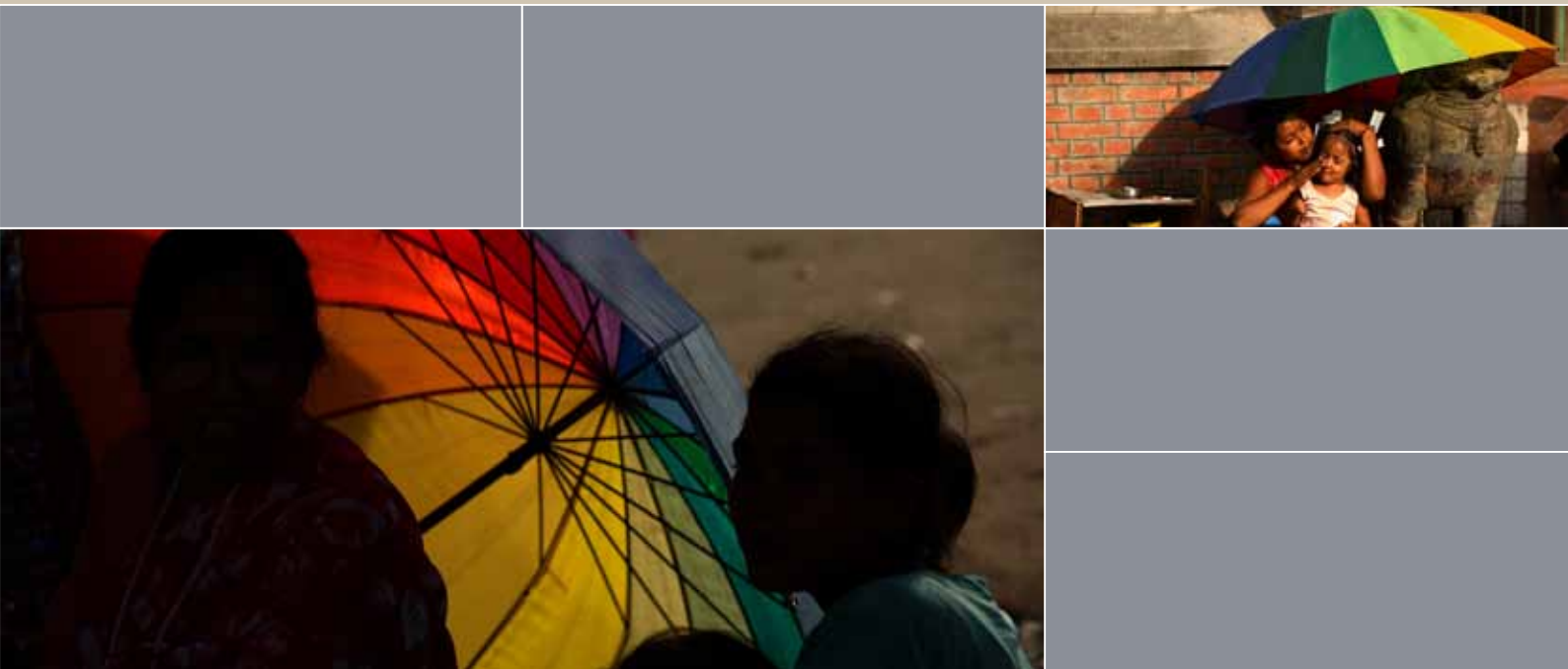




Added costs. Added value?
Evaluation of Norwegian support
through and to umbrella and network
organisations in civil society

Report 5/2014 Annex 4-7



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Bjørn Johannessen	Former Director	Private Organisations, Norad
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Annex 5: Strengths and weaknesses of UNO funding versus local funding

In the following we have assessed some of the weaknesses and strengths of disbursement of funds through local funding mechanisms as opposed to funding through the UNO types of structure. The basis for this assessment is primarily team member experiences.¹ The strengths and weaknesses have been viewed from different perspectives that have been considered important for managing funds professionally and efficiently. They include:

- Understanding Norad's rules and regulations, compliance, and accountability
- Understanding and applying Norad's approach/objectives to development
- Affiliation with Norad/embassy
- Learning and transfer of knowledge to manage funds
- Capacity to manage fund
- Knowledge of the local context and relevance of the funded projects

Box 1 Understanding Norad's rules and regulations, compliance, and accountability

	Strength	Weakness
UNO	Because of their size and their linkage to Norway, UNOs can be more accountable to funds and they will be obligated to abide by Norwegian laws and regulations. UNOs also have better access to and understanding of Norad's requirements and understanding of the policies, rules and regulations and financial rules. They are also often better equipped to understand NORAD's strategies, policies and predict their cycles.	At the same time working with UNOs can be perceived as somehow delegating the compliance responsibilities to UNOs and adding another scrutiny level. UNOs are likely to require more stringent rules given to their partners and thus adding more burden on them to comply. This has been an on-going issue and complaints from several members of umbrellas. This may also affect NORAD's reputation.
Local funding	Working with local partners will strengthen their knowledge through learning by doing, and trial and error. Partners will be obligated to make available better management/financial systems and structures to be eligible for funding – even before funds are being awarded.	Non-compliance with rules, regulations and policies will seriously affect the local partner's reputation, Norad's accountability/reputation may also affect allocations of other funding. If more funds are transferred directly from Norad to the local level, a system for local auditing needs to be established, probably through public tendering, to ensure transparency in the use of Norwegian tax funds. The number of agreements for Norad to administrate would increase and also the administration and procurement of local auditors would increase the administrative burden on Norad and/or the Norwegian Embassies.

