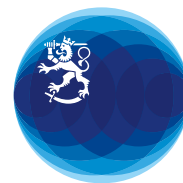


EVALUATION

EVALUATION OF FINNISH SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY,
RULE OF LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS



Ministry for Foreign
Affairs of Finland



Evaluation on Finland's Development Policy and Cooperation

2026/3



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EVALUATION

EVALUATION OF FINNISH SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY, RULE OF LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS

WITH SPECIAL FOCUS ON THE SUB-POLICY PRIORITY AREAS: GOOD GOVERNANCE, CIVIL SOCIETY

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2026/3

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This report incorporates the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies to enhance and support the mapping of the evaluation's portfolio. The AI tools or techniques utilised in this report adhere to EVA-11's requirements, ensuring ethical and responsible use, transparency, validation of results, and compliance with relevant internal regulations. For details on the specific AI methodologies and tools used and details regarding the validation of AI-generated results, refer to section 2.2.4. of this report.



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Acronyms and Abbreviations

€/EUR	Euros
AI	Artificial Intelligence
ATAF	African Tax Administration Forum (ATAF)
CERV Programme	Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme
CMI	Crisis Management Initiative
CP	Country Programme
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
DPC	Development Policy Committee
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility.
DRM	Domestic Resource Mobilisation
EC	European Commission
ECJ	European Court of Justice
EIP	European Institute of Peace
EQ	Evaluation Question
EU	European Union
EWEPP	Empowering Women for Effective Participation in Politics Programme
FCA	Finn Church Aid
FLC	Funds for Local Cooperation
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GEDSI	Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion
GRB	Gender-responsive budgeting
HQ	Headquarters
HRBA	Human-Rights-Based Approach
HRD	Human Rights Defenders
IFIs	International Financial Institutions
IND	Immigration and Naturalization Directorate
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IO	International Organisation
KII	Key Informant Interview
LACCP	Local Adaptation to Climate Change Project
LCF/FLC	Local Co-operation Fund/Fund for Local Co-operation
MFA	Ministry for Foreign Affairs (Finland)
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ODA	Official Development Assistance
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OECD-DAC	OECD Development Assistance Committee
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PwDs	People With Disabilities
PFM	Public financial management
PPA	Policy Priority Area
PPA3	Peaceful and Democratic Societies
PFM	Public Financial Management



PMIS	Project Information Management System (PMIS)
QCA	Qualitative Comparative Analysis
REILA	Responsive and Innovative Land Administration project
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SUSWA	Sustainable WASH for all
TEA	Team Europe Approach
TIWB	OECD's Tax Inspectors without Borders
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme.
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
YEARS	Civic Engagement and Human Rights project
ZNWL	Zambia National Women's Lobby.



Yhteenveto

Tämä raportti kokoaa yhteen Suomen demokratia-, oikeusvaltioperiaate- ja ihmisoikeustukea vuosina 2014–2024 tarkastelleen evaluoinnin tulokset. Temaattisesti evaluointi keskittyi kehityspolitiikan painopistealueeseen ”Rauhanomaiset ja demokraattiset yhteiskunnat” (PPA3), erityisesti sen alateemoihin ”Instituutiot ja hyvä hallinto” sekä ”Osallistuminen ja kansalaisyhteiskunta”. Evaluoinnin tavoitteena oli tuottaa tietoa ulkoministeriön tuesta ja sen kehityksestä tällä painopistealueella, kerätä ja arvioida tuloksia, onnistumisia ja haasteita Suomen hyvän hallinnon ja kansalaisyhteiskunnan edistämistyössä sekä suositella parhaita tapoja saavuttaa PPA3:n tavoitteet. Evaluaatiossa globaalin tason tarkastelua täydennettiin maakohtaisella syventymisellä Nepaliin kohdistuneeseen tukeen.

Analyysissa ei keskitytty yksittäisiin hankkeisiin tai ohjelmiin, vaan koottiin ja konsolidoitiin tuloksia laajemmin. Evaluoinnissa sovellettiin osallistavaa, tulosten hyödynnettävyyteen tähtäävää ja teorialähtöistä lähestymistapaa. Evaluointi perustuu asiakirjakatsaukseen, 123 avainhenkilöhaastatteluun, määrälliseen portfolioanalyysiin, sekä laadulliseen analyysiin, jossa oli mukana 30 otokseen globaalilla tasolla valittua hanketta ja ohjelmaa sekä 12 Nepalissa toteutettua hanketta. Muutosteorialle (Theory of Change) rakentuneessa analyysissä hyödynnettiin kontribuutioanalyysiä, jonka tavoitteena oli ymmärtää miten Suomen tukemat hankkeet ja ohjelmat yhdessä kumppanien toimien sekä toimintaympäristöjen kehityskulkujen ja muutosten kanssa kontribuoivat havaittuihin tuloksiin.

Demokratia-, oikeusvaltioperiaate- ja ihmisoikeustuen toimeenpanosta evaluointi toteaa, että ulkoministeriön laajan demokratiakäsitteen keskeiset elementit on integroitu hyvin kehityspolitiikan linjauksiin. Vahva poliitiikkatason sitoutuminen on luonut vankan, Suomen kansainvälisten kumppanien ja muiden sidosryhmien laajalti tunnistaman pohjan ulkoministeriön identiteetille ja maineelle tällä temaattisella osa-alueella. Suomen tukea PPA3-painopistealueelle toteutetaan monen eri rahoitusinstrumentin kautta, joita useat ulkoministeriön osastot ja edustustot hallinnoivat. Osallistumisen ja kansalaisyhteiskunnan alateemat ovat painottuneet rahoituksessa. Ulkoministeriön sisäinen työnjako on säilynyt tuloksellisena muutosten ja uudelleenjärjestelyjen keskellä. Viimeaikaiset muutokset Suomen kehityspolitiikan prioriteeteissa, radikaalit leikkaukset kehitysrahoituksessa sekä ulkoministeriön rakenteelliset muutokset ovat kuitenkin heikentäneet temaattista asiantuntemusta ja institutionaalista muistia. Tämä luo strategisen ja operatiivisen riskin ulkoministeriön demokratiaa, oikeusvaltioperiaatetta ja ihmisoikeuksia tukevalle työlle tulevaisuudessa.

Evaluoinnissa todetaan PPA3-painopistealueen tulosten osalta, että ulkoministeriön työ on voimakkaasti ulkoisten tekijöiden vaikutuspiirissä samalla kun siinä pyritään vaikuttamaan luonteeltaan asteittäisiin pitkän aikavälin muutoksiin. Ulkoministeriöltä kuitenkin puuttuu tälle osa-alueelle räätälöity ja toimiva tulosten seurantarjestelmä, mikä vaikuttaa kykyyn jäljittää ja osoittaa tuen vaikutusta tuloksiin. Evaluointi kuitenkin osoittaa myös, että vastuunkantajien kapasiteetin vahvistamisen myötä Suomi on edistänyt tehokkaampaa palvelujen tuottamista muun muassa vaalien järjestämisen, muuttoliikkeen hallinnan, vesi- ja sanitaatiopalvelujen, maankäytön hallinnan, jätehuollon, koulutuksen ja terveydenhuollon aloilla. Kaikissa havaituissa tapauksissa tuotetut palvelut ovat noudattaneet yhä vahvemmin ihmisoikeuksien, oikeusvaltion ja demokratian periaatteita. Kaikilla näillä eri aloilla Suomen tuki on myös kontribuoinut parannuksiin normatiivisissa viitekehyksissä, jotka on laadittu osallistavammilla ja inklusiivisemmilla tavoilla, sekä enemmän tietoon perustuen.



Suomen työ PPA3-painopistealueen ja sen periaatteiden valtavirtaistamisen eteen kansainvälisessä yhteistyössään on johtanut paikallisesti transformatiivisiin muutoksiin käsityksissä, asenteissa ja käyttäytymisessä naisia, vammaisia henkilöitä ja marginalisoituja ryhmiä kohtaan. Suomi on myös edistänyt rauhanrakentamista ja rauhanomaisten suhteiden ylläpitämistä inklusiivisen dialogin, kompromissien ja konsensuksen rakentamisen kautta. Nämä saavutukset ovat pitkälti Suomelle ominaisen lähestymistavan ansiota, jossa tuetaan paikallisia oikeudenhaltijoita ja ihmisoikeuspuolustajia. Suomen kansainvälisen yhteistyön arvopohjaisuuden johdosta PPA3:n periaatteet ovat läsnä kaikissa hankkeissa ja ohjelmissa, mikä edistää politiikkatason synergioita ja rakentaa arvopohjaista solidaarisuutta ja kumppanuutta samanmielisten lahjoittajien kanssa. Yhdessä nämä tekijät vahvistavat tuloksia varmistamalla kerrannaisvaikutuksen painopistealueen eri ala-teemojen välillä ja kumppaneiden kanssa. Arvopohjainen lähestymistapa on edistänyt myös aitoa kumppanuutta kansalaisyhteiskunnan toimijoiden kanssa, joskin epätasaisemmin.

Arvioitaessa Suomen panosta, onnistumisia ja haasteita instituutioiden ja hyvän hallinnon vahvistamisessa evaluoinnissa todetaan, että Suomen tukemat hankkeet, ohjelmat ja muu tuki ovat olleet tarkoituksenmukaisia kohdennetuille instituutioille ja oikeudenhaltijoille, mutta yhdenmukaisuus Suomen muutosteorian kanssa on ollut epätasaista. Ohjelmat ovat edistäneet osallistavampaa ja paikallisiin tarpeisiin paremmin vastaavaa hallintoa, lisääntynyttä läpinäkyvyyttä ja vahvempia politiikkalinjauksia samalla kun ne ovat vahvistaneet valikoitujen instituutioiden toiminnallista kapasiteettia. Näyttöä kontribuutiosta laajempiin kansallisen tason systeemiin uudistuksiin on kuitenkin vähän. Tuloksellisuus oli suurinta, kun ohjelmissa yhdistyivät eri sidosryhmien osallistaminen, hallituksen varhainen sitoutuminen, pitkäkestoinen vuorovaikutus sekä hyvän hallinnon valtavirtaistaminen. Näistä onnistuneista kokemuksista opittua ei kuitenkaan valitettavasti ole aina jaettu järjestelmällisesti eri ohjelmien välillä. Myöskään ulkoisia poliittisia ja institutionaalisia riskejä sekä muuttuvien toimintaympäristöjen olosuhteita ei ole riittävästi huomioitu ohjelmasuunnittelussa ja toimeenpanossa, mikä on saattanut joissakin tapauksissa vaikuttaa tulosten kestävyYTEEN.

Kansalaisyhteiskuntien vahvistamisen vaikutuksista, onnistumisista ja haasteista evaluoinnissa todetaan, että Suomi on tukenut vahvoja kansalaisyhteiskuntia luomalla pitkäkestoisia, arvopohjaisia kumppanuuksia suomalaisten ja paikallisten kansalaisjärjestöjen kanssa. Nämä saavutukset ovat onnistuneet pitämään kansalaistoiminnan Suomen edistämän kehityspolitiikan keskiössä, ja ne ovat edelleen strategisesti tarkoituksenmukaisia. Ihmisoikeusperustaisen lähestymistavan mukaisesti tämä aseointi on auttanut edistämään heikoimmassa asemassa olevien, vähemmistöjen sekä yksilöiden oikeuksia maailmanlaajuisesti. Maissa, joissa Suomella on diplomaattinen edustusto, paikallisten kansalaisjärjestökumppaneiden huolellinen valinta osallistumisen edistämiseksi, yhteisöjen kehittämiseksi ja ihmisoikeuksien vahvistamiseksi on antanut Suomelle ”paikan neuvottelupöydässä” suurempien ja taloudellisesti vahvempien kumppaneiden rinnalla. Malli, jossa ulkoministeriö on rakentanut ja ylläpitänyt symbioottista suhdetta suomalaisten kansalaisjärjestöjen kanssa samalla kun se on toimeenpannut politiikkalinjauksiaan kansalaisyhteiskuntien vahvistamiseksi kansainvälisellä tasolla, on osoittautunut arvokkaaksi. Tätä lähestymistapaa haastavat kuitenkin yhä enemmän globaalit geopoliittiset muutokset, Suomen kansallisten poliittisten linjauksen muutokset sekä ulkoministeriön budjetti- ja henkilöresurssien väheneminen. Evaluoinnissa todetaan, että mukautuksia tarvitaan kansalaisjärjestötuen jatkuvan operationaalisen relevanssin varmistamiseksi Suomen strategisten tavoitteiden edistämiseksi.

Evaluaatioissa tarkasteltiin myös, miten Suomen toimintaa tällä politiikka-alueella voidaan jatkossa tehdä tarkoituksenmukaisemmaksi, tuloksellisemmaksi ja kestävämmäksi. PPA3-painopistealueen todetaan edustavan Suomen keskeistä suhteellista etua. Suomen ihmisoikeuksille, oikeusvaltioperiaatteella ja demokratialle perustuva kansainvälisen yhteistyön lähestymistapa antaa Suomen ulkoisille toimille painoarvoa ja vaikutusvaltaa sekä PPA3:n sisällä että laajemmin kansallisella,



monikansallisella ja globaalilla tasolla. Suomi on tasapainottanut arvopohjaista lähestymistapaa ja valtavirtaistamista realistisella ja kärsivällisellä ymmärryksellä siitä, että ihmisoikeuksien, demokratian ja oikeusvaltion vahvistamiseen tähtäävä muutos on asteitteista, rajallista, epävarmaa ja herkkää. Suomen pitkäaikainen investointi näiden osa-alueiden tukemiseen on kantanut hedelmää. Evaluointi kuitenkin toteaa, että maan kehityspolitiikka on tienristeyksessä: Suomi haluaa säilyttää nämä vahvuudet ja jatkaa vaikuttamista painoarvoaan suuremmissa roolissa samalla, kun se priorisoi yhä enemmän kauppaa kehityspolitiikan painopisteenä. Samanaikaisesti resursseja sekä Suomessa että kansainvälisesti on yhä vaikeampaa mobilisoida. Tässä haastavassa globaalissa kontekstissa Suomi voisi hyötyä kehitystulosten laadullisen seurannan ja analyysin vahvistamisesta sekä riskienhallinnan edelleen kehittämistä tuetuissa hankkeissa, ohjelmissa ja muissa toimissa.

Suomen suhteellinen etu demokratian, hyvän hallinnon ja oikeusvaltioperiaatteen edistämässä on sen arvopohjainen ja sääntöperustainen identiteetti. PPA3:n tulokset on konkreettinen, mutta tulosten attribuointi ja aggregointi on haastavaa, koska muutos on luonteeltaan poliittista, käyttäytymiseen liittyvää ja kumulatiivista. Näyttö viittaa siihen, että tuloksellisuus on suurinta silloin, kun keskitytään kontekstikohtaisiin vahvuuksiin, synergiaan kumppaneiden kanssa ja toimiviksi todennettuihin modaaliteetteihin. Kestäviä tuloksia voidaan saavuttaa pitkäaikaisten kumppanuuksien ja kokonaisvaltaisten interventioiden kautta. Vaikka tuettuihin toimiin liittyvät riskit tunnustetaan, ne eivät johdonmukaisesti ohjaa portfolio-tason suunnittelua, seuranta ja riskienhallintaa. Painopistealueen hankkeiden ja ohjelmien laadun ylläpitäminen edellyttääkin uudistettua ohjeistusta, uusia osaamista ja oppimista tukevia materiaaleja sekä asiantuntemuksen kehittämistä ja ylläpitämistä ulkoministeriössä ja edustustoissa. Vaikuttavuuden säilyttäminen tiukentuvilla resursseilla edellyttää myös tietoisista toimintojen priorisointia ja hankkeiden tuottaman vipuvaikutuksen nykyistä selkeämpää huomioon ottamista.

Nykyisistä resurssirajoitteista huolimatta ulkoministeriön tulisi strategisesti varmistaa demokratia-, ihmisoikeus- ja oikeusvaltioperiaatteen tuen jatkuvuus ja pyrkiä säilyttämään tämän osa-alueen aiemmat rahoitustasot. Painopistealuekohtaisten tulosten turvaamisen lisäksi tämä olisi Suomen koko kansainvälisen yhteistyön, kaupan ja turvallisuuden liittyvien etujen mukaista. Kaikki mahdolliset toimet tulisi tehdä asiantuntemuksen säilyttämiseksi ja pitkään rakennettujen, tuloksellisten kumppanuuksien vaalimiseksi. Aiemman kokemuksen ja onnistumisten pohjalta tulisi yhä enemmän painottaa strategista politiikkavaikuttamista kaikilla tasoilla yhdessä samanmielisten lahjoittajien, paikallisten ja suomalaisten kansalaisjärjestöjen, kansainvälisten kansalaisjärjestöjen, akateemisten instituutioiden ja muiden keskeisten kumppaneiden kanssa. Samalla demokratiaa, ihmisoikeuksia ja oikeusvaltioperiaatetta tukeviin toimiin osoitettua rahoitusta tulisi suojata ja mahdollisuuksien mukaan kasvattaa, jotta se paremmin heijastaa tämän painopistealueen strategista tärkeyttä ja Suomen lisäarvoa haastavassa globaalissa kontekstissa.



Sammanfattning

Rapporten sammanfattar resultaten av utvärderingen av Finlands stöd till demokrati, rättsstatens principer och mänskliga rättigheter globalt mellan 2014 och 2024, med en fördjupad analys av Nepal. Tematiskt fokuserar utvärderingen på det prioriterade policyområdet Fredliga och demokratiska samhällen (PPA3) och i synnerhet de delteman som fokuserar på institutioner och god samhällsstyrning samt deltagande och civilsamhälle. Utvärderingens syften var att tillhandahålla information om utrikesministeriets (UM) stöd till PPA3 och dess utveckling; att samla in och bedöma resultat, framgångar och utmaningar i Finlands främjande av god samhällsstyrning och civilsamhället; samt att rekommendera hur målen inom PPA3 bäst uppnås. Utvärderingen fokuserade inte på enskilda insatser, utan aggregerade och sammanställde resultat inom bredare resultatområden. Utvärderingen tillämpade en deltagande, nyttofokuserad och teoribaserad ansats och bygger på dokumentstudier, 123 intervjuer med nyckelinformanter, kvantitativ portföljanalys samt kvalitativ analys av 30 insatser globalt, med ytterligare 12 projekt analyserade i Nepal-fördjupningen. Analysen strukturerades kring Finlands förändringsteori och använde bidragsanalys för att förstå hur Finlands insatser, i samspel med partners och kontextuella faktorer, bidrog till observerade resultat.

När det gäller frågan om hur genomförandet av stödet till demokrati, rättsstatens principer och mänskliga rättigheter organiseras inom utrikesministeriet noterar utvärderingen att de centrala delarna i UM:s breda demokratibegrepp har integrerats väl i utvecklingspolitiken. Ett starkt engagemang på policynivå har lagt en stabil grund för UM:s identitet och anseende inom området, vilket är allmänt erkänt av Finlands internationella partners och andra aktörer. Finlands stöd till PPA3 har genomförts via flera finansieringsinstrument som hanteras av olika avdelningar inom UM och av ambassader, med särskilt fokus på deltemat deltagande och civilsamhälle. Arbetsfördelningen inom UM har överlag varit effektiv trots förändringar och omorganisationer. Samtidigt har förändrade utvecklingspolitiska prioriteringar, omfattande globala nedskärningar i biståndsfinansieringen och organisatoriska förändringar inom UM bidragit till en försvagning av tematisk expertis och institutionellt minne. Utvärderingen bedömer att detta innebär en strategisk och operativ risk för UM:s framtida arbete inom området.

När det gäller resultaten inom området "fredliga och demokratiska samhällen" konstaterar utvärderingen att UM:s arbete i hög grad påverkas av externa faktorer, samtidigt som det syftar till att bidra till långsiktiga, gradvisa förändringar. I detta sammanhang saknar UM ett anpassat och operativt system för resultatuppföljning, vilket försvårar möjligheten att spåra och visa bidrag till resultat. Samtidigt visar utvärderingen att Finland, genom kapacitetsutveckling av skyldighetsbärare, har bidragit till förbättrad tjänsteleverans inom områden som valprocesser, migrationshantering, vatten och sanitet, markförvaltning, avfallshantering, utbildning och hälsa. I samtliga fall har tjänsterna i genomförts i enlighet med principer rörande de mänskliga rättigheterna, rättsstaten och demokrati. Finlands stöd har även bidragit till förbättrade och mer regelbaserade normativa ramverk, som utformats på ett mer deltagande och inkluderande sätt samt i högre grad baserats på evidens. Arbetet inom PPA3 och integreringen av dess principer i internationella samarbeten har också lett till lokala, transformativa förändringar i uppfattningar, attityder och beteenden gentemot kvinnor, personer med funktionsnedsättning och marginaliserade grupper. Finland har dessutom bidragit till fredsbyggande och bevarandet av fredliga relationer genom inkluderande dialog, kompromisser och konsensusbyggande. Dessa resultat beror i stor utsträckning på Finlands karakteristiska arbetssätt att stödja lokala rättighetsbärare och människorättsförsvarare. Eftersom Finlands



internationella samarbete i hög grad är värdebaserat genomsyrar PPA3-principerna alla insatser, vilket skapar intern policysynergi och stärker partnerskapen med likasinnade givare. Sammantaget bidrar dessa faktorer till starkare resultat genom att säkerställa multiplikatoreffekter mellan prioriterade policyområden och med partners. Det värdebaserade förhållningssättet främjar också genuint partnerskap med aktörer i civilsamhället, även om det kan vara mindre tydligt.

Vad gäller Finlands bidrag till att stärka institutioner och god samhällsstyrning fann utvärderingen att insatserna varit relevanta för avsedda institutioner och rättighetsbärare, men att kopplingen till Finlands övergripande förändringsteori varit ojämn. Insatserna har bidragit till mer deltagande och responsiv förvaltning, ökad transparens och starkare policy-ramverk, samtidigt som kapaciteten hos utvalda institutioner stärkts. Samtidigt finns begränsad evidens för bidrag till bredare systemförändringar på nationell nivå. Effektiviteten var störst där program kombinerade samverkan mellan flera aktörer, tidigt offentligt ägarskap, långsiktigt engagemang och integrering av mänskliga rättigheter, rättsstatens principer och demokrati i bredare sektorsprogram. Utvärderingen noterar att lärdomar från framgångsrika arbetssätt inte alltid spridits på ett systematiskt sätt. Externa politiska och institutionella risker samt förändrade kontextuella förutsättningar har inte heller beaktats i tillräcklig grad, vilket i vissa fall kan ha påverkat hållbarheten i resultaten.

När det gäller effekter och utmaningar i att stärka civilsamhället visar utvärderingen att Finland har stött stärkandet av civilsamhällen genom långsiktiga och värdebaserade partnerskap med finska och lokala civilsamhällesorganisationer. Detta har bidragit till att hålla ett medborgarengagemang centralt i utvecklingspolitiken och har fortsatt hög strategisk relevans. I linje med ett rättighetsbaserat arbetssätt har stödet till civilsamhället globalt främjat rättigheter för utsatta och marginaliserade grupper. I länder där Finland har diplomatisk representation har noggrant utvalda partnerskap med lokala organisationer för att främja deltagande, utveckling and mänskliga rättigheter gett Finland "en plats vid bordet" jämte större och finansiellt starkare partners. Den modell med vilken UM byggt symbiotiska relationer med finska civilsamhällesorganisationer har varit värdefull, men utmanas nu av geopolitiska förändringar, förändrade nationella prioriteringar samt minskade resurser. Anpassningar krävs för att säkerställa fortsatt relevans.

Framåtblickande, och som svar på frågan hur Finland kan göra sina PPA3-relaterade aktiviteter mer relevanta, effektiva och hållbara, konstaterar utvärderingen att Finlands värdebaserade ansats – med inriktning på de mänskliga rättigheterna, rättsstatens principer och demokrati – utgör landets främsta komparativa fördel. Den ger tyngd och inflytande i det internationella samarbetet, både inom och utanför PPA3. Finland har balanserat sitt värdebaserade förhållningssätt med realism och tålmod inför de begränsningar, osäkerheter och känsligheter som följer med den gradvisa förändringsprocess som är karaktäristisk för att stärka mänskliga rättigheter, demokrati och rättsstatens principer. Som ett resultat kan Finland nu skörda frukterna av sina långsiktiga investeringar inom dessa områden. Utvärderingen finner dock att landets politik står vid ett vägskäl: Finland vill behålla dessa tillgångar, samtidigt som man i allt högre grad satsar på handel som en utvecklingspolitisk prioritet. På samme gång blir resurserna – både i Finland och internationellt – allt svårare att mobilisera. I detta utmanande globala sammanhang skulle Finland vinna på starkt kvalitativ resultatuppföljning och riskhantering.

Sammanfattningsvis drar utvärderingen slutsatsen att Finlands komparativa fördel inom PPA3 är dess värde- och regelbaserade identitet. Resultatkedjorna är tydliga, men attribuering och aggregering är svåra då förändringarna är politiska, beteendemässiga och kumulativa. Tillgängliga bevis pekar på att effektiviteten i Finlands insatser är högst när de bygger på kontextspecifika styrkor, partnersynergier och beprövade arbetssätt. Hållbara resultat uppnås genom långsiktiga partnerskap och gedigna insatser. Risker identifieras men omsätts inte alltid systematiskt i utvecklandet,



genomförandet och uppföljningen av insatser. För att upprätthålla kvaliteten krävs förnyad vägledning, lärande och stärkt kompetens inom UM och ambassader.

Trots resursbegränsningar bör UM säkerställa kontinuitet i stödet till demokrati, mänskliga rättigheter och rättsstatens principer, med ambition att bibehålla historiska finansieringsnivåer. Detta skulle inte bara säkra resultat inom PPA3 utan även ligga i linje med Finlands bredare mål inom internationellt samarbete, handel och säkerhet. Alla ansträngningar bör göras för att säkerställa att expertis bibehålls och att långsiktigt uppbyggda partnerskap bevaras, då dessa effektivt genererar resultat. Med utgångspunkt i tidigare erfarenheter och framgångar bör ett ökat fokus läggas på strategiskt policypåverkansarbete på alla nivåer, i samarbete med likasinnade givare, lokala och finska civilsamhällsorganisationer, internationella icke-statliga organisationer, akademiska institutioner och andra centrala partners. Samtidigt bör den finansiella resurstilldelningen till insatser som stöder demokrati, mänskliga rättigheter och rättsstatens principer skyddas och, där så är möjligt, ökas för att bättre spegla områdets strategiska betydelse och Finlands mervärde inom detta prioriterade politikområde i en utmanande global kontext.



Summary

The report summarises the results of the evaluation of Finnish support for democracy, rule of law, and human rights globally between 2014 and 2024, informed by a deep dive into Nepal. The thematic scope focuses on the policy priority area of Peaceful and Democratic Societies (PPA3), and especially its sub-themes of Institutions and good governance, and Participation and civil society. The objectives of the evaluation were to provide information on MFA support to the PPA3 and its evolution; to harvest and evaluate results, successes, and challenges in Finland's promotion of good governance and civil society; and to recommend the best ways to achieve objectives under PPA3. The analysis did not concentrate on individual interventions, but aggregated and consolidated results against broader areas of achievement. The evaluation applied a participatory, utilisation-focused and theory-based approach, and is based on document review, 123 key informant interviews, quantitative portfolio analysis, and qualitative analysis of sampled 30 interventions globally, with an additional 12 projects sampled for the Nepal deep dive. Analysis was structured around the ToC, using contribution analysis to understand how Finland's interventions, in combination with those of partners and contextual dynamics, contributed to observed outcomes.

When addressing the question about the way the implementation of support for democracy, rule of law and human rights was organised at the MFA, the evaluation found that the key elements of MFA's broad concept of democracy have been well integrated into MFA's development policies. This strong policy level commitment has laid a solid foundation for MFA's identity and reputation in this thematic area, which is widely recognised by Finland's international partners and other stakeholders. Finland's support for PPA3 has been implemented through multiple funding instruments managed by several MFA departments and embassies with emphasis on the sub-theme of participation and civil society. Division of labour within MFA has remained overall effective through changes and reorganisation. However, recent shifts in Finland's development policy priorities, radical global cuts in development funding, and structural changes within MFA contributed to weakening of the thematic expertise and institutional memory. The evaluation found that this creates a strategic and operational risk for MFA's future work in support to democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

Considering the question of the results of MFA's work in the PPA of "peaceful, democratic societies", the evaluation notes that MFA's work is highly affected by external factors, while aiming to contribute to long-term changes that are progressive in nature. In this context, the evaluation found that MFA lacks a tailored, operable system of results monitoring, which affects its ability to trace and demonstrate contribution to outcome. However, it also found that thanks to capacity building with duty-bearers, Finland has contributed to stronger service delivery in areas such as elections, migration management, water and sanitation, land management, waste management, education, and health. In all cases, due to PPA3 approach, the services delivered have increasingly complied with the principles of human rights, rule of law, and democracy. In all these areas Finnish support has also contributed to improved, more compliant normative frameworks which have been elaborated in a more participatory and inclusive way and better informed by evidence. Finland's work on PPA3 and the mainstreaming of its principles throughout international cooperation have also led to localised, transformative changes in perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours towards women, persons with disabilities, and marginalised groups. Finland has also contributed to peacebuilding and preservation of peaceful relations through inclusive dialogue, compromise, and consensus-building. These achievements largely owe to Finland's characteristic approach



of supporting local rights holders and human rights champions. Since Finland's international cooperation is profoundly value-based, PPA3 principles are ubiquitous in all interventions, which helps foster internal policy synergy, but also builds value-based solidarity and partnership with like-minded donors. Taken together, these elements contribute to stronger outcomes by ensuring multiplier effect between PPAs, and with partners. Value-based approach has also fostered genuine partnership with civil society actors, though less uniformly.

While pondering the contribution of Finland to strengthening institutions and good governance, its successes and challenges, the evaluation found that Finland's interventions have been relevant to targeted institutions and rightsholders, but alignment with Finland's overall Theory of Change has been uneven. Interventions contributed to more participatory and responsive governance, increased transparency, and stronger policy frameworks, while strengthening the functional capacity of selected institutions. However, there is limited evidence of contribution to broader systemic reform at the national level. Effectiveness was greatest where programmes combined multi-stakeholder engagement, early government buy-in, sustained engagement, and governance mainstreaming across programmes. The evaluation notes, that regrettably, lessons from these successful approaches were not always systematically shared across programmes. It also found that external political and institutional risks, as well as shifting contextual conditions, were not sufficiently considered in programming and implementation, which may have affected the sustainability of results in some cases.

When it comes to the impact, successes and challenges in promotion of stronger civil societies, the evaluation found that Finland has supported strong civil societies through the creation of long-term, value-driven partnerships with Finnish and local CSOs. These efforts have proven successful in keeping civic engagement at the centre of development policy as seen and promoted by Finland and they retain high strategic relevance. Coherent with the HRBA, this approach helped advance the rights of disadvantaged and minority communities and individuals worldwide. In the countries where Finland has its diplomatic representations, careful selection of local CSO partners to promote participation, advance communities, and strengthen human rights frameworks has given Finland "a seat at the table" alongside larger and financially endowed partners. The characteristic model in which the MFA built and sustained symbiotic relationship with Finnish CSOs while implementing its policies in support of stronger civil societies internationally has proven valuable, but the approach is now increasingly challenged by global geopolitical shifts, changes in Finland's national policy approach and reduction of the MFA budgets and human resources. The evaluation found that adaptations are needed to ensure continued operational relevance of CSO support to advancing Finland's strategic objectives.

Looking ahead and responding to the question on ways to make Finland's activities in the policy area more relevant, effective and sustainable, the evaluation notes that PPA3, and Finland's approach to international cooperation which embodies the principles of human rights, rule of law, and democracy, represent the country's key comparative advantage. They lend Finland's external action gravitas and influence, both within PPA3 and beyond it, in all PPAs, throughout Finland's international cooperation and trade, at national, multi-country, and global levels. Finland has balanced its value-based approach and mainstreaming with realism and patience towards the limitations, uncertainties, and sensitivities of accompanying the incremental nature of change which is characteristic to the strengthening of human rights, democracy and rule of law. As a result, Finland can now harvest the benefits of its long-lasting investments in these areas. Yet, the evaluation finds the country's policy at a crossroad: Finland wants to maintain these assets and continue to punch above its weight, while increasingly prioritising trade as a development policy priority. All the while, the resources – both in Finland, and internationally – are increasingly difficult to mobilise. In this



challenging global context, Finland could benefit from strengthening the qualitative monitoring and analysis of development results, and further developing the risk management in supported actions.

Overall, the evaluation concludes that Finland's comparative advantage in PPA3 is its value- and rule-based identity. It notes that the results chains in PPA3 is tangible, but that attribution and aggregation is challenging as change is political, behavioural and cumulative. Evidence suggests that effectiveness is highest when there is a focus on context-specific strengths, partner synergy, and proven modalities. It also suggests that sustainable outcomes are feasible when long-term partnerships and comprehensive interventions materialise. While intervention-related risks are generally identified and acknowledged they are not consistently translated into systematic portfolio-level risk-informed design, monitoring and mitigation. Sustained quality of PPA 3 interventions requires renewed guidance, new learning products and developed or sustaining expertise across MFA and embassies. Maintaining impact under tighter resources will also require deliberate prioritisation of activities and more explicit consideration of leverage generated by these projects.

Despite the current resource constraints, MFA should strategically ensure continuity of its support to democracy, human rights and the rule of law, aiming to retain the historical levels of funding in this area: this would not only preserve results in PPA 3, it would be in the interest of Finland's entire international cooperation, trade, and security ambitions. All efforts should be made to ensure retention of expertise and preservation of long-built partnerships which efficiently yield results. Basing on the past experience and successes, an increasing emphasis should be placed on strategic policy influencing at all levels along with likeminded donors, local and Finnish CSOs, INGOs, academic institutions and other key partners. At the same time, financial resource allocations to actions supporting democracy, human rights and the rule of law should be protected, and as possible increased to better reflect the strategic importance and Finland's added value in this policy priority area in the challenging global context.



Keskeiset löydökset, johtopäätökset ja suositukset

LÖYDÖKSET	JOHTOPÄÄTÖKSET	SUOSITUKSET
<p>F1: Suomen kehitys- ja ihmisoikeuspoliittiset linjaukset ovat selkeästi linjassa laajan demokratiakäsitteen ja ulkoministeriön demokratiatukipolitiikan (2014) keskeisten teemojen kanssa.</p> <p>F2: Suomen demokratiaa, oikeusvaltioperiaatetta ja ihmisoikeuksia koskevat kehityspolitiikan linjaukset ovat luoneet vahvan perustan ulkoministeriön identiteetille ja maineelle näillä kehityspolitiikan osa-alueilla. Kehityspolitiikan viimeaikaiset muutokset herättävät kuitenkin huolta identiteetin heikkenemisestä.</p> <p>F10: Kehityspolitiikan painopistealue ”Rauhanomaiset, demokraattiset yhteiskunnat” (PPA3) asemoi Suomen rakentavaksi toimijaksi monimutkaisessa ja muuttuvassa kehitysyhteistyön lahjoittajakentässä.</p> <p>F17: Suomen ihmisoikeuksia, oikeusvaltioperiaatetta ja demokratiaa koskevan tuen keskeinen vahvuus on sen aitous.</p> <p>F18: Suomen tuki kehityspolitiikan painopistealue PPA3:lle on adaptiivista pohjaten realismiin, rajoitteiden hyväksymiseen, ja asteittaisen muutoksen edistämiseen.</p>	<p>Johtopäätös 1. Suomen arvopohjainen ja sääntöperustainen identiteetti toimii Suomen suhteellisena etuna kehityspolitiikan painopistealue PPA3:ssa ”Rauhanomaiset, demokraattiset yhteiskunnat”</p>	<p>Suositus 1. Suomen tulisi ylläpitää menestyksellistä brändiään arvopohjaisena ja sääntöperustaisena tukijana.</p>
<p>F2: Suomen poliittiset linjaukset demokratian, oikeusvaltioperiaatteen ja ihmisoikeuksien osalta ovat luoneet vahvan perustan ulkoministeriön identiteetille ja maineelle näillä kehityspolitiikan osa-alueilla. Viimeaikaiset muutokset kehityspolitiikan linjauksissa herättävät kuitenkin huolta identiteetin heikkenemisestä.</p> <p>F3: Volyymiltaan vaihtelevassa demokratiatuessa ovat painottuneet osallistumisen ja kansalaisyhteiskunnan teemat.</p> <p>F4: Ulkoministeriön demokratia-, oikeusvaltioperiaate- ja ihmisoikeustukea on hallinnoitu ja toimeenpantu useilla osastoilla ja edustustoissa. Työnjako on ollut muutoksessa, mutta kokonaisuutena tehokasta.</p> <p>F14: Kansalaisyhteiskunnan tuki on ollut arvolähtöistä ja strategisesti erittäin merkityksellistä, mutta kansallisen ja kansainvälisen toimintaympäristön muutokset edellyttävät toiminnallisia mukautuksia.</p> <p>F16: Kansalaisyhteiskunnan rahoitus kohtaa sekä vanhoja että uusia kestävyysaasteita, mutta Suomen tuki voi säilyä relevanttina uusien, paikallisten toimijoiden noustessa esiin.</p> <p>F17: Suomen ihmisoikeuksia, oikeusvaltioperiaatetta ja demokratiaa koskevan tuen keskeinen vahvuus on sen aitous.</p> <p>F19: Suomi hallinnoi ihmisoikeus-, demokratia- ja oikeusvaltioperiaatteen tukeaan PPA3:ssa adaptiivisesti, mutta riskienhallinnan näkökulmaa ei ole hyödynnetty riittävästi.</p>	<p>Johtopäätös 2. Resurssirajoitteet ja toimintaympäristön muutokset tekevät strategisesta priorisoinnista ja taitavasta vipuvaikutuksesta ratkaisevia vaikuttavuuden kannalta.</p>	<p>Suositus 2. Demokratia-, oikeusvaltioperiaate- ja ihmisoikeustyöhön kohdennettavien resurssien lisäleikkauksia tulisi välttää, tämän työn luodessa edellytykset Suomen laajemmille YK:n kestävän kehityksen tavoitteisiin, kansainväliseen turvallisuuteen ja kauppaan liittyville kehityspoliittisille prioriteeteille.</p>



LÖYDÖKSET	JOHTOPÄÄTÖKSET	SUOSITUKSET
<p>F5: PPA3:n konkreettisia tuloksia on haastava jäljittää, mutta on olemassa vahvoja viitteitä kontribuutiosta muutosteoriassa määriteltyihin keskeisiin tulosalueisiin.</p> <p>F7: Oikeudenhaltija-analyysi, kun sitä on tehty, on vaikuttanut suoraan ohjelmasuunnitteluun.</p> <p>F8: Ohjelmasuunnittelussa ja toimeenpanossa on priorisoitu tukea oikeudenhaltijoille.</p> <p>F12: Hankkeet ja ohjelmat edistivät osallistavampaa ja responsiivista julkishallintoa, lisänneet läpinäkyvyyttä ja vahvistaneet politiikkalinjauksia. Joidenkin julkisten instituutioiden toiminnallinen kapasiteetti on kasvanut, mutta kansallisen tason systeemisistä uudistuksista on näyttöä vain rajoitetusti.</p> <p>F13: Suomen hyvää hallintoa koskevat hankkeet ja ohjelmat olivat tuloksellisimpia silloin, kun niissä yhdistyivät eri sidosryhmien osallistaminen, kumppanimaan päätöksentekijöiden ja viranomaisten varhainen sitoutuminen, pitkäkestoinen vuorovaikutus sekä hyvän hallinnon valtavirtaistaminen eri sektorien ohjelmissa. Ohjelmissa opittua ei kuitenkaan aina ole jaettu laajasti, eikä ulkoisiin poliittisiin ja institutionaalisiin muutoksiin ja riskeihin ole kiinnitetty riittävästi huomiota.</p>	<p>Johtopäätös 3. PPA3:n tulosketju on konkreettinen, mutta haastavaa todentaa.</p>	<p>Suositus 3. Ulkoministeriön muutosteorian tuloskarttoja, tulosohjausta -ja raportointia tulisi mukauttaa vastaamaan paremmin PPA3:n erityispiirteitä.</p>
<p>F5: PPA3:n konkreettisia tuloksia on haastava jäljittää, mutta on olemassa vahvoja viitteitä kontribuutiosta muutosteoriassa määriteltyihin keskeisiin tulosalueisiin.</p> <p>F6: PPA3:n tulokset ovat johdonmukaisia ja synergisiä tulosalueiden 1, 2 ja 3 osalta. Tulosalue 4:n synergiapotentialiaa ei ole kuitenkaan hyödynnetty täysipainoisesti.</p> <p>F9: Jaetut demokraattiset arvot ja instrumenttien monimuotoisuus edistävät synergiaa ulkoministeriön rakenteiden ja kumppaneiden välillä. Rahoitusleikkaukset ja suurten välittäjäorganisaatioiden kaksiteräinen rooli kuitenkin rajoittavat kumppanuuksien täyttämistä hyötyä.</p> <p>F11: Instituutioita ja hyvää hallintoa tukevat hankkeet ja ohjelmat ovat olleet merkityksellisiä kohderyhmille, mutta vaihtelevasti linjassa Suomen muutosteorian kanssa.</p> <p>F12: Hankkeet ja ohjelmat edistivät osallistavampaa ja reagoivampaa julkishallintoa, lisäsivät läpinäkyvyyttä ja vahvistivat politiikkalinjauksia. Joidenkin julkisten instituutioiden toiminnallinen kapasiteetti kasvoi, mutta kansallisen tason systeemisistä uudistuksista on näyttöä vain rajoitetusti.</p> <p>F13: Suomen hyvää hallintoa koskevat hankkeet ja ohjelmat olivat tuloksellisimpia silloin, kun niissä yhdistyivät eri sidosryhmien osallistaminen, kumppanimaan päätöksentekijöiden ja viranomaisten varhainen sitoutuminen, pitkäkestoinen vuorovaikutus sekä hyvän hallinnon valtavirtaistaminen eri sektorien ohjelmissa. Ohjelmissa opittua ei kuitenkaan aina ole jaettu laajasti, eikä ulkoisiin poliittisiin ja institutionaalisiin muutoksiin ja riskeihin ole kiinnitetty riittävästi huomiota.</p> <p>F14: Kansalaisyhteiskunnan tuki on ollut arvolähtöistä ja strategisesti erittäin merkityksellistä, mutta kansallisen ja kansainvälisen toimintaympäristön muutokset edellyttävät toiminnallisia mukautuksia.</p> <p>F15: Kansalaisyhteiskuntaa tukevat toimet ovat yleensä tuottaneet myönteisiä tuloksia oikeudenhaltijoiden tukemisen osalta, mutta vähemmän selviä tuloksia institutionaalisen kehityksen kannalta.</p> <p>F16: Kansalaisyhteiskunnan rahoitus kohtaa sekä vanhoja että uusia kestävyysaasteita, mutta Suomen tuki voi säilyä relevanttina uusien, paikallisten toimijoiden noustessa esiin.</p>	<p>Johtopäätös 4. Tuloksellisuus on suurinta, kun Suomi keskittyy kontekstikohtaisiin vahvuuksiin, synergiaan kumppaneiden kanssa ja toimiviksi todennettuihin modalleetteihin.</p>	<p>Suositus 4. Jokaisessa ohjelmamaassa ja globaalilla tasolla tulisi keskittyä Suomen vahvuuksiin ja aiempiin onnistumisiin.</p>



