**CARE Denmark**

**Meta Evaluation of CARE Denmark’s Country Programmes**

**Uganda, Niger, Vietnam, Nepal and Ghana**

**Draft**

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Table of Contents

[List of abbreviations 3](#_Toc259461579)

[1.0 Introduction 3](#_Toc259461580)

[2.0 The political and strategic framework 4](#_Toc259461581)

[2.1 CARE’s niche 4](#_Toc259461582)

[3.0 Integrated programs (combining service delivery with RBA) 5](#_Toc259461583)

[3.1 Key findings 6](#_Toc259461584)

[3.2 Other perspectives 6](#_Toc259461585)

[3.3. Recommendation 7](#_Toc259461586)

[4.0 The right holders 7](#_Toc259461587)

[4.1 Key findings 8](#_Toc259461588)

[4.2 Other perspectives 8](#_Toc259461589)

[4.3 Recommendation 9](#_Toc259461590)

[5.0 Holding duty bearers accountable 9](#_Toc259461591)

[5.1 Key findings 10](#_Toc259461592)

[5.2 Other perspectives 10](#_Toc259461593)

[5.3 Recommendation 12](#_Toc259461594)

[6.0 Partnerships/Capacity building 12](#_Toc259461595)

[6.1 Key findings 12](#_Toc259461596)

[6.2 Other perspectives 13](#_Toc259461597)

[6.3 Recommendation 14](#_Toc259461598)

[7.0 Targeting the poor and marginalised 14](#_Toc259461599)

[7.1 Key findings 14](#_Toc259461600)

[7.2 Other perspectives 15](#_Toc259461601)

[7.3 Recommendation 15](#_Toc259461602)

[8.0Monitoring & Evaluation 15](#_Toc259461603)

[8.1 Key findings 16](#_Toc259461604)

[8.2 Other perspectives 16](#_Toc259461605)

[8.3 Recommendation 17](#_Toc259461606)

[9.0 The future role of CARE in the South 17](#_Toc259461607)

# List of abbreviations

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| CBE | Community Based Extension |
| CBO | Community Based Organisation |
| CSO | Civil Society Organisation  |
| CSS | Civil Society Strategy |
| FSD | Forest Service Division  |
| INGO | International Non Governmental Organisation  |
| M&E | Monitoring and Evaluation  |
| MO | Mass Organisation |
| NGO | Non Governmental Organisation |
| NRM  | Natural Resource Management  |
| OD | Organisational Development |
| RBA | Right Based Approach  |
| VPA | Voluntary Partnership Agreement |

# 1.0 Introduction

This meta-evaluation aims at undertaking a desk analysis of five final evaluation reports from CARE programmes in Uganda, Niger, Vietnam, Nepal and Ghana. The reports relate to CARE interventions in these countries in the period ranging from 2001 to 2009.

The core themes of the five evaluation reports form the basis of this report and as requested in the ToR related to the findings of the recent Danida evaluation of support by Danish NGOs to civil society in Ghana and Ethiopia (hereafter the Danida Evaluation).

The report is structured as follows; the first section places CARE in a political and strategic framework and the second section is divided into core themes from the evaluation reports such as how CARE combines service delivery with Right Based Approaches (RBA), empowers the right holders, holds duty bearer to account, builds partnerships and capacities and targets the poor and marginalized.

Under each theme key findings are highlighted focusing on commonalities in strengths and challenges rather than particularities of findings relating to different country contexts. Findings are related to the broader perspective, the Danish Civil Society Strategy (CSS), the Danida evaluation as well as other reports if appropriate and recommendations are given for concrete steps that can be taken to improve program quality in several or all country programs.

The overall conclusion of this meta-evaluation is that CARE is a highly respected organisation in the five countries and that good results have been achieved in relation to empowerment of poor and marginalised communities. The meta-evaluation is focusing on both the strength and weaknesses of the five countries programmes although emphasis has put on challenges across the five countries in order to be able to suggest concrete improvements of program quality and impact.

**The objectives**

The main objectives of the analysis are as follows:

* Identify common strengths and challenges as lessons learned across country-program evaluations at local, national and international level. Especially looking at how and whether these three different levels are properly linked.
* Relate findings to the general recommendations in the 2009 thematic evaluation of support by Danish NGOs to civil society in Ghana and Ethiopia (hereafter the Danida evaluation) and new tendencies within civil society work at a broader level (Increased direct funding streams between bilateral donors and southern NGOs and common pool funding mechanisms for advocacy and civil society strengthening).
* On this basis formulate concrete recommendations of how to improve program quality and impact.