¹ The team also interviewed KPMG Tanzania which is an effective international fund/grant manager being locally represented. However, here we have only looked at local funding as funds/grants being managed by local CSOs or Norwegian CSOs with local representation.

2 Understanding and applying Norad's approach/objectives to development

	Strength	Weakness
UNO	UNOs will often have a better understanding of Norad's development objectives	UNOs are likely to adapt their strategies to meet Norad's development objectives, and therefore channelling funds to issues that are not a priority/less of a priority for local partners
Local funding	Resources put by Norad/Embassy to communicate with local partners will have a positive effect on the direction Norad's policies will be, its entry points, and priorities.	Because of language and unfamiliarity with Norad local partners are likely to be less aware of the development objectives and may require more resources from Norad/Embassy to bring them up to speed.

3 Affiliation with Norad/Embassy

	Strength	Weakness
UNO	Local partner's positive perception of UNOs as donors is likely to ensure that they (local partners) make all effort to adhere to donor regulations and policies.	There is a risk that UNOs are derogatively perceived by local partners as donors, irrespective of whether they are actually trying to have a partnership approach. This power relationship is difficult to eradicate.
Local funding	Being closer to Norad/Embassy may have a positive effect on their work culture and positively affect policy dialogue. Norad will be more visible in the countries.	In many cases the closer the local partners are to donors the more negatively they can be perceived by the local people. This may affect the partners' independence, locals trust in their intentions, especially if the locals do not trust intentions of the donors possible 'hidden agendas', particularly issues considered to be taboos, or against local norms and culture.

4 Learning and transfer of knowledge

	Strength	Weakness
UNO	Because of their perceived higher level of international experience and capacity UNOs are likely to be more equipped to provide lesson's learned to Norad and their partners on fund management. Especially they would know better the rules, regulations and financial compliance and have worked in more than one country. As such less resources that	Because of perceive conflict of interest to provide independent lessons learned on fund management, there is a risk that UNOs will always provide Norad with learning on their own added value and much less (if any) on the added value of direct assistance to members of the UNO or local partners.

	Norad has to dedicate to acquire learning on fund management.	
Local funding	Direct interaction between Norad/Embassy and local partners will make available learning and sharing of information on direct support, and will equip Norad/Embassy staff with more understanding of fund management skills by local partners.	To acquire more learning, Norad/Embassy will have to dedicate more financial and human resources.

5 Capacity to manage fund

	Strength	Weakness
UNO	UNOs are likely to have more resources to better manage funds. UNOs may have an edge over locals with regard to certain capacities, especially research skills, technical areas that are new, or taboo (gender, and LGBT rights), International Humanitarian Law, HR treaties.	Limited knowledge of the local context may seriously affect their capacity to manage funds, and can also be more time consuming. Working through UNOs, is likely to move sustainability and fund management and transfer of knowledge in a slower pace. Expertise alone only can be ineffective if the entry points/methods used to solving problems is not done in a context specific way, e.g. respect cultures and norms, language barriers, or by those who are not genuinely working towards solving problems of their community.
Local funding	Local knowledge of the context on work and knowledge of the local development objectives will ensure a better targeted and needs based fund management, at the same time increases local capacity through learning by doing, and therefore increases sustainability.	Level of education can vary and can be a challenge to find the right person for the right job. Use of local expertise, also will create a problem known as 'brain drain'. i.e. because of higher salaries that donors normally pay, government officials will move jobs to CSO or to the donor community, and less qualified employees fill official jobs, therefore slowing development pace.

6 Knowledge of the local context and relevance of the funded projects

	Strength	Weakness
UNO	When they know local context well they will most likely capitalise on these in their advocacy efforts. A non-partisan perspective of the local context can sometimes be more beneficial to equitably benefit of the end-beneficiaries or user.	Increasing the risk of weaker knowledge of the context in comparison with locals. UNOs projects or programmes would seriously affect the relevance and impact of these projects and programmes. Projects that are out of context can also seriously affect the UNO reputations, and may extend to Norad.
Local funding	Clearly local knowledge is in favour of local organisations. Projects are likely to be more relevant, more cost effective, and may be implemented faster.	Local knowledge may be negatively used to favour one group over another; especially in conflict sensitive areas, and therefore do harm.

