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Country programme for development cooperation

Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and
Uzbekistan 2021–2024

Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Country Programme builds on the experiences gained from the region since 2009, focusing on sectors in which Central Asian countries have strong ownership and where Finland has experience, expertise and value to add. According to the Finnish Development Policy approved in 2016, Finland concentrated its support in the region to the Kyrgyz Republic (Kyrgyzstan) and Tajikistan. During the next programme period of 2021–2024, Finnish support will be extended to cover also Uzbekistan.

An evaluation conducted in 2016 rated Finland's development cooperation in Central Asia as highly relevant and noted that the expected outputs are being produced. This Country Programme, which is in line with Finland's Strategy for the Central Asian Countries of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan 2021–2024, aims to present a comprehensive framework linking Finland's political, development and humanitarian objectives in Central Asia and strengthening cooperation between all instruments and aid delivery channels.

Finnish development policy goals in Central Asian countries are guided by the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals and by the EU Strategy for Central Asia adopted in 2019. The ultimate, broad objective of the Finnish development cooperation in Central Asian countries is to strengthen the resilience of the societies. Finnish development cooperation strives to enhance the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the Kyrgyz, Tajik and Uzbek societies.

In order to achieve these goals, Finland has chosen three specific impact areas for this Country Programme: (1) Democratic and better-functioning societies; (2) Growth in the economy of these developing countries to generate more jobs, and improve livelihoods and wellbeing; (3) Access to water and energy and the sustainable use of natural resources. The projects will be implemented either by international organisations or by Finnish government authorities in the form of inter-institutional cooperation. Support is also provided to civil society organisations through the Funds for Local Cooperation.

Continuity and added value based on Finnish experiences and expertise are the guiding principles for why Finland focuses on these three areas of cooperation. With Finland's support in 2009–2020, thousands of suitable jobs have already been created, clean drinking water for hundreds of households has been ensured, access to justice for thousands of people in a vulnerable position has been made available, and the expertise of the personnel of government institutions has increased.

Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, certain parts of the Programme will be determined at later stages. Furthermore, flexibility and adjustments throughout the programming period are possible.

1 Expected Results of the Country Programme

This section presents the expected results of the Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan Country Programme by impact area. The Country Programme is based on the context analysis presented in the Country Strategy for the Central Asian Countries of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

IMPACT 1: MORE EQUAL SOCIETIES AND STRENGTHENED IMPLEMENTATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE RULE OF LAW

Description [Theory of Change]

In all three countries covered by this Country Programme, that is Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, the aim is to support the implementation of human rights with a particular focus on increasing people's access to justice. This is achieved mainly through strengthening and supporting the legal aid systems in the countries. The objective is to increase state-provided free legal aid in each country, particularly to those in the most vulnerable positions when it comes to accessing justice, including women, people living in remote areas, and people with disabilities. At the same time, support is provided to strengthen the oversight mechanisms that have a key role in promoting and monitoring the effective implementation of international human rights standards at the national level, particularly the ombudsman's offices. In order to strengthen the regulatory framework in the countries, support will also be provided for the ratification of international human rights conventions, including the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD), and for developing and implementing the relevant national legal reform strategies, policies and legislation.

In addition to strengthening the judicial institutions and mechanisms, access to rights will be improved through increasing people's awareness of their rights, and of their ability to claim and defend them. Furthermore, support is provided for strengthening the civil society in order for it to become more empowered and equipped to engage in dialogue with government authorities on the legal needs of the people and, through this, to participate in building more people-centred legal services. Supporting civil

societies is also a critical measure to counterbalance the increasingly restrictive environment for civil society actors in all three countries covered by the Programme.

In the 2020 edition of the World Justice Project's (WJP) Rule of Law Index, Kyrgyzstan ranks 87th out of 128 countries, with Uzbekistan following closely behind at 92nd, which is four places higher than the previous year. Kyrgyzstan ranks just above the global average when it comes to open government and order and security, but lags well behind when it comes to absence of corruption and, for instance in regulatory enforcement and criminal justice. Recent political developments in Kyrgyzstan raise concerns about future developments in the rule of law. Uzbekistan also ranks above the global average in order and security, but performs poorly when it comes to constraints on government powers, absence of corruption, open government, and fundamental rights. Additionally, Tajikistan faces a wide range of challenges in the rule of law, even though no information on Tajikistan is included in the WJP Index.

