

# “Evaluation of Relief, Rehabilitation, and Development Projects by Danish Afghan Diasporas Supported by DiPS”

## Final Evaluation Report

Nordic Consulting Group

May 2019

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## Acronyms

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CBO	Community Based Organization
DACAAR	Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees
DEMAC	Diaspora Emergency Action and Coordination
DiPS	Diaspora Project Support Program
DKK	Danish (Denmark) Kroner
DO	Diaspora Organization
DP	Diaspora Programme
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
DRC HQ	Danish Refugee Council Headquarters (Copenhagen)
ECHO	European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department
EU	European Union
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
LP	Local Partner
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NCG	Nordic Consulting Group
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
TBE	Theory-Based Evaluation
TOC	Theory of Change
UN	United Nations
USD	United States Dollar
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Health

## Acknowledgements

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This evaluation would not have been possible without the contribution of many individuals who graciously provided their time and reflection throughout the evaluation. The team would like to begin by thanking DRC DiPS staff, in particular Martin Wolf Andersen and Annette Christensen for their collegial, thoughtful, and steadfast support throughout the evaluation. The team would also like to thank the DiPS and DRC leadership staff, including Anders Knudsen, Mingo Heiduk Tetsche, and Peter Klansø, for their openness to critically examining the assumptions behind the DiPS program and discussing recommendations for strengthening the program going forward.

A special thanks is extended to Shuhada Organization, who conducted all in-country interviews in Afghanistan, for their professionalism, punctuality, and responsiveness throughout our partnership. Further, the team would like to acknowledge and thank all the individuals who attended the presentation of draft findings and shared their feedback on how both the report and program could be strengthened going forward. Last but not least, the team extends its heartfelt appreciation to all the diaspora organizations, local partners, host government, and outside expert representatives interviewed as part of the evaluation. We hope that your thoughts, experiences, and suggestions for strengthening the program are accurately reflected herein.

The evaluation was conducted by Mathias Kjaer, Team Leader, and Ayla-Kristina Olesen Yurtaslan, Evaluation Associate, from Nordic Consulting Group.

Copenhagen, May 2019

# Map of Data Collection Sites



Map No. 3958 Rev. 7 UNITED NATIONS  
June 2011

Department of Field Support  
Cartographic Section

 = sites of in-country data collection

Source: UN Cartographic Section

# Executive Summary

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## Background and Intended Use

This evaluation complements and builds on findings of a similar evaluation conducted in late 2017 of DiPS activities in Somalia. The evaluation was commissioned by the DRC “Diaspora Program” (DP) to promote internal learning but was designed and implemented by an external evaluation firm, Nordic Consulting Group (NCG), to ensure greater objectivity and accountability.

The **primary intended users** of the evaluation are DRC DP staff, DOs and local partners, and Danida staff. **Secondary evaluation users** include other development partners and donors implementing diaspora-led programming, as well as other interested stakeholders.

## Purpose and Objectives

The **purpose** of the evaluation is to provide an objective assessment of key programming assumptions to inform future strategies for DRC’s diaspora support. It is also meant to supplement DP’s “comprehensive learning component” by strengthening the evidence-base on how to effectively facilitate diaspora engagement for humanitarian and development support.

Specifically, the evaluation has the **objectives** of testing program assumptions related to (1) relevance and local ownership; (2) cost-effectiveness; and (3) sustainability. It also provides a comparison of the “diaspora-led model” to more traditional models of DRC programming.

## Scope, Coverage, and Duration

The evaluation covers a portfolio of 27 grants implemented by 13 different DOs between 2013 and 2018. The evaluation took place between January and April 2019 and included 33 individual interviews and six small group discussions with 54 individuals (14 or 26% female). Data collection took place in Copenhagen, Denmark; and in Kabul, Ghazni, and Jaghori, Afghanistan. Interviews in Afghanistan were conducted in partnership with Shuhada Organization.

## Evaluation Design and Methodology

The evaluation followed a similar design and approach to the evaluation of the Somalia portfolio to allow for comparability. Specifically, it followed a **non-experimental, mixed-methods design** that utilized a **theory-based evaluation approach** to data collection and analysis. It employed a range of **qualitatively-dominant rapid appraisal methods**, including: in-depth document review; semi-structured key informant and small group interviews; as well as a modified Delphi panel with outside experts and DiPS staff to discuss and critique the draft report. Qualitative data was supplemented by quantitative data mined from DiPS program and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) documents, as well as publicly available secondary studies.

## Quality Standards and Evaluation Ethics

**Standards, Ethics, and Informed Consent.** Informed consent was sought at the beginning of each interview. Respondents were assured of the confidentiality of their answers and informed that they were free to opt out at any time. All interviews were conducted in a respectful manner and one

that ensured that all participants fully understood the use and presentation of the information they provided. Sensitive data was sanitized so that it could not be traced to specific individuals.

## Limitations

**Boundary issues and difficulties of attribution** given the number of other development partners involved over long periods in Afghanistan. Attribution of results and the assessment of impact to DiPS was difficult given the large number of potential intervening variables influencing results.

*Mitigation Measure:* Recognize that attribution is neither feasible nor desirable for this assignment and instead focus on establishing potential contribution and testing specific assumptions.

**Safety considerations and restricted data collection.** The team, in collaboration with DRC, needed to carefully consider the potential risks and benefits of the evaluation team traveling around Afghanistan, as well as any potential risks that might befall their interviewees.

*Mitigation Measure:* The team partnered with a local data collection firm, Shuhada Organization, to conduct in-person interviews for those based in/around Kabul, Jaghori, and Ghazni, as well as phone-based interviews with partners outside of these areas.

**Gender imbalance of respondents.** Despite the team’s efforts to ensure that the evaluation equally reflected the voice of men and women, the final list of interviewees ended up being dominated by male respondents (74% male to 26% female).

*Mitigation Measure:* The team anticipated that the majority of interviewees would be male and so ensured that interviewers consistently probed on gender issues and asked interviewees how the program was experienced by other groups in their communities, such as women, youth, the elderly, or those from minority groups. The team also analyzed information from project documents and secondary studies to identify any potential gender issues that might have influenced results.

## Summary of Findings and Conclusions

### Relevance and Local Ownership

Strength of Evidence Supporting Assumptions				
DOs are aware of the unique needs and challenges of humanitarian and development programming in the communities they claim to represent.				2
DOs can utilize their knowledge and local networks to identify capable local partners.				1
DOs understand local contexts and cultural nuances and can work effectively with local partners.				3
DOs and their local partners are familiar with ongoing development efforts and strategies, local and national, and identify ways to support these initiatives.				3
Shared experience implementing DiPS activities will strengthen the relationships between DOs and their local partners to continue to support the development of their communities.				3
1 = Strong evidence from 2+ sources.	2 = Some confirming evidence from at least 1 source.	3 = Mixed evidence both confirming/ disconfirming assum's.	4 = Some disconfirming evidence from at least 1 source.	5 = Strong disconfirming evidence from 2+ sources.

Overall, there was mixed evidence supporting the assumptions of improved relevance and local ownership under the DiPS model. On the one hand, there was strong evidence suggesting that the model can help improve the relevance and prioritization of projects pursued. While the level of familiarity with the current needs of their home communities varied according to the background of the different DO representatives, all demonstrated an ability to utilize personal and professional networks to identify priority community needs and qualified local partners. However, the ways in which these diaspora networks were utilized varied across the portfolio. For some DiPS projects, such as KCA's construction of the school building in Khartizak village, the idea for the project originated with the community itself who then engaged their diaspora network to secure project funding. Other projects, such as DAFF's "From Street to School," originated with the DO who then engaged their networks to identify students to support.

On the other hand, there was also evidence that DiPS projects could improve the assessment and design of their activities. Interviewees conveyed the extent of basic development needs across Afghanistan and the evaluation did not find any obvious instances where a DiPS project was irrelevant to community needs. That said, there is a clear tendency for projects to be based on informal consultation rather than more structured assessment often utilized by more "traditional" development projects. While the informal consultations currently employed appear sufficient for identifying needs, there was evidence that they are insufficient for adequately identifying important additional considerations that could affect project implementation, inclusivity, and sustainability. Finally, while DiPS projects do consistently engage with local authorities, more extensive consultation on potential ideas for the sustainability of projects could help identify opportunities for fundraising or partnering with other development initiatives to support future running costs.

Likewise, there was mixed evidence on the extent to which the diaspora-model facilitates strong relationships with local partners. It is clear that the diaspora-led model offers DRC unique advantages in terms of identifying "untraditional partners"—such as village committees, school advisory boards, and smaller community based organizations— and help expand DRC's partnership options beyond the cadre of larger, established organizations or organizations that DRC has worked with in the past. However, while the diaspora-model offers advantages in the identification of new partnerships, it does not offer as clear advantages in terms of the strength and productivity of those partnerships. While DiPS's assumption that the diaspora knowledge of local languages and customs can facilitate working relationships was supported by information collected by the evaluation, there was also evidence that the assumptions overestimate that extent to which DOs are familiar with local work cultures and practices. The majority of DOs interviewed admitted being surprised by the challenges of working with local partners, including the need to overcome deep mistrust of the concept of volunteer-based work and the need for certain procurement and accountability procedures, not to mention challenges with use of English and development terms in reporting.

While the majority of DO-LP partnerships established did not result in continued partnerships on other efforts, interviewees appreciated that a byproduct of these partnerships was the exposure that it gave both parties to each other. DOs mentioned that they felt a greater understanding and stronger ties with their "home" communities as a result of having implemented their DiPS project; while, LPs appreciated understanding the priority that DOs placed on issues such as punctuality, transparency, and diligent monitoring their work.

## Cost-Effectiveness

Strength of Evidence Supporting Assumptions				
DOs constitute important “alternative development actors” that provide unique and added value to humanitarian and development efforts.				1
DOs will utilize new knowledge, skills, and expertise learned in their host-county to develop new project ideas not previously supported by local partners.				3
DOs and their local partners can utilize their specific contextual knowledge to more efficiently procure needed inputs, mitigate potential delays, and monitor ongoing progress.				1
DOs will transfer skills and knowledge gained from DRC-supported trainings to local partners during the design and implementation of DiPS projects.				4
The current DiPS mechanism effectively captures the comparative advantages of DOs.				3
1 = Strong evidence from 2+ sources.	2 = Some confirming evidence from at least 1 source.	3 = Mixed evidence both confirming/ disconfirming assum's.	4 = Some disconfirming evidence from at least 1 source.	5 = Strong disconfirming evidence from 2+ sources.

The evaluation identified several factors that both facilitate and hinder the cost-effectiveness of the DiPS model. On the positive side, the model offered important comparative advantages and added-value in terms of access, procurement, monitoring, and soliciting in-kind contributions. Interviews confirmed that the DiPS projects have enabled DRC to expand its activities into new, and often more insecure areas: a critical result for an organization committed to reaching those most in need. DiPS partners also demonstrated an ability to utilize their local knowledge, as well as an ability to appeal to local sentiments to support communities in need, which allowed them to be able to procure goods and services at significantly lower rates than offered to larger international organizations. These advantages included monitoring instances of collusion and corruption, not only in the procurement of goods but also in the delivery of services during construction and implementation. Finally, DiPS projects include an obvious cost advantage of both requiring a 15 percent contribution but also its volunteer-based model which results in minimal project management and staffing costs. In addition, a majority of DiPS projects reviewed provided additional community and DO contributions such as the provision of community labor, donation of land, supply of food for contractors, and the collection of books and other materials to support the various schools, libraries, and other activities implemented under the program.

