Guidelines for the Civil Society Fund

VER 1.3. september 2026

PHOTO: ELSA GÓMEZ ROSARIO OBREGÓN, AXIS

CISU CIVIL SOCIETY IN DEVELOPMENT

Preface

Welcome to the revised version of the Civil Society Fund. The following pages provide detailed information on the fund's principles, requirements, and funding modalities.

First, we will briefly present the thoughts behind the Civil Society Fund and the frameworks we are navigating within.

The Civil Society Fund operates within the following two frameworks:

1. The overall priorities and principles in the Danish Development Corporation within Civil Society.

These state among others that Danish support for civil society aims:

- To contribute to the development of a strong, active, independent and diverse civil society, which is a cornerstone of a consolidated democracy and a goal in its own right.
- To strengthen locally based civil-society actors that have a local constituency and champion the cause of the poorest, most marginalised and vulnerable groups.
- To secure the defence of civic space, including online space, in developing countries, also by providing emergency assistance to human rights advocates in danger.
- To help engage the Danish population at large in development policy. [1]

2. The Danish Finance Act.

This stipulates that:

"… CISU will be provided with a framework amount for a civil society pool, which provides financial support for civil society efforts that both support popular engagement and development efforts, with a view to distribution to a wide range of Danish civil society organisations."

Main changes of version 1.3

Following the introduction of the Civil Society Fund guidelines in 2025 and the subsequent update in December 2025 (version 1.2), CISU has carried out a targeted revision based on experiences from the first application round for Medium Programmes and feedback from users. Only Chapter 5 (Programme Support) and Chapter 8 (Application and Assessment) have been updated in this version.

The main changes focus on:

- Clarifying eligibility requirements, grant ceilings, deadlines, and own contribution requirements for Programme Support.
- Simplifying and refining assessment criteria for programme modalities.
- Updating procedures for Medium and Large Programme applications, including the introduction of a Capacity and Compliance Check.
- Moving detailed assessment and application process information to annexes available on cisu.dk to improve flexibility and user-friendliness.

We hope these updates will make the guidelines clearer, easier to navigate, and better aligned with the needs of applicants and partners.

The changes will take effect on 1 October 2026.

[1] The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' "How-to note" for implementation through Civil Society.

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The Civil Society Fund is an independent support facility funded by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and managed by CISU – Civil Society in Development. The guidelines for the Civil Society Fund are created by CISU in dialogue with CISU's members and users and approved by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Key concepts

Learn more about central concepts within development work in the tool papers and other ressources available on CISU's website www.cisu.dk/en/tools

1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose

The purpose of the Civil Society Fund (CSF) is to support capacity strengthening of civil society actors.

By supporting such actors, the CSF aims to increase citizen participation in governance and development processes. This helps give voice to marginalised groups and holds governments accountable, and address pressing social issues like poverty, inequality, discrimination, and lack of access to services. The CSF contributes to a robust and pluralistic civil society by supporting a wide range of formal and informal organisations, movements, and initiatives. This diversity is crucial for a well-functioning democracy.

Civil society actors can pilot innovative approaches, reach marginalised groups, and advocate for policy reforms, thereby allowing citizens to actively participate in social, economic and political life, contributing to more inclusive and just societies.

The CSF supports partnerships between civil society actors in the Global South and Denmark. Global partnerships built on mutual trust and respect are valuable as they bring together actors with different capacities and perspectives to reach common goals.

The Global South partners are closer to the problems than the Danish partners, and they are best situated to develop solutions. Therefore, the development and implementation of interventions funded by the CSF must be led by the Global South partners, who in turn who must be anchored in and accountable towards the communities wherein they work. [2]

The Danish partners typically contribute with experience, perspectives, technical inputs, and network, as well as access to decision makers and funds from institutional donors and private foundations in Denmark and Europe. Moreover, the Danish partners might be strong allies with potential to advocate for marginalised people in the Global South by addressing issues that requires political or practical action in Denmark, as well as cross-border solidarity work.

The partnerships must be meaningful and relevant to all partners, and the work done must be valuable for the communities benefitting hereof. This is ensured by giving local communities a voice to express needs and power in deciding the solutions addressing those needs.

Sustainability of the work supported by the CSF is enhanced when local communities are the principal change agents in interventions and when the CSF is not the only contribution of resources. Communities and partners can contribute to the work themselves e.g. by hosting meetings in the community hall free of charge or supplementing agricultural inputs to a farming project with seeds gathered from local farmers. These community contributions are resources contributed by communities or local partners. All interventions supported by the CSF are expected to include community contributions. However, it is only a requirement for Medium and Large Programme grants to contribute with financial resources.

CIVIL SOCIETY

is a term for groups, movements, and activists in the society that belong neither to the public nor the private sector

The role of civil society is diverse. Civil society is often the framework for people fighting collectively for rights, improved living conditions, and a fair distribution of the resources of society. Civil society is an important counterbalance to the authority of the state and the private sector as civil society holds both the state and the market accountable for their actions and priorities. At the same time, civil society is also a key partner and contributor in relation to the state and market in the pursuit of solutions to challenges in society.

'GLOBAL SOUTH'

is generally referring to a grouping of countries and people that experience economic marginalisation within the global system and have elements of a shared history of colonisation and exploitation

Read more in the article 'Too Southern to be Funded': https://globalfundcommunityfoundations.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/TooSouthernToBe-Funded.pdf

LOCALLY LED DEVELOPMENT

is an ongoing development process where local actors have agency in framing, design, delivery (including control over resources), and accountability, with or without the support of international development cooperation.

[2] The definition of locally led development is inspired by the DAC paper and the DAC working group meeting on Measuring progress on locally led development from 2 May 2024. In CISUs understanding "Locally" does not necessarily mean a community level, but relevant and legit actors in specific geographical locations.

The CSF supports a variety of work by organisations and movements; from short-term projects with a tight focus on a specific task, to longer development processes that all require long-term strategies and flexibility to react to opportunities as they present themselves. The CSF recognises different approaches and strategies can be applied to achieve sustainable changes, which varies depending on context, priorities, experiences and position.

The CSF does not prioritise specific development issues over others but is guided by a human rights-based approach.

All projects and programmes financed through the CSF address one or more of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

PHOTO: HEINE PEDERSEN, DENTAL HEALTH WITHOUT BORDERS

1.2. Principles

All applications for grants must adhere to the following principles. Additional resources related to each of the principles are available at www.cisu.dk.

Human Rights

Applicants must use a human rights-based approach to work with rights holders and/or duty bearers to promote the situation of the rights holders.

Fundamental human rights must be respected, protected and fulfilled. A human rights-based approach focuses on enabling people to demand their rights and hold duty-bearers accountable.

The approach focuses on eliminating unequal power relations and unequal distribution of resources, for example in relation to gender. A human rights-based approach rests on four fundamental principles: Participation, Accountability, Non-discrimination, and Transparency (PANT). It is expected that vulnerable or marginalised groups or otherwise affected rightsholders are adequately involved in the entire development cycle. In the case of Tribal and Indigenous Peoples and according to their collective human rights, this involves a process of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). Read more about FPIC on cisu.dk/CSP-materials.

Do no harm

Applicants must have extensive knowledge of the context and understanding of how their involvement has consequences for the target groups. Applicants must also be ready to adjust an intervention if the context changes.