Annex 6: Management and systems of the UNOs

The “Financial regulations for the State” (Reglement for økonomistyring i staten), Chapter 6, defines the basic criteria for the administration of state grants (mission, vision, strategy plan, award criteria, controls and monitoring in place) about what organisations that qualify as grant administrator (ministries, local and regional authorities, state-owned companies and corporations, foundations and private NGOs) as well as the formal guidelines for the administrator (requirements for publication, application process, grant letters, payment process, reporting, monitoring and control, evaluation).

The Norad regulation states that it is “the obligation of an individual or organisation to account for its activities, accept responsibility for them, and to disclose the results in a transparent manner. It also includes the responsibility for money or other entrusted property”.¹

The umbrella organisations are important grant recipients and one of the main civil society support modalities. Norad contracts the UNOs to assure quality and to coordinate the State grant to the member organisations. The State grant and its administration are stipulated contractually between the UNO and Norad.

Based on these criteria, the questions from the questionnaire sent to the UNOs were designed to gain an insight on how the financial regulations are implemented. This has been combined with a study of the financial documentation supplied by Norad and the selected organisations and interviews on their financial systems.

6.1 General information about the UNOs

Most of the UNOs are entirely dependent on the financing from Norad or the Norwegian State. Atlas has self-funding from a TV-campaign from 2002 as well as from individual donors. FOKUS has also had substantial self-funding from the TV telethon. VNS has some self-financing from members and participant fees, e.g. from seminars and LNU has funding from the Operations Day’s Work.

All the UNOs receive membership fee, except for Atlas. The membership fees are not significant, and seem mostly to cover some of the administration costs for the organisation. No other donors are claimed to be involved in Norad funded projects. All UNOs had signed agreements with South cooperation partners.

Most UNOs described their organisational set up as balanced and suitable for the purposes and well defined in their organisational chart. All UNOs confirmed that the reporting lines are consistent with the organisational chart.

6.2 Management systems

All UNOs responded that their Board of Directors work actively and take part in the decision making of the development projects. In relation to the number of decision making levels before the funds reach the beneficiaries in South, all UNOs claimed that they had only two to three levels, and the cooperation between the levels was mostly smooth and clearly defined.

All UNOs reported that they had an established vision, mission and objectives and that these were communicated to their members and network partners, e.g. through official documents, follow-up meetings, information work, seminars, logical framework planning, etc. The UNOs confirmed that they had their own

¹ Regelverk for støtte till sivilsamfundsaktører - kap 160.70, updated in 2012

measurement framework to assess that the objectives are achieved. There is no standard form that is common for all organisations.

Regarding risk management, only Digni seems to have a risk management system in place. The other UNOs have reported that they do not have a risk management system. While some project risks are identified during the planning process and expressed in the agreements with Norad, there is no system or defined process for organisational risk identification or management.²

All UNOs informed that they had a process for the employee for prompt communication of mistakes, incidents, bad news, deviations and other relevant information to people who need to know this. Atlas substantiated this with an example on this communication from an incident in Nepal.

6.3 Planning and reporting

Nearly all UNOs reported that the cooperation partners in the South participate in the budgeting process – they normally prepare the first budget which is then sent to the North partner. LNU responded by referring to its reporting guidelines. All UNOs conduct systematic monitoring of projects or activities, for example by performing regular monitoring visits, require regular reporting, follow-up of reporting and monitoring visits.

All UNOs are using result based management framework or the logical framework analysis for planning and reporting, and they reported that information is distributed timely and to relevant recipients.

Half of the UNOs responded that one advisor is in charge for the reporting and two UNOs informed that the overall responsibility is with the Head of the programme. Atlas did not respond to this question. All UNOs confirm that Norad reporting is in line with given Norad instructions. This was also confirmed in the evaluation when reviewing the financial reports sent to Norad.

The small UNOs (with 3-5 employees) found the result based reporting requirements too bureaucratic and requirements excessive for reporting and planning. They claimed that the Norad coordinators are more centred on procedures, system and reporting than on dialogue and exchange of experience.

Financial and narrative reporting is required by all UNOs. The UNOs follow Norad reporting guidelines and there are no major differences in reporting requirements. While harmonisation with other donors in reporting requirements should improve the internal control of the Norad funding this seldom happens, i.e. where donors agree upon one financial and narrative report from the development partner in South.

Some suggestions to further improve the Norad reporting came up in the stakeholder discussions, including (i) reports should be read and used more by other departments in Norad and not only by the desk officer/coordinator, (ii) Norad should communicate more clearly what they need from the annual reporting, and (iii) Norad should allow for reporting outside the results framework which would give Norad a better understanding of the work carried out by the UNOs.

