Digni 40 ÅR

Final Report to Norad

Digni - Cooperation Agreement 2018-2023

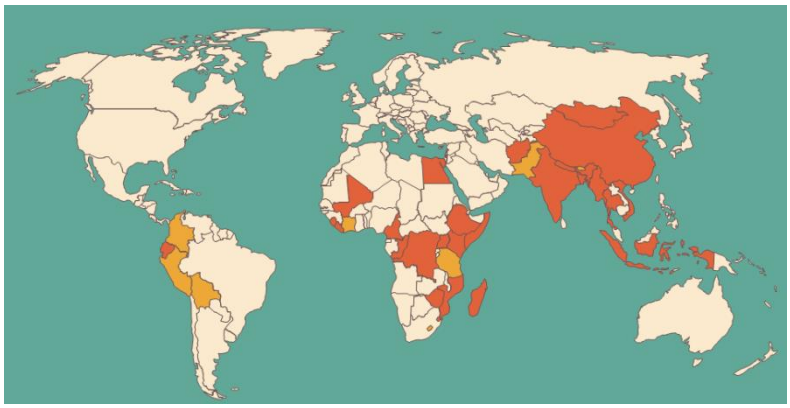
Photo front page: From the Blue Cross project in Kenya
"Alcohol and other substance abuse prevention for children and youth."
Photo: Marit Rosendahl Andersen, Digni

1. General

1.1 Name of grant recipient:	Digni
1.2 Norad's agreement number:	QZA-18/0159
1.3 Norad's agreement title:	Digni – Cooperation agreement 2018-2023
1.4 Total grant amount:	170.70.121: 947,054,503 170.70.123: 25,768,401 161.70.121: 1,900,000 (2022) 159.76: 9,951,000 (2021, reported in 2022)
1.5 Support period of the agreement	01.05.2018 – 30.04.2023
1.6 Reporting period	01.05.2018 – 30.04.2023[1]

1.7 Countries with projects:

South America	**Africa**	**Asia**
Ecuador	Burundi	Afghanistan
Phased out	Cameroon	Bangladesh
Bolivia	Congo	Cambodia
Colombia	DR Congo	China
Peru	Egypt	India
	Eswatini	Indonesia
	Ethiopia	Lebanon
	Kenya	Mongolia
	Liberia	Myanmar
	Madagascar	Nepal
	Mali	State of Palestine
	Mozambique	Vietnam
	Sierra Leone	**Phased out**
	Somalia	Bhutan
	Uganda	Pakistan
	Zimbabwe	
	Phased out	
	Côte d'Ivoire	
	Leshoto	
	Tanzania	



[1] Financial report covers the full agreement period, 01.05.2018 to 30.04.2023, while the narrative report on project implementation follows the calendar years. Implementation from 01.01.2023 to 30.04.2023 will be included in the narrative progress report for 2023.

2. Results and learning

2.1 Summary

Digni's strategic plan for the period, From Poverty to Dignity, lays the foundation of this report. The overall goal was *to see empowered communities and individuals living in dignity*. This was supported by the goal of seeing *societies characterised by a strong civil engagement for change*. In addition to strengthening civil society, Digni believes that the five long-term thematic goals related to good health, peaceful coexistence, environmental stewardship, quality education, and economic empowerment are essential aspects of human dignity.

This section highlights important key results, results examples, and lessons learned from the implementation of Digni's project portfolio throughout the Cooperation Agreement with Norad 2018-2023 in relation to the initial planned results. Later chapters will also cover significant deviations from the plan, an overview of how Digni, its member organisations and their partners have worked with risk management, and an analysis of how project implementation costs relate to achieved results. The report will conclude with a reflection on the sustainability of the project's results after completion and how Digni will follow up the findings from the thematic evaluation on "Religious Actors and the Civil Society" among selected partner organisations in the Digni chain. Budget distribution per thematic area in the beginning and at the end of the agreement period:

306,741
persons organised

72%
women

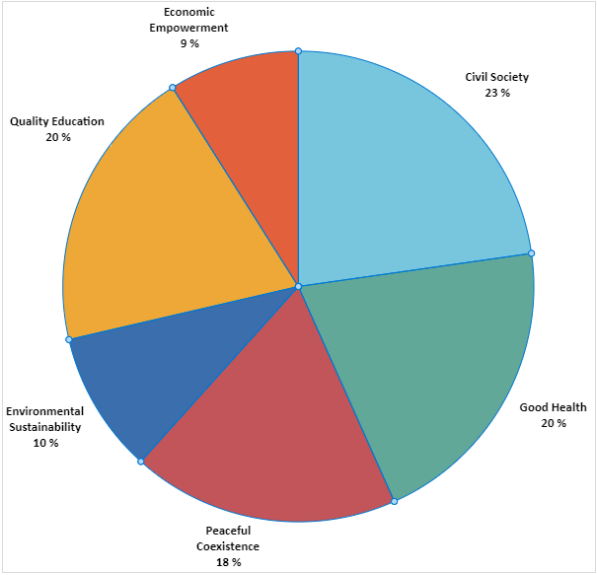
228,239
benefitting from health services

26,585
promoting peaceful coexistence

31,900
farmers using climate smart agricultural methods

1,539,615
direct beneficiaries

174,119
enrolled in target educational institutions



25 million
members in partner churces

3,806
self-sustaining savings and loans groups

Civil Society

Society is characterised by a high degree of civil society engagement for change.

Share of Accounts (2018-2022)	23%
Number of projects with final report (2018-2022)	118

Digni believes that strong civil society actors and an enabling environment for civil society are prerequisites for participatory democracy, accountable governance, and social justice. During 2018-2022, all projects in Digni have worked towards this end.

Key results 2018-2022

Outcome 1.1 There is a high degree of organisation in the target group

More than 9,5 million people have indirectly benefitted from the project interventions related to strengthening of civil society and around 20% of them have participated directly in project activities. More than 300,000 project participants have been organised in close to 25,000 different groups and networks, of whom 72% are women. Near 100,000 persons have received training in organisational skills and 31,000 in leadership skills.

Outcome 1.2 Local communities are able to identify and solve their challenges together

The overall majority of projects have empowered local communities and project participants to solve development challenges together. Based on the sample of projects reporting on this indicator, 82% obtained results at outcome level or above. The mobilisation of local resources and ability to take action, is also exemplified by the large number of volunteers, 33,000 of whom 61% female, serving the local communities.

Outcome 1.3 Communities provide equal opportunities for women and men

More than 55% of project participants are women and girls. This can be attributed to the extensive sensitising of men and women on gender equality and women's rights which included more than 430,000 persons (57% female).

Outcome 1.4 Rights-holders are holding duty-bearers accountable

Rights based approaches have been used to empower rights holders to engage with duty-bearers to advocate for their interests. 170,000 individuals have been trained in advocacy skills and human rights. The trainings empowered 120,000 persons to participate in advocacy initiatives to influence decision-makers. This is twice as many as the set target of 63,000. In addition, more than 31,000 persons (59% female) have got access to public services as consequence of advocacy efforts.

Outcome 1.5 Partners have strong capacity

Digni's Partner Assessment carried out in 2022 of all partners reveals that the average score across all organisational categories in the partner portfolio is 4.17 out of 5.0. A score of 5 indicates the lowest risk level. Most of the local partners operate on an adequate risk level and have mitigation and follow up plans in place to mitigate weaker areas. As such, the partners in Digni's portfolio are assessed to have sufficient capacity to manage Norad funds.

Outcome 1.6 Partners mobilise faith-based assets for social justice

The 18 faith-based partners mobilised their assets in various ways for social justice. Seven out of the 44 projects that ended in 2022, have reported on how they mobilised their assets for social justice in their communities. In **Ethiopia,** project interventions have strengthened relations between different church denominations in the country and networks. Church members trained in trauma healing are using their skills in the social work. Projects that have worked on women's empowerment in churches are seeing positive behaviour change related to cultural norms like women's rights to live free of violence and sexual abuse, and women's place in decision-making bodies.