LÖYDÖKSET	JOHTOPÄÄTÖKSET	SUOSITUKSET
<p>F14: Kansalaisyhteiskunnan tuki on ollut arvolähtöistä ja strategisesti erittäin merkityksellistä, mutta kansallisen ja kansainvälisen toimintaympäristön muutokset edellyttävät toiminnallisia mukautuksia.</p> <p>F15: Kansalaisyhteiskuntaa tukevat toimet ovat yleensä tuottaneet myönteisiä tuloksia oikeudenhaltijoiden tukemisen osalta, mutta vähemmän selviä tuloksia institutionaalisen kehityksen kannalta.</p> <p>F16: Kansalaisyhteiskunnan rahoitus kohtaa sekä vanhoja että uusia kestävyysasteita, mutta Suomen tuki voi säilyä relevanttina uusien, paikallisten toimijoiden noustessa esiin.</p> <p>F18: Suomen tuki kehityspolitiikan painopistealue ”Rauhanomaiset, demokraattiset yhteiskunnat” PPA3:lle on adaptiivista, pohjaten realismiin, rajoitteiden hyväksymiseen, ja asteittaisen muutoksen edistämiseen.</p> <p>F19: Suomi hallinnoi ihmisoikeus-, demokratia- ja oikeusvaltioperiaatteen tukeaan PPA3:ssa adaptiivisesti, mutta riskienhallinnan näkökulmaa ei ole hyödynnetty riittävästi.</p>	<p>Johtopäätös 5. Pitkäaikaiset kumppanuudet ja kokonaisvaltaisten kehitystoimien tukeminen yksittäisten hankkeiden sijaan mahdollistavat kestävämpiä tuloksia.</p>	<p>Suositus 5. Pitkäkestoista tukea tulisi priorisoida yksittäisten hankkeiden sijaan.</p>
<p>F12: Hankkeet ja ohjelmat edistivät osallistavampaa ja reagoivampaa julkishallintoa, lisäsivät läpinäkyvyyttä ja vahvistivat politiikkalinjauksia. Joidenkin julkisten instituutioiden toiminnallinen kapasiteetti kasvoi, mutta kansallisen tason systeemisistä uudistuksista on näyttöä vain rajoitetusti.</p> <p>F13: Suomen hyvää hallintoa koskevat hankkeet ja ohjelmat olivat tuloksellisimpia silloin, kun niissä yhdistyivät eri sidosryhmien osallistaminen, kumppanimaan päätöksentekijöiden ja viranomaisten varhainen sitoutuminen, pitkäkestoinen vuorovaikutus sekä hyvän hallinnon valtavirtaistaminen eri sektorien ohjelmissa. Ohjelmista opittua ei kuitenkaan aina ole jaettu laajasti, eikä ulkoihin poliittisiin ja institutionaalisiin muutoksiin ja riskeihin ole kiinnitetty riittävästi huomiota</p> <p>F16: Kansalaisyhteiskunnan rahoitus kohtaa sekä vanhoja että uusia kestävyysasteita, mutta Suomen tuki voi säilyä relevanttina uusien, paikallisten toimijoiden noustessa esiin.</p> <p>F17: Suomen ihmisoikeuksia, oikeusvaltioperiaatetta ja demokratiaa koskevan tuen keskeinen vahvuus on sen aitous.</p> <p>F18: Suomen tuki kehityspolitiikan painopistealue ”Rauhanomaiset, demokraattiset yhteiskunnat” PPA3:lle on adaptiivista, pohjaten realismiin, rajoitteiden hyväksymiseen, ja asteittaisen muutoksen edistämiseen.</p> <p>F19: Suomi hallinnoi ihmisoikeus-, demokratia- ja oikeusvaltioperiaatteen tukeaan PPA3:ssa adaptiivisesti, mutta riskienhallinnan näkökulmaa ei ole hyödynnetty riittävästi.</p>	<p>Johtopäätös 6. Riskienhallinta, mukaan lukien korruptio ja eettiset kysymykset on sisällytetty toimeenpanoon, mutta ei riittävän systemaattisesti.</p>	<p>Suositus 6. Korruptioon liittyviä riskejä tulisi ennaltaehkäistä ja niihin tulisi puuttua.</p>
<p>F4: Ulkoministeriön demokratia-, oikeusvaltioperiaate- ja ihmisoikeustukea on hallinnoitu ja toimeenpantu useilla osastoilla ja edustustoissa. Työnjako on ollut muutoksessa, mutta kokonaisuutena tehokasta.</p> <p>F7: Oikeudenhaltija-analyysi, kun sitä on tehty, on vaikuttanut suoraan ohjelmasuunnitteluun.</p> <p>F18: Suomen tuki kehityspolitiikan painopistealue ”Rauhanomaiset, demokraattiset yhteiskunnat” PPA3:lle on adaptiivista, pohjaten realismiin, rajoitteiden hyväksymiseen, ja asteittaisen muutoksen edistämiseen.</p> <p>F19: Suomi hallinnoi ihmisoikeus-, demokratia- ja oikeusvaltioperiaatteen tukeaan PPA3:ssa adaptiivisesti, mutta riskienhallinnan näkökulmaa ei ole hyödynnetty riittävästi.</p>	<p>Johtopäätös 7. Laadun ylläpitäminen edellyttää päivitettyä ohjeistusta, oppimista tukevia materiaaleja sekä asiantuntemuksen ylläpitämistä ja kehittämistä ulkoministeriössä ja edustustoissa.</p>	<p>Suositus 7. Ulkoministeriön henkilöstölle tulisi tarjota PPA3-painopistealueeseen liittyvää päivitettyä ja kokonaisvaltaista ohjeistusta.</p>



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<p>F5: PPA3:n konkreettisia tuloksia on haastava jäljittää, mutta on olemassa vahvoja viitteitä kontribuutiosta muutosteoriassa määriteltyihin keskeisiin tulosalueisiin.</p> <p>F14: Kansalaisyhteiskunnan tuki on ollut arvolähtöistä ja strategisesti erittäin merkityksellistä, mutta kansallisen ja kansainvälisen toimintaympäristön muutokset edellyttävät toiminnallisia mukautuksia.</p> <p>F16: Kansalaisyhteiskunnan rahoitus kohtaa sekä vanhoja että uusia kestävyysaasteita, mutta Suomen tuki voi säilyä relevanttina uusien, paikallisten toimijoiden noustessa esiin.</p> <p>F19: Suomi hallinnoi ihmisoikeus-, demokratia- ja oikeusvaltioperiaatteen tukeaan PPA3:ssa adaptiivisesti, mutta riskienhallinnan näkökulmaa ei ole hyödynnetty riittävästi.</p>	<p>Johtopäätös 2. Resurssirajoitteet ja toimintaympäristön muutokset tekevät strategisesta priorisoinnista ja taitavasta vipuvaikutuksesta ratkaisevia vaikuttavuuden kannalta.</p> <p>Johtopäätös 6. Riskienhallinta, mukaan lukien korruptio ja eettiset kysymykset on sisällytetty toimeenpanoon, mutta ei riittävän systemaattisesti.</p>	<p>Suositus 8. Paikallisille kansalaisjärjestöille tulisi kanavoida lisää rahoitusta, mutta arvioiden huolellisesti niiden kohtaamia riskejä.</p>



Centrala iakttagelser, slutsatser och rekommendationer

IAKTTAGELSER	SLUTSATSER	REKOMMENDATIONER
<p>Iakttagelse 1: Finlands utvecklings- och människorättspolitiska ramverk har varit tydligt i linje med det breda demokratibegreppet och de huvudsakliga temana i "UM:s policy för demokratistöd".</p> <p>Iakttagelse 2: Finlands policy för demokrati, rättsstatens principer och mänskliga rättigheter har utgjort en stark grund för utrikesministeriets identitet och anseende inom dessa politikområden. De senaste policyförändringarna väcker dock oro för en försvagning av denna identitet.</p> <p>Iakttagelse 10: PPA3 positionerar Finland som en konstruktiv aktör i komplexa och föränderliga givarkonstellationer.</p> <p>Iakttagelse 17: Den främsta styrkan i Finlands stöd till mänskliga rättigheter, rättsstatens principer och demokrati ligger i dess autenticitet.</p> <p>Iakttagelse 18: Realism och acceptans av begränsningar, liksom ett fokus på gradvisa framsteg, ger Finlands arbete inom PPA3 en anpassningsbar karaktär.</p>	<p>Slutsats 1: Finlands komparativa fördel inom PPA3 ligger i dess värde- och regelbaserade identitet.</p>	<p>Rekommendation 1: Upprätthåll den framgångsrika profileringen av det huvudsakligen värde- och regelbaserade finländska stödet</p>
<p>Iakttagelse 2: Finlands policyram för demokrati, rättsstatens principer och mänskliga rättigheter har utgjort en stabil grund för utrikesministeriets identitet och anseende inom dessa områden. Policyförändringar under senare tid ger dock skäl att befara att denna identitet försvagas.</p> <p>Iakttagelse 3: Ett föränderligt demokratistöd har fokuserat på deltagande och på civilsamhället.</p> <p>Iakttagelse 4: Utrikesministeriets stöd till demokrati, rättsstatens principer och mänskliga rättigheter har hanterats av flera enheter vid UM i Helsingfors samt av ambassader, med en arbetsfördelning som har utvecklats över tid men som sammantaget bedöms vara effektiv.</p> <p>Iakttagelse 14: Stödet till civilsamhället har varit värdebaserat och strategiskt mycket relevant, men förändringar i den nationella och internationella kontexten kräver operativa anpassningar.</p> <p>Iakttagelse 16: Finansieringen av civilsamhället står inför både gamla och nya hållbarhetsutmaningar, men finländskt stöd kan fortsatt vara relevant samtidigt som nya, lokalt förankrade aktörer växer fram.</p> <p>Iakttagelse 17: Styrkan i Finlands stöd till mänskliga rättigheter, rättsstatens principer och demokrati ligger huvudsakligen i dess autenticitet.</p> <p>Iakttagelse 19: Finland hanterar sitt stöd till mänskliga rättigheter, demokrati och rättsstatens principer inom PPA3 på ett anpassningsinriktat sätt, men riskhantering integreras inte i tillräcklig utsträckning i insatserna.</p>	<p>Slutsats 2: Resursbegränsningar och förändringar i kontexten gör strategisk prioritering och ett ändamålsenligt utnyttjande av hävstångseffekter avgörande för att uppnå resultat.</p>	<p>Rekommendation 2: Undvik nedskärningar i stödet till demokrati, mänskliga rättigheter och rättsstatens principer med hänsyn till Finlands bredare politiska prioriteringar vad gäller de globala målen för hållbar utveckling, internationell säkerhet och handel.</p>



IAKTTAGELSER	SLUTSATSER	REKOMMENDATIONER
<p>lakttagelse 5: Konkreta resultat inom PPA3 är svåra att spåra, men det finns starka indikationer på bidrag till centrala resultatområden i förändringsteorin.</p> <p>lakttagelse 7: Analyser fokuserade på rättighetsbärare informerar, där sådana genomförs, programutformningen.</p> <p>lakttagelse 8: Programutformning och genomförande prioriterar stöd till rättighetsbärare.</p> <p>lakttagelse 12: Insatserna bidrar till mer deltagande och responsiv samhällsstyrning, ökad transparens samt starkare policyramverk, med förbättrad funktionell kapacitet i utvalda institutioner, men med begränsad evidens för systemreformer på nationell nivå.</p> <p>lakttagelse 13: Finlands insatser för god samhällsstyrning var mest effektiva där program kombinerade samverkan mellan flera aktörer, tidigt ägarskap från offentliga aktörer, långsiktigt engagemang samt integrering av samhällsstyrningsperspektiv i sektorprogram. Lärdomar har dock inte alltid spridits i tillräcklig utsträckning, och externa politiska och institutionella förändringar och risker har inte alltid beaktats tillräckligt.</p>	<p>Slutsats 3: Resultatkedjan inom PPA3 är tydlig, men svår att styrka.</p>	<p>Rekommendation 3: Justera resultat- och uppföljningsramverket inom utrikesministeriets förändringsteorier i enlighet med PPA3:s specifika förutsättningar.</p>
<p>lakttagelse 5: Konkreta resultat inom PPA3 är svåra att spåra, men det finns starka indikationer på bidrag till centrala resultatområden i förändringsteorin.</p> <p>lakttagelse 6: Resultaten inom PPA3 är samstämmiga under utfall 1, 2 och 3, vilka samverkar ömsesidigt; synergipotentialen i utfall 4 utnyttjas dock inte fullt ut</p> <p>lakttagelse 9: Gemensamma demokratiska värderingar och en mångfald av instrument främjar synergier mellan utrikesministeriets strukturer och deras partner, men finansiella nedskärningar och stora vidareförmedlande aktörers komplexa roll begränsar partnerskapens övergripande mervärde.</p> <p>lakttagelse 11: Insatser till stöd för institutioner och god samhällsstyrning är relevanta för målgrupperna, men samstämmigheten med Finlands förändringsteori varierar.</p> <p>lakttagelse 12: Insatserna bidrar till mer deltagande och responsiv samhällsstyrning, ökad transparens samt starkare policyramverk, med förbättrad funktionell kapacitet i utvalda institutioner, men med begränsad evidens för systemreformer på nationell nivå.</p> <p>lakttagelse 13: Finlands insatser för god samhällsstyrning var mest effektiva där program kombinerade samverkan mellan flera aktörer, tidigt ägarskap från offentliga aktörer, långsiktigt engagemang samt integrering av samhällsstyrningsperspektiv i sektorprogram. Lärdomar har dock inte alltid spridits i tillräcklig utsträckning, och externa politiska och institutionella förändringar och risker har inte alltid beaktats tillräckligt.</p> <p>lakttagelse 14: Stödet till civilsamhället har varit värdebaserat och strategiskt mycket relevant, men förändringar i den nationella och internationella kontexten kräver operativa anpassningar.</p> <p>lakttagelse 15: Insatser till stöd för civilsamhället visar oftast positiva resultat i stödet till rättighetsbärare, men i lägre grad avseende institutionell utveckling.</p> <p>lakttagelse 16: Finansieringen av civilsamhället står inför både gamla och nya hållbarhetsutmaningar, men finländskt stöd kan fortsatt vara relevant samtidigt som nya, lokalt förankrade aktörer växer fram.</p>	<p>Slutsats 4: Effektiviteten är högst när Finland fokuserar på kontextspecifika styrkor, synergier med partner och beprövade arbetssätt.</p>	<p>Rekommendation 4: Inom varje samarbetsland och på global nivå bör fokus ligga på styrkor och beprövade positiva erfarenheter.</p>



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<p>lakttagelse 14: Stödet till civilsamhället har varit värdebaserat och strategiskt mycket relevant, men förändringar i den nationella och internationella kontexten kräver operativa anpassningar.</p> <p>lakttagelse 15: Insatser till stöd för civilsamhället visar oftast positiva resultat i stödet till rättighetsbärare, men i lägre grad avseende institutionell utveckling</p> <p>lakttagelse 16: Finansieringen av civilsamhället står inför både gamla och nya hållbarhetsutmaningar, men finländskt stöd kan fortsatt vara relevant samtidigt som nya, lokalt förankrade aktörer växer fram.</p> <p>lakttagelse 18: Realism och acceptans av begränsningar, liksom ett fokus på gradvisa framsteg, ger Finlands arbete inom PPA3 en anpassningsbar karaktär.</p> <p>lakttagelse 19: Finland hanterar sitt stöd till mänskliga rättigheter, demokrati och rättsstatens principer inom PPA3 på ett anpassningsinriktat sätt, men riskhantering integreras inte i tillräcklig utsträckning i insatserna.</p>	<p>Slutsats 5: Hållbara resultat är möjliga när långsiktiga partnerskap och samlade snarare än isolerade insatser realiserar.</p>	<p>Rekommendation 5: Prioritera långsiktigt stöd framför punktinsatser.</p>
<p>lakttagelse 12: Insatserna bidrar till mer deltagande och responsiv samhällsstyrning, ökad transparens samt starkare policyramverk, med förbättrad funktionell kapacitet i utvalda institutioner, men med begränsad evidens för systemreformer på nationell nivå.</p> <p>lakttagelse 13: Finlands insatser för god samhällsstyrning var mest effektiva där program kombinerade samverkan mellan flera aktörer, tidigt ägarskap från offentliga aktörer, långsiktigt engagemang samt integrering av samhällsstyrningsperspektiv i sektorprogram. Lärdomar har dock inte alltid spridits i tillräcklig utsträckning, och externa politiska och institutionella förändringar och risker har inte alltid beaktats tillräckligt.</p> <p>lakttagelse 16: Finansieringen av civilsamhället står inför både gamla och nya hållbarhetsutmaningar, men finländskt stöd kan fortsatt vara relevant samtidigt som nya, lokalt förankrade aktörer växer fram.</p> <p>lakttagelse 17: Styrkan i Finlands stöd till mänskliga rättigheter, rättsstatens principer och demokrati ligger huvudsakligen i dess autenticitet.</p> <p>lakttagelse 18: Realism och acceptans av begränsningar, liksom ett fokus på gradvisa framsteg, ger Finlands arbete inom PPA3 en anpassningsbar karaktär.</p> <p>lakttagelse 19: Finland hanterar sitt stöd till mänskliga rättigheter, demokrati och rättsstatens principer inom PPA3 på ett anpassningsinriktat sätt, men riskhantering integreras inte i tillräcklig utsträckning i insatserna.</p>	<p>Slutsats 6: Riskhantering, inklusive korruptions- och integritetsrisker, är integrerad i genomförandet, men inte systematiskt.</p>	<p>Rekommendation 6: Förebygg och hantera korruptionsrelaterade risker.</p>
<p>lakttagelse 4: Utrikesministeriets stöd till demokrati, rättsstatens principer och mänskliga rättigheter har hanterats av flera enheter vid UM i Helsingfors samt av ambassader, med en arbetsfördelning som har utvecklats över tid men som sammantaget bedöms vara effektiv.</p> <p>lakttagelse 7: Analyser fokuserade på rättighetsbärare informerar, där sådana genomförs, programutformningen.</p> <p>lakttagelse 18: Realism och acceptans av begränsningar, liksom ett fokus på gradvisa framsteg, ger Finlands arbete inom PPA3 en anpassningsbar karaktär.</p> <p>lakttagelse 19: Finland hanterar sitt stöd till mänskliga rättigheter, demokrati och rättsstatens principer inom PPA3 på ett anpassningsinriktat sätt, men riskhantering integreras inte i tillräcklig utsträckning i insatserna.</p>	<p>Slutsats 7: Bibehållen kvalitet förutsätter förnyad styrning, kunskapsutveckling samt stärkt och vidmakthållen expertis inom utrikesministeriet och vid ambassaderna.</p>	<p>Rekommendation 7: Säkerställ att personalen vid utrikesministeriet har tillgång till uppdaterad och heltäckande vägledning om PPA3</p>



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<p>lakttagelse 5: Konkreta resultat inom PPA3 är svåra att spåra, men det finns starka indikationer på bidrag till centrala resultatområden i förändringsteorin.</p> <p>lakttagelse 14: Stödet till civilsamhället har varit värdebaserat och strategiskt mycket relevant, men förändringar i den nationella och internationella kontexten kräver operativa anpassningar.</p> <p>lakttagelse 16: Finansieringen av civilsamhället står inför både gamla och nya hållbarhetsutmaningar, men finländskt stöd kan fortsatt vara relevant samtidigt som nya, lokalt förankrade aktörer växer fram.</p> <p>lakttagelse 19: Finland hanterar sitt stöd till mänskliga rättigheter, demokrati och rättsstatens principer inom PPA3 på ett anpassningsinriktat sätt, men riskhantering integreras inte i tillräcklig utsträckning i insatserna.</p>	<p>Slutsats 2: Resursbegränsningar och förändringar i kontexten gör strategisk prioritering och ett ändamålsenligt utnyttjande av hävstångseffekter avgörande för att uppnå resultat.</p> <p>Slutsats 6: Riskhantering, inklusive korruptions- och integritetsrisker, är integrerad i genomförandet, men inte systematiskt.</p>	<p>Rekommendation 8: Kanalisera mer finansiering till lokala civilsamhällesorganisationer, men utvärdera noggrant de risker de står inför.</p>



Key Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

FINDINGS	CONCLUSIONS	RECOMMENDATIONS
<p>Finding 1: Finland’s development and human rights policy frameworks have been clearly aligned with the broad concept of democracy and the main themes of the “MFA’s Democracy Support Policy”</p> <p>Finding 2: Finland’s policy framework on democracy, the rule of law and human rights has provided a strong basis for the MFA’s identity and reputation in these policy areas. However, the recent policy changes raise concerns about the weakening of this identity.</p> <p>Finding 10: PPA3 positions Finland as a constructive player in complex and changing donor constellations</p> <p>Finding 17: The key strength of Finland’s support to human rights, rule of law, and democracy lies in its authenticity.</p> <p>Finding 18: Realism and the acceptance of limitations, as well as progressive change, lend Finland’s work in PPA3 an adaptive character.</p>	<p>Conclusion 1: Finland’s comparative advantage in PPA3 is its value- and rule-based identity.</p>	<p>Recommendation 1: Maintain the successful branding of chiefly value-based and rule-based Finnish support.</p>
<p>Finding 2: Finland’s policy framework on democracy, the rule of law and human rights has provided a strong basis for the MFA’s identity and reputation in these policy areas. However, the recent policy changes raise concerns about the weakening of this identity.</p> <p>Finding 3: Fluctuating democracy support has placed emphasis on participation and civil society.</p> <p>Finding 4: The MFA’s support for democracy, the rule of law and human rights has been managed and implemented by several MFA HQ departments and embassies, with an evolving but overall effective division of labour.</p> <p>Finding 14: Support to civil society has been value-based and strategically highly relevant, but changes in the national and international context necessitate operational adjustments.</p> <p>Finding 16: Funding of civil society is facing old and new sustainability challenges, yet Finnish funding and support? can remain relevant as new, endemic actors emerge</p> <p>Finding 17: The key strength of Finland’s support to human rights, rule of law, and democracy lies in its authenticity.</p> <p>Finding 19: Finland manages its support to human rights, democracy, and rule of law within PPA 3 adaptively, but it does not sufficiently inform it with risk management.</p>	<p>Conclusion 2: Resource constraints and contextual shifts make strategic prioritisation and smart leverage decisive for impact.</p>	<p>Recommendation 2: Avoid resource cuts in support to democracy, human rights, and the rule of law in the interest of Finland’s wider policy priorities on SDGs, international security, and trade.</p>



FINDINGS	CONCLUSIONS	RECOMMENDATIONS
<p>Finding 5: Tangible results in PPA3 are difficult to trace, but there are strong indications of contribution to key result areas of the Theory of Change (ToC).</p> <p>Finding 7: Rights holder-focused analysis, when performed, directly feeds into programming.</p> <p>Finding 8: Programming and delivery prioritise rights holder support.</p> <p>Finding 12: Interventions contributed to more participatory and responsive governance, increased transparency, and stronger policy frameworks, with gains in functional capacity in selected institutions but limited evidence of national-level systemic reform.</p> <p>Finding 13: Finland's good governance interventions were most effective where programmes combined multistakeholder engagement, early government buy-in, sustained engagement, and governance mainstreaming in sector programmes. However, lessons learned were not always widely shared, and external political and institutional changes and risks were not always sufficiently considered.</p>	<p>Conclusion 3: The results chain in PPA3 is tangible, but hard to evidence.</p>	<p>Recommendation 3: Adjust the results and performance framework under the MFA Theories of Change to the specificities of PPA3</p>
<p>Finding 5: Tangible results in PPA3 are difficult to trace, but there are strong indications of contribution to key result areas of the ToC.</p> <p>Finding 6: PPA3 results are coherent under Outcomes 1, 2, and 3, which are synergetic; however, the synergetic potential of Outcome 4 is underused.</p> <p>Finding 9: Shared democratic values and the diversity of instruments foster synergies between MFA structures and their partners, though funding cuts and double-edged role of large intermediaries curtail the high-level benefits of partnerships.</p> <p>Finding 11: Interventions supporting institutions and good governance have been relevant to target groups, but alignment with Finland's ToC is uneven.</p> <p>Finding 12: Interventions contributed to more participatory and responsive governance, increased transparency, and stronger policy frameworks, with gains in functional capacity in selected institutions but limited evidence of national level systemic reform.</p> <p>Finding 13: Finland's good governance interventions were most effective where programmes combined multistakeholder engagement, early government buy-in, sustained engagement, and governance mainstreaming in sector programmes. However, lessons learned were not always widely shared and external political and institutional changes and risks were not always sufficiently considered.</p> <p>Finding 14: Support to civil society has been value-based, and strategically highly relevant, but changes in the national and international context necessitate operational adjustments.</p> <p>Finding 15: Actions in support of civil society have usually shown positive outcomes in terms of ability to support rights holders – less so in terms of institutional development.</p> <p>Finding 16: Funding of civil society is facing old and new sustainability challenges, yet Finnish can remain relevant as new endemic actors emerge</p>	<p>Conclusion 4: Effectiveness is highest when Finland focuses on context-specific strengths, partner synergy, and proven modalities.</p>	<p>Recommendation 4: Within each country of intervention and at global level, focus on strengths and positive precedents.</p>



FINDINGS	CONCLUSIONS	RECOMMENDATIONS
<p>Finding 14: Support to civil society has been value-based, and strategically highly relevant, but changes in the national and international context necessitate operational adjustments</p> <p>Finding 15: Actions in support of civil society have usually shown positive outcomes in terms of ability to support rights holders – less so in terms of institutional development</p> <p>Finding 16: Sustainability of civil society support is increasingly problematic, but new endemic actors emerge</p> <p>Finding 18: Realism and the acceptance of limitations as well as commitment to progressive change lends Finland's work in PPA3 an adaptive character.</p> <p>Finding 19: Finland manages its support to human rights, democracy, and rule of law within PPA 3 adaptively, but it does not sufficiently inform it with risk management</p>	<p>Conclusion 5: Sustainable outcomes are feasible when long-term partnerships and comprehensive rather than isolated interventions materialise.</p>	<p>Recommendation 5: Prioritise long-term support over punctual interventions.</p>
<p>Finding 12: Interventions contributed to more participatory and responsive governance, increased transparency, and stronger policy frameworks, with gains in functional capacity in selected institutions but limited evidence of national-level systemic reform.</p> <p>Finding 13: Finland's good governance interventions were most effective where programmes combined multistakeholder engagement, early government buy-in, sustained engagement, and governance mainstreaming in sector programmes. However, lessons learned were not always widely shared and external political and institutional changes and risks were not always sufficiently considered.</p> <p>Finding 16: Sustainability of civil society support is increasingly problematic, but new endemic actors emerge.</p> <p>Finding 17: The key strength of Finland's support to human rights, rule of law, and democracy lies in its authenticity</p> <p>Finding 18: Realism and the acceptance of limitations as well as commitment to progressive change lends Finland's work in PPA3 an adaptive character.</p> <p>Finding 19: Finland manages its support to human rights, democracy, and rule of law within PPA 3 adaptively, but it does not sufficiently inform it with risk management</p>	<p>Conclusion 6: Risk management, including corruption and integrity risks, is embedded in delivery, but not systematically.</p>	<p>Recommendation 6: Prevent and correct risks related to corruption.</p>
<p>Finding 4: The MFA's support for democracy, the rule of law and human rights has been managed and implemented by several MFA HQ departments and Embassies, with an evolving but overall effective division of labour.</p> <p>Finding 7: Rights holder-focused analysis, where it is performed, directly feeds into programming.</p> <p>Finding 18: Realism and the acceptance of limitations as well as commitment to progressive change lends Finland's work in PPA3 an adaptive character.</p> <p>Finding 19: Finland manages its support to human rights, democracy, and rule of law within PPA 3 adaptively, but it does not sufficiently inform it with risk management.</p>	<p>Conclusion 7: Sustaining quality requires renewed guidance, learning products and sustaining/building expertise across MFA and Embassies.</p>	<p>Recommendation 7: Equip MFA staff with updated and comprehensive guidance on PPA3.</p>
<p>Finding 5: Tangible results in PPA3 are difficult to trace, but there are strong indications of contribution to key result areas of the ToC.</p> <p>Finding 14: Support to civil society has been value-based, and strategically highly relevant, but changes in the national and international context necessitate operational adjustments.</p> <p>Finding 16: Sustainability of civil society support is increasingly problematic, but new endemic actors emerge.</p> <p>Finding 19: Finland manages its support to human rights, democracy, and rule of law within PPA 3 adaptively, but it does not sufficiently inform it with risk management.</p>	<p>Conclusion 2: Resource constraints and contextual shifts make strategic prioritisation and smart leverage decisive for impact.</p> <p>Conclusion 6: Risk management, including corruption and integrity risks, is embedded in delivery, but not systematically.</p>	<p>Recommendation 8: Channel more funding to local CSOs but evaluate the risks they are facing carefully.</p>

1 Introduction

1.1 Purposes and objectives

The Terms of Reference (ToR, provided in Appendix 1) for the evaluation listed three key purposes and five objectives for this evaluation. Firstly, the purpose of the evaluation was to provide the MFA with general information on the implementation of the support for democracy and rule of law, using the 2014 “Ministry for Foreign Affairs democracy support policy” as a starting point (MFA, 2014). Secondly, it sought to assess the achievements and results as well as challenges of the result area “Peaceful democratic societies”, drawing on the “Theories of Change and Aggregate Indicators for Finland’s Development Policy” (MFA, 2020; MFA, 2023). Thirdly, the evaluation aimed to offer evidence-based recommendations for future directions that Finland should consider when engaging with this theme. The first and second purposes contributed to achieving the third purpose: providing well-founded recommendations. The relationship between these purposes and the five listed objectives is summarised in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. Evaluation purposes in connection with the objectives



Source: ToR.

According to the ToR, the evaluation was expected to provide answers for both accountability and learning purposes. This said, the accent was placed on learning, with some formative questions aimed at informing decision-making by the evaluation users. The main users of the evaluation were various units and departments in the MFA that manage development cooperation, democracy support, and/or the rule of law. The secondary users included the Development Policy Committee (DPC) as well as other government ministries and institutions. Similarly, different partners, actors and stakeholders are likely to find the results useful. The evaluation also aimed to produce useful information for private sector actors who are considering engagement in this area.

Serving these purposes and objectives, the evaluation comprised five Evaluation Questions (EQs):

- EQ1: How is the implementation of the support for democracy, rule of law and human rights **organised** in the MFA?



- EQ 2: What **results**, including any realised or emerging impact, has Finland generated in the result area “Peaceful democratic societies” as a whole during the period under evaluation?
- EQ 3: How has Finland **promoted strengthening institutions and good governance**, and what kind of **successes and/or challenges** have there been in achieving the objectives set for this sub-theme?
- EQ 4: How has Finland promoted strong **civil societies**, and what kind of successes and/or challenges have there been in achieving the objectives set for this sub-theme?
- EQ 5: How can Finland execute activities in the result area “Peaceful democratic societies” in a more **relevant, effective and sustainable way in the next five years and beyond**?

Annex 3 outlines the coverage of each EQ.

1.2 Evaluation scope

The following subsection outlines the temporal, geographic, institutional, and thematic parameters guiding this evaluation as defined in the ToR (see Appendix 1).

The **temporal scope** encompassed the decade between 2014 and 2024.

The **geographic scope** was global, with a deep dive focusing on one country (Nepal).

The **institutional scope** encompassed actions undertaken by the MFA, excluding those by any other entity operating outside of the realm of the MFA’s mandate. In addition, the evaluation did not assess the performance of individual projects, organisations or partners; instead, it focused on the overall contribution of the MFA as a whole.

The **thematic scope** was complex and comprehensive, encompassing a range of sub-topics outlined in the ToR:

- Human rights, both in title and among cross-cutting objectives. As per the ToR “Human rights are not in the centre of this evaluation and are mainly covered by utilizing the MFA’s Human-Rights Based Approach [HRBA] evaluation”. Human rights were therefore addressed by drawing on the 2023 evaluation of the HRBA conducted for the Finnish MFA (Christoplos, et al., 2023), supplemented with additional data assembled by the team (see below 2.2.1 Data collection methods).
- Democracy and good governance
- Rule of law
- Non-discrimination and gender equality as cross-cutting objectives (in addition to human rights above).



This delineation did not exactly reproduce the sub-themes of “**Peaceful and Democratic Societies**” (Policy Priority Area [PPA] 3)¹, which are as follows:

- 1) Peaceful, stable and just societies
- 2) Strengthening institutions and promoting good governance
- 3) Possibility to participation for all and strong civil societies
- 4) Transparent and equal domestic resource mobilisation (DRM) (i.e. taxation) systems

The ToR pitched these sub-topics at several levels (individual/community, organisational/institutional, societal/policy), engaging multiple stakeholders from Finland, as well as various departments within the MFA itself. Six different aid instruments/modalities were included.

An initial analysis of the policy documents, combined with close consultation and collaboration with EVA-11 at MFA during the kick-off stage in April 2025, enabled the evaluation team to narrow down and crystallise the thematic scope. This is described in greater detail in 2.1 Evaluation Approach.

The **full thematic scope** of the evaluation focused on the priority area of PPA3 (See Figure 2 below). The conceptual framework of democracy, human rights and the rule of law helped to frame the set of thematic areas and cross-cutting objectives (CCOs) outlined in the ToR, in line with existing MFA policy documents. The evaluation’s full scope therefore, covered all sub-themes in PPA3, through the lens of human rights, democracy and rule of law, as reflected in the title of the evaluation. There was a particular focus on the sub-themes of “Strengthening institutions and promoting good governance” and “Opportunities for participation for all and a strong civil society”, as well as on existing and newly collected data at a level above individual projects, relating to PPA3 as a whole. Where possible, analysis also included the sub-themes “Peaceful, stable and just societies” and “Transparent and equal DRM”. Accordingly, the evaluation’s **“full portfolio” included all financing decisions that were directly relevant to PPA3, at the exclusion of education projects**, in line with the ToR.

In addition, the **CCOs outlined in the ToR**, gender equality and non-discrimination, were integrated into the data collection and analysis. Within this scope, the ToR specified: “The sub-theme 1, Peaceful, stable and just societies, is not in the centre of this evaluation but is part of the overall analysis of the results area.” Similarly, sub-theme 4, relating to DRM, was addressed by drawing on the MFA’s evaluation “Finland’s Initiatives Focused on Enhanced DRM”. Furthermore, the MFA had requested that education-related funding decisions be excluded from the evaluation’s scope and corresponding portfolio, even if they were tagged in the MFA’s database as relevant to PPA 3, because they were more directly implementing another PPA.

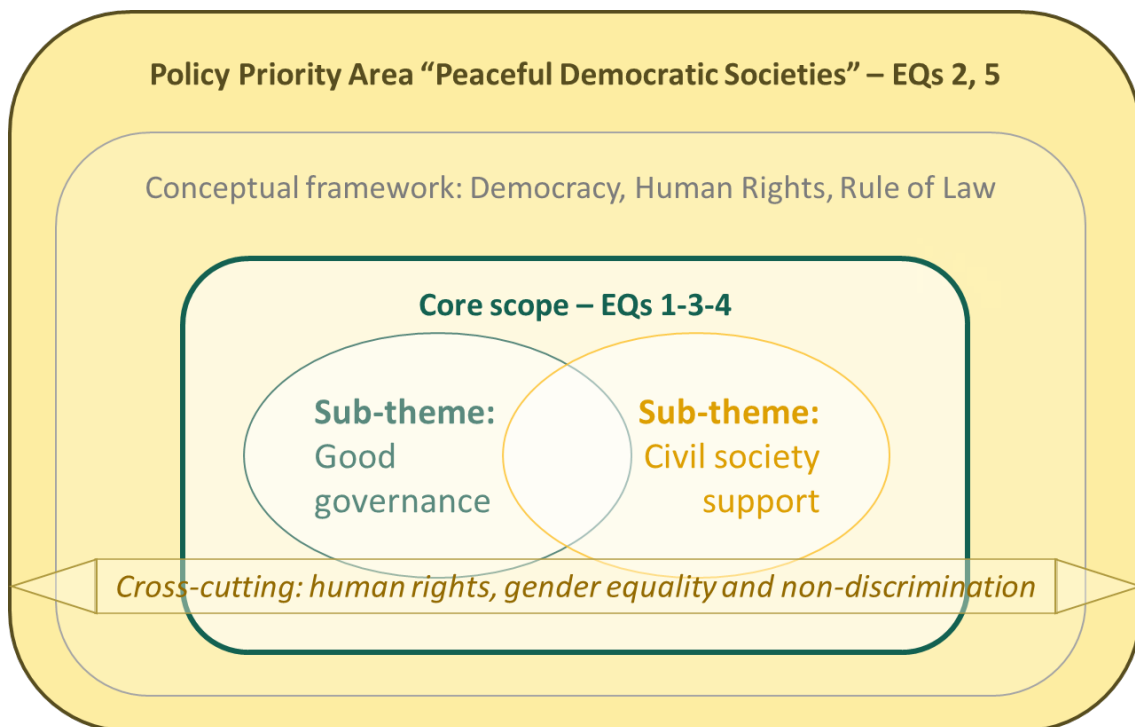
The ToR specified that “Since the concept of support for democracy, rule of law and human rights is extremely wide, this evaluation focused only on certain aspects of it “. Within the full scope, the **core scope** of the evaluation centred on **two sub-themes** within the results area “Peaceful and Democratic Societies”: Institutions and Good Governance and Participation and Civil Society. Accordingly, the portfolio of financing decisions has been categorised as **“core portfolio”, including all projects directly relevant to these sub-themes**, and **“full portfolio”**, which included

¹ Finland’s development policy is structured around five Policy Priority Areas (PPAs), each focusing on a key theme or sector, such as Rights of women and girls; Quality inclusive education; Peaceful and democratic societies; Sustainable economies and decent work; and Climate change and natural resources (MFA, 2023).



all projects directly relevant to the entirety of PPA 3. The evaluation was not limited to these two sub-themes and the “core scope” and its “core portfolio”; rather, it gave them particular attention, as they had not benefited from a dedicated thematic evaluation recently and required extra effort in terms of primary data collection. Each of these sub-themes was addressed by its respective EQ, namely EQs 3 and 4, and further informed by a description of the MFA’s labour division on these themes under EQ 1 (See Evaluation Matrix in Annex 3). The cross-cutting themes of human rights, gender equality and non-discrimination were mainstreamed across both sub-themes. To inform this conceptual framework, the evaluation team used the “Ministry for Foreign Affairs’ democracy support policy” as a starting point.

Figure 2. Overview of the evaluation’s thematic scope



Source: Evaluation team’s elaboration based on ToR, portfolio review, and interviews.

Concretely, EQs 2 and 5 synthesise the findings of EQs 1, 3 and 4, alongside insights on PPA3, drawing on both secondary evidence (relevant past evaluations and publications) and feasible primary data. Thus, following a description of how Finland structures its inputs (EQ 1), EQs 3 and 4 provide an in-depth analysis of outputs in the sub-themes of good governance and civil society, while EQ 2 examines Finland’s contribution to peaceful democratic societies through recognised outcomes, building on EQs 3-4, as well as existing evidence with additional PPA3-relevant data. EQ 5 then highlight the learnings and broader implications for the sustainability and added value of Finland’s action on PPA3, with a forward-looking perspective. EQs 2 and 5 therefore build on EQs 1, 3, and 4, and extend the analysis with additional data.

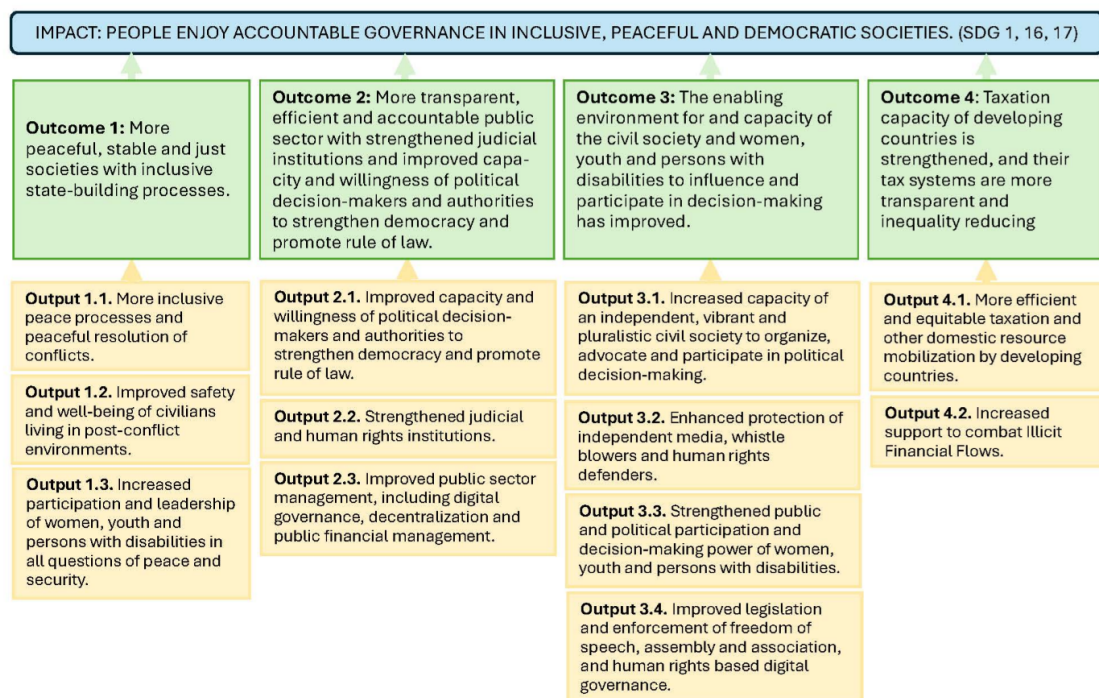


2 Approach, Methodology and Limitations

2.1 Evaluation Approach

The evaluation applied a participatory, utilisation-focused and theory-based approach, agreed with EVA 11 during inception (April-August 2025). The team used the existing Theory of Change (ToC) for the policy priority area Peaceful democratic societies (Figure 3) as the analytical backbone, and reconstructed the ToC of the Evaluation by zooming into the outcomes 2 and 3 (See Figure 4 below). This reconstruction was refined through scoping interviews, review of policy documents, portfolio analysis, and iterative exchanges with the Reference Group.

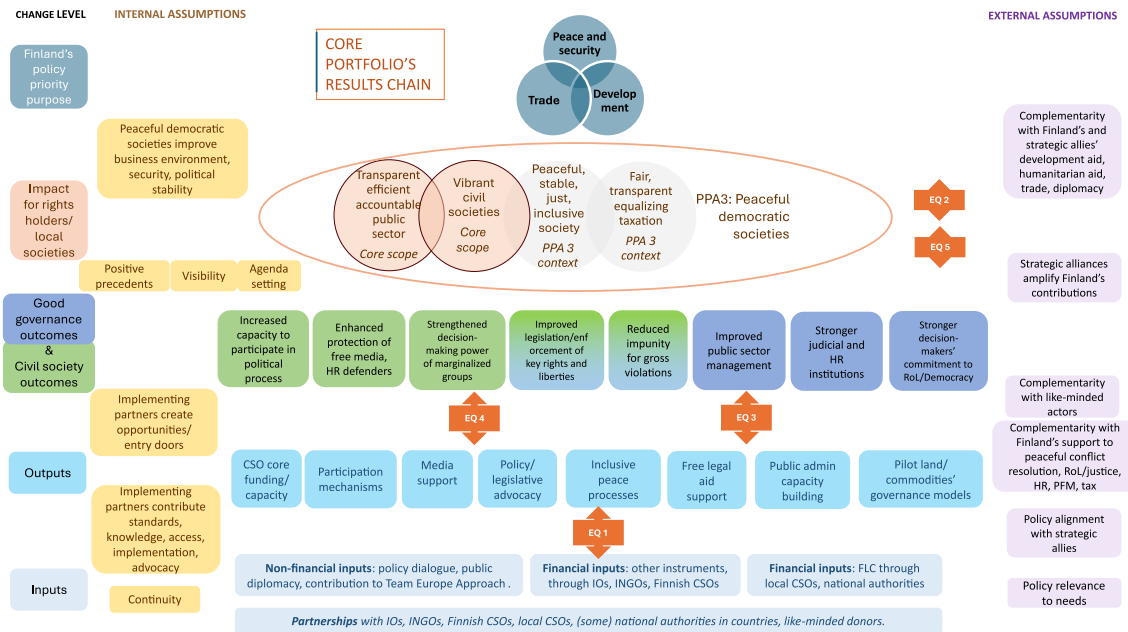
Figure 3: Results logic in MFA's Theory of Change for the Policy Priority Area of Peaceful democratic societies



Source: Evaluation team's elaboration.



Figure 4: Reconstructed ToC for the sub-themes “Good Governance” and “Civil Society”



Source: Evaluation team's elaboration.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 Data collection methods

Data collection combined three main sources:

1. Document review, including project documentation, Country Programme (CP) materials, policy documents, earlier thematic and intervention-level evaluations, and grey literature;
2. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) at global, regional, and country levels;
3. Quantitative portfolio analysis of all funding decisions under PPA3;

Sampling followed a layered approach. First, the team reconstructed the full PPA3 evaluation universe of 534 interventions after cleaning and validating MFA and OpenAid data. A sub-corpus of 394 interventions related to the sub-themes of “Institutions and Good Governance” and Participation and Civil Society” was identified. Within this, 251 interventions above €125,000 formed the basis for sampling, reducing overrepresentation of small LCF projects.

From these, the evaluation team, together with the Reference Group, selected an extended sample of 30 projects, ensuring balance across instruments, delivery channels, thematic relevance, geographic spread, and financial size. These projects formed the core for more intensive document and interview-based analysis. In addition to the extended sample, interviews and document review were also conducted on the Nepal deep dive with a total of 12 projects.



2.2.2 Mainstreaming HRBA and cross-cutting objectives (CCOs)

The evaluation applied a human rights-based approach (HRBA), systematically examining participation, inclusion, non-discrimination, transparency and accountability. Both HRBA and CCOs (gender equality and non-discrimination) were mainstreamed throughout sampling, interviewee selection, interview questions, data analysis and presentation of evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations. In the analysis, rights-holders and duty-bearers were systematically identified and it was assessed how the intervention had strengthened their ability and capacity of rights-holders to claim their rights and duty-bearers to respect, protect, and fulfil human rights. In Nepal, efforts were made to hear from organisations representing women, persons with disabilities, and other marginalised groups. Where direct interviews were not possible, consultations were held with organisations representing these groups.

2.2.3 Data collection

Data collection tools

Based on the evaluation matrix and on the review of documentation, the evaluation team elaborated semi-structured interview protocols for the following categories of respondents, respectively:

- MFA staff
- National authorities in partner countries
- National and local CSOs, academia, and media
- International and Finnish Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), multilateral organisations
- Others, e.g., other donors, experts.

Nepal country deep dive

Fieldwork in Nepal involved in-person and online interviews with **71 interviewees representing 30 different actors**, including national and local authorities, civil society organisations (CSOs), National Human Rights Institution, media actors, Finnish CSOs, Delegation of the European Union (EU), implementing organisations, and the Finnish Embassy. The country deep dive covered **12 PPA3 relevant projects**, irrespective of funding size, generating a comprehensive picture of how Finland's support to governance and civil society unfolds in practice across multiple levels.

Global and cross-country data collection

Beyond Nepal, the team conducted 52 in-depth KIIs, distributed as follows: 22 from the Finnish MFA and embassies; 10 from Finnish CSOs; 7 from agencies of the United Nations (UN); 4 from international Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs); 4 from organisations in partner countries; 3 from other Finnish organisations; 2 from other inter-governmental organisations. These interviews covered a range of countries represented in the extended sample, including, for example, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Myanmar, Kyrgyzstan, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Western Balkans, and Central America, depending on the stakeholders' availability. Interviews were semi-structured and



focused on tracing change, identifying enabling and hindering factors, and understanding Finland's added value.

In total, the evaluation consulted **123 interviewees** (see Annex 7). 64 of the interviewees were women, and 59 were men.

2.2.4 Data Analysis

The analysis was structured around the ToC framework, using contribution analysis to assess how Finland's interventions, together with those of its partners and the influence of contextual dynamics, contributed to the outcomes observed. For this purpose, the evaluation team combined qualitative and quantitative analysis, both based off the evaluation matrix.

From the start of the evaluation, quantitative analysis on the portfolio's meta-data was used to examine funding trends, geographic shifts, delivery channels, and thematic allocations over time.

