Radboud Universiteit

Citizens & Sustainable Development

A comparative case study on the role of Danish, Dutch, Belgian and French 'Citizen Initiatives for Global Solidarity' in Nepal and Senegal

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Word of thanks

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1 Introduction

By 2030, all United Nations Member States aim to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). One of the key underlying principles of the agenda is that it requires commitment of a wide diversity of actors. Companies, knowledge institutes, civil society organisations and governments; all of them are being called upon to contribute to the agenda. The appeal is not only being done on institutionalised, professional actors, also citizens are explicitly mentioned as a key actor of change. Most often they are being approached as individuals that are, for example, urged to revise their consumption patterns. In this underlying study, we look at the role organised citizens play in the realisation of the SDG agenda. In particular, we study how citizen led development organisations based in the Global North contribute to sustainable development by partnering with citizens in the Global South.

In the past year, academic interest in the role of citizens as development actors has increased significantly (see for example Haaland et. al, 2023). This growing interest goes hand in hand with the increasing number of these so-called Citizen Initiatives for Global Solidarity (CIGS) in many countries in the Global North since mid-2000. So far, most studies focused on single countries, studying CIGS from one particular country in the Global North. These various country-studies learned that, in addition to a certain common identity, there are important differences in the identity and positioning of CIGS across different countries. To come to a more systematic understanding of these differences and understanding the implications of these differences for the role CIGS play in sustainable development, in 2020 a first country comparison research project was initiated.

This underlying report is the result of the second phase of a two-phased study aimed at comparing CIGS in Belgium, France, the Netherlands, and Denmark[1]. The first phase of the study (2021–2022) focused on the identity, role and positioning of northern based CIGS in the Global North (Kinsbergen et al. 2022). Building on the findings of this study, the second phase (2023-2024) questions the role of CIGS as contributors to sustainable development. Building on the work of Edwards and in line with previous CIGS studies, we question whether projects, programmes or organisations make a lasting impact on the communities where they work (Edwards 1999; Kinsbergen et al., 2021). Interventions that are locally led and aimed at tackling root causes are more likely to be expected to make a lasting impact. We therefore study the type of development interventions CIGS initiate and/or support (*intervention type*) and the way they give shape to their partnerships (*intervention manner*). In line with previous studies (Kinsbergen, Schulpen and Ruben, 2017; Kinsbergen and Koch, 2022), we consider both aspects as preconditions for the sustainability of the development efforts of CIGS.

[1] As we only worked together with Flemish support organisations in this study, the Belgian sample solely exists of Flemish CIGS.

There are hence three guiding research questions:

1. What type of interventions do CIGS support in the Global South?
2. How do CIGS give shape to their partnerships in the Global South?
3. What explains differences in the intervention strategies of CIGS?

The report begins with a short recap of the findings of phase I (chapter two), followed by an introduction to the research methods of the second phase (chapter three). Chapter five presents the findings of the study, resulting in a CIGS typology presented and discussed in chapter six. Chapter seven presents the overall conclusions.

This study was conducted by Radboud University in close cooperation and with the support of multiple civil society and government actors from Flanders (11.11.11/4de Pijlersteunpunt, the province of East Flanders and the province of West Flanders), France (La Guilde) Denmark (Civilsamfund I Udvikling) and the Netherlands (Wilde Ganzen foundation), some of which are member of the 'Research & Action Network on European Citizen Initiatives for Global Solidarity'[2]. Staff from the support organisations provided the researchers with access to CIGS and key informants in their respective countries and shared their own experiences[3]. The support organisations also offered co-funding to the research project. Throughout this report, the term 'support organisations' refers to the aforementioned organisations. While the study took place in close collaboration with them, academic integrity standards were always respected. The independence of the study has been guaranteed and respected by all parties involved.

[2] Within this network, civil society organisations from nine European countries are currently active, and the aim is to expand this network further during the coming years. The network resulted from the two first editions of the European conference (2014 and 2019). For an overview of the participating organisations, see: http://europeannetworkforcigs.eu/members/. Radboud University is involved in the network as an academic partner.
[3] All this has been done in accordance with the European General Data Protection Regulation.

2 Recap phase I

The methods and analysis in the current study are strongly determined by the findings of the first phase of this study. We will therefore first present a recap of phase I. The recap will focus on the research approach and the findings.

2.1 Methodology

The data for phase I was collected through an electronic survey and focus group discussions or interviews among CIGS from Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium and France. Data collection occurred between 2021 and 2022. As Denmark was added as site of study at a later stage, data collection took place in 2023. The study also involved interview with experts and an analysis of secondary data (reports, scientific articles and policy documents).

2.2 Conclusions

The study of phase I found that CIGS in Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium and France share a common identity that distinguishes them from other, more established development actors. However, there are as well significant cross-country differences. Table 2.1 presents a typology of the participating CIGS in each country, outlining key differences and similarities.

	Belgium	Netherlands	France	Denmark
Identity				
Changes in no. of CIGS	Significant increase, specifically diaspora	Significant decrease	Steadily increasing, largest share of diaspora	Significant increase, but plateauing
Size (budget and members)	Medium sized	Large budgets, fewer members	Small budgets, many members	Large budgets, many members
Formalisation	Still informal, but push for professionalisation	Most formal character	Still informal, but push for professionalisation	Formal character, largest number of paid staff
Budget sources	Public (schools, local government)	Private (companies, foundations)	Public (NGOs, local government)	Public (NGOs, government)
Members and Founders	Men and women equally represented Middle aged members	Least female members Middle aged members	Most* female founders Most members with migration background Youngest members	Least female founders Most members with migration background Youngest members

Role in the Global North				
Motivation	Strongly motivated to contribute to public support for international development through activities Incentivized by donors	Least importance to contributing to public support. Strong decrease of public support activities Mainly focused on fundraising / attracting volunteers Little incentivisation by donors	Strongly motivated to contribute to public support for international development through activities Incentivized by donors	Strongly motivated to contribute to public support for international development through activities Incentivized by donors

Table 2.1 Cross-country typology of CIGS
*Most or least: in comparison to the other countries of study

When comparing CIGS in the four countries of study, it was concluded that: 1) government policy and 2) rules and regulations strongly affect the identity, role and positioning of CIGS. First, the presence of a public support policy and belonging (financial) support instruments in Denmark, France and Belgium result in more activities being organised by CIGS in the Global North aimed at strengthening public support for international cooperation-sustainable development compared to the Netherlands where such policy is currently lacking. However, the funding instruments associated with CIGS also create risks related to a strong focus on 'professionalising' their work. Established actors[4] often believe CIGS, mostly volunteer based, require quality improvements and training, and should be held to the same rigorous standards as themselves. Insufficiently recognising the different identity of CIGS risks allowing established actors to shape CIGS in their own image, pushing CIGS away from them or demotivating them in their endeavours.