However, the evaluation also found that several cost-effectiveness assumptions were not supported by the experiences of its Afghanistan partners. First, there were limited examples of DOs proposing unique or innovative project ideas based on their experiences in Denmark. The majority of projects reviewed during the evaluation supported basic infrastructure projects such as the building of schools and libraries, which although did include some “innovative” elements, were mostly fairly standard infrastructure projects. That said, it is important to note that these projects responded to identified community needs and thereby justify their lack of “innovativeness.” Second, there was little evidence of knowledge transfer on the topics covered during DRC trainings from DOs to LPs during the projects. DOs, and even some LPs, interviewees consistently referenced a need to build the capacity of local partners to facilitate a smoother implementation of their projects. These results indicate that DRC might want to broaden their training to include LPs directly and not just assume that knowledge and skills built by DOs will automatically transfer to their partners. Finally, and hopefully a key lesson from this evaluation, while there was once again evidence that although DRC

has taken notable steps to improve the flexibility of the DiPS program and reduce some of its administrative requirements, the program is still perceived by its partners to be overly burdensome and restrictive, particularly during the application and reporting process. Outside experts have commented on the dilemma of trying to “professionalize voluntary associations” and the evaluation provides further evidence that this dilemma persists.

## Sustainability

Strength of Evidence Supporting Assumptions				
DOs have an implicit interest and sense of responsibility to remain engaged in their activities to ensure they continue to benefit their communities.				1
Given their unique understanding of local contexts, DOs and their partners can better design projects based on local needs and interests, which are therefore more likely to be sustained by the community.				3
Local communities are more likely to sustain activities out of a sense of respect for their diasporas.				3
DOs have the capability to mobilize additional funding to sustain activities.				2
Linkages to other ongoing development efforts and strategies help support the sustainability of DiPS activities.				3
1 = Strong evidence from 2+ sources.	2 = Some confirming evidence from at least 1 source.	3 = Mixed evidence both confirming/ disconfirming assum's.	4 = Some disconfirming evidence from at least 1 source.	5 = Strong disconfirming evidence from 2+ sources.

The DiPS projects reviewed demonstrated a relatively strong potential for sustainability; however, these results need to be tempered by the reality that most projects are still fairly recent and it will take more time to see if communities can continue to support the running and maintenance costs.

The DiPS assumption that DOs in some cases will remain interested in continuing to support their projects based on an emotional attachment appears sound; however, slightly different than originally anticipated. Rather than the DOs only raising the funds just among their members in Denmark, experience from the Afghanistan partners indicates that DOs will reach out to broader diaspora networks and that these diaspora members are willing to support these initiatives despite them originating from an organization in Denmark. The evaluation identified a tendency to view the DiPS projects as providing a shared community resource and less as the responsibility of an individual donor.

There was less evidence supporting the assumptions that DiPS projects are more sustainable because they are based on more accurate local knowledge or that local communities are more inclined to continue to support projects coming from their diaspora. Rather, the evidence suggests that it is the perceived utility of meeting community needs that determines the community's willingness to provide time, labor, and money to support the sustainability of these projects.

Finally, there was mixed evidence on the extent to which DiPS projects are able to link with other ongoing or planned government and donor activities. There was evidence that the application requirements of getting “Letters of Approval” from local authorities have dual benefits of both ensuring that there are not duplicate activities and also that actors will take over the management and operational costs of DiPS projects, including, for example, the Ministry of Education agreeing to

register schools and providing teachers and operating costs once schools are constructed. There were also individual examples of DiPS partners linking with other organizations to complement parts of their programs. However, these examples were generally the exceptions to the larger trend of DiPS partners not actively seeking opportunities to link with other similar projects. This is a clear area that would be useful for DRC, especially its office in Afghanistan, to support in the future.

## Recommendations

### 1. DRC DiPS and Danida staff should explore ways to reduce the administrative and accountability requirements of the program.

If DRC and Danida want to capitalize on the added value that DOs offer as "alternative development actors" they should avoid holding them to the same standards as traditional development partners. Findings from this evaluation echo similar findings from a now growing list of evaluations and academic studies of diaspora-led development activities that show current regulations, such as the need to provide original receipts or follow specific procurement rules, restrain DOs from capitalizing on their comparative advantages.

DRC and Danida should therefore explore what options, such as the waiver of certain accountability requirements or the use of fixed price contracts, could be utilized to reduce the administrative and accountability requirements placed on DiPS partners.

Priority:	Responsibility:	Timeframe:	Resources Required:
High	DRC DiPS and Danida	Medium (1-2 years)	Minimal financial resources but sustain advocacy and strengthened M&E

### 2. DRC DiPS should explore options for incentivizing and rewarding DOs for their voluntary participation in the program and help motivate them to apply for follow-on funding.

Again, echoing findings from other evaluations of diaspora-led efforts, it is clear DiPS projects require considerable time and energy to design, manage, and report on activities. DOs have consistently expressed frustration that not only are the management requirements of the program extensive, they are also expected to support the program on a purely voluntary basis and are then then additionally asked to provide a financial contribution.

To address this consistently cited frustration, DRC should consider revising its current policy and accepting time spent by DOs on project management and administration in Denmark on the development, management, and oversight of their projects in lieu of the 15 percent financial contribution currently required. DRC should also consider allowing DOs to spend a small percentage of their grant on organizational strengthening activities in Denmark, such as trainings, awareness-raising events, or other social activities as an opportunity to both retain and strengthen the capacity of existing organizational members and also to possibly recruiting new members to support activities in the future.

Priority:	Responsibility:	Timeframe:	Resources Required:
High	DRC DiPS	Immediate (0-6 months).	Minimal financial resources

**3. DRC DiPS should take more of a leading role in supporting the sustainability and scale-up of its results. This could include encouraging its partners to build on the results of previous projects, as well as DRC taking more of a leading role in identifying and facilitating opportunities to link with other government and development partner programs.**

DRC DiPS staff have taken notable efforts to improve the sustainability of DiPS projects over the life of the program. Interviews confirmed that sustainability is a key topic covered during trainings and discussions with DiPS partners, and the team’s document review confirms that sustainability considerations form the most highly scored part of DiPS proposals. Despite these efforts, however, DiPS partners continue to struggle to both sustain and scale-up their activities.

DRC DiPS should consider allowing partners to scale successful activities to other areas. DRC staff, both in Denmark and Afghanistan, should also take more of an assertive role in exploring concrete opportunities to link with other potential partners. This could include networking with government partners—such as the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled, which is currently the lead ministry charged with diaspora engagement—as well as other development partners both within and outside the DiaGram Network. Working with the Ministry on their diaspora policy could be one concrete opportunity that the program should explore.

Priority:	Responsibility:	Timeframe:	Resources Required:
High	DRC DiPS and Danida	Immediate (0-6 months).	Minimal financial resources

**4. DRC should provide more capacity-building to LPs working in Afghanistan.**

Evidence across the portfolio indicates that the diaspora-led model offers DRC unique advantages in terms of identifying "non-traditional partners," such as village committees, school advisory boards, and smaller community-based organizations. However, the capacity of these partners is often quite low, and there was little evidence that LPs benefit from the knowledge and skills transfer on program management from the current partnership structure and training program.

DRC DiPS should therefore consider more targeted capacity-building assistance to the LPs working in Afghanistan—i.e. organizational capacity building including project management, strategic planning, leadership, participation, advocacy, and fundraising. This would expand DRC and other actors' partnership options and allow CBOs to mobilize their communities to pursue their interests and rights. Capacity-building assistance would not only improve the sustainability of DiPS projects but would complement Recommendation #3 above as more capacitated LPs would improve the longer-term cost-effectiveness of DiPS projects.

Priority:	Responsibility:	Timeframe:	Resources Required:
High	DRC DiPS and Danida	Immediate (0-6 months).	Moderate financial resources

- 5. DRC DiPS should look to develop a more focused overarching strategy that clearly articulates if the focus of the program is to building the capacity of DOs in Denmark and encourage the development of innovative projects or if the program is more focused on delivering tangible “results on the ground.”**

DRC DiPS has demonstrated an impressive evolution over recent years and has succeeded in building a strong foundation. The program has achieved some impressive results over its life both in Denmark, as well as in Afghanistan and Somalia. However, these results are either not well captured (e.g. the improved capacity of DOs in Denmark) or remain mostly at the community level (e.g. projects results in Afghanistan and Denmark).

In order to strengthen results in the future, DRC DiPS staff should carefully consider and clearly articulate if the focus of the program is primarily on building the capacity of DOs in Denmark or achieving “results on the ground” in targeted countries as each potential focus area requires different strategic considerations. For example, if DiPS wishes to focus on being primarily a mechanism for encouraging diaspora engagement, it should remain open to a variety of partners across various level of capacities, network sizes, and thematic and geographic focus areas. However, if DiPS desires to demonstrate more tangible outcome-level development results, it should be more restrictive and focus on working with higher-capacity partners in more limited thematic and geographic areas along with longer timeframes and larger grants.

<b>Priority:</b>	<b>Responsibility:</b>	<b>Timeframe:</b>	<b>Resources Required:</b>
High	DRC DiPS and Danida	Immediate (0-6 months).	Minimal to moderate financial resources

# Introduction

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## Background on DRC's Diaspora Programme and DiPS

Danish Refugee Council (DRC) is a Danish non-governmental organization (NGO) committed to support refugees and international displaced persons (IDPs) across the globe through all phases of displacement. It seeks to identify localized, responsible, and sustainable solutions to provide emergency aid; advocate for the rights of those displaced; support integration, resettlement, and return; and work towards addressing the root causes of displacement.

DRC implements a "Diaspora Programme" dedicated to "facilitating, supporting, and enhancing the role of diasporas as effective agents of humanitarian assistance, recovery, and development."<sup>1</sup> The program works across multiple geographies and thematic areas to provide a range of services, including: (1) providing funding to co-finance and support diaspora-led relief and recovery efforts; (2) strengthening diaspora humanitarian response capacity and coordination; (3) supporting DRC field operations; (4) building the capacity of diaspora organizations (DOs) and their Local Partners (LPs); and (5) facilitating networking and knowledge-sharing on diaspora engagement.<sup>2</sup> As of June 1, 2019, DRC will merge its Diaspora Programme with its current "Civil Society Project" under its Platform Unit to create one consolidated and better resourced "Civil Society Engagement Unit" to enable "longer-term targeted engagement and more teamwork" in DRC's civil society development.<sup>3</sup>

As a critical part of DRC's efforts to engage diasporas, DP implements a Danida-funded small-grants mechanism, "**Diaspora Project Support**" (**DiPS**), to support humanitarian and development projects led by Afghan and Somali DOs in Denmark.<sup>4</sup> DiPS offers grants, up to DKK 500,000 and 12 months in duration. To qualify, DOs must be registered in Denmark; collaborate with a local partner or local branch in their country of origin; have a Board that includes at least three members; and be able to provide "Articles of Association" signed by their Board. To qualify for funding, partners must provide a minimum financial contribution of 15% of the total project expenditure. DOs can apply for funding on a bi-annual basis following the criteria listed on the DRC website.

In addition to grant funding, DiPS provides a range of capacity-building services to improve the technical, operational and organizational skills of its partners. This includes awareness raising events, classroom-based workshops and trainings, and online, e-mentorships platform to provide peer-to-peer support between diaspora mentors and mentees. The goal of the capacity-building efforts is to strengthen DiPS partners' capacity to develop and implement sustainable and effective projects.