Gender inequality is also persistent in all three countries covered by the Programme. Uzbekistan ranks 64th out of 189 countries in the 2018 Gender Inequality Index (GII), with Kyrgyzstan at 87th and Tajikistan at 84th. Gender inequality affects women's ability to access justice. Besides domestic violence, common barriers to women in accessing justice in all three countries are frequently the lack of legal literacy, and harmful social norms and stereotypes that prevent women from seeking justice through the regular court system.

While the impact area does not include specific targets for increasing gender equality, data on access to justice will be tracked for both women and men separately. Additionally, in the efforts to build capacity and raise awareness, the rights of women and issues of gender equality will be of special focus. People with disabilities also face major obstacles in accessing justice. Some of the key challenges in the three countries include the absence of procedural accommodations in legal proceedings and a general lack of knowledge of the rights of people with disabilities. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), while covering a broader framework, is also seen as critical in the work on increasing access to justice.

OUTCOME: Institutions are able to respond to the needs and rights of citizens

Finland's support is aimed at **effective and accountable judicial institutions that are able to fulfil the legal needs and rights of citizens, especially women and people in the most vulnerable positions**. Finland aims to ensure that the local institutions are better able to face the growing legal needs of the population. The current Covid-19 pandemic will most probably increase the need for support in this sector as well, which is why specific content or details of individual projects are subject to change during the Programme period. Emphasis will be paid to supporting the capacity of the state authorities, with the focus on ministries of justice and ministries of finance in drafting, revising and effectively implementing the legislative framework.

OUTPUTS

- Finland's support focuses on improving **access to justice and legal aid services, in particular for women, people living in rural areas and people with disabilities**. In the previous programme phase, Finland supported the development of a sustainable state-run system of primary free legal aid in both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. While much has been achieved in both countries, the newly created systems are still weak and will need support going forward. In Uzbekistan, there are similar challenges related to access to justice, where both physical and financial access to justice is particularly difficult for people in remote areas, and there is a lack of free legal-aid providers. Building on previous experiences in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, Finland will support the Ministry of Justice and relevant civil society organisations (CSOs) in establishing a sustainable state guaranteed system of free legal aid in Uzbekistan.
- Finland supports **strengthening the capacity of national institutions for human rights and justice to monitor the implementation of human rights in line with international norms and standards**. Finland's support will focus on strengthening the ombudsman's offices and national human rights institutions.
- Finland supports **the improvement of the regulatory framework for human rights, including the ratification and implementation of human rights conventions**. During the previous programme period, the Government of Kyrgyzstan ratified the UNCRC in March 2019, while Tajikistan signed the Convention in 2018. In Tajikistan, work on promoting the ratification of the treaty will continue and in Kyrgyzstan, the focus will be on supporting the implementation of the Convention.

Uzbekistan signed the Convention in 2009. In Uzbekistan, Finland plans to support the development of a comprehensive and actionable judicial reform plan to improve judicial independence and enhance the impartiality, competence and accountability of judges.

OUTCOME: Empowered people who are better able to claim and defend their rights

In all three countries, Finland aims at **empowering people so that they are better able to claim and defend their rights**. Inadequate legal awareness remains one of the major issues impeding legal empowerment for citizens in all three countries, especially women and people with disabilities. According to research conducted by the 'Open Line' public fund, over 90 per cent of victims of forced marriage in Kyrgyzstan did not seek any legal assistance and did not speak about their case to any state authorities. In addition to the ineffectiveness of the state assistance provided when the issue was being raised, a low level of legal literacy was seen as another significant reason behind these results. For people with disabilities, the lack of access to legal information and court materials has been identified as another key reason hindering access to justice.

OUTPUTS

- Finland's support enhances **people's legal awareness of their human rights, and their legal literacy and access to legal information**. Special focus is placed on women and those in vulnerable positions. The past experiences in both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan showed that, in some cases, access to information is considered to be even more important than access to infrastructure. If women and people with disabilities are not aware of their rights, they will not speak up about their case to any authorities. Therefore, the Country Programme has a special focus on raising the legal awareness of those in marginalised positions and enhancing their access to legal aid. There are also significant socio-cultural obstacles to accessing justice in the three countries. In Uzbekistan for instance, the people, and rural residents in particular, face strong social pressures to reconcile or mediate disputes and going to court is seen as a last resort.
- Finland's support strengthens various forms of **policy dialogues and exchanges between the people and the authorities**. Governments' engagement with legal rights needs to include a continuous dialogue

with civil society through a policy dialogue process. The policy dialogue meetings at national and regional levels have already been steadily expanded in the Programme countries. They have proven to be effective in bringing government stakeholders and civil society organisations together. The regional policy dialogues (RPDs) have also proven to be an effective tool for clarifying national policy initiatives to state and non-state actors at the regional level. Additionally, the RPDs encourage the flow of information and exchange of opinions in the opposite direction, that is, from local to national.

