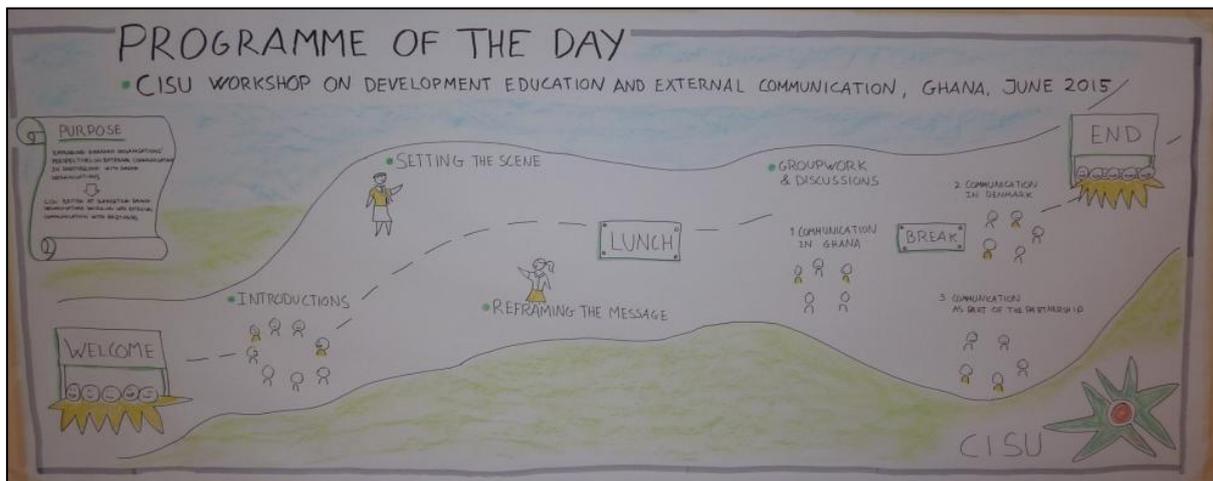


# Working with External Communication in Partnerships



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## 1. Background

CISU has for the last two years had a EU funded project called "Reframing the Message". In this project focus has been on capacity building of Danish member organisations in order for them to communicate in a more balanced and nuanced way creating stories based on hope and progress while depicting the need for more structural change.

The "Reframing the Message" project ended with two evaluation seminars, where the message from participating organisations was clear: "We have enjoyed and learnt a lot from the project on how to work with - and "reframe" - development education. Now we want to move forward and involve our partners! And we would like CISU to help us."

Therefore a visit to Ghana was planned, where CISU have taken up discussions of external communication with some of the partners to the Danish member organisations.

## 2. Objective

The objective for this thematic visit has been to explore opportunities and challenges in strengthening the cooperation between Danish organisations and their partners in relation to development education and external communication - in Denmark as well as in partner countries.