# 2.0 The political and strategic framework

The largest contributor to development activities of the Danish NGOs is the Danish Government. CARE is no exception. Sixty per cent of the DKK 100 million annual income of CARE Denmark comes from Danida[[1]](#footnote-1). Therefore CARE has to some extent to work within the political and strategic framework of the Danish Civil society strategic (CSS). In general CARE has to continuously adapt to new trends at international level including a changed architecture of the international aid system linked to the Paris/Accra agenda, but also its membership of a large international NGO corporate structure[[2]](#footnote-2). Particularly the alignment and harmonization elements of the Paris/Accra agenda have a direct bearing on International NGOs modes of operations; more donor funds are channelled directly to Southern NGOs through the Danish Embassies e.g. the Local Grant Authorities and donors including Danida are setting up joint funding mechanisms e.g. basket funds or foundations in the South to support capacity building and programmes of Southern NGOs directly.

The Danish Civil Society Strategy (CSS) was drawn up as part of an analytical and consultative process in preparation of Denmark’s strategy for development assistance, ‘Partnership 2000’ (1999-2000). The CSS is embedded in ‘Partnership 2000’, which expresses the overriding objective of Danish development policy as ‘lasting improvement in living conditions for the poorest sections of the world’s population by reducing poverty through among others promotion of democratisation and popular participation in the development process.

An updated CSS was published at the end of 2008. Contents wise the document has many similarities to its predecessor from 2000. But major differences are found in the changed architecture of the international aid system; adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on halving extreme poverty by 2015; the Paris Declaration (2005) and the continuous work to ensure aid effectiveness; attention to fragile states and situations. Moreover, the emphasis on poverty reduction is less underlined, and establishment and existence of a strong and independent civil society is regarded as an achievement in its own right. The methods are among others partnerships, capacity building, empowerment and advocacy.

## 2.1 CARE’s niche

More competition for funds has forced International NGOs (INGO) to rebrand and specialize. The Danish CSS likewise calls for Danish NGOs to specialise and develop their niche in the form of both geographical locations and themes. CARE has a niche both in Denmark and in the countries of operations with specific focus and specialisation in natural resource management as well as CARE DK only operates in a limited number of countries (which are in the group of countries, where Denmark also has bilateral assistance programmes).

The evaluation reports all point to CARE as widely acknowledged as an expert in the NRM sector. CARE possesses a wealth of experience in rural development and natural resource management and is particularly well-known for the effectiveness of its sustainable livelihood interventions at the community level. CARE clearly brings this experience to bear in the design and implementation of livelihoods and natural resource management interventions in the five countries. All the five programs under evaluation have combined service delivery (e.g. agricultural extension services) with strengthening of civil society on national or local levels (e.g. user groups). In Vietnam, CARE has run one of the first civil society programmes having natural resources as a theme and the most marginalised and rural poor (e.g. ethnic minorities, women) as its focused target group. In Uganda, CARE has specific expertise in natural resource management in relation to poor and marginalized park adjacent communities. In Ghana, the Government values CARE’s expertise in the sector and has asked CARE to provide oversight on the implementation phase of the Voluntary Partnership Agreement input and to a review of national forestry and wildlife policies. In Niger, CARE is acknowledged for outstanding knowledge on pastoralist and natural resources.

CARE has gone through a transformation in the last 5-7 years. The organization has within this period moved from direct livelihoods support towards a balance with livelihoods and right based development approach (RBA). This has included a shift in approach from needs based to RBA to development and a shift in the role of CARE being an implementer of development interventions, to CARE working in partnership with national civil society organizations. The five evaluation reports point to the challenges as well as strengths and weaknesses that have emerged in this process. In this report we will focus on the core themes of the reports such as the strengths and weaknesses associated with combining service delivery with RBA as well as issues related to empowerment through user groups, holding duty bearers accountable, partnerships/capacity building, gender equality and M&E.

# 3.0 Integrated programs (combining service delivery with RBA)

*The evaluation reports point to difficulties with combining service provision in a strategic way with RBA and to the issue of CARE filling gaps in the service delivery supposed to be carried out by Governments. Experience from elsewhere point to service delivery as a valuable entry point for e.g. advocacy initiatives- especially in country contexts with limited space for civil society actors to operate*. *The evaluation reports, however, point to the need to address issues of sustainability and replicability of CARE’s service delivery interventions.*

## 3.1 Key findings

CARE aims for poverty reduction in the targeted communities through diversification of production and better food production in Ghana. Poverty is reduced through direct service delivery and not through citizens’ advocacy for improved service delivery by local government. In Niger, CARE distributed seeds and cattle directly to the beneficiaries. CARE takes the shorter route with direct service delivery instead of the longer route that would instead hold duty bearers accountable for service delivery.

