**South-North dialogue engagement about livelihoods of vulnerable groups during the Covid-19 pandemic**

*Summary*

The Covid-19 pandemic is global and has hit vulnerable groups in any country harder than the population at large. Their livelihoods are challenged at different levels in South and North, but the amplifying impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is common. Due to the impact on social life, there is a need for discourse about magnitude and scope of the Covid-19 impact, and public engagement about how vulnerable groups can be better supported during global crises.

A South-North dialogue will engage Danish citizens in local communities and members of civil society organisations. Some of these organisations may support vulnerable groups in Denmark, be vulnerable individuals themselves, or be in advocacy and involved in practical interventions to improve the livelihoods of vulnerable groups in the Global South.

The dialogue will stimulate discussions among the participants about livelihood situations in Global South countries and in Denmark. It will incorporate journalists based in Denmark and the Global South with current eyewitness reports. Further supported by resource persons, the participants will engage in proposals for development aid policy reform and/or options for joining relevant Danish NGOs to operate practical interventions supporting vulnerable groups in Global South countries.

1. **Objective and relevance (the world around us)**

Overall, the objective of this dialogue is to achieve interaction between reports from South and North by stimulating discussions among the participants about specific parallels and non-parallels between livelihood situations in Global South countries and Denmark.

* *Which are the changes with your target groups you want to achieve with the intervention?*

In the South-North dialogue the participants are exposed to reports by journalists in the South and North on how vulnerable people are affected. In workshop discussions participants will;

* understand the root causes of the livelihood situations in South and North, and how they relate to the UN Sustainable Development Goals,
* realize the South-North divide in resources to address the situation, and
* engage in advocacy for Danish policy change and/or in practical interventions in South countries through relevant Danish development NGOs.

The attention of wider public audiences in Denmark will be drawn to the challenging situation of vulnerable groups, as the objectives, programme and process of the activity are communicated through electronic and printed media.

* *How will the activity promote the involvement and participation of the target groups in development cooperation?*

Throughout the duration of the activity, the target groups will participate in a continuous dialogue with journalists in selected Global South countries, as the journalists report on specific and current livelihood situations among vulnerable groups within the population of their respective Global South country. At any time, the target groups may ask questions about the reports of the journalists and request elaboration as needed.

A Danish journalist will report and communicate livelihood situations of vulnerable groups in Denmark during the Covid-19 crisis as well.

Further supported by resource persons and panel discussions with aid practitioners and politicians, the participants will engage in a detailed evaluation of the official Danish development assistance to the health and livelihood of vulnerable groups in Global South countries targeting specific proposals for development aid policy reform.

Additionally, participants in the hands-on workshop will suggest practical civil society efforts to address challenges of vulnerable groups in Global South countries, which may be implemented in cooperation between a Danish non-governmental organisation and selected non-governmental organisations in Global South countries. The workshop will invite NGO representatives to present options for joining relevant Danish NGOs to explore practical interventions supporting vulnerable groups in Global South countries.

Thus, the participants are engaged in a political as well as a practical effort as they realize the complexities of livelihood situations for vulnerable groups in Global South countries and draw on their experience and knowledge about the Danish context of livelihood for vulnerable groups.

1. **Sustainability**
* *How did you consider social justice in the programming of the activity? As an example, this could be achieved due to the themes, with which you are working, or through selection of participants in the activity.*

The South-North dialogue employs social justice in two ways: (1) the theme is health, which is a right that often displays inequality globally, and in particular in the Global South; (2) focus on vulnerable groups, which include but not limited to poor people, homeless, refugees, the mentally ill, trafficked people, orphaned children, disabled children and adults, school dropouts, unemployed, elderly, ethnic minorities and others. The dialogue will explore prevention and treatment in the Covid-19 pandemic, and how it affects the livelihood situations for different vulnerable groups in Global South countries and in Denmark.

* *How have you considered climate or environmental responsibility in programming the activity? As an example, this can be in relation to living conditions in developing countries or the climate and environmental impact of the activities of the initiative, e.g. travelling.*

The activity does not involve any negative impact on climate. The dialogues are conducted via Zoom and other on-line platforms. There is minimal travel by train between Copenhagen and Odense. The reports from the media will also explore climate change exacerbating livelihoods of vulnerable groups in the Global South.

