Chapter 1: Towards a comprehensive Danish development effort

Global development issues

Denmark has played a strong leadership role on the development of Agenda 2030, particularly on the promotion of human rights and support for peacebuilding and stabilisation. However, it is not yet addressing how it will respond to Agenda 2030 at both domestic and international levels, or the role that development co-operation will play within this.

Denmark is a leader in developing Agenda 2030 but lacks a clear vision for taking it forward

Denmark is a leader on global issues for sustainable development and a strong advocate for human rights in global development discussions. In particular, Denmark's high level of political engagement on gender equality, and – together with the Netherlands and Ghana – sexual and reproductive health and rights, has led to more progressive language on these issues in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Denmark is also at the forefront of efforts to promote the New Deal[1], and the five Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals[2] agreed at the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan in 2011.

With its largest multinational enterprises operating globally in sectors such as shipping, pharmaceuticals and renewable energy, Denmark has a strong record to protect on corporate social responsibility, sustainability and green growth. The government endorsed a corporate social responsibility action plan in 2008, and established an accountability mechanism in 2012 in accordance with the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. A 2015 OECD Investment Committee peer review (OECD, 2015c) found that the mechanism was well resourced, but recommended more active promotion outside Danish borders given that it had attracted few complaints to date. Meanwhile, the Danish government has also concentrated on building a comparative advantage in green growth technologies, which now account for more than 12% of all Danish exports (EC, 2015).

As a member of the Open Working Group on SDGs, Denmark is well placed to lead on Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. According to an initial assessment of how developed economies measure up against the goals (Kroll, 2015), Denmark is performing well across the 17 new goals, ranking fourth out of 34 OECD countries. However, at a time of considerable movement in the global development landscape and shrinking official development assistance (ODA) budget, Denmark has not yet set out a clear vision on how to take forward Agenda 2030 at both domestic and international levels, as it has just started to develop an action plan for the 2030 Agenda. Denmark is also in the process of elaborating a new development co-operation strategy. It is therefore in a good position to anchor its development co-operation in the national whole-of-government action plan for implementing the SDGs. Key areas to consider when finalising the strategy might include how to address financing and policy challenges to provide for global public goods, how to balance development and commercial objectives when mobilising additional development finance and the role of development co-operation within this.

Policy coherence for development

Indicator: Domestic policies support or do not harm developing countries

Denmark has a robust system for policy coherence for development, with strengthened co-ordination mechanisms, focused on those European Union policies likely to have the greatest impact on developing countries. In light of Agenda 2030 and the changing development landscape, Denmark is now considering whether its current priorities are fit for the future. This is proving difficult in the absence of a new sustainable development framework articulating the role Danish development policy should play with regard to other policy areas.

Denmark supports policy coherence for development at the highest level

Denmark has a robust system for achieving policy coherence for development, backed up by strong legislation, well-functioning political processes and clear policy commitments. Like all European Union (EU) countries, Denmark's overarching obligations towards policy coherence for development are inscribed in the Lisbon Treaty's Article 208 (EU, 2007). However, in 2011, the Danish Parliament went a step further, anchoring policy coherence in the International Development Cooperation Act, and explicitly recognising that developing countries are not only affected by development policies but also by other policy areas (Danish Government, 2012a).

Furthermore, in 2014, the Government of Denmark released its first policy coherence plan, A Shared Agenda: Denmark's Action Plan for Policy Coherence for Development (MFA, 2014a). The plan focuses Danish objectives on the EU framework on policy coherence, with the rationale that EU policies, rather than national policies, will have the greatest impact on developing countries. The action plan encompasses all EU policy areas – trade and finance, food security, climate change, and peace and security – apart from migration (van Seters et al, 2015). However, in view of the ongoing global migration crisis, Denmark is currently considering whether it might also include migration as an additional priority.

