Development policy and the role of sociology and social anthropology (SSA) in development aid: lessons from Danish development assistance.[1]

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Dr. Neil Webster, DIIS, Copenhagen nwe@diis.dk

Abstract

Development aid in recent years has witnessed a number of significant changes with implications for sociologists and social anthropologists working in the field of development studies. Three sets of changes can be pointed to here: first in the priorities of development aid; secondly in the instruments utilized in development aid at both national and local levels; thirdly in the manner in which development interventions are implemented.

Changes in development priorities can be illustrated by approaches to poverty and poverty reduction. Poverty is seen today to be multi-dimensional in nature and poverty reduction as requiring diversity in approach. Working with concepts of sustainable livelihoods, of political space for poverty reduction, of entitlements and capabilities, requires analyses that go beyond the technical capacity of an organization to deliver a service to explore the underlying relations and interests that influence the actions of the different actors or stakeholders involved.

Changes in the aid instruments utilized include the emergence of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) and sector wide approaches (SWAP), the former with its stress on participation from civil society and the latter with its pursuit of policy coherence and national ownership. At the local level changes include the greater emphasis placed on decentralized elected government, the role of NGOs and the rapid growth of user groups and committees in development projects.

Changes in the implementation of development aid, in addition to the use of new organizational forms already indicated, includes greater consideration of the possible role of research as formative, action or impact research, in implementation and notably in monitoring and evaluation.

In all three sets of changes it can be seen that there is a need to bridge the gap between research and policy, between development researchers on the one hand and development policy makers and practitioners on the other. With this starting point, the paper will address the roles that social anthropological and sociological research can play in development aid and attempt to point to the problems and the potentials in bringing this particular field of research into a closer interaction with development policy and practice. The paper will draw on examples from Danish development assistance to provide empirical material to support its argument.

[1] The paper is written as a presentation. It will be revised in form and content prior to possible publication.

Acronyms

BFT	Development Advisory Service (Danida)
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
Danida	Danish International Development Assistance
DIIS	Danish Institute for International Studies
FE	Farmer Empowerment
HIPC	Highly Indebted Poor Country
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic and Development Cooperation
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programmes
SSA	Sociology and Social Anthropology/Sociological and Social Anthropological
SWAP	Sector Wide Approach
UNDP	United Nations Development Organisation
WB	World Bank
WSS	Water Supply and Sanitation

Introduction

In order to understand the role played by sociology and social anthropology (SSA) in contemporary development assistance, it is important to begin by recognizing the way that development assistance has changed over the past two decades or so. The changes in development assistance are partly due to the perceived failings in many of the previous types of assistance provided and partly due to the emergence of new thinking on development and as to what might lead to better development outcomes. These two are obviously not unrelated. The paper therefore has three main parts: (i) It begins with an overview of the main types of changes as seen from a Danish perspective. (ii) It then proceeds to take up some of these changes and to explore the contribution and role of SSA in Danish development assistance. It is here that that the gap between research and policy becomes apparent as an issue and also as a problem that continues to exist in the Danish context. (iii) In its third section, the paper seeks to focus on this gap and to discuss the possibilities for change by both parties if better progress towards the development objectives that they hold in common is to be achieved.

The Context of Development Assistance

The priorities of development aid

Viewed from a Danish perspective[2] development aid has witnessed a number of changes in the past two decades with implications for social scientists in development research. The 1980s are characterized by the presence of a general agreement amongst donors with

[2] The Danish perspective could also be seen as a DAC perspective in so far as Danish development assistance in recent years has not been markedly different from the main approaches led by the World Bank or found in DAC/OECD. What is particularly Danish perhaps is the level of relative high level of aid, and its advanced position on certain areas such as its emphasis upon poverty reduction, its use of sector programming, its relative high allocation to multi-lateral organizations. Thereafter the support to and role of development research, Danida's location within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and other organizational aspects of Danish development assistance are variations of what is found in other countries in the developed world.

the 'Washington consensus' in which the 'state should be rolled back', withdrawing from involvement in the general sphere of production, reducing its regulation of the private sector and reducing public expenditure in all areas including education and health. The 1990s witnessed a return towards social concerns by bilateral and multilateral donors not least with the 1990-91 World Development Report in which calls for a more pro-poor development strategy were launched. It also included the prioritization of improved access to education and health and more aid to the poorest of the poor.

The 1990s also witnessed the emergence of the concept of 'sustainable development' in mainstream development discourses. It reflected the strong call for contemporary development to meet contemporary human needs without endangering those of future generations. It reflects the strong movement for learning from 'traditional' systems of resource management, the pressure to raise the 'voices of the poor' to be heard as an integral part of development policy formulation and monitoring and evaluation, and not least the pressure to achieve results with respect to poverty reduction.

In addition the 1990s have seen a growing set of arguments that take up the political requirements for achieving development objectives. The focus on democracy, human rights, good governance and related themes has been added to the focus on economic conditions and the need for economic growth and should not be seen as an attempt to move away from these earlier concerns.

As a consequence of these shifts in approaches during the 1980s and 1990s development policies and programmes have addressed peoples, organizations and institutions in a number of different and often new ways. With respect to *peoples* the discussion has turned for example to concerns with their participation, empowerment, local knowledge, networks and identities. With respect to *organizations* the focus has seen the form of government re-emerge as a critical factor in the planning and implementation of development with democratic government seen as a necessary factor for achieving development outcomes that are more equitable in their distribution, more efficient in their administration and more sustainable in their gains. There has also been a move towards emphasizing the role that local organizations can play and a need to draw them into processes of governance in terms of development policy and programmes. A core idea here is that the 'right type' of local organizations possesses necessary capacities to counter existing tendencies towards social and political marginalization and exclusion. It is support for need to develop and involve civil society more actively in development and to promote democratic decentralization of government.[3]

In the case of *institutions* the changes have seen concerns with good governance and human rights become important objectives in the promotion and implementation of development objectives. Not only do they involve the promotion of more effective legislative, administrative and judiciary systems, they also are seen to need the

[3] Sweden introduced democratic social development as an objective for development assistance already in 1978. Most other donors continued to view this objective as interference in the domestic affairs of another sovereign nation until the 1990s. Today it has taken on the status of a condition for aid as in Denmark's position towards a number of aid recipient countries.

integration of gender and minority rights as cross-cutting issues in government practice and in society generally. These are about institutional practices in administrations and in bureaucratic and political life. It is about shifting the norms of political cultures so that they are more responsive to citizens and less to political and social elites. It is to shift away from primordial loyalties, it is to address the problem of institutional practices that support and enable corruption. At the local level thinking on institutions has looked to different social groups' organizing practices, [4] to their social practices and the associational forms these take (Social Capital), to 'informal' and 'traditional' legal systems, to the management of natural and common resources e.g. in systems of water management or of forestry management.

