**Ministry of Foreign Affairs
of Denmark**

DANIDA

CISU – Civilsamfund i Udvikling

"Review of the Civil Society Fund managed by CISU"

REVIEW REPORT

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LÆRING

ABBREVIATIONS

APDK	Association for the Physically Disabled of Kenya
BTS	Breaking the Silence (a model for inclusive SRHR)
CISU	Civilsamfund i Udvikling (Civil Society in Development)
CSF	Civil Society Fund
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
CCAM	Climate Change Adaptation Modality
DANIDA	Danish International Development Cooperation
DERF	Danish Emergency Relief Fund
DKK	Danish Kroner
GH	Grant Holder
FTE	Full-time equivalent
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
HUMCIV	Department for Humanitarian and Civil Society Development within the MFA
LLD	Locally Led Development
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark
MTR	Mid-Term Review
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
LP	Local Partner
NCD	Non-Communicable Disease
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex
LÆRING	Department for Evaluation, Learning and Quality within the MFA
OpEn	Communication and Engagement Fund
RT	Review Team
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
ToR	Terms of Reference
USD	United States dollar
VfM	Value for Money

<u>Exchange rates</u>

1 DKK = 6,38 USD
1 DKK = Local currency

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The review of the Civil Society Fund (CSF) was conducted during Feb.-April 2026 and included consultations with the CISU Secretariat and Board, Danish Grant Holders (GHs), local partner organisations, and beneficiaries, as well as field visits to Kenya involving six selected CSF-supported partnerships. The purpose of the CSF is to support capacity strengthening of civil society actors. The CSF supports partnerships between Danish civil society organizations and their partners in the Global South. The CSF grant has increased over the years and for 2026 the budget is DKK 200 million to be allocated as grants to projects and programmes. The CSF is managed by CISU which has an administrative and capacity development role as well as an appropriation role.

Overall, the Review Team (RT) finds that the CSF remains a highly relevant, flexible, and strategically important funding mechanism for strengthening civil society, promoting democratic participation and human rights, and supporting locally led development in an increasingly complex international context. The review further finds that CISU continues to function as a competent, trusted, and operationally strong fund manager with high legitimacy among Danish civil society organisations and their local partners.

The CSF is well aligned with Danish development policy priorities, including support to human rights, civic engagement, locally led development, climate adaptation, gender equality, and inclusive governance. The fund contributes to strengthening democratic culture and accountability by enabling civil society actors to operate as advocates, watchdogs, and strategic service providers. Across the projects visited in Kenya, the RT found evidence that the CSF supports locally rooted and contextually relevant interventions addressing inequalities, rights violations, exclusion, and environmental challenges. The field mission confirmed that partnerships between Danish organisations and local partners are generally strong, trust-based, and characterised by a high degree of local ownership.

The review finds that the CISU Secretariat is well organised, technically competent, and highly effective in managing the CSF and associated funding mechanisms. However, with regards to governance, the RT finds that CISU formally possesses a coherent governance structure with clear mandates between the General Assembly, Board, and Secretariat. However, the separate Governance Review conducted in 2025 raises significant concerns regarding strategic leadership, role clarity, democratic functioning, Board competencies, and oversight functions.

CISU delivers a comprehensive package of advisory services, training, grant administration, and capacity development support which is highly appreciated by members and grant holders (GHs). Advisory support is regarded as timely, practical, and responsive, while CISU's training portfolio provides important opportunities for organisational learning and strengthening. Survey data and interviews confirm consistently high satisfaction levels with CISU's support functions. At the same time, the RT notes that CISU's service model is resource intensive and heavily concentrated around advisory support related to applications and compliance processes. The RT questions whether e.g. highly experienced GHs with long track records continue to require the same level of support as smaller or newer organisations. The review therefore identifies opportunities for CISU to introduce a more differentiated and strategic allocation of advisory, training, and management resources in order to improve value for money and redirect resources toward more field-based learning, monitoring, and outcome documentation.

The review finds CISU's overall results management framework to be robust and well aligned with the organisation's strategic objectives. CISU has developed a comprehensive results framework and reporting structure combining quantitative indicators with qualitative narratives and change stories. Significant progress has been made since the 2020 review, including stronger learning dimensions, better use of qualitative evidence, and improved annual reporting. However, the RT also finds that reporting from GHs insufficiently captures actual stories of change, institutional strengthening, behavioural change, leadership development, or broader contributions to strengthening civil society. During the field mission to Kenya, partners and beneficiaries provided compelling verbal evidence of transformative outcomes and strengthened organisational capacities which were often only weakly reflected in formal reporting. The review therefore concludes that CISU and its partners should strengthen participatory learning and qualitative outcome documentation in order to better capture how projects and programmes contribute to strengthening civil society actors and locally led development processes.

The RT finds CISU's monitoring systems and financial management procedures to be generally strong, credible, and well aligned with MFA requirements. CISU demonstrates solid financial stewardship, robust accounting and reporting systems, and a well-functioning digital management platform ("Vores CISU") which contributes to transparency, accountability, and operational efficiency. The review also notes positively that CISU has reached its targeted equity balance and maintains prudent financial management practices. At the same time, the RT identifies opportunities to strengthen monitoring coverage and follow-up. Monitoring visits are highly appreciated by local partners and are seen as valuable learning opportunities, but current coverage remains limited relative to the size of the portfolio. The RT recommends that CISU increase the strategic use of monitoring visits and combine financial oversight with stronger qualitative learning, organisational strengthening, and outcome verification. The RT also finds opportunities to expand online follow-up and strengthen systematic sharing of monitoring reports for quality assurance purposes.

Regarding compliance and fiduciary risk management, the RT finds that CISU has established robust systems for irregularity reporting, accountability, and financial oversight. Several reported c-cases demonstrate that the systems are operational and trusted. CISU also demonstrates a clear commitment to accountability through the existence of whistle-blower and complaints mechanisms. Nevertheless, the review identifies important weaknesses in the operationalisation and institutionalisation of safeguarding systems among both Danish GHs and local partners.

The RT further notes that the current audit framework for smaller grants appears relatively demanding and may not always be proportionate to the associated risks. While acknowledging the importance of compliance and public accountability requirements, the RT finds there may be opportunities to simplify audit requirements for smaller grants and projects in ways that preserve accountability while improving cost-efficiency and usability for partners.

The RT finds that sustainability planning is currently too narrowly focused on donor diversification and insufficiently addresses broader dimensions of organisational resilience and long-term viability. The RT therefore concludes that sustainability planning should become a more explicit and systematic component throughout the full programme cycle, particularly for later-phase grants and long-term partnerships.

List of recommendations:

R#1: "CISU introduces a more differentiated and strategic allocation of CISU's advisory, training and management resources where GHs and members' access to these resources reduces over time as they gain capacity and experience".

R#2: "The resources saved on limiting the access to advisory services for experienced GHs and members are allocated by CISU to more field-based monitoring, learning, and outcome-based documentation of results".

R#3: "CISU should develop a Guide for participatory learning and outcome documentation to strengthen qualitative learning and outcome verification. It would be applied by both CISU staff and Danish GHs conducting monitoring visits in partner countries".

R#4: "CISU should prioritise embedding mandatory safeguarding requirements, such as whistle-blower and complaints mechanisms, into institutional practice by ensuring they are visible, trusted, and consistently applied across all partners. Existing gaps, reflected in the limited uptake among GHs in Denmark and local partners in Kenya, highlight the need to move beyond formal policies toward fully operational systems that reduce fiduciary and reputational risk for all stakeholders".

R#5: CISU should sustain its current equity balance as set by the CISU board and begin building a strategic reserve through savings on the budgeted running costs under the CISU management budget to support priority initiatives—particularly enhancing documentation, impact communication, and evidence of change to strengthen CISU's strategic outputs.

R#6: "To further enhance financial monitoring and strengthen transparency CISU should scale up monitoring through clear thresholds for visits, expanded oversight of partners, increased online follow-up, and systematic sharing of monitoring reports for quality assurance".

R#7: CISU should engage with the MFA to explore the possibility of simplifying audit requirements for smaller grants for instance by allowing the option of organisational reporting, including appendix reporting as part of the required performance and compliance audit.

R#8: "CISU should strengthen the integration of sustainability planning across the full programme cycle. This entails making sustainability plans a more explicit and mandatory component of applications—particularly for later-phase grants as well as systematically assessing them in annual reporting and monitoring visits".

1 INTRODUCTION

The review of the **Civil Society Fund (CSF)** managed by the association **Civil Society in Development (CISU)** was fielded during late February and April 2026 with the aim of providing an independent assessment of the management and performance of the CSF in relation to the strategic framework of CISU and the key purpose of and principles underpinning the CSF in accordance with DANIDA's Aid Management Guidelines and the "Retningslinjer for forvaltning af tilskudsmidler fra Udenrigsministeriet til puljeordninger og netværk". The review among others includes an assessment of management, partnerships, results, challenges, development in risk factors, and need for adjustments due to developments the context of civic space. The review is based on the standard Terms of Reference (ToR) for reviews, and not internal controls, as applied by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. See the TOR in Annex 1 for further description of the scope of work of the review.

The review mission included field trips to Aarhus and Kenya which contributed to the work of the Review Team (RT). During the mission, the RT met with key stakeholders in the CISU secretariat and Board, selected Grant Holders and their local implementing partners in Kenya as well as other key stakeholder. The TOR includes a one week field mission, and ass the second largest country recipient of grants and partnerships Kenya had been selected for sampling of projects and modalities. As of January 2026, there were 15 open projects in Kenya comprising a total value of DKK 84.771.941, -. In consultation with CISU, six Danish GHs were selected from the list of projects in Kenya primarily based on their partners location in and around Nairobi. The six GHs and their portfolio of projects cover mainly large and medium size project grants. In addition, and to also interview small GHs, the RT organised a focus group meeting in Århus with eight small GHs. (See list of persons met in annex 2).

The review was carried out by Kristin Skov-Spilling, team leader, LÆRING, MFA and external consultants Jørgen Skytte Jensen, civil society and organisational expert, and Christian Gregart, financial management expert. Andreas Schulz (case handler) and Karsten Ivar Schack (Chief Financial Officer) from HUMCIV, MFA participated as resource persons and HUMCIV management was also interviewed. The RT would like to express its thanks to everyone met during the assignment, for allocating their valuable time for and sharing their knowledge and experience with the team.

This report presents the major findings and recommendations of the RT, and is based on the institutions and persons consulted during the visit and on the documents consulted prior to and during the visit. The CISU members consulted and the local partners and projects visited only represent a small fraction of the broad CISU membership base and portfolio. It is however the impression of the RT that the sampling of informants, documents, projects and programmes are representative of the work of and results created by CISU and the CSF.

The findings, suggestions and recommendations provided in the report reflect the position of the RT alone. The views expressed may not necessarily be shared by the Management of HUMCIV at the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs or CISU.

2 THE CIVIL SOCIETY FUND (CSF)

The CSF is one of four funds managed by the association CISU. The **purpose** of the association is to support its member organisations and other Danish civil society organisations to be qualified and accountable development partners that contribute to combat poverty and strengthen civil society globally. The purpose is also to support the member organisations in their work to increase public awareness and knowledge in Denmark about development cooperation. CISU has become

Denmark's largest member-based association for organisations engaged in global civil society work. CISU currently has 302 member organisations and has seen as steady increase since the start with 36 members in 1995.

CISU is managing official development funds directly appropriated from the Finance Act from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as ODA funds secured through tendering processes. The budget for 2026 is DKK 280 million allocated to four separate funds, of which the CSF is the largest with a budget of DKK 200 million. The other funds are the Danish Emergency Relief Fund (DERF) and the "Udenrigsministeriets oplysning og engagementspulje" (OpEn), each with a budget of DKK 25 million and the "Naboskabspuljen" with a budget for 2026 of DKK 30 million

The main **role** of CISU is to manage the funds and ensure the appropriation of grants are made to relevant projects and programmes that are implemented by the Danish organisations that receive grants and their local partners. The fund management and quality assurance role include developing the capacities of member organisations to design and manage development projects and programmes. Over the years CISU has also engaged in advocacy and policy dialogue on behalf of the members regarding issues related to the role and scope for civil society in development work. This role is intended to be further accentuated in the new CISU Strategy 2026-2030.

The **purpose** of the CSF is to support capacity strengthening of civil society actors and through this increase citizen participation in governance and development processes and contribute to a pluralistic civil society. The CSF supports partnerships between Danish civil society organizations and their partners in the Global South. The CSF is meant to support projects and programmes that have a human rights-based approach, have a good knowledge of the local context and the target groups, are poverty oriented and contribute to increased sustainability for the stakeholders. It is also expected that the projects and programmes include and combine elements of capacity development, advocacy and strategic service delivery, referred to by CISU as the "development triangle". Over 80 Danish organisations in partnership with 178 local partners received 128 grants from the CSF in 2025.

The role of CISU in the management of the CSF includes an management and capacity development role and an appropriation role. The administrative role includes oversight and monitoring, and these functions are kept separate from the appropriation functions where applications are assessed and rated by external appropriation consultants based on agreed assessment criteria for the various grant sizes and types. The distribution between grant types and sizes of grants are shown in table 1 below with figures from 2025. The highest number of grants, 79, are allocated for projects below DKK 700 000. Though the number of programmes supported is lower, 38, the major share of the CSF funds, just under 80 percent, is spent in this category.

This proportion between projects and programmes is approved by the CISU Board before submitted to MFA for final approval. The proportion seem to be the subject of some discussions in CISU. The RT learned that the Secretariat is planning to review and update the CSF guidelines during the summer of 2026 to enter into effect in 2027. The opinion of the Review Team (RT) is that the current division of funds (approximately 20-80) seems appropriate. It allows for a relatively large number of smaller projects to be financed, and they contribute to civil society diversity and popular engagement all over Denmark. But it also reflects the necessity to maintain a large share of the CSF funding for multi-year programmes with a higher budget volume to deliver on the overall purpose of the CSF. There is a higher likelihood of impact when there is more time to implement and collaborate with the local partners. The strengthening of civil society starts in each organisation and with the local partners and how they work, what they work on, and how they address rights, equality, accountability, advocacy and local leadership. As such, the smaller qualitative changes that the partnerships between the CISU grantees and their local partners contribute towards are relevant to monitor in order to better capture the continuous strengthening of the organisations that form part of the broader civil society. CISU is looking into how to incorporate this as part of the monitoring of locally led development ambitions in the new CISU strategy 2026-2030.