² One case was presented in Bistandsaktuelt on 23 May 2014. It showed the Women's Front's loss of almost NOK ½ million of Norwegian development funds in part due to inadequate risk management practices, see <http://www.bistandsaktuelt.no/nyheter-og-reportasjer/arkiv-nyheter-og-reportasjer/advarer-om-streng-ansvarsregler>.

6.4 Compliance with rules and policies

Manuals and guidelines exist for all UNOs. VNS responded that their manuals are considered by the volunteers to be very comprehensive. DCG noted that their procedures and formats are under revision. All UNOs reported that they have sufficient IT systems for planning and reporting.

The UNOs reported that the rules are communicated to the cooperating partners in the South by the signed contracts, through direct meetings, through their international chain. This could also be verified for Digni and Normisjon during the field mission in Nepal. Five UNOs responded that their rules and policies are kept simple and are applicable to the national and local level.

6.5 Human resources

All UNOs responded that they have a job description for all their employees. VNS reported that they were in process of updating the job descriptions. Four UNOs reported that a deputy for the key personnel has been appointed. FOKUS and VNS confirmed that the deputy is not formally introduced, but in practice it exists. PWYP Norway has close to fifty guidelines and procedures that will support and guide tasks and duties of three employees, in addition to an integrated support and project management systems.

Most UNOs confirmed that they have documented personnel guidelines. Two UNOs reported that they have a documented recruitment policy in use. All UNOs reported that they do have personnel development talks held with their employees and most UNOs reported of significant turnover of staff in their organisations.

All UNOs reported that the personnel resources and competence of employees adequately match the objectives of the organisation and most reported that the personnel have participated in relevant training courses, including results based management, monitoring, anticorruption, participatory methods, dialogue and conflict management. PWYP Norway responded that it did not have sufficient time to invest in training of staff.

Most UNOs responded that the training has been appropriately matched to the development needs of the organisation. One UNO suggested that stronger emphasis should be put on staff training. Most UNOs reported that they have the tools for consequences of inappropriate behaviour or noncompliance with rules and regulations and this has been communicated to the employees. Only Atlas is reporting that this is not in place. All UNOs reported that they have tools and sufficient reports to support human resources management.

6.6 UNO Accounting and Auditing

Half the UNOs reported that they were using Visma business accounting system; one UNO used DI Business system and two UNOs have outsourced their accounting and financial management. Digni responded that their members have different financial systems in use. The Digni secretariat uses Visma Global. VNS did not respond to this question.

Several UNOs confirmed that they have cost accounting in their bookkeeping. Atlas, Digni and VNS did not respond to the question if they have cost accounting, but based on the interviews and financial reports it could be verified that they report and follow up per project. Mostly it is the finance departments and the adviser or managers of the projects that are in charge for the project accounts. VNS did not respond to this question.

Several UNOs reported that their monitoring of projects was well organised, receiving quarterly and annual reports, external audit reports and performing monitoring visits. Most UNOs responded that one of their main tasks is to provide supportive supervision to their members/partners' project work.

Most UNOs reported that external evaluations take place. PWYP responded that they have done only internal evaluations – an external evaluation will take place in 2015. Most UNOs have follow-up systems in place for evaluation recommendations and they also share the evaluation results with their members/cooperation partners. Most UNOs reported that they did not have an internal audit.

6.7 Administration costs

Example on administration costs are not given by all UNOs. Only FOKUS and DCG are specifying the administrative costs. Most of the UNOs reported that they follow Norad's guidelines. All UNOs report that they follow up on working hours regarding the salary costs for the work done in administration for the project. In the efficiency analysis undertaken in Annex 7 it was noticed that the administrative costs have not always been clearly defined in the Financial Reports to Norad.

6.8 Private sector collaboration

None of the UNOs are directly involved with the private sector, but some have projects where the private sector provides some support as advise/dialogue to the project. PWYP has the EITI project which has a tripartite approach, based on shared decision-making between governments, the private sector and civil society. LNU has through their membership organisations introduced entrepreneurship and economic empowerment activities e.g. income generating activities. The activities included that partners carry out market analyses where they are involved with the private sector and at the end of the training phase participants get support to start their own business based on the viability of their products and/or to improve local employment.

6.9 Summary

All UNOs are dependent on State funding for their activities. The UNOs perceive the organisational structures adequate and sufficient for their purpose and the UNOs' Board of Directors are said to take active part in decision-making. The risk management system in almost all of the UNOs appears inadequate in the case a project is challenged, e.g. by corruption and efficiency of project management. The UNOs have established rules and regulations and these are communicated to their cooperating partners. Planning and reporting within the UNOs seem to be sufficiently organised and in line with given instructions. Also, it seems that the different UNOs are reporting the administration costs in different ways and there is also different understanding on what can be defined as an administration cost.