DiPS is also intended to draw on DRC's extensive field presence in Afghanistan and Somalia, previously in collaboration with Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees but also with the DRC

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<sup>1</sup> DRC Diaspora Programme, "Danish Refugee Council's Diaspora Programme: Introduction," ed. Danish Refugee Council (2017). Pg. 1.

<sup>2</sup> "What We Do," Diaspora Programme Website, <https://drc.ngo/relief-work/diaspora-programme/what-we-do>. Accessed March 12, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> DRC. "Proposal for Creation of Civil Society Engagement Unit." Internal Memo. DRC Programme Unit.

<sup>4</sup> See the 2017 Final Evaluation of the Somalia DiPS program for more complete background on the evolution of both the DP and DiPS programs.

Afghanistan field office since January 2018, to provide general monitoring and continuous support and capacity building.

The language and focus of DiPS’s objectives has shifted over the course of the three separate grants but have generally remained consistent. DiPS’s current objectives include:

- **Program Outcome 1:** Diaspora-led initiatives supported by DiPS have contributed significantly improving the target group’s situation in relation to relief, rehabilitation, and development.
- **Program Outcome 2:** The diaspora and their partners’ capacity has been strengthened to build community resilience and to contribute to relief, rehabilitation, and development of target communities in a more inclusive manner with the formal humanitarian and development sectors.
- **Program Outcome 3:** The diaspora’s role and added value in humanitarian assistance and development is further explored and documented. Knowledge is shared and used for advocacy to support and inform increased engagement in the development of solutions to displacement, responses to perceived migration challenges, and the implementation of the localization agenda. This includes recent DiPS efforts to map Iraqi diaspora organizations.

## Background on Global and Danish Afghan Diasporas

While official figures on the size of the global Afghan diaspora are not available, it is estimated to include 6-7 million members across more than 75 countries worldwide. Precise numbers on the total number of Afghans by country are again unavailable and difficult to calculate given that a high percentage of Afghan refugees and migrants are not officially registered. However, Michael Daxner, Centre for International Migration and Development, has compiled a list of the top recipient countries hosting at least 5,000 Afghan migrants (see **Figure 1**). While neighboring Pakistan and Iran host by far the largest share of Afghans, there are sizable Afghan diasporas across Europe and North America. According to the list compiled by Dr. Daxner, the Danish-Afghan diaspora ranks as the 13<sup>th</sup> largest globally.

These figures differ slightly from those compiled by Statistics Denmark, the official Danish statistics agency under the Ministry for Economic and Interior Affairs, as they do not also include individuals of Afghan descent. According to Statistics Denmark, 18,938 individuals of Afghan

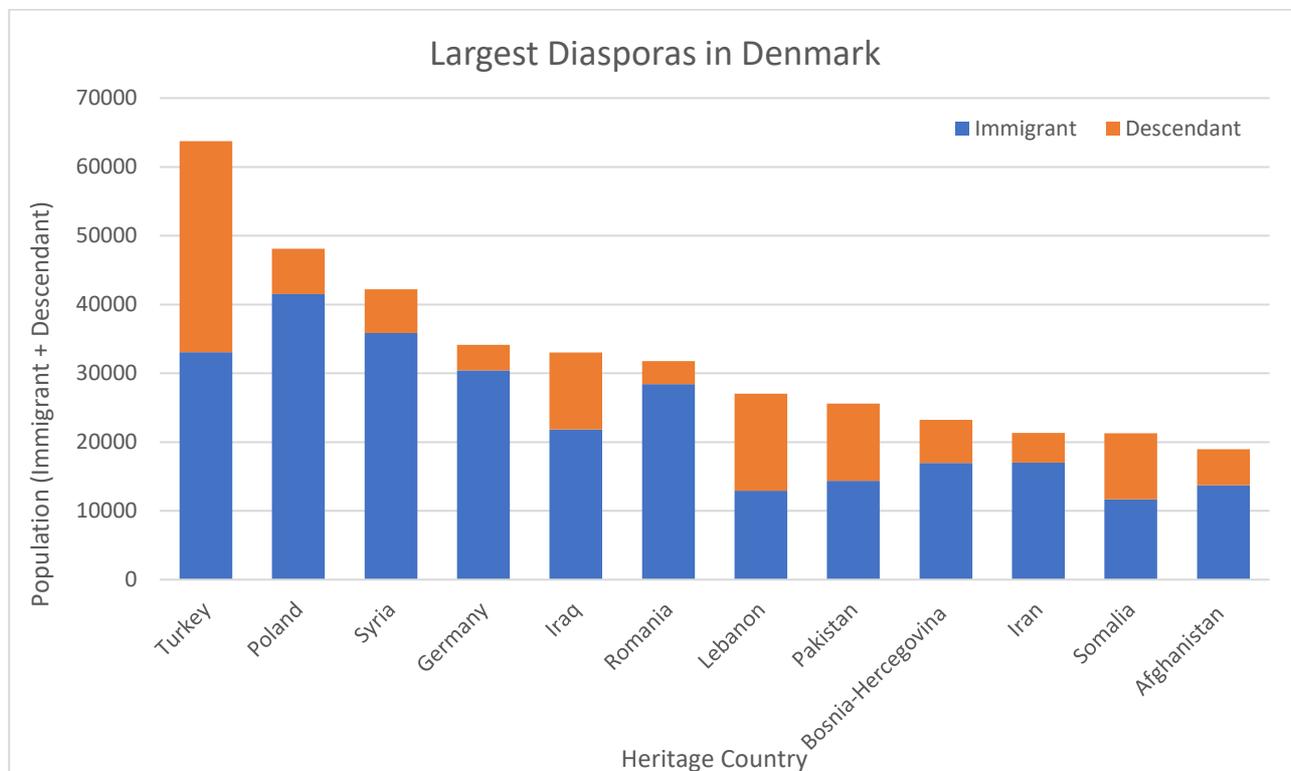
**Figure 1:** List of Top Recipient Countries of Afghan Migrants

Countries	Est. # of Afghan Migrants
1. Iran	2.350.000
2. Pakistan	1.620.000
3. Saudi Arabia	365.000
4. Germany	156.000
5. United Kingdom	68.000
6. USA	63.000
7. Canada	46.000
8. Australia	37.500
9. The Netherlands	34.000
10. Sweden	29.000
11. Turkey	13.500
12. Norway	13.000
<b>13. Denmark</b>	<b>12.000</b>
14. Belgium	10.500
15. Austria	8.500
16. India	8.000
17. Tajikistan	7.500
18. UAE	7.500
19. Italy	6.500
20. Greece	6.000
21. Finland	5.000
22. France	5.000
23. Russia	5.000

**Source:** Michael Daxner, "Mapping of and Report on the Afghan Diaspora in Germany." April 2017

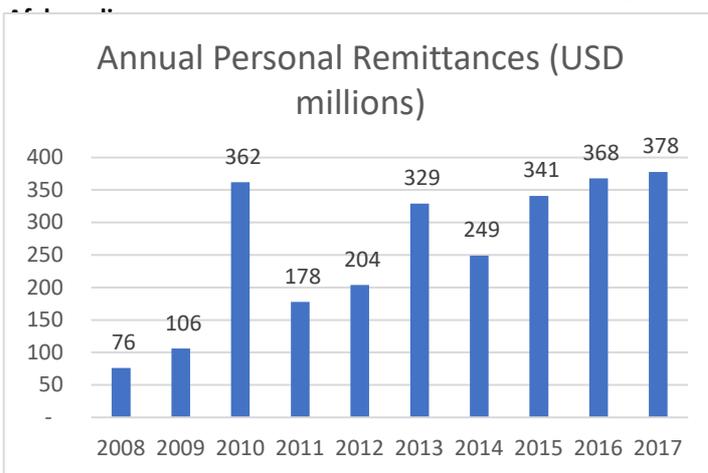
background currently reside in Denmark as of late 2018 (13,709 immigrants; 5,229 descendants), making the Afghan diaspora the 12<sup>th</sup> largest diaspora in Denmark (see **Figure 2** below for additional detail).

**Figure 2: Population of Largest Diaspora Groups in DK**



According to the World Bank, Afghanistan has seen a steady growth of personal remittances over the last decade from its global diaspora. Remittances have grown from an estimated \$76 million in 2008 to more than \$378 million in 2017, roughly two percent of the country's overall Gross Domestic Product (GDP).<sup>5</sup> See **Figure 3** for additional detail by year.

**Figure 3: Estimated Annual Personal Remittances from global diaspora**



### Danish Development Support to Afghanistan

Denmark has provided over 4.5 billion Danish Kroner (DKK) of official development assistance to Afghanistan since the start of its official engagement in 2001. This assistance generally focused on supporting (1) political dialogue; (2) security; (3) development cooperation; and (4) humanitarian assistance. Denmark has also provided

Denmark has also provided

<sup>5</sup> "World Bank Open Data Database," ed. World Bank (2019). Accessed April 3, 2019.

Danish soldiers as part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO's) efforts to bring stability to Afghanistan following the 2011 US-led invasion to oust the Taliban.

Unfortunately, despite decades of sizable international support, the humanitarian and development needs across Afghanistan remain dire. The Afghan government remains weak with limited institutional and management capacity. Sizable areas across the country remain under Taliban control and the national security forces remain too weak to effectively challenge that control. The government has limited capacity to provide even the most basic social services and is widely perceived by the general public to be "corrupt, partisan, and inefficient."<sup>6</sup>

Overall, Afghanistan faces a number of considerable development challenges. According to the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), these include regional instability, high levels of poverty, rapid population growth, rapid and unplanned urbanization, high rates of crime and drug (heroin) production, as well as increasingly extreme weather events, such as droughts and flash floods, exacerbated by global climate change.

Specific to the work of DRC and DiPS, the MFA further argues that "Afghanistan's challenges are exacerbated by significant humanitarian and development challenges arising from large numbers of returning refugees and migrants (approximately 800,000 in 2016), mainly from neighboring countries, and a large and growing IDP population (1.2 million). Displaced populations, and in many cases also affected local communities, require both immediate humanitarian assistance and protection as well as support for longer-term reintegration, including access to services, economic opportunities, as well as land and housing."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, "Country Policy Paper for Afghanistan: 2018-2020," (2017).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

# Overview of Evaluation

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## Background and Intended Use

This evaluation complements and builds on the findings of a similar evaluation conducted in late 2017 of DiPS activities in Somalia. The evaluation aligns with DRC's strategic priority of strengthening the evidence-base of its program. It was commissioned by the DRC DP to promote internal learning but was designed and implemented by an external evaluation firm, NCG, to ensure greater objectivity and accountability. The evaluation is also an important part of DiPS's "comprehensive learning component" focused on exploring, analyzing, and documenting evidence-based knowledge on how to support diaspora engagement in humanitarian and development support.

The **primary intended users** of the evaluation are DRC DP staff, DOs and local partners, and Danida staff. **Secondary evaluation users** include other partners and donors implementing diaspora-led development programming and interested stakeholders in Afghanistan, Somalia, Syria, Iraq, and future country stakeholders supported by the DP.

## Purpose and Objectives

The **purpose** of this specific evaluation was to provide an objective assessment of key programming assumptions identified during Phase I of the evaluation to inform future strategies for DRC's diaspora support. It was also meant to supplement DP's "comprehensive learning component" by strengthening the evidence-base on how to effectively to facilitate diaspora engagement for humanitarian and development support.

Specifically, the evaluation had the **objectives** of testing assumptions related to (1) relevance and local ownership; (2) cost-effectiveness; and (3) sustainability. It also provided a comparison of the "diaspora-led model" compared to more traditional models of DRC programming; however, this was limited to a more qualitative assessment of strengths and weaknesses, not an in-depth quantitative assessment involving comparisons of unit costs or similar financial disaggregation.