Table 1: Overview of CSF modalities and share of allocations in 2025

CSP Basis 2025 Budget vs. Regnskab						
Civilsamfundspuljen modalitet	**Budget DKK**	**% af total**	**Regnskab DKK**	**Regnskab #**	**% af total**	**△**
Små projekter (< 150.000)	4,122,370	2.38%	5,459,729	37	3.14%	-0.76%
Store projekter (< 700.000)	28,292,189	16.32%	27,238,344	42	15.67%	0.65%
Små programmer (< 4 mio. kr.)	63,311,192	36.53%	65,825,590	23	37.88%	-1.35%
Kørende Mellem Programmer (disponeret)	16,878,750	9.74%	17,070,000	5	9.82%	-0.08%
"Nye" Mellem Programmer (< 3,75 mio. kr./år)						
Kørende Store programmer (disponeret)	55,775,000	32.18%	55,925,000	10	32.18%	0.00%
"Nye" Store Programmer (> 3,75 mio. kr./år)						
Samfinansiering, støtte til Ansøgningsproces og Kapacitetsanalyser	4,946,187	2.85%	2,272,873	11	1.31%	1.55%
Total CSP bevillingstilsagn	**173,325,688**	**100.00%**	**173,791,536**	**128**	**100.00%**	**0.00%**

3 CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND FOR CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT

The CSF is embedded within a broader development context characterised by increasing pressure on democratic institutions, shrinking civic space, and persistent structural inequalities across political, social, and economic domains. In many partner countries, civil society organisations (CSOs) operate in environments where fundamental freedoms of association, expression, and participation are contested or actively constrained. At the same time, global challenges such as climate change, rising inequality, and democratic backsliding are intensifying the need for locally rooted, adaptive, and rights-based development approaches. The RT visited Kenya where civil society has had more room for manoeuvre due to Constitutional rights compared to peers in neighbouring countries. The situation is however changing in a negative direction reflecting global trends. There is shrinking civic space, more arrests and increased control and monitoring by the authorities coupled with rising pre-election tensions and less funding opportunities. Within this landscape, the RT finds that the CSF plays a strategically relevant role as a flexible funding and capacity development mechanism that enables Danish CSOs and their local partners to engage directly with these complex and interlinked challenges.

From a political and governance perspective, the CSF contributes to strengthening democratic culture and accountability by supporting civil society actors e.g. as independent watchdogs, advocates, and strategic service providers. The field visit to six selected CSF funded projects in Kenya verified that through partnerships between Danish organisations and local CSOs, the fund helps amplify citizen voices, promote inclusive participation in decision-making processes, and foster dialogue between rights-holders and duty-bearers. Through the Danish Grant Holders (GH), the CSF is providing support in contexts where formal democratic institutions are weak or where marginalised groups such as women, youth, and persons with disabilities are systematically excluded from political processes. This is line with Danish development priorities in general and the overall strategic objectives of CISU in particular. In the opinion of the RT the CSF can be said to contribute to maintaining and expanding civic space.

The six projects visited by the RT are presented briefly in the text boxes. All six projects, although different in size, scope and thematic focus where all assessed to be relevant within the contextual challenges and purpose of the CSF.

Kvinderådet supports **ATHENA** as a global network of individuals and organisations, with a key and strong commitment to gender equality, gender equity, human rights, sexual and reproductive health, and a HIV response accountable to women and girls.

LGBT+ Denmark supports **CAC** (Cosmopolitan Affirming Community) providing a safe space for LGBTQI+ people of faith to practice their faith in an affirming environment.

Socially, the CSF is highly relevant in addressing inequalities and promoting inclusive development pathways. Through its support to locally driven initiatives, the fund facilitates interventions that are grounded in local communities of civil society actors, thereby enhancing their legitimacy and effectiveness. This includes targeted efforts to advance human rights, gender equality, and social inclusion, often through rights-based approaches that empower individuals and communities to claim their rights and hold institutions accountable. The RT experienced testimonies verifying that the CSF aligns closely with international human rights frameworks and contributes to the realisation of fundamental rights in practice.

100% for Children supports **Kenya alliance for the advancement of children (KAACR), Association of the Physically Disabled of Kenya (APDK) AADK/KAARC** strengthening inclusive, community-based child protection in Nairobi's informal settlements, preventing

DreamTown supports **Public Space Network** to transform neglected urban areas into safe, green, and productive community assets. Focusing on community-led design, empowering local residents to build parks, gardens, and playgrounds, particularly in Nairobi's informal settlements.

Economically, the CSF supports poverty reduction not only through direct livelihood interventions but also by addressing the structural drivers of poverty. By strengthening civil society's capacity to engage in policy dialogue, budget monitoring, and advocacy, the CSF supports partners to influence the distribution of resources and the design of inclusive economic policies. The RT visited projects where local partners engage directly with duty bearers addressing governance deficits, unequal access to resources, and exclusion from economic opportunities. Hence, it is the view of the RT that the CSF thereby contributes to more equitable and sustainable economic development outcomes.

DoF supports **Nature Kenya** aiming to conserve forest landscapes and biodiversity, local communities, and the climate by integrating participatory forest management with sustainable livelihood initiatives.

The relevance of the CSF is further underscored in relation to global environmental and climate challenges. Climate change disproportionately affects vulnerable populations, exacerbating existing inequalities and undermining development gains. Through its support to civil society actors working on climate adaptation, environmental protection, and green growth, the CSF enables locally appropriate and sustainable responses to these challenges. This includes promoting community-based natural resource management, supporting climate-resilient livelihoods, and advocating for environmentally responsible policies. The RT engaged with partners who link climate action with inclusive and rights-based approaches, ensuring that those most affected are also those most involved in shaping solutions. The RT has not assessed projects funded under the Climate Change

Adaptation Modality (CCAM), but understands that CISU has been succesful in the facilitation of relevant projects supporting locally led adaptation and development.

NCD Alliance Denmark supports **NCD Alliance Kenya** addressing the growing challenge of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) in Kenya by uniting NCD civil society and drive action on NCD prevention and care.

Across these dimensions, the CSF demonstrates a high degree of contextual relevance by addressing the interdependencies between political, social, economic, and environmental factors. Its partnership-based modality and emphasis on local ownership position it as a suitable instrument for advancing resilient civil societies capable of navigating complexity and driving transformative change. In a global context marked by uncertainty and contestation, the RT finds that the CSF's role in supporting civil society and safeguarding civic space remains not only relevant but essential for achieving sustainable development, advancing human rights, and reducing poverty in an inclusive and equitable manner.

Annex 4 includes six one-pagers from the six Danish GHs and the six projects visited. The one-pagers illustrate outcomes and changes resulting from the engagements.

4 ASSESSMENT OF THE CSF

4.1 Relevance and coherence

As referred to above, the CSF is increasingly relevant to the international context. In a world with rising inequality, shrinking civic space and democratic backslides, it is important to continue to support activities that lead to stronger citizen participation and democratisation. It is similarly relevant and important that the CSF maintains its focus on human rights-based approaches and support values linked to diversity, equality and inclusion. These values and rights are under immense pressure internationally by political leaders, donors and interest groups. It is relevant that the CSF continues to require that the GHs have a focus on inequality, cross cutting issues, human rights and do-no-harm. The latest revision of the CSF Guidelines (2025) maintains this focus, but is adjusting the expectations according to the size of the grants. Reference to Danish values as expressed in the Denmark's Strategy for Development Cooperation, democratisation, gender equality and human rights also in small projects is by some members perceived to be more academic than need be, but the RT finds that some consideration of these issues can be justified also for small interventions and contributes to the relevance and sustainability of the projects.

Globally, funding for civil society has been reduced in line with the general reduction in ODA funding. The reduction increases the competition for funding opportunities and may favour larger international organisations experienced with donor application processes. In this regard, the CSF remains an important funding opportunity that is open for small, volunteer driven and diverse CSOs as well as larger more professional organisations. The interest in funding from CISU is increasing and with this comes increased competition. The funding from the MFA to CISU has increased over the years, but not at the same pace as the number of applications for grants. The rising competition has made it more difficult to meet the requirements to qualify for a grant. At the same time the quality of applications has improved, so many applications that earlier would have qualified for support are now not receiving support because the funds are exhausted before one reaches the "bottom of the list" of eligible applicants. The situation is lamented by some members, but in view of the RT it cannot really be avoided. The competition is tougher and there has to be selection criteria based on quality standards and a scoring system to ensure transparency.

The CSF contributes to capacity development of the Danish civil society, and this is relevant to the priorities in the Danish development policies and strategies. Both Denmark's Strategy for Development Cooperation "A Changing World Partnerships in Development" (2025) and Denmark's strategy for strengthened Danish engagement with African countries "Africa's century" (2024), highlight that civil society is an important partner and contributor to the Danish development cooperation. Civil society's role as a promoter of human rights, norms, and people to people cooperation is also emphasised.

The emphasis on local partnerships and locally led development seems to be well on track and are important components of CISU funded projects and programmes. Danish partners have to have at least one local partner with whom they work and the application and report formats encourage the Danish partners to have a focus on the cooperation and to encourage local ownership and leadership. All the local partner organisations the RT met with in Kenya expressed high appreciation of the partnerships with the Danish organisations. Most of the partnerships were long term, which was highlighted as beneficial and good for trust building. No doubt many of the partnerships are also friendships. The local partners had a high degree of ownership to the projects and programmes and considered themselves to have been closely involved and instrumental in the development process, and they were fully instrumental in the daily management and implementation.

4.2 Effectiveness

4.2.1 CISU governance structures

CISU is organised as a member-based, three-tier governance system comprising the General Assembly, an elected Board, and the Secretariat, each with distinct and complementary roles.

The **General Assembly** is the highest decision-making authority, consisting of all member organisations. It exercises ownership over CISU's strategic direction and is responsible for approving annual reports, financial statements, budgets, and overall strategic priorities.

The **Board** provides strategic leadership and oversight between General Assembly meetings. It oversees financial management, funding mechanisms, programme portfolios including the Civil Society Fund, and overall organisational performance, while ensuring accountability, compliance, and adherence to policies and donor requirements. The Board has also been responsible for the recruitment of the incoming Secretary General (August 2026).

The **Secretariat** is responsible for day-to-day operations and implementation. It manages the full cycle of fund administration, provides advisory services and capacity development to members and GHs, and supports learning and knowledge sharing, including MEAL systems. It also prepares documentation for governance bodies, ensuring informed decision-making, and plays both an administrative and strategic role in linking implementation with organisational learning and development.

Although, not always strictly applied, as discussed below, the RT finds that the defined statutes and mandates between these three levels reflects a coherent governance system characterised by a clear division of responsibilities and mutual accountability. The General Assembly is set to provide legitimacy and strategic mandate; the Board should ensure direction, oversight, and control; and the Secretariat delivers implementation and technical execution. This separation of roles is defined in order to contribute to the overall effectiveness and efficiency, allowing CISU to combine participatory governance with professionalised operations. At the same time, the system is reinforced by independent grant assessment committees (Bevillingsudvalg), which enhance the technical quality and transparency of funding decisions.

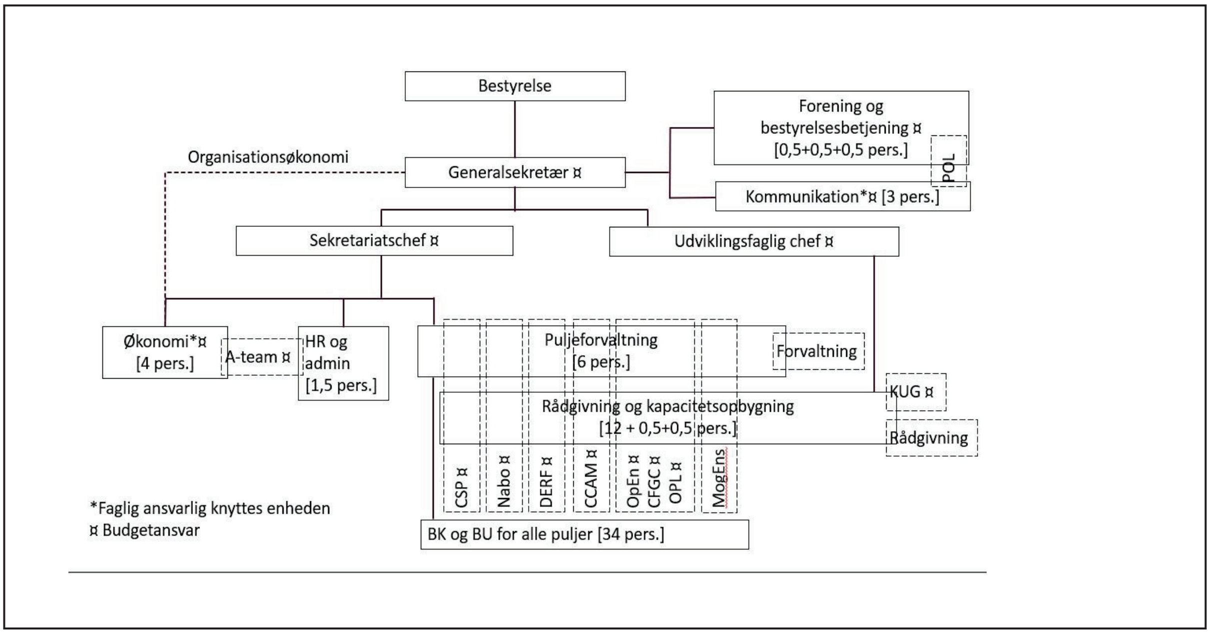
Whereas the RT finds the governance set-up both adequate and effective relative to the delivery on the CSF mandate and purposes, a newly implemented Governance Review[1] raises certain concerns regarding the efficiency and effectiveness. The Governance Review identifies significant weaknesses e.g. in strategic leadership, role clarity, and democratic functioning. A key finding is a strategic vacuum at Board level, with the Secretariat assuming an increasingly dominant role, leading to blurred responsibilities and weakened oversight. Findings also point to that the Board's effectiveness is further constrained by competency gaps and a weak selection process, while member engagement and democratic legitimacy are challenged by low participation and proxy voting practices. In parallel, risks to independent and transparent fund management have emerged, including potential conflicts of interest and limited technical grounding in decision-making. Overall, the governance review concludes that CISU requires stronger governance structures, clearer role delineation, and enhanced Board capacity to ensure accountability, legitimacy, and effective management of public funds. A comprehensive management response to the Governance Review has been prepared by the Board.

Overall, the RT finds that the Board is taking the criticism very seriously and is committed to ensure follow-up on key recommendations from the Governance Review. The RT has not addressed these critical elements of the Governance Review with neither the CISU Secretariat nor the Board, but strongly supports a thorough response and follow-up. Furthermore, **the RT suggests** that CISU and the Board provide a detailed update on the implementation of the recommendations for the next annual consultation with MFA/HUMCIV.