1. **The applicant organisation and other organisations/actors (our point of departure)**
* *Which capacity do you hold as the applicant organisation to carry out the initiative (experiences, resources, networks, relations to other activities etc.)?*

The main activity of the Danish Development Research Network (DDRN) is communicating research relevant to the fulfilment of UN Sustainable Development Goals in Global South countries. DDRN achieves this through two ways:

(1) producing, curating and amplifying information between development programmes and the research community. The membership and staff have competences about vulnerable groups, many of them as scientists, who have conducted long term field studies in Global South countries.

DDRN also serves a growing network of PhD and senior researchers in Denmark and Global South countries. Some of these researchers will be able to contribute valuable insight regarding the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on vulnerable groups in their countries, based on their own research and personal experiences. They are experienced in science communication and in information activities targeting a broader audience.

(2) building a community that interacts and collaborates among its members.

DDRN establishes and facilitates thematic platforms that encourage South-North partnerships. DDRN also works closely with journalists based in Global South countries who write articles that are published on its website [www.ddrn.dk](http://www.ddrn.dk). For this South-North dialogue, DDRN will draw on the experience of Pure Trust Social Investors Foundation (PTSIF), which is an NGO based in Tamale, Ghana. It works with rural communities and aims at enhancing cultural practices to combat COVID 19 in Ghana. PTSIF has organized webinars with experts from universities in Ghana and the world over. The NGO undertakes COVID relief operations across Ghana with the support of foreign development aid, trying to prepare rural communities for the realities of COVID19. PTSIF provides crops and medical insurance, promotes shea products made by women groups, feeds the elderly, and other vulnerable groups in selected rural communities. Also, Himalayan Media Welfare Society, India, Snehadhara Foundation, Bangalore, India, and Yug Sanskriti Nyas, New Delhi, have expressed interest in contributing reports. Several DDRN members are active in civil society organisations. DDRN has conducted public seminars around the country and is involved in the Danish Science Festival. Currently, DDRN works to widen its membership by establishing local branches in the Copenhagen and Odense areas. However, DDRN will also contribute to the organisational development of other NGOs, as participants in the activity are guided to relevant Danish NGOs operating in Global South countries.

* *If you seek cooperation with one or more organisations/actors:*
* How will you as the applicant organisation secure coordination of the effort?

The DDRN team will program, implement and evaluate the overall initiative. The activity itself will involve cooperation with individual and organisational partners, acting as resources for input and/or participants. The roles and responsibilities of each partner will be agreed upon beforehand.

1. **The activity itself (our effort)**

**Target group**

* *Which are the target groups to be reached, including no. of expected persons (be as specific as possible in terms of age and geography)?*

The primary target groups for the activity are civil society organisations, sport clubs, residential associations, youth clubs, local libraries, evening courses, primary and secondary school classes, local councils, non-governmental organisations, student groups and more in the Copenhagen and Odense regions of Denmark. Target groups may include communities of vulnerable groups and organisations supporting vulnerable groups.

Global South journalists will present reports on the livelihood of vulnerable groups in their home country. Based on these reports, a small number of Danish communities and organisations are selected as primary target groups for a match in terms of focus, objective, and membership. Thus, the activity goes beyond conventional target groups to involve those with personal experience and expertise in vulnerable livelihood situations. Up to three communities and organisations in both Copenhagen and Odense areas, each with 20 participants across age groups, will participate. This constitutes a primary target group of 120 participants.

**Examples of vulnerable groups and Danish organisations to be involved**

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| --- | --- |
| Poor people | Rådet for Socialt Udsatte |
| Homeless | Hus Forbi  |
| Refugees; immigrants | Mino Danmark; students of the Global Refugee Studies Master’s programme at Aalborg University Copenhagen |
| Mentally ill | Blå Kors |
| Trafficked people | Reden |
| Orphaned children | Børns Vilkår |
| Disabled children and adults | Dansk Handicap Forbund |
| School dropouts | Danske Skoleelever (DSE), Danske Studerendes Fællesråd  |
| Unemployed | Trade unions |
| Elderly | Ældresagen, Elderly homes |
| Ethnic minorities | Mino Danmark |

For the activity, the DDRN Global South journalists have given preliminary suggestions for reports from their home country. The table below presents examples of potential matches with livelihood situations in Denmark.