For qualitative analysis, the team designed a coding tree in MAXQDA through a collaborative process, using both inductive and deductive approaches: firstly, it elaborated codes on inputs, outputs, and outcomes, based off the evaluation matrix' indicators, as well as tags per sampled project/Nepal project/general level; secondly, it tested these on a small number of documents and interviews; thirdly, it cleaned and simplified the coding tree and added codes on key factors of success deduced from tested documents/interviews. Qualitative data (all interviews, project documents, evaluation reports) were coded by the entire team using MAXQDA, allowing systematic identification of recurring themes and patterns, and linking data to different indicators. Each Team member coded the documents and interviews related to a package of projects, plus general-level interviews. This enabled each team member to have a view on the entire evaluation matrix, for the projects it led on. The team then extracted coding results per project, and at the general level, and senior each team member took the lead on analysing extraction on one EQ.

Based on qualitative analysis (through coding) and quantitative analysis (portfolio), the team elaborated emerging findings at the level of the evaluation universe. In parallel, the team elaborated findings specific to the Nepal deep dive. We validated each set of findings, first within the team through an iterative dialogue, then with the client (respectively the Evaluation Reference Group, and the Embassy in Nepal jointly with the Evaluation Section). The team then convened a series of final validation workshops (one workshop per EQ): under each emerging finding, it confirmed, contrasted, and nuanced key statements and the evidence basis, as well as lessons learned, good practices, illustrative quotes and examples. Only then did each EQ lead proceed with drafting the report's text. The report's text was then submitted back to the entire team for cross-check an enrichment or contrasting with additional evidence and illustration.

The final evaluation report presents the outcome of this analysis. It enriched it with quotes, examples, lessons learned, and good practices. Quotes and examples are illustrative, and they were selected as representative encapsulations of already triangulated findings and sub-findings. They should not be understood as isolated perceptions or practices. Quotes reflect widespread opinions: they were chosen based on the clarity of an interviewee's encapsulation of what many expressed. All quotes were reviewed for confidentiality (no name, institution/MFA unit, or country identified). The presented examples mirror recurrent observations which proved prominent in coding analysis.



Note: Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The evaluation team used the MFA's OpenEval tool to identify and extract relevant sections from publicly available evaluation reports, and GOPA's GDPR-compliant internal Artificial Intelligence (AI) assistant (ChatGPT-4.1-based) exclusively for the translation of publicly available documents. Automated transcription software (Fireflies) was used for selected interviews, with all transcripts subsequently reviewed by the evaluation team for accuracy. All AI use adhered to the MFA and GOPA policies on generative AI, meaning no confidential, personal or sensitive data were entered into AI tools, and all AI-generated outputs were critically reviewed and validated by human experts. Machine learning was not used in this evaluation.

2.2.5 Limitations

The limitations were modest. In line with the ToR, the evaluation included fieldwork in only one country; however, this was mitigated by conducting broad global interviews and drawing on extensive secondary evidence, including previous project and strategic evaluations published by the MFA, academic articles and evaluations on the thematic areas originating from outside the MFA, and contextual publications by other donors (e.g. EU, OECD) and international NGOs. Staff rotation in embassies and partner organisations affected institutional memory, but other available data helped compensate for this. Documentation quality varied across projects and years, affecting comparability. In some cases, it was not possible to estimate precisely the level of funding in EU programmes. Gaps in the availability of project evaluation reports, final reports, or clear results-based monitoring in general, together with the broad heterogeneity among the sampled projects in general, were the core reasons for not being able to use qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) in the evaluation as was originally planned. Robust QCA requires comparable, well-specified, and systematically collected information. For this reason, we relied more extensively on the qualitative analysis conducted by the team using the MAXQDA software as a tool for systematic coding of the evaluation data. Although this did not allow for the same type of configurational comparison as QCA, thanks to a large sample of projects and general interviews, this analysis provided in-depth insights into recurring themes, patterns, and relationships within the data. No other major deviations from the original methodology occurred. The qualitative content analysis approach therefore enabled us to capture the complexity of the cases and draw meaningful conclusions.



3 Context Analysis

3.1 Support for Democracy, the Rule of Law and Human Rights in Finland's Foreign and Development Policies

Commitment to promoting democracy, the rule of law and human rights, including support to good governance and civil society, has been visible in Finland's development policy and cooperation since the 1990s (Eskelinen, Karhu, & Remes, 2024; Christoplos, et al., 2023; MFA, 2001). In 2012, this commitment was further strengthened in Finland's Development Policy Programme, which underlined the role of the development policy in promoting the related goals of Finland's foreign and security policy and defined a democratic and accountable society that promotes human rights as one of its four priority areas (MFA, 2012). Furthermore, the Programme included for the first time an explicit commitment to the HRBA to development in all development activities. These commitments were subsequently supported by the adoption of the MFA "Democracy Support Policy" (MFA, 2014) that has formed an important basis for Finland's related policy development and implementation, as well as the "HRBA in Finland's Development Cooperation Guidance Note" (MFA, 2015). Also, the updated "Guidelines for Civil Society in Development Policy" (MFA, 2017) further defined the role of civil society support in Finland's efforts to promote peaceful participation of citizens in society and the realisation of human rights.

The **2014 Democracy Support Policy** states that democracy, encompassing the rule of law, human rights, good governance, and anti-corruption, should be promoted due to its importance for "social development, conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction work" (MFA, 2014). More specifically, Finland's support should focus on the following main themes:

- Promoting the political and economic participation (including the development of societies and conflict resolution) of women and groups that are vulnerable, easily marginalised and subject to discrimination.
- Supporting/reinforcing conditions for civil society, particularly through support for defenders of human rights (including whistleblowers).
- Supporting the development of rule of law, good governance of public institutions and mechanisms, anti-corruption measures, free and fair elections, conditions for parliaments, and multi-party systems.

The Democracy Support Policy also emphasises that, in choosing the modes of implementation for Finnish democracy support, the effectiveness and impact of the support are crucial considerations. Additionally, the policy highlights the importance of assessing the added value generated by Finland's activities, ensuring complementarity with Finland's other initiatives, and considering Finland's ability to exert influence, particularly when support is channelled through international organisations (MFA, 2014).



In line with Finland's foreign and security policy (Finnish Government, 2016; Finnish Government, 2020), Finland's commitment to democracy, the rule of law and human rights was reconfirmed in the following development policy reports (MFA, 2016a; Finnish Government, 2021) as guiding values and goals for development cooperation. While similar priority areas had already been included in the earlier development policy programmes and reports, the Report on "Development Policy Extending Across Parliamentary Terms" (Finnish Government, 2021), together with the "Theories of Change and Aggregate Indicators for Finland's Development Policy" (MFA, 2023) developed a more structured approach to the promotion of peaceful democratic societies as a thematic PPA. The latter document maps contribution links from input to impact for Finland's five PPAs, including Peaceful democratic societies.

The 2024 Government report on Finnish foreign and security policy reflects a significant shift in Finland's external security environment following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The report positions sustainable development and peace promotion firmly into a broader security framework, but it notes that the objectives of development cooperation will continue to be based on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It also recognises that a well-functioning democracy, the rule of law, human rights and a vibrant civil society are prerequisites for sustainable social development and security. It states that, "Supporting peace, stability, democracy and development is important with a view to the prosperity and living conditions of people living in developing countries [...] and to enhance security in Europe and Finland." (Finnish Government, 2024a).

The 2024 Government Report on International Economic Relations and Development Cooperation continues to underline that development cooperation is an integral part of Finland's foreign and security policy and notes that "A well-functioning democracy, the rule of law, human rights and a vibrant civil society are the prerequisites for sustainable social development that Finland supports" (Finnish Government, 2024b). It also stresses the importance of a vibrant civil society and states that Finland's development cooperation should shift from bilateral CPs to Finnish CSOs. However, an increased emphasis is given to using development funding to support trade and leverage private capital. The report also introduces explicit conditionalities, stating that development cooperation is conditional on supporting the rules-based order and facilitating the readmission of nationals. Administrations and actors supporting the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine will not receive support. An increasing share of all development cooperation activities will focus on Ukraine. (Finnish Government, 2024b)

Further analysis on the implementation of Finland's support for democracy, the rule of law and human rights and related policy development can be found in Annex 6 "Portfolio analysis".

3.2 International policy context

Finland's development policies and the applied broad concept of democracy support have been largely in line with the international policy frameworks and related developments in this thematic area including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs, and the EU development policies.

The 2030 Agenda underlines democracy, good governance and the rule of law as prerequisites for sustainable development, including sustained and inclusive economic growth, social development, environmental protection and the eradication of poverty and hunger. In line with the broad concept of democracy, it recognises "the need to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies that



provide equal access to justice and that are based on respect for human rights (including the right to development), on effective rule of law and good governance at all levels and on transparent, effective and accountable institutions”, and notes that factors giving rise to violence, insecurity and injustice, such as inequality, corruption, poor governance and illicit financial and arms flows, are addressed in the 2023 Agenda (The 2030 Agenda). It also emphasises the responsibilities of all States to respect, protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, and underlines women’s and girls’ economic and political participation, and equal opportunities for leadership and decision-making at all levels.

While the concepts of democracy and human rights are less explicitly reflected in the SDGs and their targets compared to those in those in the 2030 Agenda, the key elements of support for democracy, the rule of law and human rights are included in them. Especially the SDG 16 on peaceful and inclusive societies and the SDG 5 on gender equality and the SDG 10 on reduced inequalities include specific targets largely covering the main themes in Finland’s Democracy Support Policy (MFA, 2014) and the PPA3.

SDG targets directly related to support for democracy, the rule of law and human rights

SDG 16 on peaceful and inclusive societies: promoting the rule of law and equal access to justice for all; reduction of corruption and bribery; development of effective, accountable and transparent institutions; ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making, access to information and protection of fundamental freedoms; promotion and enforcement of non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development.

SDG 5 on gender equality: ensuring women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life; adopting and strengthening of sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

SDG 10 on reduced inequalities: promoting the social, economic and political inclusion of all; ensuring equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action.

In the European Union, the legal responsibility to support democracy, human rights and the rule of law in EU’s international relations is stipulated in the Article 21 of the Treaty on European Union on the Union’s External Action. The Article 21 defines democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law as principles guiding Union’s action on the international scene. It states that the “Union shall define and pursue common policies and actions, and work for a high degree of cooperation in all fields of international relations in order to (...) consolidate and support democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the principles of international law, and to preserve peace, prevent conflicts and strengthen international security”. The Article also promotes policy coherence by stating that the Union shall respect the above noted principles and objectives in the development and implementation of the different areas of the Union’s external action. (Official Journal 115, 09/05/2008 P. 0028-0029)



In line with this legal basis, the importance of human rights, democracy and the rule of law as prerequisites for sustainable peace, development and prosperity are underlined in the key **EU development policy documents**. The EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy (2015-2019) outlined that sustainable peace, development and prosperity are possible only when grounded in respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law, and that EU development actions require systematically integrating a rights-based approach, encompassing all human rights (EU, 2015). The 2016 EU Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy further confirmed the EU's commitment to a rules-based international order, which ensures human rights and sustainable development (EU, 2016). The new European Consensus on Development "Our World, Our Dignity, Our Future", adopted in 2017 as the EU response to the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs outlines that human rights, democracy, the rule of law and good governance are essential preconditions to achieve sustainable development and long-term stability (European Parliament, Council, European Commission, 2017). The current EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2027 reconfirms EU's commitment to a rights-based approach to development cooperation, and comprehensively covers the different elements of MFA's ToC for PPA3 under the headings on "protecting and empowering individuals, building resilient, inclusive and democratic societies, promoting a global system for human rights and democracy, and new technologies: harnessing opportunities and addressing challenges." (EU, 2024).

3.3 International trends and practices

Finland's development policy and cooperation are influenced by global shifts and trends in development cooperation, reflecting changes in public opinion regarding global solidarity, economic justice, and international security challenges. While the operating contexts are increasingly challenging, Finnish development policy and cooperation can benefit from international insights and lessons learned in the field. The below described trends and practices have formed a foundation for reflecting on the effectiveness of the Finnish support for democracy, the rule of law and human rights in local and global contexts with emphasis on good governance and civil society.

Current global developments

- The world has fewer democracies than autocracies for the first time in over 20 years. Eastern Europe and South and Central Asia are in particularly steep decline.
- Clean elections declining in 25, freedom of association in 22, and rule of law in 18 countries.
- Freedom of expression is worsening in 44 countries by 2024, up from 35 in 2023.
- Only 7.2% of the global population lives in countries where civic space is open or narrowed.
- 2 billion people live in contexts with high and extreme fragility, accounting for 25% of the world's population and 72% of the world's extreme poor.

Sources: Nord, Marina et al. (2025), Democracy Report 2025: "25 Years of Autocratization – Democracy Trumped?" University of Gothenburg: V-Dem Institute; CIVICUS Monitor 2025 Report, and OECD (2025), States of Fragility 2025



Good governance

In recent years, several international trends and practices have emerged to enhance the relevance and effectiveness of good governance support. Notably, there has been a **move from good governance towards democratic governance**. While the concept of good governance lacks a widely accepted definition, it emphasises the effectiveness and efficiency of public institutions. As noted by Demo, “it is more technical in nature and less politically charged” than democratic governance (Juvonen, 2021). Democratic governance, which can be regarded as a specific form of good governance, has gained traction in international development cooperation, coinciding with, and possibly in response to, the global decline of democracy. It places special emphasis on the principles of **public participation, transparency and accountability**, ultimately helping to ensure that governments and public institutions answer to the people (OECD, 2014). These key concepts of democratic governance are clearly reflected in the PPA3 outcome on good governance that refers to “more transparent, efficient, and accountable public sector.” (MFA, 2023).

Finnish development policy has historically viewed support for good governance as a central strategy for promoting democracy and human rights (MFA, 2014).

An increasing emphasis on addressing threats affecting Europe is another notable trend especially in European support to good governance. There has been a shift where the European Commission (EC) has become more focused on defending European democracy from internal and, especially, external threats than on supporting democracy globally (Youngs, et al., 2025). In 2024, the EU allocated EUR 210 million to the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme, which works on democracy support inside the EU (and now also in accession and candidate countries) (European Commission, 2024).

Public financial management (PFM) has long been regarded as being at the core of good governance. As the focus on transparency and accountability has increased, the central role of PFM in promoting good governance has become increasingly recognised (Nolan, O’Connell, & Harvey, 2014). There has been an increasing recognition of the importance of good PFM for the effectiveness of the state”, as “good PFM not only supports fiscal discipline and macroeconomic stability but also is critical for effectively delivering the services on which human and economic development rely.” (Kristensen, Bowen, Mustapha, & Zrinski, 2019).

More broadly, the **economic and trade elements** of governance support are gaining increasing recognition, with the EC framing at least some such aid as investment in the Global South and arguing for “a policy mix driven by economic interest.” Furthermore, **migration and asylum control** is increasingly emphasised, often at the detriment of democratisation as a development aid priority (Youngs, et al., 2025). Also, the **growing emphasis on HRDs, including journalists, and their protection** is linked to the increased focus on transparent and accountable public institutions. The ability of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) to contribute is facilitated by an open civic space that enables civil society to partake in public life and influence political decisions and social structures. Thus, good governance becomes closely linked to and dependent on a well-functioning civil society, and support to these two thematic areas are not always easily distinguished.



Civil society

The Finnish MFA's "Guidelines for Civil Society Development" observed in 2017 **"a narrowing of the space for civil societies** in recent years both in developing countries and in wealthier states" through "various legislative measures [...] harassment of civil society actors, invalidation and even violence." (MFA, 2017). These trends have continued and deepened since. Several governments have attacked civic space by introducing new restrictive legislation. The regional sample is diverse, and includes Georgia, Hong Kong, Kyrgyzstan, Slovakia, and Zimbabwe, to name the few. A similar law passed by Hungary was struck down by the European Court of Justice (ECJ), only to be revamped as the defence-of-sovereignty law, which is again challenged by the EC at the ECJ. Increasingly, this legislation is considered and passed in the context of conflict and securitisation, for example, in Ukraine, Gaza, the wider Middle East, the Sahel and Sudan. A 2026 report by V-Dem states that "democratic gains since 1978 have been eradicated", particularly in the period of 2005-2025. (V-Dem, 2026).

Several governments have attacked civic space via so-called "foreign agents' laws".

As the space for civil society to operate has been shrinking in many countries, many donors have given an increasing attention to their role in supporting an enabling environment for civil society actors. This is reflected in the DAC Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance adopted by DAC in 2021. It's the first international standard to guide aid providers' action in a) respecting, protecting and promoting civic space, b) supporting and engaging with civil society and c) incentivising CSOs effectiveness, transparency and accountability. (OECD/LEGAL/5021). In addition to support to organizations working to **promote of a vibrant civil society and ensure the freedoms of association, assembly and expression, the protection of HRDs** has gained a prominent role in the development cooperation of several donor countries including France, the Netherlands, Germany and also Finland (Youngs, et al, 2025 and MFA, 2023).

Unregistered and loosely organised civil society groups, networks, and initiatives (the so-called "Fourth sector") are playing increasingly important roles in the struggle for democracy and human rights, partly due to their increased capacity to mobilise as internet and mobile coverage have developed, and the prominence of social media has increased. Although donors may be interested in supporting these loosely formed groups and networks, they have often found it administratively challenging to do so (Eskelinen et al., 2024). At the same time, the spread of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology and technology facilitating communication has contributed to increased opportunities for donors to support civil society actors working to promote and protect human rights and democracy in closed societies (Cevallos, 2025).

The **decrease in development funding** in several donor countries over the past year, particularly in the US, has significantly impacted CSOs worldwide. Additionally, many donors, including Finland, have redirected a larger portion of their development cooperation funding to support Ukraine. Even though budget cuts in Finland's support to CSOs have, overall, remained limited, in countries where Finland implements its activities, some CSOs have had to close, many others have significantly reduced their staff and activities. Concerns have also been raised on hurdles for, or a decrease in interest among philanthropies to provide funding for initiatives supporting human rights, inclusiveness, and democracy (Gawel, 2025).

Many CSOs are pushing for, and donors recognise the need for **approaches and mechanisms that provide long-term, flexible, and unrestricted funding**, allowing CSOs in partner countries



to design projects and programmes on their terms and in ways that reach the grassroots level (Alffram, 2021). Linked to this are demands that funding is not channelled through intermediaries and that genuine leadership from the global South is ensured (Chadwick, 2024; Kontinen, 2022). The localisation agenda does not feature in Finland's official development policy, while recent policy documents underline the importance of channelling development funds through Finnish CSOs. In response to growing donor demands to increase accountability and reduce risks, CSOs have raised demands for more flexible and adaptive approaches that alleviate the administrative burden associated with receiving financial support (Eskelinen et al., 2024).

Finally, it is noted that the support for good governance, and the support to civil society, have been influenced by the practices that more generally have come to characterise good development cooperation approaches, including a focus on local ownership, results-oriented planning with continuous monitoring and evaluation of performance, and iterative and adaptive management approaches which allow for learning from experiences and adjustment of strategies when new information becomes available and contexts change. The relevance of these concepts is recognised in Finnish development cooperation practice, but terms such as localisation and adaptive management do not feature prominently in its central development cooperation policy documents.

Key concepts

Grounded in the Finnish development policy documents, including the concept of “broad democracy”, the evaluation uses the following definitions:

- **Democracy** is a system in which political power emanates from the people, grounded in respect for human rights, the rule of law, accountable institutions, and a vibrant civil society, and directed toward achieving lasting and equitable development and security (MFA, 2014; Finnish Government, 2021; MFA, 2023; Finnish Government, 2024a&b).
- **Good governance** is the process by which public institutions conduct public affairs and manage public resources in a transparent, accountable, participatory, and inclusive manner, grounded in the rule of law and respect for human rights, and directed toward equitable and sustainable development (MFA, 2023).
- **Civil society** is the space outside the private and public sectors in which people can realise their active citizenship by participating in collective activities and debates. In this way, they can promote their own well-being and that of society. Civil society actor refers to non-profit associations, communities, networks and social movements, established based on a common theme, goal or ideology, and also includes non-commercial media, foundations and research institutions (MFA, 2017).

3.4 Describing the evaluand

3.4.1 MFA's objective setting and Theory of Change (ToC)

As reflected above, MFA's Democracy Support Policy (MFA, 2014) and the Report on Development Policy Extending Across Parliamentary Terms (Finnish Government, 2021) together with MFA's ToC (MFA, 2020; MFA, 2023) have been central in defining and concretising MFA's broad



concept of democracy support, related objective setting and ToC. The evaluation uses these policy documents as a starting point, while the more detailed directions laid out in the 2021 Development Policy Report and MFA's ToC formed the backbone of the reconstructed TOC's structure in this evaluation (Section 2.1,).

The Report on Development Policy Extending Across Parliamentary Terms identifies the support of **peaceful and democratic societies** as one of five priority areas of Finland's development policy (Finnish Government, 2021). This policy area (PPA3) is further elaborated through the following sub-themes or outcome areas further specified in MFA's ToC (MFA, 2020; MFA, 2023):

1. **“Peaceful, stable and just societies”** focuses on peaceful conflict resolution and inclusive peace processes; the safety and well-being of civilians in post-conflict environments; and the participation and leadership of women, youth, and persons with disabilities in peace and security issues.
2. **“Strengthening institutions and promoting good governance”** emphasises enhancing the capacity and willingness of authorities and political decision-makers to promote democracy and the rule of law; strengthening judicial and human rights institutions; and improving public sector management.
3. **“Possibility to participation for all and strong civil societies”** addresses civil society's capacity to organise, advocate, and participate in political decision-making; the protection of media, whistleblowers, and human rights defenders; the public and political participation of women, youth, and persons with disabilities; and safeguarding freedom of speech, assembly, association, and human-rights-based digital governance.
4. **“Transparent and equal DRM (i.e. taxation) systems”** covers efficient and equitable taxation as well as the fight against illicit financial flows.

The PPA3 ToC is based on the main assumptions (from outcomes to impact) that 1) stronger justice institutions and inclusive state building will contribute to building peaceful and democratic societies; 2) increased freedom and participation of civil society promotes democratic governance, transparency and accountability leading to peaceful and a more democratic society, and 3) tax revenue is used to increase equality and finance basic services. The other assumptions (from outputs to outcomes) are related to partner countries' ownership in reform processes; improved public sector and civil society capacities leading to changes in behaviours and practices; inclusive processes leading to non-discrimination and conflict prevention; and enforcement of global tax rules leading to better international and national level practices.

3.4.2 MFA's structures for operationalising democracy support

Over the evaluated period 2014-2024, the MFA support for democracy, the rule of law and human rights has been implemented through several aid instruments presented in Table 1. The delivery channels for supported interventions have included Finnish CSOs (27%), INGOs (12%), local CSOs and institutions (30%), international organizations (23%), as well as EU and other donor governments, consultancy companies and research institutes (2% each)².

² The percentages refer to the portfolio analysis on channels of delivery for MFA funded interventions contributing to PPA3 as a whole. Further details on the portfolio analysis can be found in Annex 6.



In addition to the funding partnerships, the related development policy objectives have also been promoted by MFA staff through policy dialogue and influencing at the international level, especially in the EU institutions and the UN, and in MFA's partner countries and regions with local government stakeholders, and other donor countries and development actors. As reflected in the evaluation findings, besides the funding support MFA has also had policy-influencing related cooperation with its partner CSOs.

Within the MFA, the support has been managed by different departments within the Helsinki HQ and Embassies. MFA's organisational structure for implementing the support for democracy, the rule of law and human rights is described and discussed in Section 4.1 (finding 4).

Table 1: Funding instruments covered by the evaluation

INSTRUMENT	PURPOSE	KEY CHARACTERISTICS	MANAGED BY
Bilateral support	Cooperation between Finland and individual developing countries based on the partner countries' development plans and on dialogue with them. Regional support targets areas larger than individual countries and aims at addressing cross-border problems and strengthening regional integration with focus on Finland's areas of expertise.	MFA priorities for bilateral support have been defined in the Country Strategies and Programmes for development cooperation with long-term partner countries. Regional funding is often channelled via international organisations (IO), regional economic and cooperation organisations, and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs).	Embassies, MFA HQ: geographical departments and units
Multilateral support	Financial support to multilateral actors and related advocacy work by MFA. Strengthening multilateral cooperation has been a long-term objective of Finland's foreign and development policy.	Consists of e.g. core funding to multilateral organisations, specific/thematic support to individual organisations as well as multi-bi projects at country or regional levels.	MFA HQ: core funding and thematic support: Department for Development Policy, especially the Unit for UN Development Issues multi-bi projects: geographical department and units Embassies (multi-bi projects)
Support to CSOs	Support to strengthening civil societies' role in developing countries and to support civil society's contribution to SDGs, the eradication of extreme poverty, and the reduction of inequalities.	Consists of programme support to larger Finnish development NGOs, support to individual projects of Finnish NGOs, as well as support to INGOs.	MFA HQ: Department for Development Policy, Unit for Civil Society Dialogue with Embassies
Democracy and rule of law support	Support to promoting and defending of democracy and rule of law globally. Support to the actions of the Rule of Law Centre (University of Helsinki) and Demo Finland as well as core funding to International IDEA.	Introduced in the government budget in 2020.	MFA HQ: Department for Development Policy, Unit for Civil Society Dialogue with Embassies



INSTRUMENT	PURPOSE	KEY CHARACTERISTICS	MANAGED BY
EU development cooperation	Financial support to the EU development cooperation, as well as participation in the EU development policy formulation and planning and implementation of EU programmes.	Funding the EU budget distributed to the EC's Directorates-General for International Partnerships, Neighbourhood Policy and Humanitarian Aid. Some funding is provided directly to specific EU interventions.	MFA HQ: Department for Development Policy , Project Management Unit Embassies
LCF ³	Support to CSOs and educational institutions in the partner countries.	Grants to small-scale projects. Country level calls for proposals.	Embassies

Source: Evaluation team's elaboration.

3.4.3 Portfolio analysis

A portfolio analysis on MFA-funded interventions contributing to the priority area of “Peaceful democratic societies” (PPA3), covering the sub-themes of “Peaceful Societies”, “Institutions & Good Governance”, “Participation & Civil Society”, and “DRM” was conducted the following categories:

- (i) All funding decisions during the years 2015-2022 contributing to PPA 3: all interventions with PPA3 as a primary or secondary priority and with at least some relevance to the above-noted sub-themes (534 interventions)⁴
- (ii) Within the above-mentioned (i), funding decisions contributing to the sub-themes of “Institutions & Good Governance” and/or “Participation & Civil Society” (394 interventions)
- (iii) Within the above-mentioned (ii), funding decisions excluding interventions with a budget below €125 000 (251 interventions).

All these categories include interventions that also contribute to other PPAs. For example, many multi-country CSO interventions receiving programme support include elements or components that have directly contributed to other PPAs outside the focus of this evaluation (MFA, 2020).⁵ Further details on the results of the portfolio analysis can be found in Section 4.1 (finding 3 on changes in MFA's support for democracy, the rule of law and human rights) and Annex 6.

During the period 2015-2022, the MFA approved in total €1046.0 million for interventions solely or partly contributing to the themes of the current policy priority area on “Peaceful Democratic Societies”. Out of this amount, €692.8 million were allocated to interventions with at least some relevance to the sub-themes of “Institutions & Good Governance”, and “Participation & Civil Society”, including €686.4 million to interventions with a budget above €125 000. However, it is important

3 In many MFA documents and evaluation reports, the Local Cooperation Fund (LCF) is referred to as Funds for Local Cooperation (FLC).

4 The criteria for assessing the level of relevance are presented in Annex 3 of this report.

5 The analysis excludes MFA's own administrative costs, activities funded as administrative expenses, subscription fees, communication efforts, global education projects in Finland, evaluations, and individual activities such as support for country visits or training events. Additionally, interventions recorded under PPA3 in MFA statistics that lack a clear connection to the thematic focus of this evaluation (for example, due to the absence of more appropriate PPAs) have also been omitted. Core funding to UN agencies and contributions to the replenishment of financial development institutions are excluded from the quantitative portfolio analysis; however, related partnerships are considered in the qualitative analysis of the evaluation.



to note that with the available data it is not possible to calculate what proportion of this funding is specifically allocated to PPA3-related elements within the supported interventions.

Small to medium-sized projects have formed a major share of the funded interventions. 63% of the interventions contributing to the PPA3 as a whole and 67% of those contributing to the sub-themes of “Institutions & Good Governance” and “Participation & Civil Society” have had a total budget below €1 million. Only 10-11 % of the funded interventions have had total budgets exceeding €5 million.

In all three categories analysed, the most significant share, **over one third of interventions, has been implemented in Africa**, while 17-18 % of interventions have been implemented in Asia. A significant part of the interventions with a budget above €125 000 contributing to the sub-themes of “Institutions & Good Governance” and “Participation & Civil Society” have been implemented at the global level (19 %) largely through partnerships with INGOs and international organizations or in multiple countries in two or more regions (15 %) especially through programme support to Finnish CSOs.

Support for CSOs is strongly represented in the whole portfolio. 36% of all interventions contributing to PPA3 have received CSO support, including project, programme, or core funding to Finnish and international NGOs, and 28 % have been supported with LCF, LCF-funded projects being largely implemented by local CSOs in MFA partner countries. This emphasis is also reflected in the interventions contributing to the sub-themes of “Institutions & Good Governance” and/or “Participation & Civil Society”. 49% of the related interventions with a budget exceeding €125 000 have received CSO support. This difference is due to the generally small size of LCF projects. Also, multilateral and bilateral funding play an important role in MFA’s support to the PPA3 as a whole (in total 33%) and the sub-themes of “Institutions & Good Governance” and “Participation & Civil Society” (in total 27% for all interventions and 40% for those with a budget above €125 000).

An important share of the interventions has **contributed to several sub-themes of the PPA3**. The rough analysis on the interventions with a budget exceeding €125 000 within the core focus of this evaluation indicates that over one fifth of the interventions (22%) contribute both to the sub-theme of “Institutions & Good Governance” and “Participation & Civil Society”. Furthermore, several of interventions contributing to one or two of these sub-themes also contribute to the sub-themes of “Peaceful Societies” and/or “DRM”.

3.5 Previous evaluations, reviews and studies

Various aspects related to the PPA3 on peaceful democratic societies have been reflected and analysed in several previous external evaluations and reviews of the MFA’s development policies and cooperation. This section provides a synthesis of development results related outcomes of these assessments. More detailed evaluation specific descriptions can be found in the Annex 5 of this report.

Previous evaluations and reviews have shown positive results in the thematic priority area on Peaceful, democratic societies, and especially in **promotion of women’s rights and strengthening of governance structures and processes**. For example, meta-analysis of CPs (2021-2024) demonstrated progress e.g. in enhancing women’s participation in leadership and decision-making in Nepal and Kenya as well as strengthening demand for accountability and management of public



resources for service delivery in Mozambique (Palenberg, Bartholomew, Mäkelä, & Huhta, 2024). The evaluation of Finland's country strategies in fragile contexts highlights significant results in promoting women's and girls' rights, particularly in Somalia and the Occupied Palestinian Territory and strengthening of local governance structures through capacity building of public institutions and CSOs especially in Afghanistan and Somalia (Betts & Mikkolainen, 2020). Also, the evaluation on Eastern Europe and Central Asia demonstrates tangible positive changes related to these thematic areas (Webber, et al., 2021). The strong focus on women's and girls' rights is also reflected in the results of the Finnish policy influencing as highlighted in the evaluation on the Finnish policy influencing in the EU (Mackie, Mikkolainen, Vaillant, & Ulla, 2022) and the evaluation on HRBA (Christoplos, et al., 2023).

Previous evaluations and reviews highlight promotion of women's and girls' rights, gender equality and the HRBA as areas of strength in Finland's development policy and cooperation.

The emphasis on women's and girls' rights and **gender equality** is also reflected in the development results related to the MFA CCOs. The CCO of gender equality has been promoted e.g. in DRM interventions, country strategies in fragile contexts, EU development policy influencing and more widely in multilateral organisations (Vaillant, Bartholomew, & Nieminen, 2023; Mackie, Mikkolainen, Vaillant, & Ulla, 2022; Christoplos, et al., 2023). The HRBA evaluation further confirms MFA's emphasis on gender equality and **non-discrimination with emphasis on disability inclusion** (Christoplos, et al., 2023). However, the previous evaluations also show how the context as well as the thematic and instrument focus affect the implementation of cross-cutting objectives. In Vietnam an increasing weight has been given to the CCOs on climate and environmental sustainability especially in the private sector instruments, while gender equality and social inclusion have been less in focus (van Gerwen, Nguyen, Laaksonen, Tung, & Kontro, 2021).

The importance of MFA's CSO support in **strengthening civil societies** and thereby increasing demand for accountability has been underlined in several evaluations. The HRBA Evaluation highlighted the role of CSOs in supporting rights-holders in marginalised situations to promote their rights (Christoplos et al., 2023, pp. 112–113). Civil society actors' strengthened capacities and CSOs' contributions to changes in societal attitudes, tax transparency, accountability was brought up in the evaluation on DRM (Webber, et al., 2021; Vaillant, Bartholomew, & Nieminen, 2023). The reviews on MFA's support for INGOs demonstrated achievements in improved advocacy for marginalised groups and HRDs, strengthened civil society engagement in human rights monitoring, policy dialogue and advocacy, and national and international level changes in legislation and policies (Örnemark & Tran-Nguyen, 2026 and Hansen et al., 2020).

At the same time, supporting organisational **capacity development of local CSO partners** and other civil society actors has been seen as a challenge in several earlier evaluations. The Evaluation 1 of the Programme-Based Support through Finnish Civil Society Organizations found that small value and short-term contracts for implementing CSOs had led to limited organisational capacity building in some cases, while the best results had been achieved in the cases of long-term engagement with the local CSO, treated as a partner with the ability to set its own priorities (Stage et al., 2016, p. 62). The Evaluation 2 on Programme-Based Support through Finnish Civil Society Organizations noted that most capacity development had been geared towards implementation of projects, and less towards organisational capacity development (Brusset et al., 2017, p. 45). Related findings were also reflected in the programme and project level evaluation reports.



Previous evaluations and reviews indicate progress in strengthening institutional capacities of local CSOs in MFA supported programmes and projects.

However, more recent evaluations and reviews indicate positive developments in this area. For example, while the mid-term review of Felm's development cooperation programme (2018-2021) called for better elaboration of the role and added value of the programme in the development of civil society (Venäläinen & Mikkola, 2020, p. 30-31), the final evaluation report states that there is consistent evidence that Felm's capacity-sharing efforts have resulted in new

knowledge, particularly in financial management and disability inclusion (Mesiäislehto & Sario, 2025, p. 28). Also, the Review of MFA's Support to Human Rights INGOs found that MFA's support has enabled strategic organisational strengthening and impact orientation of INGOs and their partners. This movement strengthening was seen contributing to the longer-term sustainability of their human rights work. (Örnemark & Tran-Nguyen, 2026, p. 36)

An evaluation of Demo Finland's Tunisian School of Politics Programme (2016-2020) notes that the programme had made "significant progress in developing the capacities of young politicians to take an active role in their parties and more widely in politics also across party lines", e.g. through a multi-party dialogue platform (Tran-Nguyen, 2021, p. 1). However, it had been less successful in promoting organisational and programmatic development in political parties.⁶

Regarding the role of Finnish CSOs, a recently published performance audit report on support for the development cooperation projects and programmes of Finnish NGOs conducted by the National Audit Office of Finland draws attention to the weakening diversity of Finnish NGOs involved in development cooperation. This trend is seen to be related to the emphasis in MFA's CSO support on programme support for bigger NGOs, and concentration of project support to fewer NGOs. Also, the growing emphasis on business in Finland's development policy may contribute to this loss of diversity (Valtiontalouden tarkastusvirasto, 2025).

The HRBA evaluation described how consistent efforts and strong ownership within the MFA and among partners have made **HRBA a key element in how Finland positions itself** and is perceived in the development community (Christoplos, et al., 2023). Progress in HRBA implementation was also brought up in other reviews and evaluations (Palenberg, Bartholomew, Mäkelä, & Huhta, 2024; Webber, et al., 2021). The 2024 peer review report from the OECD Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) highlights the HRBA and gender equality as clear areas of Finnish global reach and impact, partly due to the skills and expertise of Finnish public servants, which enable stronger engagement, particularly with UN agencies to promote these values in the multilateral system (OECD, 2024).

The previous evaluations highlight **contextual challenges** in achieving sustainable development results especially related to **human rights and civil society**. The meta-analysis on CPs notes that in some countries, previously achieved results have been partly lost because of regime change and conflict, for example, in Afghanistan, Ethiopia and Myanmar, or could be lost in the future, for example, in Palestine and Ukraine. (Palenberg, Bartholomew, Mäkelä, & Huhta, 2024). The evaluation on Eastern Europe and Central Asia notes that social sustainability of results has remained overall challenging, this being related to generally difficult context for human rights and civil societies, as well as conflicts in the region (Webber, et al., 2021). Concerns related to the

⁶ The report considers political parties to be part of civil society.



shrinking civic space, human rights, participation and inclusion were also highlighted in the evaluation of the transition phase in Vietnam (van Gerwen, Nguyen, Laaksonen, Tung, & Kontro, 2021). These evaluation outcomes highlight on one hand the interrelatedness of the PPA3 sub-themes, on the other hand the importance of these sub-themes for the overall sustainability of development efforts.

The resource constraints including funding cuts, reduced staffing and high staff turn-over were noted as challenges affecting MFA's capacities e.g. to conduct deeper analysis (e.g. on risks, political economy, conflicts) and monitor supported interventions, and thereby influencing MFA's contribution to development results (Webber, et al., 2021; Christoplos, et al., 2023; Palenberg, Bartholomew, Mäkelä, & Huhta, 2024). The OECD DAC peer review from 2017 identified major Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget cuts, a lack of strategic and systematic coordination between CSOs and the Finnish government, inconsistencies in gender mainstreaming, and a low focus on environmental sustainability as weaknesses of Finland's development policy and cooperation (OECD, 2017). The declining ODA budget, including the closure of several bilateral CPs, is also highlighted in the 2024 review as a risk to coherent strategic cooperation. Furthermore, an increased focus on trade and promoting Finnish business interests was seen to possibly overshadow Finland's earlier commitments to reducing poverty and inequality, as well as promoting human rights. (OECD, 2024)

Besides contextual challenges, especially related to human rights, civic space and conflicts, MFA's resource constraints and high staff turn-over have been brought up as significant constraints affecting achievement of sustainable development results in Finland's development cooperation.



4 Findings

4.1 Evaluation Question 1: How is the implementation of the support for democracy, rule of law and human rights organised in the MFA?

The evaluation found that the key elements of MFA's broad concept of democracy have been well integrated into MFA's development policies. This strong policy-level commitment has laid a solid foundation for the MFA's identity and reputation in the area of support for democracy, the rule of law and human rights. This is widely recognised by partners and other stakeholders. Finland's support for PPA3 has been implemented through multiple funding instruments managed by several MFA departments and Embassies with emphasis on the sub-theme of participation and civil society. Division of labour within MFA has remained overall effective through changes and reorganisation. However, recent shifts in Finland's development policy priorities, significant cuts to development funding, and structural changes within the MFA, which have contributed to a weakening of thematic expertise and institutional memory, pose strategic and operational risks for the MFA's future work in support of democracy and the rule of law.

Finding 1: Finland's development and human rights policy frameworks have been clearly aligned with the broad concept of democracy and the main themes of the "MFAs' Democracy Support Policy".

The MFA's policy framework on human rights, democracy, and rule of law is deep and comprehensive. The "Ministry for Foreign Affairs' Democracy Support Policy" defined Finland's broad concept of democracy including the goal of simultaneously promoting human rights, democracy, the rule of law, good governance, and the eradication of corruption. It also identified the main themes for the MFA democracy support focusing on political and economic participation of women and marginalised groups, enabling environment for civil society, as well as development of rule of law, good governance, anti-corruption measures, free and fair elections, conditions for parliaments, and multi-party systems. (MFA, 2014). The concept of broad democracy and the main themes have been clearly reflected in the goals and priorities of later policy documents guiding the MFA's overall development policy and cooperation, while the focus in Finland's democracy support has been further defined and concretised (Table 2).

However, the harmonisation across all relevant policy documents is not entirely clear. In the Finnish Government's latest policy documents from year 2024, democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and a vibrant civil society are noted as prerequisites for sustainable social development that Finland supports. Yet, the key elements of democracy support are only partially reflected in the defined areas of strength and related measures (Finnish Government, 2024a, Finnish Government, 2024b).



Table 2: Overview of the alignment of Finland’s key development policy documents with the main themes of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs Democracy Support Policy (MFA, 2014)

KEY POLICY DOCUMENTS	MAIN THEMES IN MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS DEMOCRACY SUPPORT POLICY (MFA, 2014)		
	Political and economic participation of women and vulnerable, easily marginalised and discriminated groups.	Conditions for civil society, in particular support for HRDs.	Rule of law, good governance, anti-corruption, free and fair elections, conditions for parliament, and multi-party systems.
Finland’s Development Policy (MFA, 2016b)	Strongly reflected	Strongly reflected	Strongly reflected
	Women’s and girls’ economic & political participation under a separate thematic priority area.	No explicit reference to HRDs	More efficient taxation included in the related goal.
Report on Development Policy Extending Across Parliamentary Terms (Finnish Gov., 2021)	Strongly reflected	Strongly reflected	Strongly reflected
	Non-discrimination, equality and inclusion are key principles in Finland’s development policy. Women’s, girls’ and youth participation in peace processes & peacebuilding emphasised. Women’s and girls’ economic and political participation under a separate thematic priority area.	Support to media independence and protection of whistle-blowers and HRDs explicitly stated.	Promoting access to justice and reducing impunity explicitly included in the related priority area. More explicit emphasis on public sector openness and transparency.
Theories of Change and Aggregate Indicators for Finland’s Development Policy (MFA, 2023)	Strongly reflected	Strongly reflected	Strongly reflected
	A separate outcome on the participation of civil society, women, youth and persons with disabilities: support to empowerment and improvements in the related legislation and its enforcement.	Separate outputs on civil society, protection of independent media, whistle blowers and HRDs, and legislation and its enforcements.	Separate outcomes on peaceful, stable and just societies, institutions and good governance and DRM. Support to human rights institutions, digital governance and decentralization explicitly included.
Government Report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy 2024, and Report on International Economic Relations and Development Cooperation 2024 (Finnish Gov., 2024a, 2024b)	Clearly reflected with emphasis on women and girls	Clearly reflected, emphasis on Finnish CSOs	Reflected as prerequisites for sustainable social development, not as a thematic priority area
	Promotion of women’s economic & political participation in the measures on the rights for women and girls. (Finnish Gov., 2024b) Continue promoting and defending the rights of e.g. women, girls, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, gender and sexual minorities, and other persons in a particularly vulnerable position. (Finnish Gov., 2024a & 2024b)	Finland supports the ability of civil society and defenders of human rights to act. (Finnish Government, 2024a) Continued support for the work of civil society actors to achieve Finland’s development policy objectives (Finnish Gov., 2024b)	A well-functioning democracy, the rule of law, human rights and a vibrant civil society are the prerequisites for sustainable social development that Finland supports. (Finnish Gov., 2024a and 2024b) Activities founded on democracy, the rule of law, human rights, equality and non-discrimination. Defending the rules-based international system and supporting its development. (Finnish Gov., 2024a)

Source: Evaluation team’s elaboration.



Finding 2: Finland's policy framework on democracy, the rule of law and human rights has provided a strong basis for the MFA's identity and reputation in these policy areas. However, the recent policy changes raise concerns about the weakening of this identity.

The MFA and its top-level partners have internalised the definition and prioritisation of human rights, democracy, and rule of law across the MFA's interventions. While the MFA's Democracy Support Policy from 2014 is not reported by interviewees as intensively used as a guiding document in daily work, the clear emphasis on these issues in relevant MFA policy documents has supported MFA staff in internalising the broad lines of the related policies and priorities. MFA staff and representatives of Finnish development NGOs repeatedly emphasised Finland's strong and long-term policy-level commitment to the promotion of human rights, democracy, and rule of law as fundamental elements of Finland's development cooperation, both through targeted actions and mainstreaming. They highlighted the strong prioritisation of human rights and HRBA in promoting sustainable social development, with a particular focus on women's rights and gender equality, non-discrimination, and disability inclusion. These were consistently brought up as Finland's characteristic strengths and added value compared to other donors. This is in line with the conclusions of the HRBA evaluation, which concluded that HRBA was "solidly established within MFA and its partners as the most important common normative basis for Finland's development cooperation" (Christoplos et al., 2023, Vol.1, p.112). Interviewees widely appreciated the MFA's strong commitment to democracy support, including open dialogue with CSOs in Finland and programme countries.

The establishment of *Democracy and Rule of Law Support* budget line in 2020 also clearly shows Finland's commitment to democracy support. Especially the support provided to the actions of the Rule of Law Centre (University of Helsinki) and Demo Finland has enabled MFA to complement and strengthen its democracy support portfolio with targeted actions for capacity development of key duty-bearers with a view to strengthening democratic structures and judicial systems in partner countries. At the same time, by involving Finnish rule of law experts and political parties in these processes and thereby promoting North-South dialogue, these actions have strengthened the Finnish added value in MFA's democracy and civil society support.

However, concerns related to recent policy changes and their implications for MFA's identity, reputation and role in this area topped many interviews. Several stakeholders from MFA and partner organisations brought up uncertainties related to the diminishing weight given to democracy support in policy dialogue and development cooperation in the current situation where peaceful, democratic societies is no longer an explicit development policy priority area. The strong prioritisation of trade promotion and Finnish business interests, together with radical budget cuts and the closing of several MFA CPs, were seen by many MFA staff and partners to weaken Finland's focus on human rights, democracy and the rule of law and to bring uncertainties to the continuity of related partnerships. Also, an increased emphasis on tangible results and control of funded interventions was brought up by some partner interviewees. Furthermore, the need for MFA to be clearer on how the democracy, rule of law and human rights perspectives should be integrated into the trade promotion was highlighted. Concerns were also raised about changes in the involvement of development NGOs in policy discussions and reduced sharing of related information with them. However, the value of the existing dialogue forums, such as the DPC and MFA's meetings with partner organisations was underlined.