4.2.2 CISU Secretariat and management of the CSF

The CISU secretariat is organised in a matrix-like structure with multiple groups of teams working across different functions and areas of CISU's overall portfolio of funding mechanisms and responsibilities.

Figure 1: Organogram of CISU and function of the CISU secretariat



[1] Conducted by PLUSS, 2025

Staff have multiple work functions across the mechanisms as illustrated in the organisation chart in the Figure 1 above.

Approximately 6 *full time equivalent* (FTE) staff are responsible for management (forvaltning) of the funding mechanisms and 12 FTE staff are responsible for the advisory support and training of members and applicants to the funds. 4,5 FTE staff are responsible for Finance, Human Resources and Administration and 3 FTE staff are responsible for communications. 1,5 FTE staff are servicing memberships and Board members. The Leadership Team comprises a Head of Secretariat, a Head of Development and a newly recruited Secretary General[2]. CISU has a total of 32 staff whereas not all are full time, hence a total of approximately 29-30 FTE staff.

Overall, and relative to the CSF, the RT finds the Secretariat to be well organised and with a suitable and skilled suit of staff covering a reasonable composition of advisors, technical and financial managers/officers and specialists. CISU registers time on the different funding mechanisms, and within CSF it is divided between CSF Classic and Neighbourhood. Within each of these, the registration is divided into three categories: A1 Grant management (including Monitoring, accounts and reports assessment, C-sager etc). A2 Capacity building (including advisory, courses, network etc.), A3 Fund level reporting, communication, MFA coordination/meetings etc.).However, there is no time registration relative to the actual time spend on advisory support to each individual GHs and no specific analysis of the three categories mentioned above (A1-3) has been conducted. Hence, efficiency and effectiveness of e.g. advisory support are to be measured relative to the larger statistics of the CSF and the surveys conducted with grant holders (GH). The RT finds that an analysis of the actual investment in the various work functions supporting the CSF would be beneficial.

4.2.3 CISU's effectiveness in managing the CSF

In 2024[3], CISU managed a total of DKK 304,3 million and allocated or granted a total of DKK 271.2 million across its various funding mechanisms. Within this, the CSF accounted DKK 253,7 million with an allocation or granting of DKK 149.9 million distributed through 138 base grants. These grants supported partnerships involving 120 local organisations, with a clear geographic concentration in Africa (64%), followed by Asia (21%) and Latin America (11%). This distribution reflects both historical engagement patterns and strategic prioritisation of regions with significant development challenges and active Danish civil society engagement.

A total of 125 initiatives addressed issues related to e.g. civic space, human rights, and citizen engagement. In parallel, climate change and biodiversity emerged as a major thematic priority, with 62 initiatives supported, including projects funded under the CCAM.[4] Through the Danish Emergency Relief Fund (DERF), 41 grants amounting to DKK 28.8 million were approved in 2024. The RT has not looked into potential synergies or overlaps between the funding mechanisms but based on interviews with staff and GHs it is the impression of the RT that the funding mechanisms are complementing each other and addressing distinct purposes and thematic areas. Some of the GHs interviewed expressed particular satisfaction with the CCAM mechanism, which to the regret of CISU is not part of the 2026 Finance Act. Recent MFA reviews of both CCAM and DERF find the two mechanisms both relevant and effective.

[2] Commencing on 1st August 2026.

[3] Figures for 2025 are still pending.

[4] Through the CCAM modality alone, DKK 53.5 million was allocated across 20 grants, focusing on climate resilience and environmental sustainability within civil society programming. The DERF responds to acute crises., targeting contexts such as Palestine, Myanmar, and Somalia. Furthermore, CISU expanded its engagement in the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood, supporting 13 initiatives, with a notable allocation of DKK 11.5 million specifically directed towards Ukraine.

A new set of reformed guidelines for the CSF took effect from 1 July 2025. The reform of the CSF aimed to streamline funding modalities, improve accessibility, and strengthen alignment with CISU's strategic objectives. The revised structure organises support into the following four main categories.

Project Support provides smaller-scale, shorter-term funding through Small Projects (up to DKK 150,000) and Large Projects (up to DKK 700,000).	**Programme Support** enables longer-term, strategic partnerships, with funding tiers ranging from Small Programmes (up to DKK 4 million) to Large Programmes (up to DKK 27 million).	**Funding Diversification** mechanisms aim to strengthen organisations' financial sustainability by supporting co-funding and proposal development for external donors, including the EU and private foundations.	**Capacity Analysis** grants allow organisations to undertake external assessments of their institutional capacity, thereby supporting organisational development.

The RT finds that CISU delivers a comprehensive and well-functioning package of services to its member organisations and grant holders (GHs), encompassing advisory support to members in all aspects during application for a grant, during implementation and completion, as well as management support e.g. in project cycle management and compliance, and in capacity development and strengthening of members and GHs. Across these areas, the Secretariat is by both the RT but also by CISU members and GHs widely perceived as professional, responsive, and operationally effective, reflecting a high level of institutional capacity and experience.

Advisory services are strongly valued by members and GHs. The GHs interviewed describe services as timely, relevant, and closely aligned with operational needs, providing practical guidance that support both programme application and implementation, as well as organisational development. In 2024 and 2025, covering all five funding mechanisms CISU provided a total of 542/524 advisory sessions (on average 1-2 hours duration) covering 208/195 organisations/members/GHs who jointly submitted a total of 574 applications (335 to the CSF). The demand for advisory services is very much related to the application process, 79 per cent of the advisory services in 2024 were related to preparation of applications to CISU. The increased competition may be a contributing factor to this high share. The RT learned that small and volunteer-based organisations find the first steps of applying for CSF grants to be very academic and challenging. The RT is not recommending that CISU rewrite the application formats for small grants, but merely continue the ongoing guidance and advisory support. The RT finds that the format and requirements, also for small projects, are reasonable and necessary to ensure reasonable and sufficient goals achievement and accountability. The advisory services are likely very important for the smaller and less experienced CISU members. Similarly, local partners who had been part of advisory sessions were very positive about the capacities and understandings they gained from the advisory sessions regarding applications. The RT commends that an increasing number of partners in the Global South is participating in the advisory sessions, as was recommend by the MFA Review of CISU in 2020.

The RT finds the advisory functions to be relevant and effective, but also substantial in scope. An extensive and labour-intensive advisory service is on offer to all members (small, medium and large, experienced and less experienced). The RT finds the support is relevant to ensure best quality deliverables, but it also represents a significant organisational investment in terms of staff resources and is quite concentrated towards applications. The RT questions whether experienced GHs with a long track record of projects and programmes continue to be in need of several advisory support sessions. One partner interviewed has received more than 50 project grants over the past 15 years and another has been implementing programmes in several phases and in multiple countries. The RT finds that there might be (cost) opportunities to *demand more self-governance by experienced members* *in e.g. the application processes and management* (forvaltning), saving time from CISU staff which could be used to focus more on the implementation and also the organisational development process, e.g. through an increase in monitoring visits by the secretariat.

CISU's **management** (forvaltning) of funding mechanisms is assessed as efficient and supportive. Interviewed GHs report positive experiences with the quality of dialogue, responsiveness, and overall administration of grants. The Secretariat's ability to combine compliance requirements with constructive engagement is seen as a key strength, contributing to a generally high level of trust among partners. As above, the RT finds that experienced GHs with long track records of project implementation might be less entitled to management support, and time could be saved to be used e.g. in monitoring visits.

Statistics (no. of …) from 2025 / 2024
Applications: 574 (335 CSF+) / 553
Granted: 277 / 290
Advisory sessions: 542 / 524
Organisations advised: 195 / 208
Partners participated in advisory: 29% / 24%
Training courses: 103 / 95
Participants: 2340 / 2346
Source: CISU

CISU also offers an extensive portfolio of **capacity development** through training courses for members and GHs. Although still limited in number the RT notes that there is an increase in the number of partners from Global South benefitting from training courses since the latest MFA review in 2020. More opportunities for local partners to participate in trainings are highlighted by members in training feedback surveys and were also highlighted by the partners interviewed by the RT. Further "enrolment" of the local partners in CISU trainings will contribute to their capacity strengthening and also give CISU an opportunity to engage with the local partners. If needed, it should be possible to use AI to translate the Danish training material into English.

The list of training courses covers a wide range of thematic and technical areas ensuring that there are learning opportunities suited to GHs (and partners in Global South) diverse organisational needs and levels of capacities. The RT notes that the scope of the training offered also presents challenges, including course cancellations and low participation ("no-shows").. Once a year, CISU staff review the courses implemented and ensure updates and tailoring to actual needs and demands. As above, the RT finds that *the most experienced GHs with long track records potentially could be restricted in the use of training courses*, partly to allow more focus on small and new members, volunteers, partners in Global South etc. but also to save on the budget to allow for e.g. more monitoring dialogue and visits.

The RT commend that CISU is asking users of all the above services to complete **surveys**[5] and questionnaires about the relevance, usability, timeliness, etc. The RT agrees with CISU's approach that surveys are implemented every second year alternating between advisory support and training courses. The RT notes that learning is applied among CISU staff who tailor and improve services and training courses on a regular basis. Survey data from 2023/24 also confirm an overall positive perception of CISU's services. A substantial majority of respondents report to be satisfied or very satisfied with advisory support (91%), and satisfaction with training courses is similarly high at (95%). These figures reinforce the general impression of a well-performing Secretariat delivering valued services across its core functions.

The RT finds the Secretariat to be a well-functioning operational service provider and fund manager relative to the purpose of the CSF. Staff are skilled and experienced with a positive attitude towards servicing, learning and improving. However, the RT also finds that this "service" model also entails *a considerable level of resource investment*. Acknowledging that it is hard to measure value for money (VfM) of these services, it is nonetheless important to pursue in order to

[5] There are different types of surveys. All participants receive a small questionnaire after the event. Among the larger events, some are chosen for a longer survey. This in addition to the semi-annual surveys for all participants.

optimise on costs and effects given a relatively fixed budget. The real VfM assessment should be measured against the end line indicator of success i.e. if GHs can show clear evidence of building and strengthening civil society in Global South.

As discussed below under results management, GHs are struggling capturing real stories of change and effects as a result of their projects and/or programmes. So far value for money of CISU services are measured in member surveys showing relatively high satisfaction rates as well as acknowledgement in effective grant management – and in this review verified by the RT. The RT finds that strengthening the evidence base for VfM particularly in terms of outcomes and added value for civil society actors is a key consideration for future organisational development of CISU. This will require greater investment in outcome documentation. Given that CISU and the CSF is operating with a fixed budget there is a need to consider cost-opportunities between "nice to have" and "need to have" service delivery from CISU vis-à-vis the effects of these services in building stronger civil society organisations in Global South. To make this assessment the RT finds that there is a need to strengthen outcome documentation. Limiting the access to advisory sessions for experienced members would save time and resources in the secretariat that instead could be used for more advise services in the form of monitoring dialogues or visits during the implementation.

Based on the above findings **the RT recommends** that:

> **R#1:** CISU introduces a more differentiated and strategic allocation of CISU's advisory, training and management resources where GHs and members' access to these resources reduces over time as they gain capacity and experience.
>
> **R#2:** The resources saved on limiting the access to advisory services for experienced GHs and members are allocated by CISU to more field-based monitoring, learning, and outcome-based documentation of results.

To inform this shift, CISU could systematically track time spent on advisory, training, and management over a defined period of e.g. 4-6 months. This provides a baseline and foundation to consider cost-opportunities and greater effectiveness in resource allocation and value for money assessments.

4.2.4 Results documentation and management

CISU's approach to results management is anchored in its Strategy 2022-2025, which serves as the blueprint for defining, measuring, and communicating the value of its work and that of its member organisations. The approach aims at ensuring a clear line of sight from high-level strategic goals to specific, measurable indicators across a diverse portfolio of civil society interventions.

The CISU Results Framework 2022-2025 is a direct operationalisation of the organisation's strategy, structured to measure progress toward two primary strategic goals: Bæredygtige livsvilkår (Sustainable living conditions) and Mennesker samarbejder (People collaborate).

The framework is divided into four result areas that mirror the strategy's core objectives:

- Goal 1: Ensuring basic rights and economic/social conditions to prevent poverty.
- Goal 2: Building resilient communities capable of resisting and preventing the effects of climate change and environmental degradation.
- Goal 3: Fostering diverse engagement in global solidarity and action.
- Goal 4: Strengthening international and locally led partnerships to create strong local communities.

For each goal, the framework defines specific impact, outcome, and output levels. With this structure CISU aims to track not just immediate deliverables (outputs), such as the number of courses or advice sessions provided, but also the broader changes in capacity and rights (outcomes) and long-term societal improvements (impact).

The framework also tracks CISU's four core focus areas ("kerneydelser"): Reinforce (forstærke), Manage (forvalte), Connect (forbinde), and Communicate (formidle) ensuring that the secretariat's supporting activities are measured by how they contribute to the strategic goals.

The RT finds the alignment between the strategic focus areas and the results framework to be clear and operational. The RT acknowledges the complexity and challenges of CISU to capture the diversity among CISU's members, GHs and users vis-à-vis how to capture, assess and validate their results delivery.

CISU presents results in an **Annual Results Report** through a combination of quantitative data and short qualitative narratives, aiming to provide a comprehensive overview for GHs and members, MFA and the general public. In 2024, CISU developed a new reporting format that emphasises short change stories. These stories are derived from a methodology involving interviews with members, partners, and target groups to document structural changes and the human impact of interventions. The RT finds that the Annual Results Report to MFA is both informative, demonstrating robustness in data management, accountability and validation of CISU's funds management, services and support to Danish CSOs.

In order to prepare for the annual report, CISU receives progress and or completion reports from large projects and small, medium and large programmes. Hence, to a large extent the data and narratives available for CISU depends on the quality of reporting from GHs and their partners in Global South. In addition, key performance indicators (KPIs) are extracted from the "VoresCISU" database, reporting on figures such as the total number of people reached (directly and indirectly), the number of grants awarded per region, and alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The RT reviewed several **progress and final reports** from GHs relevant to the field visit to Kenya. The RT finds the reporting relatively well tailored to results frameworks and the designs of the objectives of the individual projects or programmes. However, the RT also finds that reporting is not capturing the narrative stories of change, both in terms of approved outcome indicators, but also on how grants from the CSF are contributing to the overall purpose to strengthen civil society partners in Global South. There are elements of storytelling and evidence of strengthened civil society groups and communities, but mostly it is implicit and not directly addressed relative to the defined outcomes of the project or programme. Reporting has limited evidence of and reflections on what drove change, how and by whom.

