

Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs/Danida review of IDSN – 2014 (Summary)

In March 2014 the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs/Danida concluded its review of the International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN). This is a summary of key points underscoring the overall conclusions from the 44-page report. The objective of the review was to assess IDSN's activities and the relevance and effectiveness of its strategies and programmes in the period 2009-2013. The review was lead by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark with a team of consultants from COWI and included desk studies and analysis of verifiable indicators as well as stakeholder interviews with the EU, UN, members in caste-affected countries and Dalit Solidarity Networks in Europe.

Overall Conclusions of the Review

- “IDSN is capable of bridging the national level with international policy and decision-makers in EU and UN as well as between EU and UN, and is recognised internationally for its systematised and persistent documentation process, lobby work, mapping of stakeholders as well as monitoring and follow-up on specific issues.”
- “It is possible to track the effect of IDSN's input to e.g. the EP, and IDSN has lobbied for recommendations on caste discrimination in connection with UN special procedures, e.g. the UPR that is directed towards UN member countries, and for the inclusion of work on 'caste discrimination' into the OHCHR strategic management plan. Several of the UPR recommendations have been accepted by the UN member states. IDSN is thus fully capable of implementing its mandate and objectives as well as carrying out the programmes supported by its donors.”
- “IDSN's objectives, approach and methodologies fit well into DMFA/Danida's human rights and civil society policies and strategies.”

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“IDSN is key for bringing the issue of caste discrimination to the attention of EU. It has credibility with EU and UN, works SMART, and is strong in lobbying and follow-up.” Bert Theuermann, Chair of COHOM, Human Rights Working Group, Council of EU.

“IDSN is the only international NGO working consistently with caste discrimination and targeting the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN) specifically.”

“IDSN is capable of bridging the national level with international policy and decision-makers in EU and UN as well as between EU and UN.”

“IDSN is today recognised internationally for its working methodology.”

Review – Executive Summary

“IDSN is fully capable of implementing its mandate and objectives as well as carrying out the programmes supported.” Review – Executive Summary

The report also analysed IDSN's EU, UN and Communication and Networking programmes with the following conclusions.

Effectiveness of IDSN's UN, EU and Communication and Networking programmes - conclusions

- "IDSN succeeds in raising awareness and influencing relevant resolutions, guidelines, policies, reports, observations and recommendations related to caste discrimination, mainstreaming gender issues into EU and UN policies, and bridging local issues to become part of the international agenda."
- "Some of the UN UPR recommendations, where IDSN has provided significant input to the process and been lobbying states, have been adopted by caste affected countries, e.g. India and Nepal. If these states implement the recommendations, this would be an indicator of the attributed effect of IDSN's work."
- "The communication platform is of high quality, containing timely and relevant information. It is well organised (with a few exceptions) and used by national networks and NGOs as well as key stakeholders. It is regarded by many stakeholders as the key international source of information..."

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"IDSN has been instrumental in increasing the issue of caste discrimination in international bodies and organizations. This includes the draft *UN Principles and Guidelines for the Effective Elimination of Discrimination based on Work and Decent (2009)*, and the *European Parliament resolution of 10 October 2013 on caste-based discrimination*, as well as an increasing number of references to and recommendations on caste discrimination in EU resolutions and EU and UN guidelines, documents and reports." Review pg. 5

"Stakeholders find that IDSN has developed an excellent media platform, for combatting caste discrimination ... UN and EU officials make use of IDSN documentation before country visits. Likewise, IDSN members at national level indicated that the newsletter is *their* newsletter that they feed into from the national level" Review pg. 9

The report also analysed IDSN's relevance in relation to strategies and IDSN's efficiency and sustainability:

Conclusions – IDSN's Relevance

IDSN:

- “Is a professional human rights advocacy, lobby and networking NGO. It is the only international organisation focusing on caste discrimination in EU and UN context, bridging national NGOs with the international community.”
- “Has a strong partnership concept and its members feel strong ownership. The choice of target groups (EU and UN) is focused and reflects the IDSN goals well.”
- Bases all of its work on human rights and standard setting and confirms the DMFA's human rights based approach. As a civil society advocacy NGO, IDSN matches the DMFA's civil society strategy well.

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“IDSN members have a high degree of ownership and stakeholders have been emphasising that one of IDSN's strengths is that it involves representatives of the affected target group , including Dalit women, in EU and UN meetings and events.” Review – Executive Summary

Conclusions – IDSN's Efficiency and Sustainability

- “IDSN is efficient and capable of communicating and implementing its mandate and objectives, including the objectives and activities described in the grant document of the DMFA, and in carrying out its own administration and basic IT.”
- “IDSN is to a high degree sustainable due to the ownership of members and stakeholders, but lacks long-term and stable funding and capital resources. It is transparent in most matters.”

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“In the view of most interviewees, IDSN is *very* efficient in promoting and implementing its objectives in relation to its key stakeholders.” Review pg. 11

“The IDSN network is based on a strong partnership concept that involves consensus building among its members. Ownership of IDSN is not questioned, even though the secretariat is located in Copenhagen and employs Danish staff only.” Review pg. 3

There are also a number of challenges to IDSN outlined in the report. These notably include challenges surrounding sustainable long-term funding and adequate cash-flow. The review team recommended that IDSN revise and update statutes and bylaws, and carry out a systematic strategy process for the organisation.

The review team also notes that the work-load is high and notes that “if it would be possible for IDSN to obtain more funding, the organisation would profit from adding one or two staff member more that could assist in strengthening the organisation.” In relation to these challenges the review team offers the following recommendations to donors:

Recommendations to donors and the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

- “Make new and existing contracts longer term and rolling and lasting a minimum of three years.”
- “The DMFA may consider to raise the grant with up to 50 % and guarantee longer-term financial support to IDSN, e.g. via a mini-framework agreement.”

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For more information on this review please email info@idsn.org or call IDSN on +4560433032