At the national level development assistance has seen greater donor pressure on recipient countries to set democratizing processes in motion. DAC[5] countries have argued during the 1990s that there is a clear relationship between democratic and accountable government, respect of human rights and economic policies that promote effectiveness and equality. This provides the basis for 'legitimating' donor pressure for administrative and political reforms to promote these and to improve the development outcomes achieved with the development assistance that they provide.[6] More recently, from the mid-1990s, accountability to citizens is a theme that has emerged strongly. It underlies arguments made for good governance, for the promotion of an active civil society, for strengthening the capacity and independence of judicial systems, and most recently for capacity building in government administrations.[7]

At the local level the concern in development assistance has been to elevate the social and political status of populations and to give greater emphasis to a population's own agency in the pursuit of sustainable and more equitable development.

If these developments reflect the general tendencies affecting development assistance, the most deliberate change has to have been the priority overtly and demonstratively placed on poverty reduction as a development objective for development aid by the majority of donors.

From the first UNDP Human Development Report, 1990, the development in aid strategies has increasingly focused around poverty reduction as the overarching priority. If there is a consistent measure against which the logic for an intervention or its impact can be gauged, then it is in terms of what the development outcomes – intended or actual – achieve for reducing poverty. Again we can turn to 'The DAC Guidelines Poverty

[4] Organising practices has emerged as an important subject in research and more recently in policy. See Monique Nuitjen (1998) In the Name of The Land, PhD published at Wageningen University, Netherlands. Webster & Engberg-Pedersen (ed) (2002) In the Name of the Poor. Zed Press. London.

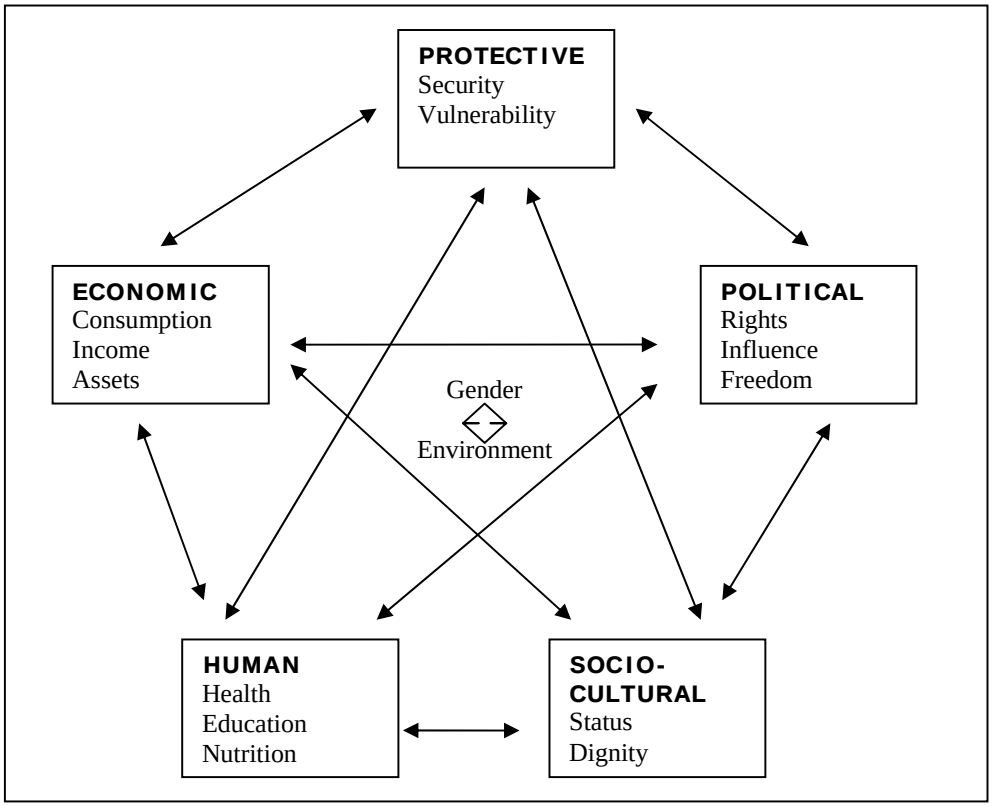
[5] Development Assistance Committeee of the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development.

[6] For example 'Shaping the 21st Century: The contribution of Development Cooperation.' (OECD/DAC, 1997)

[7] Measures include the holding of regular elections, the passing of legislation that ensures a fuller set of citizen rights, improving the functioning of courts and the access of citizens to courts, supporting a free media, bringing civil society organizations into policy formulation and decentralization of government to bring service provision closer to the citizens

Reduction' (DAC/OECD, 2001) to see how many of the arguments linking political changes to economic development and poverty reduction. Here the argument is centered upon 5 types of capability that are seen to be collectively responsible for poverty reduction. These are presented in the following diagram:

Diagram 1: Interactive dimensions of poverty and well-being.



Danish development assistance has mirrored and often been at the forefront of these recent developments. *A Developing World: Strategy for Danish development policy towards 2000* (1994) placed poverty reduction as the most important principle underlying Danish development assistance. It pointed at three main needs: (i) promotion of sustainable economic growth in which the distribution of benefits was a core policy concern; (ii) development of the social sectors and of education and health in particular as a basic requirement for human resource development; and (iii) the promotion of popular participation in development processes, of a rights-based society and of administrative capabilities that can provide greater stability for economic, social and political development. In addition, sustainable use of natural resources, human rights and democratization were established as cross-cutting priorities for all Danish aid and sector programmes.

In its 2003 policy paper on its strategy for development assistance 2004-2008 *A World of Difference* the Danish government set out the following 5 thematic areas for Danish development assistance:

- Human rights, democratisation and good governance
- Stability, security and the fight against terrorism
- Refugees, humanitarian assistance and regions of origin
- Environment
- Social and economic development

The paper states that poverty reduction remains the overarching priority; this is reflected in the fact that out of the 15 programme countries that are the recipients of Danish bilateral development assistance, 14 belong to the group of poorest countries in the world.[8]

Changes in the instruments used in development aid

The changes in the priorities of development assistance are reflected in the instruments used for its provision. As indicated, the World Bank's previous advocacy of structural adjustment plans placed a focus upon the macro-economic conditions necessary for successful development and used structural adjustment plans and conditionalities to pressure recipient governments into pursuance of the 'right' policies. Today's advocacy of political reforms, sustainable development and of citizenship[9] instruments similarly guides the design and selection of instruments used in the practice of providing development assistance. Denmark has been one of the leading donors in the use of sector wide approaches (SWAP) to development. Introduced at the end of the 1980s, partly in response to the failure of structural adjustment policies to reduce poverty to any significant degree, sector programme support (SPS) emerged as an instrument that could bring macro-economic interventions together with project interventions that continued to be funded.

For their part, UNDP and bilateral donors such as Denmark, saw sector programmes as providing a means to move away from disconnected projects scattered through a country's sectors and regions. It provided a means to connect different interventions in a sector such as health or education through a common set of development objectives, to design and implement interventions of different types and at different levels such that they gave rise to synergy effects enhancing the development outcomes that each achieved. In an education sector support programme, interventions could include capacity building within the central ministry, support to teacher training, revision of school syllabi, integration of the work of district education offices with elected district councils, construction of new class rooms and other facilities in schools, and the establishment and training of school management committees.

[8] The programme countries are Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Vietnam in Asia; Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Egypt, Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia in Africa; and Bolivia and Nicaragua in Latin America.. In 2004 the paper has been revised and now has the title *Security, Growth and Development* in which poverty reduction remains the principal objective, but some new initiatives are proposed for 2005-9, in particular a new policy on Africa, a wider Middle East initiative, and strengthening of work towards the Millennium Development Goals.