The five evaluation reports point to service delivery as largely filling gaps, and there are suggestions that it is not sustainable and difficult to combine service delivery with RBA. In Uganda it was observed that the combination of RBA and service provision has been a major challenge in the sense that in most instances activities tended to be either RBA or service delivery. The same picture is true for Niger where service delivery and e.g. political dialogues appear as two separate programmes. Furthermore, the provision of services by the CARE programs has at least in some instances shifted the focus of CSOs and communities from approaching resource trapped, and probably difficult local governments, to approaching what appear to be much easier resources from CARE, hereby in reality shifting the focus away from holding duty bearers accountable. In Ghana the evaluation emphasized that CARE has filled a large gap in Government provision of agricultural extension in Northern Ghana. In Vietnam the Farmer Field School methodology is yet to be adopted and replicated by local authorities. There are however positive indications of the contrary. In Vietnam, local governments appreciate some of the approaches introduced by CARE (e.g. participatory NRM planning processes) and intended at the time of the Vietnam evaluation to replicate the approach in more communes. The Vietnam example shows that more strategic service delivery can be a way of demonstrating to authorities that there can be advantages to conducting service delivery in a transparent and inclusive way.

## 3.2 Other perspectives

The Danish CSS does include support for activities carried out with the aim of delivering specific services within or for promoting income-generating activities if it is in the context of capacity development and advocacy. Through such activities, the aim is to create the basis for organizational and capacity development, advocacy as well as enabling the target group to acquire increased political capacity and ability to influence the underlying causes of poverty, inequality and marginalization. It is emphasized that duplication of work and establishment of parallel structures with Governments should be avoided. The activities should test new, innovative methods or prepare the ground for popular mobilization. The services should be targeted at poor and marginalised groups who for political, ethnic or social reasons are excluded from public services and it should be demonstrated that such interventions can be replicated by others thereby reaching a larger part of the marginalized group.

The combination of service delivery on the one hand, and advocacy on the other hand often tend to result in service delivery crowding out capacity building and advocacy activities[[3]](#footnote-3). The Danida evaluation however, concluded that the Danish NGOs in the sample, including CARE, had a balanced approach and the Danish NGOs do at least try to ensure that advocacy is given attention. The Danida evaluation also highlighted that in a country environment such as Ethiopia there is limited space to focus on advocacy, unless there is a ‘wrapping’ of service delivery but also that it is difficult to engage partners in advocacy activities in such a context. This corresponds to the findings of the CARE evaluation in Vietnam where the Government does not give independent civil society actors much space and service delivery may therefore be the most effective and possibly only channel of engagement for CSOs. In contexts like Ethiopia and Vietnam, service delivery can help build a relationship of trust between government departments and civil society actors and open up the space for civil society to operate. Service delivery may also be the best entry point to engaging with very resource strapped communities such as the pastoralists in Niger. The challenge is to ensure that service delivery interventions by NGOs are designed and implemented as temporary rather than permanent solutions.

The Danida evaluation also highlighted that using service delivery as an entry point may be a valid approach, since there is a certain fatigue around ‘advocacy and participation’, unless such engagement goes hand in hand with improved service delivery. Other research papers have also concluded that CSOs who have a track record in service delivery are seen as more legitimate advocates than those who specialise in advocacy, and that “in some policy processes, involvement in service delivery was a pre-requisite for participation in policy formation”, meaning that “a move away from service delivery could remove a point of entry for NGOs at local level” (Kruse 2003: iv). This is echoed by Rebelo et al (2002: 4) who argue that, in the Mozambican context, “many of the so-called ‘advocacy’ organisations have strong service delivery components, and would probably have less impact without them”[[4]](#footnote-4).

