

Report on thematic visit to Bangladesh and Nepal 1st to 16th December 2014

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1. Background

The new CISU Strategy 2014-17 is emphasising that CISU should enhance its cooperation with funds and capacity networks in the Global South as to facilitate that the 300 CSO members and their partners have improved access to information on how the Global South funds and capacity networks operate. Danida's new Civil Society Policy is also paying high attention to the potential of providing more funds and capacity services through South funds and networks, and this is of increasing importance to CISU members and their partners.

In light of the above, CISU has made a plan for its work in the Global South where identification of relevant South funds and capacity networks constitute an important basis for sharing this information with its members and their partners. Another part of the plan is to identify relevant resource persons from South funds and networks, who - where relevant and feasible -may provide input to CISU capacity services to its members.

As part of its thematic visits to the Global South every year, CISU conducts a number of contextual visits where the aim is to collect information on the context in selected countries. These ToR are covering such a contextual visit, which took place from 1st to 16th December i.e. 6 days in Bangladesh and 8 days in Nepal.

2. General objectives

- To collect information on South funds and capacity networks to be processed and disseminated to members (the information will be included in the so-called 'Country profiles' on www.cisu.dk).
- To analyse the profile and capacity of selected South funds and networks as to assess potentials for practical cooperation.
- Inspiration - how do South funds/networks work in practise at all levels, and how can CISU use this for inspirational purposes in relation to establishing good funding practices?

Thematic issues:

Bangladesh:

- The linkage between policy advocacy and funding/capacity building. How does it work? Division of roles and responsibility among funding agency and partners/members.

The focus of the visit was on Manusher Jonno Foundation and PRIP Trust and their partners.

Nepal:

- Identify active and relevant CSO networks and how they tailor their funding mechanism and capacity development activities according to the post conflict context.
- Space for Civil Society in relation to South funds: Do donors leave space for CSOs to hold GO accountable?

The focus of the visit was on the new multi-donor funding mechanism: The Governance Facility and on the EU and CSOs.

3. Observations and analysis on thematic issues

Bangladesh

Danish CSO engagement in Bangladesh financed through CISU and DANIDA

- 9 CISU member organisations are active in Bangladesh
- 6 active projects are financed through CISU (Civil Society Fund) with a total volume of app. 15 mio DKK
- 6 finalized projects have been supported with a total amount of app. 2.5 mio DKK
- 5 larger INGO: Danish Family and Planning Association, Save the Children Denmark, DanchurchAid, LO/FTF Council and Danmission are as framework organisations active in Bangladesh and supported directly through DANIDA (DMFA)

The Danish Country Policy Paper for Bangladesh and the inclusion of civil society

In the Country Policy Paper (CPP) from 2013-2017 it is stated that the overall objectives governing Denmark's engagement in Bangladesh are to:

- 1) Contribute to poverty reduction,
- 2) Promote democracy, human rights, rule of law and good governance
- 3) Promote commercial cooperation and
- 4) Strengthen collaboration on global issues.

The CPP is explicitly mentioning the **involvement of CSO's** in relation to objective 1 in relation to the chapter concerning "Water supply and sanitation" where "Several other development partners and CS provide assistance to this sector" (p. 11) and in relation to objective 2 in the chapter "Support to human Rights and good governance" where "CSO's are crucial to further progress and will continue to constitute an essential part of Danish support..." (p.14)

The CPP announces a shift from "traditional donor-recipient relation to a more balanced relationship with Denmark also pursuing its own interests". In the Objectives of the CPP, the rights-based approaches to ensure

systematic inclusion and empowerment of the most vulnerable groups are highlighted, whether it concerns rights to natural resources, women's rights or to the rights of indigenous people.

During the meeting with the staff from the Danish Embassy, we asked to which extent the CPP was aligned with the Danish Civil Society Policy. The general answer was that a concept paper only allows a limited number of pages and is primarily aligned with "The Right to better Life".

Through the **Local Grant Authority**, the Danish Embassy informs that they will "respond quickly to emerging needs" according to the CPP.

The Context for civil society in Bangladesh

More than 30.000 CSO's are registered in the country with The Social Welfare Council, 1600 with NGO Affairs Bureau (according to PRIP) and 2300 (according to MJF).

All organisations must register with different public authorities depending on different criteria. Furthermore, internationally-funded development activities must be approved by the NGO Affairs Bureau, who has a very negative reputation amongst the CSOs, met. An overview of the different types of registration can be found in a recent paper from Uttara University¹.