In **Kenya**, church leaders and members teach that it is biblical for widows to remarry a husband by her choice and they are not supposed to be forcefully 'inherited' and taken as a wife by another man appointed by the in-laws. The impacts go beyond the churches. In **Ethiopia, Madagascar**, and **Cameroon**, church members trained in peace building cooperate with traditional community-based structures and leaders to promote peace in their communities. Projects in other countries also report on the church's role in promoting peace and reconciliation. The Use Your Talents project's asset-based approach to development continues to spread to different countries and communities. This project reports that church members together, based on voluntary work, build bridges, houses for needy people, sewerage for flood protection, construct buildings for rent, generate funds for student fees, plant trees, and construct church buildings.

Results examples

In **Eswatini**, policies to fight Gender Based Violence have been adopted at national level, through persistent advocacy work in one of the programmes. The programme is affiliated to and is actively engaging in the Coordinating Assembly of Non-Governmental Organisations and the Consortiums for children's, gender, and human rights. Through intense lobbying, advocacy and engagements with policy makers, school administrators and parents; the Deputy Prime Minister's Officer effectively abolished the expulsion of pregnant girls from schools across the country in 2020.

The government in **Bhutan** has adopted a National Policy for people with disabilities because of advocacy work by one of the projects. The partner organisation has received high credibility due to the great results and has become the only officially recognised Disabled People's Organisation of Bhutan (DPOB). In addition, the Gross National Happiness Commission of Bhutan has included the construction of the DPOB Resource Centre in its five-year plan (2023-2027). At the local level, communities in different parts of the country now work together to provide free distribution of food, clothes, and shelters to people with disabilities who are in need.

The main learnings from the total of 118 projects which completed their project cycles during 2018-2022 and worked on strengthening civil society actors are summarised below:

37% of the projects strengthened civil society actors with results assessed at high outcome or impact level[2]. These projects established and empowered local community-based groups and/or associations such as village committees, municipal committees, management committees, etc. They also worked with relevant stakeholders and established solid cooperation with local authorities and relevant regional and/or national bodies. Some have engaged in development of regional or national thematic strategies and policies. In addition, they have successfully linked local community organisations and relevant authorities and officials. Moreover, the projects have actively sought cooperation with a wider and relevant network of civil society organisations. Trainings in advocacy, organisational and leadership skills, and advocacy work have been

[2] EAT= Empowerment Assessment Tool, scale: Low output: 1; Output: 2, Low Outcome: 3, Outcome: 4, Impact: 5, on the Digni EAT scale..

emphasised. They have also succeeded in mobilising resource at the communities or/and contribution from local government or others.

Only 7% of projects, were assessed to have achieved below expectation, with results at output level. The characteristic of these projects is that they were not successful in linking the established project groups with bodies outside the targeted local communities nor been able to establish collaboration with other like-minded NGOs, local, regional, and national government bodies. Although some projects offered training on organisational and leadership skills for local use, there are few activities related to advocacy work towards duty-bearers.

Digni's analysis does not reveal a significant correlation between project size/budgets and results achievement on strengthening civil society. However, we observe that the longer a project has been implemented, the more pronounced the impact level results become, although this trend is not very clear. Projects in Latin America have been most successful, followed by Asia, the Middle East, and Africa.

Good Health

Target groups are able to influence conditions regarding own health and wellbeing.

Share of Accounts (2018-2022)	21%
Number of projects with final report (2018-2022)	47

The importance of working on improved access and quality of health services and address underlying conditions impeding well-being is demonstrated by many projects having worked on health.

Key results 2018-2022

2.1 Rights-holders have access to health services.

More than 228,000 persons benefitted directly from new and running health services. Some of the projects with the largest contribution to these results were the community development programs in **Zimbabwe** and **Pakistan,** maternity health project in **Ethiopia**, and projects in **The Democratic Republic of Congo**. In **Nepal**, **Afghanistan**, and **Mongolia**, more than 8,100 persons with physical and mental disabilities received specialised health care.

Training of health staff and of community members has been important. As many as 19,000 persons have been trained in various health topics such as basic care, nutrition, HIV/Aids, mental health, reproductive health and family planning, maternal and infant health.

2.2 Target groups demonstrate knowledge about conditions affecting the health of households.

Safe drinking water and improved sanitation (WASH) are essentials for good health and reduce the prevalence of waterborne diseases. Around 58,000 households are reported practicing WASH principles due to project activities, in **Sierra Leone**, **Zimbabwe**, **Uganda**, **Ethiopia** and **Cambodia**. Sensitisation activities of on various health-related issues have been carried out to a large scale in the projects, encompassing as many as 870,000 persons.

2.3 Target groups combat stigma related to health.
Projects located in **Afghanistan, Mongolia** and **Nepal**, report reduced stigma from local communities towards close to 1,500 persons with physical or mental illnesses. In **Pakistan, Ecuador, Nepal** and **Mongolia** 12,300 patients are referred to diagnostics, treatment, counselling from the local community due to project activities. These accomplishments have been possible in part due to awareness raising. As many as 133,000 persons have been sensitised on stigma related to health conditions, in as various contexts as **Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Mongolia** and **Nepal**.

Result examples
In **Eswatini,** 4,200 clients have been assisted with an array of psychosocial services to overcome trauma related to gender-based violence. 34,600 persons have been sensitised and informed on health issues related to gender-based violence and teenage pregnancy. Through advocacy and engagements with the Ministry of Health and other health facilities, adolescent girls access teenage-friendly sexual and reproductive health and rights services.

In **Ethiopia,** project interventions have led to a significant reduction in stigma and discrimination and improved situations for HIV-positive individuals. The HIV prevalence rate is gradually falling in regions where the program has been implemented, and the number of newly HIV-infected individuals and HIV/AIDS related deaths in the intervention areas have decreased.

The main learnings from 47 projects working on good health, which completed their project cycles during 2018-2022 are summarised below:
30% of the projects working on health had results assessed at high outcome or impact level. One of the characteristics of these projects is that they often focus on a specific health related topic, rather than working on general health related issues. Projects with specialised competence on the health topic they work on, have generally good results. We have also, in previous years, seen a pattern indicating that projects where health constitutes the main thematic component (more than 50 % of the budget allocation) achieve better results within this thematic sector compared to projects in which health is a smaller part alongside several other thematic areas, even if this tendency is less in projects ending in 2022.

It appears as if preventive health projects (WASH, nutrition) tend to be more challenging to measure. The assumption is that the prevalence of illnesses and mortality in the communities would have been higher without these interventions, but in small projects/interventions it is harder to verify the impact of the project, especially when the main focus of the project is within a different thematic area.

30% of projects working on health, were assessed to have achieved results at only output levels. This result is lower than expected. Digni observes that where the partner/projects have health as an “add-on” to other interventions, without specific knowledge on health, results are often lower. The Covid-19 pandemic may also have impacted the results of the health-related projects, where public health structures had all the focus geared towards handling the pandemic, and little time to participate in project related activities. In addition, local health facilities did not prioritise to document and keep statistics, resulting in that some Digni projects lacked this information when reporting their results. Another factor that negatively affected the result reporting has been that some projects experiences freeze of funding linked to mismanagements cases.

We also see a tendency for projects that ended after three project periods had higher scores than those that ended after two periods and which in turn had higher scores than those with only one period. The trend is clear, even if it does not have a very significant impact. The variation is within low output level to high.

Peaceful Coexistence

Target groups are coexisting in a safe and peaceful environment.

Share of Accounts (2018-2022)	18%
Number of projects with final report (2018-2022)	43

Security and peaceful coexistence are important at all levels, among household members, between groups in the community, and at regional and national level. Many Digni projects have worked on this theme in various ways and obtained important results for project participants and beyond.

Key results 2018-2022

Outcome 3.1 Target groups are able to promote non-violent co-existence

In **Burundi, Palestine, Egypt, Ecuador, Cambodia, Rep of Congo, India, Kenya**, and **Afghanistan** local partners have worked on empowering project participants. A total of 27,000 key persons, of whom 55% women, were actively promoting peaceful coexistence in their communities. Close to 13,000 persons received peace education in topics like conflict management, democracy education, Do-no-harm methodology, Human rights, and peace education.