Second, we found that Denmark, France and Belgium have a more supportive (legal) environment for starting and running CIGS compared to the Netherlands. Legal requirements in the Netherlands are more stringent, with more bureaucratic requirements as well as financial hurdles to overcome.

Furthermore, a notable difference in CIGS' size is observed, with Dutch and Danish CIGS being larger in size comparted their Belgian and French counterparts. Both Dutch and Danish CIGS have a larger budget and Denmark also has a larger member base. Additionally, Danish CIGS distinguish themselves from CIGS in the other countries with the largest number of paid staff.

[4] Established actors: we use this term to refer to professional (largely paid staff) and most often larger scale development organisations.

Based on the conclusions of phase I, we take three hypotheses along to the second phase of the study:

- Differences in the donor landscape per country: we expect that the diversity of important donors come with a diverse range of requirements for CIGS, influencing their work in the Global South.
- Differences in formalisation: CIGS that use a policy/strategic plan a are expected to consider their work on a long-term basis, which also affects their work in the Global South.
- Differences in professionalisation: we expect CIGS with paid staff are expected to have more expertise, which affects their work in the Global South.

3 Methodology

To meet the research objective, we adopted a case study approach. The sampling procedure started from the participants of the electronic survey conducted in phase I. The sample was supplemented with CIGS from a previous survey conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic (Kinsbergen at al., 2021), the member base of CIGS support organisations and our own web search.

We selected CIGS from the four countries in the Global North working in either Nepal or Senegal in the Global South. These two countries were selected for the relatively large number of CIGS from the four European countries being active there. A total of 53 CIGS were selected. The selection process aimed to include a diverse group of CIGS that reflected a variety both in terms of organisation characteristics and member backgrounds (see Appendix A for more detailed information on the sample).

Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used to gather data. Interviews and project visits were conducted with CIGS members and their counterparts. In total, we interviewed ten Danish, 15 Dutch, 13 Belgium and nine French CIGS. To ensure equal representation from each country, web analysis was conducted on two Danish and four French CIGS. Of the total sample 28 CIGS were active in Nepal and 26 in Senegal. Important to note is that most Danish CIGS that participated in our study are active in Nepal and all French CIGS that participated are active in Senegal.

Following the interviews conducted in the Global North, we contacted all partner organisation of the CIGS requesting an interview and, if possible, a project visit. In total, we interviewed 26 Nepali organisations and 19 Senegalese organisations. Four organisations in the Global South worked with multiple CIGS from our sample. Missing interviews in the Global South were the result of either CIGS operating without an (active) partner or partner organisations declining the interview request. Table 3.1 provides a summary of the total number of CIGS organisations interviewed and identified through web search.

Country	Interviews			Web search	
	Total	Active in		Active in	
		Nepal	Senegal	Nepal	Senegal
Denmark	12	8	2	2	0
Belgium	13	6	7	0	0
Netherlands	15	12	3	0	0
France	13	0	9	0	4
Total	53	26	21	2	4
Interviewed in Global South	47	26	19	0	0

Table 3.1 Summary of participants across countries for each methodological approach

During the interviews, the (history, structure & goals) organisation, its development intervention strategy and future vision where discussed (see Appendix B and C for the interview guides). Additionally, all participating organisations were asked to complete a short questionnaire at the end of the interview, either on paper or online. The questionnaire comprised six questions about their partnership (see appendix D and E). The questionnaire was completed by 38 organisations in the Global North and 47 in the Global South. Partner organisations in the Global South that collaborate with multiple CIGS in our sample were asked to complete separate questionnaires for each of their partners in the Global North. Of the interviews conducted, 26 in the Global North were conducted face to face and 21 were conducted online. In the Global South, 46 interviews were conducted face to face and one online. The interviews lasted between 60 and 180 minutes.

The analysis of the interviews was conducted using the three main questions outlined in the introduction and the analytical framework used by Kinsbergen, Schulpen and Ruben (2017). Any comparisons between groups of CIGS will be presented when of relevance. However, the sample size does not allow to make statements on the statistical significance of differences. Therefore, caution should be exercised when interpreting comparisons.

To enhance understanding of the context in which the CIGS operate, we conducted three interviews with key informants, including staff from CIGS support organisations, larger development organisations and government institutes. Each interview lasted between 60 to 120 minutes. A list of anonymised interviewees has been included in Appendix A.

For the survey used during phase I, we primarily contacted CIGS through CIGS support organisations. This could affect the representativeness of the research sample since it is plausible to expect especially younger and smaller organisations and those of a diaspora background to interact to a lesser extent with support organisations and might therefore be underrepresented. To mitigate this risk, we made special efforts to include CIGS who might have been underrepresented in phase I. We approached specific sub-groups of CIGS through Google searches. In Denmark, our sample is limited to CIGS that receive support from CIGS support organisations. Because of the above, we do not claim to present a representative picture of CIGS and the CIGS support system in the participating countries.

4 Intervention types: what do CIGS do?

This chapter examines the first precondition for sustainability of interventions: the types of interventions CIGS undertake in the Global South. To classify the intervention types, we use Korten's (1990) four generations of strategies. This classification was chosen for consistency with previous research, where the same classification was used (see for example Kinsbergen, Schulpen and Ruben, 2017; Kinsbergen and Koch, 2022). Korten's (1990) classification is as follows: (1) first-generation, *relief and welfare*, focusses on targeting directly observable needs through service delivery; (2) second-generation, *community development*, aims to strengthen local capacities so that people can better meet their own needs; (3) third-generation, *sustainable system development*, seeks to eliminate institutional and policy constraints and (4) fourth-generation, *people's movement*, envisions people-centred development and act as facilitators of a global people's movement. To typify the intervention methods, we will also consider the scope of the intervention. The scope of interventions is categorised into four different levels: the individual or family level, the community level (micro), the regional level (meso), and the national level (macro).

4.1 Intervention types of CIGS

We distinguish three types of interventions in our sample: 1) First-generation interventions (n = 34); 2) second-generation interventions (n = 15); 3) combining second- and third-generation interventions (n = 3).

For most CIGS (n = 34), their activities can be typified as first-generation strategies. These CIGS aim to provide for basic needs that are according to them, or others not adequately being met, such as the lack of (proper) schools or (proper) health facilities. Most CIGS that focus on first-generation strategies work at the individual or family level. They target individuals, families or groups of individuals in a community who share a common need (e.g. schoolchildren or women). These CIGS support either one project (e.g. a single health post) or multiple projects of the same type in a certain region (e.g. building several health posts). A small number of first-generation CIGS work at the community level (n = 4), investing in the provision of infrastructure such as roads, wells, or electricity.

