the structural impediments to equitable partnership. The creation of Policy Advisory Boards (PABs) has largely been successful, and in both Kenya and Zambia there has been a significant impact of MSiS activities, not least in the area of organisational development.

It is recognised that the MSiS review was carried out only three years ago and that time is required for recommended changes to have effect. There are still issues that need to be addressed. They include (a) the issue of intercultural cooperation, (b) the role of Danish DWs, (c) the mutuality problem, (d) the status of the South and the lack of sufficient South-South synergies in the programme, (e) the impact on poverty, and (f) monitoring and evaluation:

- The notion of intercultural cooperation remains fuzzy and has not yet been sufficiently concretised for any practical application. A main difficulty is that MS has chosen to make Intercultural Cooperation an integral part of an argument in favour of maintaining MSiS as a programme using personnel assistance as an important modality of cooperation.
- The country studies and the MSiS Review 2000 all point to the difficulties of generalising about the performance of DWs, but it is found problematic that MS' partnership approach – based on values such as ownership and mutuality – to a large extent is predicated on the placement of DWs. Its cost-effectiveness is also questioned.
- There is strong commitment in MS to partnership with local organisations. None the less, a fully equitable partnership is elusive. While MS actively avoids being a donor, it is still seen as one by many partners.
- Despite the important role of PABs, there is still insufficient attention to what the South has to offer in the partnerships as well as to the issue of South-South synergies.
- The MSiS Review 2000 was critical of the way MS handled the objective of poverty reduction in its programmes. While MS has put in considerable efforts to improve on the situation, these have yet to come to fruition.
- The three country studies all reveal that there remain serious problems related to the monitoring and evaluation of MSiS activities. Again, it is recognised that MS works hard at improving performance in this area.

7. Development education and public information

MS has carried out a comprehensive programme of public information and development education since 1948, using different types of media. Much of this work is funded over Danida's Information Appropriation. As part of this Evaluation, a separate study was carried out of the effort targeting development education in Danish schools.

According to the study, MS continues to produce material of high quality. However, the use and impact of the material still leave something to be desired, partly due to factors outside the influence of MS (reduced school budgets, other topics being prioritised, increased competition). MS also needs to take fully into account the changes that are taking place in the educational system (i.a. increased focus on subject specific, measurable knowledge). At the moment, the material provided by MS for development education does not fully meet the subject specific curricular requirements expected its emergence from the current changes. Many teachers see it as too normative and deficient in terms of causal analysis.

The Evaluation recommends that MS reinforce relations with key "gatekeepers" in this area: The Ministry of Education, municipal and county councils, school librarians, teachers, and pupils' councils. MS is also encouraged to enhance its advocacy at policy level, to produce more material according to curricular requirements, and to capitalise on synergies between MSiS and MS-DK when preparing material for the education sector.

Regarding other aspects of public information, it is noted that MS plays an important, often coordinating role in public campaigns and other events related to issues of development, globalisation and North-South relationships. It also provides facilities for cooperative ventures such as the 92-Group. MS' role as initiator and coordinator receives much praise in the Danish NGO community and elsewhere.

While MS' activities in the area of public information and development education are impressive, prioritisation is an area of weakness. Given the demands for high quality and increasing competition, also in the media, there is a need for the organisation to focus its resources and energies better than today. Otherwise, MS is in danger of becoming overstretched in terms of its in-house competence and capacity.

8. Synergies, coherence and capacity

MS is involved in a range of activities and issues that are related to each other as issues relating to social justice. Different departments at MS approach these issues from different vantage points and for different purposes and there is no question of a monolithic MS identity or approach. However, there is a shared outlook and a commonality of interest across the departments that provide enough 'glue' to keep the institution together. There is also ample evidence that MS as an organisation can organise its affairs so that the various component parts effectively pull in the same direction. Still, it is realised by MS management that more can be done to achieve better synergies and more coherence between different MS activities in North and South.

A separate study of the financial management systems concludes that MS has adequate systems and the capacity necessary for good financial management in relation to Danida requirements. However, it is i.a. recommended that the systems be updated to improve internal assessments of performance in terms of efficiency and effectiveness.

9. The special role of MS and its cooperation with Danida

MS' special role has two main dimensions: In relation to Danish civil society as well as in its administrative relationship with Danida.

Interviews conducted in conjunction with this Evaluation indicate that there is wide agreement that it is primarily (a) MS' role as initiator, catalyst and coordinator on behalf of the larger Danish NGO community, and (b) the wide variety of activities that MS is engaged in, that sets MS apart and makes it both special and valuable. MS is appreciated for its role as initiator, catalyst and coordinator on behalf of the larger Danish NGO community, its wide range of activities and for providing generally high quality services and products. Respondents find it is justified that MS receives a special allocation for public information and development education. MS' "special arrangements" with Danida are not controversial in the NGO community, but are seen as features of MS' history.

There is a growing recognition, however, that MS' 'special position' is due for review. MS itself would like to retain some aspects of it, like the cooperation committee, but to redirect attention and emphasis to strategic dialogue rather than the current dominance of MSiS issues, more dialogue on MS' coordinating role among NGOs in Denmark, and more systematic and comprehensive reporting. Danida's NGO office, would prefer a mode of cooperation similar to what has been established for NGOs with framework agreements. This would involve less frequent meetings (every other year) focused on strategic and policy issues.

10. Future directions and options

Despite its many achievements and its current dynamism, it is hard to escape the feeling that, MS is currently at the crossroads and must make some key decisions about future direction, for the following main reasons:

- The implementation of Danida's Civil Society Strategy places a number of professional demands on MS. While MS often argues that the variety and breadth of its activities also provides its strength, variety can obviously not be sustained at the expense of quality, which must be maintained within each individual area of activities.
- Other large Danish NGOs now have framework agreements with Danida, which gives them a project orientation and sometimes also an impetus towards exploiting special niches (e.g. Ibis: Education and trade). They are regularly subject to capacity assessments initiated by Danida, which now also actively encourages competition from new NGOs.
- In this changing world of increased competition, MS may be in danger of slipping behind. Despite its pioneering efforts to promote partnerships, MS may become too closely tied to personnel assistance as a key modality of cooperation. Many observers judge this to be a somewhat outdated model for development cooperation. Furthermore, the diversity of its mandate weakens its profile in the Danish NGO landscape. Like many other Danish NGOs, MS remains economically vulnerable, depending on Danida and without a clear strategy for more diversified fund raising.

Such challenges are well recognised by MS, which has engaged in self-critical reflection regarding its strengths and weaknesses as well as future directions. MS must be praised for the ongoing efforts to consolidate and further develop the organisation.

The Evaluation concludes that MS is basically faced with two main options:

- Retain its current profile, with some significant improvements (Option A).
- Make more radical changes, e.g. take partnership even further than today and make it the cornerstone of a new vision for MS (Option B).

Regardless of which of the options is adopted by MS, it should be recognised that MS will remain a diversified organisation and must continue to live with many of the tensions that arise from this complexity. Rather than removing them, the contradictions should be softened and the tensions made more productive. A reformulated vision of the purposes driving MS may help to harmonise discordant elements.

Option A

This option would imply a minimum number of changes to enhance quality and address issues of coherence and synergy:

- MS should adopt a more flexible approach to the DW issue – consonant with its own policy document *“Solidarity through Partnership”*. Over a period of time, this would imply a reduced number of long-term Danish DWs increased acceptance of alternative (no-DW) options; the posting of more “shared” (between partners) DWs and short-term DWs with specific assignments; and the posting of southern nationals as DWs with partners in the MSiS programme.
- MSiS has been criticised for policies that involve exchange only from the North to the South in its programme for intercultural cooperation. South-South exchange may be a more effective and cost-efficient solution. Accepting intercultural cooperation as an objective in its own right, there may be ways of exposing representatives of the South to partner organisations of the North.
- The materials produced for development education must remain of high quality without losing their relevance to changing demands of the Danish school system.
- MS should consider better ways of safeguarding the resources represented by the collective experiences and skills of former Development Workers.
- MS has a well-functioning accounting system. In a situation of resource scarcity more attention must be given to performance measurement as well.
- It is suggested that MS must work to develop a vision that will make the activities and concerns of MS in the South central and that a key element will be how rural based poverty in the periphery is linked to global changes.

Much can be achieved by pursuing Option A, but (a): the activities in Denmark and activities in the South may still be insufficiently connected, and (b) in the South, it may be difficult to see MS’ comparative advantage over other international NGOs.

Option B

In this option, MS, in addition to addressing the issues under Option A, is encouraged to further “broaden the door” to its partners in the South and allow their influence to be increased, also on MS’ activities in Denmark.

A bottleneck for a greater impact of MSiS in the North lies in the fact that MSiS is treated as a compartmentalised area of work. In the present set-up, the South and MSiS is virtually the exclusive domain of the International Department. In order to overcome

this problem, the following operational ideas (which have largely been collected from the South) could be further explored:

- a) Establish issue-based working groups, with participation from partners in the South and by members of different MS departments.
- b) Create new North-South dynamics in the planning of South-related issues, assuring the representation of Southern views.
- c) Establish *ad hoc* or stable, specialised South advisory or reference groups to oversee the work areas in Denmark (e.g. information activities);
- d) Closer dialogue and co-ordination, between MS' political agenda and the concerns in the South.
- e) Make more use of MS as a facilitator of South-South strategic relations by developing more comparative analysis and identifying opportunities for South-South networks, contact and exchange.
- f) Identify priorities and mechanisms to generate information useful to the South, thus generating capacity for two-way information.
- g) Consider the employment of short term, issue-based advisers or consultants from the South with MS-DK in Copenhagen.

While such changes would go some way towards bringing MS-DK and MSiS closer together, the Evaluation recognises that MS will always have a political agenda in Denmark and that it may not always be easy to coordinate this with partners in the South. A more radical sub-option that MS could consider is, therefore, the establishment *MS International* – a truly international partnership with the vision of reducing poverty through intercultural cooperation, but without the privileged position of Danes in its structures. A 'MS International' would bring to a logical conclusion some trends already evident such as increased national representation in the respective Policy Advisory Boards and the transformation of the Annual Policy Meeting to an Annual General Meeting. 'MS International' would be able to draw on the large pool of staff at the various country offices, including Denmark, and recruit its Development Workers, if that cadre of staff is to be retained, from across the countries and organisations that join MS International as members.

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke (in English: The Danish Association for International Cooperation), commonly referred to as MS, is among the oldest and largest development NGOs in Denmark. The main objectives of this Evaluation are (a) to assess the relevance, effectiveness and impact of Danish development assistance administered by MS; and (b) to make recommendations for possible improvements of MS' performance as well as Danida's mode of cooperation with MS.

1.2 Background

Danish NGOs play an important role in Danish development cooperation. It is recognised by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs that they work in a largely flexible, effective and relevant manner, particularly in relation to the importance they attach to such core issues as local partnership and ownership, community participation, local development and the strengthening of civil society. For these reasons, close to 15% (DKK 900 million) of the allocations for Danish bilateral aid were channelled through NGOs in 2002. In addition, Danish NGOs received DKK 250 million in support of humanitarian aid and information activities.

During the last five years, Danida has in various ways been concerned with further enhancing the quality of the development assistance channelled through Danish NGOs. The first comprehensive Danish "*NGO Impact Study*" was completed in 1999; NGOs were part of a major evaluation of Danish assistance to the promotion of human rights and democratisation, as well as of an evaluation of humanitarian assistance, in the same year; capacity assessments of five Danish NGOs with framework agreements with Danida were conducted in 2000; and a "*Strategy for Danish Support to Civil Society in Developing countries – including Cooperation with the Danish NGOs*" was developed, also during 2000.

At the time of writing, the practical implementation of the Civil Society Strategy is being prioritised by Danida. This implies i.a. an emphasis on the role of Danish NGOs in capacity building among partner institutions, poverty reduction, advocacy, empowerment and network building, but also a growing concern and tightening of requirements regarding the popular foundation or "anchorage" of Danish NGOs in their own society. At the moment, this means that all major organisations applying for Danida funds must provide documentation on their popular base. However, there is some concern among Danish NGOs that this may be the first step towards asking the organisations for a larger share of "own contributions" as a condition for receiving public funds. This comes at a time when MS and six other large NGOs in Denmark have had to face cuts in the contributions made by Danida, following a decision by the Danish Government to reduce the foreign aid budget as well as a decision by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to redistribute NGO funds and allocate a larger share for new and smaller organisations. As a consequence of reduced Danida contributions, MS has recently been through a process whereby several staff members have been laid off. In addition, the Ethnic Minorities Department has been closed down due to reduced public support. In 2002, total Danida funding amounted to DKK 198.5 million or 84% of the total MS budget.

This Evaluation, then, is carried out at a time when MS, like other Danish NGOs, is facing a number of challenges. Unlike other organisations, however, MS has a very broad agenda. In the North, MS is a membership organisation concerned with social justice, disseminating information about the injustices of the world, seeking to convince policy makers to address root causes of local and global poverty and to support groups that are marginalised and being discriminated against; MS is involved in advocacy and activities related to ethnic minorities in Denmark, global youth exchange, development education and international lobbying on numerous issues. In two regions (Southern Africa and Central America) and seven countries of the South, MS runs a distinct ‘MS in the South’ partnership programme (MSiS) – using personnel assistance as an important modality of cooperation and aimed at poverty reduction and intercultural cooperation. The scope of MS’ work is ambitious; it puts demands on the organisation and, according to MS itself, requires quality, focus and coherence in the work as well as the structures. For such reasons, MS is in the midst of a process of self-critical reflection, aimed at further developing and consolidating the organisation while retaining its overall objective, which is “to promote understanding and solidarity between people and, by cooperation across national and cultural boundaries, to contribute to sustainable global development and an equitable distribution of the earth’s resources”.

1.3 Scope of the Evaluation

A Desk Study on MS was carried out as a preliminary study preceding the Evaluation. Its main tasks were to provide an overview of MS; to provide an overview of studies undertaken of and by MS, including their main findings and recommendations; and to make recommendations for the Evaluation (Annex 2).

While it was found that the vast majority of studies carried out concern MSiS, the Desk Study still recommended that the main subject of the Evaluation be related to its implementation. Specific issues that have not been sufficiently covered by previous studies were recommended for detailed study. Additionally, some complementary aspects of MS were identified in order to complete the picture. Thus, according to Terms of Reference (ToR), the Evaluation comprises the following issues:

1. Organisational capacity and performance of MS.
2. Performance of Development Workers (DWs).
3. Outcome and impact of MSiS at country and beneficiary level.
4. Performance and outcome of MS development education in schools in Denmark.
5. Coherence and synergy within MS’ diversified portfolio.
6. The special role of MS.

The six issues are further elaborated in the ToR (Annex 1).

It follows from the above that the intention is not to provide a complete documentation of MS and all its different activities. This Evaluation is meant first and foremost to consider the use and results of the bulk of resources provided to MS by Danida, to assess the extent to which there are adequate synergies between different MS activities and departments, and to suggest areas where there may be room for improvements in the overall performance of MS. Finally, the team in charge of the Evaluation has been asked to reflect on the special role of MS, particularly its special administrative arrangements with Danida.

In accordance with the prioritised issues, it was decided to carry out six separate studies as part of the Evaluation: Three separate field studies of the MSiS programmes in Kenya, Zambia and Nepal; a study on development education (by Copenhagen DC in association with the Danish University of Education); and a study of returned Development Workers. The individual sub-studies are presented and discussed in the report, and are made available on the enclosed CD-ROM.

Based on a tender competition, Chr. Michelsen Institute was awarded the contract for the Evaluation based on the annexed ToR. Gunnar M. Sørbo (team leader) and Johan Helland have prepared this report.

1.4 Structure of the report

The report is organised in the following manner: In Chapter 2, a brief overview is provided of MS and its different activities as well as some of the main challenges that the organisation is currently facing. In Chapter 3, the MSiS programme is presented and analysed, based on the three field studies carried out in Kenya, Zambia and Nepal. In Chapter 4, activities within the area of development education and public information are discussed, with priority being given to the special study on development education in Danish schools. Chapter 5 discusses the issue of coherence and synergy as well as organisational capacity and performance. The final chapter (Chapter 6) contains the overall assessment, a discussion of the main issues that appear to arise from the Evaluation, as well as the options that MS is recommended to consider when deciding on its future direction.

2. Activities, Organisation And Challenges

2.1 Brief history of MS

MS was conceived during World War II (January 1944) by a group of pacifists and Quakers, and emerged in 1945 as an organisation under the name “Aid Work of the Friends of Peace”. Groups of young Danish men and women were sent to Norway, Finland, Yugoslavia and Germany (among other sites) to assist with reconstruction of houses and basic infrastructure and to promote reconciliation. This activity formed the basis for the Youth Exchange Programme of Mellemlfolkeligt Samvirke, a name that the organisation adopted in 1949.

Over the years, MS grew into a special institution in Danish society. From being an organisation primarily concerned with the rehabilitation of war-torn Europe, it soon turned its attention to the problems of “underdeveloped” countries. MS started informing the Danish public about conditions in such countries as early as 1953 and received public funding to start development projects in Ghana and India in 1958 and 1959. In fact, MS to a large extent spearheaded the establishment of a Danish bilateral aid programme. In 1961, it formed the secretariat for “*Landsindsamlingen Danmarks U-lands-hjælp*”, a major fundraising campaign which allowed DKK 12 million (in addition to an equivalent amount from the Danish government) to be deposited in a national fund for development projects. When the Danish parliament (1963) decided to establish a volunteer programme (Danish Volunteer Service) as part of Danish development assistance, the experience of MS heavily influenced the legislation and the administration was subsequently delegated to MS.

MS’ information and development education work in Denmark started in 1948 when the magazine “*Kontakt*” was first published. Over the next three decades, the work expanded considerably. A library was established in 1968, and a magazine (ZAPP) targeting teenagers and school children/young students was published from 1975.

While originally against the idea that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should administer bilateral development assistance, MS came to enjoy a special relationship with that same ministry from the earliest days of Danish development assistance. In addition to administering the DVS programme, MS received a special allocation for its work in the area of public information and development education (since 1990). Thus, MS came to take on a number of public service functions closely related to Danish development assistance. Until 1975, MS was strictly an umbrella organisation with institutional members only. It then became a membership association. The number of individual members peaked at approximately 6,000 in 1994. At the end of 2002, MS had 4,199 individual and 94 institutional members.

2.2 Nature of activities undertaken by MS

As we have seen above, MS has, over the years, added a number of activities since it started as a humanitarian organisation after World War II. Currently, they can be grouped in the following way:

2.2.1 MS in the South (MSiS)

MSiS was introduced in 1993 as the successor to the Danish Volunteer Service (DVS). The current policy builds on two main themes: Poverty eradication and intercultural cooperation. The partnership approach is an important feature of the policy. Partners are primarily civil society organisations and partnerships are formalised and guided by partnership agreements. Currently MSiS comprises seven country programmes and two regional programmes. Personnel assistance is a key element in MS' contributions to the partnerships. Development workers (DWs) are assigned to the majority of partners, which, however, can also be supported in other ways. Total expenditure, and thus Danida funding, of the MSiS programme amounted to approximately DKK 138 million in 2002.

2.2.2 Humanitarian assistance

MS' involvement in humanitarian assistance is limited to participation in the two consortia: Danish Committee for Assistance to Afghan Refugees (DACAAR) and Danish Assistance to the Self-reliance Strategy (DASS). DACAAR, which is increasingly involved in many development activities and receives only a minor share of its Danida funding from the humanitarian office, provides assistance for Afghan refugees in Afghanistan/Pakistan, while DASS provides assistance for Sudanese refugees in northern Uganda. Danida funding was DKK 17.3 million in 2002.

2.2.3 Renovation and shipment of used equipment

MS is engaged in 3 different renovation and shipment programmes, fully funded by Danida: (a) a programme for renovation and shipment of used equipment to organisations in the South; (b) a programme for renovation of equipment to be used in humanitarian assistance; and (c) a programme for support for transport and conferences in Central and Eastern Europe. Danida funding for 2002 amounted to DKK 14.5 million.