[9] I use his as a generic term to cover diverse approaches rooted in, for example, theories of entitlement, advocacy of good governance and human rights, promotion of democracy and a rights-based approach (RBA).

A sector programme is built upon general principles that include the joint ownership of the programme and its objectives by the supporting donor(s) and the recipient government. This form of policy coherence is complemented by possible policy coherence between different donors who agree to be party to a sector programme. Basket funding in which donors pool their development assistance to a sector programme with cooperation over the monitoring and evaluation of the programmes implementation and therefore the utilization of their funds, is an important element in this instrument. The list of current Danida sector programmes in its bilateral development assistance is to be found in Appendix 2. From the perspective of sociology and social anthropology, what is important to note in these is the emphasis on the 'human development' sector such as education (3 soon to be in 5 countries), health (5 countries) and WSS (7 countries).

A second important instrument to be noted here is the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) Recipient governments are today pressed to prepare PRSPs using a participatory process involving civil society and development partners, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). A PRSP should describe a country's macroeconomic, structural and social policies and programs to promote growth and reduce poverty, as well as associated external financing needs. Once prepared and accepted by the principal donors (World Bank, IMF) the PRSP becomes the basis for a country's development plan. The need for political and institutional changes and the identification of those necessary for the specific country in question lies at the heart of the approach. Of particular importance to the development of the PRSP is the participation of actors representing the poor, in other words the process cannot be driven by the agenda of the incumbent government and those with greatest access to political power alone. Supporting participation, transparency in planning and better monitoring of poverty reduction impacts are important objectives from a Danish perspective.

A third instrument, or rather set of instruments, to have emerged with the changing priorities is the increased use of local organizations. In the government sphere, it is the change that has seen a far greater emphasis upon decentralized government; in the private sphere, it is the increased emphasis and reliance on the private sector with for example private firms and NGOs playing an increasing role in service provision; in the collective action sphere[10], it is the partly seen in a rediscovery of the cooperative movement, but it is particularly noticeable in the rapid expansion of local user groups and user committees in programmes such as water supply and sanitation (WSS), watershed development, forestry, education, health, to name but a few.

The emergence of the stress upon local organizations and the thinking that lies behind it on the part of both development policy makers and development academics has led some to coin the term 'glocalisation', that is the globalization in development discourse and aid

[10] Reference to the three spheres draws very much upon the work of Norman Uphoff and in particular to his article: Grassroots Organizations and NGOs in Rural Development: Opportunities with Diminishing States and Expanding Markets, in special edition on State, Market and Civil Organizations, eds. A. de Janvry, E. Sadoulet and E. Thorbecke, World Development, 21:4, 1993. The placing of NGOs in the private sector reflects the point that most southern NGOs are not member-based organizations, have poor accountability structures, and their beneficiaries have the status of clients or customers.

practice of the local. A central part of the logic is again the desire to put people into the formulation of development policy and the implementation of development programmes. Here, the stress today is upon popular participation, upon empowerment, upon local ownership. In addition to belief that these will lead to improved poverty reduction, it is also suggested that they can promote sustainability, accountability, better utilization of indigenous knowledge in resource management, and not least build upon the positive elements found in traditional organizations and institutional practices. Central to the last point has been the interest in social capital and the development potential that local forms of associational behaviour can bring to donor supported development programmes.[11]

From a specific Danish perspective, two documents can be noted here: in 1999 Danida published its paper *The New Aid: from Projects to Sector Programmes* in which it argues that the bilateral aid given to its (then) 20 partner countries should be channeled through sector programmes rather than projects. With the publication *Partnership 2000* Danida extended its concept of partnership rooted in the sector programme approach and in its focus on specific partner countries to embrace the need to develop partnerships "between state and civil society and between civil society and civil society". One consequence of this is to encourage bilateral aid to sector programmes to embrace a wider range of stakeholders as part of the mainstream policy and the programme development.[12] To build a knowledge based upon the participation of a wide range of stakeholders has led to SSA expertise and methodologies playing a significant part in many of Danida's sector programmes, from working with proposed beneficiaries at the local level through to institutional analyses of ministries organizations and human resource capacities at the national level.

Changes in the manner of implementing development interventions

The third set of changes I wish to point to for the discussion is in the area of monitoring and evaluation. Again there is considerable overlap with the previous two sets of changes discussed above. However there is an important reason for taking this up separately. Clay and Schaffer[13] argued in 1984 that policies can actually make a difference and that there are different policy choices; i.e. there is room for a manoeuvre. However, this does not mean that policy is a case of linking intentions to implementation. In fact, Clay & Schaffer point out that there is frequently a gap often found between policy aims and outcomes, and they claim that this clear divide is upheld because it enables the group on each side (decision-makers versus implementers) to blame the other group for policy failures.

[11] The World Bank Social Capital Initiative (SCI) was started in October 1996 with a triple goal: (a) to assess the impact of social capital on project effectiveness; (b) to demonstrate that outside assistance can help in the process of social capital formation; (c) and to contribute to the development of indicators for monitoring social capital and methodologies for measuring its impact on development.. See the SCI working paper series at http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/ESSD/sdvext.nsf/09ByDocName/SocialCapitalInitiativeWorkingPaperSeries

[12] James Manor has recently written an article on 'User Committees: A potentially damaging second wave of decentralisation', European Journal of Development Research 16, 1 2004: 192-213. It illustrates well this tendency in development assistance generally.

[13] E.J. Clay & B.B. Schaffer: Room for Manoeuvre; An Exploration of Public Policy in Agricultural and Rural Development (1984) Heinemann Educational Books. London.

They conclude by emphasizing the importance of self-awareness in the policy process, in order to avoid the decision/implementation dichotomy and to encourage responsible action at all stages of the process. They also note the danger - especially in rural development - that policy making may become 'a mystique of elites' [p.192], and therefore it is important to engage with the groups in question. Finally they comment that 'the whole life of policy is a chaos of purposes and accidents' [p.192]; however, this is not seen as an excuse for irresponsibility, but rather is used as an argument for increased responsibility.

Although written 20 years ago, the argument is still relevant today and there are two points I want to draw out here: First, the fact that those responsible for the implementation of development programmes from the donors' side are usually not the same as those responsible for the identification and design of these programmes or for the programme's relation to the donor governments aid strategy; very different logics driven by quite different concerns are to be found. These can be based upon factors such as the type and duration of employment contracts, the lines of accountability that they face, the training and capacities that they bring to their work.

The second point concerns the argument that the manner of implementation can have a very significant consequence for a policy and for the development outcomes that ultimately emerge. This is a point that tends to be neglected, partly due to the way we conceptualize the project cycle. If for example the targeting of beneficiaries in an intervention is a reflection of its policy objectives, the ability of local project administrators to effect policy through their decisions is considerable.[14]

In the title to this section I have suggested that there have been changes in the manner of implementation of development interventions. In fact I would suggest that the changes that have occurred have been more in the language of implementation than in the practice of implementation. Furthermore, the measures that have been introduced over the past twenty years, have tended to be rather more superficial and incorporated in their procedural form and often not as they were originally intended. Here I am thinking of participatory approaches within the different phases of the project cycle,[15] the manner in which local organizations have been incorporated into the implementation and evaluation phases in particular, and the general tension found between the technical side of programme delivery and more process oriented approaches. So, SSA has had an impact, but not enough of an impact and not that which was intended.