Textbox 1. First-generation intervention

When Jan and Anneke met a family with a small child during their holiday in Senegal, they decided to sponsor their education as godparents. This marked the beginning of a long collaboration with multiple Senegalese schools, which are united under the same name as the CIGS. The CIGS provides financial support for the schools' needs.

Textbox 2. Second-generation intervention

During a dental camp in Nepal, Tanja, a gynecologist, noticed that there were not many women attending the camps. She discovered that women often had their own health issues which kept them from attending. Therefore, she started her own CIGS, which organizes health camps for women. Over the years the CIGS members questioned the sustainability of their interventions and started training Nepali health workers to provide medical care to women in their own district.

The second group of CIGS (*n* = 15) organises capacity-strengthening interventions, such as providing training to teachers or health workers (second-generation). Although capacity strengthening is central to their intervention, they most often combine it with service delivery type of activities. For example, one CIGS aims to strengthen the capacity of local communities through communal competitions, while also constructing roads and schools. Most of these second-generation CIGS work at the community level (*n* = 11), while a few target the individual/family level (*n* = 5).

A third and small group of CIGS (*n* = 3) combines second-generation strategies with third-generation strategies. They work on capacity strengthening at the individual/family or community, while also striving to change constraining structures on the regional or national level. None of the CIGS in our sample undertakes interventions that can be categorised as fourth-generation strategies.

Textbox 3. Third-generation intervention

In response to the international adoption ban in Denmark, a former Danish adoption agency transformed into a CIGS. In partnership with a Nepali organisation, they support disabled children in boarding schools who have been separated from their parents. They engage in national-level lobbying. Furthermore, the partner's staff members conduct capacity building programs on disability in collaboration with the local government. They aim for the government to take over the work of the organisation.

4.2 Country differences

In terms of intervention strategies, Danish CIGS differ from their Dutch, Belgian and French counterparts. Specifically, 92% of Danish CIGS implement second- and/or third-generation interventions, compared to 33% of the Dutch CIGS and 8% of the Belgian and French CIGS. Furthermore, the majority (83%) of second- and/or third-generation intervention strategies are implemented in Nepal, in contrast to only 17% in Senegal. This difference may be attributed to the higher number of Danish CIGS operating in Nepal.

5 Intervention manner: how do CIGS partner?

In addition to the intervention types, the extent of local stakeholders' participation is a key aspect to consider when assessing the sustainability of development interventions. We will focus on the relationship between the CIGS and their partners, participant involvement and partnerships with other local stakeholders, particularly the local government.

5.1 Relationship between CIGS and their partners

This paragraph examines the collaboration between CIGS and their partners in the Global South. We discuss the types of partners they work with, the financial dependence of their partners, the level of involvement of CIGS in interventions and future plans when it comes to their collaboration.

5.1.1 Type of partners

In general, CIGS in our sample work with three types of partners: 1) individual contact persons (from the community) (*n* = 9); 2) institutions such as schools or hospitals (*n* = 16); and 3) (registered) NGOs (*n* = 28). Table 5.1 provides an overview of the characteristics of these different types of partners. A small group of CIGS work together with an individual from the community where they work. It is this individual that is their linking pin to the community and other stakeholders.

> "The doctor which we had met had an organisation, but in the end: on paper it existed [...], but it was an empty box." (Belgian CIGS working in Nepal)

A second group of CIGS works directly with the institution that they are supporting, such as a school, health centre, or sports organisation. These partner organisations have a median of 13 staff members and often have a board or director who communicates with the CIGS. The largest group of CIGS works together with a (registered) NGO, through which they provide their support. These partner organisations have a median of 15 staff members, who are most often paid. Compared to the CIGS in the Global North, partners in the Global South have a similar median of number of staff (10.5 compared to a median of 10 members of CIGS), but, interesting to note, a relatively larger budget (see appendix B). Most partners in our sample (*n* = 29) were established independently from the CIGS. Others (*n* = 21) were founded after meeting, and in collaboration, with the CIGS. A small minority of CIGS (*n* = 3) was established in collaboration with another actor from the Global North before meeting the CIGS.

	Individuals	Institutions	NGOs	Total
Staff members (M)	4	13	15	10.5
Budget (M)	€ 53,357	€ 35,792	€ 78,230	€ 53,357
Independently established (%)	10*	55.6	64.3	54.7

Table 5.1 Overview of types of partners
*These individuals were already supporting their community before they started collaborating with the CIGS.

5.1.2 The role of CIGS in the interventions

Based on the interviews, we distinguish between three types of partnerships: 1) CIGS is in the lead (*n* = 18); 2) CIGS and their partner are co-creators (*n* = 23); and 3) partner is in the lead (*n* = 12). We examined the division of roles between the CIGS and its partner in both the design and the implementation of the intervention.

In the first group, the CIGS has a greater influence on the design and implementation of the intervention than their partner. The idea for the intervention originates from the CIGS, and the partner implements it. In some cases, the CIGS may also play an active role in implementing the intervention, as is the case with dental camps organised by a Belgian CIGS.

"When we agreed on the project, she subsequently left to do a project somewhere else. She stayed there for three years. We didn't see each other and there was no contact. It was after the other project that she came back to see me to explain to me what she was doing in the other project. She told me: 'now I want to do the project with you that I was talking to you about', and asked me if I accept." (Senegalese partner Dutch CIGS)

In the second and largest group, CIGS and their counterparts are co-creators. Both CIGS and its partner organisation have more or less the same degree of influence on the design and implementation of the intervention. In most of these cases, the initial idea for the intervention comes from the partner.

"I see their role as a donor, an advisor, a supporter, a mentor, that is how they are supporting me. Where we are today, the success stories or the approach that we have toward success, we wouldn't have been able to reach if they were just our donors." (Nepali partner Danish CIGS)

The final group comprises CIGS which have a less influence on the intervention than their partner. The partner proposes the intervention and leads the design and implementation. The primary responsibilities of the CIGS are to provide financial support and offer advice when requested by the partner.

Our data shows that financial (in)dependence of the partner strongly relates to the way CIGS and their partners collaborate. Partners who have multiple donors and that are less financially dependent on the CIGS often have a co-creating or leading role in the intervention (81%). On the other hand, partners who are fully dependent on the CIGS describe the CIGS as having the leading role (54%).

5.1.3 Perceptions on partnership

During the interviews, we conducted a short survey among CIGS to determine how they perceive their partner. Similarly, we conducted a survey among the partners understand of how they feel they are being perceived by the CIGS with whom they cooperate. Both CIGS and their partners were asked to rate six themes on a scale of one to five, with a higher the score indicating greater agreement with the statement. Figure 5.1 compares the results of these two surveys.