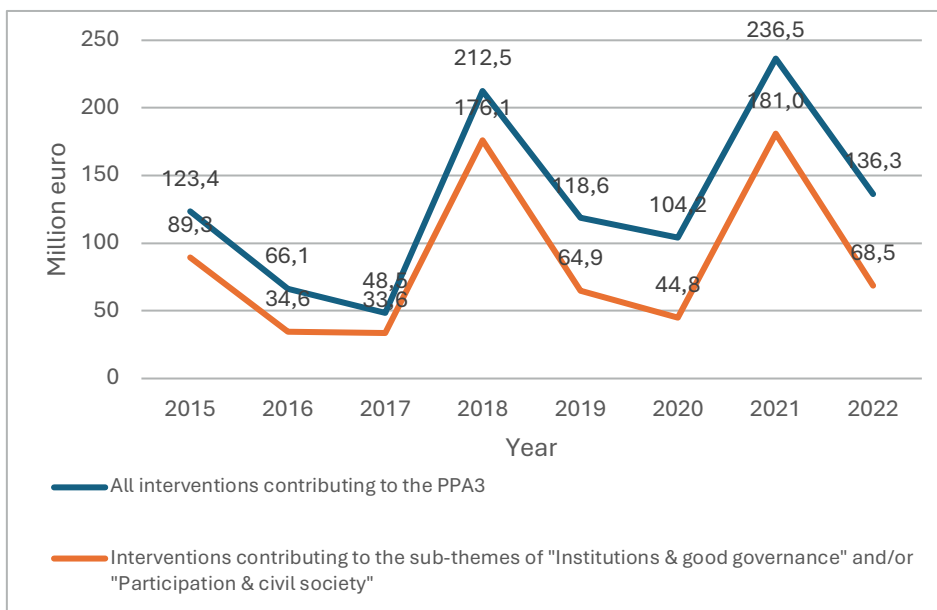
Quote – MFA staff

“There is a strength of the political will to influence certain policy areas they are long-standing and continuous objectives of foreign policy in general, it continues to be based on contributing to multilateral rules based order, where human rights are at the core of our work, but there is always a bit of trade-off, when we put more emphasis on other area. The size of the hammer is a bit smaller now, but it is still a hammer.”

Finding 3: Fluctuating democracy support has placed emphasis on participation and civil society

The volume of support has fluctuated, with severe reductions recently. The Democracy Support Policy states that democracy support funding will be increased, and that the number of projects will be restricted to improve operational effectiveness and results, and avoid fragmentation (MFA, 2014, pp. 4-5). In practice, the portfolio analysis shows clear fluctuation in the volume of MFA's democracy support. The number of funding decisions related to the PPA3 has varied between 61 (in 2017) and 98 (in 2016 and 2021), and the number of decisions related to the core scope of this evaluation has varied between 42 (in 2017) and 75 (in 2018). The levels of approved funding have fluctuated even more significantly. The lowest total annual allocation was €48.5 million for the whole PPA3 and €33.6 million for interventions within the evaluation core focus in 2017, while the highest allocations in 2021 were almost six times higher. While external factors, such as changes of government, have affected these trends, there are also other contributing factors. For example, the peaks in 2018 and 2021 are at least partly related to the Finnish CSOs' programme support funding decisions (Figure 5). PPA-specific data on funding decisions is not available for the years 2023 and 2024, but the interviews and OpenAid data on Finland's overall development funding indicate a remarkable decrease in Finland's overall ODA as well in the same period.⁷

Figure 5: Total funding approved per year



Source: Evaluation team's elaboration based on MFA data on funding decisions and OpenAid data.

7 According to Openaid data Finland's ODA disbursements in 2024 decreased by 57% compared to the previous year (<https://openaid.fi/en/viz/oda>).



All main themes have been at least to some extent addressed in programming, while a strong emphasis has been given to the sub-theme on participation and civil society (see Figure 6). The four outcome areas of PPA3 have been reflected in the objective setting of MFA's all CPs. However, the extent to which the CPs (2021-2024) have included impact areas, outcomes and outputs specifically focusing on PPA3 has varied. For example, the CP of Mozambique included expected results directly related to all four sub-themes of PPA3, the CP of Myanmar included expected results directly related to three sub-themes (all except DRM), while in the CP of Nepal the PPA3 sub-themes were explicitly reflected only in the impact area on women's participation in decision making. At the same time, in the CP of Nepal, like many other CPs, the aspects of good governance, accountability, participation and civil society have been mainstreamed in impact areas with another thematic focus (e.g. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene [WASH]).

Several MFA Country Programmes have included components specifically focusing on PPA3 outcomes, while others have followed a mainstreaming approach.

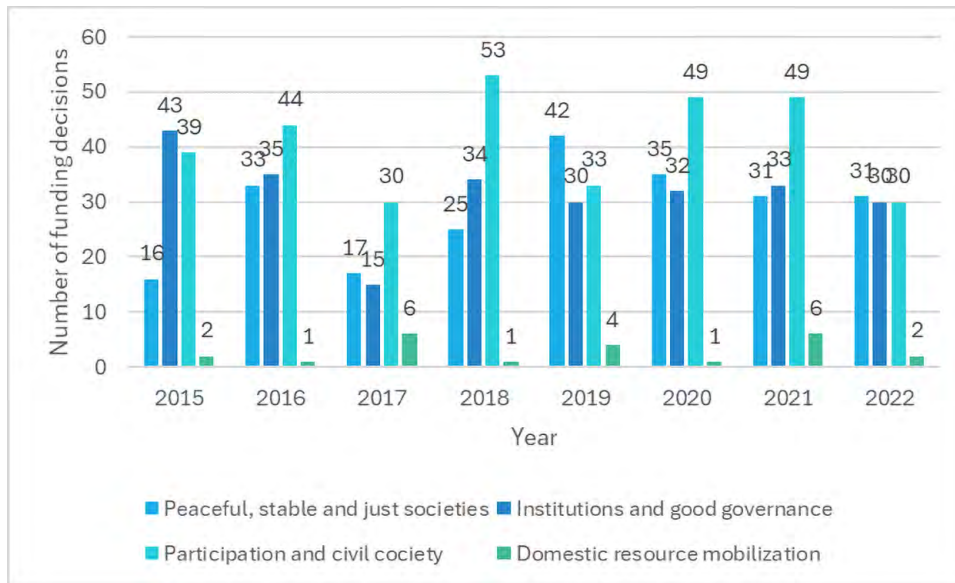
The portfolio analysis indicates that at the level of interventions, the strongest emphasis has been on the sub-theme on participation and civil society (50.3%), while the lowest number of interventions have contributed to the sub-theme on DRM (3.0%). This trend is also clearly reflected in the analysis on funding decisions per year (Figure 6). Furthermore, there's clear variation in the extent to which different aspects within the sub-themes have been addressed in programming. For example, under the sub-theme of Institutions and Good Governance, a great majority of interventions aimed at improving capacity and willingness of political decision-makers and authorities to support democracy and human rights (45.5%) or improving public sector management (49.0%), while a much smaller share of them aimed at strengthening judicial and human rights institutions (22.7%).

Finland's democracy support policy has been operationalised through multiple funding instruments, with a variety of partners, and into both targeted actions and mainstreaming.

The strong emphasis on participation and civil society reflects the strong role of CSOs in implementing democracy support, and more widely Finland's development cooperation. In 2015-2022 almost two-thirds (64.6%) of all interventions contributing to the PPA3 have been funded through CSO support (36.1%) and FLC (28.5%). In addition, Finnish, international and local CSOs have also participated in the implementation of many interventions funded through bilateral and multi-lateral funding instruments. Over the evaluated period, the geographic focus of MFA's support for democracy, the rule of law and civil society has fluctuated, though with clear emphasis on Africa (35% of all PPA3-related funding decisions). However, closure of several CPs in Africa and Asia, together with prioritisation of support to Ukraine in the current development policy, are likely to remarkably affect Finland's overall democracy support portfolio. Due to MFA's narrowing country-level presence, it will also have effects on the related networking and policy influencing.



Figure 6: Number of funding decisions on interventions contributing to different PPA3 sub-themes⁸



Source: Evaluation team's elaboration based on MFA data on funding decisions and OpenAid data.

Quote – INGO representative

“When funding became very tight two years ago, Finland, especially the Embassy, went out of their way to try to mobilise other partner countries to continue funding. The Finnish Embassy tried to pull out all the plugs and advocate for funding.”

Finding 4: The MFA’s support for democracy, the rule of law and human rights has been managed and implemented by several MFA HQ departments and Embassies, with an evolving but overall effective division of labour.

The division of labour within the MFA has been fluctuating in a partially undocumented way. MFA’s democracy support related development cooperation and policy dialogue has been mainly under the leadership of the Minister for Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade. However, drawing a clear line between the development policy and the foreign policy led by the Minister for Foreign Affairs is often difficult, especially when it comes to policy dialogue and wielding influence in intergovernmental organisations or in the regions, e.g. in Eastern Europe, where Finland’s development funding has been very limited. This flux is visible in the related division of roles and responsibilities within the Ministry, as brought up by several MFA interviewees. Besides the general level organigramme of the Ministry and the Decree of the Rules of Procedure of the MFA, more specific internal structures for managing the support for democracy, the rule of law and human rights, related roles and responsibilities, coordination and learning practices, as well as their evolution have largely remained undocumented over time (MFA 2008, amended in 2024).

⁸ Remark: The total of numbers shown in the diagram exceeds the total number of funding decisions (690), because some projects have often contributed to several sub-themes. For some projects there have also been several project phase specific funding decisions.)



Quote – MFA staff

“Before it was set on stone, you knew how the process was and how things would happen. Now it is unclear: we are adjusting and we will see what works best.”

The division of labour at MFA has changed with several organisational reforms during the past years. Several departments in the Headquarters (HQ) and Embassies in partner countries have been involved in the programming and management of targeted and democracy support interventions, related mainstreaming, and policy influencing. The Department for Development Policy has been responsible for the programming and management of multi-lateral support, support to CSOs, and since 2020 the specific budget line of “democracy and rule of law support”. It has also played a key role in providing thematic advisory support within the MFA. The Regional Departments and the Embassies have managed bilateral, regional, multilateral and EU cooperation and policy dialogue in the partner countries, while the LCF instrument has been fully managed by Embassies. At the same time, the Political Department, has been responsible for the dialogue in democracy, human rights and peace related structures within international and regional organisations such as the EU, Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the UN (Eskelinen et al., 2024), and has also played a key role in managing MFA’s support to Human Rights INGOs (Örnemark & Tran-Nguyen, 2026). Besides, the MFA has a specific structure, the Quality Assurance Board chaired by the Deputy Director General of the Department for Development Policy, for ensuring the consistency of all funding proposals, including those related to democracy support, with current development policy and MFA’s quality requirements. The comments and recommendations of the Quality Assurance Board are taken into consideration in the finalisation of proposals for decision making by responsible departments. However, thematic monitoring of the implementation of MFA’s democracy support is less systematic, an issue that was also brought up in the conclusions of the HRBA Evaluation (Chirstoplos et al., 2023, p. 77).

Horizontal cooperation within the MFA has boosted the efficiency of the work on human rights, rule of law, and democracy. The conducted interviews indicate that MFA’s internal division of labour and structures have overall functioned well despite scarce human resources and staff turnover, and that there has also been cross-departmental cooperation and dialogue on democracy, the rule of law and human rights within the Ministry. During the evaluation period, the thematic advisers within the Department for Development Policy provided advisory support on issues such as democracy and good governance, the HRBA, gender, and disability inclusion to the Regional Departments and Embassies in both bilateral and multi-bi programming. There have also been informal forums and practices for sharing information and discussing the division of labour. For example, the Unit for UN Development Issues in the Department for Development Policy, together with the Units for Human Rights and UN and General Global Affairs in the Political Department, have held regular coordination meetings to discuss the allocation of roles and responsibilities regarding human rights, women, peace and security in multilateral cooperation, and related policy-level influencing.

The expert-based internal structures have experienced ongoing changes but have remained largely effective; however, they are now reaching a tipping point as a result of staff reductions. The MFA’s distinctive model of an expert-based staff structure across Departments has played a crucial role in the development of democracy support programming and policy dialogue. The central role of staff with solid expertise on development policies in general and specifically on democracy, human rights and the rule of law together with related work experience from developing countries in MFA’s support to democracy, human rights and the rule of law was highlighted by several interviewees. However, structural changes and budget cuts initiated towards the end of the



evaluation period have resulted in increased staff turnover, reduced human resources, including expert positions, and a loss of thematic expertise and institutional memory. Some interviewees expressed concerns about the declining number of MFA staff with strong development expertise and practical field experience in implementing interventions related to democracy, the rule of law, and human rights.

Quote – MFA staff

“We are living the end of an era, because there is no critical mass to continue. The cost is that we will no longer be a significant player.”

In addition, the significant reduction in bilateral cooperation and the discontinuation of the LCF instrument in its current form may further diminish MFA staff’s understanding of local contexts, thereby weakening their expertise. If not carefully addressed in other partnerships, this could also undermine the effectiveness of the MFA’s increasingly prioritised policy-level influence at national, regional, and multilateral levels. (Örnemark and Tran-Nguyen, 2026, p. 42).

Lesson learned – Staff cuts and capacity are reaching a tipping point.

With recent staff cuts, concomitant with important turnover (retirements, moves) the loss of expertise in several Embassies and in Headquarters have left a gap in the MFA’s capacity to support its staff in charge of democracy support programming and delivery. Several Embassies reported having reached a tipping point, whereby their capacity to deliver on the policies is being compromised.



4.2 Evaluation Question 2: What results, including any realised or emerging impact, has Finland generated in the result area “Peaceful democratic societies” as a whole during the period under evaluation?”

The evaluation found that the MFA’s work on PPA3, which is highly influenced by external factors and aims for long-term, progressive change, lacks a tailored and operational results monitoring system. This limits the ability to track and demonstrate its contribution to outcomes. Nevertheless, through capacity building with duty-bearers, Finland has supported stronger service delivery in areas such as, elections, migration management, water and sanitation, land management, waste management, education, and health. In all these cases, the PPA3 approach has led to services that increasingly align with the principles of human rights, the rule of law, and democracy. Furthermore, Finnish support has helped improve normative frameworks, making them more compliant, participatory, inclusive, and better informed by evidence. Finland’s work on PPA3 and the mainstreaming of its principles throughout international cooperation have also led to localised transformative changes in perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours towards women, persons with disabilities, and marginalised groups. In some cases, Finland also contributed to peacebuilding and the preservation of peaceful relations through inclusive dialogue, compromise, and consensus-building. These achievements are largely attributable to Finland’s approach, which is primarily focused on rights-holders and strongly supports localisation. The deeply value-driven nature of Finland’s international cooperation ensures that PPA3 principles are embedded across all interventions, fostering synergies among PPAs, within PPA3 itself, and with like-minded donors, ultimately contributing to stronger outcomes. This approach also promotes genuine partnerships with civil society actors, although the extent of such partnerships varies.

Finding 5: Tangible results in PPA3 are difficult to trace, but there are strong indications of contribution to key result areas of the ToC.

Despite a strong strategic result framework embodied by the policy-level ToC, result reporting at the sub-theme and project levels is insufficient. While many projects include baseline studies, often as a launch activity, and although the vast majority of project reports make statements on results and process achievements, many project or programme reports lack clear evidence supporting these statements with clear attributability or causality. In some cases, the document track was unavailable or inaccessible to the evaluation team, and also at times to the MFA. Systematic project evaluations partly bridge this gap: the end evaluations reviewed by the team seek to reconstruct causal paths to change. However, they, too, suffer from insufficient monitoring data.

This lack of result-based monitoring and reporting partly relates to the nature of PPA 3, which is long-term, hard to quantify, and very process-oriented: the quantitative, high-level, results-based management and reporting frameworks of the MFA are therefore not highly suited to PPA3 monitoring. The MFA’s indicators for PPA3 are set at the impact level and are exclusively quantitative. This framework, in turn, encourages partners to focus on quantitative



reporting. This trend was evident in reporting practices and was confirmed in interviews with multilateral organisations (such as UN Women) and both Finnish and INGOs receiving core, programme, or project funding, who are familiar with the MFA's results framework and seek to align with it. These partners may also apply the same reporting approach to CSOs receiving sub-grants. However, as monitoring reports are not designed to capture impact, and because outcomes relating to human rights, democracy, and the rule of law are not easily quantifiable, partners tend to report at the most readily measurable level: activities and outputs. This creates a data gap at the outcome level, as the results reporting framework is not sufficiently tailored to capture the progressive changes brought about by interventions in human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. This, in turn, makes it difficult to demonstrate clear contributions to impact. As a result, project and programme monitoring and evaluation data are often challenging to link with the policy ToC indicators for PPA3. To address this challenge, a small number of sampled projects adopted adaptive programme management and alternative approaches, such as Outcome Mapping (OM) and outcome harvesting, which place greater emphasis on incremental results.

Compounding this gap, MFA partners active in PPA3 often do not demonstrate strong capacity in results-based management or in monitoring, learning, and evaluation. There are exceptions, such as multilateral organisations, and even these have monitoring weaknesses. For CSOs, governments, and local authorities, MFA support does not address this gap, as strengthening partner institutions' internal systems for monitoring, evaluation, and learning is not included in the scope of MFA assistance. The limitations of results-based management approaches, which often emphasise linear results pathways, were highlighted in several PPA3-related evaluations, including those concerning human rights INGOs.

Lesson learned – without monitoring, evaluation and learning capacity building, national and/or small partners active in PPA3 are disadvantaged to convey transformative results.

The complexity of outcome tracking and reporting in PPA3, combined with the MFA's strongly quantitative results framework, places larger CSOs (both Finnish and international) and certain UN organisations with robust in-house monitoring practices at an advantage. These organisations are typically more adept at results reporting and often maintain their own systems for quantitative data collection and monitoring, enabling them to demonstrate their contribution to PPA3 more readily. However, this does not necessarily mean that these larger partners achieve better, more transformative, or systemic results than their smaller, country- or community-level counterparts among government bodies, public entities, and CSOs. The Nepal deep dive illustrated the significant potential of smaller partners to contribute to transformative outcomes, such as changing the power structures that underpin human rights violations, inequalities, social exclusion, and limited democratic participation. Nonetheless, these smaller partners are at a disadvantage in demonstrating their contribution, as they depend on variable project funding, which restricts their ability to generate longitudinal quantitative data and to develop sustained monitoring, evaluation, and learning functions.

In all areas of PPA3, Finland has put strong emphasis on processes, and the processes themselves are largely seen as results as such. With this approach, Finland has contributed to processes that create new opportunities, and registered positive precedents, which underpin effective outcomes in democracy, human rights, and rule of law in most concerned countries, as revealed by the analysis of project reports and evaluations, as well as interviews and the deep dive in Nepal despite monitoring shortcomings. Coding and triangulation with past evaluations evidenced the following outcome types.



Stronger institutional capacity within the public service has consistently led to improved service delivery that incorporates the principles of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law, with an emphasis on bottom-up participation. This includes contributions to development and implementation of policies, strategies, tools and guidelines to adjust the way services are delivered, contributions to enhance staff capacity and contributions to strengthen public demand for more inclusive and responsive provision of local services. Examples are found in Ethiopia, Nepal, and Somalia. There is strong evidence of MFA's contribution to strengthening **tax administration**, resulting in additional revenue raised through the bilateral programme (Vaillant et al., 2023). Finland has further contributed to initiatives promoting government awareness, stronger networks, transparency and accountability mechanisms, for instance, in Tanzania and Ukraine. However, it is hard to ascertain whether these initiatives can help increase citizen voice on tax-related issues, given the length of time it takes to achieve lasting and transformative results (Vaillant et al., 2023). The **organisation of elections** are a particular field where Finland registered positive outcomes: in Ethiopia, Finnish support through UNDP has strengthened capacities of the national election bureau; in Tanzania the UN Women project strengthened women's participation in election; IDEA's work on electoral processes globally has transferred capacities to multiple national electoral bodies; in Zambia, DEMO Finland strengthened inclusivity and accessibility for persons with disabilities in elections, prompting the Government to propose constitutional guaranties. Other thematic areas of enhanced service delivery are varied. Finland increased the capacity and mainstreaming of democratic principles within **migration services** in Somalia (implemented by IOM), as well as **land management** in several Ethiopian regions. The deep dive in Nepal demonstrated localised but strongly attributable community-responsive, inclusive, and rights-based local service provision in the areas of **WATSAN**, inclusive and gender-equal **education, health, or waste management**. In all the above examples, regardless of the area of service delivery, the mainstreaming of democratic principles into various thematic areas of service delivery, and the improvement of the services' coverage and quality have gone hand in hand, with mutual reinforcement. However, in the most fragile contexts, maintaining social services has proven particularly challenging in at least one case: PEGASE enabled the Palestinian Authority to maintain public social services in a cash transfer programme targeting poor and vulnerable families and health services, but was met by declining satisfaction and coverage as the country's situation worsened.

Finland's advocacy and expertise, sometimes matched by Finnish-supported research and knowledge production, have fed into new or amended normative frameworks (legislation, regulations, case law, and other forms of public policy) on access to justice and human rights, transitional justice, antidiscrimination, women's political participation, and local governance, as also analysed in the Review of support to Human Rights INGOs (Örnemark and Tran-Nguyen, 2026). Examples are found in Ethiopia, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Nepal. At regional and global levels, another example is the contribution to shaping the international tax agenda, through support to African Tax Administration Forum in the dialogue for UN resolutions, and the OECD two-pillar taxation solution (Vaillant et al, 2023). While some contributions to normative frameworks

Evidence-based policy level influencing by MFA and its partners has contributed to changes in democracy, human rights, and the rule of law related normative frameworks at the global, regional and national levels.

targeted specific human rights problems or good governance challenges (e.g. Achieving Justice for Gross Human Rights Violations), others were part of broader efforts to reform laws and public policies related to service delivery (e.g. REILA, SUSWA). In a few instances, Finnish-supported research and knowledge production on PPA3 sub-themes have informed policy decisions, particularly on civic space and participation,



human rights violations, and governance outcomes of national policies and international policy frameworks. Good examples of this contribution are found in Mozambique, Tanzania, and Nepal. With UNEP, Finland produced research on natural resources and post-conflict peacebuilding: several post-conflict countries and fragile states have integrated natural resources and environmental aspects into conflict prevention and peacebuilding plans and their implementation, improved environmental practices in UN peace operations (UNEP Green Diplomacy). Efforts to research, influence, and monitor the normative framework yielded strong outcomes in Kenya, where Uraia performed systematic analysis of election laws, influencing electoral practices, election monitoring, and civic education. Global examples also include knowledge production on tax incentives (Vaillant et al., 2023) as well as on global defence of human rights defenders. In all cases, the normative changes contribute, if indirectly, to both demand and capacity for good governance systems, transparent and accountable governance at local level, and sometimes at the national level, and new spaces for civic participation by CSOs and citizens themselves. In parallel, Finland has contributed to government accountability through capacity and resilience of independent media, including in increasingly repressive environments: examples are found in Nicaragua, Honduras, Kenya, Nepal. The normative changes supported through these interventions, however, do not tend to amount to systemic transformation. Instead, they create strong precedents, which national governments or other donors sometimes expand upon, e.g., with large EU-funded budget support or technical assistance, building on the Finnish-supported precedents.

Systematic mainstreaming, and oftentimes explicit targeting of gender equality and social inclusion, have generated transformative changes in perceptions, practices, and behaviours, although often within the limits of certain localities. Finnish support recurrently channels the voices and/or defence of victims of human rights violations as a part of peace and development nexus approach. Examples are found in Ethiopia, Kenya, Nepal, Myanmar, Tanzania, Uganda, Ukraine and several other countries. Finland has demonstrably contributed, particularly in remote municipalities as observed in Nepal and reported in various Sub-Saharan African countries, to the empowerment of women, girls, persons with disabilities, and marginalised groups. This has been achieved through a broad variety of approaches, often combined: advocacy support, local political participation, new livelihoods, commodity management, or access to sanitation. In several cases (e.g., support to Dalit women in Nepal, support to Abilis, support to the International Commission of Jurists, and general efforts for transitional justice in Myanmar or Nepal...) Finland further supported gender-based budgeting, although the latter faces serious limitations as found by the Evaluation of Finland's support to DRM from 2016 to 2023 (Vaillant et al. 2023), and confirmed by the analysis of sampled UN Women projects and the Nepal SUSWA project. Changes were observed in the perception, attitudes, and practices related to patriarchal structures, discriminatory and harmful social practices at national, community, and political party levels. Contribution to structural and systemic social inclusion could not be established with certainty, but it is highly plausible, as found in Tanzania, Zambia, or Nepal.

Finnish support specifically targeted functional national dialogues and processes for conflict resolution or prevention, which were reported as effective by project reports, evaluations, and interviewees, at least while the windows of opportunities existed. These platforms meaningfully engaged communities, civil society actors, and other key stakeholders in peace dialogues. Several programmes (FELM, FCA, CMI) mainstream gender equality strongly in peace and conflict resolution. FELM's work in Myanmar collaborates with women's groups in its peace project. CMI has supported a longstanding network of civil society partners, thereby strengthening the capacity of local communities and their leaders to respond to new political and security realities following full-scale conflict (Wadley, 2024). The European Institute for Peace (EIP) project facilitated light coordination meetings with NGOs involved in promoting the peace process in Syria, with the process itself and the willingness of stakeholders to participate already considered as positive



outcomes (Berts, 2016). In addition, some projects directly facilitated dialogue, for example, between government and opposition affiliates in Syria (EIP), and connected local civil society with diplomats to help prepare the next generation of political leaders for potential future roles (CMI). In Somalia, the Finn Church Aid (FCA) project reported improved effectiveness and performance of government institutions in promoting reconciliation, such as through engagement with district councils and resolving inter-clan conflict – an assessment confirmed by some interviews. Notably, 65% of residents participated in reconciliation dialogues led by government institutions (FCA, Somalia Country Office, 2025).

Furthermore, Finland has contributed to making existing peace processes more inclusive by promoting the role of women in peace-making, strategically engaging with women and women's groups (CMI), and organising women's participation in light coordination meetings. The FCA programme increased inclusion and participation, with women, youth, and marginalised groups taking leadership roles and contributing to stronger governance in Somalia. Inclusive district councils, with diverse clan representation and one-third female members, fostered trust and transparency. In more than ten African countries, Finnish interventions with the African Union provided training, capacity building, and the sharing of good practices and lessons learned to strengthen institutional capacities for peace work and broaden awareness on mediation; however, the concrete outcomes of this initiative could not be traced in the practices of the beneficiaries.

Key success factors within the area of control of the ToC, have emerged:

- Strong rights-based, intersectional analysis (Finding 7).
- Strong context analysis and context monitoring (Finding 7).
- Strong outreach and targeting of rights holder throughout programming and delivery (Finding 8).
- Adaptive management with like-minded partners (Finding 9).
- Complementarity with other like-minded donors which yield strategic alliances to amplify Finland's contribution, as envisaged by the reconstructed ToC (Finding 10).
- Multi-stakeholder engagement, early government buy-in, sustained engagement, and governance mainstreaming (Findings 11, 12, 13).
- Partner-led implementation, which maximises CSOs' comparative advantage in reaching remote areas, though with varying results (Finding 14, 15, 16).

Finding 6: PPA3 results are coherent under Outcomes 1, 2, and 3, which are synergetic; however, the synergetic potential of Outcome 4 is underused.

PPA 3 outcomes 1, 2, and even more so outcome 3 dominate the portfolio with respectively 163, 197, and 270 interventions. These three outcomes are tightly intertwined in Finland's programming. The portfolio analysis shows that many interventions tagged as relevant to PPA3 tackle two or more outcomes, especially among interventions above the budget threshold, and that these combinations happen primarily among the first three outcomes of PPA3:

- 99 interventions have contributed to two or more outcomes
- 14 interventions have contributed to outcomes 1 + 2
- 9 interventions have contributed to outcomes 1+3



- 64 interventions have contributed to outcomes 2+3
- 9 interventions have contributed to outcomes 1+2+3
- 8 interventions have been tagged to the outcome 4 and another outcome(s)

Outcome 4 stands alone. While most interventions in the portfolio showed important overlaps between outcomes 1, 2, and 3 (whether or not they were formally tagged to these outcomes), Outcome 4 was often tackled alone, and is hardly represented in multi-outcome interventions. Only 16 interventions, out of which only 8 interventions combining outcome 4 with another outcome. Besides, while the interventions tackling outcomes 1, 2, and 3 are geographically spread, those targeting outcome 4 are heavily tilted towards Africa, as confirmed by the 2023 Evaluation of Finland's Initiatives focused on enhanced DRM (Annex 5, Vaillant et al. [2023]). Outcomes 2 and 3 dominate the set of interventions directly relevant to institutions and good governance, suggesting that conflict sensitivity (including conflicts internal to societies, and between countries) could be expanded upon, especially in view of the threats posed to a rule-based international order.

Lesson learned – PFM as a coherent but isolated endeavour in PPA3

PFM as supported by Finland aims to foster fiscal justice, and service delivery. It is highly aligned with the rest of PPA 3, considering PFM through the prism of rights-holders' economic and social rights. In this sub-theme, HRBA also acts as a cohesive factor for Finland's PPA3 portfolio.

However, that it is coherent does not imply it is synergetic. Potential synergies remain underused due to the relative isolation of PFM efforts within the entire PPA 3 portfolio. Potential links with good governance/democracy/RoL through public administration reform and anti-corruption are not acknowledged nor used. The holistic approach of PPA3 has not reached its potential. For instance, the documentation (including evaluation) of the UONGOZI Institute Project in Tanzania revealed weaknesses in the ToC, because it did not sufficiently factorise the effects of corruption on decision-making at all levels.

This sort of shortcoming is not specific to Finland.

However, loss of interest in this already isolated topic compounds the shortcoming. For instance, the programme SOMO Africa, focused on tax programming in Sub-Saharan Africa for just revenue mobilisation, appears to be losing traction, whereas partners perceive a de-prioritisation.

Finland's interventions tend to blend PPA3 objectives and to combine them with more technical ones. When analysing the objectives of interventions within the portfolio, the team observes that many interventions combine participation and civil society objectives, with institutional support and good governance objectives. Recurrently, these objectives are tied to development-oriented technical support: water and sanitation (land administration in Ethiopia; water and sanitation or rural income-generating activities in Nepal; natural resources and ores in Mozambique; alignment with national development plans while supporting Roma women in East/South-East Europe...). The reason why the MFA and its partners weave PPA3-related objectives and outcomes together is that they consider them synergetic with one another and with development outcomes.

Firstly, PPA3 outcomes, and the objectives related to institutional support/good governance, and civil society, are seen and presented as mutually dependent in the documentation and interviews. This is particularly the case of Outcomes 2 and 3 of PPA3. The analytical sections of project/programme documents, as well as the periodic reports and some project evaluations, recurrently explain how good governance depends on a vibrant civil society; how civil society



participation requires democratic institutions; how human development cannot go without anti-discrimination and inclusion, which in turn hinge on an HRBA.

Quote – MFA official

“Unless [a commodity] is managed democratically and inclusively, the right to it for all, which we support, will become the entitlement and leverage of some. The only way to provide support access to a commodity is through inclusive governance and HRBA – but technical support is also a good entry door to governance and HRBA.”

Secondly, the results achieved in one area tend to boost results in other objectives or outcomes. This is confirmed by the analysis of our large sample of projects. In line with the findings and conclusions of the HRBA Evaluation, the analysis of the sample shows the interrelatedness of the different outcomes. Transformative change is more likely among interventions which combine (i) strengthening the participation of rights-holders and civil society, and (ii) strengthening key institutions and good governance by duty-bearers. Country portfolios of interventions which tackle several PPA3 outcomes and related objectives have, in some cases, lent resilience to Finland’s support to democracy, human rights and rule of law in the face of adverse factors, such as in Myanmar.

Example – Myanmar: a multi-pronged approach to outcomes 1, 2, and 3 of PPA3 in a highly adverse context

Finland’s portfolio in Myanmar shows a combination of results in the areas of constitutional law and practice (outcome 1); peace dialogue (outcome 1); judicial reform and bottom-up access to justice (outcome 2); access to human rights with an intersectional approach (outcomes 1, 2, and 3); investigation and redress for gross violations with an intersectional approach (outcomes 1 and 2); protection of human rights defenders (outcomes 1 and 2); political participation of women as well as women (outcome 3), peace and security (outcome 1 and 3). This combination was assessed as particularly challenging when overt conflict started in 2021, resulting in the inaccessibility of certain areas and a severe backslide in democracy, rule of law, and civic participation. Policy-level dialogue proved near impossible for a protracted period of time, particularly when applying an intersectional approach (e.g., regarding the Rohingya minority and persons with disabilities.) Yet Finland and its partners did their utmost to maintain their engagement in all key thematic areas of outcomes 1, 2, and 3, with intersectionality and inclusion built in. By working bottom-up, and often directly with rights holders and with practitioners (e.g., in the justice system), it created some precedents of dialogue and inclusion efforts, and it achieved some results within institutional or geographic “pockets”, when it was no longer feasible to elicit progress at the national level. Only outcome 4 was not covered, whether before or after 2021.

Thirdly, these objectives and outcomes are sometimes conflated, with fluid boundaries between each outcome. Interviews with the MFA and implementing partners, as well as the analysis of programme and project documents, point out that the MFA actors and their partners and counterparts, see PPA3 as a whole, rather than a set of sub-themes.

Underpinning this integrated approach is the HRBA. Human rights, or specific rights under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (such as non-discrimination, and freedom of speech,



assembly and association) are cited several times in the ToC of PPA3, at output and assumption levels. The MFA's policy documents on Democracy and HRBA make human rights the basis and compass of all interventions, and the responsibility of all in the Ministry and amongst its partners. Virtually all interviews demonstrate that the HRBA is strongly internalised by the staff. Stemming from it and from the non-discrimination principles, gender equality, social inclusion, and the right to participate in decision-making underpin the design of all sampled interventions, regardless of their stated goals. The HRBA is therefore understood as the ultimate source of other MFA policies, which cements the strong links between (1) providing technical support for development-related resources and utilities in a human rights-compliant way, (2) support to human rights-compliant democratic governance and rule of law, and (3) support to inclusive civic and political participation. While these aspects are not always fully explicit in reporting, they are strongly articulated in project/programme documents, in interviews, and in the deliverables examined (training and guidance material, awareness raising...). This is consistent with the findings of the HRBA evaluation (Christoplos et al., 2023).

Finland often presents its own development story and model of society to its partners as one that is based on inclusive construction and governance of the country's institutions and polity, as well as an inclusive approach to sharing the resources and assets of the country. For instance, the interventions which organised study visits to Finland for Parliamentarians (e.g. from Mozambique) have put the limelight on multi-party democracy, consensus building, and compromise seeking among all political forces in Finland. The support afforded to Finnish NGOs from across Finland's political and social spectrum has exposed CSO representatives from partner countries (e.g. in the Balkans, East Africa, Asia) to a similarly inclusive model, and to gender transformative approaches in these CSO's actions internally within their own governance, in Finland through domestic actions, and abroad through international cooperation. The flipside of this exposure is the occasional criticism by partners, especially among the youth, regarding the limited replicability of the Finnish model in unstable, fragile, or culturally different environments.

Quote – CSO partner

“We had some trainers from Finland participating in our programs, who were obviously unfamiliar with the [partner country] context: they come, they train, they and speak about issues that are completely non-relevant to the [partner country] youth. But they learn too.”

Finding 7: Rights holder-focused analysis, when performed, directly feeds into programming.

Most project and programme documents contain rights-based analysis of the gaps and barriers faced by rights-holders, particularly the most vulnerable, in accessing their rights and participating in democratic governance. This is in line with the HRBA and contributes to PPA3 being programmed and delivered through the lens of rights holders' rights and interests. It is also a condition for relevance. The evaluation identified three main avenues that increase relevance to rights holders:

- Context analysis, including legal, policy, institutional, political and social aspects
- Conflict analysis in applicable situations
- Human rights, gender and inclusion analysis
- Consultation or co-creation with rights holders and/or their representatives



Based on coding results, the sampled interventions perform mostly well on analysis-based and consultation-based programming, with some variations. While the MFA places high emphasis on these aspects when selecting proposals, interventions perform differently on these aspects depending on the partner and the intervention phase. Tendentially, analysis is stronger at the design phase, while consultation is more obvious at implementation stage, when deciding on the details of activities.

Quote - MFA official

“The requirements to conduct analyses during the intervention design phase, are one of the selection criteria. When it comes to practical arrangements during the implementation phase, that’s where we could have more attention. After the planning phase (...), it becomes vaguer how the level of human rights is looked at.”

Quote - NGO partner:

“There have been significant adaptations in the program, but they were usually accepted by the MFA, especially when it is caused by the changed context. MFA puts a lot of emphasis on risks, especially contextual, and it is very good, particularly for Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova.”

The first tier of sampled projects offers in-depth context, gender, human rights and inclusion analysis, sometimes intersectional: examples include Elections in Tanzania and Ethiopia, Frontline Defenders (which also regularly updates its analysis), Roma Women’s Power (with activities of the project dedicated to continued analysis, and co-creation of activities with the rights holders), water and sanitation projects in Nepal, among others. Some of these rely on intensive consultations, such as the DEMO Finland programmes (with factfinding missions) or interventions implemented by KIOS. Others go as far as co-creation of outputs and activities with the rights holders (e.g. several water and sanitation projects, media support by Vikes in several countries). In the election support project in Ethiopia, the importance of MFA supporting and cooperating also directly with NGOs was seen as a clear added value for the whole project and possible future cooperation.

Good practices:

Grassroots initiatives supported by Abilis and KIOS

For Abilis, community ownership is at the core of its operating principle: initiatives originate from disability groups themselves, and the work is carried out, planned and managed by persons with disabilities in the programme countries. KIOS also supports directly small grassroots CSOs defending human rights in Eastern African and South Asia.

Intersectional analysis and local leadership in climate change vulnerability project in Nepal

The Local Adaptation to Climate Change Project in Nepal funded by the EU, Finland and Nepal applies explicit intersectional approach by disaggregating beneficiaries across several vulnerability dimensions (gender, caste/Dalit status, disability, indigenous identity, geography, family structure, and socio-economic status) as “all these factors are interlinked, and climate change multiplies them” (project team interview). This intersectional analysis informs also quotas for participation (“no women, no meeting; no Dalit, no meeting”). Local leadership is stressed, with communities managing procurement processes, improving transparency, ownership, and sustainability of the project. Improved water access has led to time savings



for women, reducing conflicts and vulnerability to violence in the family. However, reaching persons with disabilities remains a challenge: “To ensure they participate is very difficult, when they can’t even get out of their houses. At least we consider disability in the design of facilities and their maintenance. Disability is an issue of shame in many areas. So, you can’t count Persons with Disabilities (PwDs), as households won’t identify as such. But if you target fragile elderly for the design of toilets, it’s an entry door, more acceptable.” (CSO Interview)

Women’s political participation in Tanzania

UN Women’s programme “Women’s Political Participation in Tanzania” applied in-depth human rights, gender and inclusion analysis both at the design and implementation phases. Design process was consultative and participatory, involving grassroots actors and parliamentary caucuses, and using the evaluation results of the first phase to engage with the identified enablers and barriers for women’s political participation. Continuous gender and normative legal analysis, for instance of election related laws, were included integrally throughout implementation. Persons with disabilities were involved in these law review processes, and inter-generational dialogues were organised between senior and younger women leaders.

Another tier of projects and programmes performs strong context analysis with less detail on human rights, gender, and inclusion analysis from rights holders’ perspective: typically, those implemented by IOs (e.g. UNDP Widening access to justice in Kyrgyzstan, IOM project in Somalia), but also NGOs (SOMO Africa, Kenya Uraia Trust). This tier of projects tends to consult more with duty-bearers, at least as much as with rights-holders (interviews and document review, for instance, demonstrate broad consultation by UNDP in Kyrgyzstan, though there is no evidence this amounted to co-creation.)

A minority of interventions present a much lighter analysis on all fronts, such as the contribution to the World Bank Trust Fund.

Finding 8: Programming and delivery prioritise rights holder support.

As a result of the investment into analysis and consultations, the MFA’s support to human rights, rule of law and democracy tends to perform well on localisation and outreach, including comparatively stronger in than in other donors’ (Mc Kellar et al, 2024). In most cases, the link between this analysis and the actions proposed is clear. Projects and programmes identify the most vulnerable among rights holders, and analyses inclusion barriers. The projects and programmes then usually work with these rights-holders themselves, and/or organisations representing them or their interests, and/or relevant duty-bearers.

Lesson learned – In rare cases, the link between human rights analysis, inclusion analysis, and intervention design is unclear

There are a few exceptions such as the project on support to elections in Ethiopia: while it contains a strong HRBA, its actions mostly engage duty-bearers, possibly diluting tangible effects for rights-holders. The project documentation is not precise on whether and how vulnerable groups and regions will be included.



The deep dive in Nepal showcased prioritisation of the most vulnerable, with a strong intersectional approach – a recurrent remark in interviews with all different types of interviewees. This proved particularly relevant in a society characterised by multiple factors of inequality, exclusion, and vulnerability (rural/urban areas, mountainous/lowland areas, caste system, presence of indigenous communities, labour bondage practices, untouchability, gender inequalities, etc). Finnish interventions in Nepal study such factors through national, local, or international partners, and systematically identify the groups which most vulnerable and underserved by other donors or by public authorities. This intentional prioritisation benefits from years of practice, giving Finland's interventions in PPA3 in the country an uncommon edge and often ensuring a high level of ownership.

Good practice – intersectional approach in WASH project in Nepal

In Nepal, the Sustainable WASH for all (SUSWA) is a human rights progressive WASH project funded by the Governments of Nepal and Finland, and the EU since 2022. SUSWA addresses intersectional forms of discrimination related to gender, caste, ethnicity, disability, and geographic marginalisation. Municipalities are guided to develop Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) action plans and gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) processes. However, this GRB guideline was also described as too technical and complex, needing to be simplified and translated into minority languages for it to be implemented. At community level, inclusive structures such as Water Users and Sanitation Committees ensure representation of women, Dalits, Janajatis and sometimes PwDs, eventually influencing decisions alongside other community members. Achieved tangible improvements include notably the construction of gender and disability-friendly WASH infrastructure in schools, improving the attendance of girls during their menstrual periods, and removing some of the barriers of children with disabilities in attending school (Mikkola, 2024).

The high level of analysis and prioritisation of rights holders explains the grassroots and bottom-up intervention design visible in the programmes and projects. In many sampled projects this approach directly determined the nature of the project:

- **Community-based governance projects**, such as the management of water and sanitation directly by users. An example is the creation of water and sanitation users' committees in schools and in villages in two different projects in Nepal.

Good practice – Water management, WASH school/community groups Nepal.

The documentation and interviews with various stakeholders (CSO representatives, Finnish MFA staff, Government actors) confirm that in these cases, the committees are established in an inclusive way: school girls, rural women in remote communities, persons with disabilities and/or their caregivers – all under-served group with specific barriers to access their right to dignified menstruation – are purposefully engaged in these committees whose role is to contribute to defining the terms of reference of the equipment provided, to manage the use of the equipment, and to secure its maintenance, in coordination with local authorities.

In Nepal, the SUSWA project (mentioned above) embeds community participation throughout the project cycle: Water Users and Sanitation Committees and Total Sanitation Task Forces lead local needs assessments where community members participate in identifying needs, gaps, and household demands for sanitation. Public participatory monitoring and audits must take place before funds are released for the next phase. These community structures also



manage and oversee WASH services, monitoring progress and setting targets for sanitation access.

Another project in Nepal, the Local Adaptation to Climate Change Project (LACCP), engages communities directly to identify climate risks related to intersectional vulnerabilities around gender, caste, disability, geography or social status. Consultation at provincial and local levels has also included indigenous communities, including preservation of indigenous knowledge, such as indigenous water mills. Community members and user committees co-design interventions by assessing local water, irrigation and agroforestry needs. The project applies community-led procurement model where user committees plan, lead and transparently manage natural resources. This includes procurement, tariff setting, and accountability to their communities. Communities collectively decide materials, works and procurement procedures. Community-level actors participate in monitoring environmental and social impacts, and hold local authorities accountable through community-raised concerns on pollution and safety.

- **Community-inclusive governance** which builds on existing local authorities' structures. Such projects seek transformative results to make existing decision-making mechanisms more inclusive, particularly for the most vulnerable. Examples include the support for elections and human rights in Tanzania, or the project on Roma Women's Power.

Good practice – citizen participation of marginalised groups through social audits

Social audits involving communities and CSOs strengthen the rightsholders ability to demand duty-bearers for accountability. In Mozambique, Civic Engagement and Human Rights project promoted citizen participation and inclusion of marginalised groups in monitoring of education, sexual and reproductive health, and revenues from the extractive sector allocated to communities. Governance monitoring tools included budget analysis on national and provincial levels, budget expenditure tracking (e.g. distribution of schoolbooks and desks), as well as a social audit assessing the quality of school infrastructure, water and sanitation services, and health infrastructure. Problems found in schools and health facilities were presented to district governments who promised to integrate them in their work plan.

- **Support to categories of rights holders** such as victims of human rights violations, or persons with disabilities. This is typically done through local partners who represent the rights of the target groups, as is the case in Ethiopia for persons with disabilities (Bridge the Gap programme). Other examples feature access to justice for rights holders.

Examples – Justice support targeting rights-holders directly are more frequent than those targeting duty-bearers

In Nepal, efforts in the judicial sphere mostly target specific groups of rights-holders as end beneficiaries, with a view to strengthening their capacity to seek redress in case of human rights violations (Haliyas, indigenous communities, victims of war crimes and crimes against humanity). Concretely, these interventions support CSOs of lawyers representing the target groups in both advocacy, free legal aid, and litigation (e.g. Lawyers' associations of indigenous communities or persons in labour bondage, International Commission of Jurists).



A similar approach is observed in Myanmar (double-check in coding results), and in the Balkans.