- Finland's support will strengthen **the capacity of civil society organisations (CSOs)**, so that they can contribute to relevant policy discussions in their countries and monitor the general human rights situation. Particular focus will be put on ensuring that women's rights organisations and organisations for people with disabilities will have their voices heard in the relevant reform processes supported by the Programme. Strengthening the freedom of speech in the society requires that CSOs have the capacity to voice their concerns and are supported in their efforts to raise those concerns in public discussions. Enhancing the capacity of regional civil society organisations is also essential for them to participate in the policy dialogues in a meaningful manner.

Education is a cross-cutting and fundamental enabler for the fulfilment of human rights and the rule of law. Improving the level of education paves the way for understanding the importance of human rights and the rule of law in the functioning of societies and for the wellbeing of the people. Therefore, support for reforming and modernising the education systems in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan is highly important. Since the populations in these countries have high numbers of young people, education is a key investment for a better future.

INPUTS (ONGOING AND PLANNED PROJECTS AND OTHER INPUTS):

- Widening Access to Justice in the Kyrgyz Republic, Phase II/III. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is implementing the project.
- Strengthening the Rule of Law and Human Rights to Empower People in Tajikistan, Phase II/III. The UNDP is implementing the project.
- Rule of Law project in Uzbekistan, Phase I. The UNDP will implement the project.
- Support for the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in all three countries, as part of the projects mentioned above. The OHCHR Regional Office is based in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, and has a presence in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, and Taskent, Uzbekistan.

- Support to civil society organisations through the Funds for Local Cooperation under the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.
- Support for the work of the OSCE Academy in Bishkek.
- Planned: Modernisation of the education system in Uzbekistan either through a bilateral project or an international partner programme (because of Covid-19, to be determined later).
- Policy dialogue
- European Union: Team Europe

IMPACT 2: A MORE SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE MARKET-ORIENTED ECONOMY

Description [Theory of Change]

The global COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted global trade and severely impacted the poorest and most vulnerable populations. The ongoing pandemic has also brought new challenges to the economies of the Central Asian countries and their citizens. This region is one of the largest migration corridors in the world, and millions of people from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan work in the neighbouring countries, with Russia being the most popular destination. During the current pandemic, millions of migrant workers have been sent back to their home countries. As a result, the remittances have declined sharply and are expected to decline further. This will cause serious challenges to the economies of the migrant workers' countries of origin.

In the longer run, the way to achieve sustainable and inclusive economic growth is by developing small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). SMEs employ about half of the population, but given their small size, they lack development potential. One obstacle to private-sector development is the red tape surrounding the setting up and running of a business, including ineffective official inspections. Development cooperation must aim at supporting SME development through technical and financial assistance to SMEs that will bolster their competitiveness.

This impact is in line with Finland's policy priority for global development of strengthening the economic base of developing countries and creating jobs, with an emphasis on the role of women in the economy and female entrepreneurship.

Finland's support to enhance a more inclusive economy contributes to the target of eradicating extreme poverty for all people, currently measured as people living on less than USD 1.25 a day. This goal is supported through tangible project targets of increasing the number of jobs in the Programme countries. Finland's support also contributes to the target of increasing the productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, particularly women, and by implementing resilient agricultural practices.

With the creation of new decent jobs, Finland's support contributes to the target of sustainable economic growth and the promotion of policies that support productive activities. The number of new jobs will be disaggregated by sex. Encouraging the formalisation and growth of SMEs, including through access to financial services, also contributes to the above-mentioned goals. Additionally, an essential part of the Programme and the projects is promoting the adoption of new technologies and export practices, and the learning of new skills. By doing this, Finland's support contributes to the goal of promoting inclusive industrialisation and achieving a higher level of economic productivity.