Outcome 3.2 Local partners and communities combat gender-based violence (GBV) in target areas

More than 3,400 cases of gender-based violence have been reported and handled, due to project activities. Most of the cases were from **Eswatini, Republic of Congo**, and **Ecuador,** but projects in other countries contributed to this result as well**.** In these projects, 85,100 persons, such as traditional and religious leaders, government officials, community members, were sensitised on gender-based violence. In addition, 214 communities, with an estimated population of around 25,000, denounced harmful practices to women and girls, such as female genital mutilation and other.

Outcome 3.3 Children grow up in a safe and caring environment

More than 12,000 caregivers received training on children's rights and upbringing, of whom 10,200 were trained in the methods of International Development Child Program (ICDP) in four countries. This has contributed to children growing up in a safe and caring environment. Around 9,600 caregivers demonstrated change in attitude towards child upbringing.

A total of 2,700 children were positively affected by measures to improve their safety and protection in target institutions in **Burundi**, **Nepal** and **Mongolia**. In addition, close to 20,000 children received training on human rights.

Outcome 3.4 Local partner and communities combat human rights violations against ethnic, indigenous, or religious minorities

The projects worked on human rights violations against ethnic, indigenous, and religious minorities in multiple ways. One results of this work is that close to 4,000 persons gained ownership of land, most of them belonging to ethnic minority groups in **Pakistan** and **Bangladesh**.

Advocacy work and linking communities, networks, civil society organisations with local governments and relevant stakeholders led to 23 laws or regulations being adopted/enforced in project areas to protect ethnic or indigenous peoples. Most of these results were obtained in projects working on protection of indigenous peoples' rights in **Republic of Congo** and minorities in **Assam, India**. In addition, a total of 3,500 persons, of whom 56% female, have been trained in ethnic and minority rights.

Specific results related to Freedom of Religion and Belief (FORB) and religious equality are reported separately in this report.

Result examples

One of the projects in **Kenya,** achieved results assessed at impact level. Before the project intervention, communities in two target areas with a population of 5.6 million experienced violent conflicts, often in connection with elections. This led to loss of lives, loss of property, displacement of families, family disintegration, unemployment rates, high illiteracy levels, and violations of human rights. The most significant result is the historical record of peaceful coexistence, without any violent conflict, in key project areas during three national elections since 2009. The peace methodology of the project is studied by international researchers and replicated by other NGOs.

In **The Republic of Congo** (Brazzaville), one project achieved results at high outcome level. The Eglise Evangelique du Congo (EEC) has adopted a gender policy and later a plan of action on gender-based violence. Leaders at all levels of the church have been trained and organised. The project had 27,800 direct participants and estimate a total of 177,000 indirect beneficiaries. Close to 1,000 cases of gender-based violence have been reported, and survivors have been assisted to local hospitals, psychologists, received micro-credit, judicial help, and more. In 2020, the Congolese government invited EEC to participate in writing of a national policy on combatting gender-based violence, and several other civil society actors have replicated ECC's methodology.

The main learnings from 43 projects working on peaceful existence, which completed their project cycles during 2018-2022, are summarised below:

37% of the projects accomplished results assessed at high outcome or impact level within the theme of peaceful co-existence. When analysing these projects, we notice that some of their success can be attributed to the local knowledge of partner and the existence of trusting, and solid relationships with community. Large faith-based actors with a wide member and grassroots-base, and networks are well placed and relevant to carry out peace and reconciliation work.

The successful projects work with relevant stakeholders, to establish community structures, such as peace committees, conflict mediation forums and early warning and response mechanisms, create local ownership and secure sustainability of results after project has ended. Training key actors in conflict mediation, traditional ways of resolving conflicts, non-violent communication, trauma healing and more, are also important to enhance local capacity for peace.

Large faith-based actors have potential and have demonstrated that they are able to achieve substantial results related to gender-based violence. With millions of members and extended networks, these organisations are highly relevant, effective, and great change can be achieved. For project initiatives and interventions to be credible, it is important that the actors address gender-based violence within their own organisations and mobilise leadership. In addition, the local partners need to be prepared and have a strategy to handle the increase in reported gender-based violence cases in a responsible way.

Digni also notes that the use of International Child Development Program (ICDP)-methodology can be successfully integrated in various projects and enhance overall project results. Digni will continue to promote the use of ICDP.

14% of the projects accomplished results at low output or output level. Learnings from these projects suggest that some of their low achievement can be attributed to factors such as local partners working in a new project area context, not having sufficient thematic and/or technical competence, poor socio-cultural understanding, and weak relationships with relevant stakeholders. Low partner capacity in project and/or financial management were also contributing factors. External factors such as military coup in some cases or Covid-19 also impeded full or partial implementation of project activities, affecting results.

Environmental Sustainability

Target groups exercise responsible stewardship of the environment.

Share of Accounts (2018-2022)	10%
Number of projects with final report (2018-2022)	21

The effects of climate change, poor management of natural resources, lack of food security and resilient livelihoods, are affecting the lives of people and communities living in poverty and marginalisation. An increasing number of Digni projects during the project period 2018-2022 have worked to address these challenges, to improve resilience and responsible stewardship of environment.

Key results 2018 -2022

Outcome 4.1: Target groups are resilient to negative livelihood conditions

In countries like **Uganda, Bangladesh** and **India,** 31,900 farmers, of whom 67% female, have adopted climate-smart agricultural practices. Close to 100,000 persons have been sensitised on climate change adaptation in countries like **Vietnam, Bangladesh, Ethiopia,** and **Cameroon.**

300 communities have adopted plans and measures to mitigate deteriorating livelihood conditions, indicating significant achievements in community engagement for increasing their resilience. Many of these communities are situated in **Ethiopia, India**, **Uganda**, **Cameroon**, and **Vietnam**, in addition to other countries.

Outcome 4.2: Local partners and communities implement environmentally friendly measures

Close to 46,000 individuals, of whom 67% female, have benefitted from sustainable energy sources across various projects, mostly in **Uganda**, **Cameroon** and **India**.

Result examples

In **Uganda**, significant progress has been made in the ongoing effort to safeguard the areas surrounding Mt. Elgon National Park. As a result of these endeavours, near 12,000 farmers have adopted climate-smart agricultural practices.

In **Ethiopia,** and areas prone to extreme drought, a total of 50 communities have adopted plans and measures to mitigate deteriorating livelihood.

In the fight against desertification in **Cameroon,** proactive interventions, including awareness campaigns and eco-oven training, have successfully transitioned more than 17,000 individuals to use sustainable energy sources.

The main learnings from the total of 21 projects which completed their project cycles during 2018-2022 and worked on the theme of environmental sustainability are summarised below: 24% of these projects accomplished results assessed at high outcome level. When analysing these projects, we notice that those with environmental sustainability as its main thematic area as well as projects with a higher percentage of budget allocated to environmental themes are more likely to yield better results. These projects allocated an average of 48% of their budgets to environmental initiatives.

When assessing the whole sample of 21 projects working on environmental sustainability, it is noteworthy that six of these projects stem from the projects ending 2022, indicating an increased emphasis on the theme 'environmental sustainability' within the total Digni project portfolio. Likewise, analysis of accounts allocated to environmental sustainability for final year projects reveals a significant upward trajectory from 2018 to 2022.

The projects have predominantly been focused on implementation of eco-friendly agricultural practices and sustainable natural resource management, tailored to the specific challenges prevalent in their respective regions. A considerable proportion of these projects have operated in regions vulnerable to the impacts of adverse climate change, where adaptation measures and practices constitute a pivotal component of project interventions.

29% of the projects accomplished results assessed at output level. Five of these six projects with low results had allocated a mere 13% of their budgets to environmental activities. However, it is important to acknowledge that low results are also likely to be influenced by various other factors as well. Notably, projects with low output results in environmental sustainability exhibit similar performance levels across other thematic areas. This suggests that organisational factors and technical competence within project management and follow up, especially monitoring and evaluation, have affected the end results.