| **Examples: How has the Covid-19 pandemic affected vulnerable people?** |
| --- |
| **Global South** | **Denmark**  |
| **The girl child’s Covid-19 burden**There is evidence of increased underaged sex in Uganda, especially in poor communities, as girls no longer attend school due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The closure of schools, where young girls were previously spending most of their time, opened them to a world of risks and temptations. The result is increased early and sometimes unwanted sex with all associated risks and burdens such as early pregnancies, HIV infections and social rejection. | **Kids**As schools have been closed for months, kids have had to stay at home. While it has been a good experience for many resourceful families, it has been tough for kids in vulnerable families (e.g. where parents have alcohol problems), in some cases leading to misuse.  |
| **Left on their own: Uganda’s elderly in Covid-19-pandemic**Most of Uganda’s elderly live in rural areas. Weak and unable to work, they mostly rely on support of their children working in urban centers. Many elderly are not getting the needed livelihood support from their children who are out of income due to Covid-19.For the poorer population in general, the corona lock down has hit hard throughout Latinamerica. In many countries it became normal to show a red flag (some places white) - in your house - to show, that you would be lacking food. In Colombia, 10 % of the population went from having three meals a day to one meal a day due to the lock down. | **The elderly**Many elderly people, who have had to stay at home due to their increased risk, have been lonely during the lockdown, thus affecting their mental health.  |
| **Another one added to the woman’s burdens**There has been an increase in domestic violence, especially against women, due to the Covid-19 lockdown. Unable to make ends meet, many families end up in quarrels which later turn violent especially against women. Some of these confrontations have been fatal. In Colombia domestic violence has risen by 14 % during 2020, and sexual crime has gone up by 75 %. In Peru, there have been registered a rise of disappearance of young girls and teenagers. | **Women**Globally, there has been an increase in domestic violence as many shelters have been closed due to the Covid-19 lockdown. Also, this is also the case in Denmark according to several women’s shelters.  |
| **The Covid-19 stress: What more could it have added to the mental health problem?**This topic seeks to investigate the contribution of the Covid-19 stressful situation to mental health problems and highlight how the general mental health provision has been affected by the pandemic.  | **Covid-19 stress (mental health)**During the lockdown, most people had to stay at home. Those already feeling lonely, were challenged, including young people not meeting friends in school, and elderly missing family. People with mental problems are affected by all the uncertainty involved. |
| **Refugees in the Covid-19 situation: How has the pandemic affected refugees and those who were seeking refuge?**The Venezuelan exodus is the largest in recent history in the region - and one of the biggest currently in the world. More than 4,7 million Venezuelans have left. While Uganda is praised for welcoming refugees, the country was forced to shut her borders with her neighbours to control the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. How has the situation affected the refugees who were already in Uganda and those who were aboutin the process to cross into Uganda, what is Uganda’s current attitude towards refugees? In Central America, there are internally displaced in El Salvador and Honduras. Also, many deportees from the US return infected with COVID-19 to their countries of origin and suffer strong discrimination. | **Refugees** How have refugees in Denmark experienced the Covid-19 pandemic? How has it been for refugees living in asylum centres in Denmark during the lockdown?  |

The secondary target groups are wider audiences among the public, which will be reached via the network of the participating communities and organisations and through communication of the process of the activity and its results in several media. The Danish public is well informed about the nature of the Covid-19 pandemic, including the South-North divide and the significance of social inequality. This opens an opportunity to engage members of the public in development aid.

* *How will the activity reach the selected target group?*

The activity will negotiate with each participating community/organisation the kind of input, dialogue and formats of communications, which are most relevant in the context of the particular interests of the membership and its current efforts. The primary target groups will be directly involved in the activities, and the secondary target groups will be reached via electronic and printed documentation of the project, which will be further promoted on DDRN’s social media.

* *How do you make sure that the target groups experience that the activity is relevant for them?*

DDRN will ensure the communication between the participants and DDRN are open, and that feedback is collected at every stage of the activities. Participating communities and organisations, the objectives and activities of which target the livelihood of vulnerable groups in the Covid-19 pandemic, are selected as the target groups for the activity.

**Planning**

* *Describe how you will achieve the desired change. Describe the planned activities, and how they will lead to specific results.*

First, the DDRN network of journalists in Denmark, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Chile and Ecuador and other Global South countries will briefly present several current stories to be covered in their respective country focussing on livelihood of vulnerable groups. Second, based upon these specific livelihood situations in Global South countries, relevant communities and organisations are identified in the Copenhagen and Odense areas, e.g. a sports club, a resident association, a youth club, a public library, an evening class, a local council, a civil society organisation etc.