[14] For example selection of beneficiaries for Food for Work programmes, for educational scholarships etc. Selection of villages for schools, for forestry projects, for minor roads, and so on.

[15] The project cycle can be simply described as identification, design, implementation, evaluation. For a more sophisticated example at a national level see the World Bank's example at http://siteresources.worldbank.org/OPPORTUNITIES/Images/projectcycle-ar03_big.gif .

What role for the social sciences?

Taking a point of departure in the three types of general changes outlined above, the following seeks to point to some of the important roles that sociology and social anthropology research and researchers have played in each of them.

In the priorities of development aid.

As stated the most important shift in development assistance from a Danish perspective has been the prioritization of poverty reduction and the fact that the way we conceptualize poverty has changed significantly over the past two decade or so. In the early 1990s, there was something of a polarization between what I would call the poverty line approach to poverty and the participatory approach. The former provides objective measures of poverty, i.e. presents poverty as a condition. Poverty lines can be in terms of income, consumption measures such as those based on nutrition, health or education indicators, and so on. The poverty line approach draws on World Bank data, UNDP's Human Development Reports, national governments' own statistics,[16] and similar and can provide a basis for national comparisons and monitoring over time, it is focusing on poverty as a condition, as somewhat apolitical not least in the way it addresses causes of poverty. Economists tend to dominate work on and with this approach to poverty.

In the case of the latter, the participatory approach, it presents poverty as experienced within a specific context. It can capture dimensions such as a lack of economic means, low social status, problems of seasonal dependency, and perception-based dimensions such as isolation, vulnerability, powerlessness, and humiliation.[17] The participatory approach has long been a field for sociologists and social anthropologists. Techniques such as participatory rural appraisal, rapid rural appraisal, wealth ranking, social mapping and tracer studies (life histories etc.) have drawn upon more traditional participatory methodologies (cognitive maps, etc)[18]. It locates poverty in terms of particular individuals in specific contexts and in the details it provides can be seen the types of relations that shape the livelihoods of the people in positive and negative ways. The weakness of this approach and its methods lies in moving from the specific locality to national levels of poverty and the formulation of national sector programmes that can address poverty through the country. It is also difficult to compare between localities because each set of experiences gathered are context specific; what does one compare? It is certainly the case that social anthropologists have had problems in moving from the details of a specific field-based study to a level of generalization that can serve the needs of policymakers and programme implementers. It is also the case that they and sociologists have not always

[16] These vary greatly in quality and number from country to country. Emerging requirements linked to Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, to Mid-Term Expenditure Frameworks, to sector programming and similar developments is gradually improving the national capacity in this field of information..

[17] See for example: R. Chambers, 1995. Poverty and livelihoods: Whose reality counts? IDS Discussion paper No 347

[18] B. Mikkelsen (1995) 'Methods for Development Work and Research: A guide to practitioners', Sage, London, is a good example of a text widely used by Danish students of development studies and development practitioners. It provides a 'tool box' that includes a number of sociological and anthropological techniques.

been at ease with reducing development processes down to indicators to be compared across diverse geographical regions, institutional terrains, and cultures.

In the 1990s the tendency has been for both approaches to be used in development assistance, but in parallel to each other; the poverty line approach tending to guide national planning and the participatory approach being particularly prominent in the monitoring and evaluation of development programmes and projects. This has placed sociologists and anthropologists as experts in the local details, in the evaluation of impacts, in the exploration of attitudes among target groups and local administrators.

It has been noticeable in the Danish context that sociologists and social anthropologists were often recruited to work as technical advisers to work on the local implementation of programmes and projects. How far their use of participatory approaches in the identification and prioritization of the problems that people experienced has influenced the selection and formulation of development projects and programmes in the 1990s is very much open to debate however. Similarly the extent to which information on how targeted groups perceived, assessed and identified with development programmes has had had an impact on the implementation and the approach to poverty reduction can also be questioned. At times it appears to have been the anthropological knowledge of the adviser that has been crucial rather than a strong commitment to alter the foundations on which development assistance is based, namely a rather orthodox asset or consumption approach to identifying and aiding the targeted groups.

The many programmes and projects that claim to be highly participatory, but are at best applying the methods in a ritualistic fashion, serve to demonstrate the gap existing between researchers on the one hand and policymakers and practitioners on the other. Policymakers prefer road maps with which to move from a set of development objectives to a set of intended development outcomes. Those responsible for implementing development programmes want tools that can support the activities of the road map, they want specific procedures that can be easily followed and they want solutions to the problems that arise. The SSA researcher prefers to question the way that a ‘problem’ is defined, develops new techniques to explore the further complexities of the problem, and sees only danger in generalizing from the particular case explored. The researcher cannot reduce her knowledge to less than 50 pages, the policymaker or practitioner has only time to read 5.

The more recent ‘capabilities approach’ to poverty reduction found in the DAC guidelines and elsewhere is part of an attempt to bridge the research-policy gap. While it seeks to capture the diversity and multi-dimensional nature of poverty as seen by SSA researchers, it also places it within an analytical framework that can be used in policy formulation and programme implementation. On the one hand it places demands upon development sociologists and social anthropologists to use their skills to generate knowledge of poverty within a rather more structured analytical framework. On the other hand it requires that development policy makers and programme staff are willing to embrace greater complexity in their programme instruments and tools. The driving force for both parties must be the failure of existing policies and programmes to achieve the

development objectives with respect to poverty reduction despite the immense resources applied to the task.

The capability approach is visually presented in Diagram 1 earlier in the paper (see page 5). Change in an individual's poverty condition requires different forms of action that changes his or her capabilities. Development interventions, whether as projects or sector programmes, should seek to address one or more of the capabilities presented and the dimensions that they include. For example development assistance to secondary education might aim at contributing to the poverty capabilities in the following manner:

Box 1: Secondary education and poverty reduction

Human capabilities: the provision of making secondary education available to all who complete primary education will enhance the human capability of poor groups in particular in so far as they are able to access it. The provision of education beyond basic and primary will contribute significantly to the awareness of poor people with respect to health (preventive health care) and not least through AIDs awareness and reduced fertility rates.

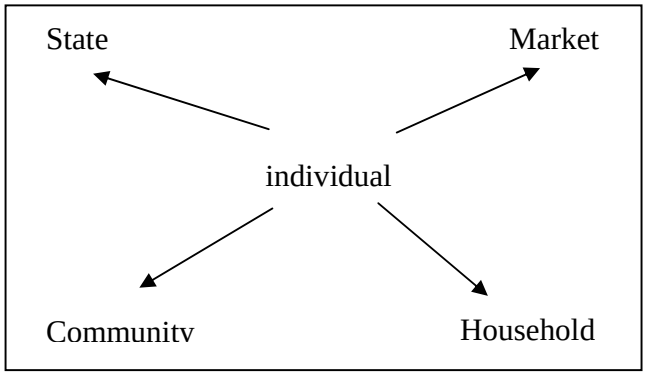
Economic capabilities: Secondary education with a vocational stream will provide poor households with the opportunity to be better educated, more skilled and to become part of a more productive labour force; it will improve income and consumption levels.