## Scope, Coverage, and Duration

The evaluation covered a portfolio of 27 grants implemented by 13 different DOs between 2013 and 2018. The evaluation took place between January and April 2019 and included 33 individual interviews and six small group discussion with 54 individuals (14 or 26% female). Data collection took place in Copenhagen, Denmark, and in Kabul, Ghazni, and Jaghori, Afghanistan. Interviews in Afghanistan were conducted in partnership with Shuhada Organization, who provided to local researchers to conduct all in-country interviews.

## Evaluation Design

The evaluation followed a similar design and approach to evaluation of the Somalia portfolio in order to allow for comparability. Specifically, it followed a **non-experiment, mixed-methods design** that utilized a **theory-based evaluation approach** to data collection and analysis.

## Methodology

The evaluation utilized a range of qualitatively-dominant rapid appraisal methods, including: in-depth document review; semi-structured key informant and small group interviews; as well as a modified Delphi panel with outside experts and DiPS staff to discuss and critique the draft report. Qualitative data was supplemented by quantitative data mined from DiPS program and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) documents, as well as publicly available secondary studies.

## Selected Assumptions To Be Assessed

To ensure comparability, the evaluation assessed the same set of underlying assumptions analyzed during the Somalia evaluation. These were structured along three main criteria of relevance/local ownership, cost-effectiveness, and sustainability, and included:

### Relevance/Local Ownership

- DOs are aware of the unique needs and challenges of humanitarian and development programming in the communities they claim to represent.
- DOs can utilize their knowledge and local networks to identify capable local partners.
- DOs understand local contexts and cultural nuances and can work effectively with local partners.
- DOs and their local partners are familiar with ongoing development efforts and strategies, local and national, and identify ways to support these initiatives.
- Shared experience implementing DiPS activities will strengthen the relationships between DOs and their local partners to continue support the development of their communities.

### Cost-Effectiveness

- DOs constitute important “alternative development actors” that provide unique and added value to humanitarian and development efforts.
- DOs will utilize new knowledge, skills, and expertise learned in their host-county to develop new project ideas not previously supported by local partners.
- DOs and their local partners can utilize their specific contextual knowledge to more efficiently procure needed inputs, mitigate potential delays, and monitor ongoing progress.
- DOs will transfer skills and knowledge gained from DRC-supported trainings to local partners during the design and implementation of DiPS projects.
- The current DiPS mechanism effectively captures the comparative advantages of DOs.

### Sustainability

- DOs have an implicit interest and sense of responsibility to remain engaged in their activities to ensure they benefit their communities.

- Given their unique understanding of local contexts, DOs and their partners can better design projects based on local needs and interests, which are therefore more likely to be sustained by the community.
- Communities are more likely to sustain activities out of a sense of respect for their diasporas.
- DOs have the capability to mobilize additional funding to sustain activities.
- Linkages to other ongoing development efforts and strategies help support the sustainability of DiPS activities.

## Quality Standards and Evaluation Ethics.

**Standards, Ethics, and Informed Consent.** Informed consent was sought at the beginning of each interview. Respondents were assured of the confidentiality of their answers and informed that they were free to opt out at any time. All interviews were conducted in a manner that was respectful and ensured that participants fully understood the use and presentation of the information they provided. Sensitive data was sanitized so that it could not be traced to specific individuals.

## Limitations

**Boundary issues and difficulties of attribution** given the number of other development partners involved over long periods in Afghanistan. Attribution of results and the assessment of impact to DiPS was difficult given the large number of potential intervening variables influencing results.

*Mitigation measure:* Recognize that attribution is neither feasible nor desirable for this assignment and instead focus on establishing potential contribution of DiPS projects to larger outcome-level results and focus on testing specific assumptions behind the program.

**Safety considerations and restricted data collection** is one of the realities of conducting fieldwork in Afghanistan. The team, in collaboration with DRC, needed to carefully consider the potential risks and benefits of the evaluation team traveling around Afghanistan, as well as any potential risks that might result from their interviewees. This presented a potential challenge of not being able to access all intended sites needed to form a comprehensive overview of the program.

*Mitigation measure:* The team decided to partner with a local data collection firm, Shuhada Organization, to conduct in-person interviews for those based in/around Kabul, Jaghori, and Ghazni, as well as phone-based interviews with select partners outside of these areas.

**Gender imbalance of respondents.** Despite the team's efforts to ensure that the evaluation equally reflected the voice of men and women, the final list of interviewees ended up being dominated by male respondents (74% male to 26% female). This presented a challenge of presenting a male-dominant view and experience of the program.

*Mitigation measure:* The team anticipated that the majority of interviewees would likely be male given prevailing social norms in Afghanistan and so ensured that interviewers consistently probed on gender issues and asked interviewees how the program was experienced by other groups in their communities, such as women, youth, the elderly, or those from minority groups. The team also analyzed information from project documents and secondary studies to identify any potential gender issues that might have influenced results.

# Findings

## Relevance/Local Ownership

Evidence Supporting Veracity of Assumptions				
DOs are aware of the unique needs and challenges of humanitarian and development programming in the communities they claim to represent.				2
DOs can utilize their knowledge and local networks to identify capable local partners.				1
DOs understand local contexts and cultural nuances and can work effectively with local partners.				3
DOs and their local partners are familiar with ongoing development efforts and strategies, local and national, and identify ways to support these initiatives.				3
Shared experience implementing DiPS activities will strengthen the relationships between DOs and their local partners to continue to support the development of their communities.				3
1 = Strong evidence from 2+ sources.	2 = Some confirming evidence from at least 1 source.	3 = Mixed evidence both confirming/disconfirming assum's.	4 = Some disconfirming evidence from at least 1 source.	5 = Strong disconfirming evidence from 2+ sources.

### DO Awareness of Local Needs and Challenges

- DOs are generally aware of broader development challenges facing their home communities. They rely on local partners and contacts to conduct informal/unstructured needs assessments to understand specific needs and help prioritize project ideas.**

While their own familiarity with the current needs of communities back in Afghanistan varied according to the background of the DO representatives interviewed, nearly all reported being able to draw on their personal networks to understand current and priority needs. Several DOs reported the needs in local communities were so extensive and at such a basic level (i.e. access to education, water, food security), that the challenge was not to identify needs, but rather determine priorities—e.g. if a school, health center, or bore hole was the largest community need. As expected, those who had emigrated from Afghanistan more recently were more likely to report being personally familiar with the needs of specific communities, while others mentioned that while they were broadly familiar with the situation in Afghanistan but needed to rely on family and personal networks to identify the most pressing needs and suggest potentially project ideas.

Interestingly, but again perhaps not surprisingly, there was more of a split in opinion among the local partners interviewed on the extent to which their DOs really understood the unique situations of the communities they claimed to represent. At least three LPs stated that their DOs were not aware of the needs and that the LP played an important role in serving as a bridge between the community and the DO (and implicitly also DRC).

A review of the DiPS applications indicates that the design of most projects appears to be based on more informal consultation and discussion with community members and local partners rather than on a more structured form of needs and conflict assessments. While the DiPS application format requires DOs to consider issues found in these more structured approaches—such as sections requiring applicants to provide a “situation and needs assessment,” an “implementation strategy”

and “strategy for ensuring accountability towards affected populations”, a “sustainability strategy,” and a “risk analysis”—the responses received often simply summarize the DOs opinion and/or ideas for addressing various potential challenges. This also indicates a need for the DRC field office to help validate and substantiate these opinions presented in DiPS proposals.

It should be noted that the evaluation did not identify any specific instances of a DiPS project being irrelevant to community needs or inflaming communal tensions in the areas where they were implemented. Respondents across all stakeholder groups clearly emphasized the wide-ranging set of basic development needs across Afghanistan and several implied that this meant that almost any project that provides some form of basic service or resource to the community can be considered relevant. That said, there were several instances across the portfolio wherein a more systematic needs assessment might have helped identify issues that ended up causing delays in implementation, such as the issues related to the soil composition challenging the construction of schools and water catchment areas or more specific issues related to the choice of building material, location of bathrooms, availability of internet, etc. More systematic approaches to project design could also have helped several DiPS projects more thoroughly consider sustainability considerations and how their projects might be able to better link with ongoing or planned activities supported by others (see **Sustainability** for additional detail).

### **Ability to Identify Strong Local Partners**

#### **2. The ability of DOs to draw on local networks to identify relevant and capable partners is a key strength of the DiPS model.**

All but one of the DOs interviewed reported identifying their local partners through their own personal, familial, or professional networks. This was identified as a key comparative advantage of the DiPS model, allowing the program to identify and work with “non-traditional” local partners and enabling DRC to expand its partnerships beyond the confines of those partners that they have worked with before. A review of the local partners supported under the Afghanistan grants indicates a fairly diverse mixture of local civil society and community-based organizations, spanning from local development councils and school committees to national professional associations to traditional and well-established NGOs.

While nearly all interviewees agreed that access to these networks was an important comparative advantage brought by DOs, a few also cautioned that such an approach might lead to an increased risk of potential nepotism and the chance for corruption. They argued that there was a “fine line” between drawing on personal connections and hiring friends and relatives to implement the project.

Interestingly, however, a majority of interviewees actually expressed an opposite opinion—that working with friends, relatives, and trusted partners actually helped to reduce the overall chance of corruption. They argued that given the context of Afghanistan—widespread corruption, collusion between different national contractors catering to international organizations, and weak judicial system with almost no options for the enforcement of contractual agreements—one of the only ways to ensure that funds were not misused and that the quality promised was the quality delivered is to work with people that you know and trust. This is particularly important given the fact that nearly all DOs managed the projects remotely. A central theme in interviews with DOs was the responsibility that they felt for ensuring financial compliance and that all money spent was properly accounted for. Several interviewees explained at length the personal anxiety they felt of needing to rely on local partners for implementation on the ground and managing them remotely from

Denmark but then also being the ones ultimately responsible for the funds and needing to pay back any money that was deemed to have been inappropriately spent.

### Unique Ability to Work with Local Partners

- 3. There was mixed evidence on the extent to which DOs are better able to work with local partners. DOs demonstrated important advantages related to higher levels of initial trust and ability to communicate in local languages; however, differences in work culture and expectations at times also considerably strained relationships.**

Interviewees identified several ways in which the background of the DOs as Afghan diaspora helped facilitate the working relationships with their local partners. Most notably, these included: (1) higher levels of initial trust, especially for those introduced through mutual connections; (2) an ability to draw on expanded networks to facilitate interaction with local authorities or verify and troubleshoot issues related to implementation; (3) an ability to communicate in local languages and dialects; and (4) a perception of more neutral and unbiased support compared to other government or other international partners. Interviewees explained that Afghan culture is heavily based on relationships and trust, and that it is common for communities to be skeptical of outsiders. DOs explained that their personal ties to the community, even if only through extended family connections or several years removed, was an important factor for building community buy-in and support. They also explained that many of their local partners, particularly those based in more remote areas outside of Kabul, often had limited capacity, struggling to not only understand specific development terms and project processes but also with basic English and in some cases even with basic literacy and numeracy skills. Finally, some DOs explained that they felt they were perceived as apolitical and removed from local power struggles and political interests.

“There were lots of challenges of dealing with the local NGO because of different working environments and approaches. Most diasporas are young people and unfamiliar with the difference. Work ethics, accounting systems, etc. We have an expectation that they deliver at a Danish standard which is unrealistic. It creates a bit of tension in the dynamics of how things can go. I felt a lot of pressure and I put that pressure on my partner.”