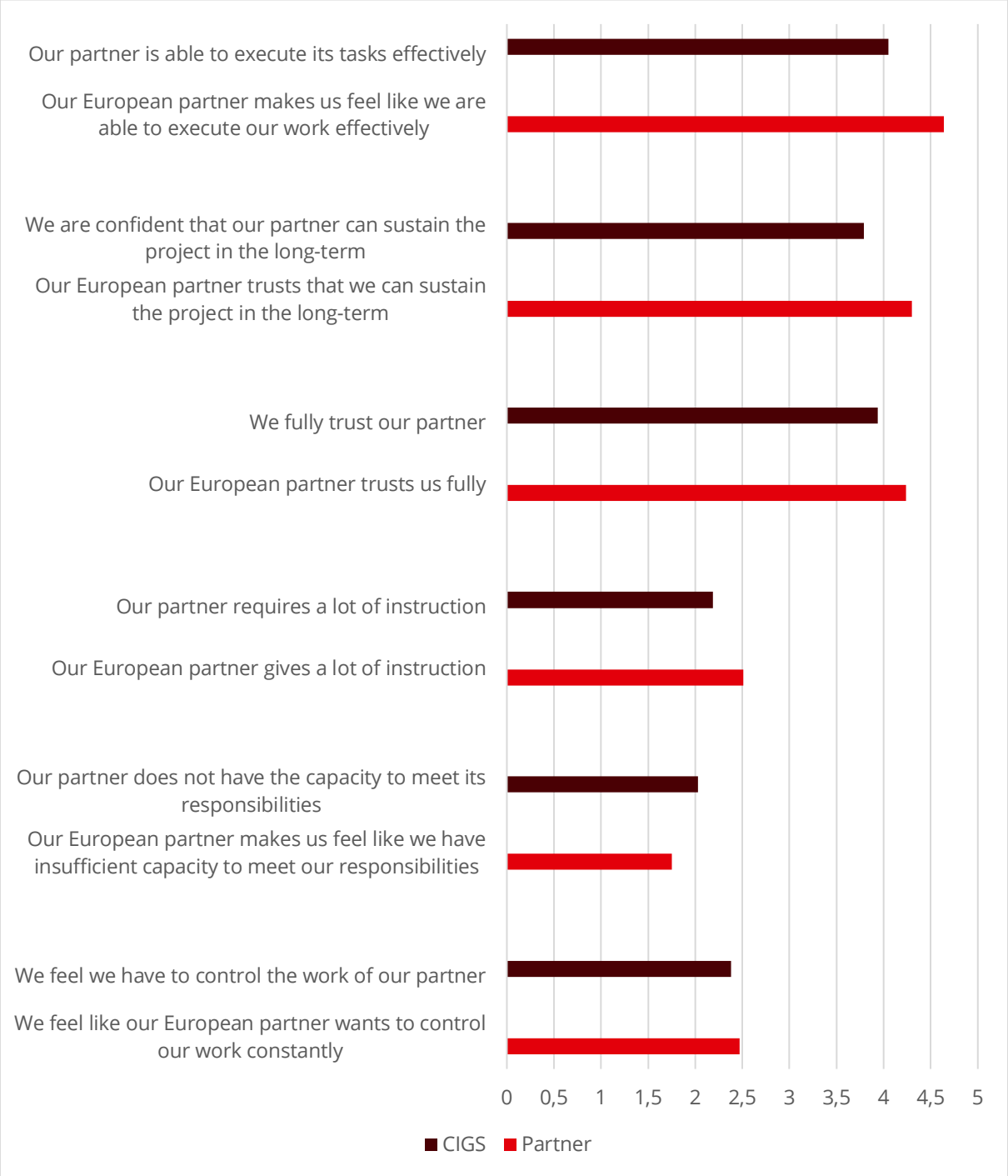

Figure 5.1 Perspectives of the CIGS on the competences of the partner and the experiences of the partner [scale from 1-5, the higher, the more they agree with the statement, Min. *n*=32]

On average, CIGS members have a positive view of their partner's competences. Overall, partners in our sample have expressed positive views on how they are being perceived by their northern counterpart. While some partners do feel restricted and controlled by the CIGS, others appreciate the tips and feedback provided by them. However, partners also note that CIGS do not always consider the cultural differences between themselves and their partners.

"We just want them to understand the situation here which is different than what they have back home. They need to understand the inside story of how the community works in this country, this place. We are culturally different. This is what is happening presently. They expect what is happening in their culture to be prevalent in our culture which isn't possible." (Nepali partner Danish CIGS)

It is noteworthy that overall, CIGS are more critical in terms of how they value their partners compared to how partners experience this. Although difficult to explain, this might reflect that it is not common amongst CIGS and their counterparts to reflect on their partnership and each other's competences explicitly and jointly.

5.1.4 Future plans

During the interviews with both CIGS and partners, we discussed the future of their organisations and partnerships. It is first noticeable that almost half of the CIGS in our sample do not have a clear plan for the future or a clear strategy for achieving their partner's (financial) independence. Some CIGS express that they avoid thinking about the future, because they are uncertain about the consequences if they were to stop their support: "We try not to do [look at the future]. Today is today. If we are not here anymore, I would not know it anyway" (Board member Belgium CIGS). Some CIGS members state that they continue to support the intervention as long as they enjoy it, while others do aspire to be superfluous, but lack a clear plan to achieve this. In certain cases, CIGS anticipate that their partners will be self-reliant without their support, while partners often explain how they are strongly (financial) dependent on CIGS' support. They express concerns about the uncertainty caused by the unknown plans of the CIGS: "We are not aware if they will fund us for our next phase or not, or if it is the end for our project or not. This kind of information, they could give us more." (Nepali partner Danish CIGS). In response to this, some partners started local fundraising activities or securing multiple donors.

The second half of our sample did express more elaborated future plans. Some of them are considering the ending of their organisation and partnership, because of their age or dissatisfaction with their partnership, others already set a date at which point they will end the organisation. Part of the CIGS that contemplate to stop is planning to look for alternative funding to prevent financial shortfalls, either by initiating local fundraising activities or by partnering with local government. A final group of CIGS has no intention of stopping and aims to expand their interventions, for example by working in more communities.

"Definitely [ending of CIGS] would affect a lot. Because if [CIGS] will not support, then we do not have our regular income. And if we don't have regular income, then we cannot pay the salary. And we do not have extra expenses to run the organisation. So, without the support of [CIGS], we are unable to run our organisation smoothly." (Nepali partner of Dutch CIGS)

It is striking that among all these groups, the partner is most often not informed about future plans of the CIGS. This lack of communication leads to feelings of uncertainty among the partners. When partners are informed about CIGS' plan to stop, they often expect to be unable to continue their operations.

5.1.5 Country comparison

Comparing the four European countries learns that Danish CIGS primarily collaborate with independently established NGOs. These partners frequently depend on multiple donors, making them less financially reliant on the CIGS. Here it is important to note that it is a requirement of CISU to collaborate with an NGO. Belgian CIGS tend to partner more frequently partner with individuals or institutions. Additionally, we found that among Belgian CIGS, there are more partners who rely solely on the funding of one sole CIGS. Dutch and French CIGS collaborate with a variety of partners.