While project accounting and monitoring seem to be sufficiently organised, the internal audit practices are insufficiently addressed. Both internal and external monitoring takes place. There are no major differences in how evaluation and monitoring are organised in the different UNOs. Also, the UNOs follow Norad reporting guidelines and there are no major differences in reporting requirements. Staff turnover seem to be high in some of the UNOs. Also, written recruitment policies are lacking in most UNOs.

Financial and narrative reporting is required by all UNOs and they follow Norad reporting guidelines. The UNO's cooperation and work with the private sector are limited. Obviously, considering the private sector's role as an important player for development impact, current collaboration is inadequate.

Annex 7: Cost-efficiency

Efficiency is in this section defined as an economic term used to describe the flow of funds from the donor to the end-beneficiary, i.e. its cost-efficiency. The focus has been to study each organisation individually in order to see any differences and make comparisons between the organisations and their structure for efficiently handling of Norad funds. The study has focused on comparing the transaction costs for the administration of Norad funds as these data are relatively accessible and comparable between the organisations. Other efficiency aspects such as staff productivity or efficiency in service delivery to the end-user have not been possible to assess in this limited study and the data would not have been easily comparable between the organisations. The percentage of administrative costs compared to the overall budget has been sequestered to allow for comparison across the organisations in the North and South and between umbrella and network organisations. What the data shows can indicate the degree of cost-efficiency of the UNO structure as supplementary information to strengths and weaknesses of the UNO structure as opposed to for example local funding.

The study of the financial mechanisms of the organisations has in accordance with the ToR been limited in time and scope and the data used in the study has mainly been based on information gathered during interviews, through questionnaires and the annual reporting to Norad. This information is sufficient to give direction to the general trend and to make comparative analysis on an aggregated scale, but not to give a clear picture of the cost-efficiency of each organisation studied. In order to get the full picture, thorough performance audits would have to be conducted for each organisation and their partners all the way to the end-beneficiary.

Most of the organisations have been members/partners in the umbrella or network organisations in order to get Norad funding but also to receive capacity building and network with other members/partners. Through the capacity enhancement processes it is assumed that the skills transferred to and organisational strengthening built up in partner organisations have a positive impact on the delivery of high quality services through projects towards the end-beneficiaries and a positive impact on the efficiency of their operations. Therefore the amount of capacity building that the organisations offer in their management systems has been taken into account in the assessments.

Umbrella and network organisations have in their proper forms quite different costs structures. Umbrella organisations have originally been designed for channelling of funds at a low administrative cost, while network organisations also have a mandate to advocate and network for their cause. An umbrella organisation in its proper form would therefore be focused on a smooth, low cost administration, while network organisations, in addition to channelling funds, also administrate their networking activities which give them a higher total administrative cost. The administrative costs of fund management and networking cannot be completely separated. Therefore it puts a limitation on the ability to draw clear conclusions from the data available as the benefits from the networking activities are not easily assessed. This would need a more thorough evaluation than available under this assignment. In addition, the umbrella organisations have developed over time and most of them now also include advocacy and networking activities to different degrees, which can be seen in the differences in their total administrative costs of their secretariats, but which also makes direct comparison difficult and definitive conclusions to their efficiency cannot be made.

7.1 Umbrella Organisations

Umbrella organisations coordinate, administrate and carry forward Norad funding to its Norwegian members. The five umbrella organisations included in the evaluation were Atlas, Digni, FOKUS, LNU and VNS. A cost-efficiency analysis of the umbrella organisations was made by comparing their total Norad funding with the total costs of the secretariats. The salary costs in Table 1 represent the total salary paid to staff in the

secretariats – including accounting and administration – and programme salaries (coordination, capacity building, monitoring or direct work with the programme).

Using total salary costs was necessary since Norad has not defined what should be considered as administrative costs and what should be considered as programme salary costs. Also, different definitions of administrative salary within the UNOs varied. Office costs include office rent, postage & freight, telephone, stationery, printing, copying, office supplies/utilities, electricity and water, insurance, security, bank charges; and administrative salaries cover salaries for the accounting, administration, management or persons not directly working with the project but indirectly.

The total income and the number of projects managed through Atlas and Digni are substantially higher than the other three organisations defined as umbrella organisations. The data show a significant difference in the salary and office costs where Atlas and Digni stand out as having low total salary and office costs compared to the amount of funds they administrate. Instead, the fewer projects administrated by the organisation, the higher the total cost of the salary and office is compared to the funds administrated. This would imply that Atlas and Digni are more efficient in managing the Norad funds. However it has to be taken into consideration that the other organisations (FOKUS, LNU and VNS) have an additional focus on advocacy and networking activities and that it is not possible with the data available to fully separate the costs for fund management. What the figures then really show is that Atlas and Digni are the only two proper umbrella organisations as per the original definition as a fund management organisation and their main focus has been on ensuring cost-efficiency.

In the section below, the financial data for each organisation is described in relation to their cost-efficiency and individual aspects influencing their efficiency has been highlighted.