~ DO Representative

However, while social and cultural ties may have facilitated relationships in certain ways, differences related to work culture and organizational life between Denmark and Afghanistan also at times equally served to strain these relationships. The most commonly cited difference related to the concept of volunteering. DOs explained that the concept of volunteering is relatively new in Afghanistan and that many of them had to work hard to overcome initial skepticism and suspicion that they were being paid by DRC to implement the projects while asking their local partners to work for free. However, once this skepticism was overcome, the voluntary nature of DOs contribution was a clear asset in terms of building trust and ensuring cost-effectiveness (the latter will be discussed further in the **Sustainability** section). A majority of DO respondents also explained they struggled initially with getting their local partners to understand the importance of punctuality and being responsive to requests for updates and additional information. Finally, as will be elaborated in the **Cost-Effectiveness** section, some DOs explained that their local partners struggled to understand the reason behind various procurement practices, such as the need to solicit proposals from multiple contractors or receiving paper receipts for all purchases. To their credit, local partners countered that sometimes their DOs did not fully understand or appreciate the challenges presented by the Afghan context and that you cannot simply follow the same procedures

that you would in Denmark. They provided poignant examples, such as the threat of being caught by the Taliban with paper receipts, laptops, or other materials, or the fact that more remote areas have a very limited set of contractors capable of building the necessary infrastructure, and even if it were possible to solicit proposals from multiple capable contractors, there was still a risk of these contractors colluding and inflating the costs of their proposals. DRC staff also explained that they would derogate these procurement requirements in such instances.

#### **Familiarity with Ongoing Development Efforts and Strategies**

- 4. There was mixed evidence on the extent to which DOs attempt to identify and link with other projects supporting similar aims in their areas. However, the application requirement of receiving government approval letters, combined with the remoteness of some of the areas supported and the focus on more tangible infrastructure projects, has limited the extent of duplicate activities and overlap with other programs.**

There was mixed performance across the portfolio on the extent to which DOs seek to identify other projects supporting similar activities. Three of the DOs—Afghan Youth Association in Denmark (AYAD), Afghan European Pharmacists Association (AEuPA) and Afghan Lawyer Association (ALA)—directly identified and explained how their activities either helped complement or fill gaps left by other actors supporting similar activities, while the rest of the DOs simply state that they have consulted with relevant local authorities who confirmed that no similar activities were taking place.

The evaluation did not find any evidence of duplicate activities based on both its document review and interviews with stakeholders in both Denmark and Afghanistan. Given that the majority of projects reviewed under the scope of the evaluation covered support to infrastructure projects, and that many of these projects represented quite sizable investments in their respective areas, it would have been surprising if there had been obvious overlap with similar projects. However, while the possibility of duplicate and overlapping activities might be mitigated by both application requirements for consultation with local authorities, as well as the fairly high level of community awareness of proposed projects in their areas, the lack of careful research on which other organizations are currently or might in the future support similar activities also limits the potential identification of groups that might be able to support the running and maintenance costs of projects.

#### **Strengthened Relationship for Continued Collaboration**

- 5. There was mixed evidence on the extent to which the experience of jointly implementing a DiPS project helped strengthen the relationship between DOs and LPs to continue supporting the development of their communities.**

There was again a fairly broad set of experiences on the extent to which DOs and LPs experience of jointly implementing their DiPS projects strengthened their relationships and interest in pursuing future joint activities. Some DOs, such as Afghansk Kulturforening (AKF), knew their local partner prior to the implementation of their DiPS projects and continue to remain in touch. Others, such as AEuPA and their local partner, Afghan Nationwide Pharmacists Association (ANPA), have applied for and received multiple rounds of funding from DiPS to support a variety of projects at Kabul University. Still others, such as Katib Cultural Organization (KCA) and their partner, Khartizak Village Community Committee, have subsequently been in touch to discuss the possibility of building onto their DiPS projects by constructing a schoolyard in addition to the school built under DiPS. Finally, some DOs mentioned that their projects were always intended to be one-off interventions that helped address a priority need and that the community would then be responsible for sustaining

and expanding on the project in the future. The evaluation also heard of at least one instance where the experience of working together had been so frustrating that both the DO and LP decided that they would not pursue any other opportunities to work together in the future.

Notably, however, while a majority of DOs and LPs did not continue their partnerships beyond their initial DiPS projects, most DOs interviewed reported that they felt a greater understanding and stronger connections with their “home” communities as a result of their DiPS project. Likewise, a majority of LPs stated that their experience under DiPS helped them better appreciate the possibility of engaging diaspora groups abroad to support the development of their local areas.

## Cost-Effectiveness

Evidence Supporting Veracity of Assumptions				
DOs constitute important “alternative development actors” that provide unique and added value to humanitarian and development efforts.				1
DOs will utilize new knowledge, skills, and expertise learned in their host-county to develop new project ideas not previously supported by local partners.				3
DOs and their local partners can utilize their specific contextual knowledge to more efficiently procure needed inputs, mitigate potential delays, and monitor ongoing progress.				1
DOs will transfer skills and knowledge gained from DRC-supported trainings to local partners during the design and implementation of DiPS projects.				4
The current DiPS mechanism effectively captures the comparative advantages of DOs.				3
1 = Strong evidence from 2+ sources.	2 = Some confirming evidence from at least 1 source.	3 = Mixed evidence both confirming/ disconfirming assum’s.	4 = Some disconfirming evidence from at least 1 source.	5 = Strong disconfirming evidence from 2+ sources.

## Effective Alternative Model

- DOs constitute important “alternative development actors” that can bring added-value in terms of increased access, improved trust, added resources, and strengthened oversight of implementation.**

The underlying premise behind DiPS—that DOs can serve as important “alternative development actors” to can provided added value to humanitarian and development programming—was supported by the experience of DOs across the Afghanistan portfolio. Specifically, there was evidence of DOs making unique and valuable contributions in terms of (1) expanding the access of DRC in Afghanistan to new areas and local partners; (2) facilitating higher levels of trust in support of community buy-in and ownership of development projects; (3) providing additional resources in terms of in-kind and financial contributions to support the implementation and sustainability of

“I think that I’m a good example of the added value of diasporas. Yes, I had to volunteer project costs, time, and money but there are good results that have come out of it. I’ve gotten lots of great contacts with students and teachers, for example. I’ve also learned many new skills—teamwork, for example. I think there is real value. I hope my experience will be a motivating factor for other diaspora members.”

~ DO Representative

projects; and (4) utilizing personal networks to support more frequent monitoring of project activities, although mostly through remote monitoring.

"I sincerely believe this is a brilliant way of doing development work but can be polished and improved. All of these things can be better developed but a good way to involve local people who have come to a new country and bring those ideas back home and have more control and be paid as a professional job, beyond volunteer job makes a lot of sense."

### Innovative Project Ideas

**2. High levels of basic development needs resulted in the portfolio mostly focusing on infrastructure related activities with only a few examples of innovative project ideas not previously supported by others.**

There was a clear tendency across the portfolio for DiPS projects to focus on addressing basic unmet needs. The majority of projects supported during the period reviewed focused on providing basic infrastructure, such as the building of schools, libraries, and a water catchment. While these projects cannot be considered innovative and were not necessarily inspired by similar infrastructure seen in Denmark, interviews with DOs, LPs, and community beneficiaries confirmed that these projects were indeed based on community priorities. Some interviewees also stressed that while the infrastructure activities supported

"This type of project is the first of its kind in the province, with the library and cultural center where everyone can come without any cost."

~ LP Representative

might not seem all that new or innovative from an international perspective, some were fairly new in Afghanistan, or least in the specific province (see **textbox** above). Interviewees also emphasized

"There has not been such kind of community before, women of the village get inspired how to contribute and be a part of the community work."

~ DO Representative

"In some ways, the DO is better poised to tackle issues such as gender equality, because they are a part of the community in a way. In terms of gender equality, there is a mix in demand from elders and youth diaspora. Think they are uniquely aware of the challenges."

~ DO Representative

that while the actual object being built might not be a new concept, the process for how it was planned and built were in many cases. They particularly emphasized how the DiPS projects raised awareness of volunteerism and working towards the betterment of your community, as well as provided tangible examples of gender equity by having women DO representatives in charge of the project and making sure that community consultations always included the voices of women and youth (see **textbox** left).

However, there were a few notable examples of innovative projects across the portfolio. These included ALA's "Free Legal Aid Office" providing free legal services to residents in Kabul; AYAD's "Pictorial Storybooks" which not only introduced concepts of peacebuilding, non-violence, and conflict resolution but also employed best practices from Danish schools and libraries on how to develop a "reading culture" among young children; as well as AEUPA's project which saw the participation of Afghan university students in the International Pharmaceutical Student's Federation (IPSF) World Congress for the first time ever.

### Cost-Efficiencies

**3. DiPS partners demonstrated cost-efficiencies related to the procurement of goods and services, monitoring of implementation and potential corruption, and ability to raise additional project funding.**

There was a consensus across interviews with DOs, LPs, DRC Afghanistan staff, and a UN agency representative familiar with DiPS that DiPS projects in Afghanistan demonstrated cost-efficiencies compared to similar projects run by other international organizations, UN Agencies, and even DRC Afghanistan itself (see **textbox** right for examples). The reasons provided generally fell into three categories: (1) an ability to procure goods and services cheaper than INGOs or UN agencies; (2) reduced costs in monitoring implementation and corruption by utilizing their personal networks; and (3) the voluntary nature coupled with both the mandatory 15 percent contribution and any additional contributions raised by the DO, LP, or their local community members.

Interviewees explained that DiPS partners were often able to procure goods at a lower cost than larger organizations based on their personal connections, awareness of prevailing local rates, and in part due to their perceived altruism and willingness to work for free to benefit the community. Interviewees also explained that corruption was rampant across Afghanistan and that local contractors had learned how to

circumnavigate widely accepted international procurement rules (see **textbox** left). Several interviewees explained that they were personally aware of instances with other non-DiPS projects where local contractors either colluded to inflate the prices of all proposals received or would use poorer quality materials than they had proposed. A couple of interviewees with experience working

with either UN agencies or INGOs also explained that security and administrative costs often accounted for over half the budget of basic activities and could even double or triple the budgets depending on the number of international staff that needed to be involved. Interestingly, even DRC Afghanistan staff reported that they had conducted informal costs comparisons within the office and found that DiPS projects implementing similar activities would often cost substantially less.

Interviewees also explained that the DiPS model presented important cost-savings related to project monitoring and oversight as this would be conducted by community members already on location on a regular basis. Again, interviewees highlighted the widespread

"I was surprised how much it costs to run big organizations and how little goes to the beneficiaries – how high their administrative costs actually are for things like security, cars, admin costs. The way that we run it, and we don't get money elsewhere, we've actually helped lots and lots of people through our support."

~ DO Representative

"Contractors raise prices for foreign NGOs, but because we have local knowledge and contacts, our costs are not based on NGO prices."

~LP Representative

"I have been living in Afghanistan since 2009, billions of dollars have been spent by the international community. I can see cost-efficiency in DRC's diaspora program. If the money is given to the Afghan government, UN, or an international NGO, prices will suddenly become 2-3 times more expensive due to corruption and [inflated] administration costs."

~ UN Agency Representative

"Corruption is a huge issue in Afghanistan, and this was also something that we encountered. Someone in local government asked us for a bribe but we explained to him the charitable nature of our project and that it was run by volunteers who were paying out of own pocket to make it happen....We also have contacts in the community that will watch the case and building and ensures that it holds the required quality and forward information to us through mail and telephone."