In its action plan, Denmark has identified a range of Danish political objectives for improving EU policy coherence: 1) the EU's free trade agreements should lead to greater economic inclusion of least developed countries; 2) the EU should be at the forefront of fighting tax fraud and tax evasion; 3) EU policies should contribute to global food security; 4) the EU should take a leading role in promoting green transition and curbing climate change; and 5) the EU should apply coherent approaches to conflict and stabilisation. Implementation of the plan, the first of its kind in Europe, is being monitored by the OECD, think tanks and civil society organisations as a potential example of good practice on how to make policies more coherent and supportive of development objectives (OECD, 2015c; Brejnholt Tranberg et al., 2014).

A clear action plan and a stronger policy co-ordination mechanism

In response to the Development Assistance Committee's (DAC) 2011 peer review recommendations (OECD, 2011), Denmark has strengthened its national-level mechanisms for policy co-ordination. The action plan nominates the Danish Special Committee for Development Policy Issues, one of the thematic special committees in the Danish EU decision-making process, as the key mechanism for inter-ministerial co-ordination and policy arbitration on policy coherence.[3]

Danish policy positions are then referred to the Danish Parliament as part of the standard procedure of informing parliament ahead of European Council meetings. The action plan is a rolling document, monitored by the Special Committee for Development Issues and up for annual review.

The action plan and strengthened co-ordination mechanism are welcomed. However Denmark will need to put more thought into how to enable all government departments to improve their proactive engagement on policy coherence, including reversing the mandate of proof,[4] as part of its preparations for the implementation of Agenda 2030.

Strong co-ordination systems, but further capacity building and evidence of implementation needed

As each new EU initiative is proposed, line ministries are required to screen them for development impact and advise the committee on potential consequences. However, reporting to the EU in 2015, Denmark noted that the capacity of line ministries to understand the consequences of Danish policy for developing countries remains a key challenge (EC, 2015a). To assist in this process, Denmark can engage academia or civil society organisations to provide analysis on specific issues. It is also standard procedure to invite civil society to contribute views on agenda points for European Council meetings, and a public hearing is a mandatory part of the Danish EU decision-making procedure for stakeholder consultation.

Denmark is one of a handful of OECD members to have adopted a formal monitoring framework and indicators to help drive cross-government co-ordination and define strategic priorities for policy coherence. A key strength of Denmark's action plan is its pragmatic approach, based on clear objectives and targets, with recognition that trade-offs are political choices where development will not always win – for example, on EU agricultural subsidies or heavily subsidised fuel costs for high-seas fishing fleets (OECD, 2015a; van Seters, 2015). Denmark also supports a coherent approach to trade and development within the EU and internationally (Box 1.1). Denmark reports to the EU on a biennial basis on progress and institutional handling of policy coherence. Its action plan also states that it will report through Danida's Annual Report, but at the time of writing, no such report had been published since the action plan was announced in 2014.

In practice, Denmark's policies are generally coherent with development objectives. This is reflected in Denmark's first place ranking in the 2015 Commitment to Development Index.[5] Agenda 2030 gives Denmark an opportunity to push the policy coherence agenda further, both nationally and internationally. However, it remains unclear which department and/or minister is responsible for integrating the current approach into a new sustainable development framework and how development will be positioned within this.

Box 1.1 Danish achievements on trade and financing for development

Denmark's coherent approach to trade and development has been recognised in international ranking exercises on policy coherence and sustainable development (CGD, 2016; Kroll, 2015). Trade heads up Denmark's list of priorities in its policy coherence action plan, and political action goes beyond advocating for more development-friendly trade agreements in EU working groups. For example, Denmark offers pragmatic support for least developed countries (LDCs) in World Trade Organization negotiations, providing a Danish ambassador to act as LDC facilitator. In 2015, Denmark also commissioned analysis to support LDCs in the ongoing negotiations for the Environmental Goods Agreement and co-signed a letter to the European Commission about the need to show flexibility towards LDCs in the negotiation of environmental protection agreements. Within the EU, Denmark has supported improved regulation on responsible mineral supply chains, and stronger protections for workers and child labour rights in developing countries. Denmark is also working to promote tax and development, both nationally and internationally, including through a decision to terminate exemptions on value-added tax for goods and services processed in host countries for development activities, sending a strong signal on the importance of strengthening domestic resource mobilisation. However, further progress is required in areas such as the proactive investigation of foreign bribery, public company ownership and related instruments.