2.2.4 International exchange (MS Travels)

MS provides young people with possibilities for participating in exchange activities in Denmark, in other countries in the North as well as in the South. Participants join work camps or study tours and MS arranges preparatory training and follow-up activities. MS Travels is not externally funded and functions on commercial conditions. The budget for 2002 was DKK 5 million. However, a particular programme in the Balkans has been supported through FRESTA, the special fund in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for peace and stability (DKK 3.2 million in 2002).

2.2.5 Ethnic minorities

Initiatives to promote understanding and co-existence between all people living in Denmark irrespective of their ethnic and cultural background have increasingly become central to MS' work although being presently threatened by major budget cuts. A Documentation Centre for Ethnic Minorities as part of the MS library was established in 1979; a newsletter on ethnic minorities was published ten times a year; counselling and training have been offered to newly arrived immigrants; and MS has tried to influence legislation and public opinion through lobbying and campaigning. Budget 2002: DKK 3.2 million.

2.2.6 Public information and development education

Since 1948, MS has carried out a comprehensive programme of development education and information using many different types of media, including the spoken word and targeting various groups. In recent years, MS has increasingly prioritised development education directed towards primary and secondary schools, and the organisation produces and distributes a quarterly “Global Education” package. MS publishes two magazines (*Kontakt* and *ZAPP*) and has a media centre and a specialised library with more than 40,000 books and journals on North-South and global issues. MS also runs a shop specialised in literature on development and on ethnic minorities. The shop also offers a selection of approximately 4,000 world music titles.

MS was the first Danish NGO to be awarded a three-year framework agreement with Danida to support information and development education work. Annual Danida funding has followed a rather stable pattern and amounted to DKK 5.3 million in 2002.

2.2.7 The political agenda

An important part of MS’ engagement is advocacy and lobbying at local, national and global levels. Special themes or focus areas are selected by the General Assembly. As part of such activity, MS is often involved in particular campaigns, conferences and other events dealing with development and global issues. MS often plays the role of a lead agency and umbrella organisation to such campaigns, which tend to mobilise a broad range of organisations and individuals. Danida often provides support for such events. In 2001, the figure amounted to some DKK 4 million.

2.3 Danida funding and mode of cooperation with MS

A review of MS’ annual accounts for the period 1991 to 2001 inclusive shows that Danida funding on average amounts to 87% of MS’ total turnover (Annex 2). Four programmes are currently fully funded by Danida. This is the case for (1) MSiS; (2) Renovation and shipment of equipment for development work; (3) MS’ involvement in humanitarian assistance; and (4) the Balkans programme. Of these programmes, only the first is covered by this Evaluation.

In addition, however, MS’ comprehensive work in the fields of information and development education is partly funded by Danida and this is also the case for the small additional renovation project undertaken in cooperation with the Municipality of Copenhagen. Danida has, over the years, also contributed funding to a number of special campaigns and events, e.g. Solidarity 2000 on globalisation and Rio+10 on the environment.

Due to the special history and role of MS, a cooperation committee consisting of representatives from Danida (including the Board Chair) and MS meets twice a year to discuss activities mainly related to MSiS. By comparison, other large Danish NGOs with framework agreements meet formally with Danida every second year, to present strategies, policy papers, plans and schedules for new activities, etc. In addition, Danida makes regular capacity assessments of the framework organisations. While there may be several good reasons for maintaining a special relationship between Danida and MS, both parties express some dissatisfaction with the present mode of cooperation.

2.4 Governing system and organisational structure

MS is a membership association and its highest authority is the General Assembly of representatives from various membership groups. Important policy initiatives are put before the General Assembly, which decides on the political agenda (including a Programme of Principles) and the overall work programme and elects a Board that constitutes itself and sets its own rules of procedure. The Board can establish permanent and *ad hoc* committees which, with the Board's endorsement, can engage people from outside the Board in their work. At the moment, there are seven committees under the Board but plans are underway to reduce the number to four, possibly five.

The Board is actively involved in the running of MS, including the dialogue with partner organisations through representation at the annual meetings in each of the countries of collaboration and at the Annual Policy Meeting in Denmark. The Board is also actively involved in representing the organisation in negotiations with Danida and in presenting MS' views to the general public. It is a MS tradition that the MS Board Chair often maintains a high public profile.

Over the past 15 years, MS has undergone a number of organisational changes. The latest reorganisation took place very recently when the Ethnic Minorities Department was closed down due to budget cuts. The structure today contains a General Secretariat and five departments:

- *The Department of Information* with web, press, politics, members and consultants (11 staff).
- *The Publications Department* with printing press, graphic design, marketing, library and MS shops (23 staff).
- *The International Department* with the MS in the South programme and renovation workshop (15 staff).
- *The Department of International Exchange* situated in Aarhus, with the Youth Exchange programme, the Balkan programme and the Reconditioning and Dispatching (7 staff).
- *The Administration Department* with finance, personnel, IT, reception, canteen, and storeroom (17 staff).

MS-DK (composed of the secretariats in Copenhagen and Aarhus) employs altogether 78 staff. In addition, 218 persons were employed in nine country or regional offices and the Training Centre for Development Cooperation (TCDC) in Arusha during 2002. The average age of MS-DK employees was 43 years; 54% of the employees were female and 46% male; and on average, staff had worked for MS for 11 years.

2.5 Current challenges

As stated in Chapter 1, MS went through a retrenchment process in which a number of staff had to be dismissed during 2002. This happened partly as a consequence of budget cuts made by the Danish Government, partly because MS for a number of years has operated within narrow economic margins in carrying out its programme of activities. The MSiS budget was reduced by approximately DKK 10 million and Danida's administrative contribution by DKK 2.5 million. It was decided by the MS Board that, as a temporary measure in 2002, all MSiS programmes be reduced by 6%. Moreover, the

regional programme in Southern Africa should be closed down by the end of 2004. In addition, programmes in Mozambique and Tanzania were reduced by 40%; the number of DWs was also reduced, again as a temporary measure in 2002; and four regional advisers in Denmark as well as seven staff members in Copenhagen had to be laid off. During 2002, it was also decided to close down the Ethnic Minorities Department due to reduced public funding. In another important MS area, exchange of youth through work camps, funding has also become more difficult in recent years. Further budget reductions for the period 2004-2006 (with similar consequences) have recently been announced by Danida. Needless to say, much energy has been spent and will continue to be spent on making decisions and adjustments to financially more stringent circumstances.

In addition, Danida has recently (June 2003) issued a document (*De danske NGO'ers folkelige forankring or The popular anchorage of Danish NGO*) in which some concern for the comparatively low number of individual members is expressed. Danida indicates a target for MS individual membership to reach 6,500 by 2005. According to the document, progress within this area will, along with the results of this Evaluation, carry weight in the determination of the amount of future Danida support to MS.

While the above process has been painful, it has also contributed to a renewed focus on quality, underlined by demands made by partner organisations in the South, by Danida's Civil Society Strategy, and by a changing political landscape in Denmark whereby public support to development cooperation can no longer be taken for granted. MS has responded to developments in many different ways. Thus, in the new Work Programme (2003-2005), five central challenges are identified:

- It is necessary to strengthen the popular base of MS, both in quantitative (members, users) and qualitative terms.
- In order to secure support and backing for MS' initiatives, the organisation must become more visible and move resources from internal to external information.
- MS will focus more of its efforts on monitoring and evaluation, to be able to improve its ability to present results.
- MS will develop alliances with new partners in Danish society, both private and public institutions, as well as institutions in civil society.
- The partnership approach is central to all of MS work and while important gains have been made, MS will strive to further develop the partnership approach across the whole organisation.

In addition, MS has decided to focus its political agenda on five areas in the coming years: Education and development (chosen as the Global Action theme 2003-4), Danish aid policy, trade issues, the European Union (EU), and ethnic minorities. It is the first time that the organisation selects the EU as a particular topic of attention in an assertive and positive manner. According to the Work Programme, it will be MS' policy to see its activities within a larger EU setting and to seek cooperation with organisations in other EU countries.

The Secretary General, as part of similar efforts, has recently engaged both management and staff in discussions on core values, on priorities and focus, on strengths and weaknesses as well as future directions. In brief, the organisation is, for the moment at least, certainly not lacking in self-critical reflection.

3. MS in The South

3.1 Background and earlier reviews

The first MS programme specifically directed at conditions in the developing countries was launched in 1963, when MS established the Danish Volunteer Service (DVS) in co-operation with the newly established Board for Technical Co-operation with Developing Countries (which later evolved into Danida). The programme has gone through a number of changes since then, particularly during the 1980s, but the core idea, viz. the posting of Danish volunteers to perform specific (usually practical) jobs, remained unchanged up to 1993. As from 1987, the volunteers were renamed Development Workers (DWs).

In April 1993, the MS General Assembly adopted a new policy: “*MS in the South – partnership and development*”. This resulted in the most comprehensive and far-reaching changes in MS’ development-related work since 1963. Some of the most important reasons motivating the new policy were:

- A wish to promote a more flexible and sustainable programme with greater scope than the existing project-oriented and volunteer-centred programme.
- A wish to infuse real meaning into the MS slogan of “development by people” and stimulate a high level of participation by partners and beneficiaries.
- A wish to develop a programme where like-minded organisations and people could meet and contribute to a value-driven process for change – a process characterised by mutual respect and interdependence (*Solidarity through Partnership*, p. 3).

From 1993 onwards, the various MS country offices, as well as the MS Board and the Secretariat in Denmark worked intensively to operationalise the new policy, which shifted the emphasis from placement of DWs to establishing partnerships (that could include the services of DWs) with organisations and groups in Africa, Asia and Central America. At the same time, many of the cooperation countries underwent profound economic and political changes. In this ever-changing environment, a number of lessons presented themselves. Some of them had to do with the DWs who felt “marginalised” in the new framework, partly because they now had less influence on programme policy and implementation. They also questioned the idea that they could easily be substituted by nationals and felt that with the focus of attention shifting to support to the partner organisation, their contributions were not duly appreciated. MS was also somewhat concerned about the decrease in number of DWs. Historically, the organisation’s identity has been grounded in deployment of personnel and in facilitating a human encounter across cultural barriers. Furthermore, contrary to the situation prior to adoption of the new policy, Danida emphasised the comparative advantages of MS as an NGO specialised in providing personnel assistance.

A “*Review of the MS Capacity to Carry out MS in The South*” was carried out by COWI-consult in 1995. Not unexpectedly, it found that the recently reformulated MSiS programme was still in its infancy and that many of the new key concepts were still not clearly understood by the many stakeholders involved. MS had no evaluation system in place and generally, there was a “capacity gap” in many of the MSiS programmes: MS had simply not been able to meet the demands associated with the new priorities, particularly with respect to the development of partnerships. A more systematic, coordinated

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approach was recommended, including a “competence development project” specifically aimed at upgrading the professional competence and capacity of the International Department at MS headquarters.

In 1996, MS again took stock of experiences and adjusted its policy. The role of the Danish DWs was given more attention than in the original policy document. MS now wanted to underscore its identity as a “personnel assistance organisation, emphasising development of human resources”. The country offices and partner organisations quickly picked up the signal, and forwarded additional requests for DWs – to the extent that the recruitment section in MS-Denmark had to ask for a slower pace.

An external review of the MSiS programme, commissioned by MS itself, took place in 2000. While giving MS credit for being a forerunner in the general move towards partnership-based development strategies in the South, and while endorsing the posting of Danish DWs as an integral part of the MSiS programme, the review identified a number of problems that needed to be addressed if MSiS were to succeed in its overarching aims and objectives. Some of the problems were linked to a failure to implement procedures and create mechanisms to safe-guard the unfolding of some key processes. Other problems were related to the organisation and management of MSiS. The following were among the key findings:

- Stakeholders in the programme had not understood their roles clearly, as their respective rights and responsibilities had not been sufficiently well defined in the operationalisation of MSiS. Operational guidelines remained unclear and there was poor communication between MS-DK and the Country Programmes with respect to areas of policy as well as stakeholders’ responsibilities. Decentralisation, which was seen as desirable, became a weakness due to the lack of clear guidelines. Effective decentralisation should aim at connecting the local to the centre by giving the partners ownership in the policy and practice of the MSiS programme as a whole.
- The review found that there was a gap between the policy and practice on poverty reduction. Country programmes failed to address poverty in a systematic and comprehensive way. Furthermore, poverty and policies for poverty reduction were not systematically linked to the other principal theme of cultural exchange (later renamed intercultural cooperation) or with the cross-cutting principles in MSiS (gender, democratisation and sustainability).
- The review found that cultural exchange tended to be lop-sided and not reciprocal: The South was presented as the beneficiary, with less attention to benefits to the North or to MS itself.
- In the partnership approach, the focus of MSiS was on capacity building in the partner organisation in terms of establishing partnerships but with insufficient attention to the subsequent partnership relationships. Furthermore, the notion of mutuality in the partnership arrangement remained a fundamental challenge to MS.

Based on its findings, the review made a large number of recommendations. Basically, MS was advised to undertake a major overhaul of the programme. There was in particular need for a sharper focus in the programme, and a clear specification of how strategies and plans could be transformed into action. The review argued strongly that the incorporation of Danish DWs into new roles still required a considerable amount of work, but recommended none the less that MSiS continue to deploy Danish personnel programme as an important modality of cooperation.

On the basis of this comprehensive review as well as subsequent internal discussions, MS adopted a revised policy paper for MSiS: “*Solidarity through Partnership*” (2001). This paper can basically be read as an endorsement of most of the recommendations made by the review. In it, the twin objectives of poverty eradication and intercultural cooperation (which now replaces “cultural exchange”) are reconfirmed, as is the role of DW placements as a central policy instrument in relation to both objectives; there is a continued emphasis on partnership as the crucial mode of cooperation to secure local relevance, support and sustainability of MS’ efforts; and it is underlined that personnel assistance will remain a central component of the programme. In addition, however, there is a new emphasis on the political aspects of poverty, and, therefore, on the need for advocacy and lobbying as part of the partnership approach. The new strategy also reduces the number of objectives, principles, considerations and cross-cutting issues that MSiS must consider, in the interest of achieving a sharper focus. Since then, the International Department, which administers MSiS, has been busy implementing the recommended changes.

3.2 Field studies

As part of this Evaluation, it was decided to carry out three field studies of MSiS – in Kenya, Zambia and Nepal. In accordance with the ToR, emphasis has been put on outcome and impact of MSiS activities at country, partner and beneficiary level. Particular attention has been given to MS’ capacity to manage and implement MSiS, and to the role and performance of DWs. First, the main findings of the three studies, as well as the findings of a visit to MS’ Training Centre for Development Cooperation (MS-TCDC) in Arusha, will briefly be presented.

3.2.1 Methodological considerations

The field studies were carried out by three study teams, each composed of one CMI researcher with a research background from the country in question and two national consultants with established research reputations within development studies and the role of NGOs in national development. The studies were carried out on the basis of an approach paper prepared to ensure that similar questions and similar issues were raised in all three studies. The studies were carried out in close co-operation with the respective MS Country Offices (COs) that in turn facilitated meetings and interactions with the various partner organisations, the DWs and the PABs established by MS.

All three country studies were intended to examine the two main objectives driving the MSiS programme, viz. poverty reduction and intercultural cooperation.

The approach paper required the country studies to ensure that the following topics were covered:

- An overview of the NGO sector.
- MS approaches to partnership.
- MS approaches to institutional development.
- Poverty reduction strategies.
- The role and performance of DWs.
- Synergies (i.e. how activities in pursuit of the dual objectives of poverty reduction and inter-cultural co-operation mutually support each other).

The three country studies were carried out between early February and late April 2003. Although the approach paper did outline the general themes and topics for the three studies, it did not establish any rigorous methodological guidelines that the study teams were required to follow. Given the restricted time available to examine quite complex issues, the individual studies explicitly endeavoured to recruit highly competent consultants and to make full use of their richness of experience within the subject matter at hand. The common methodological framework may best be described as inter-subjective validation by means of qualitative data collection, principally through semi-structured personal interviews with key informants (MS officers, DWs, PAB members, partner organisations, beneficiaries such as community and disadvantaged groups, etc.), SWOT analyses and focus group interviews. This broad range of respondents was expected to provide a sufficiently wide spread of views and positions to allow for sound inter-subjective validation of the findings.

The data thus obtained were contextualised within the country concerned and considered historically. It should be recalled that the issues under investigation are constantly moving targets. None the less, the study teams hoped to arrive at an understanding of the dynamics at play and an appreciation of the impact of MS activities, with a reasonable degree of confidence that their inferences are correct.

Wrap-up workshops were conducted in all three field studies, with oral presentations of the key findings. PAB members, staff members of the COs, partner organisations, and DWs were invited to make comments to be considered by the team for incorporation into the final report. Written draft reports were circulated to clear up misunderstandings and correct factual errors and written comments to the respective reports have been received from the MS COs as well as from MS headquarters. The country reports have thus gone through a reiterative process that has allowed the incorporation of views from many different vantage points.

3.2.2 MS-Kenya

In Kenya, MS has adopted a three-pronged approach to poverty reduction: (a) development at the grassroots, comprising income generation and service delivery; (b) awareness-raising; and (c) advocacy. In the course of the period under review (1997-2002), there has been a gradual shift towards advocacy to address the root causes of poverty as the expression of extremely unequal power relationships.

The report points out that the results and output in terms of income generation and service delivery has, in some cases, been impressive given adverse circumstances, and that the partnership arrangements have contributed to those achievements. Given the lack of specific baseline data, however, the study has had no basis for measuring the results in quantitative terms.

Similarly, activities towards raising the awareness of poor people about the social relations of poverty in their community and beyond have produced results. Again, such changes cannot be measured, but the self-confidence and assertiveness of beneficiaries and office-bearers of partner organisations attest to positive change. It is particularly noteworthy how women have acquired new confidence to speak their minds. Some positive results have also been achieved locally in the area of advocacy through partner activities.

However, regarding the second objective of intercultural cooperation, the study indicates that the concept is badly in need of re-examination, clarification and improved operationalisation, as all stakeholders are in disarray over this objective. While intercultural cooperation is seen by MS as a central objective in its own right, most of the partners interviewed see it as an instrumental concept or as a side effect of the partnership.

The concept of partnership forms the core of MS-Kenya's programme. The report recognises that the notion of partnership is complex and that ideals of equity and shared commitment to a set of common goals can only be achieved through a process characterised by continuous communication, transparency and mutual accountability. Most of the interviewed partners state that MS-Kenya has been more genuinely committed to sustaining this process towards greater equity in the partnership relationship than other international NGOs. None the less, a fully equitable partnership is elusive. MS actively avoids being seen as a donor, but is still the source of considerable material support. The placement of DWs in partner organisations and the responsibilities that MS in fact has for their welfare continue to be a source of friction, misunderstanding and a topic of discussion. These discussions are likely to continue as long as perceptions persist that there are significant discrepancies between the ideals of equitable partnership and the realities on the ground that may be seen as expressions of difference or inequity between partners.

MS-Kenya has paid considerable attention to organisational capacity building. The most prominent feature has been training – both formal and informal. Much has been accomplished in heightening the competence levels of partner staff and in increasing the capacity of partner organisations to meet the challenges they will face when the partnership period with MS-Kenya comes to an end. The efforts to develop procedures, rules and regulations have been considerable though more difficult to measure and substantiate. However, the study argues that MS-Kenya ought to take a more systematic view and a firmer grip on the institutional development challenges facing the partners. A more uniform format of the partnership agreements would be a good starting point, establishing a baseline on these institutional parameters in addition to the substantive ones, and setting targets.

The DWs occupy a central role in the Kenya country programme. Generally, the partners expressed appreciation about the performance of the DWs. But the views varied widely, also among DWs and over time. This is not surprising, given the diverse expectations from partner organisations and the many roles that the DWs are expected to play. A lot seems to depend on inter-personal rather than technical skills; successful DWs are those who manage to integrate well in the local community and maintain positive inter-personal relationships. Despite policy changes since 2001 that define the main role of DWs in relation to the two main objectives, DWs are, one way or the other, often expected to perform

- An operational role, as professionals within the partner organisations, but with expectations extending from gap-filler to facilitator and catalyst to advisers.
- A political role, involving lobbying and advocacy.
- An information role, geared to MS as an organisation and the Danish public.
- A cultural role related to the objective of intercultural cooperation.