Quality Education

Learners in target areas acquire relevant education of high quality.

Share of Accounts (2018-2022)	20%
Number of projects with final report (2018-2022)	52

The lack of access to relevant, quality education affects negatively the lives of boys and girls, marginalised youth, minorities, indigenous peoples, people with physical and psycho-social disabilities and adult illiterates. Many Digni projects have worked to meet these challenges and obtained substantial results in various areas such as: inclusive education, mother tongue education, adult literacy, vocational skills, improving school infrastructure, and other.

Key results 2018-2022

Outcome 5.1 Target educational institutions formal/informal provide quality and inclusive education to learners.

Close to 175,000 learners were enrolled in projects targeting educational institutions in 2022, many of whom were from **Mozambique, Kenya, Cambodia, Bolivia, Ethiopia,** and **Somaliland**. Of the learners enrolled, 50% were girls, 11% belonged to minorities and received mother-tongue education, 1% had disabilities and 77% were in primary school. More than 2,000 staff (mostly teachers) were trained in various subjects to improve the quality of the education and included projects in **Vietnam, Ethiopia, Mongolia, Palestine, Somaliland**, and **Afghanistan**. In 2022, 52 target educational institutions documented improved student performances.

A total of 209 classrooms were constructed or rehabilitated to improve children's learning environment, in countries such as **Zimbabwe**, **Ethiopia**, and the **Democratic Republic of Congo**. 199 WASH facilities were built/rehabilitated, a measure that is important to improve accessibility to education for girls.

13 projects reported working on inclusion of people with disabilities in educational learning institutions and 130 schools/institutions obtained improvement of facilities to meet the needs of learners with disabilities in countries like **Nepal**, **Zimbabwe** and **Vietnam**.

Outcome 5.2 Communities support the right to education for all

More than 3,500 learners, of whom 52% female, were enrolled in adult literacy education projects in **Ethiopia, Liberia** and **Democratic Republic of Congo**. 92% completed the education.

Outcome 5.3 Learners trained in vocational skills are employed or self-employed

28 institutions providing vocational training were supported and more than 7,100 persons received vocational training in 2022. 3,400 persons (64% women) were reported employed or self-employed after completed education.

Result examples

In **Bolivia**, the local partner worked with government agencies and officials, community groups, community leaders, teachers, principals, and parents in improving quality of education. 40% of the total project budget came from local government and was used for improvement of infrastructure such as schools. The training of teachers improved close to 3,600 learner's performance by 5% in 2022.

In **Ethiopia**, 17,400 children from ethnic minorities of the Segen Area People's Zone were successfully able to learn in their mother tongue in primary school. This has prepared them for further learning and active participation in their own language community.

In **Somaliland**, investment in infrastructure; training of teachers, school management, community school committees; and involving local government for support, has resulted in 2,400 learners in seven public secondary schools accessing secondary education of improved quality. The enrolment of girls in schools almost doubled, from 600 to 1,200, during the project period, leading to 48% female students at the end. The project contributed to an increased female to men teacher-ratio from 1:20 before project start to 1:15 after completion. The targeted district was ranked best performing in education in Somaliland in 2022.

In **Vietnam**, all 20 schools in the project are now accessible to children with disabilities with new adapted infrastructure. The mindset of local authorities, teachers, principals, local community, parents, and children themselves have changed about the rights, the needs, and the abilities of people with disabilities. Close to 1,000 teachers have been trained in special needs education.

Important preparatory steps have been taken to transforming the special school into an Inclusive Education Resource Centre in the project area and strengthening the capacity of Can Tho Association of Disabled People to be the leading organisation in Can Tho and Mekong region.

The main learnings from the total of 21 projects which completed their project cycles during 2018-2022 and worked on the theme of quality education are summarised below:
38% of the projects have accomplished results at high outcome or impact level. In these projects education is a specific or major theme of the project, reflected in targeted educational goals and allocating more than 40% of project budgets to education activities. The existence of solid, specific high technical competence in key project staff is necessary to achieve high level results. Digni member organisations have, in some projects, introduced new methodology, approaches, or technical competence and shared it with local partners, who develop own competence and contextualise it, and use it in project implementation.

Projects with high levels of results have used a multi-stake holder approach that has involved relevant stakeholders. This often implies building community awareness of the importance of education, in particular for girls, construction of school facilities where relevant, giving technical capacity building to teachers, involving school management and policies, and cooperation with local government and officials. In successful vocational training programs, cooperation with market actors and businesses has proven important.

17% of the 52 projects have accomplished results at output level and one project at low output level. Learning from these projects suggest that some of their low achievement can be attributed to education being a marginal thematic area of work in the project. Seven out of the ten projects with results at output level fall in this category with only 10-20% of budgets allocated to education. However, small investments in supportive themes may be important to obtain results in other thematic areas.

Economic Empowerment

Women and men in target areas are economically empowered.

Share of Accounts (2018-2022)	9%
Number of projects with final report (2018-2022)	36

Impact goal: Women and men in target areas are economically empowered.

The lack of access to credit and savings opportunity, income generation, and livelihoods are negatively affecting the lives of people living in poverty and marginalised communities. Various Digni projects work on addressing these challenges and have obtained results in economic empowerment of project participants in various areas such as livelihood and agricultural production, income generating activities, or establishing savings and loans groups at community level, or by providing micro-finance services.

Key results 2018-2022

Outcome 6.1: Women and men in target areas have improved their livelihood

A total of 37,500 of women and men have gained new sources of income due to project activities mainly in **Vietnam, Ethiopia, Liberia** and **India.**

More than 7,000 persons have accessed government welfare schemes which they are entitled to mostly in **India** and **Nepal.**

15,700 farmers have been trained in productive agricultural/husbandry/aquaculture methods and 7,400 households reported increased yield from agricultural and livestock production in **Uganda, Mali, Ethiopia, India** and **Bolivia.**

Close to 21,800 participants have been trained in income generating activities (IGA) and/or small business development and/or entrepreneurship.

3,800 self-sustaining loan and savings groups/associations were established with more than 100,000 members of whom more than 90% are female.

Outcome 6.2: Rights-holders are accessing financial services
51,500 microfinance clients accessed financial services, of whom mostly situated in **Vietnam**, but also in **Liberia**. The overall majority of clients were female.

Results examples
In **Ethiopia**, the annual income of women in one project almost doubled by the end of the project. Women are reported to be able to jointly make decisions with their spouse about household resources and matters involving sales of assets like cattle and rental of land.

In **Vietnam**, 19,400 households participating in the project are reported to have a stable income, 38,000 women have access to loans with affordable rates and 92% of clients used at least two climate smart adaptations for their production. Close to 1,200 persons were trained in climate smart entrepreneurship and market linkages. 50% of the trained women started their own small business upon graduation.

In one project in **Bolivia**, the yield increased with 63% and the meat production with 73% during the project period. This have contributed to enhancing families' economy and livelihood. Three centres for processing and adding value to agricultural production were built with co-financing from the municipal government.

The main learnings from the total of 36 projects which completed their project cycles during 2018-2022 and worked on the theme of economic empowerment are summarised below:
28% of these projects achieved results on a high outcome or impact level. Throughout the agreement period, economic empowerment has seldom been the primary thematic area of the projects, which might serve as an explanation to why results have generally hovered around outcome levels. In many of the successful projects, the organisation of project participants in income-generating activities has been a central element. The success of the strategy seems however to be determined by additional factors, such as strong cooperation with local government, and the degree to which the organisation into groups and cooperatives has enabled beneficiaries to access government services and schemes. These groups can also be an entry point for government into local communities. Organisation into groups and cooperatives are also seen as an advantage to gain access to markets and banking services.

23% of the projects have results at output levels. This may be explained in part by projects often having economic empowerment as one of several project components in integrated projects. In some cases, there may be deeper-lying structural obstacles that need to be addressed before income-generating activities will pay off. The lack of a reliable income is a challenge in most contexts where Digni-funded projects operate, and the demands from beneficiaries and target

groups to include project components on income-generating activities is common. Such activities may not be adequate to address the structural issues in play, but may nevertheless play an important role for project participants to make small steps to improve their livelihoods.