From the point of view of the CSO's met, it is a common characteristic that many especially local organisations use microcredit as a means to ensure financial sustainability.

Another characteristic is that Bangladesh has some enormous national development actors, such as BRAC. They attract donors more easily, and it is often mentioned by visited CSOs that smaller organisations have trouble competing for funding. A general view expressed was that the competition is very tough and that everybody mostly works in isolation.

The EU is mentioned as an increasingly important (and large) donor by Save the Children. A CSO consultation took place in Jan. 2014 as a preparation for a Civil Society Roadmap.

[EU + Future Engagement with Civil Society Organisations \(CSOs\) in Bangladesh: CSOs consultation final workshop](#)  [120 KB]

An increasing development issue mentioned by all stakeholders met is the emphasis on local government and its strong need for enhanced capacity. They are not able to implement laws and live up to their responsibilities as duty bearers. An example is the Access to Information Act from 2009 which requires transparency from government about people's rights to services from government. According to the organisations we met, local government at different levels have neither the knowledge nor the capacity to live up the Act. In general, the lack of capacity makes local government a weak partner for local CSOs who are in demand for a more equal counterpart in development. Some organisations have experience with capacitating local government and find that in some places local government is eager to improve its capacity.

Funding mechanisms, capacity development and networks in general

With regards to funding of CSOs, our general observation is that large organisations (like BRAC, Proshika or INGOs), the capital based and those with privileged access to donors, have better access to funding than smaller organisations, especially those based outside of the capital and those unknown to donors. Furthermore, where there are funds channelled to smaller organisations, management companies are often chosen as the channel instead of civil society organisations.

¹<http://www.eajournals.org/wp-content/uploads/Ngo-Laws-In-Bangladesh-The-Need-to-Harmonize.pdf>

According to the Danish Embassy in Dhaka, in their case, they no longer have the resources to collaborate with smaller or unfamiliar organisations. It requires more effort and manpower than dealing with the large and well known. Therefore, as part of the upcoming CPP for Bangladesh, the Embassy will fund only 4-5 organisations, with all of whom they have longstanding partnerships. They will provide core funding, which is less demanding on the Embassy's part. In this way, the country policy doesn't seem to strive towards the goal of a diversified civil society from the Danish Civil Society Strategy (June 2014).

During this visit, Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) has been identified as the primary open funding mechanism for smaller organisations. MJF funds and provides capacity building to carefully selected (national) partner organisations within the themes of human rights and governance. Unfortunately, even here, access is quite limited considering the overall number of CSOs in Bangladesh.

With regard to capacity development, the general observation is that there is access but it is quite expensive. For smaller, local organisations, access depends on the funding they can get to buy training or on partnering with organisations that provide training etc. This could be for example MJF, PRIP Trust or INGOs. PRIP Trust has an excellent reputation as a facilitator of capacity development, especially long-term organisational development.

Manusher Jonno Foundation

Manusher Jonno Foundation was established by CARE in 2002 but obtained its own legal status in 2006. Over the years, MJF has supported 178 partner organisations. In the present funding cycle, MJF have 125 partners. MJF selects partners in a thorough six month process. Among the selection criteria are capacity in financial management and monitoring and others. MJF inform that they cannot take on more partners until 2016, and then the number will depend on their future funding.

MJF partners receive grants based on project proposals and have to participate in compulsory training on financial management. Based on their identified needs, they will also receive training in other areas, e.g. human rights based approach or advocacy. Especially the trainings on financial management and internal governance are mentioned as trademarks of MJF by its partners.

We met with 10 MJF-partners in a joint interview. According to them, the main achievement of MJF is building the capacity of its partner organisations to match the level of their aspirations and ideas. MJF sets high standards for the management of the partners and help them live up to these standards in a respectful way. MJF has also opened the eyes of their partners to the role of advocates and human rights defenders and not just service providers.

Most of the CSOs were long-term partners of MJF and have managed to get other funding, e.g. from USAID, CIDA, DFID and the DFID funded Shiree Programme².

MJF also capacitate around 30 non-partner organisations. These organisations have not met the selection criteria to make partners but have shown potential to become eligible for funding from MJF or other donors. 80 % have managed to get funding afterwards.