Political capabilities: Secondary education will support a greater awareness of the rights and responsibilities of citizens with respect to institutions of central and local government, the judiciary, etc.

Socio-cultural and protective capabilities: The inclusive policies of Secondary Education will contribute indirectly to the status and dignity of socially marginalized and excluded groups. In enhancing incomes and consumption levels, together with facilitating more productive economic activities particularly in rural areas, the capacity to cope with economic crises, natural disasters and other unforeseen problems should be increased.

To move from the theoretical model with its explicit hypotheses concerning poverty presented in diagram 1 to a set of specific activities and their implementation requires a strong and detailed knowledge base. In particular it requires that the formulation of the programme with its activities is guided by an understanding of the target population's needs and interests, their relationship to the organizations involved in the proposal, the institutions that influences their access (or denial) to the service or resource in question, as well as the local political opportunity structures that shape their relationship to the state, to a specific market, to the community in which they live, and within their household. These are all crucial factors for their livelihood condition and can be presented in the rather simplistic way:

Diagram 2: The individual in development:



(adapted from Geof Wood, 2000)

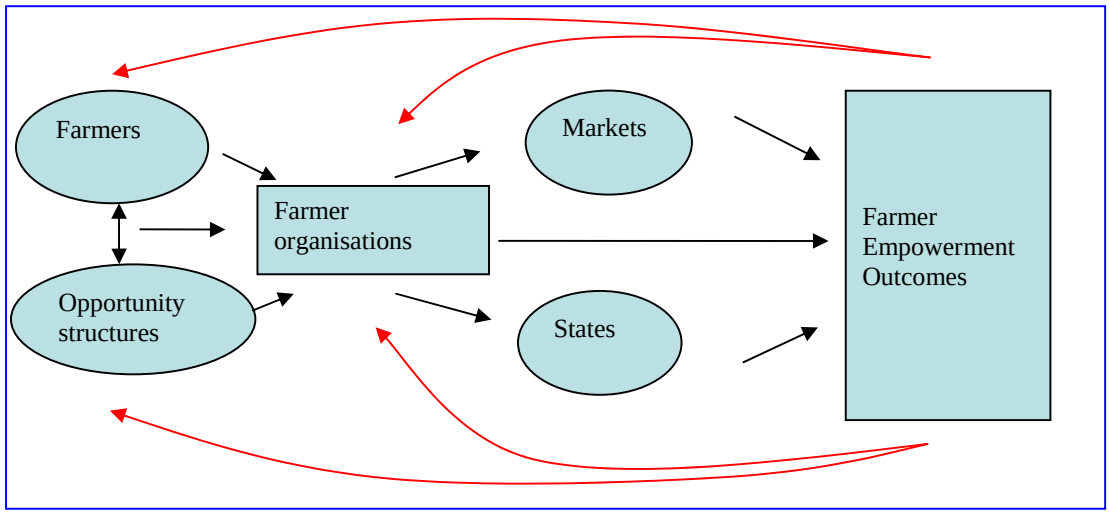
According to the capabilities she possesses, she is able pursue interests and thereby improve her different capabilities as outlined in the case of secondary education previously. To do so it requires however that she can make decisions on the basis of informed choices and as permitted by the opportunity structures that are present. Again the role of the development sociologist or social anthropologist is central to the generation and quality of the information used in the formulation of a programme and thereby the development outcomes that might be achieved. As has been argued by social scientists during the past two decades, development cannot be reduced to attitude, character or skills possessed of the individuals, but neither can it be seen to be determined by factors beyond the individual's control such as their gender, their ethnicity, their caste or similar structural factors.

This agency-structure dilemma has long been present in development assistance and longer at the heart of debates within SSA. While projects and programmes have a long tradition for directing resources at the individuals in a target group, it has not been so easy to address structural factors. Political sensitivities, Expressions such as 'the enabling environment', ' the macro-economic conditions', 'the political will' are but a few of the more recent terms to have been used in discussing the context and conditions in which development programmes are implemented.

Recent work undertaken by DIIS for Danida illustrates an approach to this discussion that is (i) influenced very much by theoretical approaches within sociology and social anthropology and (ii) point to the need for inputs from sociologists and social anthropologists and their methodological tools and analytical skills in the implementing of development programmes. It should be noted that farmers' organisations are one of the key mechanisms for supporting farmer empowerment for many donors today. While organising farmers in groups has been used for decades by governments and development organisations as a cost effective method of providing services to farmers previously there was no explicit attempt to empower farmers (e.g. the Training and Visit extension approach) Today the farmer group is seen as a key organisational instrument to facilitate small-scale farmers' collaborative efforts aimed not only at improving their own

economic and social situations but also those of their communities. In this way the example of changes in the use of Farmer Empowerment (FE) mirrors the broader changes in development assistance discussed in the paper. The following diagram captures the essence of the new FE approach:

Diagram 3: The role of farmer organisations in promoting farmer empowerment in agricultural development



The need for credible evidence and a detailed knowledge base developed through sociological and anthropological investigations in the design and implementation of any such intervention is quite clear. Questions that need to be answered include: What institutions and organisations already exist within the selected locality? What are the priorities of the local agricultural producers? What are the land and tenancy structures? How are the markets for agricultural inputs and products organised? What is the state and status of local government, of non-government organisations, of administrative services in the field of agriculture? What are the socio-economic and cultural divisions within the local population and how do these manifest themselves in institutional practices and organisational politics in the locality?

The example can be repeated for most sectors to which development assistance is given today. Whether it is called formative research, action research or merely development research the importance today of researchers' need to influence policy cannot be underestimated. Neither can the potential benefits that can ensue from such influence be neglected. [19] These include the securing of local ownership and thereby the sustainability of certain development outcomes (e.g. effective user committees, institutional practices improving the status of women, changes in land rights), generating indicators that better

[19] The poor progress made towards the Millennium Development Goals is an important illustration of the problems that need to be addressed by researchers in collaboration with policymakers. Denmark has produced a status reporting October 2004. Danida was the first bilateral donor to present a status report in September 2003.

reflect local interests within the planning process, identifying the poor and the absolute poor, and capturing local geographic, cultural and political dynamics that affect the access to resources and services.

Social sciences in Danish development assistance today.

Research

The Hernes Commission Report (2001) was prepared by an international commission chaired by the former Norwegian Minister of Health and Research, Gudmund Hernes. It carried out a study of development research financed by Danish assistance funds. The main recommendation was for greater cohesion between development research and development assistance and not least greater relevance in research for assistance and development. One consequence of this is that more research projects are implemented in the programme countries. It also recommended that research cooperation between North and South should be based on the needs of the partners in the developing countries and contribute actively to capacity building in these countries; that communication of research results should be an integrated element of all projects and that an increased open competition for research funds should improve quality and promote increased diversity of suppliers.