It is important to be aware of the effect that any involvement has on others, and as such it is necessary to analyse relations, consequences, and risks in the context in which an intervention takes place. Actors working with people living in poverty and marginalisation must be aware of the position or role they play in each context and acknowledge their own biases. The aim is to minimise any negative impact and increase the positive impact on the situation.

Poverty orientation

Applicants must have knowledge of the target groups and understand the forms of poverty they face and how to address this in an intervention.

The CSF supports work that directly or indirectly secures the participation, interests, and rights of people living in poverty. Poverty has several dimensions and is not only about income but also personal security, access to resources such as education and jobs, health and access to natural resources, including land and water, and the possibility to influence decisionmakers. Many people are trapped in one or more forms of poverty in different ways, and often various types of poverty affect each other.

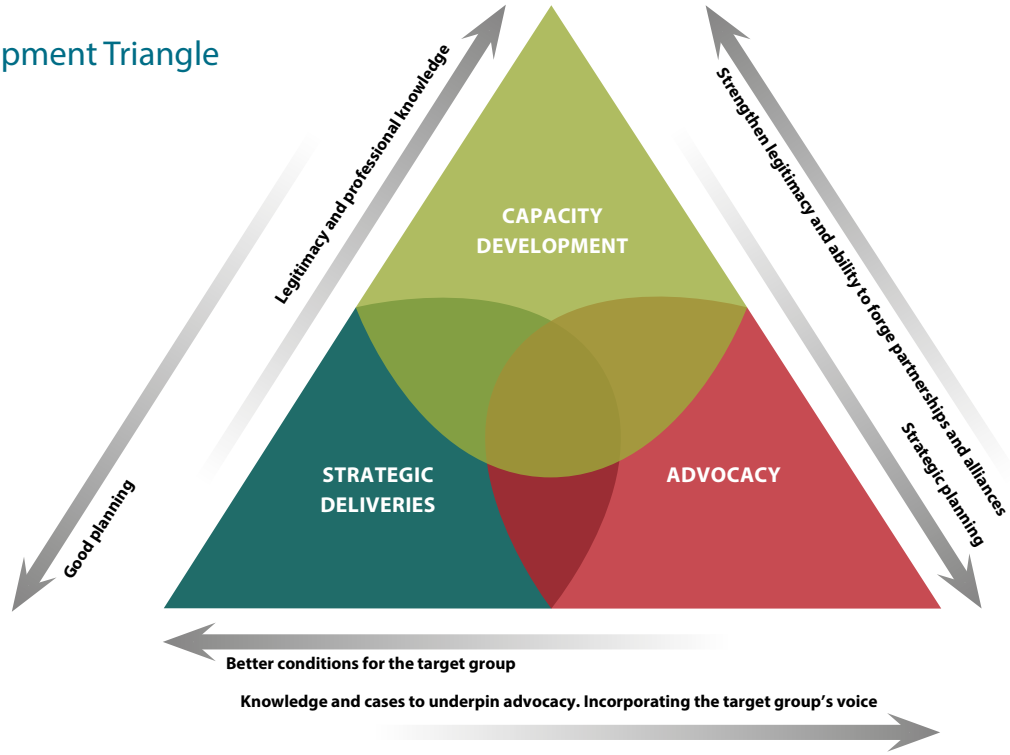
Sustainability

Applicants must demonstrate how the intervention contributes to a more sustainable situation for the community, partners, and wider environment.

Sustainability in interventions should encompass a holistic approach that ensures interventions not only achieve their immediate objectives but also foster long-term benefits for the beneficiaries, environment, and partnering organisations. This means supporting interventions and organisations that remain viable and impactful even after the completion of the intervention, thereby contributing to ongoing sustainability efforts.

Continuation in partnerships with several project and programme modalities requires solid sustainability strategies and results in relation to sustainability. Interventions should thus be designed with a focus on organisational sustainability, ensuring financial feasibility and alignment with the values and goals of the partnering organisations, social sustainability promoting equity, and environmental sustainability minimising ecological footprints and preserving natural resources.

The Development Triangle



1.3. The Development Triangle

The development triangle is a framework to describe the different elements in a development intervention. The triangle illustrates how three core elements of development interventions effects one another and their potential synergies showing how they can address fundamental causes of deprivation of human rights.

The three elements together are considered fundamental to good development processes but the balance between them can vary, depending on the context and the capacities and experiences in the partnership. It is not a requirement to include all elements in an intervention, but it must be explained why some elements are chosen over others to reach the desired outcomes.

- **Capacity development** refers to strengthening the capacity of partners and other actors, networks, and/or target groups. Capacity can include strategic and organisational capacity, technical and thematical capacity to conduct projects and programmes, and capacity to work in networks and alliances with other actors. Capacity development is often a prerequisite for making sustainable change and can form the basis for engaging in advocacy.
- **Strategic deliveries** are tangible inputs such as goods and services that the partners contribute with towards the primary target group. The strategic deliveries must never be an end in itself but be used as a strategic means that strengthens or better allow working with the two other elements of the triangle. Strategic deliveries can thus be necessary but will never in themselves create lasting and sustainable change.
- **Advocacy** is the planned action to influence formal or informal decision-makers and the public to bring about lasting improvements for poor or marginalised groups. Advocacy can be directed at duty bearers such as local authorities, community stakeholders, private sector, or national and international authorities. Advocacy can be based upon the knowledge and experience among the civil society actors, for instance based on learnings from strategic deliveries. Advocacy actions should take point of departure in the legitimacy, access, and capacity of the civil society actors.

1.4. Popular engagement in Denmark

Through interventions supported by the Civil Society Fund, the partners will accumulate extensive knowledge and experience about global issues and how partners are supporting civil society around the world. This makes it possible to inform and engage people in Denmark as fellow global citizens and actors in development cooperation. Information about an intervention, a partner or conditions in a particular country is not a mere addition to the 'real' development work but an equally worthy and important part of that work, which may help bring about significant change in the longer term.

For project applicants, it is possible to include up to two percent of the activity budget to be spent on informing and engaging Danish citizens on the subjects of the project. If applied for, there are questions in the application format that must be described.

For programme applicants, it is a requirement that the partners spend up to two percent of the activity budget to inform and engage people in Denmark. There is one criterion related to popular engagement and corresponding questions in the application formats that programme applicants need to respond to.

2. Who can apply

The CSF supports partnerships between civil society actors and movements in the Global South and Denmark. There are different requirements to the partners although there must be a clear division of roles and responsibilities in the implementation of the intervention. This division must be jointly agreed upon and clear to partners as well as the target groups of the intervention.

2.1. Requirements for Danish partner organisation

The CSF accepts applications from Danish civil society organisations that meet the following minimum requirements for support laid down by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark.

Responsibility

The applicant organisation's governing body must be able to take on full responsibility for the application and for any subsequent grant.

If several Danish organisations apply jointly, there must always be one lead organisation which holds the administrative and legal responsibility for the grant and contract with CISU. Only the lead organisation needs to live up to the above requirement.

If the lead organisation is an umbrella organisation, at least one of its member organisations must fulfil the above requirement.

Grant Administration Guide

More information about the governing body's responsibility is available in the Grant Administration Guide available at www.cisu.dk.

