

Danmission Partnership Policy

This policy sets the overall frame for how Danmission (DM) engages with partners. It includes our theological foundation for the partnership approach, DMs added value in the partnerships, types of partners, categories of partners and formalities regarding partnership agreements, due diligence, as well as processes in relation to new partnerships and partnership exits. The policy covers all Danmission's programme work, regardless of geography, type of organisation and funding modality. The policy can be supplemented by related strategic documents as required as long as these are in accordance with this policy.

Partnership is Danmission's mode of operation

DM carries out its programme work with and through local partners. This is DM's primary mode of operation. It is based on our understanding of being sent (*missio*) to be together in service (*diakonia*). From a Christian point of view, DM and our partners are members of the same body but with different roles.

Together in service led by local needs

Partnerships have been central to Danmission for almost a hundred years. In 1912 international discussions centred around how to strengthen local churches' independence and, in particular, after the Second World War churches in the Global South advocated for their independence; missionaries were welcome but as collaborative equal partners. The notion of equal partnership was born.

Local actors and partners are embedded in local contexts and have legitimacy from, knowledge of, and access to the local communities they represent. Local churches have a wide variety of expressions through worship and proclamation as well as community, witness, and service, which altogether defines what it is to be church in a local context with a holistic approach acknowledging spiritual and physical needs of people as well as human rights and human dignity. For most people in the Global South, their church or their faith-based practices, are thus central to their physical and spiritual well-being, and to solidarity and cohesion within their group or community.

Danmission sees itself as part of a larger global church community and, through partnerships, continuously develops this global church based on principles of equality and mutuality. This implies that Danmission is committed to engage in mutual learning processes on equal terms, and to use the learning also in our own organisation and in our own context.

Walking together

Churches, faith-based organisations, community-based organisations or informal networks and alliances all have important roles in fostering community development and advocating for national-level policy development and implementation. For this reason, Danmission works with a range of different partners depending on who is most relevant in the context to address the strategic themes and objectives of Danmission,

namely Contextual Theology to support churches and religious institutions to become more relevant actors in their local communities, Peace and Dialogue to foster social cohesion and peaceful societies and Sustainable Stewardship to support local communities to adapt to climate change and to prevent further destructions of natural resources.

DM's primary role is to support partners financially and through other means to implement projects that are relevant in their local contexts. Respectful dialogue is central to this as we acknowledge that power relations exist between us but strive for a relationship where our support to them in their daily work is a living sign of solidarity and community when there is no (significant) funding involved in the partnership, usually because the partner is a very strong one, equal companionship is a key principle. Usually, DM's partnerships are long-term in nature.

DM often acts as a bridge-builder who convenes actors to work together to create synergy and bring interventions to scale., for instance by collaborating with and connecting academia, tech actors, social movements, governments, private sector, multilaterals etc, as well as engage in strategic network, alliance- and coalition building.

All partnerships should be characterised by mutual respect and appreciation, based on the Christian notion of accompaniment, walking together, supporting and helping each other, and having an open and trustful dialogue where there is also room for critical and difficult discussions. This kind of partnership goes beyond instrumental donor-recipient relationships or mere technical subcontracting.

Strong partners are paramount

DM offers capacity development to its partners on a variety of issues, with a particular focus on strengthening their capacity to work with the three program themes and thus combatting poverty, reduce vulnerability and inequality, and strengthening local communities' resilience and preparedness. To get there, we focus on learning and exchanging best practices between partners and between programme countries.

Furthermore, DM supports partners' organisational capacities and their ability to design, manage and deliver projects and programmes. This involves elements such as organisational governance (constitution); structure, strategies, and management systems; development of efficient project designs; financial and project management; facilitating workshops, coaching staff, and skills training; and monitoring and exchange visits. DM invests in developing partner capacity in key areas such as the Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA), gender mainstreaming, UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) United Nations' shared framework for Leaving No One Behind (LNOB) and greening of engagements as well as innovation. This is done based on a structured capacity assessment. In some cases, it includes supporting partners' continued existence in times when the ability to work is temporarily limited e.g., due to shrinking space for civil society, political unrest, pandemic etc. Danmission's support to partners is reflected in Danmission's Strategy on Local Leadership which expands on the approach to supporting existing and new partners to have the capacity to effectively implement projects as strong organisations and networks in their own right.

DM provides funding for the work of the partners. This can either be from own sources, such as private donations, church collections and second-hand shops or from back-donors such as Danida or EU. DM has a key role both in fundraising and in managing grants for or together with partners. Working with long-term partnerships, it is a specific concern to ensure that no partner develops financial dependency on DM. Sustainability and self-reliance should always be considered and exit strategies should be in place both when finalizing a project and if/when a partnership should come to an end. DM supports partners in diversifying their income base and forming new partnerships, alliances and networks partners and finding other sources of funding.