## 3. Observations on thematic issues

### Methodology

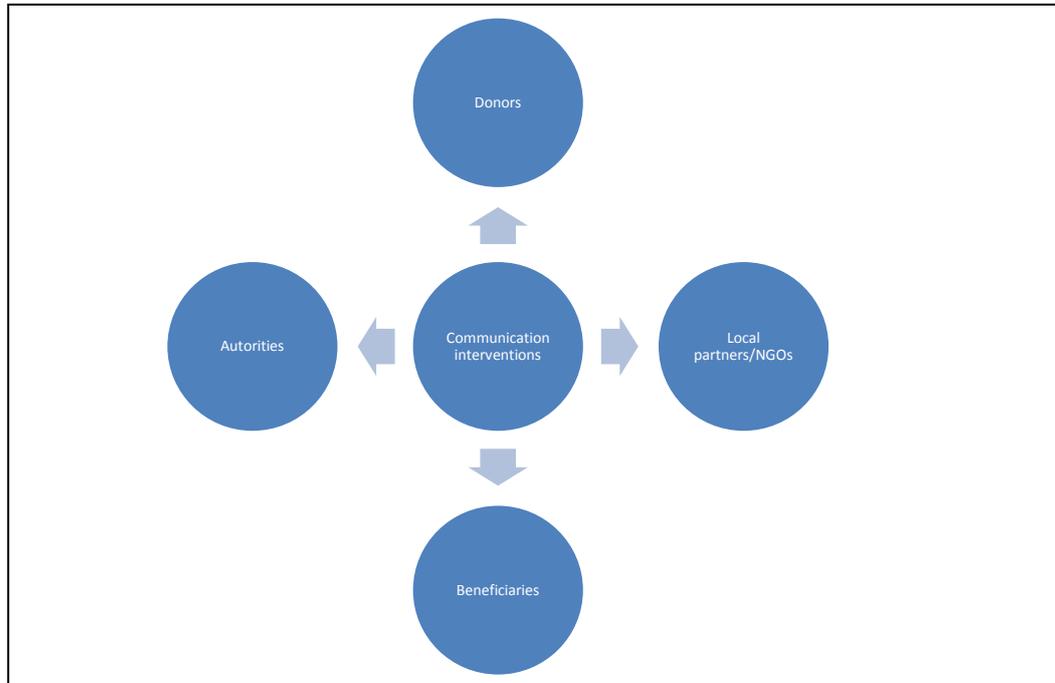
Before departure to Ghana, two meetings were held with Danish organisations, that had been involved in the "Reframing the Message" project discussing the purpose and content of the workshops to be conducted in Ghana. A main observation from the Danish partners was, that if communication are to be developed further in the partnership, it needs be relevant to the work of the Ghanaian partners as well, meaning communication should not only be an add on the project work to satisfy Danish taxpayers or raising awareness on a general level in Denmark. This focus on relevance for the Ghanaian partners is what structured our design of the workshops held in Ghana.

Two workshops were held in Ghana. One in Accra with 6 participating organizations and one in Tamale with 7 organisations (see Annex 2 for details on participants). In the workshops, partners were introduced to the basic concepts of the "Reframing the message" project, as well of the Danish current debates on development education and communication, including the transition from Millenium Development Goals to Sustainable Development Goals. This was followed by groups discussion on three issues: 1) Relevance of communication in Ghana, 2) Relevance of communication in Denmark and 3) Potentials in partnerships on communication.

Before the workshops the CISU position paper on 'Roles for organisations in the North' was shared with the participants. The following passages are extracts and main points that came up under the three sessions of group work.

## Session One: “What is the purpose of your communication in Ghana?”

Participants' description of their different ways of communicating in Ghana can be captured in the model below.



### **Danish partners or other donors**

In relations to donors – in this context mainly being Danish partners – communication was described as being ‘according to requirements’. Communication is mainly taking the form of internal project communication in terms of reports, documentation, and ‘stories of success, progress and change’ that donors continuously ask for.

Participants described this type of project communication as linear following the organisational set-up from activities – to documentation – to reporting. Only in some instances were social media deployed in communication between donors and Ghanaian partners. There was very little focus on *the way* stories were told – rather a focus on living up to the expectations from donors. Securing funding from present or future donors was mentioned as a separate purpose for employing in external communication and was given as the reason for having for instance websites and communicating externally.

### **Local NGOs/partners**

Best practice sharing was at the center of this type of communication together with the importance of networking. A strong point here was the need for avoiding duplication of both projects and learnings. The products shared were mainly documents, reports, annual reports though emails, websites, meetings and in some instances through social media, facebook, twitter and web. The participants mentioned themselves the need for

more sharing of experiences and learning e.g. through the use of social media platforms, and a greater need for building conversations between NGOs and engaging in mutual capacity building. As one participant phrased it – ‘we’re all in it for our selves’. If experience is being shared between NGOs it often gets stuck at management level and don’t trickle down through organizations.