MJF also plays an **advocacy role** on issues that are identified as relevant and important to all partner-organisations. MJF mobilizes its partners in campaigns on issues where there's no strong ownership by other organisations. The prime example is the effort to get the Access to Information Act in 2009. MJF played a crucial role in this advocacy work. Sometimes MJF also joins other campaigns on a more equal footing with their partners. But as mentioned by the 'capacity development team' in MJF, it is always a challenge to coordinate very independent CSOs, who in general don't like to be coordinated.

²<http://www.shiree.org/>

DFID (UK) is the primary donor of MJF but Australian Aid and others have also provided smaller funding. MJF also have some income-generating activities, e.g. training of organisations that are not partners to MJF. Director Shaheen Anan expresses concern about the future funding of MJF and seeks to diversify the funding sources in order to become less dependent on DFID. *With the support from the UK and Australian government, Bangladesh has undertaken a programme titled Strengthening Government Social Protection for the Poor (SGSP) for reforming the country's social protection system by enhancing its transparency and accountability. The program will run from 2013 to 2017. Ministry of Finance and six other line Ministries, and UNDP, WFP, WB and MJF are partners in the project.* It is a vulnerable position to have only one major donor. MJF and similar funding mechanisms don't seem to be a priority for donors, even though this would help increase their outreach without having to deal directly with all the grantees. We were not able to learn the reason behind this way of prioritizing. Our observation is that the transaction costs of dealing with outreach and local organisations are held by the grant recipients instead of the donors. Whether transactions costs are smaller this way remains an important question that requires more thorough research. Either way, the capacity and knowledge of the donors will be diminished, which is regretted by several CSOs.

The Danish Embassy spoke very positively of the capacity work and acknowledged the fact that their strategic partners indirectly benefitted from the capacity work of MJF.

PRIP Trust

PRIP Trust was established in the 1980s by PACT (USA) and is registered as a trust in 1995 with the NGO Affairs Bureau. PRIP has an elected 7 member's board and a 3 director management team and 25 field staff. The purpose of PRIP was to support smaller CSOs to be better able to work with advocacy. At that time, the larger CSOs dominated the joint advocacy efforts. PRIP is not a funding mechanism but a capacity development organisation that builds capacity of both CSOs and local government bodies. Organisations can enter into a tailor-made process of 12 to 18 months, based on self-assessment of the needs for organisational development. This is a very intensive type of capacity development which requires a great deal of dedication from the organisation. If the dedication is there, it will bring ownership to the process and internalisation of learning. Often, the initiative for such a process lies with the donors of the organisation, and the dedication from the organisation itself isn't necessarily there. The interventions must be regarded as their own learning product by the partners themselves. Processes are important and they must be designed according to specific needs and interests of each CSO. PRIP uses baseline data for each capacity area and consensus building is a crosscutting issue throughout the capacity development period.

PRIP has recently finalized a capacity development component of a large **EU-project** called **SMILING**. PRIP provided technical support to improve the implementation of the project and trained 204 smaller organisations in 15 districts. One of the success criteria was to make the CSOs eligible to apply for and get EU or other funding. 60 of them have managed this, which is seen as a major achievement by PRIP.

During a training in 'Local context analysis' with 16 SMILING partners (local CSOs covering the entire country), followed by a meeting with the participants, it became obvious that even though the project has finished, they keep in touch with each other and with PRIP. The hope is to establish a network or platform for local governance with PRIP as the lead organisation. The focus is on vulnerable areas in relation to climate change. It was clear from this meeting that PRIP has a special ability to create a good environment for learning, as it was also pointed out by the Danish Embassy. They create space for smaller and remote CSOs and do follow up through exchange visits and mobilizing in common advocacy work. After group work, the participants came up with a local context assessment matrix. Good (public and CSO) governance is the overall issue and in accordance the issues of climate change, food security and violence against women are developing. One of the approaches that PRIP has been using is the establishing of so-called 'Hubs' in remote areas and 7 issue-based advocacy networks has been running over the years. According to PRIP and partners, the organisational approach is the core competence and has been since the start. There is 'no size fits all' when it comes to capacity development, therefore tailor-made capacity building is designed for each organisation.

PRIP has had its ups and downs funding- and size wise. Presently, it is supported by Norway (ACD). The Danish Embassy is speaking highly of the capacity work of PRIP, but had to reject an application from them due to a political conflict that took place during the election process in 2003. PRIP themselves regard the rejection as a punishment for their justice work and that they became victims in the highly politicised environment during the election.