The Kenya report questions the continued recruitment of DWs as practiced to date. In the spirit of genuine partnership, the time may have come to give the partners more

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options with regard to inputs by technical assistance (TA) personnel. The report suggests three options:

- Business as usual, i.e. continuation of current practice.
- A flexible mix of TA personnel, i.e. a cautious departure from current practice to broaden the recruitment of technical assistants beyond Denmark so as to achieve a different mix.
- Discontinuation of the recruitment of Danish DWs, i.e. a radical shift to dispense with the DWs altogether and use the cost savings for other purposes.

The overall conclusion, however, is that MS-Kenya has performed well in the difficult circumstances set out by the challenging political environment of the Moi era. The country programme has been flexible, dynamic and process-oriented, with constant self-reflection and self-assessment. In spite of the structural asymmetry between MS as a donor and the partner organisations as recipients, much progress has been made in developing genuine partnerships through dialogue and mutual respect. There is no doubt that MS-Kenya and its partners have something to show for themselves in terms of poverty reduction through income generation as well as service delivery. At times the output has been impressive. Still, some issues remain unresolved. Both MS-Kenya and the partner organisations have difficulties in coming to grips with the notion of intercultural cooperation. The recruitment and deployment of DWs is inextricably linked to this concept. Many DWs embody the ideals and ambitions of intercultural cooperation but their presence also often serves to reveal discrepancies between the perceived ideals and realities of equitable partnership. The positions and functions of the DWs in the widely diverse partnerships that MS-Kenya takes part in remain a contentious issue.

3.2.3 MS-Zambia

MS has been present in Zambia since 1968 and has a long history of operation in the country, initially through the Danish Volunteer Service (DVS) and later through the MSiS Programme. The MS-Zambia country programme is currently being trimmed down in terms of size and refocused in terms of activity. It now devotes attention to three major areas of intervention:

- Agricultural management at community level.
- Community based natural resource management.
- Democracy and governance at local level.

Cutting across these three areas of intervention, empowerment is an important task for the MS-Zambia programme and is seen as assisting the poor in enhancing their “well-being, awareness, participation in decision making processes, and access to and control over resources” (WAPAC in the MS-Zambia jargon).

The number of Zambian NGOs has increased since 1991, partly due to changes in the political environment that in a general way encouraged civil society organisations. Another important impetus, however, was the failure of the state to maintain and keep pace with the increasing demand for social services caused by deepening poverty and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Hence, most NGOs have been preoccupied with filling the gap created, and were supported by international donors who saw the NGO sector as more efficient than government in targeting social services at prioritised groups and communities. The gap-filling role has to a large extent been accepted by government and Zambian

an NGOs are still seen as credible alternatives to government structures in terms of efficiency and effectiveness of targeting. The main negative aspect of this arrangement is that Zambian NGOs have become very dependent on international donors. Furthermore, most Zambian NGOs are preoccupied with service delivery, at the expense of other important civil society 'watchdog' functions involving monitoring of government performance and advocacy of specific issues and causes. Relations between government and advocacy NGOs (that are easily seen as political, in a departure from the accepted welfare-oriented role of the NGOs) are strained and foreign NGOs that support local advocacy groups have to tread carefully.

MS-Zambia has to take this environment into account in the implementation of its partnership approach. While MS does not rule out support to grassroots development efforts and service delivery, the attention now is much more on awareness raising and advocacy. Reaching the poor through chains of intermediaries, however, makes it difficult to assess fully the effects of MS interventions in terms of poverty reduction. The impact on poverty, whether in terms of support to advocacy groups or service delivery organisations, will be difficult to detect, at least in the short run. However, some effects of MS support on partner organisations can be observed. Efforts at institutional or organisational development enable the partner organisations to better handle their own efforts towards poverty reduction. It is found that the overall approach of MS providing assistance to self-reliant development towards poverty reduction through partners is well-conceived. The country study reports a significant strengthening of Zambian partner organisations.

The partnership strategy and efforts at institutional development have benefited most of MS' Zambian partners. In particular, the wide participation in designing the current country programme and the policy paper for the period 2002 to 2006 was useful training and living democracy in practice. The Policy Advisory Board (PAB) is seen as an important democratic structure that the partner organisations would like to see expanded in terms of number of partner organisation representatives and strengthened in terms of a wider mandate to represent partner interests more fully in their interactions with MS. The training provided by MS to partner organisation staff is given particular mention as a valuable input, even if trained staff far too often leave the organisation that trained them for greener pastures elsewhere.

The phase-out of old partnerships has been done more efficiently by the MS-Zambia CO after the review of 2000, although many of the old partnerships did not hold any exit strategies for either partner. In many cases MS is still not able to effectively communicate the phasing-out as a matter of partnership and a consequence of the mutuality of the programme. Many partner organisations primarily see the consequences of the phasing out in financial terms and wish to delay the process as much as possible.

The experience of DWs in MS-Zambia varies considerably in relation to partners, duty station, context, job description, and others. Some DWs experience different degrees of conflict between the demands of MS policy and the requirements of their job and the expectations of their partners. They feel confronted with demands and expectations that they consider unsustainable. The situation and utility of the DW depends on at least three elements: a) sound professional qualifications, b) personal ability to encounter people, solidarity, and empathy, and c) conducive local and work conditions. These three factors can only to some degree be influenced through preparation and training and through work with the partner organisation.

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The difference between the erstwhile DVS volunteers and the present-day DWs is often conceptualised as a distinction between 'doers' or 'advisers'. In order to be an effective and meaningful adviser, however, it is often necessary to be involved to some extent in the partner organisation's activities as a 'doer', as part of the learning necessary to be an informed 'adviser', and as part of the solidarity with the members of the partner organisation.

The concept of intercultural cooperation is also in Zambia perceived as fuzzy, imprecise, and not well operationalised. None the less, it is offered as the very foundation for the partnership approach and MS' involvement. Partners and DWs indicate that they 'understand' the concept, but the many demands to prepare 'operational guidelines' indicate that the concept is understood differently, and considered by many as impracticable. Some DWs, for example, experience intercultural cooperation merely as a by-product of their work. This is so mostly for those typically in 'advisory' placements, in urban settings, in practical work situations, and in capacity building. Others experience solidarity with local people as the every-day basic element of their work. Intercultural cooperation is here experienced as a central element in mobilising and empowering the poor.

The MS-Zambia CO makes a considerable effort to create situations, arrangements and meetings that are conducive to intercultural cooperation. This may be most concretely at work in the Policy Advisory Board, as the organ that in many ways epitomises the partnership approach. Here, cultures seek to influence, to correct, and to supplement each other in a collective effort at poverty reduction.

The current MS-Zambia policy paper sets out MS' mission to be 'cross-cultural partnerships that seek to empower the poor at local level to improve their livelihood'. This attempt at integrating the two overarching objectives of MS does not resolve the issue of whether intercultural cooperation is seen as a means to achieve poverty reduction or simply as a goal in itself. The Zambia country study is unable to resolve this question. It is not clear how intercultural cooperation contributes to poverty reduction; and if it should be seen as an independent goal, it seems difficult to operationalise, implement and measure intercultural co-operation. Clear synergies between the two are difficult to detect. The Zambia country study therefore suggests that solidarity with the poor would be an adequate operational understanding of intercultural cooperation, and that this solidarity guides MS' work in terms of strengthening the capabilities of the poor, supporting their organisations, facilitating their access to resources and strengthening their struggle for more influence and power.

3.2.4 MS-Nepal

MS is one of the smaller of the international NGOs within the large, diverse and at times controversial NGO-sector in Nepal. MS' policy decisions to collaborate with Dalit and ethnic organisations and to strengthen partner representation, transparency and accountability (through the creation of a PAB) have attracted positive attention. MS-Nepal works exclusively with national and local organisations in a partnership strategy, where the placement of Danish DWs is a major component.

MS-Nepal has developed MS' two overarching policy objectives of (a) poverty reduction and (b) intercultural cooperation into a comprehensive country programme, linked to a well-defined strategic planning framework. The main thrust of this policy is well-conceived, comprising (a) the insistence that poverty is mediated through complex gender,

caste and ethnic hierarchies that pervade both the society and the state; and (b) a strategic framework emphasising geographical concentration, a strategic mix of partners (including a number of locally accountable community based organisations) in order to create synergies, and a recognition of the importance of collaboration with local institutions.

At a general level, the policy objectives driving the country programme have not yet been realised, particularly with reference to poverty reduction. This may partly be due to MS' reliance on a personnel-based mode of operation, which in itself implies a set of strengths and weaknesses, as well as on partners that may not all have been chosen on the basis of MS' strategic framework. The attention in the country programme has been on national contexts and policies on the one hand, and capacity building within the partner organisations on the other: Here the DWs have at times played an important role. These aspects of the partnership approach may have demanded a lot of attention from the country office, at the expense of looking beyond the partnership structures to focus on outputs and impacts that the partnership may be expected to produce at the level of the ultimate beneficiaries. The study finds that the monitoring and evaluation system promoted by the partnership strategy of MS-Nepal since 1997 has not been sufficiently directed at outputs and effects at the beneficiary level. The monitoring efforts did not give the partners the necessary 'warning signals' that impact at the level of the disadvantaged (beneficiaries) was less than what might have been expected.

There have been a number of unexpected and external events that have had detrimental effects on country programme policies and the strategic framework. This ambitious framework, which directed attention to the most impoverished districts in the western regions of the country and presupposed the selection of partners according to an elaborate set of criteria to achieve a strategic mix of partners and synergies between them, have had to yield to other pragmatic considerations, including the security situation. The end result is quite different from the outlook in the strategic framework, in that MS-Nepal now works with a number of small partners, many of them dispersed through the vast Western Region, with limited opportunities for synergies between them or for common mobilisation for the purposes of reaching thresholds at which they would be noticed or have to be taken into account by national and regional authorities.

A major output of the partnership programme is deemed to be organisational capacity building related to project and financial management in the partner organisations. The DWs have played an instrumental role in achieving these results. There is no question about the importance of improved capacity in these terms. The study is concerned, however, that this capacity for improved management has involved a one-way influx of Western technical policy and planning concepts and practices without sufficient accommodation of local realities involving social justice, social responsibility, leadership accountability, livelihood and environmental changes. There is a danger that partner organisations may devote too much attention and resources to maintaining the skills and capacities (and responding to the demands) created by the partnership with MS, to the detriment of local poverty-reducing outreach work and the maintenance of trust and accountability towards the local community.

Attempts to enhance transparency and representation within the partner organisations have been an important aspect of organisational development. These efforts have yielded uneven results, however, for instance with regard to sensitivity to gender issues, awareness of caste and ethnic discrimination, fair representation of service-castes and indigenous ethnic groups and so on. Changes are slow in many organisations but satisfactory

in others. The complexity and scale of the problem are indicated by the assertion that even the MS-Nepal country office itself could do better on this count.

There are still gaps between the country programme policy ambitions with regard to poverty reduction and the impact of MS-Nepal partnership strategies at the beneficiary level. The chosen strategy of capacity building and advocacy connects to livelihood issues in a more indirect manner than grassroots development and service delivery projects. Thus it may take time before a cumulative impact can be seen. This strategy may be contrasted with the more visible results on the livelihood situation of the poor of projects directed at service delivery and self-help promotion. A combined approach would have been even more beneficial. The mobilisation of group-based savings in some communities, for instance, is encouraging in its own right; a greater impact would be achieved if these activities could be linked to productive and entrepreneurial activities on the one hand and more equitable access to basic necessities on the other.

MS-Nepal has recently prepared a quite forward-looking policy on intercultural cooperation, even if more effort must go into a clarification of how the two goals of poverty reduction and intercultural collaboration interrelate. Another issue concerns the balance between initiatives to strengthen South-South co-operation and the rather overwhelming momentum of North-South cooperation (involving mostly Danes).

The most significant contributions of the DWs to capacity building and organisational development relate to project planning and administrative management (accounting, reporting, etc.). All interviewed DWs were motivated to contribute to their host/partner organisation in these terms. Furthermore, some of the current DWs engage directly with the community in roles as service providers, trainers, advisers and awareness raisers, often with positive effects on poverty reduction. But few Danish DWs hold the combination of an adequate grasp of Nepali (or any other useful vernacular), political understanding, institutional knowledge and knowledge of local-level livelihoods needed to strengthen the capacity of partner organisations in terms of impact on poverty. The question must be raised if the resources spent on DW placement could be more cost-effectively used to deploy cheaper and better qualified human resources from Nepal or from the region.

The argument remains, however, that the intercultural cooperation that the DWs represent is important in its own right and that DWs can be expected to remain cultural intermediaries and life-long ambassadors for Nepali-Danish collaboration.

3.2.5 The Training Centre for Development Cooperation

MS has maintained a training establishment at Usa River 18 km west of Arusha, Tanzania, since 1976, initially set up to cater for the training needs of the DVS. The present Training Centre for Development Co-operation (MS-TCDC) has evolved since 1992, with the creation of MSiS and the advent of the DWs. The strategy change in 1992 meant a reorientation towards a broader training programme for the East African region. Today, the training of DWs is no longer its principal activity, as reflected in the budget. The MS contribution to total turnover accounted for only 31% in 2002, down from 50 and 37% in 1999 and 2001, respectively. In 2002 the MS-TCDC received DKK 4 million from MS-Denmark, half of which was earmarked for DW training. Total turnover was USD 1.8 million – the highest ever. As a revenue-generating activity the MS-TCDC increasingly takes on consultancy assignments in Eastern and Southern Africa. Through a painful retrenchment exercise in 2002, owing to cuts in funding from Denmark, 18

employees were laid off. Thus, the current staff complement is down to 74, including the principal and the administrator who are the only Danish staff members.

The MS-TCDC is not a separate legal entity but forms part of MS-Tanzania, which was registered in 1969 as an NGO under the relevant legislation. The establishment of MS-TCDC was formalised by means of an exchange of letters with the Tanzanian authorities as an addendum to the 1969 registration. As a result, it continues to be guided by MS principles and enjoys tax-exemption privileges. If and how the new NGO law passed in 2002 will affect the MS-TCDC is unclear.

A new nine-member PAB was constituted in 2002. Five members represent partner organisations, one is a DW, and three independents are appointed by the MS-TCDC. The PAB discusses MS-related issues and contributes to policy formulation. Otherwise, it provides advice to the principal on matters pertaining to the management of the centre.

The training programme is extensive and diverse. Altogether 40 DWs took part in the African orientation and language course in 2002, stretching over four weeks. The course comprises modules such as African cultures; community adaptation; culture and development; culture and living; basic Kiswahili; conflict management; African gender relations; HIV/AIDS and development; corruption; human rights, etc. It also includes methodologies in advocacy and media relations as well as capacity-building. An excursion to the UN International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in Arusha is part of the course as well as a two-day stay with an African family. All courses focus on poverty reduction and are not designed to prepare the DWs for their operational roles as professionals. The annual reports of the DWs are copied to the MS-TCDC to provide feedback on the appropriateness of the received training. In some cases those reports lead to adjustment of the training course. A revision of the DW orientation course is in progress.

The MS-TCDC has developed an internationally accredited diploma course in development studies, certified by the Development Studies Centre in Kimmage, Ireland. It extends over one calendar year, with 16 weeks or 360 contact hours with resident instructors throughout the year. The intake is 22-24 per year, drawn from African countries, including programme officers from MS country offices but mostly from NGOs and the civil service. The great diversity of participants represents a challenge but also provides a rich source of experiences.

Apart from the orientation course for DWs and the diploma course, the MS-TCDC designs thematic and policy-related courses on demand, e.g. in NGO administration, financial and general management; community mobilisation and participation, micro-finance, outreach techniques, etc. Others are supply-driven, i.e. designed by the MS-TCDC and put on offer: policy advocacy, gender mainstreaming, children's rights, environment, monitoring and evaluation, etc. All courses are based on a practitioner's perspective. The MS-TCDC staff are not averse to the idea of designing demand-led courses in partnership, empowerment, sustainability, and how to manage a phasing-out process.

A major part of the activity profile of the MS-TCDC is made up of language courses in Kiswahili at beginner, intermediate and advanced levels. Some non-language courses have been conducted with Kiswahili as the medium of instruction to cater for community based organisations whose staff tend to be less proficient in English.

In 2002 the MS-TCDC conducted 14 scheduled NGO courses and 21 language courses, with a total number of 352 participants. Individual trainees are endorsed by their respective sponsor organisations with a view to buttressing their organisational development. The cost is normally borne by the sponsoring organisation but the MS-TCDC has set aside USD 80,000 per year for scholarships as a separate budget item. The scholarships typically cover 50-70% of the full cost; the balance is met by the sponsoring organisation or by the trainees themselves. Two tracer studies have been undertaken but more needs to be done to assess systematically what impact the courses actually have on performance. For this purpose a particular tool has been developed: Training Assessment Before and Later (TABAL).

Apart from running its own kindergarten for children of its staff and course participants, the MS-TCDC conducts courses in children's rights. A special type of activity is the open policy workshops on selected issues such as globalisation, decentralisation, capacity-building, and non-formal (civic) education. In addition, the centre has hosted several international conferences and workshops. Without marketing, word has spread that conference facilities are available at competitive rates. The hotels in the area are not pleased and complain that the MS-TCDC is subsidised. Hence, the no marketing policy is deliberate.

3.3 Overall assessment and main issues

3.3.1 Assessment

The MSiS Review 2000 represents an impressively thorough analysis and appraisal of MS development-oriented efforts. The critical scrutiny of virtually all aspects of the programme is the foundation for the many recommendations offered, some of which are quite detailed. It should be recognised that MS has worked intensively with the issues raised in the MSiS Review 2000 and has accepted much of the criticism in the same positive and constructive spirit as it was offered. Many recommendations from the review have found their way into a new policy document (*Solidarity through Partnership*) and are the background for a number of reforms in the way MS handles and implements the MSiS programme. Consonant with established MS tradition, a considerable number of papers and documents have been produced as part of this process. They include papers on intercultural cooperation, on monitoring and evaluation, on partnerships, and on the role of DWs. Initiatives and efforts put in place by MS to internalise and act on the review and its recommendations have, however, been adversely affected by the recent decision by the Danish Government to reduce its contribution to the MS budget.

The three country studies of this Evaluation have all found that progress has been made in several areas. A process of conceptual refinement and rethinking on central issues like the content of and relationship between MS' dual objectives of poverty reduction and intercultural cooperation has been set in train. The main building blocks of MS operations, like the partnership approach, organisational development and capacity building are the subject of operational guidelines that will be continuously updated. Potentially difficult issues like the mutuality of the MSiS programme, the situation and position of the country-specific PAB, equitable partnership and increased South-South interactions have also been put on the agenda.

A notable feature of all the three country studies is that MS enjoys a reputation as an organisation that takes partnership seriously and actively works to overcome the many structural impediments to equitable partnership between a comparatively large, rich and powerful Northern organisation like MS and comparatively small, poor and insignificant local partners in the South that often represent the poorest and least powerful segments of society. The creation of the PABs may be taken as a case in point, as is the cumulative experience that PABs in fact are influential bodies, not only in local and parochial matters, but also in matters that affect MS as a whole. The PABs are not in fact fully democratic decision-making bodies responsible to their constituencies (only a third of the seats are assigned to partner representation, with another third assigned to the DWs and the final third of the seats to independent, appointed resource persons) but advisory bodies whose deliberations feed into a larger decision-making process. But the active involvement of the respective PABs in the preparation of the current country policy papers was noted as highly participatory, democratic and significant exercises that gave the PABs real influence. The country studies all sound a note of warning, though, that one should not depend on occasional events (like the periodic policy papers) or crises (like the 2002 budget cuts) to vitalise the PABs. Active participation and continued interest from the PABs in the unfolding of MS country programmes will depend on continuously challenging the PABs with real problems, interesting tasks and allowing them true influence.