> "Being dependent on one person is not easy at all. Sometimes they suggest things that don't suit you, but you're forced to accept them. It's like you're being held hostage." (Senegalese partner Belgium CIGS)

The study reveals that partners that collaborate with Danish or Dutch CIGS overall experience most equality or control in their partnership. In comparison, Belgian and French CIGS more often take a leading role, especially during the design and implementation of the intervention. Despite these differences in partnerships, the lack of discussion about future plans between CIGS and their partners is consistent across all CIGS countries of origin.

Overall, the findings show that partners in Senegal take up a more vulnerable position in their partnerships. Nepali partners more often take a leading role in their partnerships with CIGS compared to partners in Senegal. Additionally, we observe that most partners in Senegal are more frequently fully financially dependent on the CIGS whereas in partners in Nepal most often partner with multiple donors.

5.2 Involvement of participants in the intervention

In both the interviews with CIGS and their partners we discussed the involvement of the people or groups who CIGS and their partners work with and support. We first find that none of the CIGS in our sample actively involves their participants in the design of their interventions. Most often, participants are only involved as so-called recipients of the support (*n* = 29). An important, but most often passive role played by community members is that they inspire or trigger CIGS and their counterpart to initiate or support certain interventions when these latter two are being confronted with conditions that affect community members. A second group of CIGS (*n* = 17*)* supports interventions in which the partner actively consults the needs of the participants by, for example, conducting a survey in a community or organising consultation meetings. This approach also allows the CIGS to justify their intervention, for example towards donors. In a third and smaller group of CIGS, participants take part in the implementation of the intervention (*n* = 6).

This may involve identifying prominent individuals among the local population and giving them a leading role in the implementation (e.g. local leaders) or assigning participants the role of trainers.

5.2.1 Country comparison

Danish CIGS tend to involve their participants more in their interventions compared to Dutch, Belgian and French CIGS. Especially for the latter, the participants are mainly involved as receivers. Additionally, when partners are leading in the design phase of the intervention, it is more common that also participants are actively involved. No striking differences in terms of engagement of participants are found between interventions in Nepal and Senegal.

5.3 Collaboration with government and other stakeholders

When examining the collaboration with other stakeholders in the Global South, particularly the local government, four groups can be distinguished, varying in extent to which governments and other actors are being involved in the work of CIGS and their counterparts.

"Previously, the other mayors did not even care about the residents, did not even care that there were floods in front of their houses. So, a mayor who does not even care about his house grounds cannot care about the neighbourhood's residents. There have never been any subsidies from them, ever." (Senegalese partner of French CIGS)

The first group of CIGS (*n* = 6) does not utilise local networks during their interventions. They only collaborate with their partner and do not work with the local government in any way. Reasons for not working with the government vary from them being hard to reach to concerns regarding risk for corruption. The second group (*n* = 6) only works passively with the (local) government and does not utilize other networks. They inform the (local) government of their intervention but do not involve them in the design of implementation. In some cases, the government may make an occasional donation, but they do not provide structural support for the intervention.

The third and largest group consists of CIGS (*n* = 22) whose activities involve the (local) government in the design and/or implementation of the intervention. The government, for example, pays the staff, organises training or takes over the project at the end of the intervention. In some cases, CIGS and their partners actively consult the government about the design of their intervention, or the government hires them for a certain intervention, as explained by a Dutch CIGS: "Now there is request of a neighbouring district. They asked us if we could implement our work there." The final group (*n* = 15) not only involves the government, but also collaborates with larger networks, including other (non-governmental) organisations.

5.3.1 Country comparison

Dutch CIGS and their partners tend to be less inclined to cooperate with government or other stakeholders. Danish CIGS and their partners on the other hand do so most frequently. No striking differences were found when it comes to stakeholder engagement in Nepal and Senegal.

6 Citizens and sustainable development; a typology

In the previous chapters, we have shown that CIGS be distinguished from each other based on the type of development intervention, the type of partner and partnership. A detailed analyses of all the data, learned that CIGS can be grouped along the lines of these differences, resulting in a typology. We present and discuss this typology in this chapter. In Tables 6.1-6.3 we present the typology and the distribution of the typology across the countries of study in the Global North and South. Following this, we present some explanations for the differences among the three types of CIGS.

	Type I **CIGS led service delivery (*n*=17)**	**Type II** **Partner led service delivery (*n*=18)**	**Type III** **Partner led capacity strengthening & systems change (*n*=18)**
Intervention types			
Generation	First-generation	First-generation	Second- and third generation
Level of operation	Individual/family level	Individual/family level	Community level
Intervention manner			
Type of partner	Individuals or institutes High financial dependence on CIGS	NGOs or institutes Less financial dependent on CIGS	NGOs Less financial dependent on CIGS
Role of CIGS in the intervention	CIGS in the lead	Co-creators or partner in the lead	Co-creators or partner in the lead
Involvement participants	Recipients of support	Recipients of support	Participant involvement
Collaboration other stakeholders	Non-involvement - actively involve local government	Actively involve local government	Actively involve (local) government and working together with other organisations
Identity CIGS			
Budget (Mdn)	€ 25,000	€ 43,331	€ 61,356
Number of members (Mdn)	9.5	6	20
Organisational age (Yrs.)	17.5	15.6	25.5
Voluntariness	Voluntary	Voluntary	Relatively more paid staff

6.1 The typology

Table 6.1 CIGS Typology

	Type 1	Type 2	Type 3	Total
the Netherlands	33.33% (5)	33.33% (5)	33.33% (5)	15
Belgium	46.15% (6)	46.15% (6)	7.70% (1)	13
France	46.15% (6)	46.15% (6)	7.70% (1)	13
Denmark	0% (0)	8.33% (1)	91.67% (11)	12
Total	17	18	18	

Table 6.2 Distribution typology – Global North

	Type 1	Type 2	Type 3	Total
Nepal	17.85% (5)	28.57% (8)	53.57% (15)	28
Senegal	48% (12)	40% (10)	12% (3)	25
Total	17	18	18	

Table 6.3 Distribution typology – Global South

Type #1: CIGS led service delivery

Organisations part of this first type (*n*=17) are smallest in terms of annual budget and are almost all voluntary run. The group comprises of CIGS in France, Belgium, and the Netherlands. Compared to the other two groups, this group has the smallest median budget. Large part of their budget stems from individual donors. All of them are supporting first-generation interventions at the individual/family level. This type of CIGS typically collaborates directly with individuals or institutions and is most often highly involved in the design and implementation of the intervention. Partners of these CIGS are often strongly reliant on them. Compared to the two other types, the participation of local stakeholders is most limited. This group also shows strongest emotional engagement with the work, the partner, and communities they work with. Overall, we could say this group of CIGS is most informal in nature.