Comparatively, there is little done on judicial reform itself. Core funding to the Council of Europe and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), as well as the Rule of Law Centre programme, indicate the MFA's interest in this area; however, it remains under-represented in specific projects and programmes. An exception is the justice support implemented by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in Kyrgyzstan which targeted both legal aid (demand side) and capacity building (supply side), with annual intervention design starts with consultations with civil society, human rights organisations, organisations of PwDs, expert community, and the academia. However, interviews and document review reveal the difficulties and dilemmas attached to justice reform support in countries which feature important human rights gaps as is the case in Central Asia (based on the Universal Periodic Review).

- **Support to partners that inform communities** to boost bottom-up advocacy and participation in informed decision-making. These supported partners include CSOs, media, or research institutes. They typically contribute to good governance and inclusion on technical or practical topics (e.g. Mozambique, Nepal)

At the same time, the relationship nurtured with authorities, especially at local level (witnessed in Nepal, and repeatedly reported in Ethiopia, Mozambique, Kenya), ensures Finland and its partners are enabled to work with communities. Except in the most adverse environments (e.g. Myanmar following the 2021 coup d'état, Honduras), there have been no reports of failure to reach a compromise with authorities for the implementation of activities. In Nepal, several public officials highlighted their appreciation of Finland's readiness to take the time and dedicate sufficient human resources to maintaining a dialogue with decision-makers relevant to its projects and programmes on PPA 3. This is a unique strength.

However, capacity building provided to duty-bearers is comparably weaker than capacity building for rights holders and their champions/heralds. While some projects feature strong capacity building for national authorities (e.g., REILA II in Ethiopia, migration authorities in Somalia), the review of sampled projects worldwide, and the deep dive in Nepal revealed a comparatively lower frequency of duty-bearer support than rights holder support, particularly at national level. This is in part because State-level institutional strengthening is resource-intensive and already supported by larger donors, as explained in Nepal by interviewees representing various types of actors: Finland is not perceived a donor that champions large State reforms. Instead, it is seen and self-identified as supporting bottom-up transformational changes which dovetail large reforms supported by other donors. The link between localised/community/municipal level, and national level, can be improved.



Finding 9: Shared democratic values and the diversity of instruments foster synergies between MFA structures and their partners, though funding cuts and double-edged role of large intermediaries curtail the high-level benefits of partnerships

The MFA and its partners mutually recognise and select each other based not only on opportunity and technical criteria, but also on common values which are at the core of human rights, democracy, and rule of law. Through long-term cooperation, Finland has nurtured a broad range of partners from among large CSOs with global span, national and community-based CSOs, academia, technical-level civil servants, and local authorities. Interviews and the reports prepared by partners themselves demonstrate these partners' ownership of the values championed by Finland, in particular gender equality and social inclusion. This ownership grows as cooperation extends. Because they were compatible from the start, the partnership reinforces the importance of these common values. This trend, in turn, strengthens partnership with Finland, and among partners, with strong potential for strategic alliances.

Quote – CSO in Nepal

“The pillars of our strategic plan are aligned with [Finnish NGO's], and with the Finnish Embassy, simply because our visions are similar. It's not intentional, it's just that we have similar visions.”

Quote – CSO in Africa

“Finland has a unique way of doing things: they use a soft approach with meaningful results. This makes them more trusted: it's a stronger partnership approach. Finland is more a partner than a donor, which is instrumental for us in terms of getting to results.”

Quote – UN agency

“Finland has been like the other Nordic states, a trusted strategic partner (...) Finland has been one of the development partners insisting to really gender mainstream. Finland is keen on disability inclusion. [We are] all about intersectionality, and so is Finland: geographical location, caste, class, disability, religion, gender identity. It's a shared value.”

Quote – another donor

“In [Finland's] interventions, human rights, democracy, gender equality, and social inclusion are really very strongly integrated: it's not an accident, it's a feature. Their outreach to most remote places is partly an intension, partly the result of them being complementary with others who go to the more easily accessible places. That's not necessarily the most efficient, to go to the most remote places, but in terms of inclusion it is coherent.”

Such alliances rely on predictability: mixed messages, withdrawals or downsizing from several countries, put them at high risk. In some cases, it has suffered from the redirection of priorities from low- and middle-income countries in Africa and Asia to the EU enlargement areas, as well as occasional conflicting messages to key partners regarding thematic priorities, reporting standards (e.g. qualitative vs. quantitative outlook), and transparency (with recurrent reference to unpublished evaluation reports), as reported by several partners in Nepal and globally, and acknowledged by some MFA officials.



The variety of instruments has given Finland versatility to adjust to diverse partners, from LCFs which easily reach community CSOs, to core support to Finnish NGOs, multilateral support to the UN, OSCE/Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) or the Council of Europe, and bilateral support reaching like-minded initiatives by partner governments. Headquarter-led long-term programming and Embassy projects complemented by networking and dialogue, are complementary. However, this variety also creates differences and de facto hierarchy among partners for human rights, democracy, and rule of law. There is a divide, and at times a rivalry, between and among Finnish NGOs receiving Democracy and Rule of Law (core) support, and those receiving CSO (project-based or programme-based), whose reasoning is not clear to all, though upwards mobility has taken place for some partners, e.g., by moving from project-based to programme-based support. There is also a divide between headquarter-supported partners, and those supported directly by Embassies, who see their partnership with Finland as more uncertain in the long run.

Good practice – continuous programme adjustments based on evidence and analysis

“This is the uniqueness of Finland: the project design was demand driven. We did not have to respond to a fixed tender, unlike with other donors who only listen to beneficiaries once the tender is won and the program is launched. This means ownership problems. In contrast, Finland asked for beneficiary consultations, which we led, mapping needs before the project was designed. And after we received the first funds, there was a dedicated adjustment period: a first phase to adjust the program design in the middle of the first semester, a second adjustment period within the Steering Committee, which is a great practice. The Steering Committee looked at the political context and decided what adjustments were needed. We made proposals, and the Embassy and MFA approved our adjustments because they were based on evidence and analysis. Finally, at the end of each year there is a new adjustment moment. It pushes us not only to adjust, but also to analyse and to learn together.” (CSO in Africa)

Channelling support through Finnish and international NGOs is generally viewed positively, while feedback is mixed as regards multilateral organisations. The key advantage of these actors, compared to local actors, is their stronger ability to combine several outcomes in a single project, such as direct support to rights holders and capacity building of government duty-bearers (e.g., International Commission of Jurists project on Achieving justice for gross human rights violations, or WaterFinns WASH project, both in Nepal). These are also conducive for multi-CPs (e.g. Red Cross), even when they do not have staff on the ground for example on human rights defender and journalist protection (e.g. by Front Line Defenders, VIKES). This advantage is particularly high in authoritarian and/or fragile contexts. However, for example in the election support project in Ethiopia, the importance of MFA supporting and cooperating also directly with Ethiopian CSOs was seen as a clear added value for the whole project and possible future cooperation. The deep dive in Nepal demonstrated a general demand to cut one layer of partnership, with some though this demand was aimed at any donor, not specific to Finnish funding. Some interviewees deplored aggressive fundraising strategies of a few UN organisations (e.g. UN Women, UNDP).



Quote– Public official met in Nepal:

“Those who write nice proposals and nice reports get the funding – not the CSOs who really work at community level providing services. And women-led NGOs rarely get donor funding. The big donors choose to partner with UN agencies and INGOs. (...) Most of the money goes to the administration of the go-between, while little money reaches the communities. The community CSOs complain of that. And INGOs now register as Nepalese NGOs to be eligible for international funding – when they really are INGOs. They compete for local donor funding and they dry out the funding for genuine local NGOs even more.”

Quote – Young activist met in Nepal:

“Those NGOs working with people are few (...) the good ones are simply not visible and don't have access to international support. It takes money to prepare applications and get donations.”

LCFs have been particularly valued as a low-cost, effective instrument for support. Recurrent interviews and the coding of project documents show that they efficiently build issue-based and value-based strategic alliances, while multiplying Finland's access to information, to remote locations, and to communities. Their ending is widely viewed as a lost opportunity for more direct, traceable, efficient change, which funding through Finnish NGOs could only partly bridge. This finding is corroborated by the Review of MFA's Support to Human Rights INGOs (MFA, 2026): while the report recognises the added value of INGOs in supporting local and grassroots CSOs and linking them to international advocacy, it also highlights how this potential is further enhanced by Embassies' direct support and evidence-based policy dialogue, especially in challenging contexts where FLC are discontinued.

Finding 10: PPA3 positions Finland as a constructive player in complex and changing donor constellations.

Interviewees do not consider Finland to be a major or highly influential donor, but rather as a respected actor whose voice is taken seriously. Compared to that of other donors such as the EU and, until 2025, the US, Finland's funding directed to human rights, democracy and rule of law, remains modest. However, it has been constant, dependable, and paired with consistent participation in all dialogue platforms relevant to PPA3:

- At global level, e.g., multilateral diplomacy, where it has pushed CCOs (HRBA evaluation). An example is the UN Human Rights Council, where Finland has been especially active in promoting the rights of persons from marginalised group (Crawford et al, 2021).
- At regional level, e.g., active participation in the EU, OSCE, and the Council of Europe. During its EU Presidency and the NDICI negotiations, Finland successfully mainstreamed human rights, gender, and social inclusion (Miettinen, 2019)
- At country level, e.g. chairing donors' coordination committees and working groups on good governance and human rights. In Ukraine, Finland supported the OSCE and the Council of Europe to strengthen specialised human rights institutions and watchdogs, with limited financial contribution multiplied by in-kind contributions (secondments), expertise, and policy dialogue (Lehtinen, 2022).



Example – a joint strategy on human rights and democracy in Nepal

In Nepal, the EU and its Member States adopted a Human Rights and Democracy Country Strategy 2021-2025, now extended until 2027. The document is based on joint analysis and identification of common priorities. The EU Delegation and Member States present on the ground, including Finland, developed the document jointly, and used it to identify the strengths of each Member State, to avoid duplication. Finland is the key contributor to the Delegation's annual reporting on the strategy for the EU Commission, complemented by two other Member States.

This dialogue and alignment practice matches the co-funding of three projects by the EU and Finland.

Finland uses the Team Europe approach (TEA) to promote PPA3 objectives. Interviewees who are familiar with Finland's initiatives relevant to this evaluation consistently identify Finnish support within larger groups of donors. By utilising EU development cooperation funds, Finland has complemented EU-funded large investments (such as lending, blending, guarantees, and major grants) with more targeted grants, following the TEA. Finland often ensures that like-minded donors (Team Europe actors, UN) keep PPA3 issues on the agenda, in line with its obligations as an EU Member State, deriving from Article 21 of the Treaty on the European Union. This approach also enables like-minded individuals in other donor institutions to advocate within their headquarters for PPA3 priorities: human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. In at least one case (Nepal), Finland's role was reported as instrumental, as other actors may not have felt empowered to champion these issues without Finland voicing its position and, at times, its concerns. However, there are counter-examples where other EU Member States have taken the lead in promoting the mainstreaming of PPA3 principles, such as the Zambia Team Europe Initiative on critical raw materials.

Quote - Other donor

"Finland is the most committed EU Member State here regarding human rights and democracy. They reach out to remote parts of the country, which is a great added value to a TEA on democracy. They embed these issues in all their interventions and are open to cooperation with civil society. Good complementarity with us."

Quote - International NGO

"Finland's government in Brussels, we can rely on them, they are pushing for human rights defenders' protection."

Finland's position on the issues it champions under PPA3 is often seen as a barometer of trends within the democracy, human rights, and rule of law sphere. This is partly because Finland anticipates potential risks in civic space and tightening election observation rules: "...how they work is so prophetic. They are looking to the future so they could foresee the problem" (interview with a local CSO).

It is also because Finland is recognised as a donor that uses its diplomatic weight to defend politically sensitive questions around gender, human rights defenders, corporate accountability, or election integrity. However, uneven levels of attention are given to sub-themes and CCOs (e.g. GEWE, and disability issues are emphasised, while climate receives less focus).



Across interviews, Finland’s brand is equated with principled strategic partnership, rather than a transactional approach, conferring it a seat at the table above its weight category, whereas some donors drift away from human rights and democratic values. Finland is described as consistently pushing to include civil society, the most marginalised groups and particularly gender equality and disability inclusion considerations in all negotiation tables, providing principled inputs and strategic advice to its peers. Finland is also described as an approachable and honest partner who understands the need to adapt. In contrast to the rigidity of some larger donors, Finland is recognised for providing “full understanding and support” and demonstrating “enormous flexibility and adaptability in the changing context” (interview with an intergovernmental organisation).

4.3 Evaluation Question 3: How has Finland promoted strengthening institutions and good governance, and what kind of successes and/or challenges have there been in achieving the objectives set for this sub-theme?”

The evaluation found that Finland’s interventions supporting institutions and good governance have been relevant to targeted institutions and rights-holders, but alignment with Finland’s overall ToC has been uneven. Interventions contributed to more participatory and responsive governance, increased transparency, and stronger policy frameworks, while strengthening the functional capacity of selected institutions. However, there is limited evidence of contribution to broader systemic reform at the national level. Effectiveness was greatest where programmes combined multi-stakeholder engagement, early government buy-in, sustained engagement, and governance mainstreaming across sector programmes. Lessons from these approaches were not always systematically shared across programmes. External political and institutional risks, as well as shifting contextual conditions, were not sufficiently considered, which may have affected the sustainability of results.

Finding 11: Interventions supporting institutions and good governance have been relevant to target groups, but alignment with Finland’s ToC is uneven.

Finland’s interventions supporting institutions and good governance have generally been relevant to targeted institutions and to the rights-holders. Most project documents indicate that context assessments have informed the design of institutional strengthening and good governance interventions and helped ensure relevance. Through these assessments and interviews, implementing partners demonstrate sound familiarity with the socio-political context in which interventions operate, which is essential for ensuring relevance. In cases lacking comprehensive written context assessment, this was often mitigated by the long-term nature of the projects and programmes, which frequently built on earlier phases implemented in the same environment. When context and risks assessments showed particular weaknesses, these were often related to



how issues of corruption and vested interests had been assessed or left out of the assessments altogether.

Consultations have often involved a broad range of institutions and organisations involved in or affected by an intervention, even though it has not been standard practice to ensure relevance by engaging rights-holders in the design of the governance interventions.

Good practice – community involvement in access to justice in Kyrgyzstan

UNDP project “Widening Access to Justice for Legal Empowerment in the Kyrgyz Republic” (2014-2025) demonstrates strong community-level participation by involving civil society, legal clinics, and organisations of PwDs in both needs assessment and the co-design of annual workplans. Management was further decentralised by establishing district and oblast coordination platforms and 15 local coordination councils on disability rights, bringing state bodies, local governments, NGOs, legal clinics and paralegals to jointly oversee services and referral mechanisms, institutionalising civil society’s role in day-to-day management of legal aid provision. Moreover, 15 district-level coordination councils of PwD rights were created and run with Organisations of PwDs and local authorities, increasing PwD appeals to legal aid by ~200% in each district.

Finnish development cooperation emphasises mainstreaming of governance principles across sector programmes to a greater extent than it supports stand-alone governance reforms. The number of interventions that have focused on systemic institutional transformation or structural reform has been limited, but many technical assistance programmes in sectors such as natural resource management, health, and disaster risk management have incorporated governance considerations.

Alignment with Finland’s own development cooperation objectives, as outlined in Finland’s ToC for the Priority Area Peaceful democratic societies, appears uneven. In particular, limited attention has been given to strengthening judicial institutions despite their central role in the ToC. Apart from the work of the Rule of Law Centre, there are few initiatives that directly and significantly address the capacity of justice sector institutions such as police, prosecution services, and courts. Instead, Finnish support has more commonly focused on other aspects of the rule of law, including efforts to improve legal and regulatory frameworks related to service delivery, with an emphasis on good governance principles, often at the local level.

Finland’s objective of strengthening the capacity and willingness of political decision-makers and authorities to promote democracy and the rule of law has received more attention than the objective of strengthening judicial institutions. A range of interventions have focused on enhancing decision-makers’ capacities in areas prioritised in Finnish development cooperation, including human rights, gender equality, and the rights of persons with disabilities. Finland has also supported broader initiatives aiming at strengthening governance skills required for democratic decision-making.

MFA’s support to strengthening of judicial institutions has remained limited compared to other aspects of the rule of law.



These initiatives are often intentionally targeted to promote the inclusion of women and marginalised and vulnerable populations into democratic institutions, including PwDs, frequently applying an intersectional perspective. Notably, Finland has been an important contributor to UN Women's efforts to strengthen women's political participation through leadership training, mentoring, and support related to campaigning and media engagement. When judicial institutions, government authorities, or political decision-makers have received support, it has often taken the form of awareness-raising or short-term training on human rights issues, including women's rights and the rights of persons with disabilities.

Although decentralisation is an explicit objective in Finnish policy documents, support has rarely taken the form of comprehensive government-wide decentralisation reforms. Instead, many interventions work closely with local authorities and aim to strengthen citizens' influence over local service delivery. This local-level engagement has often been embedded within national policy frameworks. The evaluation team found no examples of project implementers bypassing formal government approval processes, which helped secure ownership and buy-in.

Finland-supported interventions have tended to emphasise the demand side of governance, accountability mechanisms, and access to justice. Efforts have often focused more on strengthening rights-holders' ability to claim justice and services than on strengthening duty-bearers' institutional capacity to deliver them. Activities promoting interaction between civil society actors and public institutions, particularly at the local level, have therefore been a prominent feature of Finnish support. Within the justice sector, this demand-side orientation is reflected in support to national and international CSOs working on legal aid, legal empowerment, legal assistance, and human rights advocacy. Where Finland has worked directly with government institutions, interventions have in several cases focused on ensuring citizens' access to legal aid.

Finding 12: Interventions contributed to more participatory and responsive governance, increased transparency, and stronger policy frameworks, with gains in functional capacity in selected institutions but limited evidence of national-level systemic reform.

The governance results to which Finland has contributed reflect the demand-side orientation, mainstreaming approach, and strong involvement of civil society that characterise its programming, centred on inclusive, participatory, and responsive governance. Finnish support has successfully strengthened dialogue and interaction between public authorities and civil society actors, frequently giving voice to women and marginalised groups. In some cases, this engagement has contributed to more inclusive national level governance processes. More commonly, however, interventions have contributed to changes at the local level, strengthening mechanisms through which citizens, particularly representatives of marginalised groups, can engage with decision-makers and influence public services. Many interventions have adopted multilayered approaches that combine efforts to strengthen citizens' capacity to engage with authorities at the same time as they enhance the capacity of authorities to engage in meaningful consultations and set up platforms and processes for dialogue and participation.



Quote – CSO representative

“We work on developing the capacity of adults and girls through formation of girls’ advocacy groups at the schools. We run reflection sessions, so the girls identify their own problems and come up with their own solutions. We also work with schoolteachers, school management committees, and parent-teacher associations. In addition, we develop the capacity of local government stakeholders and support them in strengthening child protection systems and mechanisms. We provide them with training on the concept of child rights and child protection, and on how they can better deliver child protection services.”

Good practice – consultations and dialogues linking communities, CSOs and decision makers around justice issues in Myanmar

UNDP project “Support to Democratic development and Rule of Law building in Myanmar” (2016-2017) engaged communities directly in Myanmar through consultations and roundtable dialogues, which created rare platforms for community members, CSOs and decision makers to jointly identify justice problems and discuss solutions. These engagements strengthened community legal awareness, developed networks and raised awareness of rights and justice issues related to vulnerable groups. Community consultations began feeding community-identified justice concerns into policy processes, although with limited mechanisms to ensure their systematic uptake at higher levels.

Often, Finland’s contributions to governance-related results have been the effect of mainstreaming approaches rather than the outcome of projects that have good governance contributions as their primary objective. In many cases, programmes aiming primarily at improving service delivery have strengthened participation in the decision-making and delivery of such services. In Nepal, Finnish support for water governance has, as mentioned in Finding 7 (EQ 2), contributed to participatory management structures that enable citizens, particularly women and marginalised groups, to participate directly in local decision-making processes.

Example – securing land rights in Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, Responsive and Innovative Land Administration project (REILA II, 2017-2021) delivered substantial results by securing land rights for over 1.45 million rural people through designing and establishing digital rural land cadastre. As a result of the REILA II project, women, also in polygamous unions, hold legally recognised land rights supported by systematic joint titling and federal legal reform.

Finland has also contributed to more transparent decision-making processes and more accountable public institutions and decision makers. Its contribution to more participatory and inclusive governance structures has enabled citizens to raise concerns and engage in dialogues with decision makers and public authorities. Increased interaction between public authorities and citizens has strengthened information flows and enabled greater public oversight of institutional performance. In addition, Finland has strengthened transparency and accountability through media development projects that have increased peoples’ possibilities to hold duty-bearers accountable, as well as through support to state institutions with oversight responsibilities. While some of the gains made in strengthening oversight bodies have been reversed by the closing of democratic space in countries such as Afghanistan and Myanmar, they have been assessed more positively in others.



Good practice – community evidence for democratic oversight in natural resource governance in Mozambique

In Mozambique, “Strengthening democratic institutions in the governance of natural resources” project supported by Demo Finland and the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy involved activities such as field visits by Members of Parliament and Provincial Assemblies to meet directly with affected communities, documenting pollution, resettlement and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) grievances. This community evidence informed parliamentary action plans, hearings and policy briefs. Multi-stakeholder roundtables in provinces also convened CSOs, media, affected citizens, provincial officials and Members of Parliament to bring local problems on the oversight agenda. As an example of communities and local institutions joint management of resources, a Memorandum of Understanding between a Provincial Assembly, CSOs and a mining company in Nampula established a locally negotiated mechanism for CSR funds for the communities.

Finland has also contributed to strengthening the knowledge and skills of public officials, justice sector actors and political decision makers. In most cases, its capacity development activities and contributions have related to individual rather than institutional capacities, often forming part of broader programmes focusing on service delivery or on strengthening the rights of specific groups. Through its support for UN Women, Demo Finland and others, Finland has also contributed to increasing women’s participation in political parties and political decision-making processes. The evaluation of the third programme phase of “Empowering Women for Effective Participation in Politics Programme (EWEPP)”, implemented 2018-2021 by Zambia National Women’s Lobby and Demo Finland found that “many of the participants have gained higher and more influential political positions within their political parties signalling some transformation within the patriarchal political system.” (Stenius Consulting Tmi, 2021, p. 5).

In several cases, Finland’s governance-related results have taken the form of contributions to legal and regulatory frameworks. These changes have often provided for stronger protection of the rights of women and vulnerable and marginalised groups and frequently related to improved governance of local service delivery, including more transparent and participatory management of public services and utilities.

Quote – Mid-Term Evaluation of Sustainable Wash for All in Nepal (SUSWA), 2024

“With SUSWA support, partner municipalities have started developing their own acts, strategies and plans that are important steps towards creating capacities and permanent institutions supporting improved and inclusive access to WASH services.”

However, Finland has also contributed to develop policies that help structure institutions and enable democratic governance and political competition.



Example – Finland contributed to strengthening the role of the political parties in the democratic system

In Albania, the Rule of Law Centre contributed to the development and adoption of a Code of Conduct for political parties governing online election campaigning, which was signed by political parties in March 2025. Developed through a multi-stakeholder process involving election officials, political parties and civil society, the Code complements existing legal regulations and has been recognised as an important step towards strengthening the transparency and integrity of electoral processes.

At the same time, Finland’s contributions to systemic institutional reform at the national level is limited.

There have been few contributions to comprehensive public administration reform or judicial reform. However, some contributions to sector-wide reform efforts have yielded substantial governance and human rights results. Short-term training activities focused on democracy are typical modes of interventions, which result in increased knowledge, but not necessarily in systemic change of institutional practices. There are few examples of initiatives to institutionalise learning through the establishment or reform of training systems or public administration training institutions. This ad-hoc approach to training has occasionally been criticised.

Quote – Final Internal Project Evaluation “Enhancing the Institutional Capacity of the Immigration and Naturalization Directorate (IND) in Somalia”, 2022

“IND officials recommended that instead of the IND constantly seeking funding for capacity building, the IND should get donors to fund an academy for immigration training with a curriculum to ensure continuous training for immigration workers in Somalia.”

At the same time, there are some examples of Finnish support aimed at creating more permanent institutional structures for capacity development. One example is Finland’s support to the establishment of the UONGOZI Institute in Tanzania, in which the MFA played a proactive role. The initiative aimed to create a permanent, institutionalised structure for strengthening the capacity of decision-makers in areas such as good governance and sustainable development.

Finding 13: Finland’s good governance interventions were most effective where programmes combined multistakeholder engagement, early government buy-in, sustained engagement, and governance mainstreaming in sector programmes. However, lessons learned were not always widely shared and external political and institutional changes and risks were not always sufficiently considered.

Evidence suggests that Finnish interventions have been most effective when they have engaged a broad range of stakeholders from the outset. Often this has included the engagement of, and activities focusing on, both rights-holder and duty-bearers. Early government buy-in at the national and local levels helped reduce resistance, strengthen ownership, and increase the likelihood that policy dialogue would translate into institutional commitments and practical reforms.



Quote – Representative of a civil society organisation in Nepal

“Success depends on being able to engage all local actors, the communities, local governments, mothers’ groups, and forest users’ groups.”

Sustained involvement has also been a key enabling factor. Many Finnish interventions have been implemented across several programme phases. This has enabled trust-building and gradual progress in policy development and institutional change. Another important feature has been the integration of governance components into sector programmes. Interventions in sectors such as water management, sanitation, land administration, and disaster risk management often incorporate activities that promote participation, transparency and accountability. Embedding governance elements within service delivery programmes can reduce political sensitivity while facilitating improvements in institutional practices. In some contexts, implementing partners have also adopted context-sensitive language to avoid unnecessarily politicising interventions without reducing their substantive focus on governance issues.

Quote – Final Evaluation: “Empowering Women for Effective Participation in Politics Programme (EWEPP) in Zambia, Phase III (2018-2021)”

“The added value of the long-lasting Demo Finland partnership with the Zambia National Women’s Lobby (ZNWL) in Zambia is evident and unique in the democracy support sector. One by one, external and national actors interviewed have highlighted the uniqueness of such long-term support in a context that is usually fragmented by short-term funding. The donor community calls for continuation of the Demo Finland support, signalling that their own assistance will continue to be ad-hoc and short-term.”

Internal programme assumptions and pathways to change have generally been well understood among implementing partners, contributing to ownership and supporting the sustainability of interventions. Civil society partners often demonstrate strong commitment to the principles of human rights, the rule of law, and democracy, although democratic governance principles are not always fully reflected in their own internal structures. Among supported duty-bearer institutions, however, commitment to these principles varies according to informants. While Finland’s good governance support is intended to address institutional shortcomings, weak commitment within partner institutions to tackle such deficiencies may jeopardise the effectiveness and long-term sustainability of interventions and, in some cases, allegedly risk reinforcing vested interests that sustain existing power structures.

Reforms have tended to progress where institutions were already changing, subject to external scrutiny, or otherwise receptive to engagement. Political windows of opportunity have at times enabled significant progress, but gains achieved under such conditions have also proved fragile and difficult to sustain. In several contexts, including Myanmar and Afghanistan, progress was largely reversed when the political landscape shifted dramatically and democratic space closed. These contextual conditions shape the effectiveness and durability of interventions, pointing to the importance of systematically addressing political and institutional risks in programme design and implementation to strengthen the sustainability of results.



Example – the “Gen Z” movement and its effects were insufficiently anticipated, but Finland’s emphasis on inclusiveness may have mitigated negative effects on projects.

In September 2025, youth-led “Gen Z” mass protests were triggered by corruption, unemployment and economic inequality rocked Nepal. Violence ensued, leading to the resignation of the prime minister and the dissolution of parliament. Although similar “Gen Z” movements had recently emerged in several Asian, African, and Latin American countries, the Nepalese establishment and the international community failed to anticipate the scale and impact of the protests. In the aftermath, some government agencies, particularly at the local level, became reluctant to grant CSOs and other development cooperation actors’ permission to carry out their activities. However, informants interviewed by the evaluation team suggested that the inclusive approach characterising many Finland-supported initiatives helped shield them from more serious disruption.

Finland, like many other donors, has also faced challenges in anticipating and adapting programmes to emerging socio-political and economic trends, including generational shifts and the growing role of informal social movements, which may affect the long-term relevance and sustainability of support. Available evidence suggests that, despite a strong focus on the demand side of governance, greater attention could be given to the risk of inadvertently supporting institutions that reinforce existing power imbalances or inequalities, potentially undermining the durability of outcomes. While comprehensive context assessments are carried out at the planning stages of an intervention, there is seldom a structured analysis of the continuous interplay between contextual political economy and the projects and programmes.

Good practice – Applying a tool for systematically assessing risks and sustainability

The Rule of Law Centre applies the Method of Critical Consideration as a tool for assessing the quality, risks, and sustainability of its operations. In applying the method, the Centre reflects on the following questions throughout the planning, monitoring and evaluation cycle:

- Is there sufficient trust in the integrity and commitment of the most important parties involved in the cooperation?
- Is the project considered realistic, in demand, and likely to achieve its goals?
- What else must happen in society for a restricted project to have bearing on the development of the rule of law, and what is the likelihood of achieving the desired impact?



4.4 Evaluation Question 4: How has Finland promoted strong civil societies, and what kind of successes and/or challenges have there been in achieving the objectives set for this sub-theme?

The evaluation found that Finland has supported strong civil societies through the creation of long-term, value-driven partnerships with Finnish and local CSOs. These efforts have proven successful in keeping civic engagement at the centre of development policy, as seen and promoted by Finland and retain high strategic relevance. Coherent with the HRBA, this approach helped advance the rights of disadvantaged and minority communities and individuals worldwide. In the countries where Finland has its diplomatic representations, careful selection of local CSO partners to promote participation, advance communities, and strengthen human rights frameworks has given Finland “a seat at the table” alongside larger and financially endowed partners. The model symbiotic relationship with Finnish CSOs has proven valuable, but the approach is challenged by global geopolitical shifts, changes in Finland’s national policy approach and reduction of the MFA budgets and human resources. Adaptations are needed to ensure continued operational relevance of CSO support to advancing Finland’s strategic objectives.

Finding 14: Support to civil society has been value-based, and strategically highly relevant, but changes in the national and international context necessitate operational adjustments

Finnish support to civil society outside the country serves to advance international cooperation objectives which have largely been a subject of broad societal consensus in Finland, by fact and by design, through and by supporting Finnish CSOs. Finland’s approach to the promotion of civil society has been encapsulated by one of the MFA interlocutors as “preach as we do”, starting from the policy guidance which is rooted in HRBA, through the institutional setup which prioritises co-creation between the public and civic actors, and ending with the design of the project interventions which focus heavily on rights-holders. Multiple interlocutors from MFA referred to Finland’s civil society support as both incarnating and promoting Finland’s societal model. In this sense, it is purposefully strategic in nature. This perpetuates the idea of “civil society inclusion as a “Finnish way” of operating” (Kontinen et al, p. 76) and promotes this model abroad.

The relationship between MFA and Finnish CSOs is not transactional; it is endemic and symbiotic. A characteristic feature of the Finnish CSOs that partner with MFA is that they are acting as expert actors, with strong commitment to their cause, professional recruitment, and professional program/project management.

Quote - Finnish CSO

“There’s an engagement with MFA that goes beyond the contractual agreement”



Engagement of MFA with Finnish CSOs that are its long-term, programmatic partners is based on deep, value-driven integration, which serves as a foundation for strategic-level partnership. As interviews and document review reveal, in several cases, these CSOs originally received an impetus for creation from the MFA, decades ago, and then morphed into fully independent actors. Effectively, CSOs funded through core funding or longer-term projects are delegated the means to implement some of the MFAs' policy objectives. The programme documents defining the cooperation with Demo Finland, as one example, point directly to a shared commitment to strengthening cooperation with civic actors, based on a shared understanding that “free and active civil society is an important part of a functioning democracy.”

CSOs and some MFA interlocutors tend to describe themselves as “like-minded partners” pursuing common objectives. CSO counterparts and the MFA interlocutors also repeatedly noted that their relationship is rooted in mutual trust. This is also how the relationship between the MFA and Finnish CSOs is perceived by the partners, too. During the field phase, an international development partner noted that the relationship represents “an association of ideas.”

Selection of country-level partners, both by Finnish CSOs and by Embassies seems to have followed the same pattern – selection was made based on representativeness of the specific civic groups and on values. The national counterparts that were interviewed during the visit to Nepal, report positive experiences and appreciate high levels of flexibility/adaptation to shifting local socio-political context. This is corroborated by project reports. A distinguishing characteristic of the Finnish support to the local CSOs has been attention to human rights concerns, and the willingness to work on hard-to-reach communities.

Good practice – Tailoring civil society support to the target groups

KIOS support to Dalit women's groups (Nepal) represents a rights-holder model which was tailored to a specific, structurally marginalised group. The project reports state that the groups became more organised, registered with local government units, and participated in local planning and thematic committees (schools, water, roads), strengthening both agency and access to local support schemes. The programme matched the actual constraints of the target group (remoteness, social exclusion, lack of voice/representation) and went beyond the community activities by linking the target group with the local governance structure. The importance of such a model is in its replicability, based on the core principle of working through credible intermediaries, close to the targeted communities, and based on the analysis of their needs.

The synergetic, at times fusional relationship between MFA and the Finnish CSOs represents unique strength, since their alignment on values is underpinning the alignment on policy, which translates into shared vision of what types of projects to implement abroad, and how. This implicit understanding has been strengthened by the fact that, in effect, Finnish CSO programs are co-created with MFA. Review of the project materials has demonstrated, and interviews have confirmed, that the Finnish CSOs have very often been in the lead, shaping their programme proposals, while MFA has been reviewing, complementing with their analysis and endorsing these programs, thus placing them under the foreign policy umbrella.



Lesson learned – Value-based alignment works best when with operational follow-through

Strategic partnership between MFA and Finnish CSOs has been most effective when it drew on an operational ‘feedback loop’: early engagement from the HQ but also the Embassy level, collaboration in a structured context and risk analysis, as well as both formal and informal feedback loops for monitoring. The strategic partnership between MFA and Finnish CSOs has been most effective when it drew on an operational ‘feedback loop’: early engagement from the HQ and the Embassy level, collaboration in a structured context, relationship (e.g. Taksvärkki, VIKES) helps translate value-driven alignment into tailored programming.

On the negative side, the value-based, trust-driven partnership depends significantly on the existence of implicit understanding and established personal and institutional relationships. As such, it is vulnerable to changes in the implementation context. As the interlocutors have repeatedly pointed out, the relationship is currently under stress due to changes in policy, which are partially domestically determined, but largely driven by the broader, regional and global geopolitical shifts. When it comes to the international context, the interviewees both from CSOs and MFA have pointed to the overall dramatic reduction in funds allocated globally to the development aid, and specifically cuts in aid to civil society, saying it limits the ability of Finland to complement efforts of the other like-minded partners.

As many bilateral donors are shifting towards more transactional models of development assistance, civil society partners currently experience a deep transition, referred to particularly by the high-level interlocutors, has been. As some of the CSO, academia, and media interlocutors pointed out, this shift is often conflicting with the habitual Finnish modalities of civil society support and streamlined HRBA. This is particularly troubling for some of the Finnish CSO counterparts, as, to quote one of the multi-country programme reports submitted to MFA “in many operating countries, the space for civil society is limited or closed.”

Good Practice - VIKES support to journalists in exile

Emerging issue of journalists from Nicaragua and Venezuela in exile in the Dominican Republic or Honduras. As threats from the governments of their home countries emerged, the programme helped them continue their operations in exile. Where independent media work becomes unsafe or impossible in-country, the VIKES modality illustrates a pragmatic adaptation: move the operational “centre” of delivery to a safer location, while maintaining the public-interest function of investigative reporting through exile-based networks, remote mentoring/editorial support, and secure cross-border collaboration. It preserves strategic relevance while redesigning delivery around the real constraint, taking into account the safety of the beneficiaries.

Despite the realignment of political priorities, maintaining financial support for Finnish CSOs remains a strong priority for the national policy as pointed by several interviewees (both officials and from CSOs) noted with satisfaction. Some MFA interlocutors pointed out in this connection, that civil society funding is becoming proportionally more central to MFA, as its other financial instruments contract. All interlocutors point to the continued strategic value of engagement with Finnish CSOs and with local civil society actors. Absolute majority agree though, that the changes occurring in implementation context would require an adjustment, due among others to reduction of the MFA staff and resources, especially the advisers, which have often provided



topical expertise, but also engaged Finnish CSOs in joint planning; and the phasing out of the country-level, Embassy-managed projects to fund local CSO projects.

Operationally, the evaluation identified challenges in retaining the ability of the MFA to harness the Finnish CSO-led activities to the diplomatic objectives in the context of policy and reform changes. MFA interlocutors from various locations and at various levels pointed out that ending the local, Embassy-funded projects is seen as a net loss, in terms of reducing access to the national counterparts, losing one stream of direct information about the local context, and, importantly, also losing the “seat at the table” with other like-minded partners, which local projects often guaranteed. Among MFA field staff, there is an understanding that these cuts are linked to budgetary constraints and political decisions that are beyond the Ministry’s control. Personnel cuts at the MFA headquarters also affect the Ministry’s ability to be proactive in accompanying the implementation of MFA-funded programmes. While most CSO counterparts agree that there is a good level of administrative follow-up from MFA and are satisfied with fairly regular communication with CSO Unit at the Ministry, several MFA interlocutors pointed out that the capacity for following up on content and integrating the CSO feedback into MFA learning and planning cycles has been limited since the reduction of personnel.

This loss is in part compensated by Embassies working closely with long-term Finnish CSO partners, as pointed by several MFA interlocutors, provided communication and reporting are optimised. However, both Embassy staff and some CSO counterparts concur that this can only work in the long run with frequent and close communication, as well as highly efficient co-ordination in the field, which is not always happening so far: several agreed that they coordinate “mostly on an ad hoc basis” with the Finnish CSO programs that are working in the field, and that exchanges between the Finnish CSO programme managers visiting the field and Embassy personnel are not an institutionalised practice. Review of project/programme reports, and interviews with Finnish MFA and CSO informants also highlight the dispersion and sometimes duplication of civil society partner reporting, who do not report to the set of shared indicators with the Embassies.

Quote – MFA staff

“Some of their [Finnish CSO] projects are not country-focused or country-tailored, and we usually don’t know what they do in each country.”

Finding 15: Actions in support of civil society have usually shown positive outcomes in terms of ability to support rights-holders – less so in terms of institutional development.

Across many interviews, stakeholders describe tangible outcomes for rights-holder organisations and grassroots community associations. This notably includes strengthened inclusion and visibility for marginalised groups, as well as stronger community organisation and agency. These outcomes are repeatedly linked to the intentional preference in MFA programmes for flexible, partner-led implementation, which maximises CSOs’ comparative advantage in reaching remote areas and groups that public institutions and larger programmes struggle to access consistently.



Quote: MFA interviewee

“Channelling support through CSOs proved very successful, since they reach a lot of people, and it is amazing how much they can do with the relatively small funds they are given.”

Flexible delivery grounded in local partnerships and the ability to operate close to communities, including in remote areas, have often resulted in observable changes at the rights-holder level, which many interviewees and project documents describe as both meaningful and cost-effective. For example, the Abilis-led project created life-changing opportunities for marginalised women in Nepal, while KIOS supported Dalit women to become more organised and participate in local governance, addressing vital local issues

Example: Strengthening the National Human Rights Defenders Coalition (Somalia)

DefendDefenders provided technical support to the Somali National Human Rights Defenders Coalition mobilising expertise from Uganda to provide support. The Coalition evolved from ad hoc networks to a standing protection network, and its resilience grew. It provided emergency legal support, established a round-the-clock emergency hotline, and operated a safe house.

Across several interviews and multiple programme/evaluation documents, MFA, Embassies, and Finnish CSOs describe partner selection and retention as prioritising representativeness/embeddedness and shared values. Representativeness is articulated explicitly in disability programming, including in the selection of the Finnish CSO partner – Abilis, which itself unites persons with disabilities – and is then translated further afield in the selection of the local partners. This representativeness convincingly establishes the implementer networks as an expert interlocutor. In Nepal, implementers describe using subcontracting arrangements to maintain proximity to local decision-making and community legitimacy. Values alignment and trust are most explicitly articulated in HRD support, one of MFA’s flagship projects.

While the local CSO partners seem to be carefully vetted and selected based on their alignment with Finland’s values and policies and seem to deliver context-relevant support to the target communities, the sampled project analysis suggests that Finland has not been investing considerably and directly into local CSO development. While the partner Finnish CSOs (Taksvärkki, VIKES, and others) have indeed contributed to local CSOs building expertise, reaching communities, and supported their advocacy, the efforts to build operational and project management capacities of the local CSOs have not been systemic from MFA viewpoint. The coalition building on the national and international level has been strongly supported through human rights focused INGOs, but the portfolio review does not identify this as a common practice in other areas. It is a likely interpretation, that these elements were previously mostly handled by larger donors (United States Agency for International Development [USAID], UKAid, EU, depending on the region), however, in the context of a global drop in CSO funding levels, lack of institutional support may undermine the sustainability of some of Finland’s impressive achievements.

In addition, the analysis did not show a discernible pattern of portfolio-wide outcomes that support development of civic space in the partner countries (e.g. improvement or, as a minimum, preventing the worsening of the legislative framework, openness of the authorities to cooperate with civil society actors) CSO development itself. Multiple project reports and interviews indicate that Finnish diplomats and CSO partners witness systematic restriction of civic space. Limited gains in the quality of civic space, in terms of improved regulations supported by the Finnish CSO partners in certain countries appear partial, delayed and are constantly contested.



Quotes - Project Reports

"In [state], state institutions are no longer open for the CSOs and the access to information is limited.

The programme [in a country] "must anticipate legal amendments regulating the media", when failing to do so "approaches relying mainly on journalist training proved a failure."

[Regulatory changes done through the project] "did not change the structural problem of the prominence of the executive over the legislative."

The sampled project analysis has shown that outcomes associated to core funding of multilateral organisations are hardly traceable, even though they remain coherent and relevant with Finland's strategic vision. Providing financial support to the international organizations and their programs that support civil society development and work on civic space has been one of the avenues through which the Finnish MFA has been trying to address the concerning shrinking of civic space. However, the effect of this contribution is uneven. On the one hand, several interviewees noted that the contribution gives Finland "a seat at the table", where it contributes to discussions – including within the EU - with its unique perspective about issues like gender, and disability rights, or the need to support human rights defenders. On the other hand, several interlocutors voiced concerns that some the core-funded IOs' agendas may not always align with Finland's civil society objectives.

Lesson learned: Difficulties with outcome traceability of core funding to multilateral organisations

Report on Finland's pooled contribution to the World Bank's MENA Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) notes that since activities were not earmarked and the implementation was largely multi-country, "attribution is nearly impossible" since "Finland pays into the large pot." Nonetheless, the MDTF contribution has remained coherent and aligned with Finland's strategic vision, to "generate greater citizen trust and engagement" with "stronger focus on women empowerment, youth education and employment."

ODIHR offers a more positive lesson learned on traceability: the multi-year, conditioned funding clarifies expected deliverables, and this clarity has also been appreciated by the recipient, noting Finland has "one of the most robust programmatic frameworks." Direct traceability is ensured in the project approval chain, and a structured dialogue exists between ODIHR and the Finnish delegation at OSCE. This allows for clearer expectations, better planning, and reporting against defined priorities.

The success of the long-term interventions is also underpinned by sophisticated Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) methods deployed by almost all the MFA's Finnish CSO partners. For example, Taksvärkki uses OM and developed a joint set of progress markers, complemented by regular monitoring, evaluation and learning exercises involving its partners, VIKES integrates advanced form of ToC approach into programming and monitoring, Finnish Red Cross uses Project Information Management System (PMIS) with integrated risk monitoring, etc. This served the coherent development of their interventions and helped ensure continued relevance to the local context and converged with the high relevance of the local partners selection, and their frequent engagement in co-creation of the projects, as witnessed by the sampled programme analysis, to contribute to achieving results for the communities.



While these sophisticated tools exist and are deployed, the sampled programme analysis shows that program-supported CSOs don't systematically back up the reported results with evidence based on comprehensive monitoring and evaluation data. This is consistent with the HRBA evaluation findings (Christoplos et al., 2023). Several interviews - especially from Embassies and MFA staff - indicate gaps in MFA's ability to consistently scrutinise the quality and evidentiary basis of CSO reporting, mainly because Embassies rarely receive CSO reports and have limited involvement during implementation, and staffing constraints at the headquarters reduce active monitoring and follow-up. While open dialogue with CSOs at the headquarters and regular (often annual) feedback discussions seem to be a well-established practice, these discussions are unevenly documented.

Quote: Interview – MFA staff

“HRBA has been embedded in the guidance to bilateral interventions, the proposals have been assessed from that perspective. The requirements to conduct analyses during the intervention design phase, are one of the selection criteria. [...] After the planning phase, the agreement is binding, that's where it becomes vaguer how the level of human rights is looked at: in the implementation and reporting.”

Finding 16: Funding of civil society is facing old and new sustainability challenges, yet Finnish can remain relevant as new endemic actors emerge

The evaluation identified several sustainability vulnerabilities for the capacity development and effective participation of civil society, determined by a combination of factors. Project documents, reports, and evaluations, as well as concurring interviews, point to rather “traditional” vulnerability factors such as chronic dependency of the local CSOs on foreign donors. Other factors are relatively new, such as the dramatic reduction of the development assistance accompanied by the dramatic restriction of civic space in many countries across the regions.

Interviews describe how funding cuts from multiple sources are affecting the continuity and staffing of CSOs, particularly smaller organisations. Interlocutors noted that the elimination of small grants has left the most at-risk organisations without adequate human resources. This finding is consistent with reports analysed in the sample, which place CSO support within a broader context of reduced assistance, a trend felt even by large IOs, such as UN agencies.

Quote: Finnish CSO

“The funding cuts from many different sources affect our CSOs in many different ways – there have been cuts of very small grants on peace education, global education, they were cut completely, and many of the small organisations are facing severe challenges, can no longer have paid staff. This hasn't affected big organisations – they are in a better position in a way.”