~ DO Representative

"To prevent corruption, we have monitors take pictures and also talk to families and ask for a signature for their interviews and how much payment from the project they have received."

~ LP Representative

corruption across Afghanistan and emphasized the importance of carefully and regularly monitoring the progress of activities. DOs, in particular, highlighted this need, as they felt they were ultimately responsible for how DiPS funding was utilized. Interviewees explained how DiPS partners could utilize their network in local communities to ask for regular updates on projects, including photos of progress sent through WhatsApp or Viber, and to help troubleshoot issues that threatened potential delays. At least two of the DiPS projects reported using their personal connections to intervene when local authorities threatened to delay activities.

Finally, the voluntary basis of the program along with the ability of DOs, LPs, and community members to raise additional funding was highlighted as a comparative cost-advantage. Interviewees spoke at length and often with strong frustration about the time and effort needed to manage their projects. While the majority of DOs recognized DRC's underlying rationale for using a volunteer-based model, a significant minority felt that the demands were at times unreasonable and that they were essentially asked to take over regular full-time project management positions as unpaid volunteers. In addition to their time and effort, DOs and LPs also highlighted the minimum 15 percent contribution required to participate in the program, along with the additional financial contributions raised through the organizations, as well as community contributions of land, materials, labor, and at times also financial contributions as important inputs that help expand project budgets beyond the funding level provided by DRC.

#### **Knowledge and Skill Transfer from DRC Trainings**

##### **4. There was little evidence of knowledge transfer from DOs to LPs as a result of DRC provided trainings.**

Several LPs reported learning new concepts and skills related to work culture from their DOs—such as the importance of punctuality, transparency, and the concept of volunteering—however, there was surprisingly little mention of any knowledge transfer related to project management or other topics covered during DRC trainings provided to DOs. While a majority of both DOs and LPs reported that DOs undertook a substantial effort to ensure regular and accurate reporting, the transfer of project management skills does not appear to have been a priority for many DiPS projects. Interviewees also explained some of the challenges of communicating between Denmark and remote area of Afghanistan and that this meant conversations were often through WhatsApp, Viber, or Skype text messages or short periodic check-in calls; types of interactions that would generally be expected to be less conducive to meaning learning and knowledge transfer.

#### **The ability of Current DiPS Model to Capture Comparative Advantages of DOs**

##### **5. While DRC has taken steps to improve flexibility and reduce some of the administrative burdens of DiPS, the current requirements of the program restrict DRC's ability to fully capture the comparative advantages of DOs as important "alternate development actors."**

Despite DRC's efforts over recent years to reduce the administrative and reporting burdens placed on its DiPS partners, the program continues to experience what Dr. Nauja Kleist has identified as "the dilemma of targeting voluntary associations with administrative demands geared to staffed NGOs." <sup>8</sup> Every single interview with DO representatives at some point raised the heavy administrative burdens of the program and four separate representatives mentioned that this

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<sup>8</sup> Nauja Kleist, "Somali Diaspora Groups in Sweden: Engagement in Development and Relief Work in Horn of Africa," in *Report 2018:1*, ed. Delmi (2018).

burden directly influenced their decision not to apply for future rounds of funding. DOs felt that the application requirements—such as providing detailed logical frameworks and sustainability plans—were overly complicated and that some of the accountability requirements and documentation needed to verify project expenditure were unrealistic given the Afghan context. They also mentioned the use of English during both DRC trainings, as well as required in reporting placed an unnecessary burden on diaspora members who were much more comfortable speaking Danish or Pashtu, Farsi, and other Afghan languages. Finally, a small minority felt that the requirement to work through LP placed unnecessary constraints on the program. They either explained that capacity among local NGOs was relatively low and that most of their effort was spent trying to understand and correct written reports they received from their partners, or that they wanted to reduce all administrative costs related to the project to ensure upward accountability to their members/donors (i.e. From Street to School) . Some also felt that the local NGOs in Afghanistan were more concerned with their own organizational survival than they were in the sustainability of their projects.

“I think DRC is putting lots of responsibility on us that they could easily manage themselves...One of the most important things is that diaspora needs to be seen as the resources they are—not some cheap, cost-effective resource that can be utilized because of an emotional bond they have to their home country. It’s not a volunteer job that takes 1-2 hours, it’s a full-time job and I feel almost taken advantage of.”

~ DO Representative

## Sustainability

Evidence Supporting Veracity of Assumptions				
DOs have an implicit interest and sense of responsibility to remain engaged in their activities to ensure they continue to benefit their communities.				1
Given their unique understanding of local contexts, DOs and their partners can better design projects based on local needs and interests, which are therefore more likely to be sustained by the community.				3
Local communities are more likely to sustain activities out of a sense of respect for their diasporas.				3
DOs have the capability to mobilize additional funding to sustain activities.				2
Linkages to other ongoing development efforts and strategies help support the sustainability of DiPS activities.				3
1 = Strong evidence from 2+ sources.	2 = Some confirming evidence from at least 1 source.	3 = Mixed evidence both confirming/ disconfirming assum’s.	4 = Some disconfirming evidence from at least 1 source.	5 = Strong disconfirming evidence from 2+ sources.

## Sense of Responsibility to Remain Involved

- DOs demonstrated a clear personal interest in remaining involved in their activities; however, most were challenged by finding the time to continue to dedicate the time needed to support activities.**

Interviews with DOs clearly conveyed an emotional interest to remain involved in the development of their communities, an interest which motivated their participation in DiPS in the first place. While

some continue to financially support running costs—such as school maintenance, child scholarships, and small repairs—the majority of DOs interviewed mentioned that they had limited time and financial resources to continue to actively support the projects. They also mentioned that it was the responsibility of the community, as well as local and central authorities where relevant, to ensure the maintenance and sustainability of the project.

Interestingly, a couple of DOs interviewees emphasized that there was an important distinction between the *diaspora organization* registered in Denmark and the broader *diaspora* when it came to sustaining activities. They mentioned that while the DO in Denmark might not continue to raise extensive funds to support the ongoing activities, donations from the broader diaspora across Europe and elsewhere helped to sustain activities (see “Ability to Mobilize Additional Funding” finding below for a more detailed discussion).

### More Relevant Projects Lead to Increased Sustainability

- 2. There was limited evidence that DiPS partners’ contextual knowledge led to any innovations strengthening the sustainability of projects. Rather the ability of projects to address core community needs was a more significant determinant of sustainability.**

While there was evidence across the portfolio that DiPS partners were able to leverage personal contacts and relationships with local authorities to receive commitments to support future running costs—such as from the Ministry of Education, district hospital, or Kabul University—there were limited examples of unique features of projects aimed at improving their sustainability in the Afghanistan context. That said, given that the portfolio reviewed consisted mostly of basic infrastructure projects, it would be difficult to identify ways that these projects could reasonably have been expected to be substantively modified to be more aligned to local contexts. In certain instances, the DOs were able to ensure the sustainability of their project by being politically neutral and having strong ties to the local community; for example, the local community in Alingar assured opposition forces in the area that the library and cultural center was not government-led, and therefore the building is safe from attacks while government buildings are targeted.

Nevertheless, interviews with DOs and LPs report that all projects reviewed continue to operate, with the exception of the AEUPA grant intended to support the one-time participation of Kabul University students in the IPSF) World Congress. Interviewees explained that the high sustainability rate of these projects is best explained by the fact that these projects meet core community needs, often in areas that receive little outside support, rather than any particularly innovative design.

### Local Communities More Likely to Sustain DO Projects

- 3. The sustainability of DiPS projects appears to be more determined by their utility in meeting core community needs rather than a commitment to sustaining diaspora projects.**

Interviews with LPs and community members clearly conveyed a unique appreciation for projects provided by diaspora members. In several cases, this was demonstrated by in-kind contributions of labor, time, and land to support the implementation and even expand DiPS activities, such as, for example, Khartizak village members donating land, buying cinderblocks, and building student lavatories to accompany the school building built by KCA.

However, the evaluation did not find explicit evidence that communities will take efforts to mobilize funds to support ongoing maintenance and sustainability costs specifically because DiPS projects came from their diaspora members. Information from interviews across stakeholder groups instead

again indicates that it is the ability of DiPS projects to meet core community needs that will determine the extent to which communities will work to support them, rather than an allegiance to their diaspora. It should also be noted that many of the projects reviewed were completed within the last five years and that more time would need to elapse before it is possible to identify how sustainable these projects proved to be, especially for the infrastructure related projects.

#### **Ability to Mobilize Additional Funding**

- 4. DOs demonstrated an ability to raise additional funding to help sustain projects but often through larger networks outside of Denmark. There was a tendency for projects to be regarded as community resources, rather than the project of a specific donor, indicating a potential comparative advantage of the DiPS model.**

There were several examples of DOs mobilizing additional funding to support the continuation of their DiPS projects. However, these examples were different from what the evaluation team had expected to see. While there were a few cases of DOs raising funds to support ongoing activities among their members in Denmark specifically, the majority of DOs reported the funds would often be raised through appeals to broader personal networks across Europe and the US. Interviewees explained that they were able to raise funds with diaspora members outside of Denmark as they saw the projects as a collective benefit to the development of their home communities rather than the exclusive responsibility of the diaspora in Denmark as they had initiated the project.

This conceptualization presents an interesting contrast to more "traditional" development projects implemented by more established donors and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs). Interviewees explained that although there has been a massive influx of international support to Afghanistan over the last two decades, there is still a reluctance among international donors to collaborate, build on, and sustain each other's projects. There is a tendency to view projects as the "UNDP project," "USAID project," etc., and therefore the responsibility of that specific donor to sustain those activities. This perception appears to be different with DiPS projects whereby, particularly for infrastructure, the projects come to be regarded as a shared community resource and thereby making others in the diaspora more likely to support its ongoing costs. In other words, projects are perceived less as a product of individual donors and more as a collective resource for the betterment of the community. There also appears to be an important distinction in the way that diaspora members view themselves. It appears to be less important to identify as a member of the "Danish-Afghan diaspora" and around a collective identity as a member of the diaspora from a particular region or village and reducing the importance of the country boundaries and individual diaspora member may find themselves.

A few of the DOs were able to secure funding through DUF and CISU's Danida-backed grant scheme after their initial grant(s) from DiPS. In this regard, experience with applying for funding from DRC has supported the DOs in accessing other funding modalities, as they have experience with donor requirements. However, meeting the requirements for other grants was also seen as being too work-intensive, as the DOs again stressed the time constraints related to voluntary work.

#### **Linkage to Other Development Efforts to Support Sustainability**

- 5. Sustainability is a key consideration frequently analyzed in the design of DiPS projects. While there is evidence of individual DiPS projects successfully linking with other initiatives, more effort is needed to ensure these linkages are consistently pursued across the portfolio.**

Ensuring the sustainability of DiPS projects is clearly a key priority of the program. Interviews confirm that this is a central topic covered during DRC-provided trainings and also the area that receives the most attention during the review of proposals and project designs. Sustainability is also an area that DOs and their LPs admit that they struggle with and that coming up with concrete and tangible options for securing future funding is difficult in the Afghanistan context.