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Type #2: Partner led service delivery

This second type of CIGS (*n*=18) is also characterised by its overly voluntary nature. Compared to the first type, the annual budget of these organisations is larger, and they rely on a mixture of both one-off and more structural donors and individual and institutionalised donors. In terms of interventions, the second group shows similarities to the first type. Their budget stems from a diversity of most often one of support. This type of CIGS most often also support first-generation interventions at the individual/family level. However, there are also quite some differences. Compared to the first group, CIGS in this second group are larger in terms of annual budget. CIGS in the second group tend to work more frequently with more formalised entities, such as institutions or registered NGOs, that are mostly established independently from the CIGS. Compared to the first type, these CIGS take up a less prominent role in the design and implementation of the intervention.

They either operate as co-creator, or the partner has the lead. These partners often rely on a diversity of donors. Like type one, the involvement of other local stakeholders is still limited. Overall, compared to the first type of CIGS, this group is more formalised while at the same time still small-scale and voluntary in nature.

Type #3: Partner led capacity strengthening & systems change

The CIGS in this last group (*n*=18) are largest both in terms of number of members and in terms of annual budget. Most of these CIGS receive a significant part of their budget from institutionalised donors, providing more structural support. Compared to the other two types of CIGS, larger part of the organisations has paid staff members. Especially among Danish CIGS in this group, there is a large number of CIGS members with a professional background in international development. With 25,5 years, these organisations are also remarkably older compared to the first two groups. Whereas the two first types are diverse in their nationality, this third type mainly consists of Danish CIGS and a few Dutch CIGS. They all support second-generation interventions, at times combined with third generation type of interventions, mostly on the community level. In general, the CIGS most often take up take a smaller role, as cocreator of the intervention, or the partner has the leading role. Participants are mostly actively engaged in the intervention and most of these CIGS collaborate with other stakeholders in addition to the (local) government. Overall, we conclude that this group is most established and professionalised.

6.2 What money can(t) buy: how context matters

Considering our research objective, we can carefully conclude that the third type of CIGS is more likely to meet preconditions for sustainable development as defined for this study: interventions are more often locally led and intentionally aimed at tackling root causes. The question hence is if there are explanatory factors (co)determining the type of CIGS. For this, it is first important to notice that a large majority (91%) of Danish CIGS is part of the third type of CIGS (see Table 6.2). The first phase of the study learned that Danish CIGS and the Danish context differ from CIGS in France, Belgium and the Netherlands in multiple ways that help in explaining the differences in the typology (see Table 2.1).

First, most CIGS in Denmark receive (structural) support from large, established (support) organisations, with Civilsamfund I Udvikling (CISU) being the most prominent player. CISU deliberately aims to invest in systemic change in countries in the Global South, and therefore CIGS cannot use funding for service delivery type of development interventions. This policy is reflected in the fact that, except for one, all Danish CIGS in our sample undertake second and/or third generation development interventions. In addition, it is a requirement for CIGS to work with civil society organisations. This is reflected in the fact that, compared to other CIGS in our sample, Danish CIGS work with stronger, more independent organisations, which on its turn results in more balanced partnerships.

"So, the reason why they [founders Danish CIGS] wanted to have a paid person form the very beginning is probably because they are professionals who know that if you really want to get things done, you need to pay someone to do it. That if it is all based on volunteers, that it will take a long time to go forward." (Board member Danish CIGS)

Third, for reasons difficult to explain based on the available data, Danish CIGS are established and/or run more frequently by members with a professional background in international cooperation. Compared to CIGS members in other countries, these members are more often being paid for their work, whereas in other countries there is more reluctance to opt for paid staff members. Also here, support organisations play a facilitating role. Both CISU and the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs allow for a certain percentage of their donation to go to overhead costs.

Finally, Danish CIGS are remarkably larger, most probably because most of them are registered as associations, requiring a member-based structure. As a result, in general Danish CIGS have more human resources to rely on and to undertake the wide variety of activities that are part of running a CIGS.
While carefulness is required, it is plausible that this combination of distinguishing features of the Danish context wherein CIGS operate explains the role they undertake in the Global South as found in our study.

The experiences of Belgian (but not only) CIGS overall contrast with those of Danish CIGS and especially highlight the influential role support organisation can play. Many Belgian CIGS explain how it is hard to find more structural, longer-term support for their work. As a result, CIGS explain how they move from one project to the other ('project-hopping') to secure funding for their work. Consequently, support organisations unintentionally encourage a project, shorter term versus problem, longer term orientation among CIGS. In addition, they explain how they often only receive a rejection, without (too much of) an explanation, hampering them in learning or adjusting. Across countries, CIGS explain how their reliance on multiple donors, each with their own application and accountability requirements, results in a high workload and in processes of (enforced) formalisation to meet funding requirements. Some explain how they 'dance along' with donor preferences and try to meet donors wishes. Considering the small-scale of most CIGS, these bureaucracies risk to distracts them from more longer term orientation and from more locally led development.

"We first look at [donor's] website or program to see where they focus on. With some foundations you have to talk about women, then about entrepreneurship, then about education or youth. We score on all four points, but it is about which keyword the organisation finds most important." (Dutch CIGS)

Different than expected, we do not find evidence that the degree of formalisation of a CIGS affects their role in the Global South. In the first phase, we learned that, because of rules and regulations, Dutch CIGS more often had a multi-annual policy plan. Whereas we expected that this might result in more longer-term orientation, this is not being confirmed by our data. Around half of the CIGS in our sample have a written policy plan (n = 28).

Those without policy plan explain this by stating, they do not see the need for it: “We do not really have one. Every time if we come together, we just plan, we just go on with what we are doing. We actually do not have any bigger ambitions” (Belgium CIGS). Others prefer to stay flexible and adjust to their partner’s need: “A strategy [document] would be for us to impose on our partner, that is not what we are here for” (Board member Danish CIGS).

Part of the CIGS with a policy plan mention they only have one because it is a requirement of their donors. A smaller group of CIGS states that their policy plan or strategy helps them to keep their work close to their overall goals: “It's essential. I think that first, it's very important because it allows us, when we build, we update the action plan, it allows the whole teaching team to realise all the work they do, the value of their work, what's at stake” (Board member French CIGS).

Hence, a striking communality across the CIGS typology is the overall their shorter term-orientation of CIGS which becomes most striking when talking about the future of their organisation and partnership: most of them lack a clear exit-strategies and when they do have plans or first considerations, these are not being shared with their counterparts, causing serious uncertainties among their partners and therewith jeopardises the sustainability of their interventions.