PRIP is strongly arguing that local governance is a key issue in Bangladesh at the moment. The work of local CSOs must link to local structures. Since the independence in 1971, the devolution of power from central to local level is crucial. Therefore social accountability is a very central issue, according to PRIP.

Other networks (with or without funding) mentioned during our visit (not visited):

1. CAMPE is a CSO network focussing on Primary education see www.campebd.org/
2. ADAB - A Coordinating body of NGOs in Bangladesh with more than 1000 members according to CSOs met, but has no capacity development. See www.adab.org.bd/
3. SHIREE www.shiree.org is a DFID funded programme. For more information: INTRAC report: "Study on support to Civil Society through Multi Donor Funds".

Nepal

Danish CSO engagement in Nepal financed through CISU and DANIDA

- 30 CISU members are actively involved in development work in Nepal
- 14 ongoing projects are presently funded by the Civil Society Fund (CISU) within a total volume of app.25 mio DKK. Projects are implemented within a broad area from natural resource management, women/gender issues, disability, farming, health and children's rights etc.
- 6 larger INGO are active in Nepal: LO/FTF Council, Danish Family and Planning Association (Sex og Samfund), Danish Red Cross, MS/Action Aid, Dan Church Aid and CARE.

The Danish Country Policy Paper for Nepal and the **inclusion of civil society**

The Nepal Country Policy Paper from 2013-2017 has two strategic focus areas:

- Peace-building, human rights and democracy, e.g. through support to relevant Peace Trust Fund, relevant national actors working for promoting and strengthening respect for human rights, and to local government and democratic institutions etc.
- Green and inclusive economic growth, e.g. through support to the development of agricultural development chains, rural infrastructure, to improving access to renewable energy in rural areas.

In relation to the **involvement and support to civil society**, the Danish Embassy informs about the recent Multi Donor Pooled Funding initiative, **The Governance Facility** of Denmark, Switzerland and UK that will run from 2014-2018 and which builds on previous experiences from the RDIF (Rights, Democracy and Inclusion Fund) and HRGGP (Human Rights and Good Governance) program. Some of the challenges mentioned by the Embassy is how to ensure the anchoring of the initiative, i.e. how to identify independent profiles among CS and thereby avoid political affiliation. A few cases of Corruption presently running and a lack

of accountability in general are of central concern. In recent years, education and other social issues have been improving and now the gaps emerging from weak Government structures have to be filled by NGOs, since donors haven't been effective in building up. In this context, the new focus among donors is to apply a Local Governance component, supporting local government structures and thereby ensuring social accountability. Advocacy is characterized as somehow relevant, but it is argued that in the end, poor people need basic services. We didn't/couldn't obtain any information as to what extent the Danish Civil Society Policy has been applied in relation to the CPP and country strategies.

The Danish Embassy informs that due to limited resources they will in future only be supporting the 4-5 CSOs like for example Action Aid, OXFAM, CARE, AIN (an int. alliance consisting of app. 60 INGOs) they have been supporting for the last 25 years. But there have been incidences where the Embassy has turned down proposals from the INGOs due the high administrative costs. The Embassy informs that they have been met by criticism from national CSOs in that respect.

In relation to the active involvement of CS in the development and monitoring of the support to CS, the plan is to conduct biannual meetings with their CS partners.

The context for Civil Society in Nepal

CSOs in Nepal are relatively diverse and reflect the social, economic and political plurality of the country. Since 2008, the number of registered CSOs has increased by over 25% to over 35,000 organisations. There is evidence of a stronger CSO presence and debate at the local level. Although a majority of CSOs continue to be registered in the Kathmandu Valley, some of the Kathmandu organisations are managing to reach more groups and people in remote areas, where in the past their links have been weak. At the same time, CSOs at the community level are playing a greater role, targeting marginalised and excluded groups (women, Dalits, Adibasi /Janajati and youth) while focusing particularly on their rights and increasing their access to the state's resources and services.

The general situation of Nepal is that the country is still struggling to overcome the civil war which ended in 2006 with an agreement of a Comprehensive Peace Accord to be included in a new Constitution, which unfortunately has not yet been agreed upon.

As a consequence, no local elections have taken place in the past 16 years and hence there are no elected duty bearers present at local governance level to be held accountable. This is a major concern for all visited organization and they express deep concern of the high risk of corruption heavily affecting their interventions.