Despite these challenges, there is evidence that local civic groups supported by Finland persist beyond project closure. This was the case in Nepal (KIOS project), where Dalit women's groups were integrated into the local government structure, as well as in Myanmar, where an



external evaluation of the rule-of-law training found that trainees established pro bono legal aid organisations as spin-offs, which secured funding from other sources. Even though these cases provide some evidence of sustainability, it remains fragile.

There are structural limits in how far funding allocated to INGOs and IOs “cascades” to frontline actors and serves resolve the underfunding of their core organisational functions, as revealed by the evidence gleaned from the portfolio and conversations with the Finnish and local CSOs. As one of the Finnish CSO representatives arguing for more direct and local financing routes has remarked, perhaps half of the earmarked assistance is reaching frontline CSO actors, while “the rest remains stuck in the INGOs.” Giving one of the plausible explanations for this balance, another interviewee pointed out that grassroots organisations’ core capacity is weak.

The core strengthening of the local CSOs has often been judged as insufficient, as it lacks long-term and resource-intensive to augment the sustainability of their efforts. Over the past five years approximately, the congruence of shrinking civic space in partner countries, and mounting bureaucracy within international and Finnish NGOs, as well as in multilateral agencies controlling sub-granting, place a growing burden on the local CSOs, media, or academia - although these partners are often the only possible intermediary to communities. Recent trends compound the initial programming weaknesses, and the tendency of resource loss at sub-granting stage.

Quote – CSO researcher

“I would insist on the fact that when Finland funds such [research] institutes, it’s important to have a long-term perspective. For 3-4 years, you can see research results, but not outcomes. Especially in a context with so much social, economic, and political fluidity. That’s especially true in social sciences, on inequalities, human rights, and democracy: no results in the short run. From this perspective, our partnership with Finland was already rather long, and our counterparts understood this long-term perspective. They understood it took more than a couple of years for publications to be used and have an echo with CSOs, government, MPs – whereas it’s the use of publications which is interesting.”

Multiple sources corroborate that shrinking civic space is a material operational risk in an increasing number of countries, which must be factored into programming, when planning for sustainability. At least one CSO interviewee explicitly critiqued insufficient anticipation of such risks at planning stage, while an MFA interlocutor stressed that the MFA’s ability to rely on civil society to implement their shared policy objectives is conditional on “**a conducive environment and a space for them to work**”, citing contexts where NGOs “were no longer able to exist”. Programme documents increasingly refer to this “survival constraint”, which goes beyond the usual considerations for sustainability of efforts and calls into question risk appetite of the MFA and the better institutionalised ways for assessing, planning for and managing risks.

Quote: CSO Report to MFA

“What is challenging in the programming contexts is the further deterioration of the state of civil society during the reporting year... This has not been fully taken into account in the planning phase of the programme.”



Civic space may be shrinking, but at the same time, grassroots civic activism remains vibrant and is taking on new forms. Reporting from sampled projects highlights the emergence of new actors, such as Kenyan and Nepalese youths who “take initiative into their own hands and demand change.” In some cases, this activism builds on advocacy and investigative journalism that may have been supported by Finland and other donors. As one project partner in Tanzania noted, “once you have all this information coming out is when people stand up and start demanding.”

Meanwhile, these grassroots movements often challenge the credibility and representativeness of established, foreign-funded CSOs. Youth activists in Nepal, for example, expressed concerns during the field visit that implementing reforms backed by external actors “would de-credibilise them as foreign agents.” This highlights the risk that civil society and advocacy actors may be perceived as “part of the system” or externally driven, potentially undermining their legitimacy. This represents a new and specific challenge to the sustainability of donor-supported projects.

Lesson learned: Representativeness and legitimacy of partner civil society actors should not be taken for granted

Interview evidence directly challenges assumptions that funded “CSOs” are necessarily legitimate representatives of communities. One Nepal interlocutor argues that “CSO strengthening is good, but which CSOs, whom in CSOs, and strengthening for what?”, claiming many NGOs are “a veil” and “self-serving”, while “the good ones are simply not visible”. The same source called for “stronger background check and monitoring of partner NGOs” and noted governance concerns such as “the same families sitting in the boards”, framing legitimacy and representativeness as due diligence questions rather than assumptions.

Among the younger generation of civil society activists, there is also a perception that Finnish support, and more generally international support, needs to be adjusted to accommodate the new trends in civil society. Currently, the donors, including Finland, operate through formal partner(s) with a single contact point, a clear strategy, and a structure of governance which can receive funding. In the most adverse legal contexts, which criminalise belonging to a foreign-funded organisation or the very existence of organised civil society, or in contexts of fluid and informal movements (like GenZ movement in Nepal), traditional donor funding practiced by Finland as well as other donors, is often considered a part of the system and not always well-received by these movements. This trend requires monitoring and adaptation.

Quote – Activist

“We hate the constant question of who is the leader, and what is our ideology. The older generation keep imposing their model of hierarchy that has failed.”



4.5 Evaluation Question 5: How can Finland execute activities in the result area “Peaceful democratic societies” in a more relevant, effective and sustainable way in the next five years and beyond?

The evaluation found that PPA3, and Finland’s approach to international cooperation that embodies the principles of human rights, rule of law, and democracy, are key comparative advantages. They lend Finland’s external action gravitas and influence, both within and beyond PPA3, at national, multi-country, and global levels. Finland has balanced its value-based approach and mainstreaming, with realism and patience towards the limitations, uncertainties, and sensitivities of incremental change which characterises the strengthening of human rights, democracy and rule of law. Finland now harvests the benefits of its long-lasting investments in these areas. However, it is now at a crossroad if it wants to maintain these assets and continue to play above its weight, while expanding the range of its policy priorities to include trade, within contracting resources. In an increasingly challenging global context, Finland also has a margin of progression to entrench risk analysis, monitoring, and mitigation.

Finding 17: The key strength of Finland’s support to human rights, rule of law, and democracy lies in its authenticity.

Finland’s comparative advantage is not in funding – it is in genuine mainstreaming, genuine dialogue, genuine partnerships, and genuine upholding of a rule-based international order. Finland is a donor that accepts dialogue-intensive, laborious, and long processes as the prerequisite for ownership and transformative results in human rights, democracy, and rule of law. This attitude, which several interlocutors designated as “doing it the hard way”, “genuinely”, “honestly”, or “the real way” has a long history, and it has been witnessed across the board: from local to global level, on all continents where it engages, and in all sub-themes of PPA3 as well as in other thematic areas where Finland mainstreams human right, democracy, and commitment to a rule-based order. In line with our findings, the Evaluation on Finland’s Development Cooperation in Eastern Europe and Central Asia identified Finland’s flexible approach to cooperation and its reputation as a donor committed to addressing core challenges as its unique comparative advantage (Webber et al., 2021, p. 106). Examples of this approach are abundant, not only within the strict PPA3 portfolio, but throughout thematic areas, even the most technical ones.

Quote – MFA interviewee

“[The project] is about land rights. But it is blending a technological approach with a social approach and an institutional development approach. It is about much more than technology, and it is very much based on human rights basic principles and gender empowerment.”



In parallel, Finland practices its strong commitment to multilateralism and a rule-based international order, which are at the foundation of human rights, democracy, and rule of law standards but require ever-renewed reinforcement. Through the budget line on Democracy and Rule of Law support, and its core support to multilateral organisations, constant presence in multilateral forums dedicated to human rights, democracy, and rule of law, and through reiteration of these values in multilateral forums in general, Finland makes statement as the herald of universal values. This was considered invaluable by several interviewees from the MFA, international or Finnish CSOs, from other donors and from international organisations, especially given a globally adverse context of erosion of a rules-based international order, challenges to fundamental values and rights, and widespread restriction of civic space. Some interviewees noted that Finland's consistent support to democracy, the rule of law and human rights transpires in the funding decisions and partnerships but also in MFA's policy dialogue and influencing at the national level and in multilateral organisations, especially the UN. MFA's flexibility in project support and its willingness to expand its partnerships beyond funding support to policy level cooperation, particularly in the UN Human Rights Council, also came up in the Review of MFA's Support to Human Rights INGOs (Örnemark and Tran-Nguyen, 2026).

Good practice – Contributions to multilateral organisations in support of a rules-based world order acts as a complement and helps secure key assumptions for the realisation of Finland's ToC.

Finnish foreign, security, and international development cooperation policy emphasises upholding and strengthening international law and the rules-based international system. Contribution to multilateral organisations was highlighted by several informants as good practice, as it signals continued support for multilateralism during a period of strain on the international system. Arguably, such support is particularly relevant when directed to organisations that not only promote democratic governance but also have mandates linked to upholding the rules-based international order, such as the Office of the UN OHCHR, and the Council of Europe. However, Finland's contributions to international organisations are often relatively small compared to overall institutional budgets, which means that Finland's influence and the effectiveness of its contributions are difficult to determine. As the budget of many international organisations has been drastically reduced during the past year, the significance of Finland's contributions may increase.

This strength has a flipside: imperfect results-based management and performance framework. The acceptance of process-heavy change approaches in PPA 3 is what makes Finland a valued partner, but it complicates result tracking. Finland now needs to embrace the implications of its own policy and positioning strengths, by acknowledging that traceable results may be secondary. Other donors seldom dare adopt this the same approach as Finland, because long-term gains are difficult to demonstrate – even though long-term results of this approach tend to be more transformative, if not often systemic for lack of at-scale resources.

Quote – CSO partner

“I know the MFA always wants long-term results and impact, but these are very hard to measure.”



All the work, efforts, patience, and genuine outreach to remote grass-root places or community level organisations, which Finland has invested during the period under review, have contributed to a strong reputational capital which considerably benefits Finland's contributions to PPA3 outcomes, but also goes beyond this, to all PPAs under Finland's external policy, and all of its ToC. Adaptive management within strongly value-based cooperation breed trust, which secures results and a ticket to high-level influence, beyond the proportion of Finland's funding or amount of field presence. Finland is now harvesting the fruits of this investment by having a seat at the donors' and decision-makers' tables at local, national, and multilateral levels, despite limited funding compared to other actors. The results of the work in PPA3 are therefore not just measured in terms of programme outcomes – but also in terms of policy influence and solidity of partnerships, which are preconditions for any action in the areas of development, security, or trade. When Finland applies its “value-based realism”, as described in Finland's Foreign and Security Policy, in the delivery of PPA3, it is credible in the eyes of its partners, because they have trust in the “Finnish handshake”. This has a snowball effect, creating strong ownership, long practice, and some resilience in the face of fluctuating contexts. Even though resource scarcity, political fluctuation, and global context changes endanger some of Finland's concrete contributions (CSO development, adoption of inclusive governance practices, emergence of marginalised groups' voices...) the personal commitment, the attitudes and the value changes among partners and beneficiaries have a potential to withstand serious blows, as witnessed among Finnish officials, their civil society partners, and in some cases their counterparts among duty-bearers.

However, Finnish interviewees from the MFA and NGOs dread the fading of the “Finnish way of international cooperation,” as epitomised in PPA3 and in the mainstreaming of PPA3 themes throughout international cooperation: this could indeed deplete the reputational and relationship gains of years of mainstreamed and targeted efforts, thus equating Finland with any other donors of limited size, and dulling its edge as an international actor. A transformation, parallel to the ongoing shifts in international development aid, has been occurring within Finnish international cooperation. The following key elements are repeatedly pointed out by the interlocutors: transformation in foreign policy approach that places higher value on supporting Finnish commercial and business interests abroad, compared to before. A large proportion of interlocutors have voiced unease about prioritising commercial interests: some from the point of view of value-convergence and compatibility between trade interests, value-based development cooperation, and contribution to peace and security. Others challenged the practicalities of such policy transition in the context where staff primarily has expertise on human rights, democracy and rule of law- compliant development aid. In some regions and areas, both Embassy staff and CSOs argued that business and commercial interests cannot be meaningfully advanced, due to risks considered too high or trade potential considered too low by the Finnish businesses. Meanwhile, they all highlight the continued relevance of cooperation with CSO, and of CSO support, while fearing that business partnerships would eclipse these long-term relations with civil society. The general implication is that expanding the realm of foreign policy to trade and economic cooperation, while continuing to mainstream the values of PPA3 and contribution to the SDGs, is feasible, but it requires agility, conservation of experienced human resources, and a renewed commitment to do trade in a way that that upholds democracy, human rights, and rule of law. Failing to do that, in the eyes of the majority of interlocutors who are cognisant of Finland's policy framework, could undermine Finland's influence within and beyond PPA3.



Finding 18: Realism and the acceptance of limitations as well as commitment to progressive change lends Finland's work in PPA3 an adaptive character.

Where necessary, the MFA practices adaptive management in the execution of PPA3-relevant projects, based on realistic acknowledgement of challenges.

Stakeholders generally perceive Finland as a pragmatic partner with strong principles but flexibility in implementation. The openness to discuss challenges faced in operating contexts and implementation, as well as flexibility to adjust interventions was visible in many of the reviewed interventions and confirmed by previous evaluations and reviews (Davies et al., 2017; Webber et al., 2021; Vailant et al., 2023; Örnemark and Tran-Nguyen, 2026). The

review of project adjustments and reporting, along with general interviews with the MFA and its partners, indicates that the MFA typically takes a pragmatic approach to project implementation, relationships with authorities, and the capacities of partners and rights-holders. For example, the evaluation team did not receive any feedback suggesting that capacity building efforts left partners or groups of rights-holders with new responsibilities but without adequate support. Where necessary, activities and timelines are adapted to reflect changes in the implementation environment. This flexibility is especially important in the fields of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law, where transformative outcomes require time and are significantly shaped by shifting political, security, and social contexts.

MFA's flexible and pragmatic approach has allowed adaptiveness in human rights, democracy and rule of law related programming.

Another realistic feature of Finland's work on PPA3 is the acknowledgement that support to democracy, human rights, and rule of law faces limitations, and result expectations towards partners need to be adjusted to challenging environments.

As an MFA interviewee put it, "we must accept that this does not work everywhere, every time." In locations or at moments where the feasibility is low due to ongoing conflict or particularly restrictive environments, Finland provides a lifeline for frontline actors (human rights defenders, media). It also maintains a human rights-compliant, do-no-harm approach in other fields (e.g., economic empowerment). However, a complex interplay was found between human rights compliance and HRBA: the HRBA evaluation concluded that very few partners had considered whether HRBA could increase risks, and do no harm analyses were at times superficial, rarely mentioning whether and how drawing attention to human rights, or human rights supporters, may have an impact on conflicts. In challenging but not over-restrictive contexts, Finland creates precedents of democratic, human rights, and (to a lesser extent) rule of law changes at the local level. These precedents are remembered by local actors and may serve as a reference point once circumstances improve.

However, lessons learned and good practices from adjustments made during project implementation have not been shared in a systematic manner. While evaluations and end-of-project reports do identify lessons learned and good practices, interviews with partners and MFA staff suggest that these insights are not commonly applied across different countries or projects. The main channels for disseminating lessons learned are the rotation of MFA staff and multi-country projects; however, even in the latter case, the evaluation found limited use of cross-fertilisation opportunities, primarily due to resource constraints. Given the similarities among several Finnish interventions in PPA3, the common threats to democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, and recurring windows of opportunity for democratic progress (such as generational shifts, election



periods, or contexts involving natural resource exploitation), there appears to be significant untapped potential for cross-country learning. Additionally, a generational shift is underway, and experienced career diplomats are being lost. There is a clear need to retain this experience and knowledge, and to pass it on to the next generation, so as to build on successes and avoid repeating less effective practices.

Lesson learned – Cross-fertilisation among similar interventions across countries remains limited

There are some examples of Finland promoting the sharing of practices and experiences between organisations in different countries, but such exchanges remain limited despite significant potential. This potential stems from similarities across several programmes (e.g. good governance relating to land or natural resource management in Ethiopia, Nepal, Kenya, and Tanzania). Effective cross-fertilisation often is witnessed when exchanges go beyond mutual exposure, and yields reproduction of good practices, which is not a common occurrence: it was observed in some programmes on support to persons with disability, governance improvement through the management of water and sanitation, as well as journalist support. These examples rely on (1) the availability of headquarters staff to facilitate horizontal exchange between embassies or between implementing partners, and (2) the institutional memory of staff, which is currently at risk in many organisations.

Finding 19: Finland manages its support to human rights, democracy, and rule of law within PPA 3 adaptively, but it does not sufficiently inform it with risk management.

Finland's interventions relevant to PPA3 recognise the sensitivity surrounding human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. Some MFA interviewees pointed to the MFA's cautiousness in sensitive issues. The HRBA evaluation (Christoplos et al., 2023, Vol. 2, p. 99) confirmed the attention paid to developing strategic approaches and messaging in addressing sensitive issues e.g. related to democracy or the LGBTIQ rights especially in IFIs and some other multilateral organisations. At the same time, MFA's active and strategic cooperation with ILGA in the formulation and promotion of a resolution on the human rights of intersex persons adopted by the UN Human Rights Council in April 2024 constitutes an exemplary achievement in addressing sensitive human rights issues in its influential work (Örnemark and Tran-Nguyen, 2026, p. 35).

However, this sensitivity is not systematically built into PPA3 actions through risk management. Systematic risk assessment monitoring proves to be a weakness in many projects. This observation is concurrent with the UONGOZI Institute evaluation (Venäläinen, 2022), and noticed by and large through document analysis of most projects, e.g. SOMO Africa.



Good practices – stronger risk assessment and monitoring frameworks

REILA projects on Ethiopia's land administration: blending project monitoring and monitoring of land certification by local administration for risk and result tracking. Document review and interview confirmed that the project management strategy was developed thanks to the hindsight allowed by a long-term approach (REILA had a follow-up project). The monitoring, evaluation and learning blended and cross-referenced several tools, which fed into adaptive management thanks to a flexible Supervisory Board. The monitoring tools included:

- Project results monitoring
- Evaluations
- Support to construct Ethiopia's land management monitoring and evaluation system
- Regular risk analysis
- Informal political economy assessments

Likewise, the Frontline Defenders project produced in-depth risk analysis, monitored risk evolution during implementation, and proposed concrete risk mitigation (prevention to an extent, and more so mitigation after risk realisation). In line with the object of the project, this approach has proven paramount to limit the risks posed to beneficiaries by their participation in the project, anticipate their external risks, and mitigate both on time and effectively.

A particular risk area relates to corruption and beyond it, the political economy surrounding the changes promoted by PPA3-relevant projects. Finland routinely faces a trade-off. On the one hand, its commitment to ownership prompts it to embed its interventions in national policies and cooperation with the Executive branch. On the other hand, these very partners in many countries are tainted by corruption, and their vested interests, or their personal loyalties, are contrary to the principles of transparency, accountability, genuine participation, and inclusion. Upholding PPA3 principles would, in many cases, mean losing power and personal opportunities. Many government partners, and in some cases even CSO representatives, are thus perceived as self-serving elites, especially by new generation (Gen Z). The narrative of anti-democratic forces recuperates this perception to label international donors as fuelling a corruption system, and therefore harmful to the organic development of the economic and political systems of the country (as witnessed, for instance, in Serbia, Georgia, or Nepal). Finland, thanks to its close association, in interviewees' minds, with genuine commitment to the values of human rights, democracy, and rule of law, is less at risk than others. However, this advantage remains vulnerable to circumstances and to policy shifts in Finland's external policies. Among some interviewees, especially among the youngest, there is a demand for Finland to build firewalls with "toxic" corrupt officials or CSO representatives. Uneven role of Embassies which monitor political context, and uncertainty about horizontal communication and reporting channels within the MFA.

Lesson learned – Political economy of the interventions' underplayed

Finland has not performed a strong analysis of the vested interests, power structures, and incentive structures of the various actors beyond local levels. This blind spot in analysis has curtailed its understanding of certain key factors at play, and it has prevented it from taking pushbacks into account at an early stage. Even with limited funding for national institutional strengthening/support to reforms, Finland has sufficient entry in State institutions to produce its own Pol Econ Ana, especially at national level (though with increasing challenges due to staff cuts, and historically more limited capacity in small Embassies).



Finland has established a series of successful models, as identified in the reconstructed ToC for this evaluation, which merit scaling up. However, the stagnation or reduction of development aid resources (both for Finland and other donors with the potential to support scaling up) combined with increasingly restrictive contexts, have hindered these efforts.

Finland's genuine approach to PPA3 takes time and human resources. The relevant policy documents and the 2023 PPA3 ToC are not fully updated to reflect a rapidly changing world's order and Finland's own policy shifts. Neither do carry over the results of learning through practice. In the face of uncertainty and challenges MFA staff and partners are in demand of rejuvenated, practical guidance, and avenues to share their experience and learning across PPA3, between PPA3 and other priority areas, and across countries and continents, as a condition to continuously harvest positive precedents, shepherd them, and create scaling-up opportunities.



5 Conclusions

Conclusion 1. Finland's comparative advantage in PPA3 is its value- and rule-based identity.

Findings 1 and 2 establish that Finland's policy frameworks in democracy, rule of law and human rights are strongly aligned and have laid the foundation for a trusted MFA identity and reputation in these areas, recognised by partners and other stakeholders. This identity is further reinforced by Findings 17 and 18, which emphasise authenticity and a progressive, yet pragmatic and realistic approach to change, where credibility comes from consistent adherence to values and an acceptance of the fact that results are often incremental. In practice, Findings 9 and 10 show that Finland's influence, within PPA3 and beyond, is multiplied by shared democratic values and a diverse mix of instruments that allow Finland to position itself constructively within complex donor constellations—provided the message and the instruments stay coherent.

Multiple interviews illustrate how this “identity advantage” becomes operational leverage and influence, well above what could be expected of a donor of this size. In Nepal, EU interlocutors note that Finland (often alongside the EU/Nordics) is perceived as a champion of rights in political dialogue. Front Line Defenders describes Finland as a “likeminded” government and explicitly note that engagement with MFA goes beyond the contractual relationship. This kind of trust-based positioning is mirrored in democracy support: Demo Finland's model is described as internationally exceptional because it includes all parliamentary parties and uses their expertise to strengthen dialogue on democracy issues, this linking Finland's domestic pluralism to external democracy support credibility.

This reputational capital is a demonstrable asset and a core mechanism of influence across instruments and contexts. It allows Finland to dispense the credibility capital generated through its adhesion to and promotion of the principles espoused by PPA3 in other areas of foreign policy: in bilateral relations, but also, crucially, by amplifying the voice of Helsinki in international organisations beyond what the country's nominal size and resources would command. Recent international and national policy shifts require conscious institutional adaptation to retain this advantage.

Conclusion 2. Resource constraints and contextual shifts make strategic prioritisation and smart leverage decisive for impact.

Finding 4 notes that support to PPA3 is implemented through multiple instruments and departments, with an evolving but overall effective division of labour across HQ and Embassies. At the same time, Findings 2 and 17 explicitly refer to recent policy shifts, funding cuts and structural changes as a strategic and operational risk, particularly because they affect thematic expertise and institutional memory. Finding 3 points to fluctuations in the resources devoted to PPA3, and to



a recent decrease. Finding 19 adds that adaptive management is not sufficiently informed by risk management and that sustainability of successes is itself a risk. In parallel, Findings 14–16 show that civil society support remains strategically relevant and value-based but must adjust operationally to changed national and international contexts. Finding 16 also points out that sustainability of CSO efforts is increasingly problematic in the context of shrinking civic space and aid budgets but explains that both traditional and new civic actors can be mature for receiving direct support.

Programme reports and many interviews bear witness to personnel cuts limiting the ability to actively monitor CSO programmes, as many embassies do not have the human resources to remain closely involved during implementation, and CSO programmes do not report to the Embassy level systematically. This limits the capacity of MFA to channel generated knowledge into learning, and to harness the contacts, access and knowledge as foreign policy tools. At the same time, partner-led delivery can still generate high reach and efficiency: channelling support through CSOs is successful because they often reach many people with relatively small funds, pointing to how “smart leveraging” matters when resources are getting squeezed.

These patterns imply that maintaining impact under tighter resources requires deliberate prioritisation and thinking about leverage. The limitation of feasibility of applying PPA3-related interventions in many geographic areas, returning domination of security-related mindset in foreign policy in many regions, concerns about value chains and trade from the security viewpoint, create conditions in which areas where Finland traditionally adds most value are under-served by other, larger actors and garner less international attention. Yet, despite them being under stress, Finland still retains critical capacities for strategic steering, learning, and risk-informed adaptation that can retain and expand its foreign policy leverage.

Conclusion 3. The results chain in PPA3 is tangible, but hard to evidence.

Finding 5 states that tangible results are difficult to trace while strong indications of contribution exist, and Finding 6 states that results are coherent under Outcomes 1-3 with under-used synergy potential in Outcome 4. Findings 7 and 8 (rights-holder analysis and targeting) and Findings 12-13 (good governance) underline that stronger outcomes occur where analysis informs programming and where interventions combine multi-stakeholder engagement, early buy-in, sustained engagement and mainstreaming. Yet attribution and aggregation remain challenging because change is political, behavioural and cumulative.

The portfolio evidence provides concrete illustrations of why traceability is difficult. In peace and mediation programming, one programme evaluation states plainly that diplomacy takes time and linear logframe models are poorly suited to complex change processes; it recommends ToC and adaptive approaches and points to methodologies such as outcome mapping/harvesting. In civil society programming, Taksvärkki reporting explicitly prioritises qualitative change (skills, attitudes, behaviours) while noting that such outcomes are hard to quantify and compare, creating a structural tension between what matters and what is easily measured. Conversely, where results chains are made visible through specific mechanisms, the evidence becomes clearer: in Nepal, Abilis’ long-run disability inclusion work is illustrated through concrete behaviour/visibility shifts (e.g., blind women’s participation in cricket improving visibility and school enrolment). In Ethiopia, election support reporting demonstrates an explicit risk-analysis-to-action loop (violence mapping,



validation workshops, Joint Electoral Operations Centres engaging stakeholders), showing how process-oriented governance support can still yield observable prevention effects.

The implication is that the process-oriented nature of change in the PPA3 area is a deliberate policy choice within Finnish programming, and it generates significant positive synergies throughout Finland's cooperation and trade efforts. Therefore, an instinctive shift towards soliciting and tracking more easily quantifiable indicators of success is unlikely to serve policymakers well or add value to the ToC articulated as part of Finnish foreign policy, especially given the human resource pressures at the MFA. Conversely, investing in a performance and learning architecture can credibly capture contributions to complex change and provide a solid basis for steering and adaptation.

Conclusion 4. Effectiveness is highest when Finland focuses on context-specific strengths, partner synergy, and proven modalities

Findings 5 and 6 identify the role of Finland in creating reproducible precedents and models, both in the mode of interventions for human rights, rule of law, and democracy, and in transformative results locally, which mainstream these principles. Findings 9, 14, 15, and 16 identify strong synergies with civil society partners at all levels as another decisive factor. Findings 11, 12, 13 identify patterns of effectiveness in governance support: best performance occurs when programmes combine multi-stakeholder engagement, early government buy-in, sustained engagement and governance mainstreaming, while lesson-sharing and anticipatory attention to political/institutional risks are not always sufficient. Finding 10 also frames Finland as a constructive actor in changing donor constellations, which reinforces that effectiveness depends on positioning, complementarity and feasible niche choices.

Ethiopia's election assistance provides a clear operational example of "proven modality": long-term electoral violence prevention was advanced through mapping exercises, validation workshops with experts, and stakeholder dialogue through JEOCs; lessons were then used to revise the concept towards more predictive risk analysis, i.e., an evidence-driven iteration loop. In democracy support, the Demo Finland model consistently combines capacity building with facilitated safe space for political actors to interact—an added value explicitly identified in Tunisia programme evaluation findings.

Finland's long experience in program implementation under PPA3 has created identifiable patterns and chains of success, which point to the areas, where limited resources can be best used. A comprehensive stock-taking of the portfolio makes it possible to identify subject areas and countries/regions, where the enabling conditions exist and where modalities are demonstrably effective and scalable.



Conclusion 5. Sustainable outcomes are feasible when long-term partnerships and comprehensive rather than isolated interventions materialise.

Findings 14, 15, and 16 conclude that civil society support is value-based and strategically relevant, and that it usually shows positive outcomes for rights-holders, but less so for institutional development. It is also demonstrated that sustainability is increasingly problematic. Finding 18 highlights a reality check, whereby lasting changes in PPA3 are only achieved progressively, through patient efforts. Finding 19 generalises the sustainability concern across PPA3, which requires strong risk management to inform continuity of support, institutionalisation, and resilience measures under shrinking civic space.

INSEC-supported model in Nepal provides concrete illustrations of how long-term, community-based civil society support can outlast project cycles: after the project ended, participants continued human rights activities, children's advocacy clubs still exist in schools, and leaders from advocacy groups were elected to formal local roles. In the FEDO/KIOS case, Dalit women's groups became more organised, but also, institutional anchoring mechanisms were created that are directly associated with persistence. Similarly, disability inclusion programming by Abilis demonstrates sustainability through movement-building and representation. At the same time, the sustainability challenge is referred to in multiple program documents, reports and communication.

These examples converge on the same programme logic: sustainable outcomes are most plausible when Finland favours long-term partnerships and sequenced interventions that can compound learning and institutionalisation, rather than isolated, time-bound activities. The established, strategic relationships with Finnish CSOs and the sophistication of their internal structures and procedures, creates pre-conditions for deepening the knowledge about specific regions, countries and processes relevant to PPA3 (governance concerns, human rights, media field), which can serve to inform Finland's foreign policy strategy and contribute to the international awareness.

Conclusion 6. Risk management, including corruption and integrity risks, is embedded in delivery, but not systematically

Findings 18 and 19 show that Finland manages PPA3 adaptively and sensitively but does not sufficiently inform it with risk management, and Findings 12-13 note that external political and institutional risks are not always sufficiently anticipated. Finding 16 also highlights that shrinking civic space is a material risk, requiring operational adjustments. In other words, risk is acknowledged but not consistently translated into systematic portfolio-level risk-informed design, monitoring and mitigation.

Abilis programme documentation provides a granular view of "risk becoming operational": shrinking civic space increases bureaucracy (e.g., permits delaying projects), makes advocacy impossible in some settings, and requires staff time to navigate the bureaucracy - all of which directly affects feasibility and long-term outcomes. MFA policy documents recognise since 2017 that civil society deterioration is a binding constraint on long-term results, making the case for more explicit scenario-based planning and resilience measures. Integrity and governance risks also surface through



interviews with diplomatic staff. These examples show why “adaptive management” needs to be risk-informed rather than reactive: risks emerge in implementation, and mitigation requires systematic tools and follow-through, not only project-by-project judgement.

The evidence supports treating integrity and risk management as a results enabler, rather than merely a compliance issue. Especially since the Finnish foreign policy is having a stronger focus on trade relations and business opportunities, absence of a stronger, systematic integrity lens may undermine the traditional projection of the Finnish domestic model of societal cohesion in its external policy, which served well to build country’s credibility.

Conclusion 7. Sustaining quality requires renewed guidance, learning products and sustaining/building expertise across MFA and Embassies

Finding 4 underlines that the overall HQ–Embassy division of labour has remained effective through change. Finding 7 shows that rights-holder analysis, when performed, strengthens relevance and directly feeds into programming; the report also notes that HRBA is widely internalised by staff and underpins programming logic across instruments. However, there is unevenness across phases and constraints on implementation-stage scrutiny and follow-up, including where consultation and analysis differ by phase and partner. Findings 18 and 19 reveal the concerns common to MFA staff and strategic partners about how to cross-pollinate learning and maintain the congruence of different policy priorities in the long run, in an increasingly restrictive global environment, and in the face of increasing risks.

Established procedures and approaches, such as HRBA requirements remain relevant, but their interpretation during implementation and monitoring becomes increasingly problematic, as the context shifts and staff constraints mount. Since the MFA work under PPA3 is building on strongly internalised values and value-based partnerships, the interventions remain relevant and coherent for now, but they are coming under increasing stress. A baseline of commitment needs to be safeguarded through guidance and systems. On the delivery side, loss of thematic advisers illustrates how expertise constraints can reduce the quality of engagement during implementation. Conversely, where structured learning systems exist, they support coherence: Finnish CSO partners deploy sophisticated MEL (e.g., Taksvärkki’s outcome mapping and progress markers; VIKES’ ToC; Finnish Red Cross project information systems with risk monitoring), but notably evidence-backing for reported results remains uneven and MFA/Embassies face constraints in scrutinising evidentiary quality.

The practical conclusion is that sustained expertise, institutional memory and strong partnerships are the key factors that currently underpin the relevance and coherence of the PPA3 interventions, but they are coming under resource stress and also require adaptation facing evolving global context. Sustaining quality calls for renewal of operational guidance and focus on the learning products to sustain expertise and bolster the institutional memory.



6 Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Maintain the successful branding of chiefly value-based and rule-based Finnish support.

Operational suggestions: Finland should continue to consistently frame its international development cooperation around its comparative advantage, i.e. a value-based and rule-based approach rooted in human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. In practice, this requires maintaining clear and consistent messaging in projects and programmes as well as in diplomatic dialogue, emphasising that Finland's support is grounded in genuine partnerships, agile and sustainable approaches, and adherence to international norms. Emerging priorities in Finnish development cooperation, including its focus on trade relations and private sector participation, should be positioned as complementary to this value- and rule-based approach.

Benefits: Maintaining this branding helps preserve Finland's strong reputation as a principled and trusted partner, enabling it to exercise policy influence and convening power despite comparatively limited financial resources. By reinforcing that Finland is a consistent, values-driven actor that invests in genuine dialogue and local ownership, Finland can continue to support sustainable, long-term progress in human rights, democracy, and the rule of law, and reap the benefits of its reputation in all its international cooperation and trade endeavours.

This recommendation relates to Findings No. 1, 2, 10 17, 18, and Conclusions No. 1.

Recommendation 2: Avoid resource cuts in support to democracy, human rights, and the rule of law in the interest of Finland's wider policy priorities on SDGs, international security, and trade

Operational suggestions: Despite the current remarkable resource constraints, MFA should strategically ensure continuity of its support to democracy, human rights and the rule of law. This requires the preservation of funding and human resources in this area, at their historical levels. Finland should protect the core capacities required to sustain PPA3 engagement, both in terms of funding and in terms of core human resources both in Headquarters and in the field. It should prioritise strategic engagement with partner country authorities, CSOs, like-minded donors, international organisations and IFIs in areas where Finland has clear comparative advantages. It should increase its contribution to candid, strategic and inclusive dialogue as well as predictable support to partners, including by maintaining the Democracy and Rule of Law Support budget line. At the same time, the MFA should recognise the limits of such dialogue in light of political economy dynamics. Finland should also strengthen partner-led implementation and existing alliances to maintain reach



and effectiveness. Sustaining PPA3 engagement will require that financial resource allocations are protected and, where feasible, increased to better reflect the area's strategic importance.

Benefits: Containing the resource crunch on PPA3 will help safeguard Finland's ability to exercise strategic influence and maintain its role as a credible and trusted partner in the areas of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law, and beyond these, in all PPAs and throughout its entire international trade and cooperation efforts. By protecting key capacities within existing constraints, Finland can continue to achieve meaningful results and remain aligned with its broader foreign and development policy priorities.

This recommendation relates to Findings No. 2, 3, 4, 14, 16, 17, 19, and Conclusions No. 2.

Recommendation 3: Adjust the results and performance framework under the MFA Theories of Change to the specificities of PPA3

Operational suggestions: Finland should adapt its monitoring, evaluation and learning practices to better capture and learn from political and behavioural contributions to change, including qualitative changes in attitudes, practices and participation. Monitoring should place greater emphasis on outcomes emerging from processes, especially from the perspective of rightsholders, who are chiefly targeted by Finland's work in PPA3. Finland should embrace the qualitative and process-oriented nature of these changes and reduce requirements for aggregated quantitative reporting. This includes recognising partial progress and resilience against setbacks in adverse contexts.

Benefits: Strengthening the monitoring and performance architecture will improve Finland's ability to demonstrate credible contributions to long-term change in human rights, democracy and the rule of law. It will also support more effective strategic steering by providing clearer evidence on what works and under which conditions.

This recommendation relates to Findings No. 5, 7, 8, 12, 13, and Conclusions No. 3.

Recommendation 4: Within each country of intervention and at global level, focus on strengths and positive precedents.

Operational suggestions: Finland should focus on supporting interventions that combine key success factors, such as rights-based and intersectional analysis, strong context monitoring, meaningful engagement of rights-holders, adaptive management, complementarity with other donors, and the simultaneous strengthening of civil society participation and duty-bearer capacity. Based on past experience, Finland should place emphasis on strategic policy influence at country, regional, EU, and multilateral levels. Finland should also support communication of successful approaches and lessons learned.



Benefits: Focusing on areas where Finland has demonstrated strengths will ensure better use of Finland's comparative advantages as a trusted and value-driven partner and can enhance the likelihood of sustainable results. Improved documentation and sharing of successful approaches will also increase Finland's influence and contribution to effective development cooperation.

This recommendation relates to Findings No. 5, 6, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, and Conclusions No. 4.

Recommendation 5: Prioritise long-term support over punctual interventions.

Operational suggestions: Finland should, within existing policy and resource constraints, prioritise long-term partnerships that allow learning, institutionalisation and resilience to develop over time. This includes maintaining series of interventions with trusted partners, reconsidering CPs approaches where relevant, and ensuring a balanced mix of core, programme and project funding. Such continuity can help partners consolidate capacities, strengthen organisational sustainability and maintain engagement with rights-holders and institutions.

Benefits: Prioritising long-term support will increase effectiveness and the sustainability of results by enabling gradual institutionalisation and stronger ownership among partner organisations and rights-holders.

This recommendation relates to Findings No. 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, and Conclusions No. 5.

Recommendation 6: Strengthen risk management, including governance and corruption-related risks, under PPA3.

Operational suggestions: Finland should, within existing resource constraints, further strengthen its risk management approach under PPA3. This should include more systematic and regular assessments of governance and corruption-related risks during programme design and implementation. Risk assessments should pay particular attention to political economy dynamics and cover civic space issues, partner profiles and governance conditions. These assessments should be regularly fed back into programming.

Benefits: A more systematic and risk-informed approach will enable earlier identification of emerging challenges and support more effective adaptation of programmes in complex political environments and contexts with high levels of corruption.

This recommendation relates to Findings No. 12, 13, 16, 18, 19, and Conclusions No. 6.



Recommendation 7: Equip MFA staff with updated and comprehensive guidance on PPA3.

Operational suggestions: MFA should, within existing resource constraints, equip staff at headquarters and embassies with updated and practical guidance on the sub-themes of PPA3 and their application in programming and dialogue. This could include internal guidance materials and learning products clarifying how to apply PPA3 principles throughout the programme cycle and how to reconcile policy priorities. These efforts should be supported or complemented through training, knowledge-sharing and recruitment practices that help sustain thematic expertise and institutional memory. Guidance should recognise that maintaining standards and resisting democratic backsliding can itself constitute meaningful results in difficult contexts. This is in part dependent upon the implementation of Recommendation 2, as guidance requires expert staff, which may be complemented by on-demand external expert service provision, including from key partners (e.g. NGOs) who have accumulated learning through years of cooperation with MFA on support to democracy, human rights, and rule of law.

Benefits: Strengthening guidance can help mitigate the loss of expertise linked to staff turnover and resource constraints while maintaining consistent quality in programming and implementation. It can also support more proactive management of tensions between policy priorities and help staff navigate complex political contexts. By reinforcing the strong internalisation of PPA3 values among staff, MFA can sustain its engagement in human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

This recommendation relates to Findings No. 4 and 7, 18, 19 and Conclusions No. 7.

Recommendation 8: Channel more funding to local CSOs but evaluate the risks they are facing carefully.

Operational suggestions: Given the resource constraints, the length of partnership with some national or local CSOs in partner countries, channelled through international organizations, and the demand for stronger empowerment of these partners, the MFA should consider direct support to local CSOs that have sufficiently matured through continued support of the Finnish CSOs as well as offering seed-support to emerging, grassroots movements. The such approach will imply stronger short-to-medium term focus on providing organizational (core) support, which has been a weaker side of Finland's assistance to CSOs so far. At the same time, given the global trend of shrinking civic space, the choice and delivery modalities should be conditional on the country risk analysis, as per Recommendation 4, to avoid exposing civic activists to unnecessary threats. Planning should benefit from the extensive experience of Finland in supporting and protecting human rights defenders.

Benefits: Channelling more assistance through national and local CSOs may prove more economical while empowering long-term partner CSOs on the ground. It may mitigate the challenge of attributability of changes in civil society support, strengthen the direct linkage with the realities on the ground, and contribute to reinvigorating the network of Embassy interlocutors and thus fostering operational awareness.

This recommendation relates to Findings No. 5 and 15, 16, 19 and Conclusions No. 2 and 6.



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8 The Evaluation Team

This evaluation was conducted by **Camille Massey (Team Leader [TL])**, **Henrik Alffram (Senior Evaluator [SE])**, **Elina Tran-Nguyen (Evaluator)**, **Jaba Devdariani (Policy and Programming Expert)**, **Riikka Suhonen (Emerging Evaluator)**, and **Aruna Pant (national evaluator)**. The evaluation team relied on the complementary expertise, experience, as well as regional and language portfolios of its members. The division of labour aimed to build on these complementarities, boost efficiency, and secure the quality and relevance of the evaluation process across all thematic and geographic areas.

Camille Massey (TL) is a senior evaluation consultant with over 20 years of experience leading and delivering complex, strategic evaluations in international development. She has managed and contributed to more than 40 evaluations, including over 30 strategic and 20 as Team Leader, across a wide range of thematic areas such as democracy, rule of law, human rights, public administration, anti-discrimination, and inclusion. Camille Massey's expertise covers all levels of evaluation, from community-based to multi-country and global assignments, for clients including the EU, UN agencies, the Council of Europe, OSCE, and bilateral donors. She is highly skilled in advanced evaluation methods, including theory of change, contribution analysis, outcome harvesting, qualitative comparative analysis, and both quantitative and qualitative data visualisation. Camille Massey has a strong track record of facilitating multi-stakeholder consultations, building evaluation capacity, and providing practical recommendations in diverse and often challenging contexts.

In this evaluation, Camille Massey provided strategic leadership, overseeing the overall methodology and allocation of tasks within the team. She led the synthesis of data and analysis for EQs 2 and 5, acted as lead author, and ensured the overall quality of deliverables. Camille Massey also co-led the Nepal deep dive with Senior Expert Henrik Alffram and managed interactions with the MFA at both strategic and management levels, particularly with the reference group.

Henrik Alffram (SE) is a lawyer and sociologist with 28 years of professional experience focused on human rights, rule of law, governance, and civil society issues. He specializes in the design, monitoring, and evaluation of development interventions, with extensive assignments in political economy analysis, context assessments, strategy development, organisational reviews, and training on human rights and M&E. Henrik Alffram has worked with a wide range of stakeholders, including NGOs, development agencies, and international organisations, across more than 35 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, and South America.

For this evaluation, Henrik Alffram led the "Good Governance" portfolio. He was particularly in charge of data collection and analysis for EQ 3, supported the TL with the evaluation methodology and drafting of deliverables, and took the lead on the analysis of Finland's relevant policy documents. He was also in co-charge of the Nepal deep-dive.

Elina Tran-Nguyen, Evaluator (E), has over 25 years of experience in international development cooperation, including extensive work as an evaluator, with a particular focus on HRBA, corporate human rights responsibility, and the rule of law. Her work has included mid-term and final evaluations, baseline studies, and advisory assignments in areas such as gender equality, the rights of PwDs, youth empowerment, and programme management. Elina Tran-Nguyen has led



and contributed to evaluations and development assignments in numerous countries across Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

In this evaluation, Elina Tran-Nguyen led the quantitative and textual analysis, as well as the analysis of institutional arrangements. She was particularly responsible for EQ1, conducted portfolio analysis, and handled data processing and analysis with MAXQDA. She was an integral part of data collection, and conducted interviews, for EQs 1, 2, and 5.

Riikka Suhonen, Emerging Evaluator (EE), has experience in international cooperation, with a specialisation in communication, education analysis, research, and external evaluations for various organisations, including the EU, the Finnish Agency for Education, and the MFA. She is currently pursuing a PhD in Educational Sciences at the University of Helsinki.

In her role as an Emerging Evaluator, Riikka Suhonen has contributed to document review, the preparation of the inception report, organisation of data collection activities, data coding and analysis for the evaluation. She also focused on the use of AI for data analysis. She was particularly responsible for assembling the corpus of relevant evaluations from the MFA's evaluation AI tool and supporting the Evaluator with automated textual analysis of documents. She also supported the team in data collection, especially interviews, and in the analysis of interviews and project documents, particularly those in Finnish.

Jaba Devdariani (Policy and Programming Expert) is a policy and programming expert with 28 years of professional experience, including 13 years in evaluation and strategic quality assurance. He has extensive expertise in civil society development, rule of law, democracy, and human rights, having worked with a range of international partners such as the Council of Europe, EU, USAID, and UKAid. Jaba Devdariani has designed and led long-term institution-building and reform programmes, particularly in the areas of civil society, minority rights, youth programmes, and civil service reform.

For this evaluation, Jaba Devdariani led the "Civil Society" portfolio. He was particularly in charge of data collection and analysis for EQ 4, supported the TL with team coordination and internal review of the team's inputs, and took the lead on the analysis of programming patterns and practices.

For the country deep dive, the team worked with a **national expert, Aruna Pant**. She is a Monitoring, Evaluation, and Partnerships Specialist with over 15 years of national, regional, and international experience across South Asia, MENA, and Latin America. She has a strong background in leading multi-country programmes and evaluations, with particular expertise in participatory evaluation, youth and adolescent engagement, and rights-based programming. For this evaluation, Aruna Pant served as National Expert. She contributed her expertise in data collection and analysis, provided contextual insights on Nepal, and supported the team in engaging with local stakeholders and interpreting national policy and programme documents.



Annex 1: Terms of Reference

1. Background and Rationale

One of Finland's core assumptions in implementing foreign policy is that a well-functioning democracy, the rule of law, human rights and a vibrant civil society are prerequisites for sustainable social development. The commitment to democracy, human rights, the rule of law and civil society participation has also guided Finland's development cooperation since its early years and is repeated again in the most recent Government reports.

