

## Introduction - Culture and Development Co-operation

In 2004, DCCD's mandate and field of work was extended to also include assistance to bring cultural dimensions in to the work with the developing countries in the South. This means that we are not only going to work with exchange between cultures but also with culture as an independent tool and goal with the purpose of creating a societal development in those countries to which Denmark renders assistance.

Here, the primary task of DCCD is to assist in putting into practice the Danish strategy for culture and development from 2002. This includes assistance to the Danish embassies abroad in order to integrate and promote culture in the Danish development programmes. At the same time, DCCD enters into close co-operation with Danida, Danish NGOs, and a great number of international development organisations with the purpose of launching projects and initiatives which support culture in the developing countries.

It is important that the work in the South is connected to the overall objectives for Danish development assistance which is democratisation and poverty reduction. Here, DCCD operates with a broader understanding of culture, that is, not just "art" but a pattern of traditions, languages, values, behaviour, etc. This opens up a tool box of with various cultural instruments such as:

- Culture as an economic sector consisting of design, crafts, etc which is able to improve the conditions of life for the poor people.

- The development of a rich and pluralistic civil society working for freedom of expression as well as for the respect for ethnicity and cultural diversity.
- The increase of possibilities for cultural possibilities for the strengthening of creativity, identity, motivation, and self-confidence as important factors in human development.
- The strengthening of social ties and networks with the intent of hindering the isolation of poor people and vulnerable groups, including women and minorities.

DCCD's actual work with culture and development was started in the latter half of 2004. Some of the most important initiatives have dealt with the strengthening of the cultural dimension in the Danish development assistance.

In continuation of the symposium for cultural exchange between Europe and Asia in October 2004 in Hanoi, in which DCCD participated actively, co-operation has been established with the Danish Embassy in Vietnam. This has resulted in a contract which stipulates that DCCD shall assist the embassy in preparing a cultural strategy for the Danish development assistance in Vietnam. To begin with, we have made a profile of the cultural sector in Vietnam and the co-operation with Danish institutions up to now. Based on this, we are going to suggest a number of concrete focus areas. In the same way, we have been in close contact with the embassy in Bangladesh. This is expected to result in a similar assignment in the beginning of 2005. In Bangladesh, there will be a strong focus on integrating culture as an instrument in the existing Danida Sector Programmes.

Another focus area in 2004 has been the co-operation of networks in the South. DCCD has prepared a project-suggestion for Danida which deals with the exchange of experiences and "best practices" between organisations and smaller enterprises in the sphere of culture. The project is to be carried out in co-operation with UNESCO and relevant networks for cultural diversity. At the moment, we are awaiting the final approval of the project from Danida.

DCCD has also started an initiative in order to promote identity and linguistic diversity among indigenous people. This has to do specifically with the exchanges between Bolivia and Greenland with a focus on the influence culture has on the social and personal development in post colonial societies. This will be examined through art, workshops, and lectures. The project is a co-operation between the Royal Danish Embassy in Bolivia, the Danida programme for indigenous peoples in Bolivia, DCCD, and Greenland Home Rule. The first meeting between the two countries is expected to take place in the fall of 2005.

Another core area is culture as an economic sector. In connection with this, there has been concrete co-operation with Danida's private sector programme and the Royal Danish Embassy in Bolivia about a design project. DCCD has helped find design students in Denmark who wanted to participate in the project, and at the same time we have established contact with relevant wholesalers and design fairs in Denmark.

In the light of the development in 2004, there is basis for optimism within the spheres of culture and development assistance. Several exiting and promising initiatives have been made that will help increase our networks and result in new knowledge in 2005. The task of formulating cultural strategies for Vietnam and Bangladesh holds particularly many challenges but also many possibilities for the future. Here, we are indeed breaking new grounds which hopefully can contribute to establishing DCCD's profile. At the same time, it will give us much valuable experience which we will be able to use in the dialogue with other Danish embassies, thereby creating a better integration of culture in the Danish development assistance.

# The Power of Culture

*Cultural exchange must be based on fundamental human rights and tolerance. Foreign Minister Dr. Per Stig Møller emphasizes the importance of the International Convention on Cultural Diversity.*

— By Foreign Minister Dr. Per Stig Møller —

First of all I would like to thank Asia-Europe Foundation, Visiting Arts, The Ministry of Culture and Information of Vietnam and the Danish Center for Culture and Development for arranging this symposium on Cultural Exchange between Europe and Asia.