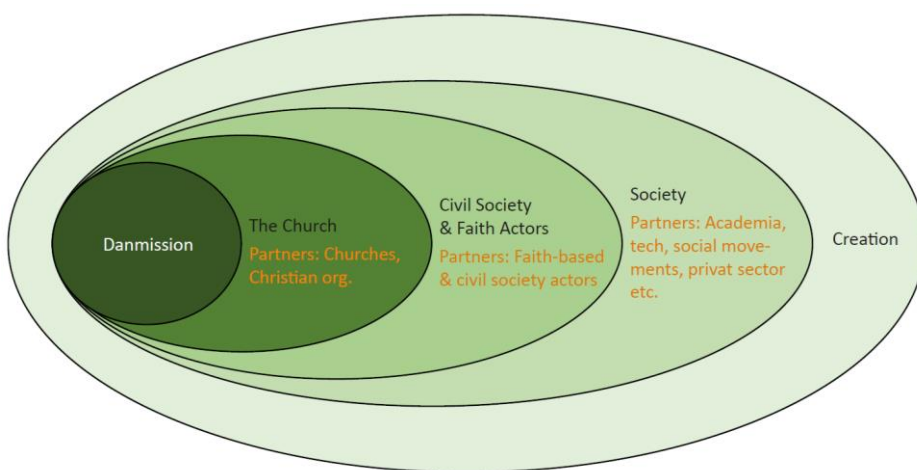
DM works with partners on advocacy, strategic networking, and alliance-building at all levels, including at the global level.

DM is usually not self-implementing. Exceptions can be made if it is an activity run by DM which supports the efforts of the partners in a special way that the partners are not able to do themselves or where there are other good reasons for DM to do it. This will always require specific approval by Danmission Management.

Who does Danmission partner with?

As part of the global Church, the wide range of faith actors and civil society actors, and along all other actors in the society, DM finds partners within these three spheres: The church, civil society and faith actors, and society at large.

Danmission's position in Society and God's Creation



Within the inner circle of cooperation we find churches, Christian faith-based organizations, networks and alliances as a part of the wider Church fellowship in which Danmission is a part and through which Danmission shares our Christian faith and thus has a value-based connection.

DM also partners with faith-based organizations of other religions than Christianity and with non-religious civil society organisations, networks and alliances, academia, social

movements, and other actors with whom we share goals and values. We wish to contribute to the development of strong, independent, and diverse organized groups of engaged people which is crucial to further inclusivity and democratic development.

Categories of partners

DM distinguishes between core partners and strategic partners.

Core partners

Core partners are locally based churches, church-based or theological institutions and theological faculties, as well as larger civil society organisations, smaller community-based organisations and informal networks/social movements, including other faith-based organisations than Christian, who are respectful of Christian and other faith practices.

Core partners should be legitimate representatives of local people/civil society, and as such, it is also a goal in itself to strengthen their organisational capacity and local leadership role. This also goes for informal networks or social movements of for instance environmental activists. Organised around a particular cause rather than being an established organisation Danmission recognises that they may require special administrative and more flexible and technical support than more established organisations.

At least one of Danmission's Core Partners in each Program Country must be a Christian church, institution, or organisation that Danmission can build a long-term partnership with focussed on theological reflections and social action, thus supporting global ecumenical relations and the global church. Based on Danmission's Lutheran identity, origins, and history, it is important for Danmission to have theological reflections with this kind of Christian core partner - either Lutheran or ecumenical¹. Through such local partnerships, Danmission establishes and strengthens its commitment to the global Christian fellowship. This long-term partnership can go beyond financial support and the traditional time-bound project support for development. If Danmission does not have such a partner in a Program Country, a plan must be made for how this can be achieved recognising that it may take a long time.

Strategic partners, alliances, and coalitions

To enhance programme work, DM can choose to partner for shorter or longer time with actors who are not core partners but who are considered strategically important, e.g. because of their role as public or private actors, e.g. duty-bearers who play an important role in the change DM and partners want to achieve or in securing the ability of DM or partners to work in a specific geographic or thematic area (concrete example: Cambodian Ministry for Religion and Cult – key for DMs registration in Cambodia). Or because they can support, strengthen, and reinforce the programme work due to relevant competencies or skills, e.g. special technical capacity, advocacy potentials, IT or tech/ innovation, investigation, documentation etc. Strategic partners can be other INGOs, private companies or social enterprises, global networks,

¹ 'To be Lutheran is to be ecumenical, as The Lutheran World Federations states:
The Lutheran World Federation: Unity of the church | The Lutheran World Federation

universities or other educational institutions, public institutions/government ministries, multilateral organisations (e.g. UN) and other relevant actors.