7 In conclusion

CIGS intervention strategies

This study aimed to come to a better understanding of the contribution of citizen led development organisations based in the Global North to sustainable development in countries in the Global South. More precisely, we question whether projects, programmes or organisations make a lasting impact on the communities where they work (Edwards 1999; Kinsbergen et al., 2021). Interventions that are locally led and aimed at tackling root causes are more likely to be expected to make a lasting impact. Based on the findings of our study, we conclude that the work of these Citizen Initiatives for Global Solidarity is characterised by:

- **Loyalty at the heart:** a strong, long-standing commitment characterises the presence of CIGS in the countries and regions where they work. Most organisations are committed for multiple years to a demarcated geographical area, where they aim to contribute to improved living conditions of community members as a whole or a specific subgroup. Also, their collaboration with local individuals, institutions or NGOs with whom they partner to provide this support can be characterised as long standing but also strong when looking at the overall share of CIGS' support in the work of their partner organisations.

- **Direct impact**: most CIGS support service delivery type of interventions, providing for basic needs of communities, a smaller part of them expands these interventions with interventions that deliberately aim at capacity strengthening or systems change.

- **Actively engaged:** Overall, CIGS are involved in various stages of the design and implementation of the interventions they support. A smaller group does so in a very prominent way, most aim for the role of co-creators.

Hence, in line with findings of earlier studies, conclusions are positive when it comes to the (expected) long lastingness of the interventions of CIGS and therewith the short(er) term impact on individuals benefitting from CIGS' support (Kinsbergen et al., 2021). The findings are however more critical when it comes to the plausibility of CIGS interventions to directly contribute to long(er) term system change (i.e. tackling root causes) and strengthening of civil society. In addition, that same long-term and strong commitment that contributes to the (expected) long lastingness of interventions, is also where critique comes in on the room for partner organisations to act (increasingly) independent from the CIGS.

What explains the intervention strategy of CIGS?

Our study allows to distinguish between several explanatory factors. The country comparative nature of this study helps clarifying how (contextual) differences among CIGS affect their role as development actors. However, we stress that the explanations presented are not strictly bound to geographical borders since also within country variation among CIGS are being noted.

In line with our initial expectation, we find that, next to personal preferences of some CIGS members for certain types of development interventions and certain type of involvement, funding frameworks of donors are an important determinant for the work of CIGS. Overall, with exception of CIGS in Denmark, CIGS are being confronted with limited opportunities for more longer-term support and, related to this, funding opportunities that allow for investments in 2nd and 3rd generation strategies (including core funding). Differences in the donor landscape across the countries of study as found in the first phase of the study, are hence being reflected in the findings of the second phase. With that, we also conclude that (government) policies in the field of international development, that largely determine how the funding landscape for CIGS looks like and how CIGS are being considered in this, play a key role in understanding the nature of the work of CIGS.

It would however be too easy to conclude that it all comes down to policy and (related) to funding opportunities. The findings of the study also show how the identity of CIGS and their members relate to their intervention strategies. The interviews learned that the different type of interventions being supported by Danish CIGS, the different partners they work with, and the different way of partnering is also the result of the more professional nature of Danish CIGS (i.e. professional experience of members in established development organisation and the number of paid staff members). So not only do the most important CIGS donors in Denmark have fundings frameworks that encourage or even require interventions meeting preconditions for sustainable development, independent of these donors, Danish CIGS themselves tend to opt for such approaches.

Our results hence do confirm our hypotheses that the level of professionalisation and the type of donors relate to the extent to which development interventions meet preconditions for sustainability.

Different than expected, we do not find that the extent to which CIGS are formalised (i.e. having a multi-annual policy plan) to result in more positive outlooks on the sustainability of CIGS' development interventions. We find that across countries, discussions among CIGS members and CIGS and their partners on the future of their cooperation are more exception than rule. The absence of strategies and discussions on the future of partnerships and possible ending of partnerships or organisations, adds to the risk of the sustainability of CIGS' interventions. The uncertainty resulting from the unclarity on the future (of partnerships), risks partner organisations for shorter term orientation and for complying ('dance along') with agendas and plannings of the CIGS (and other donors) with whom they work.

Overall reflections

The critical parts of the above conclusions might risk overlooking an important and rather unique aspect to the role of CIGS in the field of sustainable development. Their long-term presence and their people-to-people approach, both in the communities where they are based in the Global North, as in the communities where they work in the Global South, make them key ambassadors of international solidarity with a human face. The impact of this role is hard to grasp. However, in times where bureaucratisation and professionalisation have resulted or risk to result in a distance between communities in the Global North and South on the one hand, and established development actors on the other hand, the findings of the current and previous studies on CIGS urge to spotlight this particular role of CIGS.

This unique aspect of CIGS identity risks to come under pressure because of policy and funding frameworks that overlook or undervalue this role and, unintentionally or deliberately, urges CIGS to isomorph into development organisations 'as we know them'. Valuing this unique role, hence requires from policy makers and CIGS support organisations a continuous balancing act between the distinguishing, unique nature of CIGS and the role we envision CIGS to play in sustainable development.

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Appendices

Appendix A Background variables sample

	CIGS	Partners
Age organisation (Mdn)	16	-
Number of (staff) members (Mdn)	10 (*n*=50)	10.5 (*n*=44)
Female members (%)	62 (*n*=30)	-
Paid staff (%)	16 (*n*=50)	-
Age members (average)	56.4 (*n*=30)	
Budget (Mdn)	€ 31,407 (*n*=48)	€ 53,357 (*n*=33)
Diaspora (%)	26.4	-
Use of policy paper (%)	59.6	-

Appendix B Interview guide CIGS

1. Introduction

You introduce yourself and describe your role in the research study.

2. The organisation, its members activities / project-partner(s)

2.1 Purpose of the organisation:

- Quickly summarise what you already know about the purpose of the organisation and ask for confirmation. Also, try to establish a short recap of the organisation's history.
- How was this goal established?

2.2 Members:

- Who is currently involved with the organisation?
- What kind of background do people have that are involved in the work of the organisation? (Education, work and motivation, experience with international development?)

For organisations that exist of both paid and unpaid members:

- How are tasks and responsibilities divided between paid and unpaid members?
- Why did you choose to pay certain members?
- For organisations with only unpaid members: Has it ever been considered to pay certain members for their work? Why (not)?

3. Intervention strategy

3.1 Intervention type

- Create an overview:
  - What kind of project
  - Target group
  - Phase of the project (design-implementation-conclusion-evaluation)
  - Type of partner: organisation (church-school-NGO-CBO-hospital-orphanage-government) or individual?
  - The capacity of the partner (be brief on this element as this element will be discussed in length in the Nepal/Senegal interviews)

- Mirror organisation? (Founded in collaboration with the CIGS)

- Activities of partner – does the partner have more activities than those with the CIGS?
- Number of members
- Number of (foreign) donors (is the CIGS the sole donor or are there more?) (
- Yearly budget
- The part of the budget of the partner covered by the CIGS (if known)
- What is the goal of the project, in the short- and long-term (which problem does it solve)?