In a unique way culture both shapes and reflects our self. Inevitably cultural exchange and contact historically has marked the frontier of human, social and economic development. And as every other frontier what we meet at the border can be very different indeed: From open arms and smiles to high walls and barbed wire.

We should not be misled to think that cultural diversity is a given fact of a globalised world. Reality tells us a different story. What we see today is how the pressures of modernization, migration and global terrorism play into the hands of cultural and religious fanatics everywhere.

Here, as in so many other important aspects of life we must choose: Do we seek to build our identity on what unites us with other people in the world, or do we seek to build our identity on what divides us from others? And it is on occasions like today we give our answer. Our hands reach out – and they meet!

Cultural exchange and contact is about building the foundation for peaceful dialogue between people. But culture is of course never a neutral player:

- it is not about sameness in thought or expression.
- it is not about agreement on content or direction.
- it is not even about avoiding criticism or conflict.

If we turn to artistic expression its strength lies first and foremost in the ability to create a new level of understanding:

- by thinking the unthinkable and doing what has not been done before
- by changing the way we see the world and pointing out new directions
- by challenging what is and criticising what is not

In all this cultural exchange programmes, such as “Images of Asia”, work as a vehicle for acting out fundamental values such as basic human rights, cultural diversity and global ethics.

However, cultural exchanges can have both short-term and long-term impacts for cultural development, which we need to look at further. I would like to point out a few areas.

## 1) New International Norms:

The Convention on protection of the diversity of cultural contents and artistic expressions, formerly known as Cultural Diversity Convention, which currently is being

negotiated in the framework of UNESCO, is very important.

The UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity was adopted unanimously in a most unusual context, as it came in the wake of the events of 11 September 2001 and the UNESCO General Conference, which was the first ministerial-level meeting to be held after this dreadful terror attack. The conference was therefore the first opportunity for countries to reaffirm their conviction that intercultural dialogue is the best guarantee of peace and to reject outright the theory of inevitable clash of cultures and civilisations. The declaration raised cultural diversity to the level of common heritage of humanity.

We need to acknowledge that cultural exchanges are not necessarily always good, as it can be used by one party to dominate another, whether it is due to economic or political reasons.

Therefore its important to create norms, that make it possible for countries and the global community to support an active cultural policy. This is important not least for the indigenous peoples. Many especially smaller developed countries need this, if they should ever develop their languages and culture through own publishing houses, recording studios, media and Information and Communication Technology.

On the other hand cultural policy must not be used as a way to suppress human rights. Therefore a balance is

needed through international norms. Denmark is therefore supporting the existing negotiations on the convention in this field.

## **2) Integrate the Cultural Dimension in existing major international programs, both bilaterally and multilaterally:**

The integration of the cultural dimension into the development assistance has in the past few years gained more attention in the donor community. Denmark has in 2002 launched its own strategy for “Culture and Development”, where the principal and criteria is the promotion of the cultural dimension as an important component of poverty reduction in both bilateral and multilateral development assistance.

The promotion of the cultural dimension is being integrated into the Danish bilateral development assistance to ex. Vietnam, which is the only Danish program country in ASEM.

## **3) Develop new models and approaches of cultural exchange:**

“Images of Asia in Denmark”, which will be the case study for this early midday session, is a case, where the festival in Denmark has been a new model and approach for cultural exchange, which has created major attention with its artistic program, educational program, media program and its program in public space.

It has included both major public events and professional programs with potential long-term impacts. It has been

led by civil society, but in close cooperation with government - at both central and local level - and with the private sector.

I hope that this Symposium will contribute to the cultural exchange between Europe and Asia in such a way, that it will promote cultural diversity and pluralism based on fundamental human rights and tolerance.

I can promise you, that Denmark will spare no efforts in our endeavours to translate the “Power of Culture” - into reality.

—— Source: ———

*Speech by Foreign Minister Dr. Per Stig Møller  
at the Symposium on Cultural Exchange between Europe  
and Asia: “Past experiences and new approaches” Hanoi,  
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*Foreign Minister Dr. Per Stig Møller*

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