As an outcome of this report Danish development research (SSA) today is organised mainly through two instruments: (i) research councils that award grants for specific research projects and through research programmes, and (ii) support to specific institutions. Under the first Danida provides funds to the Danish Council for Development Research (Rådet for Udviklingsforskning – RUF) which allocates grants for both social science and natural science projects once a year. Project applications, where appropriate are reviewed not only by academic referees, but also by Danida personnel in the Danish embassies and within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Their advice is sought with respect to the relevance of the proposed research to sector and country programmes, sector policies, and related factors.

Under the second the main base for SSA development research is at the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS). DIIS has a five year contract to provide research and research based output in 6 fields that have been agreed in discussions between Technical Advisory Services – Development Cooperation (Bistandsfaglig Tjeneste – BFT) and the DIIS department heads concerned with development research. In addition to this, DIIS also undertakes a number of policy studies and provides consultancy services to Danida, is responsible for a series of networks working on development issues, and provides other forms of advisory and training inputs. Appendix 4 provides a breakdown of the allocation Danish development research funds and a brief discussion of their uses.

Policy and Consultancy Studies

If research seeks to maintain a healthy distance from the day to day problems of development assistance, permitting room for more critical and longer term engagements with the chosen subject, then policy and consultancy studies are more directly linked to

these. In their terms of reference are usually found clear frameworks delineating what is to be studied, what approaches are to be adopted and what form the outputs should take.

SSA researchers provide important support to policy and consultancy work undertaken in Denmark. A significant number of those working in these areas have a background in these academic disciplines and as with the trends in the form and direction of Danish development assistance briefly described in the first part of the paper, the work of programme and project identification, formulation, implementation and evaluation has increasingly drawn upon the methodological skills and techniques of SSA. In the case of such work undertaken at DIIS, we prefer to describe it as research-informed or research-based rather than as having the status of being basic research ('grundforskning' in Danish). We work with a norm of 20% of our time allocated to such work. Policy studies are primarily for Danida. Consultancy services are provided for a range of agencies including Danida, Danish NGOs, the World Bank, to name but a few. In practice, we prefer to undertake identification and formulation missions rather than evaluation missions as there can be greater opportunities to bring our research knowledge into these. Having said this, we have undertaken a series of aid impact studies for Danida seeking to explore and assess the nature of the development outcomes from major long term interventions. SSA techniques and methods have been central to these.[20]

Concluding Comments: Bridging the gap between SSA research and development policy

Clearly there is an important opportunity for SSA to contribute to improving the design and implementation of aid interventions and thereby the quality of the development outcomes achieved. To express it another way, SSA should be influencing development policy and development policy and development outcomes should be better as a result of this influence. This is not a problem found only in certain counties for while there might be a quite good relationship and between SSA research and development policy in certain countries including Denmark and Sweden there nevertheless remains a gap here as well. In Denmark the problem has given rise to a number of evaluations of development research, a major restructuring of the organisation of development research, and repeated workshops and conferences to try further 'to bridge the gap'.[21]

With respect to this gap, three issues that can be pointed to here: the *relevance* of research, *obstacles in the uptake* of research and the *role of outsiders*.[22] With respect to the *relevance* of research it is a problem that social science research is not always relevant for development policy. In Danish we tend to make a distinction between 'basic research' and 'applied research'. The former term is applied to research covering a broad range of areas and issues that can be loosely described as of 'development relevance'. These can

[20] A series of papers from the Aid Impact programme have been published by Danida and DIIS. See www.diis.dk or contact Steen Folke at DIIS for further details.

[21] The Hernes Commission Report (2001) came from an international commission chaired by the former Norwegian Minister of Health and Research, Gudmund Hernes. It carried out a study of development research financed by Danish assistance funds.

[22] Overseas Development Institute, London, runs a 'Research and Policy in Development Programme'.

range from theoretical concerns with general development processes through to empirical studies of localities, large or small, in which development or its absence is an issue. Applied research is research seen to be driven by the more immediate concerns of policy makers and of programme practitioners. The researcher naturally tends to prefer the former form of research; those responsible for policy tend towards the latter. Tensions between the two are exacerbated by the fact that funding from development research is to a large part provided through the budget for development assistance. These can be through core grants to research institutions or through funds allocated to projects and programmes through the Danish Council for Development Research. Both instruments – core grant contracts and research council allocations – place emphasis on the relevance to policy and to Danish development assistance. From the researcher's perspective the need is seen to retain independence but to accept some responsibility for supporting policy. From the policy maker's perspective it is to get value for money.

A development researcher from the social sciences will argue that their concerns are as much with the concerns that will shape development agenda in the future and not just with the problems faced by the development agenda of today and that a critical approach is an important element in undertaking the research. The relevance of what might be of importance in development in five years of problems that have not yet emerged is not always apparent to the policy maker or programme administrator and they often see a critical approach by a researcher as being unconstructive.[23]

It is also the case that while a researcher will argue that the relevance of their work is to be found in the locations of the study and by listening to the actors involved in the fields and issues studied. For a policy maker there are many other factors to be considered in determining the relevance of a study. These include the various constituencies concerned with aid at home – parliament and politicians, the public, the competing priorities for finance amongst ministers and ministries, interests in development assistance in the private sector, to name just a few.

The second issue identified is that of *uptake*. Development researchers generally believe that the complexity of development requires time and 'space' for the researcher if it is to be adequately addressed. The outputs tend to be books and peer reviewed articles for international journals. This is understandable as a researcher's career is very much influenced by these; policy studies, consultancies, teaching playing a less significant role in academic appointments. However, the research proposal-to-academic publication cycle can take several years. The policy maker needs solutions and ideas within a few weeks or months and furthermore needs them in a short and easily accessible form. They rarely have time to read articles of 20 or more pages. In addition to the time, style and length of research based outputs; the lack of clear points of interface is also a problem. Policy makers do not have time to attend academic conferences and policy workshops tend to be infrequent and reliant upon those known to be able to deliver the needs of the policy maker. Therefore the uptake, that is the utilization of the body of knowledge emerging

[23] While a consultant is said to find one solution for 10 problems, a researcher is seen to find 10 problems in every proposed solution.

from research, is poor in the developed world of donors and totally absent in the less developed world of the recipients.

The problem lies with both parties, the researchers and the policymakers. The former are poor are turning the research knowledge into accessible outputs; they are poor at finding out who are the stakeholders in policy, what are their resource needs, what are the ideas that they currently work with. For their part, the policymakers are prematurely defensive in the face of critical thinking, bad news is seen to be a criticism. They are reluctant to accept any responsibility for the development research community in their country and tend to see research as the opposite of 'action' rather than as the opposite of 'ignorance'.

The third issue noted above is the *role of outsiders*. Beyond the academic world of development research and the development agencies there are the outside 'stakeholders' who ask whether or not the money spent on development research provides value for money. Ministries, funding councils, universities, the tax paying public, the private industries seeking knowledge relevant for production or marketing strategies, all have an interest in being able to see that development research adds value to outputs that they are concerned with. These can range from students to investment strategies, to projects, to reduced conflicts, to stable governments to human rights, to name but a few. The development researcher needs to be aware of the political, economic and cultural contexts in which they work as well as those in the location where they research. They need to be aware of the institutional practices of those with who they engage with at home as well as abroad, and the pressures that these actors face.