Empowering women to become less financially dependent on husbands is an important strategy to promote gender equality and fight poverty. During the agreement period, project findings suggest that empowerment of women has led to a significant reduction in household conflicts and sexual and gender-based violence. The common explanation is that stress levels are reduced when the household economy and food security situation improve. These are unintended, but positive results from the projects, which may suggest that including income generating activities in projects may support other more prioritised project goals. Another finding is that many of the results reported on economic empowerment are closely connected to environmental stewardship, where new climate smart agricultural methods is the objective.

Freedom of religion or belief

Rights of minorities of faith and belief (FORB and religious equality)

During the agreement period, four projects have received funding from the earmarked grant for strengthening the rights of minorities of faith and belief. Three projects have completed full project periods between 2018-2022, while one started in 2022 and continues implementation in the new agreement period. The total accounts for Rights of minorities of faith and belief for 2018 through April 2023 is NOK 24,091,786.

In addition, there have been four projects with FORB (Freedom of Religion or Belief) components in the ordinary (170.70) project-portfolio between 2018 and 2022. Two of these have completed their project period within the agreement period, while two continue into the new agreement period with Norad.

From 2023 onwards, six other projects focusing on FORB and religious equality have started or are planned to start during the current agreement period.

Locations for all final reporting and ongoing projects:

- Asia: India, Myanmar, Pakistan
- Middle East: Israel/Palestine, Egypt (regional) and Lebanon (regional)

Key results 2018-2022

The five final reporting projects have had around 67,000 people as direct beneficiaries, in addition to around 1.3 million viewers of SAT-7's programs. When including ongoing projects, the total number of reported direct beneficiaries increases to 98,000, in addition to 4.1 million viewers.

More than 2,500 people have been sensitised on FORB, in addition to the 1.3 million viewers of SAT-7. It is important to keep in mind that several of the projects have reported on FORB training under the thematic indicators for peaceful coexistence, quality education, Human rights and advocacy training and/or training in minority rights. When including these indicators, the total number is close to 12,000.

The projects focus on awareness raising and sensitising project participants on different aspects of FORB/religious equality/minority rights, using methods like broadcasting/online media, social media, printed media, interreligious activities, trainings, and workshops. The results indicate that there has been a positive change in attitudes and perceptions on FORB/minority rights among projects participants.

Results examples
In **Jerusalem**, it is reported a significant change as there now is an explicit recognition of the problem of Christian – Muslim relations which, was not present before the project. There has also been increased engagement among organisations and individuals working towards finding solutions and carrying out relevant initiatives.

In **the Middle East**, the programs broadcasted by SAT-7 have reached millions of people. 89 % of viewers reported increased awareness of human rights in general and more specifically women's rights and FORB. 78 % of viewers reported acts of inclusion and positive conflict resolution. The programs have stirred a lot of activities with call-centres and social media.

One other project based in **Lebanon** has started with webinars on FORB and intersecting rights, building a network for FORB activists, and working on interreligious charters promoting FORB and inclusive citizenship.

In **Pakistan**, 97% of the minority women who participated in project activities expressed an increased understanding of their legal rights. The project provided legal aid to 230 people and shelter for 170 victims of FORB violations. The project's advocacy activities succeeded in mobilising mainstream consensus to demand penalization of forced conversion of minor girls from religious minorities. Even though the bill was rejected, the mere fact that it was proposed can be viewed as a success in a context such as Pakistan.

Learnings
Projects with FORB/religious equality components in the Digni portfolio are operating in difficult contexts with shrinking space and increasing tensions. In these settings, the projects have focused on awareness raising, rather than outspoken advocacy due to the sensitivity of the topic. Changing perceptions and attitudes on grassroot levels is important to create a change from the bottom up but takes time and demands a long-term commitment. The project that had been running for two periods showed higher levels of impact than those in their first period.

In both the completed projects and increasingly so in the ongoing ones, Digni sees that partners address FORB as a part of a wider human rights approach, linking it to intersecting rights such as minority rights, children's rights, women's rights, freedom of expression and other areas relevant to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Gender equality and FORB is a special focus in several ongoing and planned projects (both under the old funding scheme and 170.70). Digni believes that this intersectional approach is crucial, together with a focus on contextual understanding and conflict sensitivity.

When entering a new agreement period with Norad, there is an increase in number of new projects with FORB components, and several projects continue with a second period. This indicates an important long-term commitment among Digni's members and partners. There is extensive experience about their context and the issues among partners in the Digni portfolio. Digni will encourage experience exchange between the partners working on this topic.

During the agreement period, Digni has also increased efforts to build capacity both internally and among members and their partners in different arenas. Digni has become an active member of the NORFORB network, in which also Digni's Scandinavian sister organisations are active. Three of Digni's member organisations are now also connected to the network. Through this network important capacity building and experience sharing is taking place.

By the end of the agreement period, Digni and its sister organisations started to plan for a pilot meeting for a community of practice on FORB in development including academic actors, UN representatives and practitioners from the global south. This took place in September 2023 and had a special focus on measuring change/indicators in relation to FORB interventions.

Mental health Nepal

Digni was granted additional funding, NOK 9,951,000, from Norad to "Strengthening Mental Health in Nepal", in December 2021. The funding was used during 16 months in three mental health projects where local partners have cooperated with local government and others. The sub-projects have succeeded in improving mental health services and increasing the communities' and schools' awareness about mental illnesses in project areas.

From a situation where mental health services were non-existent, 21 community health facilities established mental services with trained staff serving 430 during project period. Two hospitals in Nepal strengthened their mental health services by training of staff and recruiting of psychiatrists. Community awareness and addressing stigma improved the referrals of mental health patients to health facilities and hospitals. The hospitals provided mental health services to more than 5,000 patients, of whom 55% were female.

One project focused on advocacy, produced 14 films which were shown on TV giving voice to people with mental illness. The organisation also trained 160 journalists on mental health issues, psychosocial disability, and responsible coverage of news related to this.

In the third project, the learning environment and psychosocial well-being of 1700 children in Belbari Municipality in Nepal improved in the 24 schools participating using the International Child Development Program (ICDP) Methodology. The most significant changes include improved pedagogical teaching methodologies of approximately 100 teachers; child-friendly, interactive, and upgraded classrooms; and better parent-child interaction. The project trained 50 certified ICDP trainers and 70 child friendly books were produced and provided to the schools.

Miara Mianatra, Madagascar

Digni has received an annual regional grant for the project Miara Mianatra in Madagascar for 2018-2022, with the total accounts of NOK 9,392,111. The project sought to integrate children with disabilities in mainstream schools across four areas in Madagascar. More than 4,300 persons have been direct beneficiaries and 19,000 indirect beneficiaries. The project has worked closely with several relevant government ministries and developed a module for teachers on partnership with Ministry of Education, including the National Institute of Pedagogy. 620 teachers from public and private inclusive schools were trained together, as well as parents and other care-givers. 650 children with disabilities have been actively included in educational interventions. In 2022, the project coordinator was elected "team leader" of the governmental Inclusive Education National Platform, which has strengthened the relationship with the ministries. The evaluation report refers to changing attitudes among government specialists, regional and community specialists, church leaders, managers, teachers, doctors and even among peer students. Project implementation continues in the new agreement period from 2023, with funding over the 170.70 grant scheme.

2.2 Significant deviations from the latest approved application and/or plan

Two of the projects that were planned for 2022 and submitted as part of Digni's Annual Plan to Norad for 2022, were ended during the year. The projects have submitted reports on achievements so far in the projects, but as they have not completed a full project cycle, they have not been given quality assessment scores.

The project 'Improving the Living Conditions of Indigenous People in Ratanakiri' in Cambodia was originally planned to run from 2021 to 2025, but was ended in March 2022 after only one full year

of implementation. The partner decided to dissolve the organisation and continue with a different focus. During this process, Digni member organisations also discovered a small mismanagement case. Based on an overall assessment of partner and project Digni member organisations decided to end the partnership.