Nevertheless, the evaluation found good examples throughout the Afghanistan portfolio of individual DiPS projects succeeding in establishing links with other actors, both national and international. These include:

- AEUPA working with The Asia Foundation to donate books to its Pharmacy Faculty Library;
- ALA linking with the Afghan Independent Bar Association to recruit volunteers to serve in their legal aid clinic and with Women's Protection Centers Directorate in Afghanistan to ensure its services are available to women in their shelters who have suffered from domestic violence;
- DAFF receiving 40,000 Danish Kroner (DKK) to support the training and professional development of their staff in Denmark to better manage their "From Street to School" program;
- KCA working with the Tawifq cultural association in Sweden to collect and distribute 1,200 for their library project;
- KCA's school building project which had lobbied the Ministry of Education up to seven years prior to the project to commit to registering the school, paying the teachers, and covering maintenance costs once the school was built; and

However, given the importance of sustainability considerations for the ultimate success of DiPS projects to achieve results, a more concerted effort is needed to ensure more successful linkages across the portfolio. While DRC staff in Afghanistan have explored potential linkages with GIZ and IOM, this has been mostly on an informal basis. Likewise, despite DRC HQ helping to create the "DiaGram Network" of European organizations support diaspora-led initiatives, this network has been mostly dormant in relation to DiPS with a few meetings and conference back in 2015 and few tangible examples of network members supporting each other's projects have materialized. Considering one of the successes for sustainability of DO projects was their success in mobilizing networks across national borders, DiPS and DOs could also consider how linkages to a broader Afghan diaspora may support greater sustainability.

# Conclusions

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## Relevance and Local Ownership

Overall, there was mixed evidence supporting the assumptions of improved relevance and local ownership under the diaspora-led model. On the one hand, there was strong evidence suggesting that the diaspora-led model can help improve the relevance and prioritization of projects pursued. While the level of familiarity with the current needs of their home communities varied according to the background of the different DO representatives, all demonstrated an ability to utilize personal and professional networks to identify priority community needs and qualified local partners. However, the ways in which these diaspora networks were utilized varied across the portfolio. For some DiPS projects, such as KCA's construction of the school building in Khartizak village, the idea for the project originated with the community itself who then engaged their diaspora network to secure project funding. Other projects, such as DAFF's "From Street to School," originated with the DO who then engaged their networks to identify students to support.

On the other hand, there was also evidence that DiPS projects could improve the assessment and design of their activities. Interviewees clearly conveyed that basic development needs across Afghanistan are immense and it is therefore not surprising that the evaluation did not find any obvious instances where a DiPS project was irrelevant to community needs. Simply put, with the needs so great, a project that delivers a basic social or community service could be considered relevant. That said, there is a clear tendency for projects to be based on informal consultation rather than more structure assessment often utilized by more "traditional" development projects. While the informal consultations currently employed appear sufficient for identifying needs, there was evidence that they are insufficient for adequately identifying important considerations that could affect project implementation, inclusivity, and sustainability. For example, more careful assessment of the geology and soil composition of infrastructure sites might have revealed rock beds that ended up causing implementation delays, modified designs, and contractor costs increased costs. Likewise, more extensive consultation with women and youth might have identified the need to include sex separated bathrooms in school designs or other gender-specific design issues. Finally, while DiPS projects do consistently engage with local authorities, more extensive consultation on potential ideas for the sustainability of projects could help identify opportunities for fundraising or partnering with other development initiatives to support future running costs.

Likewise, there was mixed evidence on the extent to which the diaspora-model facilitates strong relationships with local partners. There was extensive evidence across the portfolio that the diaspora-led model offers DRC unique advantages in terms of identifying "untraditional partners"—such as village committees, school advisory boards, and smaller community-based organizations—and help expand DRC's partnership options beyond the cadre of larger, established national organizations or organizations that DRC has worked within the past. However, while the DiPS-model offers advantages in the identification of new partnerships, it does not offer as clear advantages in terms of the strength and productivity of those partnerships. While DiPS's assumption that the diaspora knowledge of local languages and customs can facilitate working relationships was supported by information collected by the evaluation, there was also evidence that the assumption overestimates that extent to which DOs are familiar with local work cultures and practices. The majority of DOs interviewed admitted being surprised by the challenges of working with local

partners, including the need to overcome mistrust of the conception of voluntary work and the need for certain procurement and accountability procedures, not to mention challenges with the use of English and development terms in reporting. On the other hand, several DOs identified partners within or through their extended familial network, which they felt could mitigate the risk of corruption due to preexisting trust and an ability to monitor project implementation from the outset through the LP.

However, while the majority of DO-LP partnerships established during the DiPS projects reviewed did not result in continuing partnerships on other efforts, interviewees noted that an appreciated byproduct of these partnerships was the exposure that it gave both parties to each other. DOs consistently mentioned that they felt a greater understanding and stronger ties and connections with their “home” communities as a result of having implemented their DiPS project; while, LPs appreciated understanding the priority that DOs placed on issues such as punctuality, transparency, and diligent monitoring in their work.

## Cost-Effectiveness

The evaluation identified several factors both facilitating and hindering the cost-effectiveness of the DiPS model. On the positive side, the DiPS model offered important comparative advantages and added-value in terms of access, procurement, monitoring, and soliciting in-kind contributions. Interviews confirmed that the DiPS projects have enabled DRC to expand its activities into new, and often more insecure areas: a critical result for an organization committed to reaching those most in need. DiPS partners also demonstrated an ability to utilize their local knowledge, as well as appeal to local sentiments to support communities in need, to procure goods and services at significantly lower rates than offered to larger international organizations. These advantages included monitoring instances of collusion and corruption, not only in the procurement of goods but also in the delivery of services during construction and implementation. Finally, DiPS projects include an obvious cost advantage by requiring a 15 percent in-kind or financial contribution and through the volunteer-model, resulting in minimal project management and staff costs. In addition, a majority of DiPS projects reviewed provided additional community and DO contributions not initially planned in their proposals such as the provision of community labor, donation of land and food for contractors, and the collection of books and other materials to support the various schools, libraries, and other activities supported under the program.

However, the evaluation also found that several cost-effectiveness assumptions behind the program were not supported by the experiences of its Afghanistan partners. First, there were limited examples of DOs proposing unique or innovative project ideas based on their experiences in Denmark. The majority of projects reviewed during the evaluation supported basic infrastructure projects such as the building of schools and libraries. It is important to note that these projects responded to identified community needs and thereby justify their lack of “innovativeness.” Second, there was little evidence of knowledge transfer on the topics covered during DRC trainings from DOs to LPs during the projects. DO, and even some LP, interviewees consistently referenced a need to build the capacity of local partners and these results indicate that DRC might not to broaden their training to include LPs directly and not just assume that knowledge and skills built by DOs will automatically transfer to their partners. Finally, and hopefully a key lessons from this evaluation, there was once again evidence that although DRC has taken notable steps to improve the flexibility of the DiPS program and reduce some of its administrative requirements, the program is still

perceived by its partners to be overly burdensome and restrictive, particularly during the application and reporting processes. Outside experts have commented on the dilemma of trying to “professionalize voluntary associations” and the evaluation provides further evidence that this dilemma persists.

## Sustainability

The DiPS projects reviewed demonstrated relatively strong potential for sustainability; however, these results need to be tempered by the reality that most projects are still fairly recent and it will take more time to see if communities can continue to support the running and maintenance costs of these projects.

The DiPS assumption that DOs will remain interested in continuing to support their projects based on an emotional attachment appears sound; however, slightly different than originally anticipated. Rather than the DOs necessarily raising the funds among their members in Denmark, experience from the Afghanistan partners indicates that DOs will reach out to broader diaspora networks and that these diaspora members are willing to support these initiatives despite them originating from the Afghan diaspora in Denmark. The evaluation identified a tendency to view the DiPS projects as providing a shared community resource and less the responsibility of an individual donor.

The evaluation found less evidence supporting these assumptions that DiPS projects are more sustainable because they are based on more accurate local knowledge or that local communities are more inclined to continue to support projects coming from their diaspora. Rather, evidence suggests that it is the perceived utility of meeting community needs that determines the community’s willingness to provide time, labor, and money to support the sustainability of these projects.

Finally, there was mixed evidence on the extent to which DiPS projects are able to link with other ongoing or planned government and donor activities. There was evidence that the application requirement of getting a “Letters of Approval” from local authorities has the dual benefits of both ensuring that there are not duplicate activities and also that other actors will take over the management and operational costs of DiPS projects upon completion; for example, through the Ministry of Education agreeing to register a school and provide teachers and cover operation costs once construction is finished. There were also individual examples of DiPS partners linking with other organizations, such as The Asia Foundation, to complement parts of their programs. However, these examples were generally the exceptions to the larger trend of DiPS partners not actively seeking and/or pursuing opportunities to link with other similar projects. This is a clear area that would be useful and appropriate for DRC, especially the office in Afghanistan, to further support in the future.

## Recommendations

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### **1. DRC DiPS and Danida staff should explore ways to reduce the administrative and accountability requirements of the program.**

If DRC and Danida want to capitalize on the added value that DOs offer as "alternative development actors" they should avoid holding them to the same standards as traditional development partners. Findings from this evaluation echo similar findings from a now growing list of evaluations and academic studies of diaspora-led development activities that show current regulations, such as the need to provide original receipts or follow specific procurement rules, restrain DOs from capitalizing on their comparative advantages.

DRC and Danida should therefore explore what options, such as the waiver of certain accountability requirements or the use of fixed price contracts, could be utilized to reduce the administrative and accountability requirements placed on DiPS partners.

**Priority:** High.

**Responsible entity:** DRC DiPS and Danida

**Timeframe:** Medium (1-2 years)

**Resources Required:** Minimal financial resources but sustained advocacy and strengthened M&E of program results to convince skeptics that the results are worth the potential risks.

### **2. DRC DiPS should explore options for incentivizing and rewarding DOs for their voluntary participation in the program and help motivate them to apply for follow-on funding.**

Again, echoing findings from other evaluations of diaspora activities, it is clear DiPS projects require considerable time and energy to design, manage, and report on activities. DOs have consistently expressed frustration that not only are the management requirements of the program extensive, they are expected to support the program on a purely voluntary basis and are then also asked to provide a financial contribution. Perhaps also mention the positive aspects of volunteering raised earlier.

To address this consistently cited frustration, DRC should consider revising its current policy and accepting time spent by DOs on project management and administration in Denmark on the development, management, and oversight of their projects in lieu of the 15 percent financial contribution currently required. DRC should also consider allowing DOs to spend a small percentage of their grant on organizational strengthening activities in Denmark, such as trainings, awareness-raising events, or other social activities as an opportunity to both retain and strengthen the capacity of existing organizational members and also to possibly recruiting new members to support activities in the future.

**Priority:** High.

**Responsible entity:** DRC DiPS Program Managers.

**Timeframe:** Immediate (0-6 months).

**Resources Required:** Minimal. The DiPS portfolio may see a reduction of around 15 percent of funding, reflecting the removal of DOs' current financial contributions; however, this could potentially be offset by cost-efficiencies resulting from experienced DOs continuing to participate.

- 3. DRC DiPS should take more of a leading role in supporting the sustainability and scale-up of its results. This could include encouraging its partners to build on the results of previous projects, as well as DRC taking more of a leading role in identifying and facilitating opportunities to link with other government and development partner programs.**

DRC DiPS staff have taken notable efforts to improve the sustainability of DiPS projects over the life of the program. Interviews confirmed that sustainability is a key topic covered during trainings and discussions with DiPS partners, and the team's document review confirms that sustainability considerations form the most highly scored part of DiPS proposals. Despite these efforts, however, DiPS partners continue to struggle to both sustain and scale-up their activities.