With regard to the general situation of CSO's, we refer to the observations and findings in the CISU, Thematic Learning Visit from February 2013 ([link](#)) and to the evaluation of Danish support to civil society, country study Nepal April 2013³.

Funding mechanisms, capacity development and networks in general

The Thematic visit has focused on - and will primarily report in relation to the **EU delegations (EUD) and the CSOs** and to the Multi Donor Funding Mechanisms: the '**Governance Facility**', which was launched in December 2014 during our visit.

³ Evaluation of Danish Support to Civil Society, Country Study – Nepal, April 2013

Civil society and the EU

The EU delegation was established in 2009 and has presently a staffing level consisting of 40 persons. The overall **EU Country Strategy Paper (CSP) for Nepal 2007 – 2013** is promoting a shift from individual rural development projects towards a focus on **three sector programs**: 1) Education, thus supporting the Governments agenda, and ensuring a more systematic approach to ‘targeting the poor’ and ‘sustainability’ of results 2) Stability and peace building and 3) Trade facilitation and promotion of trade and economic activities. Human rights, gender, conflict prevention and environment are crosscutting issues. Annex 2 of the CSP includes a Country diagnosis.

In chapter 1.3 social inclusion is mentioned as a core challenge to Nepal’s development agenda. The role and function of CS is not explicitly mentioned or part of the CSP.

The EU supports CS through various programs and with a total of 360 mio Euro from 2014 -2020 through the so-called Multi annual sector programs:

- The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR)
- The non-state actors and local authorities (NSA and LA program).

A number of other thematic programs are: Rural Development, Education, Strengthening democracy – decentralization – democratic governance.

According to the EUD, the support has tripled since 2014 and the EU is thus becoming the second largest funding agent in Nepal.

The EUD is presently in a process of developing an **EU CSO Roadmap of Nepal**.

The first **EU/CSO consultation** took place in August 2014 and the second in December 2014, where we as CISU representatives were invited together with around 50 other CSOs, mainly INGO’s, larger national NGO’s and various Foundations and Trusts. EUD is hoping to have the CSO Roadmap ready by the end of 2015.

The purpose was to collect views and opinions on most relevant priorities for the call for proposal in Nepal in relation to the EU CSO-Local Authorities (LA) thematic program with the amount of 3 mio Euro.

The program is one of the concrete tools to put into practice the new EU policy “the roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe’s Engagement with Civil Society in External Relations”. The new policy focus is on empowering primarily local CSOs.

In Nepal, this program has been implemented since 2007 with around 30 projects supported with a total amount of 17 million Euros.

The aim of the program is to enhance CS as key players for development and poverty eradication. The objective of the program is to enhance CSOs and local authorities’ contribution to governance as a) Actors in governance and accountability; b) as partners in fostering social development; and c) as key stakeholders in promoting inclusive and sustainable growth.

During the CSO consultation the app. 50 participants were divided into three sector groups: 1) education, 2) rural development, and 3) democratic governance. Seven questions for group-work were identified. Many key observations and recommendations were identified in the groups and relate to the issues previously raised in CISU reports (link JB report): How can EU better support the capacity constraints of Nepalese CSOs? How can EU better support the capacity of local CSOs? What could be the modalities to reach the small/medium grassroots CSOs?

Lots of capacity constraints were identified at institutional, organisational and technical level. And the capability of how to reach local CBOs and how to address legal constraints in that context was a central concern to the participants. The challenge for EUD of managing to reach out more widely and more locally was considered as central issue to be addressed in future. The EUD promotes the establishment of consortiums among CSOs when applying for proposals. Unfortunately the role and functioning of the consortiums wasn’t discussed in the plenary session.

More emphasis should be on internal governance issues of CSOs, on building peoples capacity through civic education, building political leadership and ensuring active citizenship.

The need for depoliticizing networks and review the criteria for entering into partnerships with local groups, CBOs, and people's organisations were highly recommended by the participants.

The question of how a new federalism of Nepal will affect the perception and the role of CSO's was of major concern, but was not addressed further.

The EUD informed about their principles like competitiveness, transparency and capacity building. They also acknowledged the fact that the CS in Nepal is a big body and were questioning the challenge of how to select CSO's, who to invite, and who to talk to. They have elaborated certain criteria in relation to the support to CSOs: more Nepalese CSOs, more focus on local CSO's and only provide support to INGOs if they can create added value in terms of capacitating their local partners. As questioned by the EUD: Why do INGOs after 10 years still have to capacitate their partners, the EUD asks?