Simon Maxwell, the Director of the Overseas Development Institute in London, has suggested that the development researcher needs to be a highly skilled entrepreneurial type combining the skills of a storyteller, networker, engineer, and fixer. Sociologists and social anthropologists have made important contributions in the linking of development assistance more closely to recipient countries' populations and to the poorer sections of those populations in particular. Human development interventions (education, health, drinking water, etc) have drawn upon and benefited from the knowledge of local institutions and organizations, of the perceptions of the target groups, the means and organizing practices that SSA researchers have introduced.

If the challenge to influence policy and practice is to be taken further, not only must these researchers retain their integrity as researchers (as opposed to consultants or policy advisers) they must also learn how to meet the changing needs of policymakers. This requires that the dissemination of their research outputs takes a variety of forms for different types of users; that they learn to know policymakers and the ways that they work; that they create networks in which policy makers are present; that they consult with policymakers in the formulation of research proposals and during its undertaking (workshops etc). These are some of the challenges that we have faced in Denmark during the past decade and that continue to face us today.

For their part I would argue that donors and their policy makers should accept a greater responsibility for the development research community. This first and foremost needs to

take the form of funds to support research. It requires that they respect the status of research and the researcher, but enter a dialogue to explain their needs as policymakers and as aid practitioners. They should facilitate points of interaction in different locations within their 'aid architecture' – at the headquarters, in the country offices, with the technical advisory services, and so on. In general it is important that a space for SSA research and researchers is found in the formulation of development policy and strategy, in the preparation of country, sector and project plans, in programme and project implementation, monitoring and evaluation. This is not a luxury but a necessity for more equitable and more sustainable development outcomes. Social science research should not be seen as the opposite to action, but as a way to better development outcomes.

1. Appendix 1

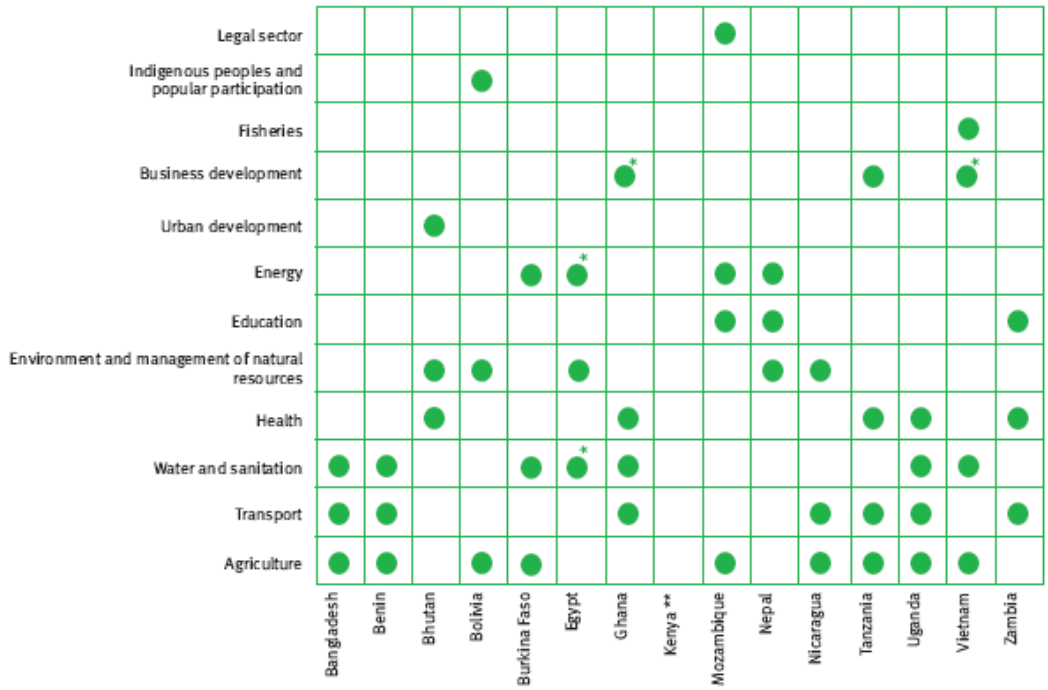
State assistance under Danish Finance Act, Account Section 06.3:

USD million	2001[1]	2002[2]	2003(3)
Bilateral assistance under Section 06.3			
Programme and project assistance in Africa	311.58	293.33	268.94
Programme and project assistance in Asia	119.66	111.46	114.21
Programme and project assistance in Latin America	44.48	48.77	42.62
Special project assistance	21.31	24.71	18.01
Assistance through NGOs	118.42	113.25	114.21
Transitional assistance to the western Balkans	23.71	17.77	9.51
Regional and local assistance	0.00	0.00	17.76
Personnel assistance	71.65	61.32	66.97
Debt relief	0.00	20.37	20.76
Mixed credits	30.02	20.98	38.05
Other bilateral activities	23.53	22.89	30.31
Human rights and democratisation	9.56	10.58	13.70
Total bilateral assistance	773.92	745.33	755.06
Multilateral assistance under Section 06.3			
UN Development Programme (UNDP)	63.16	55.80	55.88
UN Children's Fund (UNICEF)	25.68	24.25	24.48
UN Population and Health Programmes	46.03	37.35	37.16
UN Agriculture and Food Programmes	33.39	29.77	26.72
Global environmental programmes	14.37	17.37	18.45
Other UN assistance programmes	29.66	31.26	39.93
World Bank Group	67.35	66.43	55.27
Regional banks	6.28	4.33	6.86
Regional and other development funds	29.92	59.66	44.01
Assistance through the EU	14.27	29.36	41.67
Multilateral, regional and transitional assistance	21.96	21.95	18.77
International development research	11.76	10.24	10.15
Miscellaneous multilateral contributions	16.52	12.73	14.32
Humanitarian organisations	31.13	28.81	30.69
Extraordinary humanitarian contributions and the International Humanitarian Service (IHB)	102.34	70.76	69.76
Themed multilateral contributions	5.39	18.36	17.76
Total multilateral assistance	519.21	518.41	511.89
Administration	75.38	82.48	80.03
Property acquisitions and maintenance	1.99	0.99	3.17
Total state assistance under Section 06.3	1,370.49	1,347.21	1,350.15