Fortunately, the RT's field visit to Kenya and the meetings conducted with partners and beneficiaries provided testimonies on how implemented activities and achieved outputs actually are supporting and driving the strengthening of partners and beneficiaries. What the RT did not find articulated in the progress reports was made clear in testimonies of partners and beneficiaries as they provided the evidence that the projects and programmes in question are contributing to strengthening the local partners as civil society actors. Hence, the RT finds that the CSF is relevant and tailored to support strengthening of civil society in Kenya (Global South). The stories of change communicated to the RT are not really reflected in GHs progress reporting. Furthermore, the RT finds that all six projects visited had strong elements of locally led development (LLD) and partnerships. The technical and managerial capacities of the partners visited in Kenya are relatively high and Danish partners have taken a commendable "back-seat" driver approach, which to some extend "blur" the actual value addition of the Danish partners but nonetheless shows a strong focus on LLD. The value addition of Danish partners was by the majority of partners expressed through the received funding support, and support to project cycle management and compliance.

In the absence of elaborated stories of change in the reporting from the six visited projects, the RT kindly requested the six Danish GH with projects in Kenya to prepare a one-pager on actual changes and effects as a result of their CSF supported projects and/or programmes. All six one-pagers are included in Annex 4.

The RT commends that the annual results reporting now also includes analyses of "significant positive and negative deviations" and the resulting learning. The RT finds this new element a significant improvement in regard to accountability and learning. Some results are also presented through thematic presentations, such as LLD or climate change adaptation (referring to CCAM), using infographics to display complex data like green financing percentages (Rio Markers) and the distribution of funds to local partners.

Some results are verified through a multi-layered process including final grant reports, follow-up interviews, external reviews (e.g., the 2024 review of CCAM), and monitoring visits (tilsyn) to both Danish GHs and their partners in the global south.

Overall, and since the MTR in 2020, the RT finds the results management and documentation to be robust with a solid data foundation, presentation of reported quantitative data and with emerging stories of structural changes and (positive) effects for and by civil society partners. As a next level development of the results documentation and reporting, the RT finds it important to strengthen the capacity of the most experienced GHs with longer track records (large projects and/or programmes) to also development more robust stories of change and evidence on how projects and programmes in fact are contributing to the overall strategic objective of strengthening civil society in Global South.

CISU conducts between 10-15 **monitoring visits** in countries with CSF and other funding mechanisms covering approximately 15-20 ongoing projects or less than 5% of the total portfolio per year. Interviews with partner organisations in Kenya showed that visits from CISU are highly valued and appreciated. Partners see these visits as learning opportunities to better understand CISU rules and requirements and to improve on compliance and project/programme management, but also to being able to tell the stories of change. In the view of the RT, CISU's monitoring framework for monitoring visits to Danish GHs and their partners is relatively robust and comprehensive for accountability purposes but less robust on outcome documentation and validation. Whereas, logframe-based compliance and accountability is a requirement according to MFA Guidelines and therefore should be applied, reporting tends to become very compartmentalised reflecting only on compliance issues at activity and output levels with limited assessment on outcomes in a more holistically approach taking into considerations e.g. drivers of change, emerging opportunities, critical assumptions, risks or people factors (behaviours, skills, capacities, leadership, etc.).

The RT acknowledges the importance of accountability reporting and is not suggesting that CISU change its already existing and robust data collection and management system. On the contrary. The RT is merely suggesting to add a final layer moving beyond the logframe-based approach where CISU staff apply a more facilitated approach with a focus on documenting peoples' reflections, learnings, observations etc. relative to changes occurred due to a certain project or programme.

Based on the above **the RT recommends**:

> **R#3**: CISU should develop a Guide for participatory learning and outcome documentation to strengthen qualitative learning and outcome verification. It would be applied by both CISU staff and Danish GHs conducting monitoring visits in partner countries.

The RT suggests that outcome documentation becomes a participatory exercise where partners and beneficiaries jointly discuss and tell the stories of change and how a project or programme with funds from the CSF support and gradually contribute to strengthening of civil society i.e. not only "what" but also "how". The RT acknowledge that it is not easy to facilitate outcome documentation, so a new Guideline should be relatively simple, but also sufficiently robust for GH staff who are not necessarily trained in MEAL functions to facilitate a learning and outcome documentation exercise. For inspiration, Annex 5 includes a suggestion or outline of a learning and outcome documentation guide.

In addition, the RT suggests that CISU could explore with HUMCIV if it would add value to embassy staff's work to receive an annual one-pager per project or programme activity (for large projects or programmes) in their respective countries. These annual one-pagers could be based on stories of how project and programmes supported by the CSF are contributing to the strengthening of civil society in general and local partners in particular. Alternatively, these one-pagers could be made available through CISU World Map platform.

4.2.4 Risk Management

There is a clear and shared fiduciary and reputational risk across all key stakeholders, from the MFA to CISU and Danish GHs, particularly regarding compliance with mandatory MFA clauses. These include requirements linked to safeguarding, anti-corruption, anti-child labour, and anti–terror measures. While these frameworks are well-defined on paper, their effectiveness ultimately depends on how consistently and credibly they are implemented in practice.

Central to this risk is the uneven presence of whistle-blower functions and complaint mechanisms. Findings from the Kenya visit illustrate this gap clearly. Among the GHs, only two out of six have established such systems, while at the level of local partners in Kenya, just one out of seven has a functioning mechanism in place. This points to a significant shortfall in the operationalisation of accountability systems, particularly closer to the communities where programs are implemented. An important insight is that the mere existence of written policies does not equate to effective protection or risk mitigation. Policies and formal mechanisms, while necessary, are not in themselves a "bulletproof vest." Without proper institutionalisation, meaning that systems are understood, trusted, actively used, and embedded in organisational culture, they remain largely symbolic and may fail at critical moments.

The RT acknowledges that CISU has formal complaint mechanisms available on the CISU website already. The way forward for CISU and its partners is therefore not only to ensure compliance in form, but to strengthen compliance in substance. This involves building and embedding visible, accessible, and trusted systems and structures. Efforts should focus on ensuring that whistle-blower and complaints mechanisms are not only established but also known to stakeholders, perceived as safe to use, and capable of delivering fair and timely responses. In practical terms, this calls for a shift from policy adoption to genuine institutionalisation. CISU, together with Grant Holders, has an opportunity to lead this process by supporting partners in developing mechanisms that are contextually appropriate, consistently applied, and trusted by users. Strengthening this area will not only reduce reputational risk but also reinforce accountability and integrity across the entire partnership ecosystem.

In addition to the above, CISU should maintain a strong and ongoing focus on how Danish GHs conduct due diligence of local partners. All mandatory MFA clauses must be fully applied, clearly understood, and consistently respected. Particular attention must be given to ensuring that these clauses are properly presented and embedded in practice, including strict safeguards to prevent any grant funds from being used, directly or indirectly, to support terrorism. CISU should therefore continue to refine and update its forms and checklists to support thorough screening of potential local partners, as well as to highlight key risks and considerations in the screening process.

Based on the above **the RT recommends** that:

> **R#4:** CISU should prioritise embedding mandatory safeguarding requirements, such as whistle-blower and complaints mechanisms, into institutional practice by ensuring they are visible, trusted, and consistently applied across all partners. Existing gaps, reflected in the limited uptake among GHs in Denmark and local partners in Kenya, highlight the need to move beyond formal policies toward fully operational systems that reduce fiduciary and reputational risk for all stakeholders.

4.3 Efficiency

4.3.1 Financial systems and procedures

The RT finds that CISU's financial systems and practices provide a solid foundation and ensure full compliance with MFA's guidelines.

CISU's financial management framework appears to be both robust and well-integrated, forming a reliable backbone for the organisation's operations. The systems in place that cover core functions such as accounting and time registration are not only established but fully embedded within CISU's overall structure. This integration allows for consistency, transparency, and efficiency in day-to-day financial processes. The framework allows CISU to provide financial status and reports at any given time to any specific stakeholders.

A key strength lies in CISU's internal controls. Clear systems and structures ensure proper segregation of duties, reducing risk and reinforcing accountability. Financial oversight mechanisms are functioning effectively, contributing to a high level of trust in how resources are managed and monitored.

4.3.2 Financial overview

In the opinion of the RT, the budget allocation under the CSF is handled in a balanced and structured manner. Each funding modality receives an appropriate share, guided by predefined formats and evaluation criteria. This structured approach supports fairness, comparability, and strategic alignment in funding decisions, ensuring that resources are directed where they can have the most impact. The overall budget distribution across the various modalities is confirmed by the MFA, ultimately approved by the CISU board and efficiently administered by CISU. But as mentioned before, due to high demand, several eligible applications are rejected because requests for project funding exceed the CSF budget.

As illustrated in the table below, CISU's financial development over the period 2022–2025 shows a steady growth in allocated funds to projects alongside a stable level in costs for management and professional services. These costs include costs of doing business, such as the office and supplies, CISU members and board, as well as staff, and remain at a controlled level relative to funds allocation to projects. The costs are very much levelled during the shown period, ranging between DKK 18.5M in 2025 to DKK 22.3M in 2023. The calculated cost ratio on management and professional services against allocated funds to projects reflects a very reasonable range throughout the presented period. This suggests a continued attention to cost efficiency. The figures presented below are based on the Auditor's Report issued by CISU's appointed auditor, and additional financial information across all fund mechanisms and consolidated for CISU is available in ANNEX 6.

(in 1.000 DKK)	2025 (Accounts)	2024 (Accounts)	2023 (Accounts)	2022 (Accounts)
Allocated funds for grants/projects (CSF, CCAM, EUNABO)	229.678	219.512	196.585	169.628
Expenditures, Management and professional service costs	18.467	19.541	22.264	19.009
Cost in % against allocated funds for grants/projects	8,04%	8,90%	11,33%	11,21%

CISU has also successfully reached its targeted equity balance, as set by the Board of Directors and approved by the General Assembly in 2024 and again in 2025. The RT finds this achievement reflects prudent financial stewardship. Looking ahead, there is an opportunity to leverage the equity position further. Increasing the equity balance could enable CISU to invest in strategic initiatives, particularly those aimed at strengthening documentation of relevance and capturing compelling stories of change. Such investments could enhance both learning and external communication. Increasing the equity balance should be continued based on achieving a positive net result based on the current financial structure of CISU, where any surplus arises from actual cost savings on the approved management budget of running costs and not directly generated from the overhead cost.

Based on the above **the RT recommends** that:

> **R#5**: CISU should sustain its current equity balance as set by the CISU board and begin building a strategic reserve through savings on the budgeted running costs under the CISU management budgetto support priority initiatives—particularly enhancing documentation, impact communication, and evidence of change to strengthen CISU's strategic outputs.

At the operational level, the Finance Team demonstrates a strong commitment and work ethic. The staff are clearly dedicated and capable, maintaining high standards despite a lean team structure. However, there is an indication that the team may be slightly understaffed, hence the **RT suggests** that CISU should consider adding an additional staff member within the current approved management budget, which could help sustain performance, reduce pressure, and ensure better backup functions.

4.3.3 Data Management and Tools

CISU has established a strong and well-structured digital platform through "Vores CISU", which serves as a central hub for information and guidance. The portal provides comprehensive and clearly organised documentation, supported by step-by-step instructions that make processes accessible and easy to follow. The platform provides a very comprehensive overview of information for both CISU and the Danish Grant Holders (GH) and CISU members in general, and is further elaborated with "Verdenskortet" displaying all projects and programmes in different countries.

The inclusion of GH basic data and application information further strengthens the portal's functionality. By centralising key data and application-related details, CISU ensures that stakeholders have ready access to essential information, enhancing efficiency and transparency. A notable feature of the platform is the dedicated section on "Accountability." This highlights CISU's emphasis on responsible practices and guides key accountability principles, reinforcing the importance of transparency, compliance, and ethical conduct across its partnerships. Looking ahead, there are opportunities to strengthen the platform further. One potential improvement would be to include a dedicated data field for GHs to provide a link to their own website-based complaints mechanisms. This would support greater visibility and accessibility of complaints mechanisms, aligning with good accountability practices and requirements.

Overall, "Vores CISU" represents a solid and effective tool, with opportunities for incremental enhancements that could further reinforce accountability and expand the reach of capacity-building initiatives.

In addition, the availability of a wide range of courses and supporting materials demonstrates a strong commitment to capacity development. These resources provide both technical guidance and learning opportunities, enabling partners to better understand and meet CISU's standards and expectations. However, the RT suggests that while the range of CISU courses and materials is already strong, there is scope to promote these offerings more actively among local partners. Increased outreach and communication could help ensure that these valuable resources are more widely utilised, ultimately strengthening partner capacity and program quality.

4.3.4 Financial Monitoring

Financial monitoring within CISU is implemented in a structured and deliberate way, demonstrating a strong commitment to accountability and sound oversight. The methodology is both risk-based and aligned with Value for Money (VfM) principles, enabling CISU to focus its efforts where risks are greatest and where monitoring can yield the most meaningful insights. A notable strength is the practice of coordinating visits to multiple local partners within the same country or trip, which enhances efficiency and makes effective use of available resources.

The monitoring process is further supported by the use of predefined formats and checklists. These tools help standardise assessments, ensure consistency across different monitoring activities, and provide clear guidance on expectations. Importantly, these materials are also made available to GHs in Denmark, enabling alignment in approaches and strengthening overall financial management practices across the partnership network. CISU also plays an active role in capacity development by offering training courses on how to conduct financial monitoring. These courses are a valuable resource for GHs and CISU members in general, equipping them with the skills and understanding needed to carry out effective oversight. Given their importance, there is a strong case for considering whether such training should become mandatory for GHs, as this could help ensure a consistent baseline of competence and further strengthen accountability.

Despite these solid systems and efforts, the broad coverage of financial monitoring visits remains relatively low when compared to the total number of grants, which exceeds 600 across the entire CISU portfolio on any given day. In 2025, CISU conducted 14 visits abroad and 11 in Denmark, covering approximately 4.2 percent of all grants. In 2024, the figures were even lower, with 9 visits abroad and 8 in Denmark, corresponding to about 2.8 percent coverage. While the risk-based approach justifies selective monitoring, these figures highlight a potential gap in reach.

To increase the ratio and numbers on financial monitoring, CISU has several options to pursue. Firstly, CISU should reflect on how monitoring coverage might be expanded or complemented, whether through increased resources, enhanced reliance on GH-led monitoring, or alternative mechanisms such as remote reviews. Strengthening coverage, while maintaining the current quality and risk focus, would further reinforce CISU's already solid financial oversight framework. Secondly, CISU should also promote alignment and strengthen financial monitoring practices by making the standardised formats and checklists available throughout its partner network. Thirdly, in addition to oversight, CISU should invest in capacity development by offering training on financial monitoring and making such courses mandatory to GHs. Currently, the course, 'Det gode projektbesøg' is available and provides GHs with essential skills and knowledge to carry out their own monitoring responsibilities effectively. Given their importance, there is a compelling argument for making such training mandatory, ensuring a consistent level of competence and reinforcing accountability across all partners.