REQUIREMENTS TO THE DANISH PARTNER	INELIGIBILITY
▪ The organisation needs to be private, and it must have legal domicile as well as activities in Denmark. ▪ The chairperson or most members of its governing body must be Danish citizens or foreigners with permanent residency in Denmark unless the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark grants an exemption. ▪ The organisation must have an approved set of statutes. ▪ The accounts of the organisation, including the annual accounts, must be subject to auditing. ▪ The organisation must have a minimum of 25 paying contributors for applications up to DKK 500,000, and a minimum of 50 paying contributors for applications more than DKK 500,000. The contributors may be members, volunteers in the association or other persons that contribute financially. The contributions must have been given in the current or latest financial year. There are no requirements to the size of the contribution. ▪ For umbrella organisations, at least one of its member organisations must satisfy the above requirements. ▪ If the organisation has existed less than one year, it may only apply for a maximum of DKK 500,000.	▪ The CSF is unable to support interventions eligible for support from other organisations or institutions funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark such as the Centre for Church-Based Development (CKU), the Danish Youth Council (DUF), Disabled People's Organisations Denmark (DPOD), the Danish Refugee Council's Diaspora Programme and the Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy (DIPD). ▪ The CSF does not accept applications from organisations that have signed a strategic partnership agreement, fund agreement, or similar agreement with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark. ▪ The CSF does not accept applications from foundations engaged in commercial activity, consulting firms, educational establishments or entities set up by law, including folk high schools (højskoler).

2.2. Requirements Global South partners

2.2.1. The Global South partner(s)

The Global South partner(s) must be based in the country where the activities will be implemented and will be responsible for implementing the local activities. It can be from any country on OECD/DAC's list of ODA recipients.

The Global South partner(s) must be capable of taking on the necessary administrative and financial responsibility of the grant as described in the application and in CISU's Grant Administration Guide.

In some cases, a Global South Partner may be prevented from being able to receive and administer funds according to CISU's requirements for financial management. This applies to partners without legal recognition or being informal organisations (e.g., social movements, indigenous or tribal authorities). This could also be the case in countries where civil society organisations in general or certain groups are subject to legislation that restricts their right to organise or to access international funding, or organisations that are forced to work underground.

If it can be justified that the Global South Partner is prevented from being able to receive and administer funding, another organisation may act as fiscal and legal link between the Danish organisation and the Global South partner. This organisation does not need to belong to civil society or being based in a DAC country. However, the organisation must enter a written agreement with the Danish and Global South partners where it is agreed that funds will be administered according to CISU's requirements for financial management.

Eligible countries

for Civil Society Fund interventions: All countries on OECD/DAC's list of ODA recipients, except for the six Neighbourhood countries covered by CISU's Neighbourhood Fund

https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/sub-issues/oda-eligibility-and-conditions/dac-list-of-oda-recipients.html

All Global South partners must sign the front page, and Global South partners with budget responsibility* must be registered in 'Vores CISU' with all the required information.

REQUIREMENTS TO THE GLOBAL SOUTH PARTNERS	INELIGIBILITY
▪ Global South Partners must form part of civil society in the country where activities will be implemented. ▪ The partner's senior management and governing body must be locally anchored. If the partner has a governing body, the chairperson and the majority of members of its governing body must be citizens or foreigners with their permanent residence in the country concerned. Neither the senior management nor any of the board members can be part of the Danish partner organisation. If governed differently, similar anchoring and independence must be shown in the application. ▪ If the Global South partners are locally based chapters of international civil society organisations, including those to which the Danish organisation is affiliated, the partners must be registered in the country concerned and have its own governing body as described above.	The Global South Partner cannot be: ▪ Individuals and families. ▪ The local, regional, or national government or political parties. ▪ Public authorities or bodies. ▪ Private businesses. ▪ On the UN's or EU's list of terrorist organisations. The Danish organisation is responsible for checking this.

** Partners that manage, account for, and report on financial recourses from the project/programme in compliance with guidelines and requirements from CISU.*

PHOTO: BJØRN JOHANSEN, ADRA DANMARK

2.2.2. Other actors as part of an intervention

Interventions may include cooperation with other actors, which do not qualify as a Global South partner. This could be authorities, research institutes and educational establishments, or the private sector. They may play a part in, for example, activities, assignments, training, capacity development, and advocacy that have specific relevance to and advance the purpose of the CSF and of an intervention.

For instance, interventions aimed at economic development may include relevant private businesses or social enterprises as actors as long as this does not conflict with the rules on state subsidies. Activities with public institutions may also feature in the intervention if they are included strategically to ensure the rights of target groups. Cooperation with research institutes and educational establishments can support the accumulation of knowledge and documentation for the purpose of supporting interventions and advocacy with evidence-based knowledge.

It is also possible to cooperate with authorities that are duty bearers and who are key to succeed in an intervention and bring about sustainable change. However, civil society must play a primary role in the cooperation, implementation and realisation of the purpose of the intervention.

2.2.3. Several interventions in the partnership

The purpose of the CSF is to strengthen civil societies. Strong, independent, and sustainable civil society actors in the Global South are central, and although CSF supports long-lasting cooperation between the same partners, partnerships must work towards the long-term objective that all partners are able to be self-sustaining or secure additional funding from other sources.

If an intervention is a continuation of a former intervention, it will be assessed based on the following:

- It does not merely repeat the former intervention.
- It contains new expected outcomes, a new or adjusted strategy, or a new or extended target group.
- It builds on results and experiences from the former intervention.
- With each continuation, there will be an increased expectation to having achieved results and contributed to positive changes as well as showing that the continuation is built on learning from former interventions.

3. Types of support

3.1. How much can be applied for?

To ensure sufficient capacity among new applicants, the following grant ceilings apply to the CSF:

- A first-time applicant with no prior grants from CISU or a donor with similar reporting requirements to those of CISU and/or the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs can apply for projects up to DKK 500,000.
- To apply for projects and programmes of more than DKK 500,000, the applicant must have completed at least one intervention of more than DKK 200,000 funded by CISU or a donor with similar reporting requirements to those of CISU and/or the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
    - This requirement is also fulfilled when the applicant organisation as part of a consortium has been responsible for at least DKK 200,000 of the total budget of a grant with similar reporting requirements as CISU's and/or the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs'. It is the applicant organisation that must provide documentation to CISU that it has had budget responsibility of at least DKK 200,000 which includes experience with project implementation, as well as experience with narrative, financial reporting and auditing.

3.2. Organisational grant ceiling

Each organisation can obtain grants across the Project Support and Programme Support modalities for a maximum total amount of DKK 5 million per year. Organisations awarded a Large Programme can exceed the organisational grant ceiling. Grants for Funding Diversification and Capacity Analysis are not included in the organisational grant ceiling.

Other CISU funds

For other funds administered by CISU, it is determined in the guidelines for the specific fund, whether grants from the fund is included in the grant ceiling of the CSF. Find information on CISU's funds on www.cisu.dk/en/funding

Depending on the experience and capacity of the Danish organisation, the partnership can apply for funding through Project Support, Programme Support, and/or Funding Diversification described on the following pages.

CAN BE SUPPORTED	CANNOT BE SUPPORTED
▪ Activities, including costs for mobilisation, coordination, studies, materials, training, travel, security measures, salaries. ▪ Monitoring, including costs for travel, meetings, salaries. ▪ Investments, meaning the purchase of equipment that last beyond the project. ▪ Administration, including costs for financial management, reporting, digital solutions, auditing.	▪ Non-strategic service delivery. ▪ Major constructions or the purchase of buildings, materials, or major investments. ▪ Activities (e.g. training) only benefitting an individual/a few individuals. ▪ Interventions with the partial or full objective of distributing a party-political or religious messages. ▪ Emergency aid or humanitarian interventions.

