

Response to the public consultation regarding the Organisation Strategy for Denmark's Engagement with Education Cannot Wait (ECW) from the Danish Education Coalition under Global Focus

The Danish Education Coalition appreciates the continued Danish support to education through its aid budget. We agree with the justification for the support that highlights that the mandate and work of Education Cannot Wait) is increasingly relevant due to the high levels of emergencies and crisis globally. We find the three proposed Danish priorities relevant and appropriate.

While we agree that the three priorities set forth in the draft Organisation Strategy are key to the sector and link Denmark's priorities well with those of ECW, we would argue that:

1. A broader focus on equity, quality and especially the role that teachers play is key.
2. A focus on youth is key to the issue of education and aligns perfectly with Denmark's priorities. In the draft strategy, the focus is almost exclusively on children. This should be changed to children and youth, with a specific focus on student involvement in education.
1. Denmark has historically played a strong role in ensuring global focus on public education systems as opposed to private or for-profit education, and we would like to see this highlighted in the strategy, while recognizing that ECW often works in areas where the state is not present. The vulnerability of the populations ECW serves only highlights the importance of working with not-for-profit actors.
2. An increased focus on learning at all ages, including early learning, primary, secondary and tertiary education as well as catch-up programmes and technical and vocational education and training.

The multilateral funding to GPE and ECW makes up a significant portion of Denmark's total fundings to education (ODA including humanitarian aid) and reflects a funding pattern of development assistance in favour of multilateral funding over bilateral funding. This ensures a certain level of efficiency of the funds provided, but also comes with a responsibility to ensure the direction and strategies under which the funding is dispersed. As an important donor of GPE and ECW, Denmark has a strong voice in the governance structures, which set standards for the entire sector. Denmark should use this voice to make a clear stand on how to ensure DK's thematic priority areas in the education space. This requires deep knowledge of the field - something that is often gained through bilateral country programmes and national experience, and it is recommended that MFA seeks out this experience in a more coordinated and long-term manner, to consolidate a stronger knowledge base for efficient quality programming within key areas of expertise.

In terms of the three proposed priorities, we would like to make the following comments:

Gender equality:

1. We appreciate that gender has such a prominent focus in the draft strategy. We do, however, believe that gender in education needs to be addressed in the broadest terms – to include a gender transformative approach to addressing harmful gender norms and stereotypes – targeting all genders and not just girls' education. We therefore recommend an even deeper focus on the transformative change needed to uproot deep seated inequalities within the education sector. While we appreciate that gender-transformative MYRPs are written into the strategy, we do not believe that having the FERs be gender-sensitive is sufficient.

HDP Nexus:

1. Denmark has at various occasions taken upon itself a global leadership role on nexus. We would like to see concrete proposals for how to further explore synergies between GPE and ECW and how Denmark can support these.

Climate Change:

1. In general, but particularly relevant to the issue of climate change, the strategy lacks a focus on young people's agency and inclusion in decision-making processes (especially of those most marginalized, including girls) related to education and climate change.

Lastly, we want to highlight the good collaboration that exists between civil society and the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs on issues related to education, including ECW. However, for Denmark to truly push several of these issues in the governance structure of ECW, more staff might be needed. While the few staff working on education are doing admirable work, they are covering a large and important portfolio and more support could bring more visibility to these issues. We would like to offer the collective expertise of civil society to support the Danish priorities in ECW and would suggest more regular communication between Danish representatives and civil society.