Sources: EC (2015b), Policy Coherence for Development: 2015 EU Report,
http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/policy-coherence-for-development-2015-eu-report_en.pdf;
OECD (2015d), "Denmark: Follow-up to the phase 3 report and recommendations", www.oecd.org/daf/anti-bribery/Denmark-Phase-3-Written-Follow-Up-Report-EN.pdf.

Financing for development

Indicator: The member engages in development finance in addition to ODA

Denmark is increasingly looking to use ODA to leverage private investments. This effort will require increasing attention to managing development and commercial objectives to ensure Denmark's development co-operation is in line with its poverty focus. It will also require further work on evaluating the extent to which these investments catalyse other development flows and on measuring their development impact, both in terms of additionality and sustainability.

Denmark is increasingly using ODA to catalyse other development flows, but further work is required to measure the long-term development benefits of this financing

At USD 2.6 billion in 2015, ODA remains Denmark's largest resource flow to developing countries but Denmark is increasingly promoting the role of ODA as a catalyst for other flows in line with its development co-operation strategy, The Right to a Better Life (Danish Government, 2012b), and in support of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development.

This trend is reflected in higher allocations of ODA to sectors with the potential to mobilise domestic resources. In 2014, Denmark committed an estimated USD 63 million of its ODA to tax-related activities in partner countries, an increase of more than 300% on the previous year. At the same time, Denmark continued to support developing countries' trade performance and integration into the world economy, committing USD 444.5 million to trade-related activities in 2014 (23% of its sector-allocable ODA), representing a 4.4% increase in real terms from 2013.

In addition, Denmark is among the top donors for mobilising private finance through its government-owned development finance institution, the Investment Fund for Developing Countries (IFU). The fund holds a dual mandates. It aims at enhancing Danish trade and investment while contributing to economic and social development in the host countries through advisory services and commercial investments. The IFU does not provide aid or business grants but, in addition to managing its own investment portfolio, manages blended finance funds. The IFU estimates its total investments generated to date at DKK 169 billion, of which the IFU has directly contributed around DKK 18 billion. Results include creating an estimated 400 000 jobs in host countries, with gross returns on investment averaging 9.4%.

According to the 2015 Development Assistance Committee Survey of Private Finance Mobilisation by Official Finance Interventions (Benn, 2016), Denmark was the sixth largest provider after the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Sweden and the Netherlands, mobilising USD 255 million from the private sector through shares in collective investment vehicles and guarantees between 2012 and 2014, of which 64% targeted climate-related projects. Denmark is aiming to forge new synergies between commercial, trade and development objectives, both in Copenhagen and at country level (Annex C). The joint IFU-Ministry of Foreign Affairs Development Committee is a key mechanism for co-ordination with business and institutional investors and meets regularly to discuss these synergies.

Denmark examines the catalytic and development impacts of its private sector co-operation on a case-by-case basis. As observed in Ghana, the results of Denmark's private sector engagement and development work have been mixed (Annex C). An evaluation of one of Denmark's most significant instruments for catalysing private finance, the Danida Business-to Business Programme (MFA, 2014c), found that while some businesses had benefitted from the programme, evidence of broader development benefits was poor. The programme has since been suspended. Meanwhile, a number of other recent evaluations and reviews of other private sector programmes have confirmed some degree of catalytic impact[6], although challenges still remain in ensuring development objectives are protected when dealing with commercial interests, and how best to ensure sustainable and pro-poor development impact.