Table 1 Administrative costs of the umbrella organisations (key figures 2012)

	Atlas	Digni	FOKUS	LNU	VNS
Personnel	8	13	13	16 (**)	7
Members	16	19	74	96	339
No. of Projects	57	124	37	19	3
Total income (mill NOK)	81,9	164,1	42,6	21,6	11,9
Total Norad funding (mill NOK)	80,3	163,1	33,0	1,8	8,7
Used Norad funding (mill NOK)	76,6	163,1	32,3	(*)	8,7
Total salary cost (%)	5.78	4.8	15.0	26.3	28.55
Total office cost (%)	1.35	1.2	13.3	14.7	18.28
Total costs of the secretariat (%)	8.79	8.7	27.1	-	-

Source: Audited Annual Financial reports and Financial Reports on Norad Funding.

(*) The Financial report did not give the actual information on what has been spent on Norad funding. It was not possible to report in this table the actual figures. For LNU and for VNS there is no reporting on the total costs for their secretariats.

(**) Three staff work with international grant and 2 directly with Norad funds.

Atlas Alliance

As described above, the Atlas Alliance secretariat can be seen as cost-efficient when comparing the salary as well as the office costs to the total project portfolio administrated by Atlas with a total cost of the secretariat at 8.79% of the total income. According to the Annual Report for 2012 to Norad, the total administrative cost for the secretariat (excluding office costs) was annually about 7% for the years 2008-2012. At the second level of funding the same figure of 8% for the administrative cost is stated in Atlas' agreement with its member organisations.

According to the framework agreement, the administrative costs in the South should not be reported as administrative costs but as programme costs. However, in this analysis they have been considered as administrative costs in order to get the total percent of transaction cost of the Norad funding to the end-beneficiaries.

Regarding the financial reporting to Norad, the administrative costs have not been reported separately (in a separate column) for the different projects in Atlas' Annual Report for 2012 or 2013. It was therefore not possible to analyse the actual cost used for administration and therefore the budget figures were used for the analysis.

Table 2 Administrative costs of Norad funding through selected Atlas Norwegian members

	NFU Norway	LHL Norway	FFO Norway	NHF Norway	NBF Norway
Personnel	3	10	18	13	314
Norad funding in total (mill NOK)	6,7	20,1	4,1	20,4	14,9
Total admin cost; % of total Norad funding	7,4	7,4	7,4	7,4	7,4

Source: Samletabell Atlas-Alliansen 2014.

In Table 2 the administrative costs have been calculated as percent of the total Norad funding for a selected number of Atlas' Norwegian partners – i.e. project spending and administrative costs – and budgeted to the Atlas partners. The administrative costs in percent for the member organisations are slightly lower than agreement based 8%, i.e. 7,4%. These figures would imply that Atlas partners follow the required level of cost-efficiency and only charge for administrative costs according to their agreement. However the actual costs of administration should vary across the organisations.

The actual efficiency of each partner organisation, in terms of managing Norad funds, is not possible to extract from the data presented in their annual reports to Norad. Within the limitations of this assignment it was not possible to make the full financial audit necessary to get to that level of detail for each of the member organisations.

In regards to Atlas' South partners, the team visited two case countries, Nepal and Tanzania. In Nepal the team visited several partners and projects. The Atlas partners' financial reports and copies of receipts etc. are managed by account officers located in New Delhi (for Asia) and in Nairobi (for Africa) as a means for centralising the management of the accounts and use the size benefit to streamline the system and make it more efficient.

The actual administrative costs for Atlas' Nepal partners were not available at the time for the evaluation, but based on the interview with the Norwegian Association of the Blind and Partially Sighted (NABP) in Nepal, the Secretariat claimed that the administrative costs were about 5 %, which would imply quite high cost-efficiency at the local level.

Atlas' partners and projects were also visited in Tanzania. In the Financial Annual Reports to Atlas 'general indirect office cost' were reported at about 10% and the personnel costs at about 16% of the total income for the Tanzanian partners. It was not possible to derive the administrative costs of the Tanzanian partners from these figures. So a direct comparison to the figure mentioned by NABP in Nepal is not relevant. However, the figures from Tanzania do show that the personnel and office costs comprise a substantial part of the project costs at the local level. Based on information accessed from a few cases cost-efficiency appears to be relatively low in Tanzania while high in Nepal.

Digni

Of the total Norad funding of NOK 163 million, the costs of the Digni secretariat is NOK 15 million or about 8.79%, slightly above the 8% administrative costs stated in Digni's agreement with Norad and as such overall cost-efficient.

The Organisational Performance Review of the Norwegian Missions in Development recommended in 2008 that "BN takes the opportunity to do more targeted and differentiated capacity building of members to ensure that they have the right tools to train their partners, and to consider including a more institutionalized approach to capacity building of the partners by BN itself".³ As a consequence of this recommendation Digni outsourced part of the project portfolio and has established framework agreements with three of the large Digni members, i.e. Norsk Luthers Misjonssamband, Det Norske Misjonsselskap and Misjonsalliansen. Two of these framework agreements started in 2013, and the third in 2014.