Lastly, reports should consistently be issued in English for GHs in Denmark and shared with local partners to promote mutual learning and transparency. Monitoring of Danish GHs should be scaled up, with a clear threshold, whereby ten individual grants trigger a monitoring visit by CISU (in addition to monitoring automatically cone for GHs applying for medium and large programmes). Recommendations directed at GHs in Denmark should also extend to their local partners, for example, by requiring that online complaint mechanisms established by GHs are accessible to and also implemented by local partners. In addition, monitoring efforts should increasingly incorporate online follow-up, particularly to track progress on actions identified during previous visits conducted by CISU. At the programme level, GHs should also be expected to share their own monitoring reports with CISU to support quality assurance and ensure effective follow-up.

There is an opportunity for CISU to consider how monitoring coverage might be expanded or supplemented. This could involve increasing resources, strengthening the role of GH-led monitoring, or incorporating alternative approaches such as remote reviews. Enhancing coverage while maintaining the current quality and risk focus would further solidify CISU's already strong financial oversight framework.

Based on the above the **RT recommends** that:

> **R#6**: To further enhance financial monitoring and strengthen transparency CISU should scale up monitoring through clear thresholds for visits, expanded oversight of partners, increased online follow-up, and systematic sharing of monitoring reports for quality assurance.

4.3.5 Compliance

Overall, CISU has developed a system for registration and further reporting of irregularities to MFA and the RT is impressed with the functionality and structure of this system. Furthermore, the RT notes that several C-cases have been reported to the MFA, which underlines that the system in use is trusted and works as intended.

CISU demonstrates a clear commitment to accountability and transparency through the presence of a visible whistle-blower function and complaints mechanism on its website. This is an important foundation for building trust with stakeholders and ensuring that concerns can be raised and addressed. The RT suggests, however, that there is room to further strengthen accessibility and usability by expanding contact options, for example, by introducing a WhatsApp channel or similar platforms that may be more readily used by partners and, in particular, beneficiaries in different contexts.

In addition, CISU is also compliant towards audit instructions and requirements under the CSF and in general. However, the current framework for audit requirements appears relatively demanding, with high requirements for grants above DKK 500,000 and in general. While this reflects a cautious and compliance-oriented approach, it also results in a significant share of grant budgets being allocated to audit costs. Notably, despite these substantial cost allocations, the number of serious findings leading to actual or potential c-cases remains limited. This raises a question about proportionality and whether the current level of audit intensity consistently delivers value relative to its cost.

In this context, there may be scope to revisit the audit instruction framework. One option could be to adjust the requirement for performance audits, focusing instead on core financial and compliance audits for all small and large projects (up to DKK 700,000) under the CSF. Such a modification could streamline processes and lower audit costs for CSF-funded projects that account for less than 20 percent of total grant expenditures, while preserving robust assurance and audit requirements for programmes, which represent 80 percent. This is a timely consideration that could be incorporated into the ongoing revision of MFA guidelines guiding CISU. By refining the audit requirements, CISU has an opportunity to strike an even better balance between control, cost-efficiency, and practical usability for its partners.

Based on the above **the RT recommends** that:

> **R#7**: CISU should engage with the MFA to explore the possibility of simplifying audit requirements for smaller grants, for instance by allowing the option of organisational reporting, including appendix reporting as part of the required performance and compliance audit.

4.4 Sustainability

The CSF applications reviewed have a focus on sustainability approaches and how the project or programme will contribute to sustainable improvements for the target group. Capacity development, education, local ownership and fundraising are some of the elements listed that are expected to enhance the sustainability. These elements were also mentioned by the local partners in Kenya when asked about the sustainability of the project or programme in question. The relevance of funding and more fundraising and the wish to diversify the funding base was highlighted, as was the difficulty in succeeding with this. The capacity development is a strength, but the dependency on the Danish CISU members/GHs except in one of the partnerships is a risk for the local partners.

The RT finds that sustainability within CSF projects and programmes requires a broader and more structural perspective than is currently applied. Sustainability planning is often narrowly interpreted as diversification of funding sources, whereas in practice it could also depends on e.g. the robustness of organisational systems, internal capacities, leadership continuity, and succession mechanisms. Increasingly, partner organisations operate under conditions of limited and reduced financial resources, where long-term viability is less a function of external funding but could be more a question of how effectively they mobilise e.g. volunteerism, activism, and low-cost organisational models. During the field visit to Kenya the RT asked partners about their sustainability planning and discussion with Danish partners. Very few had very elaborated considerations to this. The RT's observed LLD by local partners is considered an important strength in the needed dialogue with partners about sustainability planning.

A key distinction emerging from the findings is between project sustainability and organisational sustainability. While projects may deliver results within a defined timeframe, the durability of these outcomes depends on whether partner organisations retain the capacities, structures, and networks required to continue activities independently. This places even greater emphasis on capacity development as a core pathway to sustainability.

At the same time, continued funding in consecutive phases cannot be guaranteed to continue. The CSF is under pressure and there is not enough funding to continue all large programmes. Hence, a more holistic and robust sustainability planning will be critical for many partners in the Global South that includes scenarios with reduced budgets, more volunteerism, activism etc. The sustainability planning should go beyond donor diversification to include concrete measures related to e.g. organisational resilience, including volunteer-based operational models, leadership succession, staff and volunteer retention strategies, and strategic partnerships (including cost-sharing arrangements). This would reinforce a shift from project dependency towards more self-sustaining civil society actors capable of maintaining results beyond external funding cycles.

Based on the above **the RT recommends** that:

> **R#8**: CISU should strengthen the integration of sustainability planning across the full programme cycle. This entails making sustainability plans a more explicit and mandatory component of applications, particularly for later-phase grants as well as systematically assessing them in annual reporting and monitoring visits.

ANNEX 1

Terms of Reference

Review of the Civil Society Fund (CSF) managed by Civil Society in Development (CISU)

Background and context

Civil Society in Development (CISU) has over 300 member organisations representing around 120,000 volunteers and over 1.3 million members, making it Denmark's largest member-based organisation for organisations engaged in global civil society work. The membership contains great diversity in size, purpose, history and organisation, from Amnesty International Denmark to Seniors Without Borders. Together, CISU's member organisations have partnerships in more than 100 countries, and CISU's awareness-raising and engagement efforts reach more than 3 million people annually. The organisation receives DKK 280 million annually from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs managed through HUMCIV, EUNABO and KOM.

For 2026, the allocations from the MFA managed by CISU will be as follows:

MFA Department	Modality	Amount in DKK
HUMCIV	Civilsamfundspuljen (CSF)	200 million annually
HUMCIV	Danish Emergency Relief Fund (DERF)	25 mill. annually (2021-2028)
EUNABO	Naboskabspuljen	30 mill. annually (2025-2026)
KOM	Udenrigsministeriets oplysning og engagementspulje (OpEn)	25 mill. annually (2022-2029)

Since its founding in 1995, CISU has worked with capacity building of member organisations, and since 1996 the organisation has managed development funds from the Danish Finance Act on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as through various tendering processes. The CISU also manages a small EU allocation. The organisation works to strengthen the role and engagement of civil society in development cooperation.

CISU is democratically organised with a general assembly as supreme authority and a board of seven persons, all representing member organisations. In 2025, Peter Horne Zartsdahl from Engineers Without Borders (IUG) was elected as the new chairperson. The day-to-day management of CISU is entrusted to a Secretariat located in Aarhus, Denmark. Following the departure of the previous Head of Secretariat in December 2025, Nicolai Houe is serving as Constituted Secretary-General while a recruitment process is underway to appoint a new Secretary-General.

CISU's strategic basis is grounded in relevant MFA strategies including Denmark's Strategy for Development Cooperation: "A Changing World Partnerships in Development", the government's strategy for strengthened Danish engagement with African countries "Africa's Century", and the Foreign and Security Policy Strategy. CISU's priorities are determined by this strategic framework combined with their own strategy. CISU is developing a new organizational strategy for 2026-2030 to be approved in April 2026, with implications to be discussed with the MFA in summer 2026. The legal basis varies by modality. The Civil Society Fund (CSF) is granted under direct authority from the Finance Act, while the Danish Emergency Relief Fund (DERF) and the Information and Civic Engagement Fund (OpEn) are based on separate contracts.

CISU's pool funds are implemented on the basis of the MFA's guidelines and CISU's own guidelines, which are approved by the MFA. The MFA also approves the annual budget for the CSF, including the distribution of funds between the different types of support. On the finance act for 2025 167.5 million with an additional grant of DKK 30 million was allocated for the CSF. For 2026 the annual grant has been increased to DKK 200 million.

The purpose of the CSF is to support capacity strengthening of civil society actors. The CSF supports partnerships between Danish civil society organizations and their partners in the Global South. By supporting civil society 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. The CSF does not prioritise any particular development issue but is overall guided by a human rights-based approach. In addition, applicants to the CSF are expected to have a do no harm approach, be poverty oriented and contribute to sustainable situations for communities benefiting from interventions.

The CISU management role of the CSF is twofold: an administrative and capacity development role and an appropriation role. The administrative role includes oversight and monitoring and these functions are kept separate from the appropriation functions where applications are assessed and rated.

An external capacity assessment and performance review of CISU was undertaken in 2020 with the objective to assess delivery against results as specified in CISU's 2018-21 strategy and its agreements with the MFA. There was a particular focus on popular anchorage and engagement among the Danish public in development activities. Based on findings and recommendations from this review CISU has made several changes linked to issues like introducing member surveys, revised onboarding practices for new members, co-funding requirements to enhance funding diversification among members, establishing a team focussing on transparency, accountability and safeguarding and establishing mechanisms to strengthen accountability and safeguarding in the organisation and with members, reviewing processes for monitoring and introducing new budget formats, and also becoming CHS verified.

CISU has since the last review carried out a comprehensive reform of the CSF. This was done, among other things, to increase the fund's ability to support locally led development, but also to address the extraordinarily high number of applications. The reform lowered grant ceilings and made all funding modalities competitive. In addition, increased requirements for applications for larger grants have been introduced, including strengthened requirements for diversification of funding. The CSF has five support modalities;

- **Project support:** Small Project (up to DKK 150.000) and Large Project (up to DKK 700.000). Project support enables the strengthening of organizations and partnerships.
- **Programme Support:** Small Programme (up to DKK 4 mio), Medium Programme (up to DKK 15 mio) and Large Programme (up to DKK 27 mio). This modality is only relevant for experienced organisations, who have developed a long-term strategic focus with local partners.

- **Co-financing support** (from DKK 70.000 to DKK 1 mio) supports your partnerships in cultivating different sources to finance your joint interventions. Co-financing support is aimed at applicants who assess that co-financing enables them to raise funds from another main donor, such as the EU. Co-financing does not need to be a requirement from the main donor, but it should enhance the application to the main donor.
- **Support for application processes** (up to DKK 50.000) is an opportunity to seek financial support for relevant expenses if you, along with a partner, are seeking support from a donor not financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, such as a Danish or international foundation.
- **Capacity analyses** (up to DKK 100.000) are aimed at Danish organisations in need of an external professional assessment of the organisation's professional, organisational, and administrative capacity and its partnerships. A capacity analysis can provide valuable learning in terms of strategy, management, and capacity development.

In 2024 the CSF allocated DKK 149,9 million to Danish organisations who collaborated with 120 local partner organisations. 64 percent of the funds went to African countries with Uganda having the most projects funded (27 projects) followed by Kenya (19 projects) and Ghana and Tanzania (15 projects each).

Purpose

The purpose of the midterm review is to provide an assessment of CISU's management of the Civil Society Fund (CSF) and the performance of the CSF in relation to the strategic framework of CISU and the key purpose of and principles underpinning the CSF. This is to be undertaken in accordance with DANIDA's Aid Management Guidelines and the "Retningslinjer for forvaltning af tilskudsmidler fra Udenrigsministeriet til puljeordninger og netværk". The review should also provide recommendations for the way forward regarding the CSF.

Objective

The objective of the consultancy services is to support the Department of Evaluation, Learning and Quality (LÆRING) in the implementation of the review, including document review, sampling, interviews, field mission, analysis and the production of the midterm review outputs.

Scope of Work

The scope of work will include, but not necessarily be limited to, assessment of the following:

Relevance and coherence

- Continued relevance of the CSF to the international context and to CISU's and the CSF strategic priorities
- Continued relevance of the CSF to Danish policy priorities including poverty orientation and human rights-based approach, do no harm, gender equality, disability inclusion and environmental considerations
- CISU's approach to partnerships and locally led development
- Adaptation of the updated guidelines for the CSF

Effectiveness

- CISU's management of the CSF in relation to its role and core functions and purpose of the CSF.
- Performance and results of the CSF grants in relation to the purpose and principles of the CSF and CISU's results framework.
- Capacity development of grantees and local partners

- CISU's efforts to ensure upwards and downwards accountability.
- CISU's MEAL system and monitoring of grant recipients
- Reporting capacities including learning and adaptation
- Capacity to ensure reliability of performance data and verify the validity of the data collected from partners.
- Efforts of CISU to ensure adaptive management, responsiveness and flexibility at grant recipient level.
- CISU's Risk management in relation to grantees.

Efficiency

- Financial management of the CSF including an assessment of budgets, disbursements, expenditures, and financial reporting
- Financial monitoring, the procedures and practices for following up on funds awarded to grant holders and local partners
- Compliance with DANIDA Financial Management Guidelines
- Accounting procedures, internal controls, governance, and financial reporting.
- Adequacy and quality of the auditing vis-à-vis the Danish requirements.
- Procedures and management of suspicion of irregularities, fraud, corruption, or Financial mismanagement and anti-corruption policy.
- CISU's focus on cost effective use of resources.

Sustainability

- Assess the efforts made to enhance sustainability, including strengthening the capacities of partners

Deliverables

a) Mission Preparation Note (MPN) of a maximum of five pages, outlining key issues the MTR will focus on, including suggestions for a tentative program for the field mission.
b) Debriefing Presentation (power point) highlighting key preliminary findings and recommendations. To be presented after the completion of the field mission.
c) Draft Midterm Review Report, including key findings and recommendations (max. 18-20 pages, excluding annexes.
d) Final Draft Midterm Review Report, including key findings and recommendations (max. 18-20 pages, excluding annexes.