Denmark is making efforts to better define results and measure development benefits in these areas, but could benefit from a greater focus on the development objectives and value-add of the private sector in meeting a specific development challenge. For example, the IFU has a long experience in making ex-ante assessments of financial additionality, but has less experience in undertaking ex-post evaluations of measuring developmental impact. It has recently engaged a consultant to work this issue. While the IFU notes that aggregate level returns for its investments in Ghana from inception in 1989 to end-2015 (including loans, equity and guarantees) are positive, there is no public information available on returns at country level in Ghana. However, the IFU reports that total investments in Ghana over this period of approximately USD 48 million (DKK 268 million) have mobilised USD 89 million (DKK 500 million) in financing from other sources, typically private investment, while also directly creating more than 2300 jobs. As the use of blended finance instruments increases – and the lines between public and private financing sources fade – it will also be important improve the transparency of returns on investments to the taxpayers who finance them and the countries that benefit from them.

The new Danish development co-operation strategy, due in 2016, is expected to increase the focus on supporting private sector development. It will therefore need to be much more specific than the current strategy on the rationale for choosing private sector instruments, and how these allocations are in line with the main objectives of ODA – the promotion of economic development and the welfare of developing countries.

Declining finance for climate change mitigation and adaption

On the special case of financing for climate change mitigation and adaptation projects and programmes in developing countries, Denmark ceased reporting its contribution in this area as additional to ODA in 2011. Denmark has since pledged USD 72 million (DKK 400 million) to the Green Climate Fund (Box 1.2), but will halve funding for natural resources, energy and climate change activities in 2016 due to budget cuts (Chapter 3). In 2016, subject to parliamentary approval, Denmark will also commit USD 22.1 million (DKK 156 million) to the Least Developed Countries Fund.[7]

Better linking private sector investments to country programme objectives could strengthen Denmark's development contributions

Denmark has pioneered a range of official financing instruments to leverage private sector investments for developing countries, including mixed-credit schemes, challenge funds and other business instruments,[8] with varying degrees of success (Annex C). For example, in 2014, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs carried out an evaluation of the Danida Business to Business Partnership Facility. The evaluation found that while the programme facilitated knowledge transfer and the majority of projects achieved satisfactory outcomes, there was little evidence of additionality or improvements to the business-enabling environment, job creation or broader growth impacts. The evaluation also questioned the instrument's compatibility with EU state aid rules. Against this background, it was decided in November 2014 to put the Danida Business Partnerships facility on hold.

Denmark is currently focusing its efforts on new blended finance instruments involving the transfer of Danish technology to developing countries and emerging markets through the Danish Climate Investment Fund (Box 1.2) and the recently-launched Danish Agribusiness Fund.[9] In addition, it is considering establishing other guarantee and loan schemes to support the preparation of new generation investment projects.

In an environment of budget constraints, Denmark should guard against the proliferation of small supply-driven facilities that risk fragmenting the pro-poor focus of its development co-operation. In addition, linking private sector investments to country programme objectives could strengthen Denmark's development contributions in partner countries.

Denmark is tracking and reporting non-ODA flows, but the share of ODA in blended finance instruments is not always clear

Denmark tracks the whole of its resource flows for development, including investments and commercial loans. Non-ODA flows, such as investments and commercial loans to developing countries, are reported through Denmark's development finance institution, the IFU. This approach has enhanced Denmark's engagement in development finance beyond ODA, particularly as it transitions from aid to trade-based relationships with a number of partner countries (Annex C).

However, while 100% of Denmark's ODA was reported as grants or grant-equivalent in 2014, these data may change if Denmark's equity investments through Danida business instruments start to return profits and change their reporting status in the future. In the meantime, it remains difficult to identify exactly how much ODA is being used to mobilise other resources for sustainable development, particularly in relation to blended finance instruments such as IFU-managed funds.

Box 1.2 The Danish Climate Investment Fund

At the United Nations climate conference in Copenhagen in December 2009 (COP 15), developed countries were urged to mobilise capital for climate investments in developing countries, with the aim of mobilising USD 100 billion annually from 2020 in partnership with the private sector. The Danish Climate Investment Fund was established in 2012 to promote climate investments in developing countries and emerging markets, combining commercial and environmental objectives with the goal of reducing global warming and promoting the transfer of Danish climate technology. The fund is managed by Denmark's state-owned development finance institution, the IFU, and brings together a number of Danish Pension and Capital Funds (PensionDanmark, PKA, Pædagogernes Pensionskasse and Dansk Vækstkapital).