The Funding Modalities

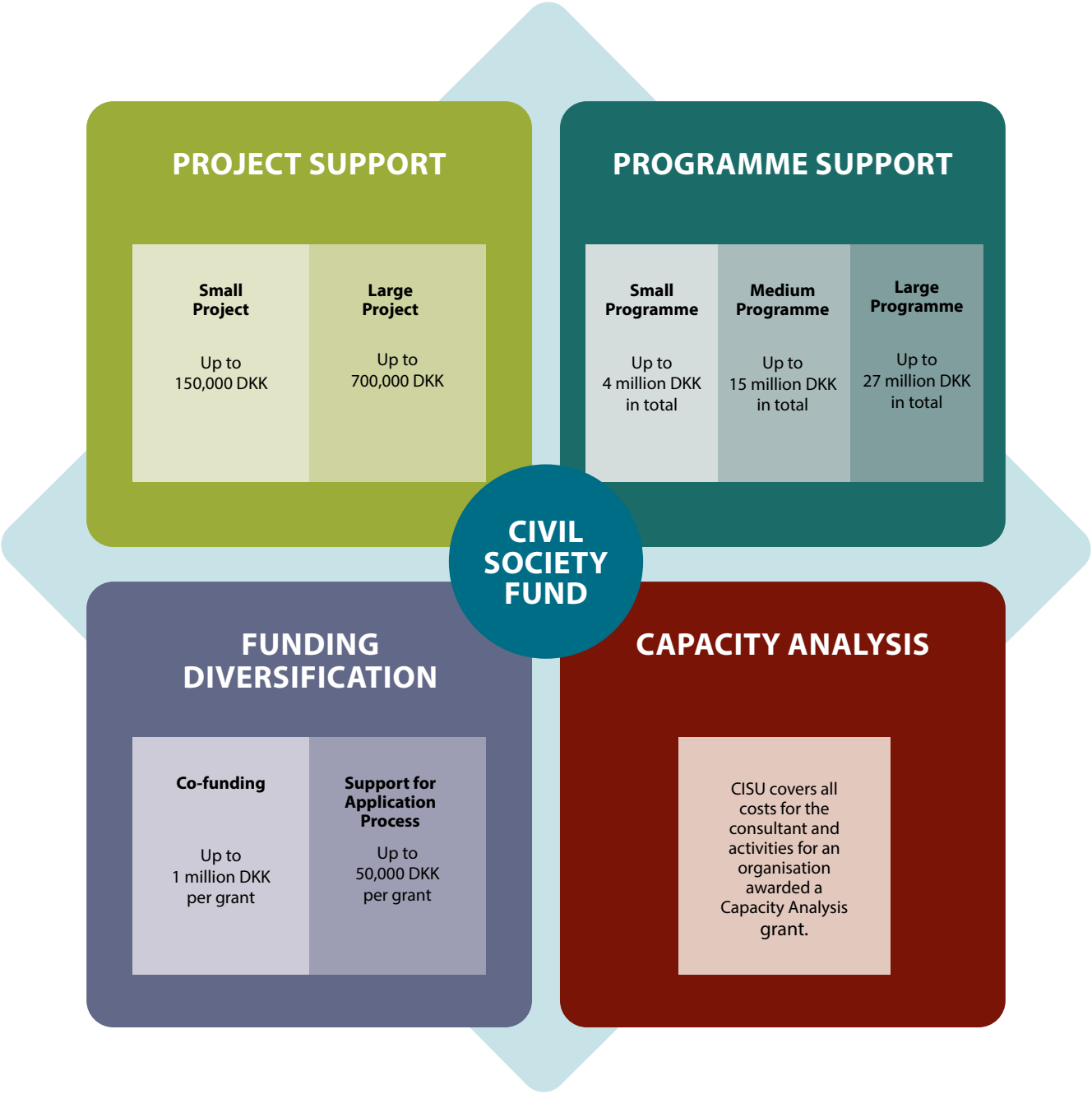


PHOTO: MONICA MOHONA, ØSTAFRIKAS VENNER

4. Project Support

4.1. Purpose

Projects supported by the Civil Society Fund must contribute to improving the lives of people living in poverty and marginalisation in the communities wherein the project activities take place, as reflected in the purpose of the CSF.

Project Support enables the strengthening of organisations and partnerships for the benefit of local communities in the Global South.

The project modality can for example include support to organisations to:

- Strengthen organisational capacities
- Develop and test new approaches and methods
- Expand on impactful approaches
- Foster popular engagement.

Projects are defined by a set of outcomes that can be realised within a specified timeframe. Outcomes should be used to guide implementation and show whether the approach is successful, or changes are required.

Organisations can apply for Small Projects up to DKK 150,000 or Large Projects up to DKK 700,000.

Eligibility requirements and assessment criteria are different depending on the size of the Project Support applied for. See the overviews below and on the following page.

4.2 Project support overview

PROJECT SUPPORT		
Type	**Small Project**	**Large Project**
Max grant size	DKK 150,000	DKK 700,000
Eligibility	No requirements of previous project experience. Danish organisations with a Medium or Large Programme from CISU cannot apply.	Previous project experience required for projects above DKK 500,000 (see section 3.1) Danish organisations with a Medium or Large Programme from CISU cannot apply.
Number of applications	Maximum three applications* for Small Projects per Danish organisation per year.	Maximum three applications* for Large Projects per Danish organisation per year.
Application deadlines	Two deadlines per year. Dates are published on www.cisu.dk	

** This number includes applications that are rejected as well as re-applications.*

The maximum number of project applications each year is six, given that the Danish organisation only applies for Small and Large Projects. If the Danish organisation applies for small programmes, the maximum number of project applications is three per year within the organizational grant ceiling.

4.3. Assessment criteria

In addition to the assessment criteria indicated below, the assessment of each application is guided by these three principles: 1.) There is no rigid formula[4], 2) adaptability of requirements, and 3) flexibility when working in fragile contexts.

There is no rigid formula means that with the purpose of the fund in mind, the assessment committee can undertake an integrated assessment of an application that considers the overall picture of the context and project described in the application.

Adaptability of requirements means that the larger the budget, the stricter the requirements regarding the capacity of the organisations involved and the higher the expected outcomes of the intervention. There are also higher requirements for organisations that have longer experience and more grants from CISU and/or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark compared to organisations that have less experience and have received fewer grants.

Flexibility when working in fragile contexts means that the assessment of the interventions considers the context, risks analysis and strategy and allows for greater flexibility in terms of cost types (e.g., for security measures or flexible funds) and balancing of the development triangle (e.g., a higher level of strategic services or less advocacy).