## 3.3. Recommendation

*The strategic use of service delivery engagement should be strengthened. Service delivery might continue to be part of the programmes but such interventions must be explicitly integrated into a strategy of promoting rights and empowerment.*

# 4.0 The right holders

*CARE is among others utilizing user groups as a way of engaging and empowering communities. User groups do serve the purpose of engaging communities around a specific issue and they do contribute to empowering communities, there are however strong indications that these groups are not sustainable and fall apart as soon as the project runs out. Civic education has had positive outcomes but outcomes are on a limited scale.*

## 4.1 Key findings

User groups may serve a purpose of engaging a community around a specific issue during the implementation of a project but once the work has been completed, there is little focus on the user or watch dog groups, which gradually cease to exist as a foundation for more transformational participation with empowerment processes at the centre. This has been the case with the conservation user groups in Nepal for example. The groups do not have defined rules and regulations, regular meetings and future plans. These groups are not deemed to be viable in the long-run. They can for example not be expected to undertake for example post project watershed management activities as envisaged. In Niger, experience also point to a lack of viability for user groups established. In Uganda the main challenge for the REPA programme is the sustainability of the Community Based Monitors and only few examples of successfully scaling up exist.

There are positive outcomes in terms of better awareness of rights and empowerment. In Ghana, participants in user groups have learned about NRM rights and gained organisational capacity and competence in advocacy and sensitization. The Community Based Extension (CBE) approach, which has emphasised training of small farmer groups, has led to a strengthening of community based groups and peer-to-peer information sharing. In Nepal, adoption of RBA and advocacy has not only led to increased awareness among the people about rights and responsibilities but also to initiation of affirmative action in favour of marginalised groups. In Vietnam, the LARC clubs have made important contributions in terms of building social and human capital amongst poor women, in Niger civic education has given pastoralists more positive self images and more confidence in negotiations with other groups and with the authorities, and in Uganda, the Batwa communities have been empowered through village based trainings. It is unfortunately not possible to assess from the evaluation reports whether the human and social capital that has been built is likely to be sustained.

## 4.2 Other perspectives

It is stressed in the Danish CSS that poverty reduction is the cornerstone of Danish development assistance policy, and support to civil society and concrete projects implemented by civil society organisations must make an active contribution to poverty reduction and improve the rights of poor and marginalised men and women, and their access to and control of social, economic and political resources.

According to the Danish CSS, promotion of popular participation is achieved by actively involving women and men in decision-making processes and developing the capacity and possibility of poor communities to participate in social processes. CARE interprets this concept of participation in social processes both as instrumental and transformational. There is evidence to substantiate that CARE programmes through e.g. user groups have contributed to transforming the way that certain groups think of their place in society, and some evidence in Ghana that this had led to these groups starting to demand accountability from more powerful groups such as contractors. The user groups are instrumental in achieving engagement and participation as long as they exist. They are however not viable in themselves as they are abolished as soon the projects are over. An issue that adds to the limited prospect of sustainability is the small scale of civil society projects. The major challenge highlighted by the evaluations concerns that the lasting capacity in communities and civil society at large is still limited.

A main conclusion drawn in the Danida evaluation was that the seeds that have been sown in terms of increased awareness in local communities are not likely to grow and extend to the rest of the society because of the limited geographical coverage of project activities. It is doubtful as emphasised in the Uganda evaluation that the approach of working with fairly small rural community based organisations as individual partners will help building a social movement/force that can trigger sustainable social change at any scale.

It does not necessarily mean that CARE has to fundamentally rethink its strategies. Change processes are complex human and social processes involving complex power relationships. Within such a perspective the limited success in up scaling activities are hardly surprising, as change processes only appear based on a deep long-term engagement. But CARE needs to reflect on how to trigger change at a larger scale and needs to have explicit and concrete strategies for how to do so especially when working with the very marginalised communities such as the Batwa in Uganda or the pastoralist groups in Niger. The Batwa for example probably has few (if any) alliances nationally and even in the region. They are considered marginal by all, and the fact that they by themselves are marginalised in these respects reinforces the isolation and impedes scaling-up. The achievements are difficult to transform to a general development agenda but remains as Batwa agenda. The issue of how various marginalised groups can come together needs to be analysed thoroughly to understand these change processes.

CARE also needs to reflect on the impediments to change. Lack of financial resources at local administrative levels is a problem highlighted in all the CARE evaluations. The Danida evaluation also emphases the increased level of participation by local communities is not sustainable if there continues to be too few resources for services delivery on local level. Local communities will not continue to be engaged in drawing up local development etc. if they do not see their efforts being translated into reduced poverty at some point.

