

The Danish Emmaus organization "Genvej til Udvikling" (GtU = Short Cut to Development") has for all its lifetime been a participant in the public debate about development matters. In recent years the participation has especially taken place in form of blog posts on the website www.ulandsnyt.dk. The following article is about coordination between donators and recipients of development aid put against the tendency that one organization in the south co-operates with one organization in the north and regard the other organizations away and home as competitors:

I Have Caught a White Person

Published the 5th of March 2012 as a blog post on www.u-landsnyt.dk/blog/51/jeg-har-fanget-mig-en-hvid

The northern development organization often wants to see an effect of spreading; but the partner in Africa rarely has visions that extend beyond the local area. The most important for an African is his family. The second most important is the village and the local area. How can we from the North meet this challenge?

During one of my visits in Niger I followed a project coordinator from Amatal to Agadez and one day a friend had asked him: "That guy, your white person, how much money does he have?" After that the coordinator insisted that as few as possible should know about my existence. The coordinator is the only one of his generation in the Amatal Zone who has got an academic education, and the area's poor inhabitants put a persistent pressure of expectations on him.

On my first Africa journey the man in whose house I lived said: "Most of those who want to talk to you are just happy about the human contact but there are also some people, who have a strategy in their minds: "If I can attach myself permanently to a white person, then it will help my family for many years from now on."

Should we let it stay that way that each African organization has its "white persons" when we at the same time remember that the big majority of African organizations only have between 5 and 25 members?

In Burkina Faso 15 Danish associations are running activities and it happens that we co-operate in Denmark: but mutual contacts in Burkina Faso between organizations with Danish collaborators are non-existing. At the same time the Burkinabé traditions for peaceful co-existence between the 64 ethnic groups are about to come unstuck, since there are murderous attacks on herdsmen of the Fulani people in the battle for pastures, and since there has been extensive street fighting and plundering in protest against the President. It is not likely that people will keep him from celebrating his 25 years in power in October 2012, not at least because opposition against him lacks cohesion.

Can Denmark contribute to a co-ordination of the association life in Burkina Faso, Niger and other countries with a more extensive democratic perspective, without failing their efforts, because the idea of co-ordination came from abroad?

Maybe we have to reject both the "a white person each- model" *and* the co-ordination suggested from abroad?

Maybe we have to change the way the international development network are organized?
If we offer the organizations from the South seats, that *they* choose people to, in the leading organs, then we get the highest attainable equality in the co-operation. South persons will be listened to in a new way. But the structure will not least imply that the representative from the South not only must decide upon his attitude to his own situation but also to a vast number of other contexts, in his own country, among his neighbors and in a global perspective. Then the ground maybe can be prepared for coordination between the South organizations which they will organize themselves - rather than a situation where each look out for his own together with the white person, he or she has "caught" on the way through life.

The Tanzanian organizer John Ulanga told on a meeting in the Danish Education Network, that the average South representation in international development NGO's leading organs is 6,5 percent. There are endless democratization and development perspectives in making this number grow.