[4] In Danish: *Skøn under regel.*

PHOTO: SIMON STICKER, DREAMTOWN

4.4. Assessment Criteria Small Projects

Criteria	Sub-criteria	Weight of criteria
1. Relevance	1.1 The project aligns with the purpose and the principles of the CSF.	15%
	1.2 The project is relevant in the context in which it will take place and is based on local needs.	15%
2. Partners	2.1 The Global South partner(s) have the relevant experience, capacities, and resources to implement the project and manage the grant.	9%
	2.2 The Danish partner has the relevant experience, capacities, and resources to support project implementation and manage the grant.	9%
3. Strategy	3.1 The strategy (the connection between outcomes, outputs, and activities) is coherent and it is clear how and why the strategy works with capacity building and, if relevant, strategic deliveries and advocacy.	16%
	3.2 The roles, responsibilities, and contributions of partners and other actors are clear and relevant.	12%
4. Target group(s)	4.1 The target group(s) are well defined and relevant.	12%
5. Budget and cost level	5.1 The budget is clear and transparent, and the cost level is reasonable and reflects the project strategy and responsibilities of each partner.	12%

4.5. Assessment Criteria Large Projects

Criteria	Sub-criteria	Weight of criteria
1. Relevance	1.1 The project aligns with the purpose and the principles of the CSF.	10%
	1.2 The project is relevant in the context in which it will take place and is based on local needs.	10%
	1.3 The project builds on results and learnings from previous interventions.	10%
2. Partners	2.1 The Global South partner(s) have the relevant experience, capacities, and resources to implement the project and manage the grant.	5%
	2.2 The Danish partner has the relevant experience, capacities, and resources to support project implementation and manage the grant.	5%
	2.3 The project strengthens the partners and/or the relationship between them.	8%
3. Strategy	3.1 The strategy (the connection between outcomes, outputs, and activities) is coherent and it is clear how and the strategy works with capacity building, strategic deliveries, and advocacy. If strategic deliveries and advocacy are not included in the strategy, it must be justified.	13%
	3.2 The roles, responsibilities, and contributions of partners and other actors are clear and relevant.	5%
	3.3 The project contributes to sustainable improvements for the target group(s).	5%
	3.4 The setup for monitoring is suitable for examining and following up on whether the project meets the outcomes.	5%
4. Target group(s)	4.1 The target group(s) are well defined and relevant.	6%
	4.2 The target group(s) are involved in the design and the ongoing adjustment of the project.	6%
5. Budget and cost level	5.1 The budget is clear and transparent, and the cost level is reasonable and reflects the project strategy and responsibilities of each partner.	6%
	5.2 The partners and local communities provide relevant financial and/or non-financial contributions.	6%

4.4. Internal competition

Applications will be scored and will compete for the amount allocated for each application round for Small Projects and Large Projects respectively.

If CISU receives applications for more money than available in the modality in the application round, the applications with the highest score will receive a grant. In case two or more applications receive the same score, the application with the smallest budget will be granted. This is to allow for the award of more grants.

In case two or more applications share the lowest score and they cannot all be awarded a grant, the application with the lowest amount applied for will be awarded the grant. This is to allow for the award of more grants.

See section 8.4 for more details on the scoring system used.

5. Programme Support

5.1. Purpose

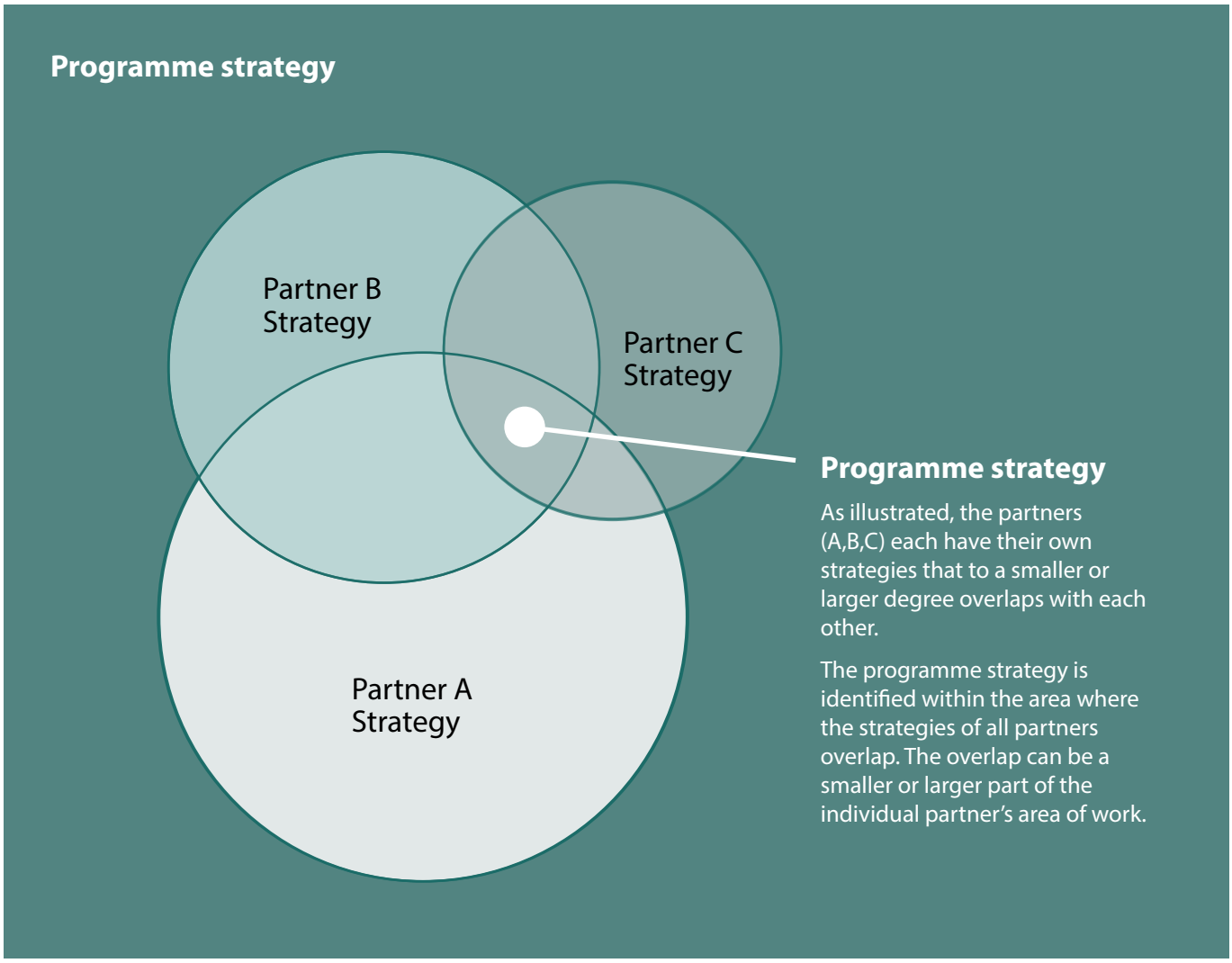
Locally led development is at the centre of Programme Support. The funding modality provides strong partnerships with the possibility to engage with their target groups, strengthen civil society, and deliver on their strategy. It allows CSOs, movements, and other civil society actors to implement programmes based on a programme strategy coherent with the partners' own strategies, thus, bringing together the array of expertise, ensuring relevance and decision-making power of local actors.

A programme makes it possible to work with a wide range of partners and create synergies, and it enables dynamic learning across a diversity of partners and target groups.

Working with locally led development and acknowledging the need for supporting processes of change beyond shorter project cycles, Programme Support provides the foundation to work in already-established, long-term partnerships.