This will release extra time for the Digni Secretariat to use for servicing its members, including time for monitoring and follow-up of the Norad funding projects. It is not yet known if this arrangement will be cost-efficient in the long term, but it can be seen as an effort to streamline the fund management while also giving higher quality support to its members.

Table 3 Administrative costs of Norad funding through selected Norwegian Digni members

	HP Norway	Normisjon, Norway	NLM Norway
Personnel	7	180	81
Norad funding in total (mill NOK)	3,9	12,3	20,7
Total admin cost; % of total Norad funding	7,4	7,4	8

Source: Regenskapsrapport 2012, Digni projektmidler 2012.

Table 3 shows the administrative costs of Norad funding through three selected Norwegian Digni members. HimalPartner (HP) is a member of Digni and has 7 Norad funded projects in Nepal. The Norad funding constitutes 90% of the project budgets, with an additional self-financing of 10%.

Table 4 presents the administrative costs for project management of each of HimalPartner's seven Norad funded projects. The administrative costs are calculated to 8 % of the total Norad funding in accordance with the general Norad agreements. The actual administrative costs in the accounts averaged around 8%, though differ somewhat from project to project. This means that the main part of the administrative cost has been covered by Norad funding and not by the 10% self-financing, thus some of the local partners can be seen as more efficient in administrating project funds than others.

³ p.

Table 4 Administrative costs of Normisjon Norway and UMN, and projects managed by selected members of HimalPartner

Project	Grant NOK	Admin cost %	Salary cost %
HP Norway	3,562,632	8,00	-
HP Nepal ECEC	72,279	7,48	-
HP Early Childhood Development Programme	439,346	10,17	16,09
HP Counselling Department	384,923	-	-
HP Mental Health	77,808	0	34,81
HP Kathmandu University	283,614	2,20	42,28
HP Peace and Conflict	1,347,375	8,39	31,31
HP Improving Access to Mental Health	431,690	9,00	12,19
Normisjon, Norway	11,391,971	8,00	0,00
UMN Peace Building Programme	1,278,930	8,47	31,62

Source: The Annual Financial Reports of 2012 of HimalPartner and UMN Peace Building Programme

The administrative costs of HP Norway are calculated to 8 % of the total Norad funding in accordance with the general Norad agreements. The actual administrative costs in the accounts of the projects are averaged at 8%, varying from 2.2% in Kathmandu University to 10.2% in the Early Childhood programme. The HP Counselling Department project has neither reported on administrative nor salary costs and the HP Mental Health project reported its administrative costs as zero.

The Performance Organisational Review of 2008 stated that the administration costs in percentage as well as the salary cost in percentage are calculated as the total costs for administration and salary compared to the total grant/income for a project.

“Digni should work towards more alignment and harmonisation to the partner strategies to reduce their transaction costs. The way forward lies in the country and partner programme approach, as strengthening the capacities and the quality of the partner management system will allow Digni, and potentially other donors, to align to these systems.” The same conclusion and recommendation can be repeated here based on the cost-efficiency analysis made above.

FOKUS

According to the Annual Financial Report for 2012 (Samlet oversikt over Norad-projektregenskap FOKUS-2012) NOK 21.8 million of a total of NOK 33 million contributed by Norad was spent on projects. NOK 8.6 million was spent on administration and NOK 3.1 million on project assistance. According to the Norad agreement the administration costs should be 8 % of the total Norad funding. However, the administrative costs come to about 27% (NOK 8.6 million/NOK 33 millionx100). This high administration costs are probably related to FOKUS’ networking and advocacy activities.

These activities are covered by some of the personnel costs and salary, together with some of the office costs. Since it is not possible from the available data to differentiate clearly between the administration of project funds and networking and advocacy activities, it is difficult to analyse the cost-efficiency of FOKUS in managing Norad funds – even though the general data points to low efficiency. There is also possible added value from the networking and advocacy that needs to be taken into account.

VNS

For the Financial Year 2012 VNS had three programmes that have been implemented with Norad funding: Local Community Partnership (NOK 3 million), The School Partnership Programme (NOK 4.1 million) and for information/communication (NOK 1.6 million). According to the interview with the VNS secretariat VNS has developed from being a Norwegian umbrella organisation to an international network with over 300 member organisations and cooperation in different regions. VNS has worked strategically to establish regional bodies that represent the South network and function as driving forces to consolidate and spread the network regionally and to influence the development of their organisation.

As VNS' main part of activities is today focused on networking and less on direct projects, the cost-efficiency of the organisation as an umbrella and as a networking cannot be directly analysed as it is difficult to quantify the impact of networking activities. Applying for example a Return on Investment methodology it would be possible to even measure the monetary benefits of the networking. As of now the networking is covered by part of the office and salary costs – and this is the reason for the high percentage of administration and salary costs as shown in Table 1 compared with a very small project portfolio suggesting a low efficiency in managing Norad funds.

