

Danmission's Approach to Dialogue – A Driving Force for Change

Dialogue is fundamental to our work

Dialogue drives action and fosters transformation. At Danmission, we see dialogue as multifaceted, with two core dimensions: it generates new knowledge while reshaping relationships and worldviews. These perspectives complement each other and form the foundation of our approach. For us, dialogue is not simply an exchange of words but a way of being and acting in the world. It must never be reduced to debate or argument but remain a shared space for exploration and collaboration – where new partnerships, insights, and outcomes can emerge. Dialogue holds the power to transform both individuals and societies.

The Purpose of Our Dialogue Efforts

Our dialogue work aims to deliver real solutions today while laying the groundwork for lasting change through mutual understanding and acceptance of diversity. For Danmission, dialogue is both a tool for transformation and a goal in itself. It opens doors to new insights and actions through shared experiences, while affirming human dignity and reshaping relationships. We strive to foster societal change through collective reflection and action and to create spaces where people feel heard and valued. Equal dialogue is a pathway to joint action that counters polarization and promotes peace and sustainable development.

Dialogue as a part of our Christian Foundation

As a church-based organization, we base our work on a Christian understanding of human dignity. We believe God created us for dialogue as equals. Every person has inherent worth, regardless of religion or conviction, which calls us to meet others with openness, curiosity, and respect. Dialogue does not erase differences; it takes them seriously – because we believe God intended people to be diverse and be in fellowship across differences. Dialogue creates spaces where encounters with others and their experiences open new horizons and where we stand together to envision and shape a shared future.

The Content and Context of Dialogue

Danmission's dialogue initiatives:

- Engage religious actors
- Address issues of ethnic, cultural, religious, societal, or worldview significance
- Build bridges across religious, ethnic, cultural, and worldview divides to prevent conflict, polarization, and discrimination

We foster conversations and collaboration among individuals, communities, decision-makers, and institutions with diverse perspectives. Often, we involve influential groups – academics, journalists, politicians, religious leaders, and other actors – who can shape societal development. We prioritize to include youth, women, and religious minorities while at the same time acknowledging unequal power structures, including our own role. Our goal is to ensure every voice is heard so that diverse actors can work together to find shared solutions to societal challenges.

Through partnerships and concrete projects, we use dialogue as a tool to build a more peaceful, just, and sustainable world – globally and in Denmark. We continually develop methods and tools that enhance dialogue's role in preventing conflict, reducing polarization, strengthening democracy, and addressing climate and environmental challenges. Dialogue must remain inclusive and equal, embracing the richness of experiences and voices across all backgrounds.

Danmission's Distinct Strength – Why Our Dialogue Work Makes a Difference

Our strength lies in facilitating processes grounded in mutual respect, equality, and openness – enabling collaboration and transformation at both personal and collective levels. Across the globe, societies are marked by deep diversity in ethnicity, culture, religion, and worldview, and religious actors play a pivotal role in driving positive, sustainable change. Dialogue makes cooperation possible – even where differences seem daunting or irreconcilable.

- **We have experience in navigating among religious actors and groups**
As a faith-based organization, we understand what it means to believe. Religious actors trust Danmission because we value faith, speak its language, and recognize its importance to many people.
- **Building interfaith and cross-cultural competence**
Our approach equips people to form relationships across ethnic, cultural, and religious divides. It fosters self-reflection, respect, curiosity, and empathy – making perspective shifts possible.
- **Reducing polarization and fostering collective action**
Through our partners, we unite religious as well as non-religious actors across

differences. Our aim is to diminish polarization and lay the groundwork for peaceful coexistence, mutual understanding, and joint responses to shared challenges, including climate and environmental issues.

We tailor our methods to each context and group involved.

Examples of How Danmission Works with Dialogue

Danmission always works in partnerships, and through capacity building we empower our partners to become dialogue actors.

1. Northern Myanmar

In northern Myanmar, Danmission's partner brought together key stakeholders – both religious leaders and village chiefs – for a dialogue process. They met several times, with Christians and Buddhists represented, as well as people from different ethnic backgrounds. For a long time, they feared each other, uncertain which side the others supported in the war. With the partner's careful facilitation of dialogue, they gradually got to know one another, and the fear disappeared. This enabled them to focus on their village's shared needs. One of those needs was a school for their children. Everyone contributed what they could – bamboo, tools, timber, or building skills. Together, they built a school where their children could meet their teacher and resume their education. The group continues to meet regularly over a cup of green tea to discuss the needs of their shared village.

2. Zanzibar

Over the years, several committees of religious leaders have been established across Zanzibar. Danmission's partner, Zanzic, has trained these committees in dialogue, conflict resolution, and collaboration. Initially, the committee on Pemba Island was unsure whether they could make a difference. Through Zanzic's ongoing training, support, and frequent visits, the religious leaders gradually grew confident in their ability to solve problems together. They have learned a great deal about Islam and Christianity, and they are no longer uncertain about one another. This process has taken time. For example, the committee resolved a land dispute between Christians and Muslims after Christians had purchased land to build a church. It turned out that the municipality had sold land that did not belong to them. As a result, Muslims protested in front of the construction site. The committee was called in and initiated dialogue with both parties, including the municipal office. The Christians were allowed to keep the land they had bought, and the Muslims were allocated a new plot. Today, whenever conflicts arise on Pemba Island, the committee of religious leaders is called upon to work with the municipality to resolve them.

3. Egypt

After Danmission's partner, CEOSS, trained religious leaders in Egypt in dialogue, diversity, tolerance, and citizenship, these values became integrated into their work. They promote tolerance and oppose hate speech through sermons in institutions, mosques, and churches, as well as in their writings. For example, a female Muslim preacher wrote an article on citizenship that was published in the official newspaper of Al-Azhar University – a highly influential reference point within Islam, both in Egypt and internationally. In addition, many religious leaders have begun organizing school visits to engage students in dialogue, explain the values of citizenship, and address different forms of violence. The aim is to help shape active and inclusive citizens for the future. This outcome is significant, as it demonstrates how religious leaders, who hold great influence in Egyptian society, promote diversity, oppose hate speech, and reject violence through positive and inclusive narratives. By using multiple platforms – such as Al-Azhar – that help shape people's values and understanding of “the other,” their influence reaches millions across Egypt.