Long-term partnerships provide strong environments for learning and development for the Danish partners and a solid foundation to build popular support and engagement in Denmark. If a partnership chooses to apply for a continuation of an existing programme, it is expected that there is a progression in outcomes and sustainability of the intervention. Further, all programmes are subjected to competition, and there are no guarantees that existing programmes will receive a grant for continued work.

Programme Support is divided into three types defined by the size of the grant (Small, Medium, Large). Each type has a set of requirements and assessment criteria elaborated on the following pages.



Programme support overview

Programme Support			
Type	**Small Programme**	**Medium Programme**	**Large Programme**
Eligibility*	Having been granted minimum DKK 750,000 in total from the CSF over the last four years. Previous experience from the context and cooperation with at least one of the Global South partner(s). The Danish applicant and Global South partners meet CISU's requirements for financial management and accountability.	Having been granted minimum DKK 3 million yearly on average or completed a program from the CSF in the last four years. Previous experience from the context and cooperation with at least two of the Global South partners. The Danish applicant and Global South partners meet CISU's requirements for financial management and accountability.	Having been granted two Large, Medium or equivalent programmes from the CSF in the partnership within the past ten years Previous experience from the context and cooperation with at least two of the Global South partners. The Danish applicant and Global South partners meet CISU's requirements for financial management and accountability.
Global South partners	Minimum one Global South partner in the programme. Global South partners applying for a Small Programme cannot at the same time be engaged in a Medium Programme.	Minimum two Global South partners in the programme.	
Max grant size	Up to DKK 4 million in total (resulting in maximum DKK 0.8 – 1.3 million per year, depending on duration).	Up to DKK 15 million in total (resulting in maximum DKK 3.75 million per year).	Up to 40% increase of existing yearly program grant. However, maximum up to DKK 27 million in total (resulting in maximum DKK 6.75 million per year) Up to DKK 60 million in total (resulting in maximum DKK 15 million per year)**
Duration (chosen by the applicant)	3 – 5 years	4 years	
Possibility for the Danish organisation to apply for additional Programme Support under the CSF	Maximum three applications for Small Programmes per year within the organisational grant ceiling.***	Maximum one application for Small Programme per year within the organisational grant ceiling.***	No
Possibility for the Danish organisation to apply for Project Support	Maximum a total of three project applications* per year within the organisational grant ceiling.	No	No
Application deadlines	Twice per year	Once every second year Organisations can only apply in the final year of their ongoing programme or after it has ended.	
Own financial contribution	0%	10%	20%

* The eligibility for programmes is based on previous projects and/or programmes granted to the Danish partner organisation from the CSF. This includes Small-Scale Interventions, Citizen Participation Interventions, Development Interventions, and the Neighbourhood Fund (except Resilience and Democratic Development Ukraine). This means that CCAM, DERF, Resilience and Democratic Development Ukraine, OpEn, Civic Space, and CISUs Information Fund are not included when determining eligibility. Member organisations of CKU or DUF are eligible to apply programmes based on grants from the CKU Fund or DUF's International Pool.

** Large Programme grants above 27 million/6.75 million per year will be subject to specific guidelines developed in dialogue with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and will include additional requirements, including an external review and capacity assessment.

*** This number includes applications that are rejected and re-applications.

5.2.1. Financial own contribution

Medium and Large Programmes must ensure a degree of financial own contribution that lies within the purpose in the programme strategy to supplement the grant given by CISU. The financial own contribution is minimum 10% of the budget for programme & project activities (PPA) for a Medium Programme and 20% of the budget for PPA for a Large Programme. The contribution can be either 'Funds raised in Denmark' and/or 'Co-financing' (see information box). The financial own contribution of Large Programmes does not exceed those used by Danida towards organisations with Strategic Partnership Agreements.

The financial own contribution requirement must be completed by the end of a given grant period. If the requirement is not achieved, the maximum grant amount for the next grant given under Programme Support shall be aligned to the financial contribution that the partners have secured to supplement CISUs funding for the programme.

FINANCIAL OWN CONTRIBUTION

- Funds raised in Denmark, e.g., donations, contributions, membership fees, grants.
- Co-financing e.g., grants from foundations or institutional donors supporting one or more partners in the partnership within the purpose of the programme.

See also the Budget Guide at cisu.dk

5.3. Assessment criteria

In addition to the assessment criteria indicated on the following pages, the assessment of each application is guided by these three principles: 1.) Assessment of the application as a whole, 2) adaptability of requirements, and 3) flexibility when working in fragile contexts.

Assessment of the application as a whole: The Assessment Committee always arrives at its decisions by considering the totality of aspects addressed in the application. Strengths may compensate for weaknesses, and the relevance of each criterion may vary depending on the type of intervention.

Adaptability of requirements means that the larger the budget, the stricter the requirements regarding the capacity of the organisations involved and the higher the expected outcomes of the programme. There are also higher requirements for organisations that have longer experience and more grants from CISU and/or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark compared to organisations that have less experience and have received fewer grants.

Flexibility when working in fragile contexts means that the assessment of the interventions considers the context, risks analysis, and strategy and allows for greater flexibility in terms of cost types (e.g., for security measures or flexible funds) and balancing of the development triangle (e.g., a higher level of strategic services or less advocacy).

5.4. Internal competition

Based on the assessment criteria, the applications will be scored individually for approval and will compete for a certain amount allocated for each application round.

If CISU receives applications for more money than available in the modality in the application round, the applications with the highest score will receive a grant.

If several applications share the "bottom rating" and they cannot all be awarded grants, applications with the lowest amount applied for will be awarded the grant. This is to allow for the award of more grants.

See section 8.4 for more details on the scoring method used.

5.5. Addressing funding gaps

For long-term partnerships, a rejected application can result in significant insecurity for all partners involved, and challenges to the continuation of the long-term strategic work in the partnership.

Whereas partnerships with a Small Programme can re-apply to the same funding modality within a timeframe of six months, Medium and Large Programmes must reconsider and re-strategize their programme should their application be rejected.

Medium and Large Programme applicants that do not receive a grant will receive this decision before medio June. This timing provides them with the below possibilities:

For Medium Programme Applications

If an applicant receives the assessment 'rejected due to lack of funds' or 'rejection', the applicant can apply for one Small Programme in the fall round. The applicant's current Medium or Large Programme grant is not included in the grant ceiling in the year of rejection.

For Large Programme Applications

If an applicant receives the assessment 'rejected due to lack of funds', the application will be transferred to the Medium Programme lot.

- If the score is sufficiently high, the applicant will be awarded a Medium Programme. In this case the applicant must - within one week – presents an adjusted programme document and budget reflecting a Medium Programme. This is needed to complete the final appropriation note for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- If the score is not high enough to be awarded a Medium Programme the applicant can apply for one Small Programme in the fall round.

5.6 The assessment criteria's for each program type.

Regardless of their size, all programmes will be assessed against the same seven overarching criteria. However, the scope and depth of the assessment, and consequently the requirements that applicants must meet, will vary according to the size of the programme for which they are applying. Detailed assessment criteria for Small programme is presented below, while the detailed assessment elements for Medium & Large programme can be found in Annex 1 on CISU's website.