## 4.3 Recommendation

*More attention has to be paid to drivers and impediments of change. More attention should also be made in understanding the impact and sustainability of interventions. It would be useful for future programming to understand e.g. whether user groups are more sustainable if they are built on existing structures and if community groups continue to take initiatives after the finalisation of the projects.*

# 5.0 Holding duty bearers accountable

*Success has been registered in engaging local authorities in all programme countries. It has proved more difficult to engage policy makers and implementers at higher levels and CARE has experienced difficulties in moving from local to national level and from awareness-raising to actually influencing policy making and implementation, difficulties in instituting more mass scale action and the lack of critical partners that are able to and interested in tackling more sensitive issues at the level where power is actually exercised. The Ghana programme is the exception in the sense that strong national partners have influenced the national agenda in relation to national resource management.*

## 5.1 Key findings

In Ghana the programme has provided support to developing advocacy and networking at multiple levels, e.g., with partner CSOs, with decentralised departments and agencies, and with communities. The programme has made local people more assertive and able to challenge abuse and mismanagement of natural resources and a CARE partner such a Forest Watch Ghana has become an influential voice for civil society in the sector. Other country programmes have been less successful in this regard. Some countries contexts are clearly much more challenging than others. In Vietnam translating the right based approaches into appropriate activity has been more of a challenge and especially engaging with government has proved challenging. The power and impact of CSOs remain generally limited to local or commune levels and that whilst awareness and participation may have increased the demanding of rights and services and holding duty-bearers accountable has not increased significantly and there is a lack of linkages to higher levels. The vigorous interaction at the village level in Vietnam is of little benefit, because the resource allocation and investment priorities are not decided there but at a level where local communities have little influence. Therefore the objective of improving participation of poor people in decisions that affect their lives remains largely unfulfilled. In Niger decisions are taken on the basis of brute economic force as opposed to formal rules and regulations and the civil society is too weak to challenge what the evaluation report describes as corruption and clientism. In Uganda only few examples exist of local partners taking on a proactive role in advocacy so although achievements have been made it is doubtful if the partners have developed capacity for undertaking advocacy themselves.

CARE has had some success with making local authorities more responsive to demands from civil society e.g. changing the attitudes of lower level Forest Service Division (FSD) staff in Ghana. The FSD has not succeeded in arresting the degradation of the country’s forest resources because of vested interest at the top level of the division. There is according to the Evaluation report a need for bringing the issues to the next level and e.g. try to engage top level management in for example FSD. In Vietnam where natural resource planning still operates in a very socialist, top-down manner it is also recommended to engage those who have real control over the resources. In Niger it is also recommended that the future advocacy strategy should be more focused, concentrate on the most pertinent issues and engage directly with decision makers.

## 5.2 Other perspectives

The evaluations raise several challenges related to holding duty bearers accountable. Many of the same issues are raised in the Danida evaluation. It has found that achievements have primarily been on the level of individual rights (changes in practice and behaviour) at local level, and policy advocacy has been relatively limited.

It was also concluded in the Danida Evaluation that there is a tendency for Danish NGOs to have partners that primarily engage with the state on national level in spaces where they are invited to by the government (what is sometimes referred to as tri-partite agreements between Governments, donors and CSOs). It was recommended that the civil society try to create their own space and develop their agendas outside the control of the government and to engage in a dialogue with other actors. CARE has done that in Ghana. In Ghana CARE partners have with success started to demand better accountability from private sector actors. They have influenced the capability of the communities to negotiate for better social responsibility agreements with timber contractors, and that the timber operators now also seem to be making a more sincere effort to honour these agreements.

CARE should build on these experiences and start tackling mining issues in for example Ghana or oil extraction in Niger. International extractive industries are often more receptive to pressure from civil society (than national governments) especially if it is linked up to international treaties, initiatives and networks. CARE could add a lot of value as a strong international alliance.

The CARE programmes will need to develop strategies with its partners in redrawing power relations in substantive and enduring ways if real shifts in access to services, decision making and influence in decisions for rural and natural resource dependent people are to be actualised. In general the Evaluation reports point to weak analysis and understanding of power.

In the Danida evaluation it was found that some of the larger Danish NGOs including CARE (primarily through partners) have been successful in influencing a number of policies especially in relation to sector legislation and policies. The Evaluation however highlighted that the Danish NGOs and their partners have not significantly challenged the power relations between citizens and state institution. The civil society has been invited to have a voice in national planning processes. Danish NGOs have supported (built capacity) for partners to do this. The Evaluation also highlighted that civil society so far has obtained little in terms of influencing the broader power relations from such engagement. It is recommended that Danish NGOs undertake state/civil society assessments (political/economy/social relations assessments) in relation to their main engagements in the future. The aim is to enhance the relevance through a better understanding of the potential impact and replication potential of interventions and for organisations to assess options (or lack of options) of most relevant approaches to reach objectives.