In each area, up to three communities and organisations, are selected for negotiating an agreement about participation in the activity. The project will then be segmented into a three-stage action plan, as outlined below:

**Stage 1: Dialogue about the challenges faced by vulnerable groups**

The first stage will involve the presentation of how the livelihoods of vulnerable groups in the Global South and in Denmark have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. A network of South journalists and a Danish journalist will contribute current reports. Also, Master’s and PhD students from Global South countries presently studying at a Danish university may present their research and personal experiences relevant to the subject. Invited speakers may also contribute as resource persons from Danish NGOs and institutions. This will be done through a seminar and video media, followed by a discussion and question and answer session. The aim of this stage is to educate members of the target groups about the differences and similarities in the challenges faced by vulnerable groups across the globe. To further promote public engagement in Denmark, the seminar will be recorded and made available for those wishing to engage but unable to attend the seminar.

**Stage 2: Panel discussion about current policies and strategies**

The second stage of the project is a panel discussion with Danish politicians at a local and national level representing the range of political parties about current policies and practices in place in Denmark to aid vulnerable groups with regards to Covid-19. Experts and NGO representatives in Denmark may contribute. The aim of this stage is to allow the members of the target groups to understand and ask questions about the current policies in place and their effectiveness. The basic question to be addressed is: What are we doing in Denmark about the livelihood of vulnerable groups affected by the Covid-19 in Denmark and as well those in the Global South countries? The outcome of the discussions may be a document advocating reforms of Danish development aid policy and practices and identifying priority interventions.

**Stage 3: Brainstorming solutions**

The third stage of the project will be a participatory workshop that encourages not only analysis but more practical problem-solving engagement from the members of the target groups. This will involve brainstorming and discussion with relevant NGOs in Denmark and possibly, in the Global South. This will be achieved either via on-line communication or through representatives presently in Denmark, to provide implementable and actionable solutions. This aims at taking the project beyond the discussions to participants, actively engaging with issues and suggesting solutions. The activity will pinpoint relevant NGOs in Denmark, within which the target groups may continue their efforts beyond the duration of the activity. The project will be documented throughout in the form of videos, podcast episodes, and articles as an example for learning. In the event of a second Covid-19 wave, it is possible that the project and activities be moved entirely online.

* *How does the activity increase the possibilities for the target groups to participate, act, and find common solutions for a more sustainable world?*

Partner organisations have competences, which make it possible for them and the participants to conduct advocacy, actively join practical initiatives, and negotiate. The project will also bring different organisations together in the dialogue, thus allowing the target groups to form networks with one another and encourage future partnerships.

* *How will you achieve experience and learning during and after the activity?*

The experimental nature of the activity requires a continuous documentation and evaluation by the DDRN team and by the participants themselves. The evaluations will form the basis for a decision on a possible, subsequent upscaling of the activity.

**Methods**

* *How will you include voices from developing countries in the activity?*

The activity involves presenting the stories of vulnerable groups in the Global South, thus giving these groups an opportunity to voice their challenges and experiences about Covid-19. Global South journalists who have previously contributed articles to [www.ddrn.dk](http://www.ddrn.dk) and are based in South countries will participate in the activity. The journalists will report current, authentic, and vivid stories from their respective countries: Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Chile, and Ecuador, where they work as professionals, live as citizens, and follow the situation closely. DDRN will engage the public in Denmark through these stories about the livelihood situations of vulnerable people in the Global South. The target groups become aware of the situation in these countries, make them reflect - and act - upon the situation of vulnerable people.

* *Which developing countries does the activity involve?*

Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Ghana, Ecuador, Chile, India.

* *How will you secure that messages which you communicate via the activities of the effort, are nuanced and constructive and create understanding of the root causes within the themes, which the effort concerns.*

The analytical part of the communication has its point of departure in research-based knowledge and interview statements, which originate from the performance of basic principles of journalism. At the same time, the UN Sustainable Development Goals and their interrelationships form the frame for the communication, thus appreciating the complex nature of health and livelihood. Options for solutions are identified and argued as inspired by the principles of constructive journalism. As an example, the DDRN journalist in Chile suggest a report about the resurgence of common pots in Chile, as neighbours, friends, families in the same neighbourhood suffering from unemployment and job insecurity due to the pandemic, have strengthened this food distribution system to ensure a daily meal for thousands of families nationwide. The comparison between livelihood situations in Global South countries and Denmark will obviously pinpoint differences, however simultanously provide understanding of structural similarities in the underlying causes.

* *To what extent are you making use of new methods and/or new forms of cooperation?*

The activity encourages the participants to move up the engagement pyramid through personal communication with journalists and researchers both contributing analysis and eyewitness reports, a sequence of dialogue workshops with resource persons and NGOs, and continuous feedback facilitated by DDRN social media. The activity offers specific opportunities for engagement beyond the duration of the activity, and it works with local communities and organisations having capacity for subsequent follow up in a wider context.