5.6.1 Assessment Criteria Small Programmes

Criteria	Sub-criteria	Weight of criteria
1. Relevance	1.1 The programme aligns with the purpose and the principles of the CSF.	10%
	1.2 The programme is relevant in the context in which it will take place and clearly addresses locally identified needs and concerns.	10%
	1.3 The programme builds on results and learnings from previous interventions	4%
2. Partnership	2.1.1 The Global South partner(s) have knowledge of the local context, relevant experience, capacities, and systems to implement the programme and manage the grant. And the partners work towards being able to sustain their work beyond funding from the CSF.	8%
	2.1.2 The partners and/or local communities provide relevant non-financial (and where relevant financial) contributions.	3%
	2.2 The Danish partner has relevant experience, capacities, systems, and resources to support programme implementation and manage the grant.	8%
3. Strategy	3.1 The programme strategy (the connection between outcomes, outputs, and clusters of activities) is coherent and it is clear how and why the strategy works with capacity building, strategic deliveries, and advocacy.	10%
	3.2 The programme strategy builds on the strategic priorities of each partner and ensures synergies and a collective direction towards shared goals.	7%
	3.3 The programme strategy promotes sustainable changes beyond the duration of the programme.	3%
4. Target group(s)	4.1 The target group(s) are well defined and relevant.	5%
	4.2 The target group(s) are involved in the design and the ongoing adjustment of the programme.	5%
5. MEAL & Risks	5.1 The setup and methods for monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) is suitable for documenting the outcomes of the programme.	10%
	5.2. The programme considers likely risks and possible mitigation measures in the context.	5%
6.Cost level	6.1 The budget is clear and transparent, and the cost level is reasonable and reflects the programme strategy and responsibilities of each partner.	7%
7.Popular engagement in Denmark	7.1 The approaches and activities to foster information and popular engagement in Denmark strengthen the understanding of - or interest in - global development.	5%

5.6.2 Assessment Criteria Medium and Large Programmes

Criteria	Criteria	Weight of criteria
1. Relevance	The programme strengthens civil society actors relevant to the specific contexts, responding to local needs.	20%
2. Partnership	The roles and added value of each partner foster synergies and strategic cooperation, contributing to greater programme impact.	25%
3. Strategy	The programme strategy is coherent and realistic, ensuring sustainable and structural impact.	20%
4. Target group(s)	The target groups are relevant and their participation in the programme contribute to their increased agency.	10%
5. MEAL & Risks	The MEAL system is participatory and ensures downward and upward accountability	10%
6. Cost level	The cost level is reasonable and reflects the responsibilities of each partner.	10%
7. Popular engagement	The approaches and activities to foster information and popular engagement in Denmark strengthen the understanding of - or interest in - global development.	5%

See Annex 1 for detailed assessment elements for Medium & Large Programmes.

PHOTO: CHRISTOF KRACKHARDT, APDA

6. Funding Diversification

6.1. Purpose

The purpose is to support users of the CSF to diversify their fund base with two types of support:

- Co-funding can help partnerships obtain funding from another donor that requires and/or favours applications with a co- financing element. If funding is obtained from another donor, this can be used as financial own contribution for an intervention supported by the CSF.
- Support for Application Process aids partnerships with developing an application to other donors than CISU such as a private company, foundation, or institutional donor. The proposal developed may afterwards be submitted to other relevant donors, if suitable.

For both types of support, it is not possible to use the grants to apply for funding financed by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

6.2. What can be supported

Co-funding	Support for Application Process
▪ Co-financing can cover up to 35% of the amount applied for to the main donor. ▪ Up to DKK 1 million per grant.	▪ Relevant expenses of the application process of each partner, e.g., salaries, consultant fees, workshops, and studies. ▪ Up to DKK 50,000 per grant.

The CSF will allocate a yearly budget for the Co-funding and Support for Application Process modalities. These allocations will be administered on a first come, first served basis. Applicants can contact CISU to be informed of budget status before applying.

6.3. Requirements

	Co-funding	Support for Application Process
Eligibility	The partners applying must: ▪ Live up to general requirements as described in section 2 in these guidelines. ▪ Have previously managed a grant of at least DKK 200,000 from one of CISU's funds or from a donor with similar reporting requirements. ▪ Justify that there is chance of receiving the grant from the main donor by supplementing with Co-Funding from the CSF. ▪ Either be lead applicant or co-applicant of the application to the main donor.	▪ The partners must live up to the general requirements as described in section 2. ▪ The total budget of the application to be submitted to the donor must be at least DKK 200,000.
# of applications	One application per year.	Two applications per year.

6.4. Assessment criteria

Criteria	Co-funding	Support for Application Process
Relevance	The application to the main donor adheres as a whole to the CSF's purpose and principles.	The application developed will generally adhere to the CSF's purpose and principles.
Need	-	It is clear how the application process will be strengthened from the support.
Chances of success	The probability of the application to the main donor being approved for support is sufficiently justified.	The probability of the application to be developed being approved for support is sufficiently justified.
Partnership	-	All partners will be included in the application process.

7. Capacity Analysis

7.1. Purpose

A Capacity Analysis targets Danish organisations that wants an external review of their organisation's or partnership's professional, organisational, and administrative capacity and must include its South-partners. A Capacity Analysis will contribute to valuable learning in terms of strategy, management, and capacity development and can be considered for example in relation to preparing to apply for a Medium or Large Programme.

The focus of a Capacity Analysis is one or several specific areas related to the strengthening and further development of the organisations, such as:

- The Danish organisation's partnerships, including the number and nature of existing and planned partners or approaches to entering new cooperation.
- The Danish organisation's strategic and thematic work with Global South partners.
- The Danish organisation's popular roots, internal decision-making processes, and work with information on global issues in Denmark.
- Identification of capacity gaps to be attended in projects and programmes, with the specific purpose of strengthening the local/civil society/rights-holder organisations
- Other areas that can support the further development of the organisation.

7.2. Conducting a Capacity Analysis

If an organisation is awarded a Capacity Analysis grant, CISU will make a contract with the organisation as well as with the external consultant who will conduct the analysis. One of CISU's advisers and possibly a member of the Assessment Committee (if they have recommended the Capacity Assessment or have good advice) will cooperate with the grantee to draw up the Terms of Reference (ToR) that describe the focus and scope of the task. The ToR must be approved by CISU.

A capacity analysis has a maximum budget of DKK 100,000, and CISU pays all costs for the consultant and activities. An organisation in the process of a Capacity Analysis can still submit applications to the CSF.

The consultant will prepare a draft report to be discussed with the organisation and one of CISU's advisers. Hereafter, the consultant writes the final report that must subsequently be approved by an assessment consultant, one of CISU's advisers, and CISU's management.

To follow up, the organisation must write a reply to the recommendations of the Capacity Analysis (i.e., a management response), which must be approved by CISU. It is then the responsibility and duty of the organisation's board of directors to follow up on the capacity analysis. It is recommended that the organisation use the learning and the recommendations of the capacity analysis in future applications to the CSF.

7.3. Assessment criteria

The application for a capacity analysis is assessed based on two criteria:

Criteria	Capacity Analysis
Civil society relevance	The organisation's work generally contributes to the CSF's purpose and principles.
Focus	The proposed specific areas to be analysed are based on a thorough analysis of needs, wishes, and opportunities for the organisation, its partnerships, and/or interventions.

PHOTO: EDWARD MENSAH, HOPIN ACADEMY

8. Application and assessment

8.1. Deadlines

There are application deadlines for the Project and Programme Support modalities. For Project Support, there are two deadlines a year. The application processes for Programme Support are described under section 8.2.2. Be aware that there is only one application round for Medium and Large Programmes every second year.