The country studies hold generally positive views on the PABs and their functions and the promise they hold for more equitable partnership, as an arena for concrete intercultural cooperation and as an opportunity to increase the voice, influence and ownership of the South in a programme that is largely funded from the North. There are still issues, however, that remain unresolved. As indicated above, most of these issues have been identified in the MSiS Review 2000 and are being handled in various ways by MS at various levels in the organisation. The following points emphasise those issues that the country studies found to be prominent in the country programmes examined. They include (a) the issue of intercultural cooperation, (b) the impact on poverty, (c) the role of Danish DWs, (d) the mutuality problem, (e) the status of the South and the lack of sufficient South-South synergies in the programme, (f) monitoring and evaluation, and (g) organisational capacity.

3.3.2 Intercultural cooperation

The country studies from both Kenya and Nepal make the point quite strongly that the notion of intercultural cooperation remains conceptually fuzzy and has not yet been sufficiently concretised for practical application of the concept. The reports are quite clear that the partner organisations in particular, but also to some extent the DWs, are in disarray over the concept. Intercultural cooperation is often seen as some kind of loosely defined means to the end of poverty reduction, on the somewhat naïve assumption that the views, values and perspectives from two different cultures will facilitate problem solving and the implementation of specific project activities. At other times, intercultural cooperation is perceived as an end in itself and that there is some intrinsic value in bringing together the views, values and perspectives from different cultures in contexts defined by specific problems or tasks. A particularly crass view of intercultural cooperation is reflected in the MSiS Review where it is reported that partners accept intercultural exchange (as it was known at the time) as 'something that MS wants' (p.46) and something which at best is irrelevant to the real task at hand (poverty reduction) or at worst may be seen as an inevitable and burdensome condition imposed on an otherwise valuable and desirable

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partnership. The MSiS Review recommended strongly that MS needed to define and clarify the concept and link it to MS' other main objective of poverty reduction and the cross-cutting operational principles that characterise the MSiS programme.

A particularly important point raised by the Review concerns the relationship of intercultural exchange to the mutuality of the MSiS programme: MS works hard to avoid the polarity of Northern 'donors' and Southern 'beneficiaries'. The notion of cooperation, exchange, sharing common experiences and achieving mutual gain may be seen as deeply embedded in its history and ideology. In this context, the idea that intercultural cooperation really involves the extension of aspects of Danish culture and various sub-sets of Danish values to peoples and societies that are organised differently would be particularly abhorrent. But such a crude and misleading understanding could easily remain as the 'default option' unless the concept of intercultural cooperation is clearly defined and charged with the significance that MS actually intends it to have. The best way to avoid the crude interpretation above is a clear demonstration of what MS as a Northern partner receives in return in these relations of cooperation and exchange. The MSiS Review urged MS to adopt this perspective and to develop the concept in relation to other key issues in the MSiS programme, including the role and function of DWs, the role of partner organisations in policy formulation and decision-making, encouragement of South-South cooperation (including cultural exchange between cultures of the South) and a truly global perspective on the subject matter and intended audiences of MS' information efforts.

MS has responded to the recommendations of the MSiS Review and a number of draft papers have been produced both by MS-DK and in the context of various country programming exercises and country policy papers. The last draft document produced by MS-DK, however, was rejected at the Annual Policy Meeting 2003 for being too academic in its outlook and for being dominated by Northern concerns. In the view of the Evaluation, the main reason for the difficulties experienced in this process is that MS, to a large extent, has chosen to make intercultural cooperation an integral part of an argument in favour of maintaining personnel assistance as a key modality of cooperation within the MSiS programme. Intercultural cooperation thus becomes the justification for DW placement, at the same time as the DWs have difficulties in pointing to anything beyond their own presence as the substance of intercultural cooperation.

The Nepal country study argues that MS, at least in Nepal, has adopted a rather narrow and restricted sectoral understanding of culture (as one of several sectors of society) and hence placed intercultural cooperation within the confines of the cultural sector so understood. This has prevented the organisation from seeing that intercultural communication and learning are necessarily embedded in any form of collaboration across cultural and social boundaries. The study asserts for instance, that the notion of intercultural cooperation is absent in the creation of partnerships between MS and local partner organisations and the subsequent tasks of capacity building and organisational development, which involve:

"A massive and lop-sided socialization process in which the organisations are expected to understand and internalise basic values, notions and practical management skills, wrapped in rather abstract ideas and a highly technical policy and planning language."

The problems involved in intercultural cooperation are further illustrated by a discussion of goal-oriented management models adopted by MS in the conduct of its business, both in Denmark and abroad. These are models that stem from Western business man-

agement and decision-making theory. It is argued that these models fail to accommodate important concerns in Nepali society and that they therefore hinder rather than foster communication and cooperation across social and cultural boundaries.

The other two country studies are less strident in their discussion and criticism of the concept of intercultural cooperation, but both studies found that the stakeholders, such as the representatives of the partner organisations, members of the PAB and the DWs themselves were largely confused over what intercultural cooperation actually implies, either as a means to the end of poverty reduction or as an objective in its own right. The view that intercultural cooperation was merely a spin-off of other efforts was common. The Zambia study prefers to see it as an aspect of solidarity, but without any elaboration beyond this echo of the main MS policy document entitled '*Solidarity through Partnership*'. Perhaps the view that should give most cause for worry, however, is the attitude that intercultural cooperation is mere window-dressing for other, more substantial aspects of MS' work, something which distracts from the 'real' business at hand and serves to disguise the realities of the partnerships that MS is involved in. This view challenges MS' integrity and must be countered as soon as possible with the clarifications that have been lacking since the MSiS review.

3.3.3 The impact on poverty

The second main objective of MSiS is poverty reduction, which is the shared motivation underlying all of MS' partnerships with organisations in the South. The MSiS programme does not offer much scope for direct intervention and direct implementation by MS of pro-poor initiatives, but has made the strategic choice to rely on partner organisations in this regard. MSiS has entered into partnership with organisations that may be divided into organisations involved in advocacy and political lobbying on behalf of the poor, or organisations that are involved in direct grassroots development work and service delivery, often filling gaps in government services. Whether the advocacy or the gap-filling strategy is likely to produce the greatest impact on the livelihood situation of the poor is a moot point; what should be noted here is that MSiS depends on the performance of its partners for whatever impact in terms of poverty reduction that it can be expected to show for itself. Even so, there seems to be a noticeable shift, particularly in Kenya and in Zambia, in the direction towards increased attention to the advocacy-based partnerships.

The country studies point out that the respective MS country programmes have developed strategies and policies that put organisational development and capacity building in the partner organisations at the centre of attention. The policy instruments and means of intervention available to MS are geared to these tasks and MS must obviously be preoccupied with outputs and effects at this level. The country studies indicate that MS has been generally successful in these aspects of its partnership approach and has in fact contributed significantly to increased capacity and improved performance in the partner organisations. The Zambia study actually points to these accomplishments as the main achievement of the country programme. The Nepal study is more equivocal in its assessment of the success of capacity building and imparting new skills to the partner organisations. The efforts have certainly been successful at the level of the partner organisations and particularly in terms of interactions between MS-Nepal and the partner organisations. The efforts are judged to have been less successful in terms of improving the quality of interactions between the partner organisation and its membership or other ultimate beneficiaries.

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All three country studies make the point that since MS addresses poverty in indirect ways and through several layers of intermediaries, it becomes difficult to assess the impact that MS has had on poverty. The Nepal study is quite clear that the MS country programme has given too much emphasis and attention to the implementation of the MSiS programme at the level of the partner organisations, to the detriment of tracking the effects of the partnership approach on the livelihoods of the ultimate beneficiaries. The Nepal study is dissatisfied with the level of outreach to the beneficiary level and finds little to report in terms of impact on poverty.

The Kenya study is most confident of the three that:

“There is no doubt that MS-Kenya and its partners have something to show for themselves in terms of poverty reduction through income-generation and service delivery. In some cases the output has been impressive, given adverse circumstances. The partnership arrangements have contributed to those achievements. Given the lack of systematic baseline studies, however, the evaluation team has had no basis for measuring the results in quantitative terms (p.iii).”

The Zambia study also discusses MS partnership strategy in terms of impact on poverty and particularly to how the problem of attribution becomes particularly difficult in such situations:

MS takes a rather indirect approach to poverty reduction, which can also only be judged by its indirect results. Still, in visiting partner organisations the Team did come across clear indications of results, some more directly visible and even measurable, other only indirectly indicating success or lack of effects on the poverty situation and the WAPAC of the poor. (p.32)

The MSiS Review was critical of the way MS handled the objective of poverty reduction in its programmes, pointing to a lack of analytical capacity and conceptual clarification of poverty issues, a lack of well-developed guidelines for the implementation of poverty reduction at all levels, a lack of institutional memory and lacking institutionalisation of a poverty orientation. Given the high priority of poverty reduction as an overarching objective of the MSiS programme, the Review expressed considerable concern that poverty reduction had not been routinised in MS programming and implementation practices. Since then, MS has put in a considerable effort to improve on the situation, both at the level of the country programmes and centrally. All of these initiatives and efforts have yet to come to fruition and immediate changes in terms of outputs and effects cannot be expected. In view of the mixed findings of the country studies, one should bear in mind the comparatively short period since the MSiS Review was undertaken.

3.3.4 The role of DWs

The MSiS programme is closely associated with the placement of DWs in partner organisations and, as was pointed out in the MSiS Review, DWs are important to the ‘corporate identity’ of MS and the kind of partnership it has to offer. MS has made a conscious choice to retain DWs and the profile of personnel-based development co-operation. The MSiS Review supported this and recommended that the role of the DWs should be revisited by MS in order to utilise the DWs as a central instrument for MSiS policies of partnership. MS has followed this advice and the new MSiS policy paper emphasises the importance of the DWs in terms of the partnership approach and for achieving the goals of intercultural cooperation and poverty reduction. These are not

uncontroversial decisions in the general context of development assistance strategies, where personnel-based approaches are becoming increasingly rare and are increasingly seen as outmoded models for development cooperation. Thus since the late 1980s, a number of reports and studies on the effectiveness of technical assistance personnel have clearly indicated that their use and deployment are driven more by donors than demands from partners (e.g. a recent report (2001) for Danida on *“Advisers in Danish Bilateral Development Co-operation”*), and that the impact in general does not stand in any favourable relation to their cost.

The DWs occupy a central role in the respective country programmes and at the level of partner organisations. Not unexpectedly, the field studies reveal that some DWs do extremely well, others satisfactorily, while yet others largely fail to make an impact. This is not surprising in view of the complexity of the roles that the DWs are expected to fill. Many find themselves in ambiguous situations. Candidates apply for DW jobs because they possess certain professional qualifications that they believe are important. The reality of many DW placements put greater emphasis on the roles as facilitators and advisers and with a concern for awareness raising and advocacy rather than the delivery of services. None the less, many DWs may be involved in a directly operational role within a partner organisation, filling a gap within the organisation. In the Zambia study it is reported that circumstances require the DWs to be ‘doers’, for instance by involving themselves directly in service delivery. The study observes that DWs may actually become better ‘advisers’ by also engaging in the role of ‘doers’. The Kenya study also recognises that the realities on the ground, i.e. within a particular partner organisation, may be such that a certain measure of gap-filling may be inevitable.

All three studies are able to report positively on instances where DWs have involved themselves directly as ‘doers’, without delving very deeply into considerations that have to do with sustainability and dependence or other factors that militate against such direct involvement. But the tendency is for DWs to be attached to partner organisations as facilitators, or advisers, with operational responsibilities directed at capacity building and organisational development rather than gap-filling in service delivery operations. There are many instances where DWs have contributed to the creation of effective organisations that offer services that are important to the livelihood of the beneficiaries, or that engage in advocacy and political lobbying work that actually bring benefits to local people. The Kamiya project in Nepal and the OSILIGI project in Kenya are both important cases in point.

The country studies, and the MSiS Review before them, all point to the difficulties of generalising about the performance of DWs. Qualifications and professional background are important preconditions, as are the organisational and partnership contexts in which they are placed. But successful placements all seem to depend more on the personal qualities of the individuals than on professional qualifications or the formal job descriptions that the DWs are supposed to fill.

It is important to note that MS’ partnership approach is largely predicated on the placement of DWs. There is more variation than used to be the case, with increasingly frequent options for partner organisations to share a DW, or hosting a DW for shorter periods of time. None the less, a partnership without an active DW component is a rare option, fundamentally because the placement of DWs seems to be so closely associated with the objective of intercultural cooperation.

During 2002, well over 60% of MSiS expenditures in the partnership programmes were related to the selection, training and deployment of DWs. 28% was spent on organisational development, including training, monitoring and evaluation, and less than 10% was spent on other material support to partner organisations. Additionally, it is argued that a disproportionate part of the capacity of the COs actually goes to support and provide various services to the DWs. A partnership between MS and a local partner organisation normally involves the placement of a DW and most of the resources available for the partnerships are tied to DWs. Arguments come across in the country studies, in particular from Kenya and Nepal, that partner organisations are growing increasingly aware of the dilemmas involved in DW placement. Questions are being raised with regard to the competence of the DWs, in general social terms as well as in more narrow professional terms, about 'ownership' and lines of responsibility (does the DW ultimately answer to the partner organisation or to MS?), about equity and about power. The issue of cost effectiveness has also been raised and has not yet been satisfactorily answered. Danish DWs are expensive and there may be alternative ways of spending the resources they require. The Nepal country report in particular argues strongly that Nepali DWs or DWs from the region could fill the functions of Danish DWs much more cheaply and probably more competently – in particular if social and cultural competence is given the weight it should have in placements that focus on advocacy and the engendering of social processes.

There is an apparent contradiction between an emphasis on partnership, mutuality and equity, on the one hand, and the conditionality implied by the fact of MS' preoccupation with personnel assistance on the other. It may be argued that genuine partnerships require that the partner organisations should be entitled to make choices whether or not the resources set aside for the partnership relationship should be used for a DW or for other purposes that may be deemed more important. In addition, the strategy of intercultural cooperation through the deployment of Danish DWs faces problems of legitimacy in a globalised world with increasing mobility of people and increasingly dense networks of meaning and information. Under these rapidly changing circumstances, continued efforts and resources to legitimate personnel inputs from the North to the South can easily be seen as an expression of "a lack of creativity" or as a "failure to adjust to a changing world". Such efforts do not only neglect other ways one can work with intercultural cooperation, creating networks between North and South, South-South linkages, and enhancing knowledge and interest for development problems. Many will also argue that they reflect the ways in which images of a superior Western self are manifested in development activities in the South.

These interpretations and possible implications are no doubt anathema to MS as an organisation and run counter to its self-perception and its role in Danish society. But there is no doubt a number of ambiguities in the notion that DWs should be the main instrument for MSiS policies and the lynch-pin of MS partnerships with partner organisations in the South. The MSiS Review raised several of the issues discussed above and cautioned that MS should re-examine the way DW placement could be used in the partnerships, to exercise greater flexibility in meeting the diverse needs of partner organisations. The Kenya country study in particular echoes these concerns. MS has in its follow-up to the Review reaffirmed its views on the crucial importance of DWs to the attainment of MSiS objectives.

The obvious riposte to the criticism that has been directed at MS' personnel-based partnership strategy is that MS must bring to the partnership concepts and resources that

MS finds useful, which happens to be DWs. Southern organisations that do not find MS' concepts useful should of course not develop any partnership with MS. This is well and good, but as long as MSiS is supported by public funds, the utility, effectiveness and efficiency of the personnel-based model applied by MS must be supported by evidence that is independent of MS' own ideology. First and foremost, the personnel-based model must demonstrate comparative advantage over other assistance and partnership strategies in terms of impact on poverty.

3.3.5 Mutuality

There is a strong commitment in MS to partnership with local organisations as the general framework for achieving the two overarching objectives of MSiS. MS is given credit in the country studies for its genuine commitment to develop partnerships. It is important to note that MS and the local partner organisation usually come into the partnership from two very different vantage points in terms of skills, capacities, knowledge, power and financial resources. There can also be no doubt that MS virtually by definition comes into the partnership as the dominant partner, right down to the power to initiate the partnership in the first place. MS also holds the skills and resources to define the content and format of the partnership, at least in the initial stages. Hence, partnerships are rarely equal and it must be accepted that they will remain unequal for as long as the partnership involves transfers of resources from MS (in the form of DW, training opportunities, network contacts and other material resources) and for as long as MS is charged with the supervision of how funds from the public (Danish) purse are spent. The controller functions that MS is obliged to assume in the partnership relationship underline the unequal position of the two partners.

The country studies show that the notion of partnership is complex and that ideals of equity and shared commitment to a set of common goals can only be achieved through a process characterised by continuous communication, transparency and mutual accountability. The three studies report that partners appreciate that MS is much more genuinely committed to sustaining this process towards greater equity in the partnership relationship than other international NGOs. None the less, a fully equitable partnership is elusive. MS actively avoids being seen as a donor, but is still the source of considerable material support to many partner organisations. The placement of DWs in partner organisations and the responsibilities that MS in fact has for their welfare remains a difficult topic. MS at both country and headquarter level, are aware of the tensions involved from time to time in the unfolding of a partnership between quite unequal partners and MS as an organisation has in fact achieved a reputation for actively working to attenuate potential conflicts.

MSiS is sometimes criticised for being dominated by Northern concerns and that the scope and programme agenda are defined in Copenhagen rather than within the respective country programmes or partnerships. However, with the creation and active use of the PAB, a deliberate effort has been made to give the Southern partners a voice and to include the views and perspectives of the South in MS policies and practices. The country studies from Zambia, in particular, and Kenya emphasise the positive contributions of the PABs in the recent policy formulation exercises. Both the Zambia and Nepal studies raise the point that the PABs could be made more democratic (and "Southern") by increasing the proportion of partner organisation representation.

Notwithstanding the PABs and the opportunities offered for Southern partners to give expression to their concerns, the issue of mutuality concerns other aspects of the MSiS

as well, perhaps most notably the question of intercultural cooperation and the placement of DWs. Is it conceivable, in the spirit of mutuality, for partner representatives or members of a PAB to engage in intercultural cooperation with staff members of MS-DK, bringing to bear on the routines and practices of the headquarters the views and values of a culture from the South? With regard to the placement of DWs, for instance, and other exchange programmes, the Nepal study is quite critical of the seemingly implicit assumption that intercultural cooperation and exchange involves a one-way relationship, from the North to the South. The MSiS Review also made this point strongly.

3.3.6 South-South synergies

An extension of the North to South perspective that allegedly has come to underlie the MSiS programme is a lack of attention to what the South has to offer, either in a relationship of mutuality with partners in the North, or in terms of solidarity and commonality of interest between organisations in the South. The topic is not very well developed in the country studies and primarily concerns the possible placement of DWs recruited locally or in the region (as discussed in the Nepal report) and the notion that intercultural cooperation may be organised as much along a South-South dimension as in the existing North-South alignment.

There seems to be an argument that the positive qualities and possible contributions of the South are still largely neglected in the MSiS programme. It is difficult to assess to what extent this is true. The whole idea of intercultural cooperation seems to be founded on an assumption that all cultures have something to contribute and something to learn. But to the extent that MSiS is largely a matter of transfer of personnel and resources from the North to the South, there seems to be little space, conceptually and in practical terms, for any transfer from the South to the North, or indeed between countries and societies in the South.

3.3.7 Monitoring and evaluation

At the moment, there are various ways by which MSiS activities are monitored and evaluated:

- Written reports on activities (partner reports, DW reports, semi-annual and annual reports from the country programmes).
- Annual partner review workshops.
- Country programme reviews.
- “Most Significant Changes” (MSC) approach.
- Programme Development Indicators which are meant to identify results on programme level.

While the first three instruments are in place, but only to a limited extent measure outputs and effects, the last two are under way. However, MS has struggled to introduce the Most Significant Changes approach in the programme countries. Basically, the MSC approach is a participatory tool for continuous monitoring and evaluation. It is meant to partly replace the Logical Framework Approach which has not worked well, and in particular to supplement its monitoring functions. With MSC you simply ask people to identify positive or negative changes observed over a period of time within a given domain of interest. The same people are asked about which change they find is the most

important, and why they have chosen it as the most significant change. The outcome of the exercise will be a number of recorded “stories” about change.