The implementation of the project 'National Adult Education Association of Liberia – Education Project' was affected by a fraud and mismanagement case at the management level in the local partner organisation, with freeze of funding. Although the project was disrupted, Digni's member organisation managed to pick up the management responsibility of the project, by hiring some of the local partner staff and ensure that the learning circles were completed, and students were able to graduate at the end of the year.

To monitor implementation of ongoing projects, Digni has devised a system for assessing *progress* in the projects according to two parameters: 1) The project's ability to carry out activities according to the plan and within the budget and 2) The project's ability to reach result targets.[3]

In sum, 82.5 %[4] of the ongoing portfolio is considered to progress as expected or better. The corresponding figure in 2018 that marked the beginning of the agreement period was 84.2%, while the figure for 2020 was as low as 45% due to Covid-19. The projects progressing above expectation were supported through five different Norwegian member organisations. Most of these organisations attribute the success of the projects to a combination of factors. This includes long-term collaboration with local communities, strong foundations resulting from the development and capacity building of local community groups, and effective cooperation with government partners responsible for fulfilling their duties.

The 17.5% of the projects progressing below expectation are distributed among six Norwegian member organisations. The corresponding figure for 2021 was 31 %, largely explained by travel and gathering restrictions due to Covid-19.

The member organisations cited two primary reasons for the lower progress. The ongoing negative impact of the Covid-19 has been a significant factor. Projects have still been catching up on activities not completed during 2020 and 2021. The second explanation is delay in activities due to freeze of funding following financial mismanagement and/or irregularities. To reduce the risk of financial mismanagement, Digni, its member organisations and the partners are committed to strengthening the financial management systems and incorporating mitigation measures where high risks are detected in Digni's Partner Assessments.

2.3 Risks

Risk management in the Digni chain

Risks are identified, analysed, and mitigated at the project, partner, and member level, and in the Digni secretariat. All Digni financed projects are required to conduct a thorough risk analysis, which is reviewed and reported on an annual basis to Digni. Given the diverse contexts represented in the Digni portfolio, we do not aggregate risks across projects or countries. However,

---

[3] *The different status brackets were defined as follows:* ***"Progress beyond expectation":*** *The project has carried out all planned activities or more. Results are better than anticipated, exceeding set targets.* ***"Progress as expected":*** *The project has carried out activities according to plan. Results targets have generally been met.* ***"Progress below expectation":*** *The project has carried out fewer activities than indicated in the plan. Results have fallen short of set targets.* ***"Little or no progress"****: The project has carried out few or no activities. Few or no results have been reported.*

[4] Calculated on the basis of on-going projects, if projects that submitted final report 2022 were included the percentage would be 77%

major risks observed in the portfolio are included in the Digni secretariats' risk management system.

In 2018, Digni developed a much-improved risk management tool for the application to Norad. In the period 2018-2023, this tool has served us well. However, in 2022, an improved tool was developed, and the Policy on Risk Management was revised. We also saw a need for a clearer picture of the situation at the partner level. As a result of this, the Partner Assessment tool was developed. The results and aggregated risk picture from the Partner Assessment, have fed into and improved the overall analysis of the Digni secretariat. In the coming period, Digni will develop a Member Assessment tool, which, we believe, will further improve the data behind our analysis.

All Digni projects are required to analyse the unintended negative consequences of their projects on cross cutting issues. We observe a need for improvement on this part of the risk analyses and will therefore develop a set of questions for each cross-cutting issue to guide the projects in their analyses.

Risk factors 2018-2023

A great part of the period 2018-2023 was marked by Covid-19. The risk of a global or regional pandemic was identified beforehand, but not planned for. When the pandemic hit, the Digni chain was able to rapidly establish mitigation measures and draw on the experiences made by some of our partners during the Ebola-crisis. Experiences from this crisis were compiled and shared with members and partners. A comprehensive Covid risk analysis, including different scenarios, was developed, and distributed. In this analysis we tried to foresee the implications of the spread of the disease, the government restrictions, and the possible low degree of implementation in the projects due to restrictions and disease, would have in the different countries represented in Digni's project portfolio.

Many of Dignis' partner organisations adapted to new ways of working within the restrictions and other impediments and they proved to be highly flexible in their approach. However, seeing that the curfews and other restrictions forced many partners to operate in new ways, we also saw new risks for fraud and corruption. A separate analysis on fraud and corruption risks related to operating in a pandemic, was therefore developed and distributed.

Reaching those left behind and in difficult contexts often means working with grassroot partners, that may not meet all the standards set by Norad. In order to map the needs for capacity development, and ensure a degree of control, Digni developed first the PCAI (Partner Capacity Assessment Index) and later a new tool in 2021, the Partner Assessment tool. This tool has so far served us well and given us a clearer picture of where to strengthen our work.

Cross cutting issues

Projects with **Human Rights**/FORB/religious equality components in the Digni portfolio are operating in difficult contexts with shrinking space and increasing tensions. As a mitigation in these settings, the projects have focused on awareness raising, rather than outspoken advocacy due to the sensitivity of the topic. Digni has also experienced shrinking civic space in several other countries with strong restrictions on NGO laws and regulations. In dialogue with Norad, several mitigation measures have been established to continue the implementation of projects in countries like **Myanmar** and **Afghanistan**.

In **Uganda**, the passing of new legislation criminalizing and threatening the lives og LGBT+ people was a case of major concern. Digni will, as result, monitor closely the development in Uganda and other countries and also initiate a dialogue with members and partners on the inclusion and non-discrimination of LGBT+ people.

Women's rights and gender equality are addressed in all projects of the portfolio through gender analyses and awareness raising. The situation for women was, in many contexts, deteriorated during the pandemic, as we saw an increase of domestic violence. Lately, we have seen more projects focusing on Gender Based Violence.

Climate change and its consequences are already visible in many of our partner countries. There is a need for us to develop knowledge to ensure that our climate and environment projects work as intended, without discriminating against minority groups or causing unintended negative consequences. Resilience, disaster preparedness and food security are all important aspects of these efforts.

Anti-corruption work entails all efforts to mitigate risks of mismanagement. In vulnerable situations, there is a high potential of weak organisational structures in partner organisations. Hence, poor financial management, corruption, and sexual harassment were among the risks we worked to mitigate. Dignis' anti-corruption efforts increased, leading to improvement in financial management, and more cases being reported. Enhanced organizational reviews and spot checks were also introduced. Digni ran a competence building programme to create a toolbox for prevention and handling of SEAH (sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment).

Emerging risks
The world is going through wars and geopolitical tensions. The Russian invasion of Ukraine led to series of consequences, not only for the Ukrainian people, but a large part of the world's population. Prices of wheat, corn and oil have soared, thus affecting the food security of many people in Digni's partner countries. Conflicts in the Middle East, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Mali, and Myanmar, amongst others, are likely to affect the operations of our partners and the lives of people. A weak Norwegian currency results in risk for relative and nominal cuts in the project budgets and downscaling of project activities.

2.4 Cost-efficiency

The Norad grant covers project costs and the cost of the Digni Secretariat. Of the total Norad grant, about nine percent is earmarked for the Secretariat's operating costs and specific capacity development activities for Member Organisations (MO)s and partners. Seven percent administration grant is calculated based on the proposed project costs and forwarded to the MOs. The MOs, in turn, sub-grant the funds in accordance with the agreed budgets and the seven percent administration grant remains with the MOs.

About 87 percent of the Norad grant is used to implement projects and/or provide capacity development to MOs and partners.

Digni is committed to working on the cost-efficiency of the management of the Secretariat and the portfolio by improving tools and systems to strengthen access to data on results and to ensure compliance and alignment to policies and procedures. In this agreement period, Digni has developed a new project management system (DiP) to enhance operational efficiency for member organisations and partners, by offering streamlined features such as document management, data storage, a comprehensive decision log, digital checklists, approval and review workflows, routine control, task and milestone management, a logical framework module, and analytic tools. It also provides a digital budgeting and accounting solution with seamless integration into Digni's accounting program, ensuring transparency in funding and transactions. Additionally, with several partner organisations embracing innovative digital data collection and monitoring methods, the multi-tiered DiP system offers the potential for integration and synergy with these digital tools,

further enhancing overall operational efficiency and data-driven decision-making within the network.