### **Beneficiaries**

Beneficiaries came out as the primary target group for most organizations’ communication with the purpose of keeping communities and individuals continuously included, updated and involved in order to grow ownership and build sustainability. Where the projects and activities had an inbuilt communication component (radio networks, youth involvement through soc. Media etc) online communication and social media (facebook, what’s App, twitter, web) were consciously and strategically deployed as tools for mobilization, sharing of information and advocacy work. The more service oriented projects in smaller rural communities used mostly verbal communication, text messages, radio and animations (and to a lesser extent Whats App) because many people would not have a smart phone. Exceptions were present though.

One discussion focused specifically on ownership of stories – whether and how organisations and donors have the right to take the stories from communities and use them as organizational ‘stories of success’. Also it was mentioned that communication does not come back to the beneficiaries on progress and change eg. on advocacy efforts – the loop is not complete.

### **Authorities**

In relation to authorities organizations were split between those who had advocacy components and those who just communicated to authorities according to demand. Communication with advocacy purposes were both carried out by organizations as well as directly by beneficiaries. In activities where beneficiaries were youth, social media was deployed. Advocacy was in general not discussed much during the sessions.

### **Debates and discussions**

It became clear from the session that communication and development education towards the general public in Ghana is not very present as a direct purpose of communicating in Ghana. Following this the general population in Ghana is for most organisations not seen as a specific target group for communication. Communication is primarily seen as having the purpose of ‘securing the implementation of projects’ and ‘securing of funding’. This was framed as communication according to requirements. Inspired by the discussions and introductory presentation at the workshop, some participants advocated for community based organisations (CSOs) to change this focus and start building conversations with ordinary Ghanaian people on development issues. A link was made to global discussions of climate change and structural causes.

The fact that organizations mainly communicate in writing was seen as a major obstacle to include the general public as a target group and there was **a call for organizations to move from text to visuals**. This was also targeted the Danish partners who only promote documentation and internal communication in writing. There was also **a call for**

**making external communication mandatory in** both projects and partnerships and move away from reporting into storytelling.

A strong debate throughout the session was the **lack of capacity for communication**. Not only in the use of e.g. social media, but also in identifying the 'good stories' and in writing both in terms of reports/documentation, but also for external purposes. As one stated 'the quality of documentation and writing is depending on the capacity of people'.



## Session Two: "What is the purpose of your communication in Denmark?"

The discussions around the **value and purpose of communicating in Denmark** centered around the following points:

The main purpose seen was definitely **fundraising**. Communication in Denmark was seen as a way to promote the organisation, showing successes and best practices, attracting possible donors or securing the next funding from DANIDA/CISU.

There was also attention towards the possibility of engaging in **new networks on thematic issues**, creating contact to other partners, who would get to know the organisation through the communication in Denmark. A new employee in one of the organisations with British origins, emphasized that she had only got to know the organisation through the British partners' communication in UK.

In the same way the **recruitment of volunteers and interns** was seen as an important gain from the communication in partner countries. Several organisations highlighted the benefits of having interns and volunteers in relation to organisational learning, cultural exchange as well as exchange of capacities.

Especially in Tamale the issue of **accountability towards Danish taxpayers** was quite prominent in the discussions as a specific purpose of communicating. They emphasized that it was important to show the Danish public that they got value for money.

Other comments centered around **recognition** and **strengthening of the partnership** as a result of communication progress and results in Denmark. Many of the Ghanaian

organisations felt that their partners' communication in Denmark was a way of being appreciated; it could boost your morale and solidify your relation to your partner - one participant even mentioned the option of winning international awards.

