

MEMO

20. February 2017

To:
HMC, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Denmark
From:
Danish Red Cross



Danish Red Cross input to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' draft Information Note regarding Strategic Partnerships, February 2017

The Danish Red Cross (DRC) welcomes the publication of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' (MoFA) draft Information Note on Strategic Partnerships and the open consultation process to finalize this. DRC would like to commend MoFA on the many positive aspects included in the Information Note. Specifically, DRC commends the commitment to support the localization agenda under the Lot CIV, through emphasis on capacity building and the imperative for partners in the global South to take responsibility in managing and implementing programs. DRC encourages a continued holistic, integrated programming approach, which looks across relevant stakeholders and supports a contextually differentiated approach. DRC appreciates the geographic flexibility under the Lot CIV, and the degree of permissible financial allocation for countries falling outside lot-specific priorities. Furthermore, the DRC welcomes the specification of 'context relevant SDGs' under the Lot HUM. Finally, DRC appreciates the affirmation that Strategic Partnerships will be built on a fundamental respect for the independent nature, and different roles and mandates of CSOs.

However, DRC, Save the Children Denmark and Danish Refugee Council share the observation that there is still much potential to capitalise on the opportunity to *rethink* the approach to civil society support to address current gaps in working across the development-humanitarian nexus. Despite separate budget lines, there is still much opportunity for strengthening the linkages across the substance of the lot objectives and activities. Finally, we collectively would encourage more clarity with respect to the assessment under Lot CIV and Lot HUM of organizations' capacity and abilities to work in fragile countries characterized by highly politicized conflicts and/or challenged humanitarian space. CHS should be as relevant for Lot CIV as it is for Lot HUM, considering the country categories 1 and 4.

To strengthen the draft Information Note, DRC would like to take the opportunity to present for considered inclusion the following four core issues:

- 1. Strengthened operationalization of the humanitarian-development nexus**
- 2. The assessment of operational capacities to work in highly politicized armed conflict areas**
- 3. Mobilization and engagement of the Danish public**
- 4. Flexibility in humanitarian funding – as formulated by Globalt Fokus.**

1. Strengthen the operationalization of the humanitarian-development nexus

The new Strategic Partnership modality offers a historic opportunity to better support interventions across the humanitarian-development nexus, where this is appropriate and of added value, and does not jeopardize the respective core objectives of humanitarian and development interventions. By making support across this nexus *intentional*, MoFA and CSOs can break new ground as responsive actors, addressing well-known shortcomings in linking relief, recovery and development. This can be strengthened in the Information Note through:

- **An extended description of the CIV lot**

With their typically longer term programmatic approach, on the ground presence, and established partnerships, organizations working under Lot CIV contribute fundamentally to the work with preparedness, building resilience and self-reliance, conflict prevention and institutional reform. These experiences enable them to provide rapid and timely response when disasters strike, and in most cases, significantly reduce the impact of disasters. DRC suggests adding the following in Section 2.1.1 (additions underlined):

- "Efforts that enable partners in conflict and natural disaster affected communities, including communities hosting displaced people, to respond to both immediate and long-term consequences of crises".
- "Efforts that enable partners in crisis affected communities to strengthen resilience and self-reliance of vulnerable people and to build capacity within early warning, risk reduction, preparedness, climate change adaptation¹ resilience and conflict prevention in their communities";
- "Efforts to ensure coherence with humanitarian work aimed at reducing vulnerabilities of communities and people affected by crisis in a sustainable manner by building self-reliance, resilience, preparedness and through supporting durable solutions for displaced people;

- **Amendments to the application and assessment forms**

Currently, it is not clear where the work across the nexus should be included, and how organizations' abilities, experiences and plans to work through this approach will be assessed. DRC therefore suggests the following:

- Under 2. *Strategic Relevance* (p.6) in the application form: include a description on how the proposed partnership agreement will support work and coordination across the nexus.
- Under 3. *Strategic Approach* (p. 7+8): ask for common pitches if an organization is applying under both Lots CIV and HUM. These pitches should present the overall approach, common features for the different Lots, and highlight specific priorities for the respective Lots. This would strengthen the presentation of the overall strategic approach and lighten the administrative work for both MoFA and CSOs and avoid repetition.
- Under *Step 2, Assessment criteria*: Include under the different themes how the proposed partnership agreement will support work and coordination across the nexus.