However simple, participatory, demystifying and well-suited the MSC approach may look for an NGO like MS, it still involves careful planning and it clearly has its limitations. To get started MS developed a set of guidelines to guide the story-telling as dialogues around the three “domains” of MS’ mandate, i.e. poverty reduction, intercultural cooperation, and organisational performance. But several issues remain which a guide cannot solve. For example, the practical issue of sampling: Who is to tell their story about significant changes regarding the three domains? Who will facilitate the dialogue and verify the stories? How will prioritisation of the most significant change stories be facilitated? Who will record the information and how will the information be used and by whom? And in addition, what is a story? Is a statement a story? Decisions must be made on these and other issues before starting.

MS is aware of these difficulties and has already learned many lessons from pilot testing the MSC approach, one of them being that it is only partly participatory, another that training on MSC use is obviously required. While the data collected and insights gained through MSC can feed well into an evaluation, a recognised limitation is that the MSC is not suited as a stand-alone approach for ex-post, objectives-based evaluation.

In all three countries, it seems that the quality of the monitoring and evaluation systems varies considerably from one organisation to the next. As described in the Kenya study, indicators are often vague and some of them refer to activities rather than output or outcome. Still others do not try to distinguish the effects of activities attributable to MS-Kenya and its partners from those of others active in a given area. Generally, the lack of good baselines further compounds the matter.

3.3.8 Organisational capacity

According to the 1995 “Review of the MS Capacity to carry out MSiS”, the expertise of the International Department of MS is geared towards the priority functions of a volunteer programme (which is handled very competently) and there is a scarcity of personnel with the relevant and necessary qualifications to handle the professional challenges of MSiS. Similar views were expressed in the MSiS Review 2000, where it is argued that the administrative structure of MS in Denmark should be assessed with respect to its capacity to operationalise MSiS to its full potential. The failure to produce user-friendly operational guidelines for policy, problems in maintaining policy coherence across administrative boundaries, decision-making driven by internal Northern MS values and considerations, have, according to the review, undermined the effectiveness of the MSiS strategy.

There is little doubt that some problems remain in this area and that the International Department, which administers MSiS, suffers from having only four professional staff (including its Director) to manage the large programme from Copenhagen. It is an important finding, however, that the country and regional offices have both directors and other staff as well as many PAB members who are highly competent in many areas (see Chapter 5). MS, therefore, should be encouraged to promote improved synergies between the International Department and the country and regional offices, in order to address the above issues.

4. Development Education and Public Information

4.1 Introduction

As stated in Chapter 1, MS has carried out a comprehensive programme of public information and development education since 1948, using many different types of media. At the moment, approximately 40% of this work is funded over Danida's Information Appropriation (DKK 5.3 million in 2003). The agreement covers the following areas: (1) the so-called "konsulenttjenesten" (working group of communications consultants); (2) library services; (3) the magazines *Kontakt* and *ZAPP*; (4) electronical media; and (5) printed products. In addition, funds can be used for appraisal studies, promotion, marketing and evaluations.

Studies or reviews relating to this important area of MS' agenda have been few, the most important being an Evaluation of Danida's Information Appropriation (1998) focusing mainly on the advantages and disadvantages of MS' framework agreement with Danida. It was, therefore, decided, as part of this Evaluation, to consider the assistance provided by MS targeting enhanced development education in Danish schools, with an emphasis on issues related to efficiency, effectiveness, relevance, impact and sustainability.

In this chapter, no attempt will be made to account for the great diversity of activities in the MS portfolio on public information. Suffice it here to say that MS is a major Danish actor in this area, and that further information is available on MS' own web page (ms.dk). Rather, a summary of the Evaluation of MS' efforts specifically within the area of support to development education in the Danish school system will be presented, followed by a brief review of some other issues that have emerged during the evaluation process.

4.2 Development education

4.2.1 MS' strategic approach to development education

MS aims at promoting education and development as an overall theme in its Global Action Plan for 2003-04. While maintaining a focus and priority on education activities in the South, development education activities in Denmark and the South will be linked.

MS' strategy on development education in Denmark is based on the preconditions (1) that it is possible to integrate development education into various subjects at all levels of the education system; (2) that development education can be addressed through cross-curricular activities; and (3) that new, more critical pedagogical methods can be applied. MS furthermore anticipates that the ability of teachers' to integrate development education into existing subjects and to work on a cross-curricular basis is the main challenge.

MS has concluded that information activities in the future have to be more focused and differentiated, because the current acceleration of information generation leads to increased competition for the attention of target groups. From the traditional focus on grade 7-10, MS' support to development education has in recent years diversified into upper secondary and adult level.

4.2.2 The Danish education system as framework and users

At policy level, the Primary Education Act of 1993 and the Executive Order for the “Gymnasium” are found to provide for inclusion of global and green issues and problem oriented, cross-curricular based learning, which are the main themes in MS’ approach to development education. A number of references to e.g. green issues and cross-curricular based learning has, however, been removed in the *Clear Objectives* (“*Klare Mål*”) formulated by the Ministry of Education. *At strategic level*, decentralisation and sharper focus on quality assurance have over the last years led to a movement from planning to documentation of learning achievements and increased focus on subject specific, measurable knowledge, clear objectives and a ‘one subject-one teacher-one class’ approach to learning. This development affects inclusion of development issues in the Danish school system as decreasing number of factors facilitate cross-curricular learning. Furthermore, schools are presently occupied with learning that can be – and is – measured in national and international evaluations. This adversely affects the inclusion of broader competence areas – such as development issues – which are not centrally placed in the curricula. When specific curricular references to development issues are indeed made, then it is primarily in subjects, which – especially in the primary school system – have been given a low allocation of teaching hours.

4.2.3 Approach and methodology

The study applied a reflexive approach by searching for stakeholder perceptions of relevant criteria for formulating alternative perspectives on MS’ involvement in development education. MS’ declared objective for development education is to achieve “global and international action competencies”, which is also reflecting overall aims expressed in the Primary Education Act of 1993 on preparing pupils to understand and act in a democratic society. The concept *action competence* and its subsidiary elements of *knowledge/insight*, *commitment*, *visions and action experiences* were therefore applied as the main criteria for the study.

It is appreciated that most MS material has been developed as reflections of aims, standards and legislative framework stipulated in the Act of 1993. However, as the education sector in recent years has undergone a number of changes, MS material will be analysed in the context of the current status and foreseeable trends in the education sector. This choice has been made to avoid that findings become retrospective, but rather related to new developments.

4.2.4 Efficiency of MS’ support to development education

The study concludes that MS’ material generally is characterised by high quality layout and good combinations of media. The editorial profile of the reviewed material, e.g. selection of themes and case stories, together with the modern layout and innovative use of media, facilitates motivation on the part of the reader. Many of the themes are rather complex and the sub-study suggests that the reviewed material does not fully support generation of deeper understanding of complex development dynamics. General interpretations and conclusions are based on isolated case stories.

Distribution of MS material primarily takes place through county centres and school libraries and the marketing of the material is found adequate. The actual use of the material, however, does not seem to fully reflect the otherwise good marketing of the material. There may be many factors outside the influence of MS causing this, e.g. crowded

curricula and increased focus on traditional subjects such as mathematics and (Danish) language. Reduced school budgets for purchase of education materials also constitute an important factor as the school budgets for purchase of education materials in Denmark have been reduced from 6 % of the total budget in 1980 to 2% in 2003. Finally, MS is also facing competition from many other organisations and government institutions, which are trying to persuade teachers to adopt extra-curricular subjects. Given this context, it is recommended that MS utilises its core competence in material design and development by further focusing its production. Otherwise, there may be a risk that the organisation will produce too much material of a general nature at the expense of producing material reflecting curricular requirements for selected subjects.

4.2.5 Effectiveness of MS' support to development education

The perception of teachers and pupils has been analysed through two sub-studies. Generally, the pupils find the layout and contents of the material interesting and are motivated to work with the thematic issues presented in the material. They also appreciate the perspectives and normative statements presented (through cases) in the material, but do have problems in associating themselves with the actions proposed by MS in the material. The teachers do to a high extent share the pupils' appreciation that the layout and choice of themes facilitate motivation, but have mixed opinions on whether the material provides enough knowledge about underlying causes. Although the material has the potential for motivating and actively engaging the pupils, the teachers generally find that the knowledge dimension has not been adequately addressed, which is one of the main criteria in the education system.

The material may be considered as a worthy point of departure for young people to involve themselves in global problems. As teaching material, it is of importance that MS revisits its concept, and especially takes into consideration both the curricular requirements and the time-constraints in the everyday school life. The curricular requirements, especially at high school level, focus on the inclusion of empirical data as well as the pupils' ability to critically assess different sources of information and the world-views presented by different sources. MS may therefore consider adding more empirical information (e.g. of popular scientific nature where applicable) to complement the existing themes; to make it clear what information is normative and what is empirical; to complement the normative articles with different generic explanatory models for development problems or with articles (or internet-links), which represent other perspectives than those of MS. The findings furthermore suggest that MS – although it may reduce its income generating activities – may enhance its present efforts on IT material, as this – especially at high school level – is the preferred media by both pupils and teachers. Finally, the teachers find that the material can not “stand alone” and the studies suggest that use of the material would be facilitated by ensuring that it would reflect, to a higher extent, curricular requirements, and be supported by learning “tools” enabling the teachers to use it.

4.2.6 Relevance of MS' strategic approach to development education

Based on analysis of whether MS' strategy adequately takes external factors into account, MS' strategy on integration of development education into several subjects and into cross-curricular activities is found to be very relevant according to the intentions of the Primary Education Act of 1993 and the Executive Order for the Gymnasium. This is, however, being undermined by the consequences deriving from the formulation of

“*Clear Objectives*”, decentralisation and the increased focus on quality assurance accompanied by increased focus on measurable core competencies.

MS’ material for development education can be seen in light of the general information activities carried out by MS and does only to a certain extent reflect curricular requirements for targeted subjects. While this may facilitate flexible use of the material in multiple settings, it may also be at the expense of providing material which is easily used by the teacher. MS has very appropriately concluded that information activities in the future need to be more focused and differentiated. MS has diversified into other parts of the Danish education system and has to strike a balance between diversification into different parts of the education system and focused differentiation of material in order not to stretch its scarce resources too thinly.

MS’ publishing department also has to maintain a balance between priorities given to material with a high profile on MS positions – for the sake of increasing the knowledge about the organisation – and dilution of this profile so as to meet requirements in the Danish education sector.

MS’ assumption about teachers being qualified to use the material is questionable, as a rather limited number of teachers have formal qualifications or participate in teacher courses on development education. MS may therefore, in addition to its existing support extended e.g. through EVAM, consider developing a strategy for broader support structure (see 4.2.8.).

4.2.7 Impact and sustainability of MS’ support to development education

The impact from use of MS material in the primary school has also been analysed through a separate sub-study. Pupils generally found that the layout and content of the reviewed MS material were interesting. Both commitment and insight into the actual theme covered by the material were achieved. However, teachers found that deeper insight into the underlying structures and complex interrelations presented in the material was not fully achieved.

At the Gymnasium level, the sub-study on use of MS material at upper secondary level also suggests that the layout and content of the reviewed MS material were found appealing and that pupils felt that insight and commitment were achieved, while vision and action experience were only partly achieved. The teachers had mixed opinions on this, as several found that appropriate insight into complex interrelations had not been achieved. The teachers furthermore found that considerable planning and compilation of additional material has to be done by the teachers in order to ensure that curricular requirements were met.

This difference in perception of impact reflects the present challenge of popular vs. curricular approach to learning. Pupils are influenced by popular culture and may perceive learning differently from teachers, who mostly are embedded in a curricular culture, where the school is seen as the arena for ensuring appropriate learning according to curricular standards.

A general conclusion from both the primary school and the Gymnasium is that the MS material was found particularly to have an impact in connection with project work. Project work is also a formal examination requirement at both levels. MS may therefore

consider further producing material – printed and web-based – to be used for project work. The sub-studies also suggest that impact was particularly achieved in learning situations, where the teacher carried a personal commitment and interest in the subject. MS may therefore consider enhancing its training and informational activities specifically targeting teachers.

Support structures required for achieving higher level of sustainability were also analysed. Given the present situation where (a) there are no clear definitions of key competencies connected to development education, (b) only limited support to teachers to develop their teaching in this area and (c) decentralised decisions are made on scope of teaching and purchase of material, it is recommended that MS considers reinforcing relations to the following key gatekeepers in order to enhance impact and sustainability:

- The Government and Ministry of Education – when it comes to discussing the role of global issues on the educational system's agenda – where it is important that MS reinforces its communication with key actors.
- The counties' and municipalities' councils – when it comes to distributing educational material – where it is important that MS enhances its linkages to the councils.
- School librarians – when it comes to informing and distributing educational materials to the teachers and pupils – where MS should focus on not only maintaining contact to the school librarians but also work towards ensuring that information reaches other fora inside the schools.
- Teachers in the MS school network – when it comes to paying attention to and eventually carrying educational material into the classrooms – where MS should seek to optimise the scarce resources made available for teacher courses.
- Pupils' councils – when it comes to carrying campaigns into schools and spreading MS information in the school system.

4.2.8 Main themes and lessons learned

Many of the themes discussed in the report represent dilemmas calling for MS' clarification of its priorities.

Firstly, MS has to strike a balance between profiling of MS messages and dilution of its normative position in order to adapt to the school system. *Secondly*, MS must also find a balance between the rather idealised aims expressed in the policy aims for the Danish education and the actual situation characterised by new public management thinking in the schools. *Thirdly*, MS will have to find a balance between pursuing a popular-oriented approach aimed at getting in contact with the pupils in order to enhance their motivation, and a curricular-oriented approach aimed at fulfilling learning requirements expressed in school curricula. *Finally*, MS presently plays an important role as external actor in trying to influence the education system to incorporate development education in its learning activities. While it may be required of MS to stay outside in order to get inside, MS is currently primarily interpreting its external position as being best served by primarily focusing on producing material, training teachers and to a certain extent implementing advocacy activities at the political level.

In light of the above dilemmas and in order to improve its support to development education in the school system, it is proposed that MS redefine its position as an external actor by considering:

- Developing new support structures in terms of intensified relations to decision makers inside the school system.
- Focusing on developing more contacts inside the school system and provision of pedagogical support services.
- Utilising these contacts not only to ensure that MS material/perspectives will be utilised inside the system, but also to use the contacts to further enhance its popular anchorage in the Danish society.
- Focusing material by further target group differentiation and more clear references to curricular requirements.
- Further capitalising on synergies between MSiS and MS-DK when preparing material for the education sector.
- Further utilising its core competence in material development and dissemination by enhancing cooperation with other NGOs and Danida.

4.3 Other Issues

4.3.1 MS as initiator and coordinator

A particularly pronounced feature of MS' efforts is its important, often coordinating role in public campaigns on issues related to development, globalisation and North-South relationships. MS also regularly carries out two-year campaigns on a topic selected jointly by MSiS and MS-DK. These campaigns are called "Global Action" and the topic chosen for 2001-02 was "peace, conflict solution and reconciliation". Beginning in 2003, a Global Action will be launched on "education and development".

In addition, campaigns are often started jointly with other organisations as issues emerge. Thus, MS took the initiative to and coordinated the work of almost 70 organisations in advance of the EU Summit in Copenhagen in 2002. The purpose was to stop the violence associated with such meetings. In the same year, MS cooperated with *Operation Day's Work* ("*Operation Dagsværk*") on a campaign focusing on the living conditions (particularly education) of former bonded labourers in Nepal. More than 30.000 Danish high school students participated, collecting DKK 7.1 million for the purpose of improving conditions for a marginalised Nepalese group (see Chapter 5).

During the summer of 2003, MS again coordinated, on behalf of 45 organisations, a major two-week long campaign called "*The poorest of the world*" (with its own web site), aimed at maintaining and increasing support for development assistance among the Danish public.

MS has also provided facilities, including administrative services, (since 1998) for the 92-Group which is a cooperative venture between 18 Danish organisations working on issues related to environment and development, with a particular mandate to follow up on the 1992 Rio conference. In addition, MS plays a central and coordinating role in "*Fagligt Forum*" (on development education) and participates very actively in a number of other networks, including "'U-land.dk" and the Danish Centre for Culture and Development.

According to MS, its formal role as an interest organisation which raises issues and policy concerns on behalf of other organisations, has decreased as opportunities for Danish NGOs to access authorities and decision-makers have grown considerably in recent

years. However, it still often plays an instrumental role in bringing groups of NGOs together to establish joint positions in relation to Danida and other authorities.

The Evaluation heard only praise from members of other organisations regarding the role of MS in such cooperative ventures. MS is regarded by others as highly professional and it commands resources that other organisations do not possess, not only because of its special allocations from Danida, but also because it has managed to blend the use of volunteers and activists with professionals in the secretariat. In organising campaigns (as well as developing policies in specific fields), activists with special interests and competencies often work along with employees. It is also our observation that despite its real dominance in many campaigns, MS appears to behave wisely as a coordinating team player, even to the extent that some members and staff would like to see its visibility enhanced.

4.3.2 Prioritisation of tasks

MS' efforts within the area of public information are impressive (the last application to Danida makes up 42 pages and includes a wide range of activities) but quite dispersed. Activities are planned on the basis of several considerations: Political priorities; MS' historical commitments towards broad sectors of the Danish population; envisaged or felt needs of particular target groups; possibilities for coordinating efforts and cooperating with other organisations (projects, campaigns); and opportunities that arise within different media (publishing, IT).

As seen from the study of MS' efforts within Danish development education, there is a need for a better focus, for efforts to be more targeted, and for improved synergies between different activities. This includes synergies between development work in the South, membership activities in Denmark and campaigns as well as publishing, but there is also a recognised need to select communication and information areas that are in accordance with political priorities and vice versa. According to MS itself, prioritisation is a major area of weakness, also in the sense that there is a feeling that too many actions (projects, programmes, campaigns, etc.) are initiated, without the necessary assessment of costs or consequences for ongoing activities. Such views are echoed by staff. Also, new projects are often added on without old ones being dropped. Thus, at the moment, there is e.g. an idea to promote a new programme or centre which will offer training and courses in intercultural communication to Danish industry, bureaucracy and other sectors of society which may need such knowledge and competence. While, on the face of it, this may sound as a very worth-while idea, it will not only require additional funding but probably also that something else is down-sized or terminated.

In line with the argument that MS must strive for high quality in whatever it chooses to do, there would seem to be a need for the organisation to focus its energies and resources in the area of public information better than today. At the moment, in-house expertise on a broad range of development issues is scarce. As the demands for high quality increase, MS will be in danger of falling behind, as other Danish and international NGOs increasingly cultivate particular niches and strive for quality within limited areas.

The Evaluation is not in a position to propose a detailed strategy of making changes in this very important area. However, as a first step, the initiative taken by MS management to develop and enforce clear procedures for starting up, planning, monitoring, implementing and evaluating projects/activities and to "cost" all new activities before being approved or implemented, should be endorsed. This is also discussed in the separate

study that was commissioned on financial management (see Chapter 5). It is also recommended that more efforts be made in order to achieve improved synergies between MS-DK and MSiS in the area of public information. Finally, there is a need, again fully recognised by MS, for diverting some of the resources presently being used to service internal needs and communication (including board and committees) to external purposes.

4.3.3 The framework agreement

The 1998 Evaluation of Danida's Information Appropriation stated that the agreement with Danida had given MS more flexibility and more effective utilisation of resources, but had also created some inertia in the allocation of funds between the five budget frames (see above). According to the Evaluation, MS had not been sufficiently able to adapt to new challenges related to development communication (particularly the Internet). In addition, the framework agreement had not resulted in more coordination between the efforts funded through the Information Appropriation, Danida's own development education, and the project related development education undertaken by the NGOs. More coordination – or at least interrelated thinking about these efforts – was recommended. One of the advantages of the large and stable grants of the agreement was that it had allowed MS to build stability, professional competence and administrative capacity within development education. The development education work was also found to have become more coherent after entering into the framework agreement.