3.2 Method of intervention:

3.2.1 Start-up phase
Meeting partner: How-where-when-who took the initiative to collaborate and what was the relationship with the CIGS before the partner became a 'partner'?

Choice of project (type of project-location-target group):
- How was this decision made?
- Who was involved in this choice? (Partner, local citizens, local government)

3.2.2 implementation & follow-up (if the project is already implemented)
- How did the implementation progress? Which steps were taken?
Who was involved in these steps (partner, local citizens, local government), which role did they have?
- What is the follow-up to the implementation of the project? Do you keep in touch? How frequently?
- What happens between the start-up and implementation phases concerning maintaining the long-term functioning of the project (e.g., allocation of maintenance costs, management training)?

3.3.3 Collaborating with partner
Present the quantitative survey. Indicate for each statement to what extent you agree.

4. Reflection

4.1 Financing
- From whom do you (the CIGS) receive funding? (Is there co-financing? Is so, which?).
- Focusing on the top three donors: Do these donors attach conditions to their support? Which?
- Have donors explained why they give you financial support? What were their reasons?
- Do your donors have (had) an influence on which project you pursued?

4.2 Formalisation (plans)
You have a policy plan:
- Why was the policy plan drafted?
- How was the policy plan drafted – who was involved? (Particularly, was the Southern partner involved?)
- Would you say the policy plan has (had) an influence on the project we have discussed? (E.g., the modes operandi, objective, collaboration with partners)

You do not have a policy plan/year plan:
- Did you ever consider making these documents?
- Why did you choose not to make these documents?

4.3 Networks
- With whom do you work together in the Global North? (Other CIGS, NGOs, companies, advisors)
- In which way do you work together?

- With whom do you work together in Senegal/Nepal? (Other CIGS, NGOs, companies, advisors) – *This question concerns the network that they have within Senegal/Nepal.* - In which way do you work together?

5. **Vision of the future**

- Commitment: Have you communicated to your partner how long you will keep supporting the project> Do you know yourself how long you will/can offer support? Have you considered dissolving the organisation?

- Why would you dissolve the organisation?

- What would happen if your organisation would stop tomorrow? (If you get the feeling the organisation relies on one or two persons, ask what would happen if this person would stop)

- What would happen if your partner would stop tomorrow? (If you get the feeling the organisation relies on one or two persons, ask what would happen if this person would stop)

Appendix C Interview guide partners

1. **Introduction:**

You introduce yourself and your role in the research study.

2. **The organisation – its members – activities /project(s) – partner(s)**

2.1 Activities/Projects across time:
- What type of activities (theme – target group – type of investment) has the organisation undertaken since its creation – where.
- Why were these activities chosen?
- In case activities have been completed: why?

2.2 Members (Try to be as brief as possible):
- Who is the founder of the organisation? Is the founder still involved?
- Number of staff throughout its history. Grown/remained stable throughout the years?
- How many people are being paid?
- Division of tasks and responsibilities: Who does what in the organisation (in broad terms)? Determine whether there is a concentration or spread of responsibilities.

2.4 Financing:
- From whom do/did they receive funding?
Local fundraising
National-international
NGO – government – church – companies

2.5 Networks:
- With whom do/did they work together in Senegal/Nepal/Internationally? (Other CIGS, NGOs, companies, advisors…)

2.6 Collaboration with government:
- Registration
- In which manner does the organisation work together with the local government?
- What is their stance towards the government?
Passive: Are they informed about government policy? Do they adjust their policies according to government policy?

3. Modus operandi of partners

3.1 Type of intervention

- Collect the following information:
    - Type of project (e.g., an orphanage for street kids)
    - Target group (e.g., 40 orphans from village x)
    - The phase of the project (e.g., the building has been completed, the project is ongoing) design – implementation – conclusion – evaluation.
    - Capacity of partner
- Activities of partner- does the partner undertake other activities?
- Number of employees
- Number of (foreign) partners (is CIGS the only supporter or are there others)
  Yearly budget (if this is known)
- What is the intended outcome of this project, in the short-term and long-term (for which problem is this a solution)

3.2 Method of intervention

In this section, we discuss a few phases of the project cycle and important decisions that were made. Crucial is obtaining insight into how processes evolved, how decisions were derived, and who took on what role.

3.2.1 Start-up phase

Meeting partner: How-where-when-who took the initiative to collaborate and what was the relationship with the CIGS before the partner became a 'partner'?

Choice of project (type of project-location-target group):
- How was this decision made?
- Who was involved in the decision and which role did they have? (Partner, local citizens, local government)
- Was the population consulted – were other local stakeholders consulted?

3.2.2 Implementation & follow-up (if the project is already implemented)

- How did the implementation progress? Which steps were taken?
- Who was involved in these steps (CIGS, local citizens, local government) and which role did they have?
- What is the follow-up to the implementation of the project? Do you keep in touch with the CIGS? How frequently?
- What happens between the start-up and implementation phases concerning maintaining the long-term functioning of the project (e.g., allocation of maintenance costs, management training)?

3.2.3 Collaboration:

- How do they describe the role of the CIGS?

- In case there are other donors: compare. Does the CIGS occupy a different/similar role compared to other donors? In which way? Better or worse?

- Are you working towards (increasing) financial independence? Why (not)? How?
- If you had the chance to change something about the collaboration, what would it be?

Let the interviewee fill in the questionnaire about the relation with the CIGS

4. **Vision of the future**

- What do you think about the future of the organisation? What are the expectations? Which problems/risks might you encounter? Sketch a future vision of the next five years: How do they consider their future partnership with the CIGS?

- Commitment: Do you know how long the CIGS will continue supporting the project and/or your organisation?

- What would happen if your organisation would stop tomorrow (for whatever reason)? (If you get the feeling the organisation relies on one or two persons, ask what would happen if this person would stop) Have you considered dissolving the organisation?

- What would happen if the CIGS would stop tomorrow (for whatever reason)? (If you get the feeling the organisation relies on one or two persons, ask what would happen if this person would stop)

Appendix C Statements survey CIGS

1. Our partner is able to execute its tasks effectively
2. Our partner does not have the capacity to meet its responsibilities
3. We are confident that our partner can sustain the project in the long-term
4. Our partner requires a lot of instruction
5. We fully trust our partner
6. We feel we have to control the work of our partner

Appendix D Statements survey partners

1. Our European partner makes us feel like we are able to execute our work effectively
2. Our European partner makes us feel like we have insufficient capacity to meet our responsibilities
3. Our European partner trusts that we can sustain the project in the long-term
4. Our European partner gives a lot of instruction
5. Our European partner trusts us fully
6. We feel like our European partner wants to control our work constantly