- **Flexibility in the use of funds**

The Information Note highlights valuable flexibility in the use of humanitarian vs. development funds in protracted crisis situations. DRC suggests similar flexibility (15%) under Lot CIV to enhance responsiveness to changing needs,² and support fuller potential to operate across the nexus as and when appropriate. Recent examples of this adaptability include the 2015 Nepal earthquake response, and the West Africa Ebola outbreak³.

¹ In accordance with Danish support to the Paris Agreement, 2016.

² For example natural disasters, election violence, sudden influxes of refugees etc.

³ In Nepal activities were re-oriented to assist in all phases of relief and recovery activities and in the West Africa Ebola outbreak activities were rapidly re-oriented towards handling a new risk (and personal danger).

DRC suggests that 10% of total partnership funds remain flexible to enable responsive and adaptive interventions, and open for gradual release of funding as forecast show increasing likelihood of disaster, conflict and other crises limiting human and financial costs and consequences.⁴

2. The assessment of operational capacities to work in highly politicized armed conflict areas

The majority of countries in Lot CIV priority categories are characterized by national or local armed conflicts that are highly politicized. Securing results, access, and security for beneficiaries and organizations requires a different approach than that adopted in category 2 'stable poor countries'. A failure to successfully adapt approaches in accordance with the humanitarian principles, will, in a worst case scenario, contribute to putting lives at risk, and in the best case scenario make it impossible to achieve results.

Therefore, DRC suggests more clarity on how organizations' abilities to work in fragile countries with highly politicized conflicts and/or challenged humanitarian space will be assessed under Lots HUM and CIV, in order to ensure ongoing secure access, and commitment to the principle of Do No Harm. This is of uttermost importance due to the complex and dynamic nature of these settings, and the possibility of rapid deterioration to escalated conflict and/or a humanitarian emergency. DRC thus suggests:

- That organizations working under Lot CIV in fragile countries and regions demonstrate a proven track record in operating in these complex settings, and are verified, certified, or in the process of either, against the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS).
- Inclusion of this in the assessment criteria as a requirement for Lot CIV.
- Due to the very recent introduction of CHS and the fact that it in its initial roll-out primarily relies on declarations of intentions through policy and guideline framework, rather than proven track record on operationalization of humanitarian principles, DRC proposes criteria and assessments methods similar to those in ECHOs Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) are applied in assessments under the HUM Lot.⁵

3. Mobilization and engagement of the Danish public

Traditionally engagement with the Danish public is only integrated in longer-term development work. However, there are many benefits in engaging the public in the dynamics, complexities and longer term effects of conflicts, disasters and protracted crisis. Engagement here can be a door-opener to lesser covered development work. This is not least relevant with regard to current refugee and migration movements. DRC therefore suggests:

- That Lot HUM is subject to the same rules for expenditure on information and engagement activities in Denmark as Lot CIV and Lot LAB. For all three lots we further suggest that Strategic Partners be allowed to spend up to 2% of their budgets on these activities.
- Accordingly scoring criteria in Annex 4 are adjusted so that "Popular engagement in Denmark" is awarded 5 points under Lot HUM. Reducing the weighting of "Theory of change for the proposed engagement" under Lot HUM would maintain a scoring scale to 100, and would place the same weight on "Theory of Change" as Lots CIV and LAB.

Yours sincerely,

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⁴ In accordance with the Pledge made by the Danish Government and Danish Red Cross at the 32nd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in December 2015 "Resilience Building in a Changing Landscape".

⁵ See section 7 in the detailed ECHO FPA questionnaire.