Timing

The MTR is expected to start end-February/beginning of March and be completed by end-April 2026. Timing of milestones and travel dates to be agreed in more detail between the MFA, the consultant and CISU.

The Review will be organised in three main phases as outlined below:

Phases	Main activities	Output
Inception (up to 10 days, including a visit to Aarhus)	• Kick-off meeting with MFA and CISU. Sampling of cases. CISU assist with stakeholder list and assists with setting up online meetings • Preparatory desk review to analyse key documents. • Initial interviews and consultations in Denmark and online. Visit to CISU secretariat in Aarhus. • Preparation of Mission Preparation Note (MPN) prior to field mission including meetings scheduled for the field mission – assisted by the local MSI office. • Meeting with stakeholders to discuss MPN.	Stakeholder list Mission Preparation Note
Field mission 7 days	• Data collection and interviews with partners, beneficiaries, other stakeholders and relevant donors in Kenya	Daily debrief meetings in team after meetings/interviews.
Reporting (Up to 11 days)	• Debrief meeting (online) after field visit to discuss recommendations with MFA and CISU • Prepare draft report for discussion and comments by MFA and CISU. • Finalise report based on comments from CISU and MFA.	Debriefing PP after mission. Draft report. Final report.

Methodology
The mid-term review will be based on document reviews, interviews (in-person and virtual) with key informants and stakeholders and will involve a visit to the CISU secretariat in Aarhus and a field visit to Kenya. A sampling of CSF grantees representing different support modalities will be made and will in particular be related to the partners to be visited in Kenya but additional grantees may also be included in the sample to include more countries.
To support the review team's assessment, the review team may request CISU and CSF grantees to complete an online survey/self-assessments, which can inform the review team's dialogue with CISU and members on issues related to partnership, capacity development, monitoring and learning.

Qualifications and Competence of Staff
The MTR team will consist of:

- Kristin Skov-Spilling, Chief Adviser, Evaluation, Learning and Quality (LÆRING) /Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Denmark (Team Leader).
- External consultant 1: Expert in civil society organisations and civil society development
- External consultant 2: Expert in Financial Management and Grant management

One of the external consultants (1 or 2) shall act as the team coordinator of the consultant team for the purpose of internal management of the external consultants within the MTR team.

The MTR team may include relevant staff from the MFA as resource persons during the mission.

1 Expert in civil society organisations and civil society development
General Qualifications

- Recognised relevant university degree, preferably a Master's degree;

- A minimum of 10 years of experience with development cooperation and civil society development.

Adequacy for the Assignment
- Documented experience with conducting reviews, capacity assessments, and similar assignments, including report writing.
- Documented experience with working on issues related to civil society development.
- Documented experience with localisation and local leadership.
- Experience with working with alliances.
- Experience with organisational management, administrative systems and procedures.
- Experience with the Danida Aid Management guidelines and conducting Danida reviews is an asset.

Language and experience from the region
- Strong proficiency in Danish and English is a requirement.
- Experience with working on the African continent.

Expert in financial management and grant management
General Qualifications
- Recognised university degree in economics, development studies or similar,
- A minimum of 10 years of experience with development cooperation with focus on financial management, grant management, budget monitoring and risk assessments,

Adequacy for the Assignment
- Documented experience with reviews as financial management expert.
- Experience with assessing and analysing project and financial management systems and risks, including mitigation of fiduciary risks, and anti-corruption management and prevention,
- Experience with capacity assessments of civil society organisations, especially in relation to financial management, monitoring and reporting,
- Experience with grant management,
- Experience with development assistance programmes implemented through non-governmental organisations,
- Experience with Danida Aid Management Guidelines regarding administrative and financial management procedures and requirements is an asset

Language
- Strong proficiency in Danish and English is a requirement.
- Experience with working on the African continent.

Estimated budget and level of effort
The budget maximum is DKK 500 000 net of VAT (as set out in Article IX in the Consultancy Agreement). The financial proposal must i.a. include the following:
- Fees, including work during weekends and missions as well as travel time according to Danida contract conditions;

- Costs for international travel and other travel, per diem etc. The budget should be based on the number of indicated travel days in the ToRs and must specify the two day visit to Aarhus and the seven days visit to Kenya;
- Insurance and audit costs.
- A lumpsum of DKK 17 000 for in-country logistical expenses such as local car rental and taxis, potential interpreters, meeting venues etc. should be included in the budget.

For the level of effort, the below presents the minimum expected number of days per expert:
- External consultant 1: 28 work days.
- External consultant 2: 23 work days.

Management
The MTR will be led by LÆRING as the unit responsible for the MTR. The contact point from LÆRING will be the team leader of the MTR. The team leader will lead all communication with relevant MFA departments and embassies and ensure the delivery of outputs to these parties. Concurrently, the team leader will assign roles and responsibilities to the consultant team and set expectations for the delivery of outputs. Consultants will be under the direct management and supervision of LÆRING.

The Consultants will be responsible for the delivery of the required outputs to LÆRING, and should assign a consultant team coordinator for the internal team management of the consultant team and consolidation of the Consultant's outputs prior to submission to LÆRING. The report deliverables shall be quality assured by the Consultant's quality assurance system prior to delivery to LÆRING. The contact point for the Consultant during this assignment should at all times be the team leader at LÆRING.

Background documents
Background documents include, but are not limited to:
- CISU strategic documents as well as result framework
- CISU's latest reports and strategic outlooks submitted to the MFA
- Documents related to applications and assessments and awarding of CSF grants (a sample)
- Documents relating to monitoring of CSF grants (a sample)
- Documents relating to the grantee's follow up and dialogue with the local partners (a sample)
- Denmark's strategy for development cooperation "A changing world - partnerships in development"
- DANIDA's Aid Management Guidelines and Financial Management guidelines
- "Retningslinjer for forvaltning af tilskudsmidler fra Udenrigsministeriet"
- Other relevant docs

ANNEX 2

Persons Met

CISU staff

- Nicolai Houe, Head of Development
- Iben Westergård Rasmussen, Head of Secretariat
- Bolette Kornum, Controller
- Mette Kjærtinge, Advisor
- Søren Asboe Jørgensen, Advisor
- Jakob Thorsen, Advisor (DERF)
- Christoph Lodemann, Advisor
- Maria Graversen, Advisor
- Camilla Bøgelund, Engagement and Communications Advisor
- Helene Holbeck Kannegaard, Engagement Advisor
- Rikke Sig Hansen, Advisor
- Amalia Palle Bjørnsen, Advisor
- Maria Haahr, Advisor
- Hans Jakob Hausmann, Advisor
- Rune Vinter Pedersen, Advisor
- Marie Kirketerp Frandsen, Advisor
- Ayram Shine, Advisor
- Morten Pagh Svalgaard, Finance Officer
- Angela Issac, Finance Officer
- Kim Jensen, Communications consultant

CISU Board

- Peter Horne Zartsdahl, Chairperson

CISU Bevillingsudvalg/Konsulenter

- Marianne Bo Paludan, Bevillingskonsulent
- Herluf G. Madsen, Bevillingsudvalg (Save the Children)

Danish Grant Holders

100% for the Children

- Camilla Legendre, Daily Manager
- Camilla Quist Olesen, Head of International Development

Dansk Ornitologisk Forening

- Thomas Lehmberg, Programme Coordinator

Non-Communicable Diseases Alliance Denmark

- Stefan Islandi, Director
- Morten Bach, Programme Officer

Kvinderådet
- Helene Forsberg, Director
- Anita Andersen, Administrations and Finance consultant

LGBT+ Denmark
- Benjamin Foyn Lausten, Programme Manager

Dream Town
- Nina Ottosen, Leadership and Programmes

Partners in Kenya

Association for the Physically Disabled of Kenya APDK and KAARC
- Benson Agesa, Project Manager, APDK
- Peggy Mamadi, Regional Coordinator
- Engory Juma, Program Officer
- Alba Giturn, Head of Program, APDK
- Anthony Nzuki, CEO APDK
- Shukri Hussein, 100% for the Children Kenya
- Lydia Muthoni, 100% for the Children, Program Manager
- Timothy Eksesa, Director, KAACR

Nature Kenya
- Paul Matiku, Executive Director
- Paul Gacheru, Species & Sities, Programme Manager
- Denvas Gekonde, Finance Manager
- Caroline Kabilu, Programme Support Manager

Non-Communicable Diseases Alliance Kenya
- Catherine Karekezi, Executive Director
- Nancy Wesonga, Finance Officer
- Gideon Ayodo, Program Manager
- Peris Musionbi, Youth Advocate
- Frankline Musina, Advocate Right Chapter

Athena Alliance Kenya
- Cate Nyambura
- Lilian Njeri Mbuchi
- Stehanie Melisson Mulei
- Margrethe Wathiegeni
- Wakecho Langali

Cosmopolitan Affirming Community (CAC)
- Caroline Omolo
- Brian K Outa
- Charles G Maina

- Naema Murundi
- Carlsen Luchazo
- Winnie Oketch
- Caroline Oudlo
- Shukuru Peter
- Florence Nijaske
- Godfrem Adera

PEMA
- Ishmael Bahati, Director (online)

Public Space Network
- Robinson Esialimbi, Director
- Edward Kipchumba, Finance Officer
- Community representatives in Dandora and Kamukunji (public spaces)

Danish Embassy in Nairobi
- Henrik Larsen, Head of Cooperation / Teamleader Governance & Health
- Joseph Kimani Njuguna, Program Manager, Democratic Governance

MFA staff
- Katrine Skamriis, MFA-ØKO, former CISU Board Chairperson
- Thomas Nicolaj Hansen, Teamleader HUMCIV
- Andreas Schultz, Head of Section, Humanitarian Affairs and Civil Society
- Karsten Ivar Schack, Chief Financial Officer, HUMCIV

ANNEX 3

Summary of Review Recommendations

Title of Programme/Project	Review of the Civil Society Fund managed by CISU
File number/360 reference	25/48404
Review report date	18.05.2026
Summary of possible recommendations not followed **(to be filled in by HUMCIV)**	

Overall conclusion of the review The review is overall very positive to the way the civil society fund (CSF) is being managed by the CISU secretariat. The appropriation of funds is transparent and structured with solid justifications for the evaluation of proposals. The guidance and capacity development of the members of CISU is very comprehensive and appreciated by the beneficiaries. What may be considered, is to reduce the time and resources spent on guidance and assistance to the more experienced CISU members in the application phase, and redirect this time and resources for more support and follow-up during the implementation phase.	
Recommendations by the review team	**Follow up by the responsible unit**
"Slimming" and reallocation of advisory and training services *The advisory services, especially regarding applications, are used extensively by the members. There is less interest by members in asking for advisory services during the implementation period. Advise during the application process is resource intensive for the secretariat. There is also a long list of different training courses on offer, often suggested by members but sometimes with limited participation when the trainings take place. Resources could be saved and redirected towards the implementation phase if access to advise and the list of training courses on offer were reduced.*	
Recommendation no.1: *CISU introduces a more differentiated and strategic allocation of CISU's advisory, training and management resources where GHs and members' access to these resources reduces over time as they gain capacity and experience.*	
Recommendation no.2: *The resources saved on limiting the access to advisory services for experienced GHs and members are allocated by CISU to more field-based monitoring, learning, and outcome-based documentation of results*	
Better capturing of changes that the projects and programmes contribute to *The reporting based on the logframe of the projects or programmes is not always capturing the changes that are taking place. To strengthen participatory learning and qualitative outcome documentation, the current monitoring set-up could be expanded to ask questions that better capture the stories of change from the local partners, the beneficiaries and the communities.*	

Recommendation no.3: CISU should develop a Guide for participatory learning and outcome documentation to strengthen qualitative learning and outcome verification. It would be applied by both CISU staff and Danish GHs conducting monitoring visits in partner countries.	
Safeguarding Set-ups with CISU members and local partners regarding information about mechanisms and the availability of complaints- and whistle blower mechanisms could be improved.	
Recommendation no.4: CISU should prioritise embedding mandatory safeguarding requirements, such as whistle-blower and complaints mechanisms, into institutional practice by ensuring they are visible, trusted, and consistently applied across all partners. Existing gaps, reflected in the limited uptake among GHs in Denmark and local partners in Kenya, highlight the need to move beyond formal policies toward fully operational systems that reduce fiduciary and reputational risk for all stakeholders.	
Potential for an increase of the equity balance CISU has reached its targeted equity balance, as set by the Board of Directors and approved by the General Assembly in 2024 and again in 2025. This could be increased further to allow CISU to have funds that can be used for strategically relevant purposes like further documentation of change stories. The equity balance can increase when a surplus arises from actual cost savings on the approved management budget of running costs.	
Recommendation no.5: CISU should sustain its current equity balance as set by the CISU board and begin building a strategic reserve through savings on the budgeted running costs under the CISU management budget to support priority initiatives—particularly enhancing documentation, impact communication, and evidence of change to strengthen CISU's strategic outputs	
Strengthen further the financial monitoring *CISU has solid systems for accountability and sound oversight. The monitoring process is supported by the use of predefined formats and checklists. However, the broad coverage of financial monitoring visits remains relatively low when compared to the total number of grants, which exceeds 600 across the entire CISU portfolio on any given day. In 2025, CISU conducted 14 visits abroad and 11 in Denmark, covering approximately 4.2 percent of all grants.*	
Recommendation no.6: To further enhance financial monitoring and strengthen transparency CISU should scale up monitoring through clear thresholds for visits, expanded oversight of partners, increased online follow-up, and systematic sharing of monitoring reports for quality assurance.	

Audit compliance CISU is compliant towards audit instructions and requirements under the CSF and in general. However, the current framework for audit requirements appears relatively demanding, with high requirements for grants above DKK 500,000 and in general. While this reflects a cautious and compliance-oriented approach, it also results in a significant share of grant budgets being allocated to audit costs.	
Recommendation no.7: CISU should engage with the MFA to explore the possibility of simplifying audit requirements for smaller grants, for instance by allowing the option of organisational reporting, including appendix reporting as part of the required performance and compliance audit	
Sustainability The CSF applications reviewed have a focus on sustainability approaches and how the project or programme will contribute to sustainable improvements for the target group. Capacity development, education, local ownership and fundraising are some of the elements expected to enhance the sustainability. It could however also depend on e.g. the robustness of organisational systems, internal capacities, leadership continuity, and succession mechanisms. A broader and more structural perspective on sustainability planning could be relevant.	
Recommendation no.8: CISU should strengthen the integration of sustainability planning across the full programme cycle. This entails making sustainability plans a more explicit and mandatory component of applications, particularly for later-phase grants as well as systematically assessing them in annual reporting and monitoring visits.	