OUTCOME: Addressing poverty and inequalities through a more inclusive development pathway

Finland's support aims **to address poverty and inequalities through a more inclusive and sustainable development pathway**. The current structure of growth and exports in the countries of Central Asia has contributed to poverty reduction over the last decade, but falls short of being fully economically, socially or environmentally sustainable. The threats to economic sustainability stem from the fact that the economies are characterised by a strong dependence on exports with a limited number of export destinations. This, in turn, contributes to the vulnerability of the economies to external shocks. The export baskets are dominated by unprocessed minerals with weak links to decent job creation. This has led to a dependence on labour migration and remittances. More inclusive economic growth is needed, that is, growth that is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable.

OUTPUTS

- The first expected output for this outcome is **supporting an enabling environment for trade and the private sector**. This output is achieved by promoting enabling policies and regulations for inclusive and trade-oriented private sector development. By creating sustainable growth, Finland's support incorporates productive capacities that can generate employment and improve livelihoods for the poor and excluded people.

- The second output is more effective and competitive producers and processors who can contribute to sustainable development. Finland will support the identification and development of green niche products in sectors that are employment-rich and that have high productivity and market potential. A higher productivity and export readiness of target products will be achieved by the use of innovative technologies.

OUTCOME: Better access to economic opportunities

Finland's support **improves access to economic opportunities and increases opportunities for generating employment and income**. By supporting, for example, female entrepreneurs in developing their business skills through training and networking opportunities, Finland will participate in creating visibility for women entrepreneurs to reinforce positive role models. Additionally, by encouraging the use of sustainable production methods (green niche products), Finland supports rural populations with limited access to income and employment opportunities.

OUTPUTS

- Finland's support aims at **increasing income generation**. By working with small companies, producers, processors, cooperatives and associations, with much of the generated employment coming from the agricultural sector, income generation will benefit especially rural populations. Agriculture productivity remains low in Central Asia, and this has pushed many people out of their home countries. High migration rates have led to greater pressure on women to maintain families, which means lower labour participation of women. Projects supported by Finland will have a special focus on enhancing the productive employment of women.
- Finland's support **strengthens the capacity of SMEs**. SMEs are often considered to be the main contributors to economic growth and job creation. However, they often have weak capacity for management processes (e.g. marketing, sales, finances) and for production processes (e.g. standards, quality management). This has a direct impact on their competitiveness in international markets. Finland supports developing informational tools for SMEs that will be of use in providing know-how for new product solutions and options for business development, including export development. Additionally, Finland will include technical assistance in the projects it funds to increase the development of export potential.

INPUTS (ONGOING AND PLANNED PROJECTS AND OTHER INPUTS):

- Aid for Trade Project in Central Asia, phase IV, implemented by the UNDP
- Multi-donor Early Transition Countries Fund, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)
- UN Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea Region in Uzbekistan
- Policy dialogue
- European Union: Team Europe

IMPACT 3: MORE SUSTAINABLE USE OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND RESILIENCE TO THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Description [Theory of Change]

Central Asia is endowed with an abundance of diverse natural resources, particularly related to energy, yet their distribution is unbalanced and access to them is uneven. Central Asia is also one of the most vulnerable regions to climate change. The average temperatures in the region are projected to increase by 1.6°C to 2.6°C by 2030 to 2050. Regionally, climate change is projected to lead to changes in precipitation, increased incidents of flooding and more severe and prolonged droughts, with corresponding variable water availability.

As government authorities have so far lacked the capacity to set up early warning systems, there is a high degree of vulnerability to several kinds of environmental hazards. Development cooperation can make a significant contribution in these areas. This impact is in line with Finland's priority for global development policy of improving the sustainable use of natural resources and enhancing climate resilience. Inefficient resource use, ageing infrastructure, limited enforcement of regulations, and severe land degradation all contribute to the increased vulnerability of the region to climate change. Climate change affects all sectors vital to economic growth and development in the region.

Policies and interventions to address climate change have the potential to open up new areas of investment and private-sector activity, and to promote plant-level efficiencies and economic savings. For example, a clear plan to align agricultural

policies and make needed investments in infrastructure and on-farm improvements can help offset risks. In the energy sector, energy efficiency and diversification (to renewable energy) provide both immediate economic benefits and help in mitigating climate change. Water demand in both sectors emphasises the need for effective national and transboundary water resources management and cooperation.

Safeguarding equitable access to water and sanitation and taking urgent action to enhance climate resilience are directly targeted by the Country Programme. Additionally, other core aspects of the Programme are the management of drinking water supply to keep it free from contamination and protecting health and livelihoods. Furthermore, Finland's support will strengthen the resilience to and adaptive capacity for climate-related risks and natural disasters. At the same time, it will improve education, awareness-raising and the human and institutional capacity for climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction, and early warning in all three countries covered by the Programme.