On the question of the Ghanaian partners' knowledge of **what Danish partners actually are communicating in Denmark**, the message was more diversified. Some told about their partner being very transparent, sharing activities and videos, and giving quick and proper feedback on both reports and suggestions for stories. Others did not know very well what was going on in Denmark - and some were a bit frustrated about it. Challenges mentioned were fx improper or very slow feedback on reports and stories and especially feedback on how the stories produced in Ghana were being rewritten and used. Furthermore one participant described how he sometimes went to the partner's Facebook page and translated some of the postings, observing that they were very problem oriented but not knowing how to address this with their partner.

Furthermore the level of **details and nuances in the communication in Denmark** was discussed - informed of some of the themes being introduced in the first part of the workshops about the general tendency of producing simple stories of victims, focusing on conflict and problems as well as a reluctance to "hand over the microphone" meaning a focus on, who is telling the story: The DK partner? The Ghanaian partner? The beneficiaries?

Finally some participants mentioned the purpose of **contributing to the general knowledge among the Danish public in relation to global interconnectedness and the need for change** in the "North" as well as "the South" as discussed in the first session of the workshop as well as described in CISUs recent position paper.



## Session Three: "Potentials for developing communication in the partnership?"

The last session in the workshops focused on potentials for developing communication in the partnership and many suggestions came up.

A main point in both Accra and Tamale was that in order to develop and prioritize external communication as part of projects, **communication has to be an integrated part of project design from the start**. That means both in relation to the planning and budgeting of specific activities as well as incorporating resources and time for capacity building of relevant staff in communication - not only in relation to reporting, but also in relation to producing videos, audios and written pieces to radio, newspapers, websites, Facebook, Twitter and other media. There is a need to prioritize staff resources on this - either by hiring somebody specifically for this purpose or by training several project staff in lifting different communication tasks. Another suggestion was that several organisations could share a communication officer.

As part of this a **system for collecting data, stories and results** should be an integrated part of the overall project monitoring.

Where participants in Accra made the observation that external communication is optional and therefore not prioritized, participants in Tamale made a direct recommendation that **external communication should be made mandatory in projects**.

There was also a wish for discussing *what* is being communicated, including the option of communicating **challenges as well as results** (meaning that sometimes there is an unbalanced focus on successes and results), as well as more possibilities for communicating of **unintended results**. Hence, communication should not only be defined in relation to the fulfillment of indicators, but also in relation to locating the best stories.

A third idea expressed in both workshops were the wish for a **common platform** (facebook group or similar) where partners (in Ghana or Tamale) together could share successes and challenges among themselves and with Danish partners. The vision was that everybody - including Danish partners - should participate actively on such a platform, posting questions and comments and starting discussions.

An additional point presented was that before you can strengthen external communication in your partnership you have to **strengthen the communication internally between partners**. This could be done by more frequent partner visits and more formalized partner update meetings.

Other ideas mentioned were:

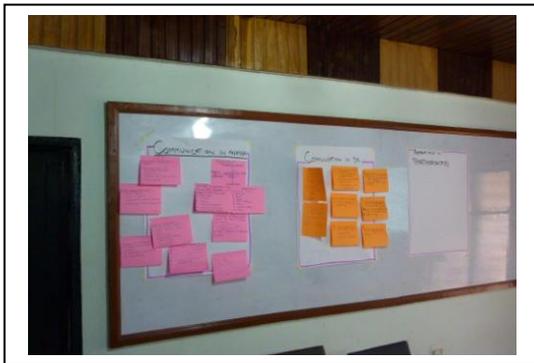
- The development of a **common communication strategy** among the partners. Ideally from the start of the project
- Include a specific **part on communication in as well long term partnership agreements as shorter term project agreements** clearly spelling out expectations and content
- Shorter or longer term "**job-swops**" between people in the Danish and the Ghanaian organisation
- Together **discuss how things are being communicated** in the partnership, referring to the "Reframing" discussions
- To a greater extent **work with social media** in communication as well as reporting (one participant emphasized that many Ghanaian organisations were still way to traditional in their communication)
- Be aware and **sensitive towards different target groups, different cultural approaches and understanding of sensitive issues**, as fx. Sexuality Education and LGBT
- Ghanaian organisations could be better at **networking among themselves**, sharing experiences and capacities within communication