LNU

For LNU, the office and salary costs presented in Table 1 are based on the 2012 audited financial report where LNU has reported administrative costs to a total of NOK 10.1 million (total direct salaries are NOK 5.7 million and direct office and other costs are NOK 3.2 million and investments in an IT system NOK 1.3 million). According to the Norad agreement the total funding for 2012 was NOK 1.8 million. LNU reports project costs for the work in North-South at a total of NOK 2 million. According to the 2012 budget for the North-South projects the total project costs were NOK 1.5 million. The financial report for 2012 does not define project and administrative costs for Norad funded projects. In addition, the administrative costs of 8% of the total actual costs were not reported separately.

LNU is mainly working as a networking organisation with about 100 member organisations. The Norad funded projects are small with about NOK 100 000 per project. Accordingly, the salary and office costs are mainly spent on the networking activities and the direct cost-efficiency of managing the Norad funds becomes low.

7.2 Network organisations

Three network organisations are included in this evaluation, ForUM, PWYP and DCG. A similar cost-efficiency analysis to the umbrella organisations was made also for the network organisations by comparing their total Norad funding with the total costs of the office.

As can be seen from Table 5, the network organisations have high personnel costs in comparison to their total income when comparing with the umbrella organisations who manage large funds with less staff costs. However, when personnel costs are considered as cost 'per person' the costs levels equals the personnel costs of the umbrellas showing that salary levels are similar in both types of organisations.

In the framework agreement between Norad and ForUM, the administrative costs are stated to be 17% of the total Norad funding. The administrative costs have not been reported separately in ForUM's Annual Financial Report. According to the agreement between Norad and PWYP the administration costs should be 7% and reported separately from the operational costs, so the agreement has not been followed entirely because the part of the administrative costs for Norad has not been separately reported in the Annual report.

Table 5 Cost data for the network organisations (key figures 2012)

	ForUM	PWYP	DCG/TKG
Personnel	11	3	8
Members	53	19	77
Total Income (mill NOK)	9.7	5.3	7.1
Total Norad Funding (mill NOK)	7.9	4.2	7.1
Used Norad Funding (mill NOK)	8.4	4.2	6,7
Total salary cost %	55.68	35.24	14.68
Total office cost %	19.23	8.22	9.48

Source: Forum: Årsmelding 2012; PWYP: Informasjonsrapport med regenskap 2012; DCG/TKG: TKG Regnskap 2012 and Revideret revisionsberetning 2012.

For DCG the administration cost for 2012 was 8% and for 2013 7% according to the agreement between Norad and DCG. DCG has not specified or reported the administration costs separately to Norad. Therefore it was not possible to calculate the actual administrative costs. However, DCG did for 2013 specify and report the administrative costs. For DCG the salary costs for the total secretariat was 1.6 million NOK. In Table 5 the total salary costs for DCG in Norway has compared with the total office costs in Norway. The information of the salary and office costs for DCG was received from the secretariat in Norway.

7.3 Key issues

The cost-efficiency of the transfer of funds from the umbrella secretariats to their Norwegian members may be questioned. Normally in the transfer of funds from one level to the next an administrative cost of 7% or 8% is deducted. As such, the final administrative costs for a project would increase significantly. In a four level chain where every level is authorised a 7% deduction, the final percentage of a grant is deducted by about 25% (calculated as 7% deducted from the remaining grant at each level). If 8% is taken as a case the percentage deducted would be close to 30%. Most of the grants from Norad are administrated by umbrellas with a minimum of four layers. It has not been possible to verify whether all umbrella fund transfers from one level to the next include a 7% but it is verified for some, e.g. for Digni partners, 8% costs have been reported for members in Norway as well as for local partners and projects in Nepal.

The administrative costs are calculated differently at different levels and they can therefore differ significantly from organisation to organisation. This suggests that the Norad agreement at a set cost for administration could be restrictive for a flexible management of Norad funding through UNOs and either deter organisations from becoming even more efficient or force the organisation to pay for administration of Norad funds through other funding.

Three of the five organisations defined as umbrella organisations, FOKUS, LNU and VNS, are working more as network organisations focusing on advocacy, networking and other activities apart from the management of Norad funds. Only Atlas and Digni can be considered umbrella organisations in its 'proper' definition of coordinating fund management to its members. Digni is now also showing signs of wanting to provide more added value to its members through outsourcing part of their fund management in order to strengthen further their ability to provide other support activities or devote activities to own projects.

The administrative costs of the networking organisations cannot be directly compared to the Norad funding as a portfolio, because the network organisations often work directly with their partners without additional layers of transactions. This implies that network organisations in general work with fewer layers than umbrella organisations and have more direct linkages with their partners.

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