All deadlines are at 12:00 (noon) Danish time, and the exact dates are available at www.cisu.dk

MODALITY	# OF DEADLINES
Project Support	2 times per year
Small Programme	2 times per year
Medium and Large Programme	1 every second year
Funding Diversification and Capacity Analysis	Ongoing

8.2. How to apply

All applications are submitted via the online grant management system 'Vores CISU' (Our CISU) before the given deadline. For modalities with application deadlines, the system will be open for applications two weeks prior to the given deadline.

Formats

For each modality, there are formats for the application and the budget, as well as any required annexes.

See www.cisu.dk/csp-materials

As the application process is different between the modalities a detailed outline is described in the following sections.

8.2.1. Project application process

There are two deadlines for applying for Project Support each year. It is a one-step process, where applicants apply before the deadline.

8.2.2. Programme application process

Small Programmes

There are two deadlines for applying for Small Programmes each year. It is a one-step process, where applicants apply before the deadline

Medium and Large Programmes

There is an application round every second year for Medium and Large Programmes. The application process is divided into seven steps.

The Danish applicant can only submit one application per round for Medium and Large Programmes.

Danish organisations with a Large Programme grant can only have one active programme grant at a time. Danish organisations with a Medium Programme grant can only apply for one Small Programme grant.

Steps	Time (tentative)
1) Dialogue and preparation by the Global South and Danish partners	The months leading up to step 2
2) Expression of Interest (EoI)	December
3) Eligibility check by CISU	2 weeks
4) Capacity and compliance check by CISU	9 weeks
5) Submission of application	-
6) Decision of the Assessment Committee	11 weeks
7) Final decision by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs	3 months

See Annex2 for a detailed description of each step and actual deadlines for next application round.

8.2.3. Funding Diversification Application Process

Co-funding

Applications for co-funding can be submitted at any time of the year, but not after the application has been submitted to the main donor. If the main donor's application process contains a first stage of submitting a concept note, an application based on this concept note and a budget summary may be submitted.

Applications are normally processed within four weeks. In case of a comprehensive application to the primary donor, the processing time can be extended for up to six weeks.

Applications for co-funding assessed worthy of support are awarded a grant commitment in advance, whereas the contract with CISU cannot be issued and the grant cannot be disbursed before the contract/agreement with the main donor is signed and sent to CISU.

Support for Application Processes

There is no deadline for applying for Support for application process, and grants are given on a 'first come, first served' basis.

8.2.4. Capacity Analysis application process

A Capacity Analysis can be initiated by three different actors, but it is always the Danish organisation that submits the application. The different actors are:

1. A Danish CSO can apply for a capacity assessment as part of a long-term strategy development or process of change.
2. CISU's Assessment Committee can recommend or make it a precondition that an organisation carry out a capacity analysis. This requirement could be motivated by the committee finding it necessary to obtain an assessment of the organisation's capacity across the organisation's interventions.
3. CISU's secretariat may, in connection with its advisory services, in response to a report, or because of a monitoring visit recommend a Capacity Analysis, which will then form part of the partnership organisations' track records and future applications from the organisation concerned. If CISU recommends or requires a Capacity Analysis, the specific recommendations/requirements must be listed in the application.

CISU receives applications on an ongoing basis and processes them as fast as possible, normally within four weeks.

ARE YOU READY TO APPLY?

When applying for a grant from the Civil Society Fund, you must do the following:

APPLICATION DOCUMENTS

- ☑ Read the guidelines thoroughly.
- ☑ Find the relevant and latest updated application, budget and frontpage formats at www.cisu.dk.
- ☑ Answer all the questions in the application format and fill out the budget format as described in the budget guide.
- ☑ Make sure that the application does not exceed the maximum page limit.
- ☑ Be aware not to exceed the funding limit (5 million DKK) per Danish applicant per calendar year.
- ☑ Sign the front page and get signatures from all partners.
- ☑ Write a cover letter if submitting a reapplication.

ONLINE APPLICATION SYSTEM 'VORES CISU'

- ☑ Fill out all required information about the applicant organisation and all partner organisations mentioned in the application
- ☑ Upload latest organizational accounts and the latest approved statutes for the Danish applicant. Management Guide, outlining the requirements and responsibilities of grantees.

On www.cisu.dk/CSP-materials you can find an extended checklist, used by CISU grant managers to screen your application.

8.3. Screening and assessment

CISU will initially screen applications to ensure that they live up to all formal requirements. The lists used for screening is available at www.cisu.dk. If an application does not meet all formal requirements, it will be administratively rejected.

When an application fulfils all formal requirements, it is forwarded to an assessment consultant and an assessment committee member. The consultant assesses each application based on the criteria set for the modality and submits a recommendation to the assessment committee indicating whether the application should be approved or rejected. The assessment committee makes the final decision.

Each applicant will receive an assessment note, explaining the reasons for either approval or rejection. This note is useful to guide a potential re-application, as it provides comments on what is deemed critical and thus what can be improved.

Depending on the modality, the assessment will take a certain amount of time, which is shown in the table below.

Modality	Indicated number of weeks for the assessment
Project Support	6 weeks
Small Programme	9 weeks
Medium Programme	*See process in section 8.2.2.*
Large Programme	*See process in section 8.2.2.*
Support for Co-funding	4 weeks
Support for Application Process	4 weeks

Note that the assessment process for all modalities will be prolonged if the deadline collides with holiday periods in Denmark (summer, Christmas, Easter, fall, and winter breaks).

Feedback and complaints

CISU's procedures for feedback and complaints are set out in CISU's Code of Conduct.

More information is available at:
www.cisu.dk/en/about-cisu/how-to-file-a-complaint

8.4. Scoring

All applications are scored using the scores 1-5. The assessment committee gives a score to each criterion. The scores are weighted to assess what is most important in relation to the purpose and principles of the CSF. The score is used to rank approved applications in circumstances where there are not enough funds to support all applications.

SCORE	THE SCORE IS GIVEN WHEN THERE IS
1	Weak indication that supports the criteria
2	Some indication that supports the criteria
3	Adequate indication that supports the criteria
4	Solid indication that supports the criteria
5	Comprehensive indication that supports the criteria

8.5. Principles for administration and grant approval

Transparency and openness in the administration. This means, among other things:

- All assessment criteria and processes are explicit and available to all applicants.
- All applicants receive a written response explaining the reasons for the approval or rejection.
- A summary and basic information for all grants is publicly available at www.cisu.dk (anonymity can be requested if justified).

Orderly administration applying the highest standards of administrative conduct (e.g., ensuring impartiality, making decisions on an informed basis, writing in an understandable manner, complying with deadlines, and stating the reasons for decisions as detailed in the legal principles of CISU that are outlined in CISU's Code of Conduct).

Clear separation between the advisory process/the advisers and the assessment process/assessment system. Accordingly, CISU's advisers and the rest of CISU's secretariat are not in any way involved in the process from the moment the application is submitted until the grant decision is made.

8.6. Budget commitments

Every year, CISU's Board determines, upon approval by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, what share of the total CSF will be allocated to the different types of support modalities.

For the Medium and Large Programmes their annual grants may be reduced after approval if the total CSF budget is decreased.

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CISU CIVIL SOCIETY IN DEVELOPMENT