DRC DiPS should consider making it easier for partners to scale successful activities to other areas. DRC staff, both in Denmark and Afghanistan, should also take more of an assertive role in exploring concrete opportunities to link with other potential partners. This could include networking with government partners—such as the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled, which is currently the lead ministry charged with diaspora engagement—as well as other development partners both within and outside the DiaGram Network.

**Priority:** High.

**Responsible entity:** DRC DiPS and Danida

**Timeframe:** Short (0-6 months)

**Resources Required:** Minimal financial resources as DRC already has contacts with many of the relevant partners that would potentially be interested in support diaspora-led efforts.

- 4. DRC should provide more capacity-building to LPs working in Afghanistan.**

Evidence across the portfolio indicates that the diaspora-led model offers DRC unique advantages in terms of identifying "untraditional partners," such as village committees, school advisory boards, and smaller community-based organizations (CBOs). However, the capacity of these partners is often quite low, and there was little evidence that LPs benefit from the knowledge and skills transfer on program management from the current partnership structure and training program.

DRC DiPS should therefore consider more targeted capacity-building assistance to the LPs working in Afghanistan—i.e. organizational capacity building including project management, strategic planning, leadership, participation, advocacy, and fundraising. This would expand DRC and other actors' partnership options and allow CBOs to mobilize their communities to pursue their interests and rights. Capacity-building assistance would not only improve the sustainability of DiPS projects but would complement the previous recommendation (Recommendation 3) as more capacitated LPs would improve the longer-term cost-effectiveness of DiPS projects.

**Priority:** High.

**Responsible entity:** DRC DiPS and Danida

**Timeframe:** Short (0-6 months)

**Resources Required:** Moderate financial resources as most of the training materials already exist and trainings could be provided by DRC Afghanistan staff and/or experienced DiPS partners.

- 5. DRC DiPS should look to develop a more focused overarching strategy that clearly articulates if the focus of the program is to building the capacity of DOs in Denmark and encourage the development of innovative projects or if the program is more focused on delivering tangible “results on the ground.”**

DRC DiPS has demonstrated an impressive evolution over recent years and has succeeded in building a strong core foundation. The program has achieved some impressive results over its life in both in Denmark, as well as in Afghanistan and Somalia. However, these results are either not well captured by current M&E and reporting processes (e.g. the improved capacity of DOs in Denmark) or remain mostly at the community level (e.g. projects results in Afghanistan and Denmark).

In order to strengthen results in the future, DRC DiPS staff should carefully consider and clearly articulate if the focus of the program is primarily on building the capacity of DOs in Denmark or achieving “results on the ground” in targeted countries as each potential focus area requires different strategic considerations. For example, if DiPS wishes to focus on being primarily a mechanism for encouraging diaspora engagement, it should remain open to a variety of partners across various level of capacities, network sizes, and thematic and geographic focus areas. However, if DiPS desires to demonstrate more tangible outcome-level development results, it should be more restrictive and focus on working with higher-capacity partners in more limited thematic and geographic areas along with longer timeframes and larger grants. Being clear on this strategy would also enable the DiPS team to better design and focus their M&E tools to capture these results.

**Responsible entity:** DRC DiPS and Danida

**Timeframe:** Short (0-6 months)

**Resources Required:** Minimal to moderate finances. This recommendation would mostly involve consultations within DRC and with Danida but would also require funding for awareness-building events and engagement with various diaspora groups.

# Annexes

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## Annex A – Terms of Reference

Danish Refugee Council is a private, independent, humanitarian organization working on all aspects of the refugee cause in more than forty countries throughout the world. The aim of DRC is to protect refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) against persecution and to promote durable solutions to the problems of forced displacement on the basis of humanitarian principles and human rights.

### **Background**

DRC's Diaspora Program aims to facilitate, support, and enhance the role of diasporas as agents in humanitarian assistance, recovery and development in their countries of origin. Via its Danida-funded Diaspora Project Support (DiPS), DP provides direct support to diaspora organizations by co-financing relief, rehabilitation and development activities in Somalia and Afghanistan led by diaspora organizations, and offering training activities to build the capacity of the diasporas as agents of change.

The purpose of the evaluation is to provide a concise and methodologically rigid evaluation that comprises that tests key assumptions underpinning DiPS, builds the evidence-base of results, and informs future programming strategies for diaspora support. The evaluation also forms a part of DP's comprehensive learning component focused on exploring, analyzing, and documenting evidence-based knowledge on how to best support diaspora engagement in humanitarian and development interventions.

### **Objective of the consultancy**

The evaluation is to be structured around three central objectives: Testing key assumptions related to (i) relevance and local ownership; (ii) cost-effectiveness; and (iii) sustainability of the DiPS supported diaspora-led interventions in Afghanistan.

This should be achieved by providing a summative and objective assessment of the DiPS 2010-2017 grants mechanism structured around the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) evaluation criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability.

The evaluation will also aim to provide a comparison to the "diaspora model" compared to the more traditional models of related DRC and other INGO programming; however, this will be limited to a mainly qualitative assessment of strengths and weaknesses, not an in-depth quantitative assessment involving comparisons of unit costs or similar financial disaggregation.

### **Scope**

This evaluation constitutes the second half of an evaluation which is to focus on DiPS activities with and by Danish-based Afghan diaspora and their DiPS-supported activities in Afghanistan. The first part of the evaluation (2017) focused on activities in Somalia and the Somali diaspora in Denmark engaging with DiPS.

It is expected that the Afghanistan focused evaluation carefully follows the structure and methodology of the Somalia focused evaluation to ensure that the findings and recommendations form a comprehensive evidence platform from which the DiPS grant mechanism can be adjusted and informed. Reference is made to the 2017 Somalia focused evaluation.

The scope of the evaluation covers diaspora-led activities funded by DiPS in Afghanistan between 2010 and 2017; a total of 17 grant agreements awarded to eight diaspora organizations. While taking into consideration safety issues in the target areas, the consultant is to develop an appropriate strategy that ensures a broad and as comprehensive as possible data collection.

The data set is expected to consist of information from stakeholders in the targeted project sites, including beneficiaries, local partners and representatives of local authorities to the extent feasible, and from Afghan diasporas and other stakeholders in Denmark, including relevant DRC staff members.

For data collection in Afghanistan, it is expected that the consultant works in close collaboration with the DP team based at HQ and at the DRC Afghanistan country office in Kabul and – most likely – with third party data collectors in the form of locally based NGOs with relevant experience that may travel to the project sites. If the consultant is unable to travel to Afghanistan, a training session between the evaluator and the data collectors may also be conducted in an area accessible to all parties.

## Annex B – Bibliography

Documents Reviewed					
#	Author	Title	Institution	Year	Location Published
1	Ashil Farokh (Project Manager)	DAFF Application to the Diaspora Fund for a Capacity building/ Assessment Trip to Kabul	Den Afghanske-Fynske Forening (DAFF)	2011	Denmark
2	Ashil Farokh (Project Manager)	DAFF Travel Assessment from Street to School (Capacity building/Assessment Trip to Kabul)	Den Afghanske-Fynske Forening (DAFF)	2011	Denmark
3	Ashil Farokh (Project Manager)	Application to the DRC Diaspora Fund - From Street to School	From Street to School (DAFF)	2011 (12/10)	Denmark
4	Ashil Farokh (Project Manager)	Application to the DRC Diaspora Fund - From Street to School	From Street to School (DAFF)	2011 (14/10)	Denmark
5	Kirsten Nielsen (DRC Afghanistan)	Diaspora Fund Monitoring Checklist for From Street to School - Monitoring Visit 1 to Kabul	From Street to School (DAFF)	2012	Denmark
6	Maja Halleen Graae (Project Coordinator Diaspora Fund)	Diaspora Fund Monitoring Checklist for From Street to School - Monitoring in Copenhagen of Danish activities	From Street to School (DAFF)	2012	Denmark
7	Dr. SamayHamed (Chairman)	Application to the DRC Diaspora Fund - Open Afghanistan	Open Afghanistan (PUL)	2011	Denmark
8	Dr. Samay Hamed (Chairman)	Final Report for the Diaspora Fund by Open Afghanistan (PUL) for "Welcome Back!"	Open Afghanistan (PUL)	2012	Denmark
9	Shoukat Naeimi (Chairman)	Application to the DRC Diaspora Fund for Afghan Cultural Association " Library and Cultural Centre in Alingar Laghman"	Afghan Cultural Association (AKF)	2011	Denmark
10	Shoukat Naeimi (Chairman)	End Report - Afghan Culture Association in Denmark Library and Cultural Centre	Afghan Cultural Association (AKF)	2012	Denmark
11	Shoukat Naeimi (Chairman)	Application to the DRC Diaspora Fund for further development of Library and Cultural Center in Alingar	Afghan Cultural Association (AKF)	2013	Denmark
12	Shoukat Naeimi (Chairman)	DRC Diaspora Programme Final Narrative Report for AKF project -further development of Library and Cultural Center in Alingar	Afghan Cultural Association (AKF)	2013	Denmark
13	Erfan Mujahid	Application to the DRC Diaspora Fund - Afghan Cultural Association project to build Hilalzo Village School	Afghan Cultural Association (AKF)	2013	Denmark
14	N/A	DRC Diaspora Programme Final Narrative Report for AKF project -Hilalzo village school	Afghan Cultural Association (AKF)	2013	Denmark
15	Sediqullah Safi (President of assoc.)	Application to the DRC Diaspora Fund for public library project in Chowki District, Kunar Province	Chowki Association in Denmark	2011	Denmark
16	Sediqullah Safi (President of assoc.)	Final Report Chowki Public Library Kun Afghanistan	Chowki Association in Denmark	2011	Denmark
17	Katib Cultural Association	Application - Khartezak School Project		2013	

18	Katib Cultural Association	Final Report - Khartezak School Project		2016	
19	Sharif Akbari	M&E Report no. 6 on Project number 742-2013-12	Shuhada Organization	2014	
20	Meena G. Gulabzoi	Application - Pharmacy Faculty Library	Afghan European Pharmacists Association (AEuPA)	2014	
21	AEuPA	Final Report - Library and Book Project		2015	
22	AEuPA	Impact Report - Library and Book Project		2016	
23	Gul Begum Haydar	Application - Water-Catchment-Reservoir	Katib Cultural Association	2013	
24	Katib Cultural Association	Final Report - Water Catchment Reservoir		2015	
25	Asmat Ziraki	Application - Library and Cultural Center	Katib Cultural Association		
26	Katib Cultural Association	Application - Follow-On Furniture for Library Project		2015	
27	Katib Cultural Association	Application- Improvement of Education in Subjects: Physics and Chemistry		2014	
28	Afghan European Pharmacist Association	Kabul University Conference Program		2015	
29	Afghan European Pharmacist Association	Final Narrative Report - Kabul University, conference and Afghan Pharmaceutical Development		2015	
30	Afghan European Pharmacist Association	Application - Standardization in Pharmaceutical Healthcare Conference		2015	
31	Setara Nigar Hassan	Application - The World in Pictures: Pictorial Books with Stories for Children	Afghan Youth Association in Denmark	2016	
32	Afghan Youth Association in Denmark	Final Narrative Report - The World in Pictures: Pictorial Books with Stories for Children (Mobile Box Library)		2017	
33	The Afghan Lawyers' Association in Denmark	Application - Creation of Legal Aid Office in Kabul		2017	
34	Nauja Kleist	"Somali Diaspora Groups in Sweden: Engagement in Development and Relief Work in Horn of Africa."		2018	
35	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark	Country Policy Paper for Afghanistan: 2018-2020."		2017	
36	World Bank	World Bank Open Data Database		2019	

## Annex C – People Consulted

### People Met