CARE could get inspiration from countries such as Tanzania where there is an emerging shift in the approaches among CSOs from project based support, to strategies and key CSO organizations are opting out of many of the events of the tripartite development agenda. Some of the CSOs in Tanzania have started using innovative and promising measures of directly engaging with the authorities and the public through e.g. the media in deliberate attempts to support the growth of social movements. This is an approach that resonates with the increasingly influential complexity approach[[5]](#footnote-5).

## 5.3 Recommendation

*It is time to stop running away from tackling the more sensitive issues. Power needs to be analysed in terms of learning, planning processes and accountability and CARE needs to carefully build relations with partners that have the willingness and potential to tackle some of the more sensitive and difficult issues. The choice of partners is often the make or break point of a successful advocacy programme.*

# 6.0 Partnerships/Capacity building

*CARE’s force is a strong presence at local level among rural communities. The reverse side of the coin is that CARE project staff has played a very pro-active role in capacity building and to some extent also in project implementation. Partners have to some degree been seen as contractors, and capacity building has been rather conventional with emphasis on “expert” led training and transfer of knowledge.*

## 6.1 Key findings

CARE has been in the process of clarifying its partnership strategy in the period under evaluation. This is a difficult issue, and is also one that is likely to need continuous monitoring and adjustment, considering that the pool of potential and actual CSO partners in the South are also evolving rapidly in capacities and needs. CARE appears to be conscious of the inherent difficulties involved in creating an equal relationship between a resourceful INGO and its Southern partners. The five evaluations however all point to great challenges in this regard. In Nepal the implementing organizations are seen and treated more as contractors than partners per se. There is e.g. little evidence of partners participating in planning activities. Also in Vietnam the CASI programme has been designed with little input from partners and there arechallenges in partner selection and partner influence in projects. By and large the major direction of the project is not challenged by partners. Partner input focuses on “how-to” and what resources are needed for implementation. The ownership over the project is mostly from CARE’s side.

Many partners in Ghana feel there is still room to work on ensuring equity and fair distribution of benefits and resources. Some partners were not happy with what they perceived as a lack of transparency and balance in CAREs dealings with them. According to them, they are not always seen as partners; some stakeholders referred to the MoU with CARE as more of a ‘consulting contract’ than a partnership agreement. The problem appears to be most strained when partnering with very ‘young’ less confident and accomplished groups than with mature organisations and coalitions. There were examples of good partnership in Ghana where the two organisations worked as equal partners.

The same issues are raised in the Uganda evaluation where the relationships between REPA and Ugandan civil society organisations tend to be more of a contractual relationship than a full partnership. A number of factors contribute to this situation, including; short term contracts, a strong emphasis on output rather than shared values and strategies, a very hands on involvement of CARE capacity building groups, limiting the scope for independent organisational growth. In Niger, CARE has also opted to work with more professional NGOs as opposed to more community based CSOs in a more contractual relation.

In Nepal there was a lack of tangible plans for OD support to the individual organisation and in general the capacity development component suffered from inadequate definition and focus, thereby missing the overall coherence in the project design. In Ghana there has been limited technical support so far to CSOs for developing a range of organisational survival strategies for the short, medium and long term. There is also a need for a clearer definition of expected outcomes at different levels for CSOs, networks and communities.

In Vietnam engaging with government is proving challenging for many and this is a key area of need in terms of CARE inputs and capacity building. The Vietnam Evaluation recommends that CARE uses more local level capacity building approaches that can engage local authorities, CBOs and MOs. In Uganda very little capacity and tradition exist on working with whole organizations in a process oriented manner, including working with identity, relationships and strategic processes.

In most programmes there has been a mixture of CARE roles as a funding and a capacity building organisation. Depending on the nature of the capacity building such a mixture could have negative impact as it could blur boundaries and increase dependency. The programmes have had a rather conventional approach to capacity building with emphasis on “expert” led training and transfer of knowledge. The point of departure for organisational development (OD) support should be an organisational capacity assessment in order to identify any capacity constraints or gaps. It is not sufficient to assess training needs as shortcomings may just as well relate to strategies, structures or systems – or to the general level of resources available.

## 6.2 Other perspectives

Forming partnerships between Northern and Southern organisations is a key operational principle of the support provided through civil society in the CSS. The specific overarching objective of the Danish civil society strategy is “to contribute to the development of a strong, independent and diversified civil society in developing countries”. Capacity building constitutes a core operational principle in the CSS. Capacity building is closely linked to increased capability to carry out lobby- and advocacy work and participate in networks.