Finnish support aims to enhance the capacity of the responsible local authorities in their efforts to make progress in improving water quality, wastewater, and safe reuse. Finland's support also focuses on improving the capacity of the local hydrometeorological institutes in glacier monitoring, air quality monitoring, and modern observation and forecasting processes. The ultimate goal is to increase the quality and level of information, services and early warnings provided by the institutes to support the development of the societies and improve the institutes' capacities to serve weather-sensitive sectors of the society.

OUTCOME: Enhancing the capacity of environmental administration to monitor and assess natural resources

Finland's support **strengthens the capacity of environmental administrations to monitor and assess the quality of surface water and groundwater and mineral resources**. Additionally, it improves the capacity of local institutions to produce and disseminate information on natural resources by equipping them with better tools and skills for responding to requirements set by the society and the international community of today. This is done by applying modern techniques such as satellite image analysis, and hydrogeological and geophysical methods. New techniques for visualising the existing old data and harmonising this data with new monitoring data gives information on water resources, not only to the society, but also to the decision-

makers. This ensures better quality surface water and groundwater for the people and sufficient quantity, and eventually better living conditions for all.

OUTPUTS

- Finland promotes the management of water resources in an integrated and sustainable manner (i.e. integrated water resources management, IWRM). Additionally, Finland supports actions that result in **authorities who are able to effectively manage water resources and control water quality**. Enhanced water security improves food security, energy supply and the health of the local population. Improved resilience and economic production that is environmentally sustainable require better systems for managing electronic data and environmental regulation. The knowledge and capacity gained during the prior projects will be deepened in order to improve the overall capacity for monitoring water quality in the region.
- Finland's support enhances **a civil society that participates in the planning of the sustainable use of water resources**. During the previous programme period, Finnish institutions began collaboration with local non-governmental organisations to build trust between governmental agencies and civil society and the people. This work will continue to further enhance the accountability and transparency of the use of natural resources. Access to clean water is a fundamental human right and public access to information is also a prerequisite for democracy. Finland's support aims at engaging civil society in discussing the importance of sustainable water resources management, taking into account the health and safety aspects.

OUTCOME: Enhanced knowledge of mineral resources and improved geohazard management

Finland's support **enhances the knowledge of mineral resources, improves the process for allocating mineral rights and contributes to improved geohazard management**. While mining presents a significant opportunity for growth and development in Central Asia, the governments, civil society and the private sector understand that new mining projects must take into account the environmental and social impacts often associated with their operations. If the sector is to continue making a contribution to a country's development, that country needs to have a strong legal and policy framework that maximises the benefits accrued to the nation and its communities, and a framework that promotes the benefits of developing mining activities, while upholding strong environmental and social standards.

OUTPUTS

- Finland's support aims to **assist the authorities in producing geoinformation in digital format**. During the previous programme period, Finland supported the introduction of modern and safe procedures for digital data storage of old geoscientific information and trained local experts in running these procedures. During the new Programme period, the capacity for meeting the requirements of digitalisation will be further developed by strengthening local experts' skills in data management, digitalisation and the dissemination of geoinformation. This will be achieved by further developing the Central Asia Geoportal webpage, and in turn, this will increase the regional cooperation between the Programme countries.
- Finland's support enhances **the capability to forecast geohazards** and improves **access to geoinformation for decision-makers and stakeholders**. Proper monitoring of geohazards requires the application of different techniques, and the availability of modern techniques serves these purposes. Satellite images and remote sensing techniques are vital means of monitoring geohazards, and the applications connected to these strengthen the capacity of the institutions to carry out their tasks. The improved capacity of local institutions will help them in becoming expert organisations in decision-making processes at both national and regional level. Finland's support also facilitates environmental monitoring and the detection of climate change effects.

OUTCOME: Reducing health risks and the risks of loss of life and property caused by severe weather, climate and environmental events

Finland contributes to the **increased availability of high-quality information, and to accurate early warnings that increase productivity and reduce health risks and the risks of loss of life and property caused by severe weather, climate and environmental events**. Dangerous weather phenomena, floods, drought and sand storms usually hit the poorest people hardest. A reduction of poverty and in the loss of life are some of the main indirect goals of Finland's support, which promotes the open sharing of essential warning information by enhancing observation services and weather forecasting processes. By improving weather, climate, and early warning services, Finland's support aims at indirectly decreasing losses caused by these phenomena, and at increasing the productivity of agriculture and improving the living conditions of the poorest population.