I hereby confirm that the above-mentioned issues have been addressed properly as part of the (Mid-term) Review and that the review team has provided the recommendations stated above.

Signed in………………… on the ……..…………….……………
Kristin Skov-Spilling
Review Team leader/LÆRING representative

I hereby confirm that the responsible MFA-unit has undertaken the follow-up activities stated above. In cases where recommendations have not been accepted, reasons for this are given either in the table or in the notes enclosed.

Signed in………………..…on the……………..………………………………….

Head of HUMCIV

ANNEX 4

One-pagers from six Grant Holders operating in Kenya

5.1 Danish NCD Alliance with NCD Alliance Kenya

Over the past decade, Non-Communicable Diseases Alliance of Kenya (NCD Alliance Kenya) has grown into a strong and influential civil society voice for people living with non-communicable diseases in Kenya. Long-term support from CISU through the Civil Society Fund (Civilsamfundspuljen), in partnership with Danish NCD Alliance, has played a key role in this development.

The programme support from CISU has contributed to strengthening the institutional capacity and advocacy impact of NCD Alliance Kenya. With support from CISU, the Danish NCD Alliance and NCD Alliance Kenya has established the systems and governance structures necessary to operate as a strong and credible civil society organization. This includes the development of core operational frameworks such as financial and human resource manuals, project management and monitoring systems, communication and branding strategies, and an advocacy strategy. Over the last decade NCD Alliance Kenya has grown significantly to become the umbrella organization for more than 50 CSOs all working with chronic diseases and with 8 staff employed at HQ alone and 11 clinical staff. NCD Alliance Kenya works regionally, nationally and locally. Regionally they have been pivotal in getting the East African Community ("the EU" of East Africa) to finalize their first regional framework for NCDs. At the national level, NCD Alliance Kenya has engaged actively in policy processes, including contributing to the development and implementation monitoring of the National Strategy for the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases under the Ministry of Health. It has strengthened its multi-sectoral collaboration through platforms such as the Inter-Sectoral Committee.

At the same time, the programme has supported the establishment of six county-level chapters out of 22 active counties, creating sustainable platforms for advocacy and engagement with duty bearers at the local level. These chapters bring together people living with non-communicable diseases through community-based organizations and support groups. Over time, the county chapters have formalized into umbrella community-based organizations with their own identities and structures, enabling them to lead advocacy initiatives and mobilize resources locally. Overall NCD Alliance Kenya has managed to diversify their project portfolio considerably and NCD Alliance Kenya is no longer dependent on only one or two donors. The CISU programme approach, which provides a degree of long-term stability, along with DNCDA's fundraising support, has contributed significantly to this success.

Kenya has made significant progress in the fight against NCDs during the last decade, not least because of pressure and support from NCD Alliance Kenya and their members. However, there are still mountains to climb if Kenya is to avoid hundreds of thousands of people dying prematurely from NCDs. There is an urgent need to focus more on prevention and to break down the silos between communicable and non-communicable diseases and most importantly ensuring that People Living with NCDs are consulted and listened to. As NCD Alliance Kenya's members emphasize: "Nothing about us without us."

5.2 100% for Children with APDK, PLK and HDMS

Breaking the Silence: A rights-based model for inclusive SRHR developed in the partnership between 100% for Børnene, Association for the Physically Disabled of Kenya (APDK), Positive Life Kenya (PLK) and Help Mission Development Services (HDMS).

The Breaking the Silence (BTS) model, developed by 100% for the Children in partnership with Kenyan organisations including APDK, is a rights-based and participatory approach aimed at improving adolescents' access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) through inclusive education in schools and communities. It is grounded in a bottom-up methodology that recognizes young people, including persons with disabilities, as rights-holders and active agents of change. Central to the model is Active Assessment, which promotes learner-centered and dialogue-based teaching practices that foster trust, reflection, and inclusion. The model further establishes Safe Spaces that enable open and confidential dialogue on sensitive issues, thereby reducing stigma and ensuring participation of marginalized groups. Through school clubs and peer-led initiatives, BTS strengthens learners' agency, leadership, and civic engagement. Risk mapping and protection mechanisms are applied to identify and address vulnerabilities affecting learners' well-being. The model explicitly addresses harmful norms, gender inequalities, and stigma, which disproportionately affect persons with disabilities. BTS includes a Graduation Model; a structured approach designed to ensure the sustainability of the BTS model by gradually transferring ownership and capacity to schools. Through phased training, mentorship, and teacher-to-teacher learning, schools build the skills and systems needed to independently deliver SRHR education and maintain Safe Spaces. Evidence shows that this approach strengthens institutional ownership and enables continued implementation of BTS practices beyond direct project support, although sustained results depend on leadership commitment and minimal resource allocation commitments.

By promoting inclusive and rights-based education, BTS contributes to safer learning environments and improved access to SRHR knowledge and services. This is particularly relevant given the multiple barriers faced by young persons with disabilities in accessing information, services and justice. Overall, BTS supports sustainable institutional change by embedding inclusive practices within education systems and community structures with a focus on building their capacities to continue BTS without funding.

From service delivery to systems change: How the partnership drives rights-based disability inclusion in Nairobi County

The transformation of The Association for the Physically Disabled of Kenya (APDK) from a primarily service delivery organisation to a strategic, rights-based actor has been driven through its long-standing partnership with 100% for the Children (100% for Børnene). Through this partnership, APDK has strengthened its adoption of a human rights-based approach, positioning persons with disabilities as rights holders rather than beneficiaries. 100% for the Children has supported APDK in building capacity to empower persons with disabilities, particularly youth, to claim their rights and participate actively in society. The partnership has enabled APDK to move beyond focusing solely on direct services towards advocacy and structured engagement with duty bearers, including Nairobi County authorities. Together, the partners have developed approaches to mainstream disability inclusion across sectors, including health and education. This is also reflected in a signed MOU between Nairobi County and APDK. 100% for the Children has played a key role in facilitating APDK's shift towards systems-level engagement and co-creation with government actors. This has contributed to embedding disability inclusion within public systems rather than parallel project implementation.

From parallel projects to public systems: Institutionalising Disability-Inclusive SRHR through county co-creation.

The collaboration with Nairobi County Government reflects a clear shift from stand-alone project implementation towards a systems-oriented co-creation approach. Building on jointly developed and officially approved disability-inclusive SRHR materials, APDK and 100% for the Children now works in close partnership with county authorities to deliver inclusive training and services within existing public-school systems. This collaboration includes joint monitoring of implementation, where partners and duty bearers collectively assess teaching practices and continuously adapt approaches to improve quality and inclusion. At the same time, alignment with county plans and budgeting processes strengthens public ownership and embeds SRHR within government structures. Overall, this approach marks a transition from parallel service delivery to integrated systems strengthening, with shared accountability for advancing inclusive SRHR outcomes.

5.3 DreamTown with Public Space Network

Dandora Community Park

Dreamtown's overall purpose is to strengthen the wellbeing of young people in cities by developing safe, green, and creative urban spaces. These spaces are designed by and for youth, with the aim of making cities more youth-friendly.

In Nairobi, Dreamtown has supported the transformation of several large-scale public spaces. In this case, we highlight one of these – the Dandora Community Park. If you visit the park, you will encounter a vibrant community meeting space, visited by up to 500 children and young people daily. The park includes an urban garden, a play area for children, and football fields. It also features an amphitheatre where the community can gather. This space integrates a range of climate adaptation techniques, allowing it to retain and reuse rainwater that would otherwise flood the surrounding area.

The journey of transforming the space has been lengthy, marked by both challenges and successes. The process began a few years ago, driven by the fact that although Dandora is a large community with many children and young people, there are very few safe public spaces where they can gather. A network of active and influential youth groups engaged the Public Space Network and Dreamtown around a shared vision to develop a large community park.

However, a major challenge quickly emerged: very few open spaces exist in Dandora. One of the only available areas was a large plot of land running under the power lines - an area widely known as unsafe due to crime and gang activity. Following lengthy advocacy engagement with the Kenyan Power and Lighting Company (a public company with majority government ownership), which owns the land, permission was granted to transform the space.

The transformation involved a range of activities. It included capacity development for local youth groups leading the process, focusing on key areas such as project and budget management. It also included training in entrepreneurship to support youth-led initiatives that could be integrated into the space and contribute to its financial sustainability. In addition, the project was connected with key actors with thematic expertise in climate adaptation, including Rambøll.

The co-design process of the park provided rich experiences and important lessons. The design team consisted of staff from Dreamtown's local partner Public Space Network, urban design students from Kenyatta University, and, most importantly, youth from Dandora. When this group first came together, the design proposal was clear, tidy, and realistic. However, once the team began community dialogues the initial plans quickly evolved. The community generated a wide range of new ideas, and as a result, the original budget was exceeded threefold. This created a quiet tension: should the team stick to the budget and deliver a simpler space, or follow the community's vision and find a way to fund it? They chose the latter. Local and recycled materials were sourced, discarded tyres became seating, and reclaimed wood formed a retaining wall. Construction was phased, beginning with an amphitheatre and drainage system to address immediate flood risks while maintaining community momentum. Each cost increase was matched by a form of community contribution, reinforcing a strong sense of ownership.

What emerged was a space that reflects Dandora's identity, with a railway theme running through the park. Most powerfully, the budget "overrun" became a lesson in trust. Today, the community sees the park as their own - co-created, co-funded, co-funded, and co-protected.

5.4 LGBT+ Denmark and PEMA Kenya

In Mombasa, Kenya, PEMA Kenya's work has transformed the lives of LGBTQ+ individuals through mental health support, identity affirmation, and economic empowerment.

One participant shared how **counselling** helped them regain control of their life: *"Counselling gives you a way to find out more about yourself. I was able to face my fears and feelings, which helped me gain control over my actions and behaviour to bring a positive change in my life."* Through these sessions, they developed self-acceptance, communication skills, and emotional resilience which are critical tools for navigating daily challenges.

Another individual described the impact of **LILO Identity workshops**: *"I have come to understand my body, identification, and orientation. LILO made me feel safe in my own space and showed me I'm okay, I'm normal. I can be me, and that's just okay."* These workshops provided a space for self-affirmation, helping participants build confidence and form supportive networks.

Baraza dialogues also played a vital role, offering a safe space for sharing emotions and finding solutions. A participant noted, *"Having a space to let out my emotions and feelings has helped me release some stress but also gain solutions through others' experiences."* These dialogues fostered community, healing, and a sense of belonging.

PEMA Kenya's **economic empowerment** activities, including training in computer literacy, IT skills, graphic design, and catering, equipped participants with practical tools to improve their livelihoods. One staff member shared, *"A group of participants attended a Baraza session on economic empowerment. They joined together and started their own business, exceeding their expectations."*

Beyond individual transformation, PEMA Kenya's work extended to **building alliances** with religious leaders and local authorities. A chief ally in Mombasa reflected, *"I realise that our diversity is our strength, and as a chief, I am able to debunk some of the false information."* This collaboration helped create safer spaces and stronger advocacy networks.

Through its integrated approach of combining mental health support, identity affirmation, community-building, and economic empowerment, PEMA Kenya has fostered sustainable change. Participants now have the tools to support themselves and others, building a more resilient and connected LGBTQ+ community in Kenya.

5.5 Kvinderåddet with Athena Network

From Participation to Power: Feminist Movement Building in Kenya

With support from the CISU grant, ATHENA Network's work in Kenya contributed to strengthening feminist, youth-led advocacy on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), HIV, and gender-based violence (GBV) through a deliberate process of localization, movement-building, and capacity strengthening. While the intervention spanned multiple countries, qualitative insights from the Kenya engagement highlight important shifts in agency, participation, and feminist organizing among adolescent girls and young women (AGYW).

A key change observed was the increased visibility and leadership of young women and girls in advocacy spaces. Through ATHENA's model of working in partnership with AGYW, Kenyan participants mobilized through focal points and local networks. They were not only engaged as beneficiaries but as active shapers of advocacy priorities. This approach enabled AGYW to articulate their lived experiences more confidently and to influence discussions linked to national, regional, and global policy processes such as the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and SDG-related dialogues. Participants reported feeling a stronger sense of ownership over advocacy agendas, marking a shift from tokenistic inclusion to meaningful participation.

The intervention also contributed to strengthened grassroots feminist organizing and solidarity. In Kenya, the convening and engagement of cohorts created spaces for peer learning, intergenerational dialogue, and collective strategizing. These processes fostered trust, built relationships across diverse groups of young women, including those often marginalized, and reinforced a sense of belonging within a broader feminist movement. Qualitatively, this translated into more cohesive and confident local networks that are better positioned to sustain advocacy beyond the project lifecycle.

Another significant outcome was enhanced capacity for advocacy and strategic engagement. Through trainings, consultations, and ongoing mentorship, Kenyan participants and focal points deepened their understanding of SRHR, HIV, and GBV policy landscapes, as well as advocacy tools and approaches. This included skills in framing messages, engaging decision-makers, and linking local priorities to global platforms. The qualitative feedback suggests that participants felt more capable to navigate policy spaces and hold decision-makers accountable, even within contexts where civic space is constrained.

The project further contributed to shifting narratives and bridging the gap between lived realities and policy discourse. By centering the voices of AGYW in Kenya, ATHENA helped challenge dominant patriarchal narratives that often exclude young women from decision-making. The integration of grassroots perspectives into broader advocacy efforts ensured that policy discussions were more reflective of on-the-ground realities, particularly regarding access to SRHR services, HIV prevention, and responses to GBV.

Finally, the intervention laid groundwork for longer-term sustainability and localization of feminist advocacy. Through its strategic planning processes and emphasis on African-led resource mobilization, ATHENA strengthened its presence and relevance in countries like

Kenya. The qualitative shift here is seen in the growing confidence among local actors that advocacy can be driven from within the region, reducing reliance on external agendas and funding structures.

5.6 Dof with Nature Kenya

The PPN Program worked towards the long-term impact of creating sustainable benefits for people, biodiversity, and climate by improving the conservation of three forested areas in Kenya, Taita Hills forests, Arabuko-Sokoke Forest and Dakatcha Woodland. The entry point and area of work was based on the promotion of Participatory Forest Management (PFM), contributing to the full operationalization of the Forest Conservation and Management Act 2016 nationally and at site level. Nature Kenya was the national partner organisation responsible for PPN III Program implementation.

Some of the achievements at the site level:

Despite recurring droughts, the climate-smart agriculture activities of capacity building on access to certified seed varieties, access to weather forecasts, and improved post-harvest management, resulted in a 250% increase in drought resistant legume crop harvest in 600 households.