Specific calls from Ghanaian organisations to Danish partners included:

- Remember to translate and share stories back to your partners.
- Give your partners more information about the stories to be produced: Who are the target groups? What kind of language is suitable? Type of framing? What process the story will go through in the Danish organisation etc.
- Have more confidence in your Ghanaian partners. Remember, that silence on the part of the Ghanaian organisation does not mean that nothing is happening.
- Remember to share feedback from CISU on different reports with partners
- Explore options of making greater use of social media as a channel for communication
- Sometimes it could be of great help if Danish organisations could write the reports based on verbal communication with the Ghanaian partner, e.g. through skype-interviews, and include more visuals and audios

Specific calls from Ghanaian organisation to CISU included:

- More flexibility in reporting options, including options of using videos, audios and images.
- External communication should be mandatory in projects
- Be aware of the great value in funding for example solar panels for partners due to frequent power cuts in Ghana.



## Summing Up

Overall we experienced a great interest and engagement from all participants at the two workshops even though the organisations had very different points of departure. Some had been working specifically with communication for a long time, for others it was quite new. However, we felt a strong dedication and motivation to move this agenda forward from everybody participating. As one participant phrased it: "In the past communication has been an afterthought". But new insight was formulated after the first workshop about communication as a driving force by a participant from a small organisation near Accra, who had not worked a lot with communication before:

***"Communication is not only about sending and receiving information. It is about solving problems".***

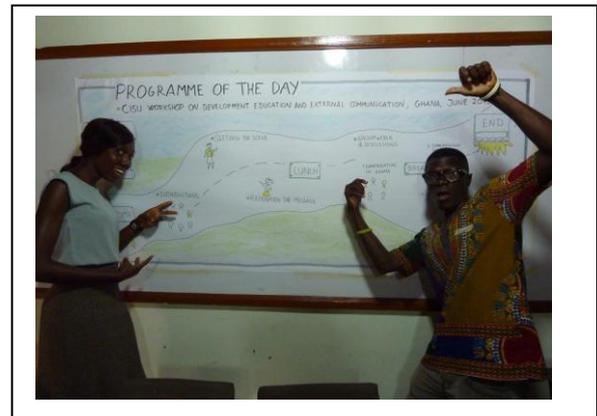
Or formulated in another way by a participant in Tamale:

***"Effective communication about development, will bring about effective development"***

However, as stated by both the Danish organisations in the meetings in Denmark as well as their Ghanaian partners during the workshops - the issue of prioritizing external communication in the partnership presupposes that external communication is an

integrated part of project design and partner agreements. It needs planning, resources as well as the building of capacity of the people involved. And the *purpose* of communicating and also *what*, to *whom*, *when*, *where* and *how* to communicate needs to be discussed thoroughly among the partners.

In these discussions the Danish organisations have a potential role to play in discussing communication towards the general public with their partners as more than securing project implementation. Meaning that the Danish organisations have experience in working with development education (in Danish: "Oplysning") as a cross cutting objective in its own right. This could become an issue in building long term partnerships by including it in the partnerships agreements. On the same hand the Danish organisations' partners can support the Danish organizations in considering their own role in a Danish context. How can Danish organization strengthen *their* legitimacy as Danish civil society organizations – by development education or other means<sup>1</sup>.



## 4. Outputs and Dissemination

### Recommendations for Danish organizations and their partners

- The Danish Civil Society organisations (CSOs) and their partners support each other in developing their role as civil society organisations in their respective countries, including a focus on development education and awareness raising.
- That Danish organisations and their partners to a larger extent focus on how to prioritize communication as a component of development work that has equal importance with other project elements. This focus can be developed by including communication components directly and more integrated in project applications or

<sup>1</sup> For more elaboration on this point see CISUs position paper on The Role of Danish Development Organisations. [www.cisu.dk](http://www.cisu.dk)

by applying specifically for developing communication capacities and strategies as part of a partnership activity (funding modality in the Civil Society Fund)

- Danish organisations and their partners to include external communication and development education in partnership agreements as well as in project agreements (memorandums of understanding) clearly spelling out content and common expectations
- That Danish organisations support or help facilitate local, regional or national networks among partners where experiences and capacities for communication can be shared.