Working with these kinds of partners always requires a special argumentation for their role and how they contribute to and support the work of core partners, the target groups or the goals and changes aimed for in the programme work, or DM's ability to work in an area. Strategic partnerships can be short-term or long-term, depending on mutual agreement and the purpose of the concrete cooperation.

Partnership agreements

Partnerships should be based on a close dialogue between DM and the partner to get to know and understand each other and identify common strategies and goals and what the partnership should focus on, including link to one or more of DM's programme themes. The result of the dialogue should be formalised in the signing of a partnership agreement which clarifies the common areas of interest and settles the basic agreements for cooperation – including accountability issues such as anticorruption and ethical code-of-conduct. Based on the partnership agreements concrete projects can be developed leading to the signing of project agreements or joint proposals to back-donors. Negotiation of partnership agreements are the responsibility and mandate of the Country Directors. Signing of partnership agreements is done by DM management at the recommendation of the Country Directors. Partnership Agreements should be renewed every fourth years.

Due diligence and monitoring of financial capacity

Before entering a new partnership with a new partner, Danmission will perform a financial Due Diligence (DD), which is a detailed examination of a partner, done prior to signing a contract with it or becoming formally involved with it. Undertaking a DD contributes to informed decision making by enhancing the amount and quality of information available to the decision makers. In addition, DM continuously monitors our partner organizations based on a risk analysis with monitoring visits. This is reported and documented on an ongoing basis. The reports contain recommendations that are communicated to the partner organization after each visit. DM also continuously assesses whether assistance should be provided for capacity development of the partners' financial administration.

New partners

When implementing the country programmes, suggestions for new partners – core partners or strategic partners – can become relevant. Country Directors are mandated to have dialogue with potential new partners and recommend to Danmission management if a new partner is suggested, explaining how the new partner will supplement existing partners and contribute to the country programme goals, including a timeline and suggested budget. New partnerships can be tested with pilot-funding in a pre-partnership phase to see whether the cooperation is fruitful for both sides before entering into a longer-term partnership and signing a partnership agreement.

Ending partnerships

Danmission values long-term partnerships, but sometimes partnerships can come to an end. Because of strategic differences between the partners or because the cooperation for some other reason is no longer considered to be relevant or add value for one or both partners. It can also be caused by a concrete breach of trust (e.g. a severe corruption case which is not handled in a proper manner). In the first case, the Country Director can recommend to DM Management that the partnership should be phased out. The recommendation should include a well-founded analysis and argumentation for doing so. This should be done in a respectful way and, if possible, include a plan with enough time and budget to ensure the necessary organizational sustainability of the partner and the projects. In case of a breach of trust, the Country Director can recommend to DM management that the partnership is terminated with short notice as specified in the partnership agreement.

Partnerships in fragile contexts

Some of Danmission's programme countries are fragile contexts marked by high levels of conflict. In these contexts, Danmission always supports our partners in efforts to manage and/or endure conflict in a way that strengthens hope for the future, justice, peaceful coexistence, and dialogue across differences. Danmission's focus, in these situations, is primarily on the long-term development and peace to support partners to assist affected communities to manage and mitigate urgent or protracted crises as well as assist in solving challenges and conflicts caused by/related to the crisis. In some of these situations, Danmission may support elements of humanitarian assistance carried out by partners, as is stipulated in Danmission's Humanitarian Policy.

In fragile contexts, Danmission will support Christian, faith-based, and interfaith peacebuilders and mediators, organizations, and institutions to enable civil society and local actors to build and sustain structures to deal with conflict dynamics with non-violence as a principle. This can also mean supporting civil society partners in being sustained in keeping their operations ongoing in protracted crises, such as has been the case in Myanmar during the recent conflict. Sometimes working in this kind of context can lead to dilemmas in relation to partner activities, e.g., in relation to a military regime like the one in Myanmar after the 2021 military coup or in relation to the partners in the war in Syria. These dilemmas will have to be dealt with case-by-case as they arise.

Danmission adheres to the do-no-harm principle and will take measures to prevent and alleviate any negative consequences of its actions on the affected populations. In doing so Danmission will seek to identify unintended negative impacts of humanitarian and development interventions in settings where there is conflict or risk of conflict.

Adjusted by Danmission Board on June 1, 2024.