In relation to capacity building, the EUD questioned how they can contribute to that. They had no evidence based research in terms of what had worked previously. But interestingly enough, it was pointed out by EUD as a challenge "that it seems that all the energy among the CSOs is on implementation and very little on own organisational development" and that there is a lack of incentives for capacity development in the design of the funding of programs. In future, internal governance issues, capacity assessment, and capacity plans will be requested to be part of strategic plans.

The call for proposal is a competitive process and first call starts in February 2015 (link)

Looking at the participants list from the consultation, we will question to what extent the 50 representatives from the CS reflects the diversity of national CSO's in Nepal. This was also raised as an issue by several participants during breaks, where they suggested that local (Nepalese speaking) CSOs in future should be able to participate with the support from interpreters. Unfortunately there was no space for a brief evaluation of the consultation.

Another point of concern among the participants was the confusion around the large number of programs and funding options, which is also reflected in a rather inaccessible web page. Finally, the need for follow up on the consultations was requested by many participants.

A general view expressed by the visited CSOs, is that 'on paper' there is options for funding, but in practice the trend is unambiguous; fewer and larger CSOs will get more.

The Governance Facility

The Governance Facility (GF) is a new initiative of Denmark, Switzerland and UK and was launched during our visit in December 2014. The program aims to enhance democratic governance, peace building, Human Rights and access to justice and is expected to run from 2014-2018. The GF will support GOV institutions, national and international NGO's and other partners to address governance challenges. The GF is about supporting local governance ensuring social accountability. The secretariat of GF explains how they regard CSO's as filling out the gaps of Government. Governance is essential in the present context of Nepal and according to GF staff, the donors are stepping on each other toes to fill in the gap.

The GF will support four components:

- 1) Peace building and democratic development
- 2) Access to justice
- 3) Human Rights promotion and protection
- 4) Voice and accountability

The GF has a Steering Committee consisting of the three donors, with a representative from the Danish Embassy as Chairperson, a small secretariat and an Advisory Board with representatives of GOV of Nepal, National Planning Commission, CS and donors. The Chairperson from the NGO Federation is a member of the

board. Finally a Technical Committee will be established in order to assess the concept notes in collaboration with the Steering Committee.

The GF will seek partners, particular CSOs, through public calls for submitting concept notes under its four program components. If shortlisted, CSOs will be requested to develop a proposal, which will be assessed by the following considerations:

The GF's objectives and output, number, balance and mix of partners desired for each of the components, balance in number of partnerships between GOV and CS, and geographic areas. Finally the GF seeks to focus on management capacity.

The GF provides 7% for administrative costs, and they have been rejecting INGO's due to the huge OH costs. From the representative in the Danish Embassy, it is stated that the assessment of concept notes will focus on the anchoring of interventions, integration, and professionalism as in the case of the EUD.

They will also be looking at the possible political affiliation with political parties, on a big issue like corruption, and (lack of) accountability mechanisms.

First open calls will be expected in Jan. 2015 in relation to the components 2) Access to justice and 3) Human Rights promotion and protection. In March 2015, the calls will be expected in relation to component 1) Peace Building and democratic development and 4) Voice and accountability.

The calls will be announced through newspapers and on www.gfnepal.org

We were informed that one state partner will be identified together with 10 CSO's.

GF Staff states that the real challenge when establishing a MDPFM is to get the partners to balance their different approaches. DFID has a more entrepreneurial view on CSO's and perceive them as subcontractors whereas DANIDA has a CS policy with the objective of developing a CS as a strong and independent partner. But as it is pointed out, GF should be seen as a funding mechanism where donors harmonize with GOV and each other.

GF and the support for capacity development

The process of proposal writing will include some technical guidance notes. And through an individual assessment of the proposals, they will identify the capacity needs. The general capacity needs will be covered as part of the budget, and the CSO's will find relevant suppliers by themselves.

But as GF staff points out; GF should be seen as a funding mechanism where donors harmonizes with GOV and each other.

When questioning the GF strategy on how to ensure the reach out to local based CSOs, the good experiences and evaluation of the RDIF fund was mentioned by the GF staff themselves. But as the staff concluded: we have to go for the 'possible practice' and not the best practice.

In the end, we are measured on to what extent we are able to use the resources.