## Recommendations for CISU

- It is recommended that CISU develops a Dialogue Tool for Danish partners to use when discussing communication with their partners. The tool could have the form of a power point presentation building on experience from "Reframing the Message", the recent position paper and some questions for reflection and debate.
- CISU to include the issue of external communication and development education in the recommendations for partnership agreements and project agreements
- In the process of updating the guidelines for the Civil Society Fund the following points should be taken into consideration:
  1. Possibilities of including external communication and development education into the project design from the outset and allocating resources for developing and hiring capacity for communication (internally and externally)
  2. Investigate possibilities for strengthening the dynamic/synergy between communication in Denmark and the countries of the partner organisations, meaning a greater synergy between communication components in the actual project and the 2 % funds for project related communication in Denmark (PRO midler). An example of this could be the development of a shared communication platform directed at both the Danish populations and the population in the country of the partner organization or that staff in the partner organisation trained in communication through the project produces stories for a Danish audience.
  3. That more flexible reporting methods are included as part of documentation, monitoring and evaluation (e.g. short videos, audios or images) and that guidelines for this are developed

4. As a consequence of the recommendations above a final recommendation would be for CISU to further develop its organisational capacity to deliver trainings and advisory sessions on communication.

## Dissemination

- A follow-up meeting with interested Danish organisations presenting findings from the trip, possibly with subsequent network meetings for interested members sharing experiences on how to move forward
- Sharing of the report and findings with the involved Ghanaian organisations
- An internal meeting at CISU presenting findings from the trip for colleagues
- Input to the process of renewing the CSF guidelines
- Sharing of the report via CISUs homepage



## 5. Annexes

### Annex 1 - Itinerary

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>
11.06	Travel Billund - Accra
12.06	Settling in. Arranging last details for workshop
13.06	Workshop Accra at YES Ghana Venue
14.06	Travel to Tamale postponed due to hospitalisation of Maria
15.06	Sofie Travel Tamale. Workshop Tamale at Global Platform Venue
16.06	Field visit Tamale with YEFL Meeting GCDA Meeting Global Platform
17.06	Travel Accra Meeting Occupy Ghana
18.06	Report writing. Departure Accra.
19.06	Arriving in Billund

## Annex 2 - People met

### Workshop Accra

Ali Ibrahim	Youth for Change
Dela Ayivor	YES Ghana
Kimberly Green	YES Ghana
Bismark Asempapah	KPDP
Godwin Badu	KPDP
Faith Adusei	KPDP
Kofi Larweh	Ghana Community Radio Network
Amos Katsekor	Ghana Community Radio Network
Lovans Owusu-Takyi	KITA-Ghana
Wisdom Adzawlo	Youth Volunteers for Environment

### Workshop Tamale

Iddrisu Asana	NORSAAC
Prince Imoro Issah	NORSAAC
Salifu Mahama	Youth Empowerment for Life
Abukari Anass Neindow	Youth Empowerment for Life
Abdallah Kassim	Rural Media Network
Ahmed Abdul-Mumin	School for Life
Philip Gmabi Alaika	GCDA
Peter F.X Porekuu	GCDA
Abukari Abdul-Fatawu	REEP Ghana
Abukari Abdul-Razak	REEP Ghana
Maccarthy Lomotey	Hop In Academy
Genevieve Adjoa Micado	Hop In Academy