A total of 500 households in Dakatcha Woodland were supported with skills and materials to improve small stock management, focusing on goats adapted to very dry areas and poultry. Field assessments determined viable stock numbers to support replication and expansion across additional locations in Dakatcha. Households were also trained in improved poultry husbandry practices. Most of the participating households generated an increasing cash income from the sale of livestock products ensuring livelihood sustainability during droughts.

Through species-specific studies and monitoring, Nature Kenya has documented that the selected indicator species have all maintained or slightly improved their populations on the three forest sites. Similarly, the forest cover has been maintained and the quality of the forest improved (by selectively removing exotic tree species) in Taita Hills and in Arabuko-Sokoke Forest, while in the unprotected Dakatcha Woodland there has been a slight decrease in forest cover. The strict endemic bird, Kilifi Weaver, returned to breed in Dakatcha Woodland after 4 years of no breeding due to severe droughts.

One of the major achievements at the local government-/county-level:

Nature Kenya facilitated the formulation from start and until it was passed by the County Government of Taita Tavera in 2024 of the Taita Taveta County Forest and Landscape Restoration Implementation Action Plan (FOLAREP) 2024-2033, which is to be implemented by the Department of Lands, Urban Planning & Development, Environment and Climate Change, Government of Taita Taveta County. It is aligned with national priorities outlined in Vision 2030 and supported by legislative frameworks such as the Forest Conservation and Management Act (2016), the Climate Change Act (2016).

One of the major achievements at the national level:

In collaboration with the Kenya Forestry Research Institute (KEFRI), Nature Kenya formulated the national PFM & LR (Landscape Restoration) training curriculum, which started being operationalised in early 2025. It is now an integral part of the education of forest practitioners in the country, and the training courses have also attracted forest practitioners from Tanzania and India. Back-to-back with these courses, more than 300 forest practitioners and forestry students have been engaged including participating in field visits to our program sites since the commencement of the PPN III. Inspired by this work and the courses, the Forest Society of Kenya convened a national dialogue "Impacts of PFM on Sustainable Forests, Livelihoods, Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation," held in Malindi that showcased PFM implementation by visiting PPN Program activities in and around Arabuko-Sokoke Forest for the 150 participants.

ANNEX 5

Suggested outline for CISU and Danish partners' monitoring visits

FOR INTERNAL USE ONLY!

A proposed guide to outcome-based learning and documentation
By Jørgen Skytte Jensen / IMPAKT

Introduction

The intention of this guide is to provide inspiration for CISU to strengthen outcome-based learning and documentation from CISU funded projects and programmes. It is not a blue-print template or framework which should be followed from the start to the end, but merely a catalogue of suggestions on how to facilitate learning and documentation sessions with partners and beneficiaries in Global South.

Facilitation is the key to outcome-based learning and not everyone have natural skills in facilitation of meetings, workshops, learning sessions etc. It takes time and training to become a good facilitator, but it is better to try than not to try. The hope is that his guide can support getting started asking questions which brings out the stories of change or outcomes and why they came about.

It is recommended to start with Danish partners who have long-term experiences in Global South and partners who have been through two-three phases of CISU funded projects and/or programmes.

Examples of core probing questions (Use actively)

Outcomes • "What is the single biggest change?" • "Who is behaving differently now?" **Causality** • "Which exact activity led to that?" • "Would it have happened anyway?" **Learning** • "What would you never do again?" • "What would you scale up?"	**Efficiency** • "Where did you 'overspend' relative to results?" • "What gave the biggest return?" **Sustainability** • "Will this continue without funding?" • "What could make it stop?"

Common pitfalls to avoid

- Turning sessions into reporting exercises
- Accepting vague answers (find the root causalities)
- Over-focusing on outputs (and activities)
- Not challenging assumptions (e.g. defined in the project document)

Guide

Design principles behind the guide
This guide is intentionally built around:

- Outcome orientation (not activity-output reporting)
- Causality analysis (what actually drove change, how and why)
- Learning and adaptation
- Efficiency and (light) value for money
- Narrative evidence (stories of change)

1. Basic information
Country:

Partner organisation:

Project title:

Grant type / modality:

Visit dates (*preferably close to end of year*):

Participants (*names + roles*):

CISU/DK partner staff (*facilitator*):

2. Framing the session (Facilitator guidance)
Purpose (state clearly to partner):
"This is not an audit or evaluation. The purpose is to jointly reflect on what has actually changed over the past 12 months, why, and what we can learn."

Suggested format:

- Group discussion (5–10 participants – a reasonable mix of partner staff and beneficiaries)
    - Sit in a circle (not across a table)
    - Use flipchart or whiteboard to write headline notes
- Audio record the session (with consent)
- Build trust with the purpose of creating mutual learning
- Encourage concrete examples – avoid general statements
- Probe for evidence, causality, and trade-offs

3. Outcomes and changes (Core section)
3.1 What has actually changed? (Outcomes –> effects -> changes)

- (Write it in the whiteboard) What are the expected outcomes according to the (CSF) project document? – is it still valid?
- (Open question) What are the most important changes that have happened as a result of the (CSF) project in the last 12 months?
- Who experienced these changes? (specific groups)
- Are these changes behavioural, institutional, social, economic, environmental? – explain and elaborate.
- (Follow the stories) Which changes are most significant? - for whom and why?

☞ *Facilitator probe:*

- "What is different today compared to one year ago?"
- "Can you give a concrete example or story?"
- "How have changes made you stronger as a civil society organisation/community/group?"

3.2 Evidence of change
- How do you know these changes happened? (compare with indicators later)
- What evidence do you have? (data, observations, testimonies)
- Are there any unexpected changes (positive or negative)?
    - How and why did these changes come about?
    - Who experienced and benefitted from these changes? – and how?

4. Contribution and causality (when pursuing the stories …)
4.1 What did you do to achieve these changes?
- Which activities or approaches contributed most?
- What worked particularly well?
- What did not work as expected?

☞ *Probe for causality:*

- "Which specific action led to this change?"
- "Would this change have happened anyway?"

4.2 Role of others
- Were other actors involved (government, NGOs, private sector)? – and how?
- How did collaboration influence results?
- Were they the right actors to influence results? – why?

5. Learning and adaptation (after the stories have been told …)
5.1 Key learnings
- What are the top 3 lessons learned from implementation? (positive and negative)
- What surprised you? – why did it surprise you?

5.2 Adaptive management
- Did you change your approach during implementation? – what did you change?
- Why were these changes made?
- Did adaptation improve results? – how?

6. Efficiency and resource use
6.1 Use of Resources
- Did you use the budget in a way that maximized results? – explain?
- Would you assess the changes as high, medium or low impact

- Was it achieved with high, medium or low implementation costs (all included – salaries, activities, equipment etc.)? – compare changes relative to budget invested.
- Was the budget used wisely? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Partly
  → Why?

6.2 Cost-effectiveness
- Could the same results have been achieved with fewer resources?
- Were there areas where more investment would have yielded better results?
- What was the core added value of your Danish partner (beside funding)? – be honest!

☞ *Probe:*

- "If you had to redo the project with 20% less budget, what would you change?"

7. Alternative approaches
- Could you have done things differently and achieved (- and how?):
  - Faster results?
  - Greater impact?
  - More sustainable outcomes?
- What would you do next time?

8. Sustainability and future outlook
- Are the observed changes likely to continue after the project ends? – how?
- What factors support or threaten sustainability? – how?
- What still needs to happen to consolidate results? – how?

9. Story of change (Narrative capture)

☞ *Facilitator task: capture 1–3 concrete stories*

Story Title:
- Who experienced the change?
- What was the situation before?
- What changed?
- What caused the change?
- Why is this significant?

10. Key insights (CISU or DK partner staff reflections)
- Most significant outcome:
- Strongest driver of change:
- Main inefficiency observed:
- Key learning for CISU/CSF:
- Implications for future support:

11. AI-assisted documentation (optional but recommended)

Process:

- Record discussion (with consent)
- Use AI tool to generate:
  - Summary of key findings
  - Extracted "stories of change"
  - Identified lessons and efficiency insights
- Proof check of AI generated stories
  - using own notes and observations
  - can be reviewed and endorsed by the partner and/or beneficiaries (subjects of stories)

Suggested AI prompt:

"Summarise the discussion focusing on: (1) concrete outcomes, (2) causal links between activities and results, (3) lessons learned, (4) efficiency of resource use, and (5) 2–3 strong stories of achieved changes."

Facilitation principles

1. Push for concreteness

Avoid: "We strengthened capacity"

Push toward: "Who changed behaviour? - How exactly?"

2. Always ask "why?"

Every answer should be followed by: "Why did that happen?" and "What exactly caused that?"

3. Separate activities from outcomes

If they list activities:
→ Ask: "What changed because of that?" – and why?

4. Probe efficiency explicitly

Partners often avoid this unless asked directly:

"Which activity gave the most value for money?" and

"Where did you spend too much for too little result?"

5. Normalise failure

Say explicitly: "We are equally interested in what did NOT work." – and why?

6. Capture stories, not just statements

A strong story includes:

- Specific person/group
- Clear "before → after"
- A causal explanation
- A focus on "what" – and a bigger focus on "why" and "how"

ANNEX 6

Financial overview from the CISU Auditor's Report 2020-2025 (in Danish)

CISU samlede puljeforvaltning (kun UM puljer)	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020
Antal ansøgte projekter	534	532	550	443	360	473
Antal bevilgede projekter	267	271	247	258	206	0
Antal igangværende projekter	578	652	526	572	490	494
Antal afsluttede projekter	345	160	282	166	116	164
Tildelte midler til bevillinger/projekter t. DKK	272.930	271.174	245.205	218.540	230.582	270.566
Honorar Bevillingssystem t. DKK	4.285	4.042	4.468	3.259	3.051	2.841
Samlede udgifter til forvaltning og faglige ydelser m.v. t. DKK	24.201	24.518	28.295	23.235	22.789	23.175
Honorar Bevillingssystem per ansøgning t. DKK	8	8	8	7	8	6
Forvaltning & ydelser m.v. pr. igangv. projekt t. DKK	42	38	54	41	47	47
Forvaltning & ydelser i % af tildelte midler til bevillinger/projekter	9%	9%	12%	11%	10%	9%

CISUs Faglige ydelser - Kapacitetsudvikling	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020

CISU Kurser						
Afholdte fysiske kurser	53	49	55	44	26	20
Antal deltagere på fysiske kurser (i alt)	1.518	1.422	1.081	806	437	498
Antal deltagere på fysiske kurser (gnsn.)	29	29	20	18	17	25
Afholdte online kurser	50	46	52	38	64	10
Antal deltagere på online kurser (i alt)	822	924	740	692	1.410	458
Antal deltagere på online kurser (gnsn.)	16	20	14	18	22	46
Afholdte kurser i alt	103	95	107	82	90	30
Antal deltagere i alt	2.340	2.346	1.821	1.498	1.847	956
Rådgivninger						
Antal rådgivningsanmodninger	538					
Afholdte rådgivninger med medlemmer og bevillingshavere	524	544	492	455	410	563
% Rådgivninger afholdt online (samt telefonisk eller skriftligt)	84%	77%	67%	69%	80%	
Antal unikke organisationer der har modtaget rådgivning	195	210	188	163	160	178
Gennemsnitligt antal rådgivninger pr. organisation pr. år	3	3	3	3	3	3

Antal medlemsorganisationer i CISU sidst på året	300	304	297	281		
% outreach til medlemsorganisationer gennem rådgivning	65%	69%	63%	58%		
Antal rådgivninger med partnerdeltagelse	153	129	112			
CISUs medarbejdere	**2025**	**2024**	**2023**	**2022**	**2021**	**2020**
Antal fastansatte ved CISU	32	30	30	29	28	28

Civilsamfundspuljen (inkl. tillæg) [CSP+]	**2025**	**2024**	**2023**	**2022**	**2021**	**2020**
Antal ansøgte projekter	335	328	282	262	334	364
Antal bevilgede projekter	173	186	153	179	195	200
Antal igangværende projekter	409	464	398	488	479	423
Antal afsluttede projekter	230	123	232	150	105	93
Tildelte midler til bevillinger/projekter t. DKK	229.678	219.512	196.585	169.628	219.391	221.998
Honorar Bevillingssystem t. DKK	3.241	2.858	2.964	2.244	2.933	2.616
Samlede udgifter til forvaltning og faglige ydelser m.v. t. DKK	18.467	19.541	22.264	19.009	21.816	20.022
Honorar Bevillingssystem per ansøgning t. DKK	10	9	11	9	9	7

Forvaltning & ydelser m.v. pr. igangv. projekt t. DKK	45	42	56	39	46	47
Forvaltning & ydelser i % af tildelte midler til bevillinger/projekter	8%	9%	11%	11%	10%	9%

Nødhjælpspuljen [DERF]	**2025**	**2024**	**2023**	**2022**	**2021**	**2020**
Number of applied projects	60	66	73	61	26	109
Number of approved projects	35	41	43	36	11	54
Number of ongoing projects	39	63	37	41	11	71
Number of closed projects	59	15	47	16	11	71
Allocated funds for projects DKK '000	22.415	28.771	30.076	28.022	11.191	48.569
Assessment Cons. & Grant Committee fees DKK '000	481	511	469	424	119	225
Total Fund management & Activities costs DKK '000	2.082	1.572	1.881	1.650	973	3.153
Fee per application	8	8	6	7	5	2
Total Fund management & Activities per ongoing project	53	25	51	40	88	44
Total Fund Management & Activities in % of funds allocated for projects	9%	5%	6%	6%	9%	6%

Oplysnings- og Engagementspuljen [OPEN]	**2025**	**2024**	**2023**	**2022**	**2021**	**2020**
Number of applied projects	139	138	195	120		
Number of approved projects	59	44	51	43		
Number of ongoing projects	130	125	91	43		
Number of closed projects	56	22	3	-		
Allocated funds for projects DKK ‘000	20.836	22.891	18.545	20.890		
Assessment Cons. & Grant Committee fees DKK ‘000	562	673	1.035	590		
Total Fund management & Activities costs DKK ‘000	3.651	3.405	4.150	2.576		
Fee per application DKK `000	4	5	5	5		
Total Fund management & Activities per ongoing project DKK `000	28	27	46	60		
Total Fund Management & Activities in % of funds allocated for projects	18%	15%	22%	12%		

Connect for Global Change [CFGC]	**2025**
Number of applied projects	40
Number of approved projects	23

Number of ongoing projects	23
Number of closed projects	N/A
Allocated funds for projects EUR ‘000	4.203
Assessment Cons. & Grant Committee fees EUR ‘000	250
Total Fund management & Activities costs EUR ‘000	863
Fee per application EUR `000	6
Total Fund management & Activities per ongoing project EUR `000	38
Total Fund Management & Activities in % of funds allocated for projects	21%