During Covid-19, Digni gained experience in using digital tools for meetings and conferences. Based on the learning from this experience, Digni continues with digital conferences for members and partners to reduce travel, costs, and time. Digni has also joined Fabo, a digital e-learning platform, to enhance learning and impact within the Digni fellowship.

Digni's guideline on Value for Money (VfM) is about maximizing the impact of money spent to empower poor and marginalized people to live a life in dignity. The VfM-tools and principles outline how to achieve better evidence of the correlation between costs and results. Digni value effectiveness over efficiency. It is our effectiveness in achieving the desired outcomes and impacts that matters, not our ability to carry out activities (outputs).

Many of Digni's partner organisations, such as The United Bible Society, responded to the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic with remarkable adaptability. In light of the restrictions imposed by governments, which were beyond the program's control, the HIV Service initiated a successful transition to digital training and follow-up for country teams. This strategic shift ensured that most activities were carried out as planned, with minimal disruptions. A pivotal component of this digital transformation was the implementation of KoBo Collect, which played a crucial role in enhancing the consistency and efficiency of reporting. The outcomes of this initiative are not only commendable but also indicative of the United Bible Society's forward-thinking approach, serving as an example of building future resilience.

As Digni has already begun to reap benefits of data-driven management, which encompasses a more targeted approach to Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL), the organization is dedicated to further elevating its capacities. Digni aspires to markedly boost its efficiency, broaden its impact, and deepen its learning across its operations.

Digni's analysis of the 106 projects in the project portfolio in 2022 reveals that 77% of progressed towards their targets. The remaining projects' low achievement is partly attributed to either Covid-19 or freeze due to financial irregularities. Of the 118 ended projects during the entire period, 100 or nearly 85% had results at outcome and impact level.

At the aggregate level, Digni observes that the use of volunteers is high and that individuals, communities and in many contexts also the local government contribute resources to project activities. In addition, it is important to state that Digni members' own contribution, on average, is equivalent to 12% of the project budgets with a total of NOK 31,071,235, which is 2% more than the contractual agreement with Norad requires. This implies that Digni assesses that the overall cost-efficiency, or value for money of Norad funds is satisfactory, given the substantial results achieved where more than 90% of projects results are assessed to likely be sustained after the completion of ended project periods.

2.5 Sustainability

Digni's assessment of sustainability presented in this chapter builds on the following understanding: *'Sustainability is the ability to maintain or possibly even strengthen the Project's results after the end of project agreement in 2022'*. Even though some indirect costs have been spent on the Digni Secretariat and member organisations for administration and competence building, the Project's results are related to strengthened local partners/civil society organisations and the results of the projects these partners have implemented together with communities and multiple

stakeholders. Therefore, in this assessment the focus is on analysing the sustainability of local partners and their project's results.

When it comes to local partners organisational financial sustainability, results from partners assessments in 2022, show that a total of 26 of 59 partners were financially dependent on a few donors and lacked fundraising strategies.

The sustainability of local partners and their project's results

At the end of the Digni-Norad agreement 2022, the majority of projects are ongoing and will continue into the next agreement period with Norad. In the Partners Assessment conducted for all local partners in 2022, risks related to sustainability were included. The results show that 6 out of 59 partners, i.e., 10%, had Digni projects assessed with a high risk of not reaching project result sustainability, requiring mitigation measures.

Digni's experience is that the main factor contributing to sustainability of project results is the degree of local ownership of the project among relevant stakeholders and project participants. Hence, Digni will use the results on the thematic area of "strengthening civil society" to assess sustainability, since the result on this thematic area best reflects project actors' ability to maintain results after end of project.

44 projects out of 118, i.e., 37%, had results at high outcome and impact level, and are assessed to have a *strong likelihood* for sustaining or even strengthening results after completion of project[5]. This is due to the empowerment of project participants, their organisations, communities, and other stakeholders which have shown commitment and ability to: a) mobilise and organise own resources to complement initial resources/investments provided by the project; b) have gained power to act or have control over and manage change processes; c) and there is evidence of results of "structural changes" in the context that have permanently changed the conditions for the project participants and civil society organisations to operate. In the highest scoring projects, there are even documentation of multiplication effects beyond project area, showing strong local ownership and continuation of change processes. In Latin America 66% of ending projects are in this category, compared to 58% in Asia, 50% for Middle East, and 42% in Africa.

A large majority, 66 out of 118 ending projects, had results at outcome level[6]. Of these 58% were in Africa, 32% in Asia, 0.5 % in Latin America, and 0.2% in the Middle East. The overall assessment of the likelihood for sustainability of results from these projects is that it is relatively good. 50% of these projects completed their first project phase and many of them have continued with new project phases to improve results and sustainability. For quite a few of the projects in Africa and Asia, the sustainability of project results will depend on strengthening local partners and civil society groups to continue to be able to maintain project results. Getting commitment and financial support from local governments for continuation of project activities may be a challenge in many countries. However, sustainability of results is likely in contexts where we have churches with strong local ownership, continued presence, and commitment to carry on the social work. As many as 20 of the 40 projects in Africa are implemented by churches with a large member-base and strong grassroot-connections, such as in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Liberia, Ethiopia, Madagascar, and Mozambique.

A small proportion, 8 out of 118 ending projects, i.e., 7%, had results assessed at output level[7]. Of the projects in this category, six were situated in Africa (Sierra Leone, Liberia, Democratic Republic

[5] EAT score = 4 and 5
[6] EAT score = 3
[7] EAT score = 2

of Congo, Ethiopia, and Tanzania); one in Cambodia; and one in Egypt. Digni assess that projects with low score have a likelihood of low degree of sustainability, in part due to local partners or civil society groups not having sufficient capacity to continue project activities and sustain results on their own. Of these, 75% projects had finished their first project phase, and the remaining 25%, their second. However, only three of these projects went on to receive Digni funding for a new project phase, whereas five projects were phased out of the Digni project portfolio. It is important to note that even if these latter projects were phased out, Digni members in some cases continued to follow up projects, the relationship with partner, and fund activities and work on measures to improve sustainability.

Sustainability of projects in countries that are phased out during 2018-2022:

In Bolivia, the projects had high results scores and the likelihood is high for maintaining project results at community level in project areas, with commitment and cooperation between strong civil society groups and support from local government. **In Peru** and **Colombia,** the local partners are churches and their presence in project areas will continue. In all these countries, Digni member organisations continue the relationship and support to local partners' social work.

In **Bhutan**, the project had high result scores at impact level, and there is strong commitment from national government to support the continuation and even strengthening the work for people with disabilities and their organisation. The Digni member organisation continues the support to the local partner. In **Pakistan**, the degree of local ownership of project and results is high in all the projects. In two of the projects working with mother tongue education financially self-sustainable schools have been established with the support from local communities and to some extent from other donors. In the project on Freedom of Religion and Belief, the local partner's work will continue to be supported by Digni member organisation.

In the **Côte d'Ivoire** (**Ivory Coast)** and **North Africa,** local partners will continue their presence and social work with communities. In North Africa, the local partner obtains funding from other international donors for continuation of their work. The Digni member will also continue the support to partners with own funds. In **Lesotho** and **Tanzania,** the projects were implemented by local partners belonging to international faith-based organisations, the Blue Cross and the Salvation Army. Even though the Digni member organisation does no longer have direct support to the work of these partners. The results scores of these two projects are at lower outcome/output level indicating a lower degree of sustainability and continuation of project results. However, the local partners' presence remains, and their social work will continue in some form or another.

2.6 Lessons learned

When analysing the project portfolio of the agreement period 2018-2022, we have seen an increasing pattern indicating that the proportion of funds allocated to a thematic area seems to play a more significant role in relation to the level of results, than the size of the total project budget itself. Within several thematic areas, projects deliver higher results when the thematic area constitutes a pivotal component of the project intervention compared with projects that have included the thematic area as an "add-on" among several other project components. Furthermore, projects implemented by partners and project staff with a high level of specialized competence in the main thematic area and extensive contextual understanding, perform better.