OUTPUTS

- Finland's support aims at **improved capacity of the authorities to produce weather, climate and air-quality information and early warning services**. One of the key goals in the projects funded by Finland is enhancing the capacity of local experts in operating and maintaining modern forecast technologies. With comprehensive training packages, Finland's support ensures the sustainable installation and use of an automated forecast and early warning production process.
- Finland contributes to the improved planning by government authorities and other groups that have a special need for early warnings and weather and environmental information. Central Asian government authorities need better hydrometeorological, environmental and climate information that can be used as an input in strategic planning and operational decision-making. The government authorities' strategic and technical planning capacity is improved by enhancing the human capacity and upgrading the technical infrastructure.

OUTCOME: Better preparedness to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change

Finland's support directly contributes to climate resilience. Projects funded by Finland aim to improve **preparedness to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change**. The support will give local experts the means to observe and model ongoing natural phenomena caused by climate change and human activities. This is the first step in climate change adaptation and mitigation, as this knowledge can be taken into consideration at all levels of the society, especially in decision-making, preparedness plans, land use planning and building infrastructure, resulting in safer living conditions. Climate change and melting glaciers cause changes to surface waters and groundwaters. Climate change also causes alterations in precipitation patterns and more frequent heat extremes, leading to increased incidence of drought, particularly in mountain pastures. Finland's support facilitates environmental monitoring and the detection of climate change effects.

OUTPUTS

- Finland's support enables **the authorities to produce and disseminate climate change-related information and early warnings**. Finnish experts will provide training in processing and analysing satellite and remote sensing data in selected target areas. Such new information will increase the capacity of local authorities to provide information to other

governmental organisations, and to assist in the creation of early warning systems for natural hazards. This kind of information is essential in land use and construction planning. Finnish support also targets directly improving the capacity of local authorities in glacier monitoring, air-quality monitoring, forecasting, and early warning processes.

- Finland contributes to enhancing the **awareness of climate-related hazards**. A substantial part of the population in Central Asia live in the foothills of the mountains, and these regions are the most prone to climate-related hazards. Improved climate resilience requires better awareness, better data, and environmentally sustainable production so that the livelihoods of the vulnerable communities are not threatened. Finland's support aims at increasing the understanding of and opportunities provided by modern technology and the latest scientific achievements.

INPUTS (ONGOING AND PLANNED PROJECTS AND OTHER INPUTS):

- Consolidating Institutional Capacities for National Surface Water Quality Monitoring in the Kyrgyz Republic, KGZ-Water Phase III. The Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE) is implementing the project.
- Development of Tajik Surface Water Monitoring by Quality Management and Collaboration, TJK-Water Phase II. The Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE) is implementing the project.
- Finland's Water Sector Support to Uzbekistan, Phase I. The Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE) will implement the project.
- Strengthening the Mastering of Natural Resources in the Kyrgyz Republic, Phase II, and Strengthening the Mastering of Natural Resources in the Republic of Tajikistan, Phase II. The Geological Survey of Finland (GTK) is implementing both projects.
- Capacity Building in the Field of Meteorology in the Kyrgyz Republic, Phase II, and Capacity Building in the Field of Meteorology in Tajikistan, Phase II. The Finnish Meteorological Institute (FMI) is implementing both projects.
- UN Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea Region in Uzbekistan
- Policy dialogue
- European Union: Team Europe

2 RISKS, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

2.1 Risk management

All development cooperation involves risks. Development cooperation is often carried out under complex and difficult conditions, and usually in countries where the administrations may be weak, people live in extreme poverty and corruption is a problem.

For this reason, the risks involved in implementing country programmes are assessed and monitored closely, but sometimes they appear despite the precautions taken. Anticipating and managing risks is an essential part of the implementation of the country programmes: risk assessments are done regularly and impact the programme design and decision-making process at all stages. Risk mitigation measures, their success and the risks that have appeared are reported annually.

In the Central Asian countries, political instability and unstable security conditions form a considerable **strategic risk**. Frequent natural calamities are another source of strategic risk. Land degradation and deforestation have left the steep mountain slopes vulnerable to landslides, and accelerating climate change is continuing to make the situation worse. All three Programme countries are dependent on remittances from migrant workers in Russia and Kazakhstan. Swings in the Russian economy, as well as the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, can have momentous **financial** effects in Central Asia.