The distribution of Danida funds allocated to different activities has not changed radically since 1998. MS has emphasised the importance of continuing efforts within the same areas – approximately according to the same priorities – and Danida has not requested that significant changes be made. Regarding coordination with Danida's own information work, there is some cooperation and delegation of responsibilities to MS, but clearly limits beyond which it may be difficult to move. Particularly a possible initiative to merge MS' *Kontakt* with Danida's *Udvikling* appears problematic. While it may make sense from the point of view of MS, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs cannot easily relinquish its own public information role by delegating important parts of it to a non-governmental organisation.

Despite the stability of budget allocations, the framework agreement has in fact allowed MS considerable freedom to respond to new challenges. If we consider e.g. the publications profile (media as well as themes) or the areas of work under “konsulenttjenesten”, considerable changes have taken place over time – in response to new demands and strategic decisions made by MS.

In meetings with Danida, MS has asked for more extensive, strategic dialogue with the Ministry on its information activities. This would include dialogue on the three-year appropriations as well as the annual reports/accounts on how funds have been utilised. Such a dialogue is to be recommended.

5. Synergies, Coherence and Capacity Issues

5.1 Introduction

The Evaluation is required to assess the extent to which MS is able to realise the opportunities for synergetic coherence between the different aspects of MS' work. This issue includes both (a) specific, strategically chosen activities undertaken as time-bound activities by MS, and (b) the question whether and how this organisational potential is available for the more continuous work and the on-going internal/external dialogue. In both cases, an important issue is the coherence of MS itself, i.e. to which extent the organisation is able to sufficiently coordinate its activities between its different departments in Denmark, as well as between the respective country offices of MSiS.

5.2 Case studies

In considering ways of approaching the issues of coherence and synergies it was decided jointly with MS to consider a few activities that should meet the following criteria:

- The activity should cut across different programme areas in MS.
- The activity should have produced some kind of concrete results in Nepal, Kenya or Zambia, and, preferably have supported the creation of networks in these countries.
- One of the cases should address an activity within the MS' 'Global Action' schedule, because these annual campaigns are specifically intended as exercises that should involve and unite the many parts of the diversified organisation.
- Involvement of one of the institutional members of MS.
- Altogether the cases should cover intercultural cooperation, international political advocacy, development education and networking.

Based on such considerations, we have received self-assessments and analysed the following cases: (a) Operation Day's Work 2002, Nepal; (b) Global action 1999: Democratisation; and (c) The Rio+10 project.

5.2.1 Operation Day's Work, Nepal

Operation Day's Work (OD) is an annual campaign organised by high-school students in Denmark who offer to work for one day to collect financial contributions from the public to support a particular cause. The 2002 campaign focused on the situation of the recently freed bonded labourers (Kamayias) in the lowlands of Nepal. The Government of Nepal had declared the Kamayias to be free of their bondage, largely in response to the popular political pressures generated by a campaign co-ordinated by BASE (*Backward Society Education*), a local NGO that is one of MS' partners in Nepal. Around 100,000 bonded labourers were freed by a government declaration in 2000, after decades of bondage. The Kamayias were promised both land and education by the Government of Nepal. The government had difficulties in honouring its promises and BASE has, with the support of MS and other organisations, fought hard to keep the Kamayia issue on the political agenda in Nepal.

DWs attached to BASE promoted the Kamaiya issue internally in MS, and when it had an opportunity to do so, MS proposed to OD that the campaign in 2002 should be in favour of the Kamayia movement. BASE staff, MS-sponsored DWs and MS-Nepal prepared a proposal describing the predicament of the Kamaiyas. This proposal was further processed by the Information Department in Denmark (including translation into Danish), which also maintained the contacts with Operation Day's Work. After the proposal was accepted, the Information and Publishing Departments of MS worked with OD to do the necessary groundwork and promote the campaign in Denmark. MS was able to apply both its own in-house technical capacity as well as its extensive network in the Danish press and the electronic media for these purposes.

The full extent of MS' capacity to promote an issue like the Kamayia movement was further displayed in connection with the OD campaign. MS was able to facilitate visits by OD organisers to Nepal who thus gained first-hand knowledge and impressions. Former DWs and a former participant in a work camp (organised in Nepal by MS Travels) took active part in the campaign in Denmark, in particular in interactions with the press. The Information Department co-ordinated MS participation in the planning phase and was able to use its network to generate an impressive amount of publicity in the press and in the electronic media. The Publishing Department prepared a separate issue of the youth magazine ZAPP and provided OD with previously published materials (from *Kontakt* magazine) on the Asian region and on slavery. The Information Department was also able to make use of materials on the Kamayia issue originally prepared in support of BASE's political advocacy and lobbying effort to create an Internet web page. These materials were organised in collaboration with high-school teachers, who provided advice on presentation. The web page registered some 20,000 hits a week. A video on the issue of the lower castes (Dalits) in Nepal was also part of MS' contribution.

The campaign was a success. Approximately 30,000 high-school students collected more than DKK 7.1 million on behalf of the Kamaiyas. These funds now provide a platform for continued co-operation between BASE, OD and MS to maintain the momentum of the Kamayia movement in Nepal.

It is interesting to note how the various component parts of MS were able to contribute both as autonomous departments and as parts of a larger structure to the OD campaign. Thus Operation Day's Work involved almost all parts of MS – both professionals at MS-DK and MS-Nepal as well as professionals from MS' partner organisations in Nepal. DWs working for MS as well as former DWs took part and activists in BASE were also involved. As far as MS is concerned, it seems that all departments were content with the campaign. The only negative note in the self-assessment is contained in a rather rueful statement from the Publications Department that perhaps too much information was provided free of charge, thus adversely affecting the sales of prepared materials.

5.2.2 Global Action 1999: Democracy

Every second year MS organises a global brainstorming exercise throughout its network (in Denmark and in the South) to select a topic for a Global Action campaign. The topic for 1999, democracy, was partly inspired by the previous campaign on human rights, and partly by the fact that Denmark was to celebrate the 150th anniversary of its own constitution. The topic was not very enthusiastically received by the MS membership in Denmark, in spite of the great relevance it holds for many developing countries.

The Global Action campaign consists of a series of events, both in Denmark and in the countries where MS has country programmes. MS began by preparing a policy paper at TCDC. This was never translated into Danish. Another effort involved the launching of a booklet, with the support of a press campaign, at the 150th anniversary of Denmark's constitution, in which civil society representatives from a number of developing countries compared the Danish constitution with their own. A general lesson seems to be that MS experienced difficulties in generating much enthusiasm in Denmark for this particular campaign

Democracy by Bus, another component of the Global Action campaign, represented a comparatively large investment by MS-DK. MS invited eight guests from Central America, Nepal and Africa to travel by bus to four regions in Denmark to study everyday and commonplace examples of Danish democracy, e.g. work places, school boards, trade unions, municipal councils, co-operatives as well as the parliament. Although the guests found the Danes to be rather unconcerned about a democracy that they took for granted, this project involved large parts of the MS organisation, including several departments at headquarters as well as the regional offices.

The Democracy by Bus was an expensive project but it is considered one of the most successful collaborative efforts in North-South information work, with a particular emphasis on Southern perspectives. The guests from the South as well as the diverse Danish contacts appreciated the initiative. There were other activities under the Global Action programme as well, including an Internet conference on democracy with participation of young people from several countries. At the country level, there were follow-up activities in Lesotho, Nepal and Uganda.

Another important information project under the heading of this campaign involved the publication of a special edition on democracy of MS' youth magazine ZAPP in Spanish, jointly with editors from Nicaragua. The main target group of this publication was youth in Central America. Attempts were made to introduce both an Internet website and the ZAPP issue into the formal Spanish language classes in Danish schools. This experiment failed because teachers found it difficult to use materials by authors from outside Spain in this particular context.

The Global Action campaign comprised an additional number of events in Denmark, including an international work camp organised on the theme "*The Constitution of the Youth*"; a conference was held on the situation of ethnic minorities in Danish local democracy; and a large number of events took place in the country programmes as well, often characterised by more enthusiasm than was the case in Denmark.

MS' assessment of the Global Action campaign emphasises that it involved most of the departments of MS-DK and that it had a particularly strong involvement from the South. But the topic did not meet with much enthusiasm in Denmark and was as such not a very successful theme for MS membership activities. Particular note is made, however, of the fact that the topic selected for the 1999 campaign was strongly supported by representatives from the South at the Annual Policy Meeting, and as such represented a democratic event in its own right.

5.2.3 The Rio +10 Project

The 92-group is a coalition of 21 Danish environment and development organisations working together on environment, development, and information activities related to the follow-up on the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro 1992. The objective of the Danish 92 Group was to serve as the link between, on the one side the Parliament, the Government and the relevant Ministries and, on the other, the organisations dealing with issues in relation to UNCED, to co-ordinate the activities of the member organisations, to inform the Danish public about issues to be dealt with at UNCED and to appoint NGO-representatives as members of official Danish delegations. The Danish member organisations are in turn linked to a wide network of civil society organisations in the South.

The “*Project of Danish Support for Increased Participation of Southern NGOs in the Rio+10 Earth Summit*” was conducted by three Danish NGOs, (MS, Ibis and WWF-Denmark) on behalf of the Danish 92 Group. It was sponsored by Danida, its main aim being to boost the involvement and participation, in terms of quality as well as quantity, of the civil society in the South in the preparation for, participation in and follow-up of the Johannesburg Summit in 2002. The project focused on furthering an inclusive public debate on environment and development in each country taking part in the network supported by the Danish 92 Group in order to buttress the negotiating positions of the respective governments concerned.

MS’ participation in this project was initially managed jointly by the Information and the International Departments. In response to the gradual involvement of the MSiS programme and partners in the South, it came to be handled mainly by the International Department. MS was furthermore responsible for the financial management of the project as well as the publication of an internet-based educational game (*‘Global Island’*) and the book *‘From Rio to Johannesburg: Ten years after the Rio summit’*.

MS saw the project as a window of opportunity to gain additional experience in Denmark and internationally with lobbying and advocacy work, as well as from working closely with other Danish NGOs on a concrete project. The project had a rather modest public profile in Denmark, due to a conscious decision by the implementing partners to concentrate its limited resources in the South. The project did, however, provide inputs to the wider lobbying effort of the Danish 92 Group, raising the levels of awareness of Danish politicians about the views and priorities of civil society organisations in the South. A notable achievement was a meeting between the Danish Prime Minister and representatives from the Southern networks organised during the World Summit session in Johannesburg.

The experiences from project implementation in the Southern networks were mixed. Some partners in the network organisations perceived the concerns of the project as stemming from the South and engaged in a dynamic and bottom-up oriented process. Here the project was an opportunity to create cross-sectoral civil society networks and an impetus to obtaining new tools and experiences in the field of advocacy work and lobbying. In other countries, unfortunately, the co-operation became more of a top-down process, with initiatives springing from the Danish 92 Group. A major problem was the time requirements, with too little time available for the network partners to reflect on the issues themselves and assume proper ownership. None the less, the experiences gained with running the project have started a learning process for many of the national focal points (spe-

cific local organisations) and national steering committees. In some countries the initiative has been taken to create stronger linkages between the networks and local partners with a view to creating more solid foundations for alliances between civil society organisations, to facilitate joint lobby and advocacy campaigns and to create new opportunities for grass-root organisations to influence national policy-makers.

5.3 Ex-DWs

Yet another dimension of coherence across the various activities and departments of MS can be elucidated by looking at the situation of Development Workers. The DWs represent the major instrument in the implementation of MS' partnership approach. The Evaluation has assessed whether MS holds comparative advantages over other development-related NGOs in terms of access to a large pool of well-trained, interested and well-experienced people, whether for information work or other tasks within the organisation where hands-on experience from MS' work with partner organisations may be of value. These tasks could involve contributions to advocacy and political lobbying campaigns, to planning and programming work or various tasks involving the MS membership throughout Denmark. Furthermore, the DWs inherently represent and embody one of MS' main policy objectives of intercultural cooperation, and the DWs are often thought of as 'cultural ambassadors' or 'cultural mediators' who will contribute to maintaining the partnership between MS and the respective partner organisations. Alternatively, the experiences and skills acquired by the ex-DWs could be seen as general contribution to the Danish resource base for development cooperation.

It has been noted (in Chapter 3) that the performance of the DWs ultimately depends much on their personal qualities, in addition, of course, to professional background and work experiences. A similar pattern seems to present itself with regard to how well former DWs, i.e. those who have returned to Denmark, are able to relate to various aspects of MS activities. A separate study was undertaken in conjunction with this Evaluation to examine these issues.

The study was able to classify its sample of former DWs into two general classes of 'extrovert' and 'introvert' DWs. There seems to be little difference between the two classes in terms of where they had been posted, in their professional background, marital and family status, job satisfaction and rating of personal well-being. Still, the groups of 'extroverts' (of which there were slightly fewer than the 'introverts') were more active in development-related activities before their posting, were more active in 'extra-curricular' activities during their posting, were more articulate that their posting had been useful to the partner, were more satisfied with the way MS manages the concept of intercultural cooperation and were (slightly) more satisfied with the way MS received them after their posting than what was the case with the 'introvert' DWs. The study concludes, however, that MS' reception of former DWs does not seem to influence the extent to which the former DWs continue working with development issues, either in conjunction with MS or elsewhere. This seems to depend on whether the person in question is an extrovert or an introvert, i.e. on the personal qualities of the DW.

In general, the study seems to indicate that MS only to a limited degree has been able to make use of the potential capacity and skills of the DWs. The availability and involvement of DWs in general development related work, inside or outside MS, seems to depend on personal qualities of the DWs. There are some suggestions arising from the

DW study with regard to how MS could improve on the situation, which seems to be a question that MS has given insufficient attention so far.

Anecdotal evidence indicates that many DWs were formerly recruited from among the MS activists – which helped secure synergies between MSiS and activities in Denmark. Today, DWs are increasingly recruited from the academic ranks and see their MS employment as stages in their careers. There may, therefore, be less contact with MS after their contracts have ended. On the other hand, and in a larger perspective, the study shows that as many as 42% of returnees have taken up work in developing countries after their return. This figure is derived from a study of only two cohorts of returned DWs, but it varies quite a bit across cohorts. In terms of information activities, most ex-DWs have been active in disseminating information about their experiences in non-family contexts, e.g. at work, in the local community, in professional associations and in the press. The Evaluation offers the cautious conclusion that ex-DWs do in fact contribute to the general resource base for development work in Denmark.

5.4. Problems of coherence: Multiple realities

While the case studies above show that MS often has the ability to forge synergies and create coherence between activities and departments, there is still concern in the organisation that more can be done in this area. Interviews with staff have revealed that different departments are, to some extent, characterised by different work cultures (that can be conveniently labelled business, activism and development); that there is insufficient interaction and coordinated efforts across departments, sometimes leading to a sense of compartmentalisation; and that the Country Offices often feel that they are being overwhelmed by initiatives and decisions made in Copenhagen and over which they have little influence.

Despite considerable progress, the Evaluation has found that MS' activities in the North – information and solidarity work, networking, organisational linkages, etc. – can still be linked more visibly with the policy objectives of MSiS. It would also seem possible to create stronger links between MSiS and MS Travels as well as to improve coordination and save resources in the area of personnel recruitment (which currently takes place in two different departments). MS is aware of this and measures are presently taken to rectify the situation.

However, there are certainly limits to the level of coherence that can be achieved between different activities within an organisation like MS. Like so many other NGOs, MS operates in a number of different domains, each with their own (but partly overlapping) languages, rules, routines and demands. It is enough to look at the list of activities at MS and where they are carried out – to realise that a great many “forces” pull and push MS, its management and staff in different directions, creating sometimes incompatible commitments and contradictions. Rather than asking why NGOs like MS do not always live up to their promises, the more relevant question may be how MS management and staff members manage to maintain an orderly structure, a shared outlook, a shared sense of purpose and other practical expressions of coherence within the organisation, given the multiple binds and many different arenas in which they operate.

There has not been enough time to further probe these issues. However, it is important to note that organisations like MS are fundamentally multi-centred, in the sense that dif-

ferent departments, different staff and different members have different understandings of the organisation. Such understandings draw on many elements: office procedures, official policies, as well as a range of discourses (on different topics) from within and outside MS. As a result, board members, staff, activists and ordinary members attach different values to the diverse meanings MS may have and continue to have different understandings of what MS “is all about”. The fact that MS is accountable to so many different stakeholders (partners in the South, Danida, its own membership), is engaged in diversified activities, and serve many different clients help maintain such differences.

While there is a shared outlook and a commonality of interest across the departments that provide enough ‘glue’ to keep MS as an institution together, a reformulated and restated vision of the purposes driving MS as an organisation – different from the present overall objective (see Section 1.2) which is so all-embracing that it does not induce much obligation – may help harmonise the most discordant elements.

5.5 Capacity issues

According to the ToR, this issue is strongly related to MS’ ability to live up to its MSiS policy document (*Solidarity through Partnership*). The MSiS Review 2000 points to a number of weaknesses related to MS’ ability to operationalise its overall objectives. The ToR for the Evaluation narrows down the issue of organisational capacity and performance to MS’ ability to conduct financial management and to implement recommendations, mainly related to the MSiS programme.

5.5.1 Financial management

A separate study of the financial management system of MS has been carried out as part of this assignment. In general the assessment is positive. MS has good financial management systems and the capacity necessary for good financial management in relation to Danida requirements. However, the magnitude of Danida’s support compared to other sources of income makes MS vulnerable and the relatively short-term horizon of support makes long term planning and financial management difficult.

The study concludes that there is room for improvement, particularly in the following areas:

- The financial management systems of MS are geared towards accountability, whereas assessments of performance in terms of efficiency and effectiveness play a lesser role. This implies i.a. that the financial aspects of activities, decisions and prioritisations may not always be fully considered. It is an overall recommendation, therefore, that the financial management systems be updated – in a participatory manner so as to ensure that innovative ideas and proposals are promoted from staff and management in both Denmark and in the South.
- On managing partner support, the study also found that the quality of financial management systems in relation to partners in general is acceptable but needs to be upgraded in the country offices, particularly because partners are in need of targeted training.
- MS and the Country Offices (COs) should explore options for incorporating and benefiting more fully from the work performed by local external auditors.
- MS and Danida should enter into a dialogue on financial management and specify mutual obligations and requirements. It may be advantageous to adopt a reporting format similar to what is being required of the NGOs that have framework agreements with Danida.

- Many partners find the COs rather strict on financial management. In general, they find it difficult to adhere to accountability demands that are unfamiliar in many developing countries. Some of the procedures tend to frustrate partners. MS should continue to consider the views and perceptions brought forward and initiate action where required, without compromising the standards required. Generally, MS should define modes for improved partner communication by developing a minimum set of financial management requirements that are workable for partners.
- There is also need for specifying procedures and update manuals on anomalies and staff loans.

5.5.2 Capacity to carry out MSiS

As indicated above, MS is not a monolithic, tightly integrated bureaucratic structure. There is considerable autonomy within the respective departments at MS-DK. The respective COs also seem to enjoy considerable autonomy and are expected to be proactively involved in fashioning and guiding the implementation of MS' partnership approach. The country offices are structurally placed in the somewhat difficult position of having to relate to and respond to policy guidelines and policy concerns from the International Department in Copenhagen, on the one hand, while they are also expected, on the other hand, to reflect the concerns of partner organisations and significant features of the policy environment that they work in. These dilemmas and the compromises involved are given final expression in the country policy papers and in the respective country programmes, both of which are now produced with the full involvement of the Policy Advisory Boards in each country. The PABs seem to give support to the autonomy of the country offices by clearly putting a country-specific mark on the policy documents. But the country programmes still reflect the overall themes and strategies of the MSiS programme, in terms of its overriding objectives and the main policy instruments available, viz. support to partnership through the placement of DWs and other efforts at organisational development.

The three country studies conducted in conjunction with this Evaluation have considered the ability of the respective COs to carry forward the MSiS programme. The country studies are generally impressed by the capacity of the COs in these terms. They are characterised by professionalism and dedication and the country studies found them to be well staffed with well-qualified and enthusiastic staff. In view of the long distances and the dispersed distribution of partner organisations, the country studies judged the COs to be parsimoniously staffed. The Kenya and Zambia studies in particular remarked on the friendly, non-hierarchical and transparent management style adopted by the COs, which facilitated the handling of difficult (in a partnership context) issues like the terms of service of the DWs, MS' policy on transport and MS' non-compromising demands for proper business management and accountability.