> *This suggests that Digni should actively encourage partners to concentrate their interventions on one or a few thematic areas in which they have experience and high thematic competence.*

At the same time, small investments in supportive themes may be important to include in the project in order to address related challenges hindering the project from obtaining results in the main thematic areas. For example, for a project intervention to address a low educational level among the population in an area, it might not be sufficient to raise the quality of the schools alone, if there are other issues hindering children from attending school.

> *This understanding/learning provides crucial guidance to the Digni secretariat when assessing and approving project applications. There is a need to assess the relevance of the supporting themes towards the main thematic area, as well as ensuring that local partners have sufficient technical competence in the subject.*

Another factor for success is to which degree partners use a multi-stakeholder approach involving all relevant actors and how they utilise their networks. This is especially true for how the project manages to involve local governmental structures in contexts were this is possible and build sustainable ways of organising the local communities.

> *This will be highlighted in Digni's communication with members and in the assessment of applications.*

Although not sufficient condition for success, the overall project (management) quality, plays a pivotal role for the level of end-results. Projects with low end-results frequently are often too oriented towards collecting output data at household level while lacking comprehensive documented benchmark data at the societal level.

> *Digni will seek to strengthen both member's and partners capacity in M&E.*

There is a slight indication of higher results achievements in projects that have been running for several periods compared with those ending their first period. The majority of the projects with best results have run for two or three periods. On the other hand, among the projects with lowest achievement, the majority were first period projects. This correlation seems a bit weaker on thematic areas such as in economic empowerment and environmental sustainability.

Anti-corruption/financial mismanagement

Digni has substantially increased the focus on anti-corruption in the agreement period. The strategic work to strengthen anti-corruption work entails that all parts of the Digni chain of cooperating organisations have increased their efforts on preventive measures. Members and partners have worked strategically to reduce risks and improve financial integrity. Organisational reviews have highlighted areas where member and partner organisations need to strengthen their financial management. In 2023 the Member Assessment tool is being developed. This will identify risks at the member level, and the assessments will be followed by specific capacity development plans to mitigate the highest identified risks.

This work has led to strengthened financial management in the chain and led to more cases being reported. Through the period, Digni handled 56 cases of financial mismanagement and SEAH (Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harrassment) related issues. 40 of these were concluded with repayment of mismanaged funds, of which 21 were repaid to Norad and 19 cases repaid to the project.

In the first weeks of the Covid-19 pandemic, as a pre-emptive anti-corruption measure, Digni developed a manual on "Risk reduction in crisis". Based on learning from former unforeseen emergencies, crisis, and situations, recommendations for reducing risks of mismanagement and corruption were shared with all members and partners.

Through the Partner Capacity Assessment Index (PCAI), and later the Partner Assessment tool, Digni identified where there are high risks in the portfolio. The Partner Assessment tool has improved Digni's efforts to work more targeted, spend resources on mitigating the highest risks, and develop capacity and competence where needed. Use of spot checks has increased. Learning from this is that it gives Digni better knowledge of what's hidden under the surface, and possibilities to clarify requirements and give recommendations for strengthened financial management.

Other ways of learning have been internal projects and concluded cases. In 2022 Digni conducted an internal capacity building project. This project included assessment and production of a report were an external consultant analysed all Digni's mismanagement cases from 2018 to 2020 to enhance learning. This learning has been included in the anti-corruption work. Whenever a suspicion or report of mismanagement is received by Digni, an action group will consider the information received and whether it should be reported to Norad's Internal Audit. This report and lessons learned has improved efficiency of the assessments and handling of complaints, and improved the management of cases, and resulted in that more time and resources are spent on preventive anti-corruption work.

After each case has been concluded by Norad, a short learning note is written. This summarises the case briefly and highlights learning points both on how the handling worked, and how future mismanagement can be prevented and detected. Learning from cases, how they were detected, what kind of mismanagement took place, and how it can be prevented, is shared within Digni and with Digni's members.

3. Evaluation/review

3.1 Evaluations and reviews

43 external project evaluations were conducted in 2022. The number of evaluations is higher than previous years since several projects were approved for an extension year due to the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic. Digni is actively involved in preparing the Terms of Reference (ToR) for external evaluations and give member organisations advice regarding possible evaluators and the focus and methodology of the evaluation. Evaluations are frequently used to learn, verify results obtained in the projects and to measure the effectiveness of the project design and its implementation. All external project evaluations have included an assessment using Digni's Empowerment Assessment Tool (EAT). Evaluations are commonly based on OECD/DAC's evaluation principles.

In the new agreement period, Digni will assess its evaluation practice to ensure increased learning and a more useful thematic focus.

Thematic evaluation on "Religious Actors and the Civil Society"

In 2022, Digni engaged Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC) to conduct a thematic evaluation on "Religious Actors and the Civil Society". The scope of the evaluation was limited to partners and projects within the Digni chain in Ethiopia and Kenya reporting on the outcome indicator on faith-based assets.

The key findings and observations of the evaluation are as follows: there is significant underreporting on how partners mobilise faith-based assets for social justice; reaching and engaging vulnerable and marginalised groups; solving challenges in their societies. There are less clear results on how the actors in the Digni chain improve the conditions and the space of

operation for civil society under pressure and limited civic space. Furthermore, there are fewer results on how they hold authorities accountable. The evaluation also shows that there is a need for more capacity building on the concept of faith-based assets among local partners. Furthermore, Digni's Global Results Framework is not adequately designed to capture results on faith-based resources and the results achieved on the project level.

Based on the findings, the evaluation report splits the recommendations according to the main actors of the Digni chain; Digni secretariat, member organisations, and local partners. One overall learning is that the distinctiveness of Digni's members and local partners as faith-based actors must be more strategically coordinated to bring out synergies to enable the full potential of the faith-based partner's added value. Digni has developed a detailed follow-up plan on the specific recommendations and included this in further plans for improving the work in the Digni chain. The Digni board has decided to initiate a process to strategically enhance cooperation and improve synergies in the Digni chain to increase impact on every level.

4. Financial report and audit

4.1 Significant deviations from the latest approved budget

The financial report with audited financial statements and audit report can be found in Annex A: Financial Report, Digni – Cooperation

5. Other reporting requirements

5.1 Civil Society Actors reached and strengthened

The number of civil society organisations reached and strengthened, distributed by country and type of actor, refers to the implementing partners that Digni's member organisations collaborate with. Digni's secretariat and member organisations work continuously to strengthen their local partners.

In 2022, Partner Assessments were conducted for all partners that continue into a new agreement period with Norad from May 2023. The assessments form follow-up plans that are reported on annually to Digni to ensure that actors with weak scores in individual areas receive the necessary support, follow-up, and training to develop further.

Country	Association	Church	Faith-based Organisation	Foundation	NGO	Number of civil society actors reached*	Number of civil society actors strengthened*
Afghanistan					1	1	1
Africa Regional	1				1	2	2
Bangladesh					3	3	3
Bolivia		1			2	3	3
Burundi					1	1	1
Cambodia					9	9	9
Cameroon		1				1	1
China	1				1	2	2
Congo		1				1	1
Democratic Republic of the Congo		1			1	2	2
Ecuador					1	1	1
Egypt					2	2	2
Eswatini		1				1	1
Ethiopia		3			4	7	7
India					2	2	2
Indonesia					1	1	1
Kenya		1	1		1	3	3
Lebanon				1		1	1
Liberia		1		1	1	3	3
Madagascar		1				1	1
Mali					2	2	2
Mongolia			1			1	1
Mozambique		1				1	1
Myanmar					2	2	2
Nepal					3	3	3
Pakistan					2	2	2
Sierra Leone		1			1	2	2
Somalia					1	1	1
State of Palestine					1	1	1
Tunisia			1			1	1
Uganda		1			2	3	3
Viet Nam					1	1	1
Zimbabwe		1				1	1
Grand Total	**2**	**15**	**3**	**2**	**46**	**68**	**68**