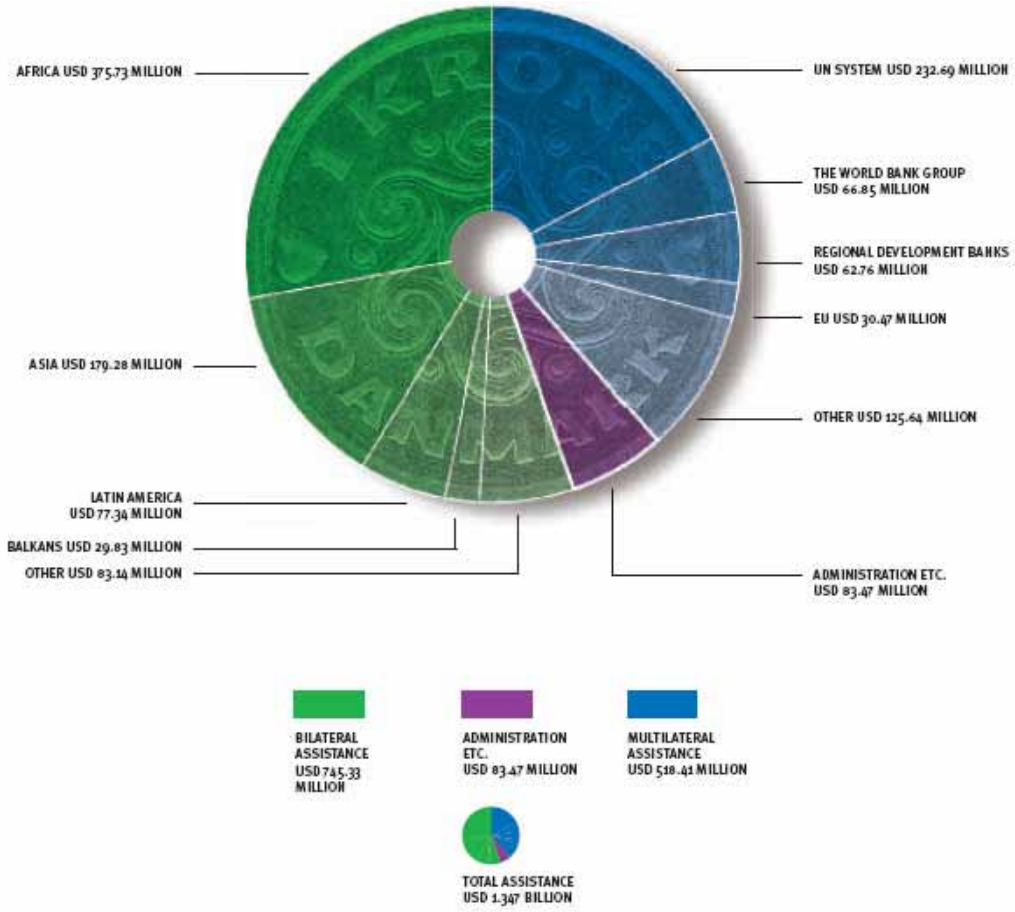
Environmental assistance to developing countries (06.11.16)	77.57	78.67	67.86
Transferred to ASEM IV from 06.11.16	0.00	-7.61	0.00
Share of Peace and Stability Fund (FRESTA) (06.11.17)	5.36	7.15	0.00
Community-financed EU assistance	73.59	79.14	82.44
Repayment of government loans and debt relief	-19.22	10.32	-0.81
Armed forces and police	11.95	6.79	17.63
Refugee reception expenses	114.06	109.56	95.13
Other (The Industrialisation Fund for Developing Countries - IFU),contributions to UN organisations) 4)	2.31	2.41	14.59
GEF adjustment	-1.68	-2.07	0.00
Total Danish assistance as estimated for the DAC	1,634.43	1,631.57	1,626.98

1) 1 USD =DKK 8.3208
2) 1 USD =DKK 7.8843
3) 2003 Danish Finance Act. Exchange rate = 7.8843
4) Budget figures for 2002.
GNP for 2002: USD 170,436.91 million – ODA percentage for 2002: 0.96

Appendix 2: Partner Countries and Sector Programmes



Appendix 3: Distribution of Danish Development Assistance in 2002.



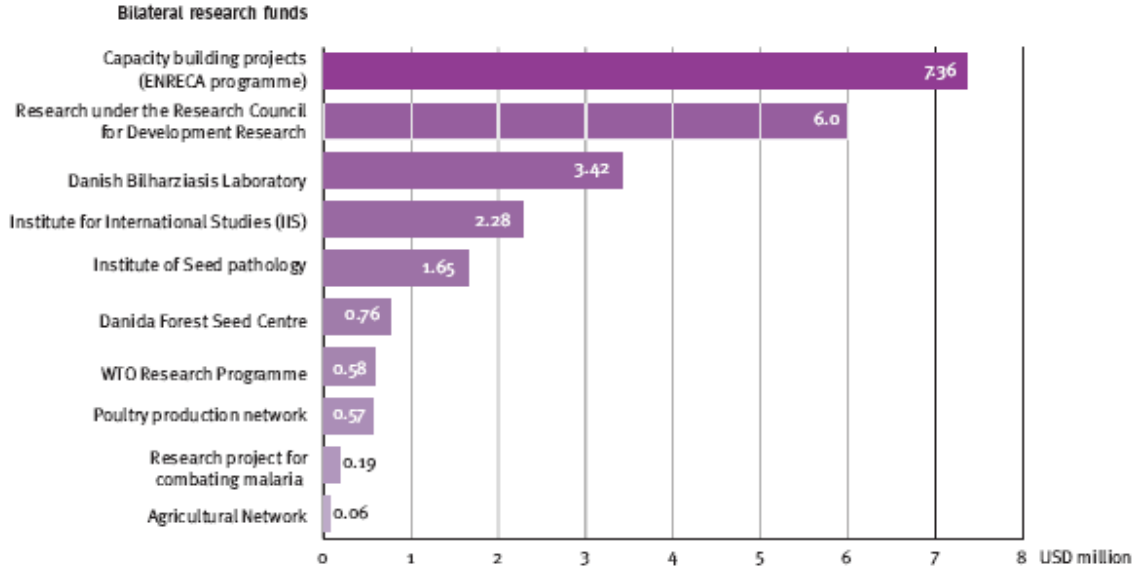
Appendix 4: Research Supports Danish Development Cooperation

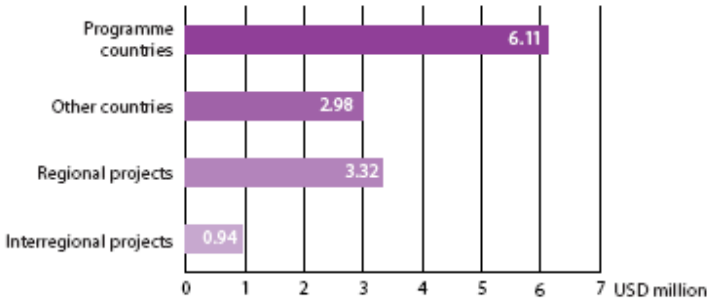
In 2000, an international commission chaired by the former Norwegian Minister of Health and Research, Gudmund Hernes, carried out a study of development research financed by Danish assistance funds.
As a result of the Hernes Commission's recommendations for greater cohesion as regards assistance, it is now considered more important for research to be of relevance for assistance and development. One consequence of this will be that more research projects are implemented in the programme countries. The research cooperation between North and South should be based on the needs of the partners in the developing countries and contribute actively to capacity building in these countries.

Communication of research results should be an integrated element of all projects and increased open competition for research funds should improve quality and promote increased diversity of suppliers. In autumn 2002, a new Research Council for

Development Research was appointed to advise the Danish Minister for Foreign Affairs on the distribution of research support.

Recipients of Research Funds, 2002



The graph shows how the bilateral research funds, a total of USD 22.9 million, were distributed in 2002. A total of DKK USD 16.1 million was allocated in multilateral grants to international research institutions and programmes in 2002, over half being used for international agricultural research.

Research Funds Divided by Countries and Regions