### Meetings Tamale

Osman Abdel Rahmam	GCDA
Kevin Nordman Andersen	Global Platform

### Meeting Accra

Sydney Casely Hayford	Occupy Ghana
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### Preparatory meeting Copenhagen

Merete Arnoldi	Red Orangutangen
Leah Strauss	Crossing Borders
Astrid Coyne-Jensen	Dansk Folkehjælp
Mona Ljungberg	Mit Asyl
Lars Rosenmejer	100% for Børnene
Camilla Nielsen-Englyst	100% for Børnene
Janne Stella Søndergård	Seniorhænder til Afrika

### Preparatory meeting Aarhus

Sigrid Soelberg Vestergaard	Vedvarende Energi
Kresten Kjær Sørensen	Vedvarende Energi
Lise Grauenkaer	Ghana Venskabsgrupperne

## Annex 3 - Terms of Reference

### **Working with external communication in partnerships**

#### **1. Background**

CISU has for the last two years had a EU funded project called "Reframing the Message". In this project focus was on capacity building of Danish member organisations in order for them to communicate in a more balanced and nuanced way creating stories based on hope and progress while depicting the need for more structural change.

The "Reframing the Message" project ended with two evaluation seminars, where the message from participating organisations was clear: "We have enjoyed and learnt a lot from the project on how to work with - and "reframe" - development education. Now we want to move forward and involve our partners! And we would like CISU to help us."

Therefore a visit to Ghana was planned, where CISU will take up the discussion of external communication with some of the partners to the Danish member organisations.

This trip to Ghana relates to two out of three CISU criteria for thematic visits, namely:

- Investigating themes related to the development of CISUs services to its members.
- Investigating themes related to members' and their partners' actual use of newly developed tools and methods.

#### **2. Objective**

The objective for this thematic visit is to explore opportunities and challenges in strengthening the cooperation between Danish organisations and their partners in relation to development education and communication in Denmark as well as in partner countries.

#### **3. Outputs**

The thematic visit will lead to the following outputs:

- A report compiling findings and recommendations – if possible including recommendations for how to include a partner perspective in the CSF guidelines on Development Education.
- A web based guide on how to discuss development education in the partnership

#### **4. Thematic issues for the visit**

More specifically the visit will focus on compilation and analysis of experience on:

- The capacity of Ghanaian organisations to involve themselves in development education and communication in Ghana and with their partner in DK – including driving and restraining forces
- The understanding of and view on the importance of engaging in development education and communication as part of entering into partnerships

- Opportunities for local capacity building – eg. MS' Global Platform Ghana or other relevant actors.

## **5. Stakeholders to be involved in the visit**

The journey will include contact and dialogue with the following main stakeholders:

Partners of Danish members in and around Accra and Tamale accordingly. The Danish members and their partners are:

100 % til børnene	Youth for Change/CAS/KPDP/Reep
Crossing Borders	GCRN/YES Ghana (former partner)
Landsforeningen for Økosamfund	KITA/GEN Ghana/ Youth Volunteers for the Environment
Ghana Venskabsgrupperne	GCDA/YEFL/HopInAcademy/RUMNET/Schoolsforlife
DGI Midtjylland	YOPP
AXIS	NORSAAC

## **6. Plan of work**

The visit will be based on the following main methods and activities:

- Two workshops for partners of CISU members. One in Accra and one in Tamale. The workshops will be based on brief introductions to basic concepts from the "Reframing the Message" project focus on discussions among the invited organisations exploring experience and perspectives on their work with communication and development education in their partnerships today
- Individual meetings with selected organisations and actors

## **7. Dissemination**

- Trainings for CISU members in how to work with communication in the partnerships - alternatively a workshop for sharing experiences of how to move forward
- A follow-up meeting with interested Danish organisations presenting findings from the trip, possibly with subsequent network meetings for interested members (like the option mentioned above)
- An internal meeting at CISU presenting findings from the trip for colleagues
- Input to the process of renewing the CSF guidelines