CARE is perceived to have a stronger emphasis on organizational strengthening of partners compared to other donors in for example Ghana. CSO partners in Ghana highlighted they do not receive any support for organizational development from other sources. Most donors offer little or no support for capacity building, the provision of equipment or other organizational strengthening. The Danida Evaluation supports the view that there is a special Danish approach to partnerships and capacity building that is more long-term and mutually respectful and that other INGO (non-Danish organisations) fund specific projects with shorter time frames and are less willing or able to cover core costs of partners.

There will always be structural imbalances between a well resourced INGO such as CARE and local mainly under-resourced NGOs. However more should be done to mitigate this by acknowledging the importance of local NGOs as resources of unique importance which cannot be substituted by INGO’s. Otherwise CARE will miss the opportunity of benefiting from the capacity, energy and relationships that partner organisations are in possession of. There is a need to engage in long-term partnership in particular with national CSOs that would include support for the strengthening of vertical and horizontal linkages for example between strong national think tanks or NGOs and rural CBOs or between various civil society actors in sector networks.

## 6.3 Recommendation

*There is currently too strong an emphasis on concrete output at a community level rather than seeing civil society and organisational growth as the objective. CARE should work towards a more explicit focus on civil society strengthening and work with multiple layers of civil society spanning the whole civil society spectrum with a strong emphasis on supporting horizontal and vertical civil society linkages with special focus on sustainable institutional infrastructures for social action.*

# 7.0 Targeting the poor and marginalised

*CARE is poverty orientated in its programmes. The target groups are in general poor and marginalised groups. Major results have been achieved in relation to protection and empowerment of marginalised ethnic groups and women. There is, however, indications that it is difficult to engage with the poorest of the poor and with the most marginalised women.*

## 7.1 Key findings

In Nepal, women and particularly vulnerable groups, notably the dalit, are given priority as key beneficiaries through affirmative action. This approach has produced significant results in terms of increased participation of these groups although their participation in decision-making processes is still low. Upper caste and relatively well-off men and women appear to have gained the most in terms of participation in decision-making processes. In Vietnam both quantitative and qualitative results are recorded for poor women in rural areas. They participate in village meetings in greater numbers and they also have increased knowledge and confidence and voice their concerns. The target group of CARE’s interventions in Ghana are in general the poorest and most marginalised farmers and women at least in one programme area have gained long-term access to good quality lands.

CARE is present in remote areas and targets poor and marginalized groups (e.g. the Batwa group in Uganda, pastoralist groups in Niger, Dalits in Nepal) and the mere presence of a strong INGO like CARE protects the local communities and contributed to the continued existence of such groups. The evaluation reports confirm that CARE has in many instances chose local partners that are legitimate representatives of the poor and marginalised*.*

Gender issues are, however, not systematically mainstreamed (CBLA agreements are for example gender blind) and gender analysis should be undertaken more systematically (e.g. specific barriers identified or strategies developed to address the barriers affecting women who want to plant trees in Ghana).

## 7.2 Other perspectives

The Danida evaluation confirms that CARE makes an outstanding effort to target the very marginalised and poor groups. The Danida evaluation also highlighted that CARE along with other Danish NGOs do not always target the poorest of the poor (agricultural programmes target the people that already have land, programmes that work on reducing early marriage target children that are in school as opposed to children that are not even going to school). It also highlighted the difficulty in getting from participation of excluded groups in development processes to them actually having a say in these processes.

## 7.3 Recommendation

*The capacity of excluded groups should be further developed to enable them to effectively participate in decision-making process. More systematic analysis and programme adjustments need to be made to move from e.g. participation of women in meetings to identification of gender roles and strategies for gender mainstreaming. This could also take the form of special targeting and empowerment of men or women, in case of either sex experiencing discrimination and less access to influence, rights and resources.*

*Sex disaggregated data need to be integrated in the monitoring system that provides the qualitative and quantitative data on: a) the participation and contribution of men and women in the realisation of objectives and b) the effect of the programme on gender relations and disparities. Similarly, efforts need to be made to collect multivariable data, such as by sex and caste/ethnicity not only for user group members but also for leadership positions in these groups (e.g. in Nepal and Niger).*

# 8.0Monitoring & Evaluation

*Ideally an M&E learning structure should facilitate deeper learning, analysis and linkages between partners and projects than is currently the case, both in terms of horizontal and vertical connections with emphasis on how M&E can be of more direct benefit to e.g. partners.*

## 8.1 Key findings

All the evaluated country programmes are struggling with M&E and need improvements in relation to how M&E can be used for reflection and learning. The challenges range from how systems are designed to the way the M&E is implemented. The M&E system in Ghana is for example weak in terms of benchmarks/indicators and processes for tracking behaviours, and for assessing outcomes by community, by partner and by intervention. In Vietnam, the systems are likewise not designed to establish direct outcomes of RBA activities (e.g. identifying attitude and behaviour indicators).