The NGO Federation

The NGO Federation ([link](#)) was established in 1991 and has 8-10 staff members at central level and 7 project staff in the 7 district chapters. It now has 5600 paying members and an elected board consisting of 31 board members. They have established so-called district chapters in 7 districts out of 75, where a lot of capacity building is taking place.

The board members are being used as resource persons in relation to capacity building activities in the district, but have no funding provision. Our aim is to ensure policy influence at local level, and we have achieved that 24 local CS representatives are represented in the Agricultural and Education Committees. At central level, we focus on the national planning commission and relevant ministries.

Some of the advocacy issues that NGO Federation has been taking up is the Governments attempt to take provision of VAT from the CSO's. We have been arguing that since CSO's are NOT businesses they should not be VAT-registered businesses.

We are also lobbying the EU in order to put pressure on the GOV for giving space to civil society.

Now the CS picture has changed in Nepal, we see less party affiliation among CSO's and more willingness to do voluntary work at local level.

The lobby work concerning more outreach and national ownership in relation to the establishment and governance of MDPFM's has been a central issue for the NGO Federation. And positions and articles on their web page are very much in line with those of CISU through the capacity development work in the Professional Panel (Fagligt Fokus).

All of the visited Kathmandu-based CSO's were members of the NGO Federation, but it was not clear to us, if and how they benefitted from their membership. All of them had very little knowledge of what their role and work was about and didn't consider them very relevant for their performance as CSO's.

The NGO Federation is presently supported by Switzerland and Finland.

4. Recommendations

General issues to be addressed by CISU and members

- CISU should continuously stress the necessity of the implementation of the Danish Civil Society Policy towards Danida and the Danish embassies. Especially with regard to achieving the goal of a strong *and* diversified civil society. The Bangladesh CPP and Nepalese CPP and their selection of civil society partners do not seem to strive towards this goal. The annual or bi-annual dialogue sessions at the Embassy could address this relevant issue for an overall discussion and plan of action.
- CISU and members should consider the possibility of establishing 'country-groups' and use these for elaborating participatory 'Country profiles' in order to provide input to DMFA Embassies and EU country policies and strategies. It seems there is a wide-open - and non-utilized space for influence with regard to CS influence, especially at the dialogue sessions/meetings at embassies and in the process of developing the EU Civil Society Roadmaps through the EUD and CSO consultations.
- CISU should investigate/innovate to which extent the CSR's can promote and support the capacity development of consortiums in order for local CSOs to get access to funding as well as to capacity development. Should CISU develop a Position Paper on: 'The access to funding and capacity development for all?'
- Monitor where there actually is a trend of Multi Donor Pooled Funds. It doesn't seem to be a trend in Bangladesh. Monitor the rise - and fall? of this trend. Maybe this work will be relevant for CONCORD DK?

Bangladesh

- Practical cooperation with MJF and PRIP is a relevant basis for mutually beneficial partnerships.
- MJF, especially cooperation and sharing regarding:
 - Selection criteria to get funding. What should be the minimum requirements and how to support smaller CSOs that are not eligible?
 - How to mobilize members/partners in joint advocacy activities? And how to ensure equal ownership in advocacy efforts? What role does capacity building play in this?
 - Training manuals and other guidelines, particularly on financial management

- PRIP, especially cooperation and sharing regarding:
 - o Facilitation of long term organisational development (OD)-processes and tools to self-assessment of OD needs.
 - o Advocacy as a constructive relationship between local organisations and local government

Nepal

- NGO Foundation
A strategic partnership with the NGO Foundation should be considered by CISU. Especially in terms of developing a platform for positioning on common issues like the establishment and performance of MDPFM's and to promote their capability to ensure equal access to funding and capacity development for all CSOs

Extract from the Danish Civil Society policy, June 2014

"Danish support to civil society will aim to:

- *Contribute to the development of a strong, independent, vocal and diverse CS as a prerequisite to long-term poverty reduction; respect and protection of human rights; and the promotion of democracy and sustainable development*
- *Promote a vibrant, inclusive and open debate in which CS takes active part as interlocutors in their own right and on behalf of the rights-holders whom they represent.*
- *Create more invited space for CS's participation in national legislation, cooperation and decision-making processes; national and local policy making; social dialogue and the distribution of resources.*
- *Promote a representative, accountable, and locally based CS working according to the principles of participation, accountability, non-discrimination and transparency with regard to its target groups/ beneficiaries.*

Annexes:

- ToR
- Organizations met