Of the total commitment of DKK 1.3 billion, ODA makes up DKK 275 million, the IFU contributes DKK 250 million and private funds DKK 775 million. To date, the Danish Climate Investment Fund has approved six investments in developing and emerging economies, including a wind farm in Kenya with Vestas and solar energy installations in the Maldives with Nordic Power Partners, as well as other projects in China and Brazil. While the climate fund is able to operate in all developing countries on the OECD/DAC list, ODA financing must be directed to developing countries with a per capita annual income of 80% of the World Bank's definition of lower middle income countries. It is envisaged that any return on ODA will be reinvested in other developing countries where projects target reductions in the emission of greenhouse gases.

The IFU estimates that for every DKK 100 that the fund invests, total investments will be just over DKK 600, with total investments expected to be in the range of DKK 8-9 billion. The fund will run for four years, after which investment projects will be divested and the investors will receive the expected return during a period of six years. The fund expects an annual return of 12%.

Sources: IFU (2016c), "The Danish Climate Investment Fund", http://www.ifu.dk/en/services/the-danish-climate-investment-fund, accessed 17 March 2016; IFU (2016b), *IFU's Best Practice on Business Plans: A Handbook for Our Partners, http://viewer.zmaqs.com/publication/9022bdee#/9022bdee/1*; IFU (8 January 2016b), "New Danish agribusiness fund to invest billions in developing countries", www.ifu.dk/en/service/news-and-publications/news/new-danish-agribusiness-fund-to-invest-billions-in-developing-countries; MFA (2013), "Danish Climate Investment Fund", External Grant Committee Meeting 8 May 2013.

Notes

1. In 2011, Denmark and other international development partners joined forces with the group of fragile countries to establish the International Dialogue on the New Deal for peacebuilding and state building.

2. The goals promote: (1) legitimate and inclusive politics, (2) security, (3) justice, (4) better economic foundations and (5) higher revenues and improved services.

3. The committee is made up of officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (chair); Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Business and Growth; Ministry of Taxation; Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries; Ministry of Climate, Energy and Building; Ministry of Environment; and Ministry of Justice. Additional formal cross-government co-ordination mechanisms include the Whole-of-Government Stabilisation Committee, comprising deputy permanent secretaries from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence, Prime Minister's Office and Ministry of Justice.

4. For examples of the use of reverse burden of proof, see recommendations for Denmark (ECDPM, 2013).

5. Each year, the Commitment to Development Index ranks "wealthy governments on how well they are living up to their potential to help poor countries." The index scores seven policy areas that affect the well-being of others around the world: aid, trade, finance, migration, environment, security and technology. See: www.cgdev.org/publication/ft/commitment-development-index-2015.

6. Danish ODA has been found to have had catalytic effects within the following areas: 1) financial service systems for agribusiness and SME development; 2) business advocacy and 3) mobilisation of private finance for impact investment (e.g. through the Climate Investment Fund and the Agribusiness Fund) and 4) Corporate Social Responsibility programmes (e.g. for agribusiness and textiles industries). Danida's evaluations are available at http://um.dk/en/danida-en/results/eval/eval_reports/evaluations/.

7. The Least Developed Countries Fund addresses the urgent adaptation needs of least developed countries and supports adaptation planning processes to reduce their medium- and long-term vulnerability to the impact of climate change.

8. Key Danida business instruments include: Danida Business Delegations, Danida Business Explorer, Danida Business Finance, IFU funds and the IFU Small and Medium Enterprises Facility.

9. On 1 January 2016, the Danish Government and the IFU, in collaboration with Danish pension funds, launched the Danish Agribusiness Fund, with DKK 88 million in ODA, DKK 212 million in IFU financing and DKK 200 million from institutional investors. The fund works with Danish companies to invest capital in projects in Asia, Africa, Latin America and parts of Europe.

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Chapter 1: Towards a comprehensive Danish development effort

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