All three country studies made note of the success of involving national professionals, through both the PAB and through consultancies, in the preparation of policy documents and work programmes. The country studies also report that the COs have generally been successful in promoting various institutional development efforts, including training, in the partner organisations. The partner organisations had in general come to appreciate the MS country offices as genuine partners, 'working with them, not against them' (Kenya study, p. vi). It is emphasised that this has happened in spite of the structural asymmetry built into the partnership between MS as donor and the partners as recipients. This is a theme that appears in all three studies, viz. that the main operational

problems facing the COs derive from the difficulties of combining the role of an equitable partner that claims to share the concerns and aspirations of the partner organisation with the role of donor and financial controller that must take the partner organisation to task over unsatisfactory accounts or faulty practices.

The three COs must relate to quite different external environments in the three countries in question, and are also at different stages of MSiS implementation. The Zambia programme is in the middle of a major restructuring, with a number of partnerships being phased out. Communication, particularly with the stakeholders beyond or below the management of the concerned partner organisations, seems to be a challenge. The challenges in the Nepal programme derive from its choice of target groups and geographical areas. A conflict-ridden environment where security is a constant concern has caused the wide dispersion of partner organisations, causing problems of communication and follow-up. The Kenya programme has matured in the sense that it has successfully emerged from a long period in a hostile political environment with a dynamic and process-oriented approach to partnership.

The MSiS programme aims at achieving results in terms of intercultural cooperation and impact on poverty through the effective interventions of its partners in the various programme countries. MS does not itself implement activities with a configuration that can be expected to have any direct impact at the level of the poor. The country programmes and the COs thus represent the cutting edge of MS' approach. Success or failure will to a large extent depend on how well the country offices are able to build effective partnerships with the means and policy instruments at their disposal. This Evaluation asserts that the placement of DWs, which is the main policy instrument available in the country programmes, may be a blunt, if not double-edged tool. None the less, the Evaluation subscribes to the reports in the country studies that the COs have been able to nurture viable partnerships that in many cases have yielded tangible results and positive impacts.

6. Overall Assessment, Options and Recommendations

6.1 Overall assessment

It is the overall assessment of this Evaluation that MS continues to be a key actor in Danish development cooperation; that the organisation has made progress in several areas since 2000 when its programme in the South (MSiS) was reviewed; and that it continues to play an important, constructive and often coordinating role in the larger Danish NGO community. In the area of development education in Denmark, MS has traditionally held a special position that now needs to be further nurtured and developed. Its financial management is basically sound. While the impact of MS' activities on its ultimate beneficiaries – poor people in developing countries – may be uneven, and, in some cases, difficult to ascertain, the relevance of these activities can hardly be questioned. MS deals with problems and challenges that are important to all of us, in an increasingly globalised world with porous borders, major and growing differences between rich and poor, a plethora of conflicts and a host of problems that have to do with the present and future welfare of its many inhabitants. Overall, MS continues to engage this world and these problems in a vibrant and professional way.

This is not to say that there is no scope for improvement. In Chapter 3, it was argued that the MSiS programme must continue to address some important issues raised in the MSiS Review 2000:

- The notion of intercultural cooperation remains fuzzy and has not yet been given a sufficiently concrete meaning for any practical application. A main reason is that MS has chosen to make it an integral part of an argument in favour of maintaining MSiS as a personnel assistance programme. Intercultural cooperation has become the main justification for placement of Danish Development Workers (DWs) while the DWs themselves have difficulties in pointing to anything beyond their own presence as the substance of intercultural cooperation. Culture, in these terms, cannot be confined to any specific sector and it is important to underline that intercultural learning and communication are embedded in any form of collaboration across cultural borders. Genuine intercultural cooperation must also require from MS that it reflects upon, and takes into account, that such cooperation must be more reciprocal than today.
- The MSiS review was critical of the role of DWs, yet recommended that they be retained as an integral part of the MSiS programme. The country studies and the MSiS Review all point to the difficulties of generalising about the performance of DWs, but it is problematic that MS' partnership approach – based on values such as ownership and mutuality – to a large extent is predicated on the placement of DWs. While there are many partnerships where DWs have played a crucial and highly appreciated role, there have also been partnerships where the placement of DWs has been inappropriate. Models for partnership approaches without the placement of DWs should be given greater prominence. The Evaluation also questions the cost-effectiveness of DW placement, bearing in mind that well over 60% of MSiS expenditures in the partnership programmes are related to the selection, training and deployment of DWs. Finally, the notion that intercultural cooperation is best pro-

moted through the deployment of Danish DWs faces problems of legitimacy in a globalising world with increasing mobility of people and increasingly dense networks of meaning and information.

- There is a strong commitment in MS to partnership with local organisations. Partnerships are ideally about sharing and mutual benefits on the basis of a commonality of interest. The three studies report that partners appreciate that MS is much more genuinely committed to sustaining this process towards greater equity than other international NGOs. None the less, a fully equitable partnership is elusive. While MS actively avoids being seen as a donor, it is still viewed as such by many partners. This is despite efforts to the contrary, and regardless of motivations and purposes of individuals or groups within MS. After all, MS effectively sets the premises for the relationship; it wields the power to enter or terminate agreements; it defines the parameters for the unfolding of the partnership; and it largely formulates the policies on which the MSiS programme is based.
- On the other hand, and as a result of the partnership approach, MS has created institutional spaces and mechanisms through which the Danish NGO and its partners may relate to each other outside a donor-recipient relationship and focus on policy and strategic dialogue. In this respect, the Evaluation finds that the concept and implementation of Policy Advisory Boards (PABs) represents a very positive step in the right direction. Annual meetings in the South, partnership workshops, the annual policy meeting in Copenhagen and other events are vital for this process. MSiS has become a potential platform for such dialogue as well as for discussing common dilemmas between Northern and Southern actors. Such dilemmas may express themselves differently in the North and South, but differences in capacities and conditions may also be an asset. These can in turn set trends for new ways of relating between North and South thus laying down foundations for more real partnership (horizontal) relations.
- It was claimed also by the MSiS Review that a North to South perspective has come to dominate the MSiS programme. By extension, there is still a lack of attention to what the South has to offer, either in a relationship of mutuality with partners in the North, or in terms of solidarity and commonality of interest between organisations in the South (South-South synergies).
- The MSiS Review was critical of the way MS handled the objective of poverty reduction in its programmes. While MS has put in considerable effort to improve on the situation, particularly with respect to poverty analysis, initiatives have yet to come to fruition. As long as MS has made the strategic choice of working through partners and intermediaries, immediate changes in terms of outputs and effects cannot be expected. While the Evaluation support this decision, the Evaluation encourage MS to continue to work on identifying better models and better instruments for intervention. The breadth of MS partnerships across a diversity of contexts, addressing a wide range of substantive issues in highly variable circumstances makes it well placed to shape partnerships that will have an impact on poverty.
- The country studies reveal that there still remains a number of problems related to the monitoring and evaluation of MSiS activities. Indicators are often vague and some of them refer to activities rather than output or outcome. The lack of good baselines further compounds the matter. It is recognised, however, that MS works hard at improving performance in this area.

Of other main issues that have arisen during the Evaluation process, the Evaluation choose to highlight the following:

- The history of MS' engagement within the area of development education in Denmark is impressive and the organisation continues to produce material of high quality. However, the use of the material within the intended target groups still leaves something to be desired. This is partly due to factors outside the influence of MS (reduced school budgets, other topics being prioritised, increased competition) but also to a failure on the part of MS to fully take into account the current changes that have taken place in the educational system in Denmark (i.a. increased focus on subject specific, measurable knowledge). It is also seen by many teachers as being too normative and deficient in terms of causal analysis of the complex dynamics of development and change.
- While MS presently gives high priority to improved synergies between different activities and departments and are able to show a number of results from such efforts, considerable potential still remains to be tapped. This includes synergies between development work in the South, membership activities in Denmark and campaigns as well as publishing. According to MS itself, prioritisation is a major area of weakness, also in the sense that there is a feeling that too many things are initiated, without the necessary assessment of costs or consequences for ongoing activities. As one consequence, MS appears to be overstretched in terms of competence and capacity. In the important area of public information, there would, therefore, seem to be a need for MS to focus its energies and resources better than today.
- While MS has a well-functioning accounting system, it only to a limited extent allows the organisation to measure its own performance in terms of financial effectiveness and efficiency.

6.2 Directions for the future

Despite its many achievements and despite the dynamism that it still exudes, it is hard to escape the feeling that MS is currently at the crossroads and that the organisation must make some key decisions about where it wants to go and what directions to follow. The main reasons for this would seem to be the following:

- Danida has recently issued a Civil Society Strategy that includes its cooperation with Danish NGOs. Its implementation places a number of professional demands on MS (as well as other Danish NGOs) – a constant attention to quality and documentation of results but also to strengthening the popular base of the organisation. While MS often argues that the variety and breadth of its activities also constitutes its strength, variety cannot be sustained at the expense of quality. Quality must be documented within each individual area of activities.
- Other large development-oriented Danish NGOs now have framework agreements with Danida. While this arrangement may not in itself make a great difference, an important aspect of the way these NGOs operate is their project orientation. They are used to writing project applications, to making adjustments, and responding to new challenges. In so doing, they are increasingly oriented towards identifying and exploiting special areas or niches of competence (e.g. Ibis: education and trade). They are also, at regular intervals, subject to capacity assessments initiated by Danida. In addition, Danida now actively encourages new NGOs to apply for funds over the development cooperation budget, increasing the level of competition.

- In this changing world of increased competition (also in the media) and reduced support, MS may be in danger of slipping behind. Despite its pioneering efforts to promote partnerships, MS is seen by many observers of the NGO channel to development cooperation as an organisation where a somewhat outmoded personnel assistance programme is still the backbone of its work in the South. Furthermore, and as admitted by MS management, the broad mandate to which the organisation has committed itself, weakens its profile in the Danish NGO landscape. Or, put in other words: In terms of its capacity and competence, MS may be overstretched in relation to current challenges at home and abroad. Like many other Danish NGOs, MS remains economically vulnerable. There is not yet in place a fund-raising culture, ready to tap foreign sources of support for its work, particularly in the South. It is largely dependent on Danida for its funding and has yet to respond seriously to challenges related to more diversified fund raising.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, these challenges are acknowledged by MS, which has recently engaged in self-critical reflection regarding its strengths and weaknesses as well as future directions. According to its Secretary General, MS is characterised by the following strengths: (a) MS is engaged in different activities/plays on many strings; (b) its staff and users are committed and highly motivated; (c) MS has a presence in Denmark as well as abroad; (d) MS applies the right policies and the right instruments: Personnel assistance and partnership; and (e) MS has a comprehensive network of collaborating partners – in Denmark as well as in the South.

In terms of weaknesses, still as seen by the Secretary General, they include (a) overburdened and underdeveloped management; (b) a broad mandate and public service functions that weakens the MS profile; (c) a tendency for communication and servicing to become too introvert; and (d) a scarcity of untied funds (SWOT analysis, May 2003).

In addition, MS staff often mention (a) too tight compartmentalisation between departments (including different work cultures), (b) MS' image problem (what is MS really all about?), (c) and a tendency for staff to become overburdened with paper work and unexpected tasks – as current problems that need to be addressed.

MS must be praised for the ongoing efforts to consolidate and further develop the organisation, and on many issues and in many fields, the Evaluation can offer little in the way of further assistance and advice. This applies to the discussion of the core values of MS staff policy (quality, creativity, respect, and influence) but also to numerous other aspects related to e.g. organisational structure, public information strategies to enhance visibility, and initiatives to recruit and maintain individual and collective members.

This Evaluation offers the view that MS is basically faced with two main options: To stay more or less as it is today, but with some important improvements within the current set-up, which seems to be the line of the present management (Option A); or to make more radical changes, e.g. take partnership even further than today and make it the cornerstone of a new vision of what MS should be all about and how it can develop this into its comparative advantage (Option B).

Regardless of which of the options is finally adopted by MS, it should be recognised that MS is a diversified organisation with a number of inherent tensions. MS is a voluntary association/organisation with a humanitarian orientation – yet expected to function effectively and efficiently; it is a membership association accountable to its members and

responsive to their needs and demands – yet also accountable to those who fund its activities (primarily Danida) as well as to its many partners in the South and in Denmark; and it finds itself in a changing world which poses demands on the ability to make continuous changes – yet is composed of members who join it for many different reasons and have, therefore, diversified interests.

As indicated in Chapter 5, MS must to a significant extent, continue to live with many of the tensions arising from this complexity. It is not so much a matter of removing them but rather to soften the contradictions and make tensions more productive. However, a reformulated and restated vision of the purposes driving MS as an organisation – different from the present overall objective which is all-embracing and not very compelling on anybody – seems to be an important precondition for attempts to harmonise discordant elements.

6.2.1 Option A

This option would imply that a minimum number of changes be made to enhance quality and address issues of coherence and synergy:

- MS should adopt a more flexible approach to the DW issue – consonant with its own policy document “*Solidarity through Partnership*” (pp.21-22). Over a period of time, this would imply a substantial reduction in the number of long-term Danish DWs posted to partner organisations as a component of partnership (through increased acceptance of alternative options); the posting of more “shared” (between partners) DWs and short-term DWs that are given specific assignments; and the posting of southern nationals as DWs with partners in the MSiS programme.
- MSiS has been criticised for policies that imply that intercultural cooperation involves exchange only from the North to the South. South-South exchange has been proposed as a more effective and cost-efficient solution to meet operational needs in specific partnership situations. In the more general context of intercultural cooperation as an objective in its own right, there may also be an argument for seeking ways of exposing representatives of the South to the contexts of the North. This would require a new set of partnerships, between MS and partner organisations of the North. Furthermore, the purpose of these partnerships must be defined differently, with a definite emphasis on the experience of working across cultures. MS should further explore this avenue as part of its ongoing efforts to seek new alliances and partners in Danish society.
- The materials produced for purposes of development education must remain of high quality without losing their relevance in terms of the rapidly changing demands of the Danish school system.
- Given the high level of investment in Danish Development Workers, MS should consider better ways of safeguarding the resources represented by their collective experiences and skills.
- The main recommendations from the financial management study indicate that MS has a well-functioning accounting system, but that this system only to a limited extent allows MS to measure its own performance in terms of financial effectiveness and efficiency. In a situation of resource scarcity and budget cuts more attention must be given to such performance measurement.
- In addition, MS is encouraged to work to develop a vision that will tie its activities together in a better way than today. In line with current MS thinking, it is suggested that the activities and concerns of MS in the South be made central to this vision

and that a key element would be to link rural based poverty in the periphery (as exemplified through the efforts of MS and its partners in the South) to global and other macro level changes. The Kamayia case in Nepal would seem to provide an excellent example of such linkages.

Much can be achieved by pursuing Option A. However, two issues remain somewhat unsettled: (a) there may still be too much of a gap between activities in Denmark and activities in the South, without a sufficiently clear profile; and (b) in the South, it may be difficult to see that MS has any comparative advantage over other international NGOs. For these reasons, the Evaluation recommends that Option B be seriously considered.

6.2.2 Option B

This option implies that MS, in addition to addressing the issues under Option A, further “broadens the door” to its partners in the South and allows their influence to be increased, also on MS’ activities in Denmark.

A bottleneck for a greater impact of MSiS in the North lies in the fact that MSiS is treated as a compartmentalised area of work parallel to other areas of work (of MS) instead of a space in which all the skills and capacities of MS interact. In the present set-up, the South and MSiS is the “preserve” of the International Department mainly. The dialogue with the South becomes a dialogue on programme management, budgets, monitoring and evaluation, etc. There is also excessive centralisation or bureaucratisation of communication and initiatives, most of them emanating from Copenhagen and with partners at the receiving end.

In order to overcome this problem, the following operational ideas (which have largely been collected from the South) could be further explored:

- a) Establish issue-based or area-based working groups, with participation from partners in the South and by members of different MS departments.
- b) Create new North-South dynamics in the planning of South-related issues, assuring the representation of Southern views in the understanding of the problem and in the strategy formulation stage (e.g. the campaign on development aid).
- c) Establish ‘ad hoc’ or stable, specialised South advisory or reference groups to oversee the work areas in Denmark (e.g. information activities).
- d) Make for closer coordination, through dialogue, between MS’ political agenda and the concerns in the South.
- e) Make more use of MS as a facilitator of South-South strategic relations by developing more comparative analysis and identifying opportunities for South-South networks, contact and exchange.
- f) Identify priorities and mechanisms to generate information useful to the South, thus generating capacity for two ways information.
- g) Consider the employment of short term, issue-based advisers or consultants from the South with MS-DK in Copenhagen.

While such and other changes in a similar direction would at least go some way towards bringing MS-DK and MSiS closer together, we recognise that MS will always want to have a political agenda in Denmark and that it may not always be easy to coordinate this with partners in the South. A more radical sub-option that MS could consider is,

therefore, the establishment of a MS International, in the form of a truly international partnership that will work towards the vision of reducing poverty through intercultural co-operation, but without the privileged position of Danes in its structures for governance, management or implementation. A 'MS International' would bring to a logical conclusion some of the evolutionary trends already evident in the organisation. This in particular concerns increased national representation (by partner representatives or 'specialists') in the respective Policy Advisory Boards and the transformation of the Annual Policy Meeting to an Annual General Meeting. 'MS International' would be able to draw on the large pool of dedicated and skilled management staff and subject matter specialists at the various country offices, including Denmark and recruit its Development Workers, if that cadre of staff is to be retained, from across the countries and organisations that join MS International as members.

6.3 The special role of MS and its cooperation with Danida

The desk study undertaken as part of the Evaluation (Annex 2) argues that MS' special role has two dimensions: in relation to Danish civil society as well as in the particular relations which have been established with Danida.

In a self-assessment on this issue, MS argues that in order to assess "the justification and the implications of the special arrangements with Danida" (ToR), one needs to analyse MS from three perspectives:

- Particular features of MS as an association: MS as an umbrella organisation, as a membership organisation and as an association with a strong Board and a peculiar mix of voluntarism and professionalism.
- Programmatic characteristics of MS: The extent, nature and variety of ongoing activities.
- Functional characteristics: MS as an interest organisation, as an initiator/catalyst, and a service provider to the general public in Denmark.

Interviews with NGO representatives outside MS about this issue indicate wide agreement that it is primarily (a) MS' role as initiator, catalyst and coordinator on behalf of the larger Danish NGO community, and (b) the wide variety of activities in which MS is engaged, that sets MS apart and makes the organisation both special and valuable. Respondents find this a good thing and believe it is justified that MS receive a special allocation for its efforts within the area of public information and development education. The special arrangements that MS has with Danida in terms of programming and the peculiarities of how MS is funded do not cause any concern in the NGO community.

MS no doubt holds a special position in Danish society and there are many reasons for this. Some of these are historical, and MS has for many years been the centre of gravity in the Danish NGO landscape. But contemporary features are also important, including the wide range of activities it is involved in, its ability and willingness to cooperate, facilitate and promote issues beyond its own immediate concerns, the generally high quality of its services and products, and the running of a large personnel assistance programme.

The final exercise of the Evaluation involved a workshop called by Danida's Evaluation Secretariat on August 15, 2003 to discuss the issues of MS special position. This meeting confirmed the assessment set out above. The other NGO appreciate the level of co-

6. OVERALL ASSESSMENT, OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ordination and other specific services offered by MS, both in particular campaigns and in the day-to-day conduct of business. Specific examples offered include the value of e.g. personnel training offered by MS, shared service functions in country programmes abroad and MS' ability to meet new challenges, both in Denmark and abroad, due to its size and experience. Many NGOs are driven to specialise, to focus on particular issues and refine their skills with increasingly narrow bands of concern, and the importance of an organisation like MS with the capacity and scope to maintain cross-sectoral and holistic perspectives, was particularly underlined. It is important to maintain a non-government and civil society counterpoint to official development assistance policies and practices. MS' role in this perspective, with regard to relevant training, credible information work, and the maintenance of alternative networks, was also appreciated.