The cumbersome administrative structures, coupled with inadequate government funding, have in many cases paralysed the ability of institutions to perform their duties. Poor pay in the public sector is hampering the recruitment and retainment of competent people. High staff turnover rates constitute **an operational risk** for successful project implementation and sustainability. Poorly funded and ineffective institutions are prone to bad governance, misappropriation of funds and corruption.

The cultural background and values of the Uzbek, Kyrgyz and Tajik people are unique and different from the prevailing European ones. This may hamper the implementation of certain policies or activities, especially regarding the rights of women and minorities.

In the context of implementing the Programme, the risks are managed through careful planning and screening, and the selection of partners and funding channels. All programmes report on the use of funding and the results of their work. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs follows the progress, the use of funds, and the reliability of reporting through steering groups, monitoring visits, independent evaluations and reviews, and regular communication. The Ministry also commissions external auditing companies to perform regular audits.

2.2 Monitoring, evaluation and learning

Country teams are in charge of monitoring the performance of country programmes for development cooperation. This work follows the principles and guidelines of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, especially the Guidelines on Results-based Management, the Manual for Bilateral Programmes and the Evaluation Guidelines. In joint arrangements, Finland will participate in joint reviews and evaluations, and aims to support the development of local monitoring and evaluation frameworks and capacity.

The Country Programme will be monitored closely. Monitoring and evaluation activities are identified in the monitoring and evaluation plan, which will be updated and followed up regularly.

The monitoring of this Programme is based on ongoing evaluations of development projects and the related policy dialogue by the Ministry's development cooperation team in the unit for Eastern Europe and Central Asia in Helsinki, the Embassy of Finland in Nur-Sultan (which covers Kyrgyzstan), and the Roving Ambassador to Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Since bilateral and multilateral implementation is a key modality of the Programme, primary responsibility for monitoring and project management, in general, rests with each multilateral agency according to its own rules and regulations. The Ministry receives monitoring data on project implementation through reports by the multilateral agencies, but it also works actively to ensure that the projects are achieving their results according to the plans agreed in the project documents. Therefore, the Ministry participates on a regular basis in the meetings of project governing bodies and field-monitoring missions.

Another important modality of the Programme is inter-institutional cooperation. In this context, the Finnish partner reports to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs on project implementation and progress. Again, the responsible Ministry team in Helsinki, the Embassy in Nur-Sultan and the Roving Ambassador follow the progress achieved by

the field-monitoring missions and by participating in the meetings of the project governing bodies when possible.

Since the Programme falls under the Strategy for Development Cooperation for the Central Asia Countries of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, the evaluation of it will be integrated into the Ministry-wide country strategy evaluation process. Separate evaluations will be conducted by the multilateral agencies involved in project implementation according to their own rules and regulations. The Ministry's development cooperation team in the unit for Eastern Europe and Central Asia will monitor the validity of the assumptions made in the Strategy and its Results Framework (Annex I) and the identified risks, and take corrective measures as needed. The use of budgeted funds is monitored on an ongoing basis using reports from the Ministry's financial accounting systems. The need for any corrective measures will be determined by the Department for Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

The collective monitoring and evaluation cycle of Finland's country programmes includes monitoring, evaluation and reporting activities, which are carried out simultaneously for all country programmes, in a fixed format. These include yearly reports, biannual synthesis reports, mid-term review and external evaluations.

In preparing the **annual results report** of a country programme for development cooperation, the relevant country team assesses not only the programme performance as per the results framework but also assesses the validity of the theories of change and related assumptions and risks vis-à-vis the context. The annual report is discussed within the respective regional department.

A synthesis report of the annual reports is prepared as a joint effort by the regional departments every two years. The departments synthesise the main findings or trends found in all of the annual results reports of the country programmes.

The country teams will carry out a **mid-term review** of the Country Programme. The mid-term review results and recommendations are used in deciding whether changes are needed in the impact areas of the country programmes. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs' Evaluation Unit may carry out an evaluation of the country programmes towards the end of the country programme cycle.

2.3 Tentative financing plan

The financing framework for 2021–2024 is approximately EUR 25,2 million. The financing plan includes the bilateral and multilateral development cooperation that is programmed under the Country Programme. It does not include humanitarian aid, private sector instruments or Finnish CSOs.