The implementation is weak e.g. in Nepal where progress reports do not always reflect the linkages to the work plans and in Ghana there are gaps in the data and in the analysis. In Vietnam the partners were all grappling with M&E learning and in Niger the use of the information collected is very limited. It is not shared, discussed or used for adjustment of the programme.

The consequence is that CARE is lacking a body of evidence to support advocacy approaches (e.g., evidence about effectiveness). The absence of appropriate M&E and limited use of other forms of documentation has led to gaps in evidence formation and programme innovations that would fully support anecdotal claims and observations about positive developments.

M &E is not adequately developed and integrated into the programmes. In Uganda the Evaluation recommends a fundamental shift from an output to an outcome focus and from blueprint planning oriented approach to strategic programme leadership. A strategic leadership shall be based on a continuous assessment of the context within which partners operate, and understanding potentials and challenges in the promotion of the programme goals. Furthermore there is need for a mechanism whereby the programme on a recurrent basis can be adjusted. In Ghana it is suggested that weaknesses have appeared because the current M&E systems in the programme were not formulated in a participatory manner from field level upwards. In consequence, they do not deliver information that is useful at all levels including the level where data is collected.

## 8.2 Other perspectives

The Danida evaluation concluded that the Danish NGOs and their partners have put considerable efforts into improving their M&E systems the last years. Programme and project designs of partners have improved, even if they are in some cases still of relatively poor quality. Documenting results of capacity building was highlighted as a weak area. Efforts are documented, but the changes achieved and how they facilitate results at various levels is generally less easy to follow.

## 8.3 Recommendation

*CARE should collect more systematic documentation on how the organisation contributes to organisational growth of partners and how the contribution of CARE is reflected in e.g. changed power relations in the society at large. There is more and more focus on the added value of INGOs and CARE would benefit from having a stronger evidence of how it specifically contributes to building a strong and independent civil society in countries of operation.*

# 9.0 The future role of CARE in the South

CARE should be careful not to substitute the role of weak local organisations. CARE should work with national organisations that can undertake, or can be supported to undertake capacity building interventions. Capacity building and to some extent advocacy initiatives are in the main still led by CARE project staff, but there is evidence to indicate that partnerships are strengthening the capacity of national CSOs and the CSOs are undoubtedly becoming more familiar with best-practice development approaches. It is also important to use the capable National NGOs as role models of accountability and integrity for partners at the grass root level (CBOs, associations, interest groups) and should bring partners to the forefront of its programme with greater responsibility in planning, and implementation of projects at all levels.

This naturally infers a change of role for CARE towards more coordination, technical backstopping and M&E. In such a scenario the role of CARE should be strategic, facilitative and monitoring/controlling. Part of a facilitator role for CARE could be to be a broker of contact and resources for such organisations to engage with experienced and innovative capacity building organisations in the country or elsewhere.

CARE could position itself more pro-actively to implement governance/climate programs for Danish Embassies (like IBIS does with the Good Governance and Human Rights Programme in Ghana) and other donors. Specific components on civil society are currently being developed as part of environment sector programmes with the objectives of improved governance and accountability of relevant authorities in relation to the management of environment, land and climate change initiatives. National foundations that are currently being established in many countries to implement governance programmes do not have the capacity to administer this large inflow of funding and very limited technical capacity for understanding issues such as the interlinked challenges of forest loss and global warning and issues related to forest governance. CARE can potentially play a very important role either directly as a grant making mechanism or directly as providing capacity building to national foundations.

1. The rest of the funding comes from the EU, collections from the Danish public, companies and foundations. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The relationship between CARE DK and CARE International, and the role played by the large NGO corporate structure in the international aid system will not be discussed in this paper. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Reference will follow [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Evaluation of Citizens Voice and Accountability (ODI August 2007) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The strength of approaching the target areas as Complex Adaptive Systems is that it focuses on the actors and the relationships between them. It looks at what actually is there, rather than what should be there. It is also a much more flexible approach that relies on iterative planning and monitoring rather than prescriptive logframes. See Henrick (2009) for an analysis of Complex Adaptive Systems. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)