The NGO community as represented at this meeting did not see any problem that involved them in the administrative arrangements of MS' relationship to Danida. The impetus for change in this regard comes from both MS itself and from Danida. There is a realisation that the historical reasons for the special arrangements to a large extent have been overtaken by events. A case in point is MS position as a separate line item in the annual Financial Appropriations Bill. Changes in the financial regulations from 2004 will put the other organisations (with framework agreements with Danida) in the same situation. The functional aspects that still set MS apart from the other large development-related NGO no longer seem to warrant particular administrative and bureaucratic arrangements.

Both parties want to see some changes to be made to the arrangement of relations between MS and Danida. MS would like to maintain the close relationship implied by the Cooperation Committee, but would favour more emphasis on strategic dialogue, such as dialogue on MS' coordinating role among NGOs in Denmark, and less dominance of MSiS issues. Danida's NGO office, on the other hand, would prefer a mode of cooperation similar to what has been established for NGOs with framework agreements. This would involve less frequent meetings (every other year), with an emphasis on strategic and policy issues.

MS is likely to maintain many aspects of its special role in Danish society. The exact nature and content of its relationship to Danida does not seem important, even if MS, like so many other NGOs, to a large extent depend on contributions from the public purse. It is important to underline that the special position of MS will primarily be based on its performance as a facilitator of civil society alternatives to official development assistance policies. There is likely to be increased competition within MS' chosen fields of activity in the South, and in Denmark the number of NGOs involved in development is likely to increase. But there are no other development-related NGO in Denmark with the scope and capacity to sustain the role that MS has assumed.

Copenhagen, 20 September 2002
J. No: 104.N.13.Eval.

Annex 1. Terms of Reference

for

Evaluation of The Danish Association For International Cooperation (MS)

1. Background

MS was conceived during World War II (January 1944), and emerged in 1945 as an organisation under the name 'Aid Work of the Friends of Peace'. Groups of young Danish men and women were sent to Norway, Finland, Yugoslavia and Germany (among others) to assist with reconstruction of houses and basic infrastructure and to promote reconciliation. This activity formed the basis for the Youth Exchange Programme of MS, a name that the organisation adopted in 1949. Until 1975 MS was strictly an umbrella organisation with collective members only. The number of individual members peaked at approximately 6,000 in 1994.

Over the years MS grew into an institution in Danish society. MS enjoyed a special relationship with the Danish Ministry of Foreign affairs from the earliest days of Danish development assistance. In 1961 MS initiated, and undertook the task as secretariat for the "Landsindsamlingen Danmarks U-landshjælp", a huge fundraising campaign in 1962 which allowed MS (in 1963) to deposit DKK 12 million in a national fund for development projects. When the Danish Parliament (1963) decided to establish a volunteer programme as part of the ODA, the experience of MS heavily influenced the legislation, and the administration of this programme was subsequently delegated to MS. General development education was linked to the actual development work right from the beginning. More recently MS has taken on other additional activities. Below is a summary of the size of the Danida supported MS activities as per the year 2001. For the year 2002, the support has been reduced by approximately 10% as a consequence of the general reduction in Danish ODA.

- A. Today's major area of Danida-support is "MS in the South" (MSiS). MSiS was introduced in 1993 as the successor to the Danish volunteer programme established in 1963. The current strategy was adopted in 2001 with two interrelated goals: Poverty eradication and intercultural cooperation. The partnership approach is an important feature of the programme and entails that two or more organisations in mutual trust share responsibility for joining resources to achieve goals for their mutual benefit and empowerment. Partnerships are formalised and guided by partnership agreements. In 2001 MS cooperated with 258 partner-organisations from nine different countries/geographical regions. Personnel assistance is a key element in MS' contributions to the partnerships. Development workers (DWs) are assigned to the majority of partners, which, however, can also be supported in other ways. In 2001 MS had 173 DWs deployed.

- B. MS receives an institutional block grant (core funding) for administration of public services (e.g. including MSiS, recruitment of UN volunteers, renovation and shipment of used equipment, and development education). Funding has in general followed the increase in the price index. MS has on several occasions pointed out that the block grant for administration in reality covers a number of non-administrative (public service) functions, e.g. the library and editorial work.
- C. The Programme for Renovation and Shipment of Used Equipment has been operating since 1990 and seeks to support social and economic development through shipment of used and renovated equipment. The Programme has led to the support of 60 organisations in 35 countries, primarily within health (including disabled people), education and the social sector.
- D. MS is the only Danish NGO, which has a so-called framework agreement with Danida on information and development education. The first framework agreement was entered into in 1990, and the current agreement covers 2000-2002.
- E. Danida contributions to MS' Balkan activities started in 2000, and derive from the special fund for peace and stability (FRESTA).
- F. Small, additional grants for campaigns are provided strictly tied to particular events and are, thus, of an ad hoc nature.
- G. MS' involvement in humanitarian assistance is limited to participation in the two consortia DACAAR and DASS (the appropriations for these have not been included in the figures below). Danida funding for renovation of equipment for humanitarian work amounts to DKK 6.5 million from 1996 until 2001.

Overview of Danida support to MS-activities in 2001 (Million DKK):

| A | B | C | D | E | F | G | Total |
|-----|----|---|---|---|---|---|-------|
| 149 | 28 | 9 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 201 |

As a prominent NGO, MS has been subject to many independent studies and reviews over the years. Danish Government institutions have commissioned some of these; MS has initiated others as part of internal processes of change and development. None of these studies have intended a full coverage of all MS activities. A desk-study has been undertaken over the summer 2002, in order to demarcate the relevant scope for this evaluation and avoid repetition of previous studies. A reference group has been established as a forum for direct dialogue between stakeholders of the evaluation representing: MS, the department for NGO-assistance, the technical advisory service (TSA) and the Evaluation Secretariat.

2. Objectives

The main objectives of the evaluation are to obtain:

- An assessment of the relevance, effectiveness and impact of Danish development assistance administered by MS;

- Recommendations for possible improvement of MS' performance and Danidas mode of cooperation with MS.

3. Scope of work

Prioritising the resources available for this evaluation, it is important only to undertake new and additional analyses and assessments as needed to evaluate the activities performed against the following five evaluation criteria (ref. Evaluation Guidelines):

- The relevance of the strategic intentions guiding the work of MS – overall strategies as well as country strategies and specific intentions of individual partnerships (i.e.: Are external factors taken properly into account in the anticipation of the role and potential of MS within the double goal of poverty eradication and intercultural cooperation?)
- The impact of MS in Denmark and partner countries (i.e.: In which fields, in which institutional settings and by which criteria are MS to be attributed causal effects, positive as well as negative?)
- The effectiveness of initiatives taken by MS (i.e.: To which extent have individual endeavours proven able to achieve the intended objectives, and are MS able to monitor and realistically assess the processes in a way that enhances the effectiveness?)
- The efficiency of the cooperation with national partner-organisations (i.e.: Have individual endeavours delivered the intended outputs, e.g. as stipulated in the partnership agreements, or is the efficiency evaluable in other ways?)
- The sustainability of the outcome of MS' work in Denmark and partner countries (e.g.: Are the effects of initiatives long lived or soon forgotten, and to which degree does the sustainability depend on choices made by MS, partners or external factors?)

One primary point of reference for this evaluation is Danida's civil society strategy. Cutting across the evaluation criteria above, the Strategy provides the general guidelines and specific criteria for Danish development assistance to be channelled through Danish NGOs. Aiming at poverty alleviation as the overall objective of Danish development assistance, Danish NGOs are acknowledged as potential partners, strengthening civil society organisations in developing countries through partnerships within capacity development, provision of services or advocacy activities.

4. Issues

The main subject of this evaluation will be the implementation of the MSiS programme. Specific issues, which are not covered by previous studies, are selected for detailed study. Additionally, some complementary aspects of MS are identified in order to complete the picture. The evaluation must comprise the following issues:

- 1) Organisational capacity and performance of MS
- 2) Performance of the DWs
- 3) Outcome and impact of MSiS at country- and beneficiary level
- 4) Performance and outcome of MS development education in schools in Denmark
- 5) Coherence and synergy within MS' diversified portfolio
- 6) The special role of MS

The six issues are elaborated below, and given individual remarks regarding the approach in the next section. Further specification of the issues is given in the working paper produced by the desk study, as a background for this evaluation. The evaluation should address, but not be limited to the specified aspects of the issues.

1) Organisational capacity and performance of MS

The detailed findings regarding issues 2-5 below should be taken as qualifiers of the previous assessments of the overall organisational capacity of MS, available in recent studies. These studies are not to be repeated, but MS' ability to implement review recommendations is to be assessed. One particular aspect is not sufficiently covered by the previous studies: The financial management system of MS. This calls for a comparison with the financial management requirements imposed on the NGOs that hold Framework agreements with Danida.

2) Performance of the DWs

Emphasis should be on the performance of DWs and the relevance of their inputs (in relation to the needs of the partner organisation, beneficiaries and overall MSiS objectives). The concept of DW is broad enough to include both long-term positions and youth-exchange – and the MSiS policy specifically intends further experiments with different forms of personnel support within the concept of DW. This leaves some specific questions open for the evaluation, i.e.:

- What is the scope of the experiments undertaken so far, how are the experiments to be evaluated and how is MS accountable to Danida, if the DW-concept itself is in flux?
- How does MS prepare DWs prior to deployment, and how does MS guide, support and motivate DWs when posted?
- How do the DWs contribute to other aspects of MS' activities during and after deployment?

Some aspects of this issue regard the process and procedures for management and internal decision-making in MS, the role of the Country Offices (CO) and the role and functioning of the MS training centre in Arusha (TCDC). This constitutes linkages back to issue 1 above. Other aspects regard the partnership relations with the recipients of DWs and the relevance of personnel assistance as a modality for cooperation. This constitutes a linkage to issue 3 below. Finally the utilisation of DWs as resources with multiple potentials in the work of MS is an aspect which is interlinked with issue 5 below.

3) Outcome and impact of MSiS at country, partner and beneficiary level

The evaluation should analyse the outcome and impact of the partnerships and the development processes supported by MS. MS' input to these processes will typically be little more than the DWs posted in partner organisations, and the general “means and resources” administered by the CO as supplementary modalities within the partnership approach. The country specific criteria for this analysis must be found in the hierarchy of objectives established by the MSiS policy, country strategies and partnership agreements.

One primary point of reference should be the INTRAC Impact-study of 1999, especially in the sense that this evaluation should add to the continued development of the relevant monitoring and evaluation methodology.

4) Performance and outcome of MS development education in schools in Denmark

It is assumed that this issue will lead to findings, which represent the full scope of development education undertaken by MS, since it encompasses most of the different media. The study should include both the professional quality of the individual products and how teachers and students perceive it. The effectiveness and efficiency of the distribution and marketing strategies should also be assessed. A primary point of departure for this study should be the review of project-related information activities undertaken by NGO's (Danicom, 1996).

5) Coherence and synergy within MS' diversified portfolio

Emphasis should be on findings that enable the evaluation to establish recommendations for future improvements. It is a crucial question whether an organisation like MS is able not just to generate economy of scale of country programmes, but also to realise the "potential of diversification" – the opportunities for synergetic coherence between the different aspects of MS' work. This issue includes both specific, strategically chosen activities undertaken as time-bound priorities by MS (campaigns) and the question whether or how this organisational potential is available for the more continuous work and internal/external dialogue. To a large extent the evaluation should assess this capability by studying a few cases, chosen as examples of "best practices". The processes inherent to these cases should be scrutinised in a number of perspectives, e.g.:

- How, and by whom, were the activity originally motivated, and which resources were mobilised in the process?
- How do the "contributors" assess the final outcome, compared to the resources invested?

On the other hand, the team should also be aware of specific "opportunities lost" or general shortcomings in achieving "coherence and synergy" as partners, DWs or other informants might indicate them during field study.

6) The special role of MS

Emphasis must be on the comparable advantages of MS at the time of the evaluation, and thus allow an assessment of the justification and the implications of the special arrangements with Danida and possible recommendations for further development. Aspects of the special role should be found both in the self-assessment of MS, and in the way MS is perceived from outside.

5. Evaluation Approach

As a matter of principle it is worth stating that the outcome of an evaluation is not to be envisaged as disclosure of the undisputable "evident truth" about neither the general subject nor the specified issues of the study. The value of an evaluation relies on the relevance of the chosen scope and objectives of the evaluation, and the professional quality of the **independent assessments** achieved through a **transparent process**. Consequently, this section of the ToR outlines the envisaged process, and leads on to the reporting requirements and the identification of the needed professional competencies of the team.

The evaluation will include field-studies in Nepal, Kenya and Zambia. In order to fulfil the objectives of the evaluation, the methods and process must ensure that the team will be able to retrieve information of different nature from different sources, and orchestrate a transparent aggregation and analysis of findings. The outline of the methodology to be applied by the team must be agreed upon by the Evaluation Secretariat during contract negotiation.

- The first issue of the evaluation – overall MS-capacity and performance – requests clear references to be made to previous studies and recommendations. This issue will play a relatively minor role in the initial phase of the evaluation. The team must however trace the “most significant changes” within MS management system and organisation and the degree to which these changes are in accordance with the recommendations of previous studies, as a natural element of “getting to know” MS. The substantial outcome of this evaluation will be the subsequent inclusion of findings from field-studies, which will allow the evaluation to revisit the issues of current capacity constraints with (opportunity for) new priorities, based on practical experience rather than general management theory.
- The second issue – performance of DWs – has not previously been evaluated. In the initial phase of the evaluation, the team must establish a statistical overview of the DWs presently deployed in the three countries to be visited – in 2001 totalling 54 persons. The nature and history of their assignments, as well as possible synergetic relations to other issues of the evaluation, must lead to a motivated selection of a feasible number of DWs and a prioritisation of the resources to be invested in this issue during field studies. As part of the motivation, the question of representativity must be addressed – not as primary objective for the selection, but as a methodological clarification of the implications of the selection made.
- The third issue – outcome and impact of MsiS – is the most crucial element of the methodological design of the country studies, and thus heavily referred to in the team composition below. In the initial phase of the evaluation (and in the tender as well), the team must clearly establish the criteria and techniques to be applied when selecting and analysing specific, recently completed or ongoing activities and processes. Throughout the process of the evaluation, the team must sustain a dialogue with MS on the outline and further potential of their “Most Significant Changes” approach (MSC).
- The fourth issue – MS’ development education in schools in Denmark – stands out as a quite separate element of the evaluation, which require a team with a particular professional background. Thus this study will be undertaken under a separate contract, based on ToR established by the team and the Evaluation Secretariat during the inception phase of the overall evaluation. The timing will be crucial, since the findings of this study must be integrated and taken into account not just in the evaluation report, but also in the process of assessing the coherence and synergetic potential of the MS organisation.
- The fifth issue – coherence and synergy – should by nature cut across the four issues above, and also touch upon other activities undertaken by MS. The identification of which case studies to pursue, in order to assess synergy effects, should be made during the inception phase – but leave room for the team to add other examples (good or bad) as they might surface during the process.
- The sixth issue – the special role of MS – tends to be the last, also in a chronological outline. A historical “evaluation” of MS would easily reveal examples of processes where MS has played a unique role as an “institution” – like the old example already given in the background above. It is however another matter to assess the actual

“here and now” status of the organisation. In the initial phase, the team must present the leads it intends to follow when assessing this issue. Some leads will be related to the issue of coherence and synergy (i.e. assessing unique internal capacities of MS), others will lead to a survey of external partners/actors assessment of MS’ uniqueness whereas some will lead to a particular assessment of the “mutual benefits” or other arguments pro et con the present, unique relations between MS and Danida. Since the evaluation itself will constitute the best point of departure for the broader, external assessment of the “special role”, and how MS performs it, it is proposed that the final assessment of this issue is taken on as a task for the team when facilitating the process of commenting on the draft report. This could take the form of an external hearing, seminar or workshop with representation of a broad range of interest groups, complementing the ordinary process of retrieving written comments on the report from the primary stakeholders of the evaluation.

The optimal process and sequencing of the studies – i.e. the implementation of the methodology – will be discussed and finally approved as part of the inception report. The general outline is, however, bound to include a phase of simultaneous studies in several countries, and thus emphasises the need for highly skilled national teams, capable of undertaking parts of the study under “remote” supervision by the teamleader. This intensive phase of simultaneous work will allow for an iterative process of assessing the fifth issue – coherence and synergy – as an integrated element of the process. The sixth issue – “the special role” of MS – is, on the other hand, an issue prone to be undertaken (or at least finalised) in a separate process. As a prerequisite for this process, the below requirements on reporting has been established.

6. Reporting

The reports to be produced during the course of the evaluation are:

- An Inception Report, detailing methodology and providing a detailed plan for the fieldwork (in Denmark as well as abroad), specifying the documentation required (and whether it has been retrieved), the meetings to be held and activities/projects to be subject to detailed study during the fieldwork.
- A Debriefing note on preliminary findings and possible needs for revision of the work-plan, to be presented at a debriefing meeting with the reference group immediately after the start-up field visits by the core-team.
- Country reports on the countries selected for field studies, to be publicly available within three weeks after wrap-up workshops (including MS, partner and UM representatives, and thus substituting traditional debriefing meetings). Country reports could take the form of proceedings of the Workshops.
- A Draft Report no later than June 2003.
- After a thorough and facilitated process of commenting, and final assessment of the “special role” of MS, a Final Report ready for publication.

7. Composition of the evaluation team

The evaluation will require a multidisciplinary team, comprising international and local consultants with previous, substantial experience in the working conditions of development NGOs, process approaches and participatory techniques applicable to develop-

ment cooperation, and the specific national context of Nepal, Kenya, Zambia and Denmark. The general profile of the international consultants should include a theoretical background in social science as well as professional expertise in the field of participatory ODA-evaluation, process- and impact monitoring and institutional capacity analysis. The local consultants should match one or more of the same characteristics, and hold the intimate knowledge of social/institutional preconditions on the southern side of the partnerships.

The team is anticipated to organise itself in four sub-groups – a core-team responsible for studies undertaken in Denmark and coordination/QA on country-studies, and three relatively independent national teams. The team should include the following resources:

Core-team (3-4 consultants)

- Senior experience in the field of evaluating ODA aiming at (and channelled through) civil society organisations.
- Up-to-date references in the field of impact monitoring and institutional capacity analyses.
- General knowledge about management models applied by other northern development NGO's.
- At least one consultant must be fluent in Danish

Previous experience in the field of ODA related Human Resource Management and External Communication would be considered an asset, but not a requirement.

Three National Teams

- Intimate knowledge of the national civil society scene.
- Previous experience in the field of ODA-evaluation.
- Broad experience in existing working relations between national/local and northern NGO's.

Apart from these resources, a native English speaking copy editor, general secretarial assistance and interpretation relevant for country studies are included in the contract. Resources for the evaluation of the fourth issue above (development education) are mobilised based on individual ToR and contract.

8. Timing

It is expected that the evaluation will be carried out from October 2002 to August 2003. The crucial milestone will be the submission of the Draft report and the final, facilitated process of commenting, scheduled for June 2003. Other scheduled milestones along the way are:

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| October 2002: | Contracting and mobilisation |
| December: | Submission of Inception Report |
| January – March 2003: | Field studies |
| March – May: | Country reports + studies in DK |
| June: | Submission of Draft Report + final work on MS' "special role" |
| August: | Final Report |

9. Major background Documents

- Evaluation Guidelines, Danida, February 1999
- Strategi for dansk støtte til civilsamfundet i udviklingslandene – herunder samarbejdet med de danske NGO'er, Danida, October 2000
- Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management, OECD/DAC, 2002
- Desk Study on the Danish Association for International Cooperation (MS) (including an extensive list of documents available for the evaluation), IDP, August 2002
- Solidarity through Partnership – Policy for MS in the South, MS, April 2001
- Review – MS in The South programme 2000, MS, 2001
- The Danish NGO impact study (INTRAC), Danida, 1999
- Finanslov for finansåret 2002 – tekst og anmærkninger for §6.32.05., Finansministeriet

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