The Government report on Finnish foreign and security policy (2024) states the following:

“Finland is committed to accelerating the global implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and 2030 Agenda. Supporting peace, stability, democracy and development is important with a view to the prosperity and living conditions of people living in developing countries. These measures also enhance security in Europe and Finland. (...) Finland's foreign and security policy is based on the rule of law, human rights, equality and democracy. A well-functioning democracy, the rule of law, human rights and a vibrant civil society are prerequisites for sustainable social development. The objectives of development cooperation will continue to be based on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).”

[\(Government of Finland, 2024a\)](#)

The Government's Report on International Economic Relations and Development Cooperation repeats (2024) the same message by saying that:

“Development policy is an integral part of Finland's foreign and security policy. Development cooperation is one way of implementing it. Development cooperation promotes opportunities for a better life. Finland aims to achieve sustainable results and long-term impacts through development cooperation. Development is the sum of many factors and development cooperation is only one instrument for achieving change. A well-functioning democracy, the rule of law, human rights and a vibrant civil society are prerequisites for sustainable social development. Finland's development cooperation promotes the realisation of these essential conditions.”

[\(Government of Finland, 2024b\)](#)

Promoting democracy, the rule of law and human rights can be seen both as an intrinsic value and as a means to achieve favorable conditions for something, such as increased security and more stable economic relations. While promoting democracy, the rule of law and human rights has formed a central part of Finland's development policy for decades, Finnish support to this thematic area has been evaluated only through specific project-based evaluations and as part of country programme evaluations. The current evaluation aims at looking at Finnish support to promoting democracy, the rule of law and human rights in developing countries from a more comprehensive perspective, emphasizing specifically support for democracy and rule of law. Human rights will be mostly covered by utilizing the 2023 evaluation on Human Rights Based Approach ([HRBA evaluation 2023](#)) of the Ministry for foreign Affairs of Finland (MFA).



2. Description of the Evaluand

There have been two separate approaches to democracy support in the MFA and this evaluation should use both of them as starting point as indicated in more detail in chapter 3 Scope.

The first approach is outlined in the document titled **Ministry for Foreign Affairs' Democracy Support Policy**, which was published in 2014. This policy document defines Finland's broad concept of democracy which includes the goal of simultaneously promoting human rights, democracy, and the rule of law, good governance, and the eradication of corruption.

The document states that in its democracy support Finland will focus on the following main themes:

- Promoting the political and economic participation (including the development of societies and conflict resolution) of women and groups that are vulnerable, easily marginalised and subject to discrimination;
- Supporting/reinforcing conditions for civil society, particularly through support for defenders of human rights (including whistleblowers);
- Supporting the development of rule of law, good governance of public institutions and mechanisms, anti-corruption measures, free and fair elections, conditions for parliaments, and multi-party systems.

The policy document also outlines some modes of implementation of the Finnish democracy support as follows: "When selecting modes of implementation, the effectiveness and impact of support is essential. In addition, the added value generated by Finland's activities in promoting set objectives, complementarity with respect to Finland's other activities, and Finland's opportunities to influence when support is directed via international organisations are all taken into account."

A second approach to Finland's democracy support is presented in the document titled "**Report on Development Policy Extending Across Parliamentary Terms**", published in 2021 (Finnish Government 2021, [Development Policy Extending Across Parliamentary Terms](#)). The document defines peaceful democratic societies as one of Finland's development policy priorities. The priority area "Peaceful democratic societies" is further divided into four sub-themes or outcome areas in the document "Theories of Change and Aggregate Indicators for Finland's Development Policy". (This document was first published by the MFA in 2020 and updated in 2023; MFA 2020 indicators).

The sub-themes are:

- 1) Peaceful, stable and just societies
- 2) Strengthening institutions and promoting good governance
- 3) Possibility to participation for all and strong civil societies
- 4) Transparent and equal domestic resource mobilization (i.e. taxation) systems

Peaceful democratic societies is one of MFA's result area also in the updated document of 2023, and the sub-themes or outcome areas all have their corresponding indicators for results based management purposes.



The support for democracy, rule of law and human rights is implemented in several departments and embassies of MFA and it is funded through several aid instruments/modalities. These cooperation instruments/modalities are:

- **Bilateral support** to Finland's partner countries (also including regional cooperation),
- **Multilateral support** (core funding, specific support to individual organisations as well as multi-bi projects)
- **Support to civil society organisations** (CSOs), including CSO support (programme and project-based instruments) and International Non-Governmental Organisation (INGO) support
- **Support channeled through the budget line "democracy and rule of law support"** which constitutes funding of the Rule of Law Centre and Demo Finland and can be compared to other CSO support
- **EU development cooperation**
- **Local Cooperation Funds (LCF)**

All the above mentioned instruments/modalities will be covered in this evaluation.

3. Purpose and objectives

The purpose of this evaluation is three-fold:

First, to provide the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and its stakeholders with general information on the implementation of the support for democracy and rule of law using the 2014 "Ministry for Foreign Affairs' democracy support policy" as a starting point.

Second, to assess the achievements and results as well as challenges of the result area "Peaceful democratic societies" using the "Theories of Change and Aggregate Indicators for Finland's Development Policy" as a starting point.

Third, to provide evidence-based recommendations on future directions for Finland to consider when it engages with this theme with a longer-term time perspective.

This evaluation is expected to increase knowledge on the democracy support, rule of law and human rights related SDG 16 as well as SDG 17 on partnerships.

The objectives of this evaluation are:

1. To provide information on the practical implementation of the support to democracy and rule of law in the MFA and how it has changed since publishing the "Ministry for Foreign Affairs' democracy support policy", as well as what role the policy has had in the practical implementation of democracy support. (Purpose 1)
2. To harvest and evaluate results, successes and challenges in achieving the objectives of the result area "Peaceful democratic societies" and its sub-themes as a whole. (Purpose 2)



3. To assess how Finland has promoted strengthening institutions and good governance and what kind of successes and/or challenges there have been in achieving the objectives set for this sub-theme. (Purpose 2)
4. To assess how Finland has promoted civil societies and what kind of successes and/or challenges there have been in achieving the objectives set for this sub-theme. (Purpose 2)
5. To provide realistic evidence-based recommendations on how to best achieve the policy objectives for result area “Peaceful democratic societies” in the future, including those policy objectives identified in the 2024 Government’s Report on International Economic Relations and Development Cooperation. (Purpose 3)

The evaluation is expected to provide answers for both accountability and learning purposes. On one hand it must draw together results and impacts that have been achieved so far (accountability) within the result area peaceful democratic societies, on the other hand it is expected to give guidance on how to best proceed with the democracy support, rule of law and human rights given the current government priorities as well as the rapid changes affecting the global scene.

One country case study will be conducted as part of this evaluation. The purpose of the case study is to provide a contributory evidence stream to the overall evaluation. First, it will provide a context analysis that includes a comprehensive picture of Finland’s different aid modalities, interventions and activities in terms of support for democracy, rule of law and human rights in a given country as well as an overview of other key donors and their corresponding actions in that country. Second, it will provide answers to the evaluation questions 3-4 from the country context point of view. And third, it will provide additional information to be utilised in answering to the evaluation question 2. The target country for the case study will be selected in the inception phase together with the reference group of this evaluation.

Some additional field trips may be relevant but their locations as well as the team composition to carry them out will be decided later on together with the evaluation team.

The evaluation focusses mainly on the OECD DAC evaluation criteria of **relevance, effectiveness and sustainability** with emphasis on results and sustainability (of long-term or completed interventions).

The main users of the evaluation are different units and departments in the MFA managing development cooperation, democracy support and/or rule of law. The secondary users include the Development Policy Committee (DPC) as well as other government ministries and institutions. Similarly, different partners, actors and stakeholders are likely to find the results useful. The evaluation also aims at producing useful information for private sector actors who are considering engagement in this area.

4. Scope

Since the concept of support for democracy, rule of law and human rights is extremely wide, this evaluation focuses only on certain aspects of it. Human rights are not in the centre of this evaluation and are mainly covered by utilizing the MFA’s HRBA evaluation mentioned in the Background and Rationale -section.



In answering the Evaluation Question 1 this evaluation will use the “Ministry for Foreign Affairs’ democracy support policy” as a starting point, whereas in answering the Evaluation Questions 2-4 this evaluation will use the results area “Peaceful democratic societies” and its sub-themes/outcome areas as the starting point. Finally, this evaluation will utilize the information produced for all the above mentioned evaluation questions when formulating recommendations for the future i.e. answering the Evaluation Question 5.

The sub-theme 1 Peaceful, stable and just societies is not in the centre of this evaluation but will be part of the overall analysis of the results area. The sub-theme 4 relating to domestic resource mobilisation will be covered by utilising the MFA’s evaluation “Finland’s Initiatives Focused on Enhanced Domestic Resource Mobilization” ([DRM evaluation](#)) carried out in 2023. Its results must be taken into account in the overall analysis of the results area.

Finnish development policy and cooperation are part of broader foreign and security policy of Finland. **The main focus of this evaluation is on development policy and cooperation.** However, the evaluation must note that the evaluation is also directly linked with **Finland’s Foreign Policy** and so take into account activities carried out by Political department when evaluating the result area as a whole.

This evaluation will also **address Finland’s cross-cutting objectives of human rights, gender equality and non-discrimination** from the perspective of how well they have been realized in “Peaceful democratic societies” result area.

On the **level of analysis**, the evaluation is not focussing on evaluating the performance of individual projects, organisations or partners but make an overall analysis of the result area, emphasizing **relevance, effectiveness and sustainability** of Finland’s activities.

In addition to the **development contexts that will remain relevant also in the future**, this evaluation also takes into account (past and present) **contexts of newly developed democracies**. The sampling is therefore expected to go beyond the bilateral long-term partner countries of Finland to also include countries which are relevant from the democracy development perspective and where there are, or have been, democracy support projects of other cooperation instruments such as multilateral cooperation or LCF.

Although international work to support democracy, rule of law and human rights is carried out by many actors in Finland, including other ministries, this evaluation focusses on the work **financed through the Official Development Assistance (ODA) funds of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs**. Such other actors may however constitute important stakeholders and informants in some cases.

The National Audit Office of Finland is carrying out a performance audit on support for the development cooperation projects and programmes of Finnish Non-Governmental Organizations. The audit will be finalised due May 2025 and this evaluation is expected to utilize it for relevant parts.

The temporal scope of this evaluation broadly covers the years **2014 - 2024**, but is treated flexibly and **adjusted if needed**. The MFA management information system covers information from 2015 onwards but contains limitations.



The cooperation instruments/modalities foreseen as part of this evaluation include:

- **Bilateral support** to Finland's partner countries (including also regional cooperation),
- **Multilateral support** (core funding, specific support to individual organisations as well as multi-bi projects)
- **Support to civil society organisations** (CSOs), including CSO support (programme and project-based instruments) and International Non-Governmental Organisation (INGO) support
- **Support channelled through the budget line "democracy and rule of law support"** which constitutes funding of the Rule of Law Centre and Demo Finland and can be compared to other CSO support
- **EU development cooperation**
- **Local Cooperation Funds (LCF)**

This evaluation will address policy influencing activities as a distinct cooperation modality when relevant from the result area "Peaceful democratic societies" perspective.

5. Evaluation Questions

The evaluation questions are:

EQ1: How is the implementation of the support for democracy, rule of law and human rights organised in the MFA? (Descriptive)

1.1 What is the division of labor between different departments, units and embassies of the MFA in implementing support for democracy, rule of law and human rights?

1.2 How has Finnish support for democracy changed in 2014-2024?

1.3 To what extent has the "Ministry for Foreign Affairs' democracy support policy" affected the implementation of democracy support since 2014?

EQ2: What results, including any realised or emerging impact, has Finland generated in the result area "Peaceful democratic societies" as a whole during the period under evaluation? (Summative)

2.1 What have been the most notable results and impacts of the result area? What relative change(s) was resulted through Finnish support during the period? Are/were the results sustainable?

2.2 Have the activities undertaken in result area been relevant and or effective?

2.3 What approaches have been particularly effective?

2.4 What has been Finland's added value in generating the results?



EQ3: How has Finland promoted strengthening institutions and good governance, and what kind of successes and/or challenges have there been in achieving the objectives set for this sub-theme. (Summative)

3.1 What kind of results has Finland achieved in strengthening institutions and promoting good governance? Have the results been sustainable?

3.2 Have the activities undertaken been relevant and/or effective?

3.3 Are there any success stories and/or lessons learned in Finland's actions?

3.4 What has been Finland's added value in generating the results?

EQ4: How has Finland promoted strong civil societies, and what kind of successes and/or challenges have there been in achieving the objectives set for this sub-theme? (Summative)

4.1 What kind of results has Finland achieved in promoting strong civil societies? Have the results been sustainable?

4.2 Have the activities undertaken been relevant and/or effective?

4.3 Are there any success stories and/or lessons learned in Finland's actions?

4.4 What has been Finland's added value in generating the results?

EQ5: How can Finland execute activities in the result area "Peaceful democratic societies" in a more relevant, effective and sustainable way in the next five years and beyond? (Formative)

6. Methodology

The methodology is expected to use mixed-methods, including both quantitative and qualitative data. There is special emphasis for the summative evaluation questions to **use secondary data**. The evaluation is expected to effectively use the wealth of existing documentary evidence such as previous evaluations and reports. For the formative evaluation questions, relevant futures methods may be employed if relevant.

The foreseen methods for data collection and analysis include:

- Document analysis
- Analysis of MFA's administrative data (financial, indicators)
- Available statistics information (incl. OECD DAC, MFA [OpenAid](#), other) and the use of statistics methods, grids, data integration, indices etc. when relevant
- Key informant interviews (remote/onsite)
- Observation on selected project sites/country visits

The selection of best suited methods and data sources will be defined in the inception report.



The service providers are expected to describe their proposed approach and methods as well as their limitations in their proposals.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in EVA-11 assignments

In general, EVA-11 considers the use of new technologies such as AI a positive thing, when they serve a meaningful purpose in the assignment. However, AI technologies cannot be used in the FACE contract unless a prior written approval is obtained from EVA-11 for each assignment. The service provider and consultant(s) are obligated to disclose the detailed utilization of AI tools and techniques in the evaluation or assignment. The draft inception report or equivalent must carefully describe the purpose and ways of the proposed AI use, assess their risks and ‘do no harm’, and provide risk mitigation measures. If the proposed use of AI in evaluation is accepted, the service provider and consultant(s) must be transparent and declare the use of AI tools and techniques in all tasks, specifying the purpose and nature of AI usage. MFA information and data security regulations must be adhered to at all times.

The service provider and consultant(s) commit to upholding accuracy in the application of AI tools and techniques during implementation. They will provide a detailed description of the methodology and process employed for the analyses, to safeguard transparency and explainability. The service provider and consultant commits to diligently checking and verifying the accuracy of all AI-generated or AI-powered analyses and results and assumes full responsibility for its reliability and validity. The service provider and consultant(s) are obliged to rectify any biases, errors, or shortcomings in the AI analyses promptly.

The service provider and consultant(s) are obligated to use AI responsibly and uphold ethical principles in their use of AI⁹. The service provider and consultant(s) commit to employing AI tools in a way that adheres to principles of non-discrimination, fairness, transparency, explainability and accountability. The consultant will adopt an approach that aligns with the principle of ‘leaving no one behind’, ensuring that AI tool usage avoids exclusion or disadvantage to any group.

7. Evaluation Process, Timeline and Deliverables

The assignment is estimated to be conducted between March 2025 - January/February 2026. The process largely follows the general evaluation process description for EVA-11.

Deliverables

1) Inception report

A comprehensive document/materials analysis containing

- *Context analysis* (key concepts, policy context, organisational context)

⁹ See, e.g.: <https://vm.fi/en/ethical-guidelines-for-ai-in-public-administration>; and <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/ethics-guidelines-trustworthy-ai>; and <https://kehittajille.suomi.fi/guides/responsible-ai/introduction-to-data-ethics/pay-attention-to-laws-and-recommendations>



- *Portfolio analysis* including identification of successful interventions
- *Development results* from earlier evaluations, reviews and other reports/existing sources (to inform sampling, and to be further used in the evaluation report)

Evaluation plan that includes:

- detailed methodology
- evaluation matrix
- proposed sampling
- plan for field visits and other data collection activities
- workplan and division of labour
- communications plan

2) The draft final and final report

The draft final report will provide answers to the evaluations questions. It is based on a holistic understanding of Finland's policy objectives in providing an overall analysis and realistic recommendations.

The estimated length of the evaluation report is around 60-80 pages, excluding annexes.

The report will include:

- Table of content
- List of tables and abbreviations
- Summary in English (incl. FCR table)
- Summary in Finnish (incl. FCR table)
- Summary in Swedish (incl. FCR table)
- Introduction (1-2 pages)
- Context: (also utilising analyses in the inception report) (around 5 pages)
 - Overview of Finland's broader policy environment and objectives (development policy, foreign and security policy, human rights policy)
 - Overview of Finland's objectives, interventions and activities in result area
 - Overview of the relevant operational context of the interventions/activities; global, regional and country
- Methodology (2-3 pages)
 - Briefly presenting the approach, methods, sources of evidence, process of analysis, quality assurance and limitations.



- Findings (around 35-40 pages)
- Overall answers and findings on evaluation questions
- Conclusions (2-3 pages)
- Recommendations with options for courses of action to consider (3-4 pages)
- Annexes (Detailed methodology for the evaluation, additional and complementary materials used, table of portfolio with interventions and activities by outcome area, list of interviewees which will be for EVA-11 use only)

The content will be further specified during the inception phase.

The report(s) are to pay special attention to clear, non-technical everyday language.

The final report will include the following disclaimer when relevant:

“This report incorporates the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies to enhance and support [mention for which purpose the AI tool was used]. The AI tools or techniques utilised in this report adhere to EVA-11’s requirements, ensuring ethical and responsible use, transparency, validation of results, and compliance with relevant internal regulations. For details on the specific AI methodologies and tools used and details regarding the validation of AI-generated results, refer to section/annex [add reference] of this report.”

3) Communications outputs and products

- The evaluation team is expected to prepare presentations to all meetings involving the reference group (inception, FCR-workshop and presentation of the report).
- A draft communications 4-pager presenting key results messages of the evaluation in the usual EVA-11 format and style, not duplicating the summary.

8. Expertise Required from the Evaluation Team

In addition to meeting the minimum requirements and quality standard levels of FACE for the different roles, successful completion of this assignment requires:

- Experience in designing and implementing robust mixed-methods evaluations in the field of development policy and cooperation
- Strong sectoral subject matter expertise in democracy support, rule of law and human rights applied in the context of development policy cooperation
- Knowledge of the Finnish development policy context and development cooperation
- Capabilities in the Finnish language
- Strong time management skills, availability and commitment, and flexibility.



Team leader candidates should have proven expertise in both evaluation and the subject matter (democracy support and rule of law) in addition to the general requirements stipulated in the FACE framework arrangement.

9. Management of the Evaluation

The evaluation is commissioned by the EVA-11. The Evaluation Manager of EVA-11 will be responsible for the overall management of the process. The Evaluation Manager will work closely with other units/departments of the MFA and other stakeholders in Finland and abroad.

This evaluation is managed through the Framework Agreement for Centralised Evaluations (FACE), and it will be conducted by an independent evaluation team.

There will be one Management Team responsible for the overall coordination of the evaluation. This consists of the EVA-11 Evaluation Manager, the Team Leader, and a representative of the service provider (tbc).

A reference group for the evaluation will be established and chaired by the Evaluation Manager. The reference group is constituted to facilitate the participation of relevant stakeholders in the design and scoping of the evaluation, informing others about the progress of the evaluation, raising awareness of the different information needs, quality assurance throughout the process, and using and disseminating the evaluation results. The mandate of the reference group is to provide quality assurance, advisory support, and inputs to the evaluation, e.g., through participating in the planning of the evaluation and commenting on deliverables of the Consultant. The reference group is critical in guaranteeing transparency, accountability, and credibility, as well as the use of the evaluation and validating the results.

The Team Leader will manage the evaluation team. This requires careful planning to ensure that a common, consistent approach is used to achieve comparability of the data gathered and the approach used in the analysis. The Team Leader will develop a set of clear protocols for the team to use and will convene regular online team meetings to discuss the approach. Particular attention should be paid to strong inter-team coordination and information sharing within the team during the process.

The evaluation team is responsible for identifying relevant stakeholders to be interviewed or surveyed and organising the interviews/surveys. The MFA and embassies will not organize these or meetings on behalf of the evaluation team, but will assist in identifying people and organizations to be included in the evaluation.

Management of the evaluation entails risk management. The most pertinent risks are identified at the time of proposal submission and proactively discussed, monitored and managed during the evaluation process by all parties. The service providers will identify key risks and their mitigation in their proposals.



10. Budget

The foreseen maximum budget for this evaluation is 280 000 euros (excl. VAT, but including a contingency for any unexpected expenses).

11. Mandate

The evaluation team is entitled and expected to discuss matters relevant to this evaluation with pertinent persons and organizations. However, it is not authorised to make any commitments on behalf of the Government of Finland or the Ministry. The evaluation team does not represent the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland in any capacity.

All intellectual property rights to the result of the Service referred to in the Contract will be the exclusive property of the Ministry, including the right to make modifications and hand over material to a third party. The Ministry may publish the result under Creative Commons license to promote openness and public use of evaluation results.

12. Authorisation

Antero Klemola
Director,
Development Evaluation Unit
Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland



ANNEX 1: List of previous evaluations, reviews, studies and reports (not exhaustive, not exclusive)

The **2024 meta-analysis of country programmes** ([MFA 2024:2](#))

The **2023 Evaluation of Domestic Resource Mobilisation** ([MFA 2023:8](#))

The **2023 Evaluation of Human Rights Based Approach** ([MFA 2023:5](#))

The **2022 results report to the Finnish Parliament** ([MFA 2022](#))

The **2022 Evaluation of Development Policy Influencing in the EU** ([MFA 2022:5](#))

The **2021 Report on Development Policy across Parliamentary Terms** The report states that Finland's development policy priorities are based on its own strengths, which include **the rights of women and girls**; training and education; sustainable economy and decent work; **peaceful, democratic societies**; and climate change, biodiversity and sustainable management and use of natural resources. ([GoF 2021](#))

In **2021**, the **Development Policy Committee** published an analysis of Supporting democracy (Demokratia vaatii vahvistamista kaikkialla. Mahdollisuuksia demokratian lujittamiseen Suomen kehityspoliitikassa ja ulkosuhteissa. *Kehityspoliittisen toimikunnan julkaisu* 2024:1, in Finnish only). ([KPT 2024:1](#), in Finnish)

Finland's Development Cooperation in **Eastern Europe and Central Asia** (2021) ([MFA, 2021:4](#))

The evaluation on the **transition process of Finnish-Vietnamese cooperation** in 2008–2020 ([MFA 2021:5](#)).

The **OECD DAC peer review in 2017 and 2024**

Several of the **project and programme evaluations** of 2015-2022 cover issues relevant to this evaluation.



Annex 2. Sample interventions

List of extended global sample of 30 projects

N°	YEAR	TITLE	IMPLEMENTING PARTNER	INSTRUMENT	COMMITMENT	GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE	SUB-THEME
1	2016	Responsible and Innovative Land Administration Project in Ethiopia second phase (REILA II)	Niras Finland Oy	Bilateral	7,100,000	Ethiopia	Institutions & good governance
2	2015	KEN/Support to democracy in Kenya	Uraia Trust	Bilateral	3,200,000	Kenya	Institutions & good governance and Participation & civil society
3	2015, 2022	Widening Access to Justice for Legal Empowerment in the Kyrgyz Republic Phase II	UN Development Programme	Bilateral	3,200,000	Kyrgyzstan	Institutions & good governance
4	2018	Support to the Institute of Social and Economic Research	Instituto de Estudos Sociais e Económicos	Bilateral/research	1,538,000	Mozambique	Institutions & good governance and Participation & civil society
5	2022	Civic Engagement and Human Rights	Instituto Mozambicano Para Democracia Multipartidária	Bilateral	5,450,000	Mozambique	Participation & civil society
6	2022	UONGOZI Institute IV phase	UONGOZI Institute	Bilateral	4,000,000	Tanzania	Institutions & good governance
7		Independent media support programme in Central America phase 3	Foundation for Media and Development Fund (VIKES)	CSO (Project support) ⁴⁴	682,598	Central America	Participation & civil society
8	2018	Roma women's power - Fostering the Inclusive Participation and Economic Empowerment of Roma women in	Deaconess Institute in Helsinki	CSO (Project support)	789,000	Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus	Participation & civil society
9	2018, 2020, 2022	Supporting Democracy in Western Balkans Progress and Bridges: Phase I, Phase II and Phase III	Kalevi Sorsa – säätiö rs	CSO (Project support)	1,032,500	Western Balkan	Participation & civil society



N°	YEAR	TITLE	IMPLEMENTING PARTNER	INSTRUMENT	COMMITMENT	GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE	SUB-THEME
10	2018, 2020	Strengthening human rights work in East Africa and South Asia	Kansalaisjärjestöjen Ihmisoikeussäätiö (KIOS Foundation)	CSO (Programme support)	5,042,000	East Africa and South Asia	Participation & civil society
11	2018, 2020	Youth as change agents	Taksvärkki ry	CSO (programme support)	3,106,600	Multi-country	Participation & civil society
12	2021	Abilis Global Development Programme (2022-2025)	Abilis Foundation	CSO (programme support)	12,000,000	Multi-country	Participation & civil society
13	2019	Protecting Civic Space for Human Rights Defenders in the East and Horn of Africa	DefendDefenders (East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project)	CSO (INGO)	536,000	East and Horn of Africa	Participation & civil society
14	2021	Front Line Defenders / Fostering a stronger international response to key threats faced by Human Rights Defenders	Front Line Defenders	CSO (INGO)	1,500,000	Global	Participation & civil society
15	2021	Stichting Onderzoek Multinationale Ondernemingen (SOMO): Going public. Transparency on public resources tax just. and soc. contr (theme 2)	Stichting Onderzoek Multinationale Ondernemingen (SOMO)	CSO (INGO)	800,000	Kenya, Mozambique, Uganda	Participation & civil society
16	2019	Elections and human rights in Tanzania	Legal and Human Rights Centre in Tanzania	CSO	1,500,000	Tanzania	Participation & civil society
17	2018, 2020	Demo Finland Democracy Support Programme 2018-2021	Puolueiden kansainvälinen demokratiayhdistys (Demo Finland)	Democracy and rule of law support	4,040,000	Multi-country	Institutions & good governance and Participation & civil society
18	2016, 2019	Strengthening democratic institutions in the governance of natural resources 1st and 2nd phase	DEMO and Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy	Democracy & rule of law support (bilateral programme)	4,300,000	Mozambique	Institutions & good governance
19		Support to the Rule of Law Centre in 2022	Rule of Law Centre, University of Helsinki	Democracy and rule of law	tbc	Multi-country	Institutions & good governance
20	2020	WB Trust Fund for Global Evaluation Capacity Initiative GECl	World Bank Group	Multilateral (specific support)	250,000	Global	Institutions & good governance
21	2021, 2022	International IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance	Multilateral (core)	1,000,000	Global	Institutions & good governance and Participation & civil society



N°	YEAR	TITLE	IMPLEMENTING PARTNER	INSTRUMENT	COMMITMENT	GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE	SUB-THEME
22	2019	Support to Elections in Ethiopia	UN Development Programme	Multilateral (multi-bi)	800,000	Ethiopia	Institutions & good governance
23	2015	Support to the UN Women Country Strategy implementation in Kenya	UN Women	Multilateral	4,000,000	Kenya	Institutions & good governance and Participation & civil society
24	2015	MYA/Support to Democratic development and Rule of Law building in Myanmar	UN Development Programme	Multilateral (multi-bi)	4,000,000	Myanmar	Institutions & good governance and Participation & civil society
25	2020	Gender Responsive Governance	UN Women	Multilateral (multi-bi)	4,000,000	Myanmar	Institutions & good governance and Participation & civil society
26	2022	Restoring Democracy in Myanmar (International IDEA)	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance	Multilateral (multi-bi)	800,000	Myanmar	Institutions & good governance and Participation & civil society
27	2017	World Bank Multi-Donor Trust Fund for the Middle East and North Africa Region	World Bank Group	Multilateral (multi-bi)	920,000	MENA	Institutions & good governance
28	2019	IOM Enhancing the Institutional Capacity of the Immigration and Naturalization Directorate of Somali	International Organization for Migration	Multilateral (multi-bi)	1,000,000	Somalia	Institutions & good governance
29	2017	Support to women's political participation in Tanzania 2nd phase	UN Women	Multilateral (multi-bi)	3,900,000	Tanzania	Institutions & good governance and Participation & civil society
30	2016	Bridging the Gap: Inclusive policies and services for equal rights of persons with disabilities	European Commission (EC), Development Agencies of Austria, Italy and Spain, EDF, FIIAPP	EC - Development Share of Budget	200000	Multi-country	Institutions & good governance and Participation & civil society
		Six evaluation reports related to the sub-theme of peaceful societies					

Source: Evaluation team's elaboration.



List of projects with relevance to PPA3 in Nepal

N°	YEAR	TITLE	IMPLEMENTING PARTNER	PARTNER IN NEPAL	INSTRUMENT	GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE	COMMITMENT
1	2016	Achieving Justice for Gross Human Rights Violations	International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)		Bilateral (Bi-Cofinancing)	Global (Nepal)	
2	2021	Meaningful youth participation in sustainable development	Taksvärkki ry	ECCA Nepal	CSO (project support)	Multi-country (Nepal)	
3	2018, 2020	Strengthening human rights work in East Africa and South Asia	KIOS		CSO (programme support)	Multi-country (Nepal)	
4	2021	Finnish Red Cross Development Cooperation Programme 2022 - 2025	Finnish Red Cross		CSO (programme support)	Multi-country (Nepal)	
5	2016	Supporting Democracy through Digital Investigative Journalism in Nepal	Media and Development Fund (Vikes)	CIJ	CSO	Nepal	
6	2018	Leaving no one behind: Women's equal access to justice and inclusive governance	UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)		Multilateral	Nepal	
7	2020	ADHICAR - Enhancing Dignified Life of Freed Haliyas in Nepal	Felm	CAHURAST (Human Rights and Social Transformation Nepal)	CSO (Programme support)	Nepal	
8		Power Girls	Interpedia ry	CWISH	CSO (Project support)	Nepal	
9		WASH Model Village Project Nepal	WaterFinns ry	CATN	CSO (Project support)	Nepal	
10		Strengthening and Expanding the Community Model of Mental Health Care in Nepal	Lääkäriin Sosiaalinen Vastuu ry (Physicians for Social Responsibility)		CSO (Project support)	Nepal	
11		Local Adaptation to Climate Change Project (LACC)	Government of Nepal Cowater International		Bilateral	Nepal	
12		Sustainable Wash for All	Government of Nepal NIRAS	SUSWA	Bilateral	Nepal	

Source: Evaluation team's elaboration



Annex 3: Approach and Methodology and Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation Approach

The evaluation team chose and cleared with EVA-11 during the kick-off period a participatory, utilisation-focused and theory-based evaluation design with iterative elements.

The evaluation applied a participatory, utilisation-focused and theory-based evaluation design, cleared with EVA-11 during the inception phase. It took as a foundation the existing ToC for the result area “Peaceful democratic societies” and contrasted it with the portfolio of the projects analysed through mapping and scoping interviews, and developed the reconstructed ToC focusing on the areas within the core scope (See Figure 7).

Due to the considerable number of interventions within the scope, the evaluation team conducted a comprehensive inventory and mapping of all relevant funding decisions relevant to PPA3, to allow for robust scoping, and methodologically sound sampling within PPA3. Scoping interviews with six participants were used to clarify and deepen understanding of the evaluation team concerning the various pertinent elements of the ToR, as well as, importantly to establish relevant contextual elements, such as the transformation of the MFA’s approach, practices as well as financial and human rights implications and constraints linked to the implementation of the policy.

The reduction in the size of Finland’s international development cooperation support, along with an increased focus on assistance through Finnish CSO, and a closer link between Finland’s development cooperation and international security, are among the contextual and policy-related factors impacting the size, type, geographic focus, and thematic emphasis of Finland’s interventions. These points were highlighted during key informant interviews and document reviews conducted by the evaluation team. The changes in interventions also reflect the shifts introduced by national policy documents discussed in Section 3 “Context Analysis” as well as significant global developments, such as the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, and global trends, including, for instance the heightened focus on the security and protection of human rights defenders amid a global context of shrinking civic space. Together, changes in the international and Finnish development context, and in the interventions supported, have informed the evaluation team’s reconstruction of assumptions and outcomes.

A theory-based evaluation

The methodological framework for this evaluation was designed to develop an understanding of what works and what does not, and under which conditions, so that lessons can be drawn and applied to future support efforts. The evaluation relies on the concept of theory-based evaluation. The ToC for Finland’s PPA 3 outlines the results chain and the internal and associated assumptions from outputs to impact.



Each EQ, sub-question, and indicator is tied to a specific level and section of the PPA3 ToC with a zoom into the two sub-themes' outcomes under EQs 3 and 4 (See Table 3 “Evaluation Matrix”) in line with the focus of these questions as per the ToR. The ToC serves to identify:

- What actions were expected to cause what results at all levels of changes, from Finland’s inputs, to impact on rights-holders as final beneficiaries, in other words, the **results chain**;
- Why these changes were expected to happen within the core scope of the evaluation (Finland’s actions in support of the “Good Governance” and “Civil Society” sub-themes), i.e. **internal assumptions** tied to each level of change in the results chain;
- What external conditions had to be in place for this, i.e. **external assumptions** also tied to each level of change. For this ToC, “external” means any action, event, or actor which does not belong within Finland’s support in terms of good governance and civil society. For instance, Finland’s actions undertaken under other sub-themes within PPA3 are external assumptions. So are the actions of stakeholders other than Finland.

The reconstructed Theory of Change (ToC), which focuses on the sub-themes of “Good Governance” and “Civil Society,” is shown in Figure 4 in the main body of the report.

Inputs (Mainly EQ 1, EQs 3-4, plus EQ 2)

The starting point of the ToC’s inputs, is Finland’s partnerships with IOs, Finnish CSOs, INGOs, local CSOs, the national authorities and like-minded donors, such as the EU, EU member States, other specific countries, and international financial institutions. These partnerships equip Finland with an important capital and network to build on. The underpinning external assumption is a strong alignment between Finland and these partners.

Finland’s inputs are channelled through the MFA’s financial instruments. They are implemented by various actors, including Finnish and INGOs, but also multilateral actors, and other means such as bilateral funding, and FLCs targeting, among others, local CSOs, and national/local authorities. Non-financial inputs include the MFA’s human resources in the field, maintaining the wide range of their partnerships, with dialogue, sometimes public diplomacy, and participation in joint assessments and programming within the TEA. For the complementarity between financial and non-financial outputs to deliver, the internal assumption is that Finland’s engagement in the two sub-themes remains sufficiently continuous.

Outputs (Mainly, EQs 3-4)

Finland’s contribution to the core portfolio of “Good Governance” and “Civil Society” materialises through a set of outputs mainstreaming the CCOs of gender equality, inclusion, and non-discrimination:

- Advocacy and advice for public policies and legislative reforms;
- Core support to CSOs;



- Setup or facilitation of participation mechanisms, complemented by capacity building for public administration, both being piloted through land/utility/commodity governance in landmark projects
- Support to checks-and-balances actors such as legal aid providers and media;
- Setup or facilitation of peace dialogue platforms.

This complex architecture has not been deployed in its entirety in all countries, but examples can be found, for instance, in Tanzania or Mozambique, and some of its key elements were reported in Nepal and Myanmar. In line with the assumptions that are identified in the ToC of PPA3, the key internal assumption is that Finland's partners boost their contribution as they bring standards, knowledge, access to local stakeholders, implementation capacity, and advocacy leverage. This, in turn, allows the reproduction of good practices piloted by Finland and scaling up. Conversely, one external assumption is the complementarity between this core portfolio of outputs and other actions under PPA3, such as supporting public finance management, just and equitable taxation, human rights support, supporting justice systems (national or international) and the rule of law, and conflict resolution efforts.

The other external assumption, bearing in mind the modest size of Finland's support in PPA3, is its complementarity with the actions undertaken by like-minded donors in the result areas.

Outputs' contribution to Outcomes (mainly EQs 3-4)

This architecture of outputs leads to a set of outcomes which form a continuum from "Good Governance" to "Civil Society": both sub-themes' outcomes sometimes overlap and mutually reinforce, in line with the PP3 ToC document:

- Increased capacity to participate in political and policy processes;
- Enhanced protection and preserved space for civil society actors and HRDs;
- Strengthened decision-making power, especially for women and marginalised groups (e.g. persons with disabilities, minorities, the poor, etc);
- Improved legislation and improved enforcement of this legislation, focusing on fundamental rights and liberties;
- Reduced impunity for violations, be it at the national or international level;
- Improved public sector management, in particular in terms of equitable, inclusive, and non-discriminatory delivery of services;
- Stronger judicial and human rights institutions;
- Commitment to, and ownership of, the principles of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

For these outcomes to contribute to impacts within PPA 3, the internal assumption is that Finland's interventions in the sub-themes of "Good Governance" and "Civil Society" create visible, positive precedents while maintaining the sub-themes on the national and international agenda of key partners and stakeholders. The external assumption, in turn, is that Finland's strategic allies, both international and in-country, amplify its contributions.



Outcomes' contribution towards impacts (Mainly EQs 2-5)

In PPA 3, the impacts are defined both for the evaluation's core scope ("Good Governance" and "Civil Society") and beyond, which mutually reinforce:

- A transparent, efficient, accountable public sector (related chiefly to the "Good Governance" sub-theme)
- Vibrant civil societies (related chiefly to the "Civil Society" sub-theme)
- Peaceful, stable, just, inclusive society (beyond the core scope), which subsumes democratic and peaceful ways of resolving interest divergences, conflicts, and disputes
- Fair, transparent, equalising taxation, encompassing a taxation PFM framework geared towards public oversight, inclusion, and equality.

Strategic policy purpose (out of scope - for context)

In the context of Finland's most recent policy documents, these impacts further contribute to sustainable development tied to the SDGs but also form a conducive context for trade and peace and security, because peaceful democratic societies tend to improve the business environment, maintain political stability, and nurture comprehensive security. These constitute the strategic policy purpose, which is beyond the scope of the evaluation.

Evaluation criteria and questions

Five Evaluation Questions (EQs), aligned closely with the evaluation objectives, were formulated in the ToR, as follows:

- **EQ1:** How is the implementation of the support for democracy, rule of law and human rights organised in the MFA?
- **EQ2:** What results, including any realised or emerging impact, has Finland generated in the result area "Peaceful democratic societies" as a whole during the period under evaluation?
- **EQ3:** How has Finland promoted strengthening institutions and good governance, and what kind of successes and/or challenges have there been in achieving the objectives set for this sub-theme?
- **EQ4:** How has Finland promoted strong civil societies, and what kind of successes and/or challenges have there been in achieving the objectives set for this sub-theme?
- **EQ5:** How can Finland execute activities in the result area "Peaceful democratic societies" in a more relevant, effective and sustainable way in the next five years and beyond?

The EQs, taken together, cover the OECD DAC **evaluation criteria** of relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability.



- The research on EQ1 (within the core scope) will be essentially descriptive, thus not tied to an evaluation criterion.
- **Relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability** will be informed by the research in responding to the core scoping area, EQs 2, 3, 4, and 5, with EQ 2 pitched mostly at the impact level of the ToC.

The full Evaluation Matrix (Table 3) below systematically presents which indicators cover which sub-EQ, and which section of the ToC is covered by which indicator.



Table 3: Evaluation Matrix

EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND SUB-QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	DATA SOURCES	DATA COLLECTION METHODS	DATA ANALYSIS METHODS	LEVEL OF ANALYSIS (POLICY PRIORITY AREA, AND/OR G G/CS ¹⁰ PORTFOLIO, AND/OR EXTENDED SAMPLE, AND/OR NEPAL CASE STUDY)	LEVEL OF ROBUSTNESS	TOC LEVEL (INPUT, AND/OR OUTPUTS, AND/OR OUTCOMES, AND/OR IMPACT, AND/OR POLICY PURPOSE) AND FOCUS (RESULT CHAIN/INTERNAL ASSUMPTIONS/ EXTERNAL ASSUMPTIONS)
EQ1 - How is the implementation of the support for democracy, rule of law and human rights organised in the MFA?							
1.1 What is the division of labour between different departments, units and embassies of the MFA in implementing support for democracy, rule of law and human rights?	1.1.1 Evolution of MFA internal structure in relation to division of responsibilities in relevant thematic areas	Documents: policy documents, regulatory framework, MFA website Experience of MFA HQ staff	Desk review Semi-structured interviews	Qualitative: textual analysis	PPA3, with zoom into good governance/civil society	Medium	Inputs: results chain
	1.1.2 Evolution of the HQ vs. field division of labour	Documents: Country Programmes Experience of MFA HQ and Embassies' staff	Desk review Semi-structured interviews	Qualitative: textual analysis	PPA3, with zoom into good governance/civil society	Medium	Inputs: results chain
1.2 How has Finnish support for democracy changed in 2014-2024?	1.2.1 Shifts in programming associated with successive Development policies since 2014	Documents: policy documents, regulatory framework, Country Programmes, sampled project documents Quantitative data on the portfolio of funding decisions Experience and perception of MFA HQ staff	Desk review Funding decisions meta-data (collected already) Semi-structured interviews	Qualitative: textual analysis Quantitative: trend analysis against chronology	Good Governance/ Civil Society portfolio, with zoom into the extended sample and country case study	High	Inputs, Outputs: results chain + external/internal assumptions

¹⁰ GG: Good Governance, CS: Civil Society.



EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND SUB-QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	DATA SOURCES	DATA COLLECTION METHODS	DATA ANALYSIS METHODS	LEVEL OF ANALYSIS (POLICY PRIORITY AREA, AND/OR G G/CS ¹⁰ PORTFOLIO, AND/OR EXTENDED SAMPLE, AND/OR NEPAL CASE STUDY)	LEVEL OF ROBUSTNESS	TOC LEVEL (INPUT, AND/OR OUTPUTS, AND/OR OUTCOMES, AND/OR IMPACT, AND/OR POLICY PURPOSE) AND FOCUS (RESULT CHAIN/INTERNAL ASSUMPTIONS/ EXTERNAL ASSUMPTIONS)
1.3 To what extent has the “Ministry for Foreign Affairs’ democracy support policy” affected the implementation of democracy support since 2014?	1.3.1 Level of alignment with “Ministry for Foreign Affairs’ democracy support policy” on programming since 2014	Documents: policy documents, Country Programmes, sampled project documents Experience and perception of MFA HQ staff	Desk review Semi-structured interviews	Qualitative: textual analysis	Good Governance/ Civil Society, with zoom into the extended sample and country case study	High	Inputs, Outputs: results chain + external/internal assumptions
EQ 2: What results, including any realised or emerging impact, has Finland generated in the result area “Peaceful democratic societies” as a whole during the period under evaluation?							
2.1 What have been the most notable results and impacts of the result area? What relative change(s) have resulted from Finnish support during the period? Are/ were the results sustainable?	2.1.1 Absence of contradictions between the interventions in the good governance and civil society, and interventions in the broader policy priority area	Documents: secondary evidence (existing evaluations). Extended sample and country case study project end reports and evaluations. Experience and perception of MFA HQ and select Embassies. INGOs, multilateral organisations. Like-minded donors, CSOs, and national counterparts in case study country	Desk review Semi-structured interviews	Qualitative: textual analysis and QCA (outcomes identification and links to factors) Use of MFA AI tool, MAXQDA, GOPA, GDPR compliant Chatbot	PPA3, with zoom into Good Governance/Civil Society portfolio, extended sample and country case study	Limited (PPA3 as a whole, depending on coverage, robustness, and focus of secondary sources) to strong (extended sample, case study country)	Outcome, with inroads into impact: results chain
2.2 Have the activities undertaken in result area been relevant and or effective?	2.2.1 Adaptive responses of the actions to evolving needs and constraints.	Documents: secondary evidence (existing evaluations), grey literature. Extended sample and country case study project documents. Qualitative data on the portfolio of funding decisions. Experience and perception of MFA HQ and select Embassies. INGOs, multilateral organisations. Like-minded donors, CSOs, and national counterparts in case study country.	Desk review Funding decisions metadata (collected already) Semi-structured interviews	Qualitative: textual analysis and QCA (factors’ identification) Use of MFA AI tool, MAXQDA, GOPA, GDPR compliant Chatbot	PPA3, with zoom into Good Governance/ Civil Society portfolio, extended sample and country case study	Limited to medium (depending on coverage, robustness, and focus of secondary sources)	Inputs, outputs: external assumptions



EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND SUB-QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	DATA SOURCES	DATA COLLECTION METHODS	DATA ANALYSIS METHODS	LEVEL OF ANALYSIS (POLICY PRIORITY AREA, AND/OR G G/CS ¹⁰ PORTFOLIO, AND/OR EXTENDED SAMPLE, AND/OR NEPAL CASE STUDY)	LEVEL OF ROBUSTNESS	TOC LEVEL (INPUT, AND/OR OUTPUTS, AND/OR OUTCOMES, AND/OR IMPACT, AND/OR POLICY PURPOSE) AND FOCUS (RESULT CHAIN/INTERNAL ASSUMPTIONS/ EXTERNAL ASSUMPTIONS)
2.3 What approaches have been particularly effective?	2.3.1 Occurrences of scaled-up/ reproduced good practices	Documents: secondary evidence (existing evaluations), grey literature. Extended sample and country case study project documents. Qualitative and quantitative data on the portfolio of funding decisions. Experience and perception of MFA HQ and select Embassies. INGOs, multilateral organisations. Like-minded donors, CSOs, and national counterparts in case study country	Desk review Funding decisions meta-data (collected already) Semi-structured interviews	Qualitative: textual analysis and QCA (factors' identification) Use of MFA AI tool, MAXQDA, GOPA, GDPR compliant Chatbot Quantitative: trend analysis in portfolio	PPA3, with zoom into Good Governance/Civil Society portfolio, extended sample and country case study	Limited (depending on coverage, robustness, and focus of secondary sources)	Inputs, outputs: external assumptions
2.4 What has Finland's added value been in generating the results?	2.4.1 Perception/ identification of Finland's added value in PPA3	Documents: secondary evidence (existing evaluations), grey literature. Extended sample and country case study project end reports and evaluations. Experience and perception of MFA HQ and select Embassies. INGOs, multilateral organisations. Like-minded donors, CSOs, and national counterparts in case study country	Desk review Semi-structured interviews	Qualitative: textual analysis and QCA (outcomes identification and links to factors) Use of MFA AI tool, MAXQDA, GOPA, GDPR compliant Chatbot	PPA3, with zoom into Good Governance/Civil Society portfolio, extended sample and country case study	Medium	Outcome, with inroads into impact: internal and external assumptions



EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND SUB-QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	DATA SOURCES	DATA COLLECTION METHODS	DATA ANALYSIS METHODS	LEVEL OF ANALYSIS (POLICY PRIORITY AREA, AND/OR G G/CS ¹⁰ PORTFOLIO, AND/OR EXTENDED SAMPLE, AND/OR NEPAL CASE STUDY)	LEVEL OF ROBUSTNESS	TOC LEVEL (INPUT, AND/OR OUTPUTS, AND/OR OUTCOMES, AND/OR IMPACT, AND/OR POLICY PURPOSE) AND FOCUS (RESULT CHAIN/INTERNAL ASSUMPTIONS/ EXTERNAL ASSUMPTIONS)
EQ 3 – How has Finland promoted strengthening institutions and good governance, and what kind of successes and/or challenges have there been in achieving the objectives set for this sub-theme?							
3.1 What kind of results has Finland achieved in strengthening institutions and promoting good governance? Have the results been sustainable?	3.1.1 Number and type of instances in which public demand for transparency or accountability of public institutions has increased	Desk review: secondary evidence. Projects' final reports and evaluations for extended sample and case study country. Grey literature in case study country, such as CSOs/NHRIS'/ IOs'/Parliament's public reports Feedback in case study country from beneficiaries (CSOs, NHRIs, media) and observers (IOs, authorities, Finnish Embassy). Experience and perception of MFA HQ, select Embassies, and MFA strategic partners.	Desk review Semi-structured interviews	Qualitative – textual analysis QCA (outcomes identification and links to factors)	Case study country. Relevant projects of the extended sample.	Medium (extended sample, depending on coverage and robustness of existing evaluations and progress reports) to high (case study country)	Output, Outcome: results chain + internal assumptions
	3.1.2 Number and type of public policy reforms (i.e. adoption of laws, regulations, official strategy documents, etc.) based on key principles of good and democratic governance (participation, inclusion, transparency, accountability, etc.).	Desk review: Primary and secondary evidence. Final project report and evaluations for extended sample and case study country. Grey literature in case study country, such as CSOs'/ NHRIS'/IOs'/Parliament public reports. Adopted laws and other public policies. Feedback in case study country from beneficiaries (CSOs, NHRIs, media) and observers (IOs, authorities, Finnish Embassy). Experience and perception of MFA HQ and partner Finnish/International CS.	Desk review Semi-structured interviews	Qualitative – textual analysis QCA (outcomes identification and links to factors)	Case study country. Relevant projects of the extended sample	Medium (extended sample, depending on coverage and robustness of existing evaluations and progress reports) to high (case study country)	Outcome: results chain + external assumptions



EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND SUB-QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	DATA SOURCES	DATA COLLECTION METHODS	DATA ANALYSIS METHODS	LEVEL OF ANALYSIS (POLICY PRIORITY AREA, AND/OR G G/CS ¹⁰ PORTFOLIO, AND/OR EXTENDED SAMPLE, AND/OR NEPAL CASE STUDY)	LEVEL OF ROBUSTNESS	TOC LEVEL (INPUT, AND/OR OUTPUTS, AND/OR OUTCOMES, AND/OR IMPACT, AND/OR POLICY PURPOSE) AND FOCUS (RESULT CHAIN/INTERNAL ASSUMPTIONS/ EXTERNAL ASSUMPTIONS)
	3.1.3 Perception of stakeholders on supported public institutions' practices about participation, inclusion, transparency and accountability	Desk review: Secondary evidence. Final project report and evaluations for extended sample and case study country. Grey literature in case study country, such as CSOs/NHRIS'/IOs'/ Parliament and other public institutions' public reports. Feedback in case study country from beneficiaries (CSOs, NHRIs, media) and observers (IOs, authorities, Finnish Embassy). Experience and perception of MFA HQ and partner Finnish/International CS	Desk review Semi-structured interviews	Qualitative – textual analysis QCA (outcomes identification and links to factors)	Case study country. Relevant projects of the extended sample	Limited (largely depending on availability of relevant secondary sources)	Outcome, impact: results chain + internal and external assumptions
3.2 Have the activities undertaken been relevant (and/or effective)?	3.2.1 Degree to which interventions are based on comprehensive context assessments	Desk review: Secondary evidence. Project documents and evaluations for extended sample and case study country. Other relevant evaluations and reports available.	Desk review	Qualitative – textual analysis	Case study country. Relevant projects of the extended sample	High	Input: external assumption
	3.2.2 Extent to which the target audience has been engaged in the design of the interventions	Desk review: Secondary evidence. Project document and evaluations for extended sample and case study country. Other relevant evaluations and reports available. Feedback in case study country from beneficiaries (CSOs, NHRIs, media) and observers (IOs, authorities, Finnish Embassy). Experience and perception of MFA HQ and partner Finnish/International CS	Desk review Semi-structured interviews	Qualitative – textual analysis QCA (outcomes identification and links to factors)	Case study country. Relevant projects of the extended sample	High	Input: internal assumption



EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND SUB-QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	DATA SOURCES	DATA COLLECTION METHODS	DATA ANALYSIS METHODS	LEVEL OF ANALYSIS (POLICY PRIORITY AREA, AND/OR G G/CS ¹⁰ PORTFOLIO, AND/OR EXTENDED SAMPLE, AND/OR NEPAL CASE STUDY)	LEVEL OF ROBUSTNESS	TOC LEVEL (INPUT, AND/OR OUTPUTS, AND/OR OUTCOMES, AND/OR IMPACT, AND/OR POLICY PURPOSE) AND FOCUS (RESULT CHAIN/INTERNAL ASSUMPTIONS/ EXTERNAL ASSUMPTIONS)
	3.2.3 Extent to which stakeholders perceive that the interventions have focused on the target audience's essential needs	Feedback in case study country from beneficiaries (CSOs, NHRIs, media) and observers (IOs, authorities, Finnish Embassy). Experience and perception of MFA HQ and partner Finnish/International CS	Semi-structured interviews	QCA (outcomes identification and links to factors)	Case study country. Relevant projects of the extended sample.	Medium	Input, output: result chain + internal assumptions
3.3 Are there any success stories and/or lessons learned in Finland's actions?	3.3.1 Reported cases of success from stakeholders on supported public institutions' practices about participation, inclusion, transparency and accountability	Feedback in case study country from beneficiaries (CSOs, NHRIs, media) and observers (IOs, authorities, Finnish Embassy). Experience and perception of MFA HQ and partner Finnish/International CS	Semi-structured interviews	QCA (outcomes identification and links to factors)	Case study country. Relevant projects of the extended sample	Limited (largely depending on availability of feedback)	Outcome, impact: results chain + internal and external assumptions
3.4 What has been Finland's added value in generating the results?	3.4.1 Informants' perceptions of Finland's comparative advantages	Desk review: Secondary evidence. Final project report and evaluations for extended sample and case study country. Feedback in case study country from beneficiaries (CSOs, NHRIs, media) and observers (IOs, authorities, Finnish Embassy). Experience and perception of MFA HQ and partner Finnish/International CS	Desk review Semi-structured interviews	Qualitative – textual analysis QCA (outcomes identification and links to factors)	Case study country. Relevant projects of the extended sample.	High	Input: external assumptions
	3.4.2 Frequency of Finland's promotion of gender-equality, HRBA, the rights of PWD	Desk review: Secondary evidence. Project document, final project report and evaluations for extended sample and case study country. Feedback in case study country from beneficiaries (CSOs, NHRIs, media) and observers (IOs, authorities, Finnish Embassy). Experience and perception of MFA HQ and partner Finnish/International CS	Desk review Semi-structured interviews	Qualitative – textual analysis QCA (outcomes identification and links to factors)	Case study country. Relevant projects of the extended sample.	High	Input, output: results chain + internal assumptions



EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND SUB-QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	DATA SOURCES	DATA COLLECTION METHODS	DATA ANALYSIS METHODS	LEVEL OF ANALYSIS (POLICY PRIORITY AREA, AND/OR G G/CS ¹⁰ PORTFOLIO, AND/ OR EXTENDED SAMPLE, AND/ OR NEPAL CASE STUDY)	LEVEL OF ROBUSTNESS	TOC LEVEL (INPUT, AND/OR OUTPUTS, AND/OR OUTCOMES, AND/OR IMPACT, AND/ OR POLICY PURPOSE) AND FOCUS (RESULT CHAIN/INTERNAL ASSUMPTIONS/ EXTERNAL ASSUMPTIONS)
EQ 4 – How has Finland promoted strong civil societies, and what kind of successes and/or challenges have there been in achieving the objectives set for this sub-theme?							
4.1 What kind of results has Finland achieved in promoting strong civil societies? Have the results been sustainable?	4.1.1 Extent to which direct beneficiaries and observers report tangible changes civil society actors' operational environment	Desk review: secondary evidence. Projects' final reports and evaluations for extended sample and case study country). Other relevant evaluations and reports available. Grey literature in case study country, such as CSOs'/ NHRIS'/IOs' public reports. Feedback in case study country from beneficiaries (CSOs, NHRIs, media) and observers (IOs, authorities, Finnish Embassy). Experience and perception of partner Finnish/ International CSOs.	Desk review Semi-structured interviews	Textual analysis (possibly using MFA AI tool as regards former evaluations) QCA (focus on outcomes and their connection to factors), Case study analysis	Extended sample (to some extent), case study country (mainly)	Medium (extended sample, depending on coverage and robustness of existing evaluations) to high (case study country)	Outcomes: results chain and internal assumptions
	4.1.2 Finland's contribution to net change in the capacity of the partner Finnish and INGOs to promote participation and inclusion in beneficiary countries these principles (as relevant)	Project final and evaluation reports. Other relevant evaluations and reports available. Feedback in case study country from beneficiaries (CSOs, NHRIs, media) and observers (IOs, authorities, Finnish Embassy). Experience and perception of partner Finnish/ International CSOs. Field observation	Desk research Semi-structured interviews Case study report	Qualitative – textual analysis and QCA (factors' identification)	Good Governance/ Civil Society portfolio Country case study	Moderate (due to difficulties of attribution)	Outcomes: results chain and internal assumptions
	4.1.3 Level of ownership by target groups and their confidence that results can be sustained without further MFA support?	Feedback from beneficiaries Feedback from MFA staff Secondary reports	Case study report Semi structured interviews Desk research	Textual analysis QCA, case study analysis	Good Governance/ Civil Society portfolio Country case study	Moderate	Outcomes: external assumptions



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4.2 Have the activities undertaken been relevant and/or effective?	4.2.1 Extent to which the adverse/conductive factors for civil society development were systematically tracked by MFA and integrated in programming at various levels	Project reports Feedback from MFA staff	Desk research Semi structured interviews	Qualitative – textual analysis and QCA (outcomes identification and links to factors) Use of MFA AI tool	Good Governance/ Civil Society portfolio Country case study	Medium	Inputs/Outputs
	4.2.2 Incidence of identified challenges/ changes in the implementation context that were met by adaptive strategies from MFA/Embassies	Project reports Feedback from MFA staff and beneficiaries Field observation	Desk research Semi-structured interviews Case study report	Qualitative – textual analysis and QCA (factors' identification) Use of MFA AI tool, MAXQDA, GOPA Chatbot Quantitative: trends analysis in portfolio	Good Governance/ Civil Society portfolio Country case study	High	Outputs
4.3 Are there any success stories and/or lessons learned in Finland's actions?	4.3.1 Reported cases of success from stakeholders on supported public institutions' practices about participation, inclusion, transparency and accountability	Feedback in case study country from beneficiaries (CSOs, NHRIs, media) and observers (IOs, authorities, Finnish Embassy). Experience and perception of MFA HQ and partner Finnish/International CS	Semi-structured interviews	QCA (outcomes identification and links to factors)	Case study country. Relevant projects of the extended sample	Limited (largely depending on availability of feedback)	Outcome, impact: results chain + internal and external assumptions



EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND SUB-QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	DATA SOURCES	DATA COLLECTION METHODS	DATA ANALYSIS METHODS	LEVEL OF ANALYSIS (POLICY PRIORITY AREA, AND/OR G G/CS ¹⁰ PORTFOLIO, AND/OR EXTENDED SAMPLE, AND/OR NEPAL CASE STUDY)	LEVEL OF ROBUSTNESS	TOC LEVEL (INPUT, AND/OR OUTPUTS, AND/OR OUTCOMES, AND/OR IMPACT, AND/OR POLICY PURPOSE) AND FOCUS (RESULT CHAIN/INTERNAL ASSUMPTIONS/ EXTERNAL ASSUMPTIONS)
4.4 What has Finland's added value been in generating the results?	4.4.1 Extent to which the Finnish contribution is clearly identified and recognised by partners and beneficiaries.	Feedback from partners and beneficiaries Secondary reports	Semi-structured interviews Desk research	Textual analysis QCA, case study analysis	Good Governance/ Civil Society portfolio Country case study		Inputs
	4.4.2 Extent of verifiable, proactive identification and implementation of complementarities and synergies with IOs and like-minded donors' projects and initiatives by MFA	Project documents and reports Feedback from MFA staff	Desk research Semi-structured interviews	Qualitative – textual analysis and QCA Quantitative: trends analysis in portfolio	Good Governance/ Civil Society portfolio Country case study	Moderate	Inputs/Outputs
EQ 5 – How can Finland execute activities in the result area “Peaceful democratic societies” in a more relevant, effective and sustainable way in the next five years and beyond?							
N/A	5.1.1 Extent to which Finland has matched its funded interventions with its messaging.	Desk review: secondary evidence. Existing evaluations. Experience and perception of MFA HQ staff. Experience and perception of Embassy staff, partner CSOs and authorities, international partners in case study country	Use of MFA AI tool, MAXQDA, GOPA Chatbot Semi-structured interviews	Qualitative – textual analysis and QCA (Focus on factors)	Country case study, PPA3	Medium (PPA 3) to high (case study country)	Outcomes, with inroads to impact: internal assumptions



EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND SUB-QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	DATA SOURCES	DATA COLLECTION METHODS	DATA ANALYSIS METHODS	LEVEL OF ANALYSIS (POLICY PRIORITY AREA, AND/OR G G/CS ¹⁰ PORTFOLIO, AND/OR EXTENDED SAMPLE, AND/OR NEPAL CASE STUDY)	LEVEL OF ROBUSTNESS	TOC LEVEL (INPUT, AND/OR OUTPUTS, AND/OR OUTCOMES, AND/OR IMPACT, AND/OR POLICY PURPOSE) AND FOCUS (RESULT CHAIN/INTERNAL ASSUMPTIONS/ EXTERNAL ASSUMPTIONS)
	5.1.2 Trends in human/financial resource allocation since 2014	Documents: policy documents, Country Programmes, sampled project documents Quantitative data on the portfolio of funding decisions Experience and perception of MFA HQ staff	Desk review Funding decisions meta-data (collected already) Semi-structured interviews	Qualitative – textual analysis Quantitative – trends analysis against chronology	Good Governance/ Civil Society portfolio, with zoom into the extended sample	High	Inputs, Outputs: results chain + internal assumptions
	5.1.3 Examples of how Finland promoted the positive precedents it has set in the results areas	Desk review: secondary evidence. Existing evaluations. Experience and perception of MFA HQ staff. Experience and perception of Embassy staff, partner CSOs and authorities, international/ multilateral partners in case study country	Use of MFA AI tool, MAXQDA, GOPA Chatbot Semi-structured interviews	Qualitative – textual analysis and QCA (Focus on factors)	Country case study, PPA3	Medium (PPA 3) to high (case study country)	Outcomes, with inroads to impact: internal assumptions
	5.1.4 Examples of Finland's co-funding (or non-spending contributions) to joint initiatives	Secondary evidence: Team Europe Initiatives tracker, existing MFA evaluations. Portfolio data Experience of MFA HQ and select Embassies' staff	Desk review Portfolio review (meta-data collected already) Semi-structured interviews	Qualitative – textual analysis and QCA (focus on factors)	PPA3, Country Case study	Medium (examples can be ascertained – whether they are systemic cannot)	Outcomes, with inroads to impact: external assumptions
	5.1.5 Examples of Finland's promoted approaches or models reproduced by other actors	Experience and perception of MFA HQ staff and select Embassies' staff. Experience and perception of partner Finnish and international CSOs. Experience and perception of Embassy staff, partner CSOs and authorities, international/multilateral partners in case study country	Semi-structured interviews	Qualitative – textual analysis and QCA (focus on factors)	Country Case Study	Medium (examples can be ascertained – whether they are systemic cannot)	Outcomes, with inroads to impact: external assumptions

Source: Evaluation team's elaboration.



Table 4 below presents the coverage of each EQ and sub-EQ, as well as a summary of the data collection and analysis approach per EQ.

Table 4: Coverage of each Evaluation Question

EQ1: HOW IS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY, RULE OF LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANISED IN THE MFA?	
<p>This EQ looks into the inputs' level of the ToC. It examines, in a descriptive fashion, the dynamics of Finland's support under PPA3 as a whole, with an extra zoom into the sub-themes of good governance/ democracy, and civil society.</p> <p>Rationale and coverage</p> <p><i>Sub-EQ 1.1: What is the division of labour between different departments, units and embassies of the MFA in implementing support for democracy, rule of law and human rights?</i></p> <p>This sub-EQ examines the organisational structures underpinning the implementation of work on human rights, democracy and rule of law in particular through the sub-themes 2 and 3 of PPA3, both within headquarters and between headquarters and field. This sub-EQ is essentially descriptive with main focus on the development policy and cooperation, and therefore, the Department for Development Policy, the Regional Departments, and the Embassies within the Ministry. However, the evaluation is also linked with Finland's Foreign Policy, and so Sub-EQ 1 also considers activities carried out by the Political Department under EQ 1. This sub-EQ triangulates based on policy documents and regulatory framework as applicable, review of the MFA's website, interviews with key informants at MFA headquarter and embassies, and relevant results from earlier evaluations.</p> <p><i>Sub-EQ 1.2: How has Finnish support for democracy changed in 2014-2024?</i></p> <p>This sub-EQ presents the shifts in the policy apparatus of Finland's support to these topics. It further describes the shifts in programming on the same thematic areas and how these two interplay. The relevant policy apparatus is defined in line with the complex scope of the evaluation: Finnish development policies are part of the broader foreign and security policy of Finland. The programming shifts were identified qualitatively (e.g. how the nature of the sampled interventions and of the MFA staff has evolved) and quantitatively (how the portfolio evolved in terms of amounts, instruments, focus, and partners). With this evidence, the sub-EQ therefore describes and contrasts, over time and in connection with the adoption of policy documents, the trends which characterise the portfolio's composition, the experience of the MFA staff in HQ and embassies, and of key partners (e.g. Finnish CSOs, multilateral organisations receiving core funding or acting as implementing partners), and the interventions (deep dive country and extended sample).</p> <p><i>Sub-EQ 1.3: To what extent has the "Ministry for Foreign Affairs' democracy support policy" affected the implementation of democracy support since 2014?</i></p> <p>This sub-EQ describes the alignment between the evaluation's portfolio (especially the sampled projects and the deep dive interventions), and this key thematic policy document. Triangulation was ensured by comparing and contrasting the guidance enshrined in this document with the relevant CPs (in the deep dive country and in key countries of the sampled interventions), as well as the intervention-level documentation (especially end reports and evaluations, where available), and the experience and perceptions of the MFA staff at HQ and relevant embassies.</p>	
<p>Data collection</p> <p>Desk review: this EQ assembled policy documents, relevant MFA materials, including website/OpenAid, CPs relevant to the extended sample and the deep dive country as well as their evaluations, sampled project documents.</p> <p>Portfolio: the already assembled portfolio was reviewed to provide quantitative data overall, and over time (e.g. on the use of instruments).</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews: interviews with key informant in the MFA HQ and embassies.</p>	<p>Data analysis</p> <p>This EQ relied on qualitative analysis, including human textual analysis of policy, regulatory, and programmatic documents, including comparison between documents over time, and comparison of documents between levels. This was triangulated with content analysis of interviews with informants having complementary perspectives (field, headquarters; different levels of hindsight based on history of posting).</p> <p>Additionally, the quantitative analysis of the portfolio, especially its evolution over time, provided further triangulation and nuance.</p>



EQ2: WHAT RESULTS, INCLUDING ANY REALISED OR EMERGING IMPACT, HAS FINLAND GENERATED IN THE RESULT AREA “PEACEFUL DEMOCRATIC SOCIETIES” AS A WHOLE DURING THE PERIOD UNDER EVALUATION?

This EQ synthesises the findings of EQs 1, 3, 4, together with existing secondary evidence on sub-themes 1 and 4 of PPA3, and additional data gathered on PPA 3 as a whole. Through this, this EQ examined the relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability of the changes resulting from the outcomes of Finland’s support to the sub-themes covered by PPA3. It used contribution analysis to assess how Finland’s support in these areas has triggered results and impact, why this contribution has worked more or less effectively, and what has been distinctive in Finland’s support to this result area, thus creating change that would otherwise not have been possible. This EQ therefore builds on the results identified on the sub-themes 2 and 3 of PPA3 in other EQs, as well as results identified by secondary evidence triangulated with EQ2-specific evidence on sub-themes 1 and 4, to show Finland’s contribution to peaceful democratic societies.

Rationale and coverage

Sub-EQ 2.1: What have been the most notable results and impacts of the result area? What relative change(s) have resulted from Finnish support during the period? Are/were the results sustainable?

This sub-EQ acknowledges the links between all the sub-themes in PPA3 and therefore examines the mutual contributions between the actions undertaken in support of good governance/democracy, civil society, peaceful/stable/just societies, and domestic revenue mobilisation, as well as their overall relevance and contribution to PPA3 taken as a whole, through the lens of human rights, democracy, and rule of law. Therefore, for this sub-EQ, spearhead outcomes were first extracted as identified in EQs 3 and 4 regarding good governance/democracy and civil society, respectively. Then, key results in these and other PPA3 sub-themes were extracted and acknowledged as identified by earlier evaluations (including among others, eight evaluation reports on Sub-theme 1), whether thematic (HRBA evaluation, evaluation of support to domestic revenue mobilisation) or project-level (project evaluations relative to PPA3 and coded by the evaluation team). These key results were cross-referenced with the outcomes identified by interviewees who have a view of the whole PPA3 considered through the angle of human rights, democracy and rule of law, at several levels: in the deep dive country; in other countries covered by the extended project sample; at global level (e.g. partner multilateral organisations, Finnish NGOs, MFA HQ staff).

Sub-EQ 2.2: Have the activities undertaken in result area been relevant and or effective?

One of the key success factors for effective results is the continued relevance of actions and their synergies. This sub-EQ seeks to support an informed judgment about the relevance and effectiveness of the entire result area, which takes internal and external assumptions into account. The analysis concentrated on adaptive responses which Finland has deployed, in view of evolving needs and constraints in the entire result area.

Sub-EQ 2.3: What approaches have been particularly effective?

This sub-EQ seeks to assemble the good and promising practices and approaches identified in EQ 3 and 4, as well as from other sources mentioned above, which cover the entire result area. The sub-EQ particularly looked for examples where an effective model promoted by Finland has been scaled up or reproduced by a partner country, or another international partner (e.g. multilateral organisation, EU...): this helped document positive learnings on transition from outcome to impact, and on ensuring sustainability.

Sub-EQ 2.4: What has Finland’s added value been in generating the results?

Finland’s added value is a transversal issue that permeates the Terms of Reference, and which appears in sub-text of several other sub-EQs. This is paramount for learning. Given the broad geographic and sub-thematic coverage of Finland’s support to human rights, democracy, and rule of law, compared to the financial resources mobilised during the period under review, it is essential for interventions to offer a comparative advantage and build on it towards results. This sub-EQ synthesised what comparative advantages have acted as recurrent key success factors, as evidenced by the data collected for this evaluation. It then confronted these with the perception of Finland’s added value in PPA3 as a whole, as evidenced by desk review conducted for all other sub-EQs, and by interviews at all levels. This sub-EQ also acknowledged the contribution of multilateral core funding.



EQ2: WHAT RESULTS, INCLUDING ANY REALISED OR EMERGING IMPACT, HAS FINLAND GENERATED IN THE RESULT AREA “PEACEFUL DEMOCRATIC SOCIETIES” AS A WHOLE DURING THE PERIOD UNDER EVALUATION?

Data collection

The desk review and interviews conducted for EQs1, 3 and 4 also contributed to EQ 2 (see below).

Additional desk review: Additionally, EQ 2 relied on existing thematic evaluations, CP evaluations of the countries covered in the extended sample, other project evaluations relevant to PPA3 and coded by the team, as well as other publications relevant to PPA3 issued by the MFA and third party (e.g. academia, Finnish NGOs, partner multilateral organisations)

Additional interviews: All interviews above individual project level addressed EQ 2. This was the case for interviews at global level (MFA, partner multilateral organisations, Finnish NGOs, INGOs) and country level (Finnish Embassies beyond the deep dive country; deep dive country interviews including Finnish Embassy, like-minded donors and multilateral organisations, EU, national counterparts, national CSOs). Interview guidelines, while zooming into the sub-themes of good governance/democracy and civil society, also lifted the discussion to the whole PPA3.

Data analysis

This EQ did not seek to analyse project-level results, but rather higher-result levels, thanks to analysis and synthesis covering the entire result area. All the findings stemming from the analysis conducted under EQs 3 and 4 about the sub-themes “Good Governance” and “Civil Society” directly contributed to EQ 2. In addition, these were synthesised with data analysis about the entire PPA 3. This included qualitative analysis, and quantitative analysis of the portfolio.

Within PPA 3, the sub-theme 1 “Peaceful, stable and just societies” was considered from the angle of human rights, democracy and rule of law, through synthesis of existing evidence, and any evidence stemming from global and deep dive interviews and document review. A similar approach considered the sub-theme 4 relating to “DRM”, utilising the MFA’s evaluation “Finland’s Initiatives Focused on Enhanced DRM” (DRM evaluation) carried out in 2023: its results were considered in the overall analysis of the results area. Further desk review, PPA3-relevant project and CP evaluations available was analysed qualitatively using coding (MaxQDA). Publications from academic or grey literature, in the deep dive country, and at global level complemented desk review.

The team further triangulated the above with global or country-level interviews addressing PPA3, with the PPA3-related aspects of interviews in the deep dive country, and with the relevant aspects of interviews related to the extended project sample.



EQ3: HOW HAS FINLAND PROMOTED STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONS AND GOOD GOVERNANCE, AND WHAT KIND OF SUCCESSES AND/OR CHALLENGES HAVE THERE BEEN IN ACHIEVING THE OBJECTIVES SET FOR THIS SUB-THEME?

This EQ is pitched at the outcome level of the ToC. It relates to the criteria of effectiveness, relevance, and sustainability. It provides a deep dive into the sub-theme of PPA3 on good governance, which lies within the core scope of the evaluation, and which requires intensive data collection. The EQ also examined the factors that may have fuelled/hindered the desired outcomes, and that make them more or less sustainable, such as the relevance of interventions, the added value of Finland's support in complementarity with other actors, or the establishment of partnerships that create entry doors.

Rationale and coverage

Sub-EQ 3.1: What kind of results has Finland achieved in strengthening institutions and promoting good governance? Have the results been sustainable?

This sub-EQ assessed the materialisation, or not, of the key outcomes envisaged under this sub-thematic area, such as the emergence and capacity of transparent and accountable institutions, the stakeholders' perception of good governance, and the capacity for the roll-out of policy reforms that uphold participation, inclusion, transparency, non-discrimination, gender equality, and human rights. Any other outcomes, such as contribution to cross-cutting objectives, and other outcomes even unintended, were also analysed. The sub-EQ further looked into the likelihood that these outcomes may be sustained beyond the end of Finland's support (sustainability) based on factors such as local ownership and demand for good governance, established human capacity, institutionalisation of changes, and political will, in line with the ToC and Finland's policy documents.

Sub-EQ 3.2: Have the activities undertaken been relevant (and/or effective)?

This sub-EQ assessed the match between needs and aspirations of stakeholders, the context of intervention, and Finland's intervention design. It particularly analysed how context assessments underpin interventions and the choice of activities, and the engagement of the interventions' stakeholders in this design. It further looked into the perception of these stakeholders regarding the relevance of actions and the effectiveness of results. It also looked at whether and how CCOs have been included in the interventions.

Sub-EQ 3.3: Are there any success stories and/or lessons learned in Finland's actions?

This sub-EQ was particularly learning-oriented, as it identified cases of success and their underlying factors, as reported by stakeholders from among the MFA, the implementing partners, and the national and local actors. The Sub-EQ further examined what less successful cases teach us. The combination of learnings from the deep dive country and the extended sample informed this analysis.

Sub-EQ 3.4: What has been Finland's added value in generating the results?

This sub-EQ focuses on what is distinctive about Finnish support to good governance/democracy, and the comparative advantages in the constellation of international partners active in this field. It analysed what, in these specificities, has been instrumental in triggering outcomes. This sub-EQ particularly looked into how the CCOs of Finnish support may have added value to interventions.



EQ3: HOW HAS FINLAND PROMOTED STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONS AND GOOD GOVERNANCE, AND WHAT KIND OF SUCCESSES AND/OR CHALLENGES HAVE THERE BEEN IN ACHIEVING THE OBJECTIVES SET FOR THIS SUB-THEME?

Data collection

Desk review: portfolio quantitative data, human review of secondary evidence including project documents related to the deep dive country and the extended sample, was complemented by data from the coding of other relevant evaluations. The team additionally reviewed grey literature about the sub-theme, and in/about the deep dive country (e.g. media coverage, publications by CSOs, NHRIs, and multilateral organisations, parliament and other institutions' public reports).

Semi-structured interviews triangulated complementary viewpoints, paying particular attention to gender disaggregation and hearing the voice of vulnerable groups. They included deep dive country stakeholders including project implementing partners, CSOs, media, and community leaders as applicable, national/local authorities and NHRI, international partners (e.g. EU, IFIs, like-minded donor countries and multilateral organisations present on the spot), INGOs, and Finnish CSOs having experience with the country whether currently present or not. Finnish MFA staff related to the extended sample of projects and to the sub-theme, with snowball identification of national stakeholders in the most learning-rich countries were covered by the extended sample.

Data analysis

All sub-EQs analyse the degree of realisation of the ToC (effectiveness), the factors leading to it in particular relevance, as well as the realisation of the conditions identified for lasting change (sustainability).

To this end, the team triangulated a wide range of primary and secondary data, including documents and interviews with diverse stakeholders. The deep dive was particularly useful to evidence outcomes, but also the extended sample projects vastly enriched the analysis with representative range of experiences including diverse countries, instruments, partners, amounts, durations, and topics. The deep dive country's relevant projects and activities, the extended sample of projects, and the coding of existing project evaluations beyond the deep dive country and the sample, complemented each other to provide robust evidence.



EQ4: HOW HAS FINLAND PROMOTED STRONG CIVIL SOCIETIES, AND WHAT KIND OF SUCCESSES AND/OR CHALLENGES HAVE THERE BEEN IN ACHIEVING THE OBJECTIVES SET FOR THIS SUB-THEME?

Rationale and coverage

Sub-EQ 4.1: What kind of results has Finland achieved in promoting strong civil societies? Have the results been sustainable?

This sub-EQ assessed the materialisation, or not, of the key outcomes envisaged under this sub-thematic area, such as tangible changes in civil society actors' operational environment (legal framework, funding channels, evolution of threats and pressure if any, access to information); capacity gains among supported CSOs both in partner countries and among INGOs and Finnish NGOs receiving funding in the framework of the sub-theme; and effective promotion of participation and inclusion by civil society. Other outcomes, such as contribution to cross-cutting objectives, and other outcomes, even unintended, were also analysed. The sub-EQ further looked into the likelihood that these outcomes may be sustained beyond the end of Finland's support (sustainability) based on factors such as local ownership and confidence among the supported stakeholders, established human capacity, institutionalisation of changes, and political will, in line with the ToC and Finland's policy documents.

Sub-EQ 4.2: Have the activities undertaken been relevant and/or effective?

This sub-EQ assessed the match between needs and aspirations of stakeholders, the context of intervention, and Finland's intervention design. It particularly analysed how context assessments underpin interventions and the choice of activities, how conducive or hindering factors have been monitored throughout implementation, and how Finland (HQ and Embassies) and its partners have practiced adaptive strategies to respond to opportunities and challenges. It also looked at whether and how CCOs have been included in the interventions.

Sub-EQ 4.3: Are there any success stories and/or lessons learned in Finland's actions?

This sub-EQ was particularly learning-oriented, as it identified cases of success and their underlying factors, as reported by stakeholders from among the MFA, the implementing partners, and the national and local actors. The sub-EQ especially inquired about positive changes in the practices of supported public institutions in terms of civil society engagement and participation, as well as transparency towards them. The sub-EQ further examined what less successful cases teach us. The combination of learnings from the deep dive country and the extended sample informed this analysis.

Sub-EQ 4.4: What has Finland's added value been in generating the results?

This sub-EQ focused on what is distinctive about Finnish support to good governance/democracy, and the comparative advantages in the constellation of international partners active in this field. It gathered feedback from partners and beneficiaries at all levels, validated by the review of documents, to gauge how much Finland's support in this sub-theme is clearly identified in publications and in stakeholders' perceptions. It further identified complementarities and synergies with like-minded actors also active in this sub-theme (e.g. multilateral organisations, other bilateral donors, EU). This sub-EQ particularly looked into how the CCOs of Finnish support may have added value to interventions.



EQ4: HOW HAS FINLAND PROMOTED STRONG CIVIL SOCIETIES, AND WHAT KIND OF SUCCESSES AND/OR CHALLENGES HAVE THERE BEEN IN ACHIEVING THE OBJECTIVES SET FOR THIS SUB-THEME?

Data collection

Desk review: portfolio quantitative data, human review of secondary evidence including project documents related to the deep dive country and the extended sample, were complemented by data from the coding of other relevant evaluations. The team additionally reviewed grey literature about the sub-theme, and in/about the deep dive country (e.g. media coverage, publications by CSOs, NHRIs, and multilateral organisations, parliament and other institutions' public reports).

Semi-structured interviews triangulated complementary viewpoints, paying particular attention to gender disaggregation and hearing the voice of vulnerable groups. They included in-person interviews with broad range of actors in the deep dive country (MFA, implementing partners, national/local authorities, CSOs, multilaterals present there...). Online interviews with the Embassies and stakeholders in countries most relevant to the extended project sample covered EQ 3 along with the other EQs, as well as online interviews at global level (multilaterals, Finnish CSOs, INGOs).

Direct observation: in the deep dive country, where possible: physical conditions in which supported civil society and good governance actors operate; attitudes displayed by the actors.

Data analysis

All sub-EQs analysed the degree of realization of the ToC (effectiveness), the factors leading to it in particular relevance, as well as the realisation of the conditions identified for lasting change (sustainability). To this end, the team triangulated a wide range of primary and secondary data, including documents and interviews with diverse stakeholders. The deep dive was particularly useful to evidence outcomes, but also the extended sample projects vastly enriched the analysis with representative range of experiences including diverse countries, instruments, partners, amounts, durations, and topics. The deep dive country's relevant projects and activities, the extended sample of projects, and the coding of existing project evaluations beyond the deep dive country and the sample, complemented each other to provide robust evidence.

EQ5: HOW CAN FINLAND EXECUTE ACTIVITIES IN THE RESULT AREA "PEACEFUL DEMOCRATIC SOCIETIES" IN A MORE RELEVANT, EFFECTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE WAY IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS AND BEYOND?

Rationale and coverage

As the findings of the other EQs were not yet known, this EQ did not contain sub-EQs, but the team anticipated learnings about the programming, and its interplay with Finland's vision and message regarding the result area. It also anticipated that the trends in human and financial resources, in the broader policy context, and in view of identified results, yield important lessons for future execution of activities in PPA3. Examples of how Finland promoted its positive precedents, and how it optimised its contribution to joint initiatives with other key stakeholders of the results area (such as Finnish CSOs, multilateral organisations, or the EU) and how it built strategic alliances in the deep dive country or other countries, were also expected to yield promising learning. However, these are not limitative.

Data collection

Desk review: All desk review conducted for other EQs indirectly informed EQ 5. Additionally, the lessons learned and recommendations of the earlier evaluations outlined above specifically informed EQ 5. Policy documents and CPs, along with portfolio data, provided a basis. Public data about the initiatives offering opportunities for Finland to capitalise on its contributions (e.g. TEI tracker) were also reviewed.

Interviews: all interviews with MFA HQ staff, staff at deep dive country and other embassies, as well as partners CSOs (Finnish, INGO, and national CSOs in country deep dive), and multilateral partners.

Data analysis

This EQ is formative and therefore seeks to synthesise the learnings gained through all other EQs. It takes the reflection further to inform future programming with opportunities for improvement and optimisation, towards more relevant, effective and sustainable interventions.



Mainstreaming HRBA and cross-cutting objectives

The ToR outlines that human rights, gender equality and non-discrimination should be mainstreamed as cross-cutting issues in the evaluation. Within the framework of HRBA, MFA pays specific attention to gender equality as well as non-discrimination with emphasis on disability inclusion as CCOs guiding all programming.

The evaluation team therefore applied a human rights-based approach, including the principles of participation and inclusion, equality and non-discrimination, transparency, and accountability. The principles and CCOs were taken into account in the sampling of the projects, the identification of organisations to be interviewed, the formulation of interview questions and the lens applied for analysis, presentation of evaluation findings, conclusions, and recommendations. They further informed the selection of individual interviewees, particularly in the deep dive country. The evaluation analysis systematically identified rights-holders and duty-bearers, assessing how the intervention has strengthened the ability of rights-holders to claim and promote their rights, and the capacity of duty-bearers to respect, protect, and fulfil human rights. It also considered the extent to which the HRBA principles guide interventions and contribute to their implementation, as reflected in the choice of indicators set out in the evaluation matrix, including indicators addressing participation, inclusion, transparency, accountability. The evaluation drew on the MFA's 2023 evaluation of a HRBA (Christoplos et al., 2023) to address EQ 2 and 5.

The evaluation aimed to ensure that the voices of women, persons with disabilities, and marginalised groups are adequately represented. While it was not be feasible to collect significant amounts of data directly from marginalised, excluded and discriminated rights-holders, the team focused on interviewing representatives of civil society organizations working for, and managed by, persons belonging to these groups. All interviews were carried out on the basis of the interviewees informed consent. All informants were notified of the possibility to withdraw from interviews without repercussion, and that the team will maintain confidentiality and anonymity to protect their integrity.

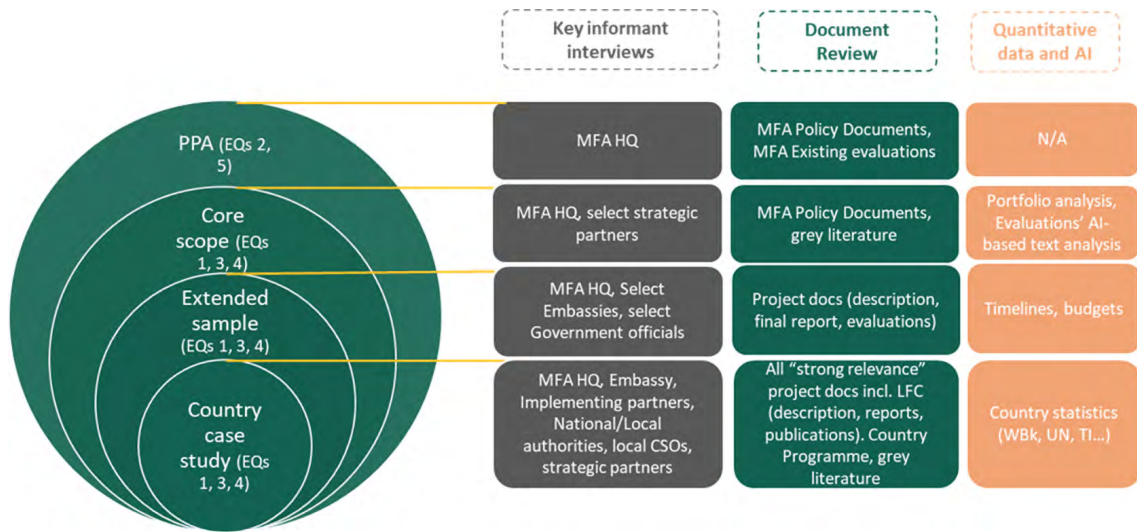
As part of its HRBA, the evaluation team disaggregated data wherever possible, e.g. by sex and disability when relevant, and assess the extent to which a gender and disability lens is mainstreamed in sampled interventions and in the deep dive country. Gender has also been taken into account in the composition of the evaluation team and the team members have extensive experience of applying a gender lens to evaluations, as well as of evaluating interventions primarily focusing on addressing issues of gender-equality. More generally, the team members have considerable experience of all three CCOs guiding this evaluation.

Methodology

Data collection methods

For data collection, this evaluation used three key methods: key informant interviews (KIIs), document review, and quantitative data analysis complemented by AI tools (See Figure 17). Each of these methods will be used differently depending on the level of scope, as demonstrated in Section 2.1.2 above.

Figure 7: Data collection methods by level of scope: each level incorporates the lower one(s) and builds upon them.



Source: Evaluation team's elaboration.

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) at the global level

The evaluation team conducted six semi-structured inception interviews with reference group members. In the data collection phase, these were followed by additional interviews with a wider range of MFA employees in Helsinki (covering all employees engaged in, or coordinating with, the core scope of the evaluation) and in the Embassies relevant to the extended sample (where there is still relevant staff present; if not, interviews will be held with former staff of embassies). These "select Embassies" and desk interviews covered a large number of countries, based on availability of the stakeholders with experience in the extended project sample's countries, including: Mozambique, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Ukraine, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar, and countries in Central America, and the Western Balkans. In addition, the team interviewed Finland's strategic partners on good governance and civil society, such as contact points in the headquarters of multilateral organisations receiving core funding or project funding (e.g., UN agencies, OSCE ODIHR), Finnish NGOs (e.g. DEMO Finland) and INGOs commonly acting as delivery channels. The team used snowball technique to gain access, where possible, to a few local partners for the most meaningful projects of the extended sample (e.g. Strengthening democratic institutions in the governance of natural resources in Mozambique). All of these interviews were conducted remotely.

Overall, the total number of data collection interviewees for this evaluation was 123, including 71 for Nepal exclusively, 7 covering both Nepal and global issues, and 45 covering global issues or



other countries. The 52 interviewees covering global scope were distributed as follows: 22 from the Finnish MFA; 10 from Finnish civil society organisations; 7 from UN agencies; 4 from international NGOs; 4 from organisations in partner countries; 3 from other Finnish organisations; 2 from other inter-governmental organisations. 64 of the interviewees were women and 59 were men.

Nepal country deep dive interviews

Regarding the deep dive country Nepal, in addition to Embassy officials, the team interviewed counterparts who are relevant to PPA3, including implementing partners, relevant Finnish CSOs, multilateral organisations and other international partners present on the spot or engaged in projects from their headquarters (EU, multilateral organisations, International Financing Institutions, embassies of other EU Member States); national and local stakeholders engaged in the PPA3-relevant interventions such as national/local authorities, NHRI, and local CSOs. Interviews took place in Kathmandu due to long travel distance to the regions where Finland's key supported interventions take place. Some interviews were conducted online before or after the case country visit. CSOs were interviewed with a particular attention to those representing the rights of women, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups. In the deep dive country, the National Expert joined the team to help reach out to national/local interviewees and suggesting valuable additional interviewees to those already identified (see Annex 7: list of interviewees).

Fieldwork in Nepal involved in-person and online interviews with **71 interviewees representing 30 different actors**. The deep dive covered **12 PPA3 relevant projects**, irrespective of funding size, generating a comprehensive picture of how Finland's support to governance and civil society unfolds in practice across multiple levels.

Interviews were held online and in English, except in the deep dive country Nepal where the team travelled, with the National Expert supporting interpretation where necessary. All interviews were semi-structured to capture diverse and complementary perspectives on the results. They focused on tracing change (especially at the outcome level), identifying enabling factors and challenges in the core scope, and in relation with PPA 3, and understanding Finland's added value.

Following the mission, the Evaluation Team held an emerging findings validation session with representatives from the MFA headquarters and the Embassy in Nepal.

Document review (secondary)

Considering the complex scope of the evaluation, the limited field coverage of data collection (only one deep dive country and mission), and the important use of secondary data for EQs 2 and 5, document review had particular importance.

In the inception phase, the team reviewed the documents listed in the ToR as well as secondary sources, such as other relevant evaluations, reviews, studies, reports and policies. This review served to develop (i) a context analysis (key concepts, policy context, organisational context); (ii) basic portfolio analysis and (iii) a first stocktaking of development results. This analysis also mapped the evolution of Finland's approach to democracy support, identifying core priorities and strategies. MFA internal database OpenAid served as a useful document pool. A sampling strategy was developed and applied for primary mapping, as described below, and will be used for further data collection and analysis.



During the data collection phase, the **detailed desk review** built on the sampling strategy.[1] Due to the high importance of (qualitative) secondary data, we suggested choosing a systematic approach for collecting and processing secondary data.

- For EQs 2 and 5 which concern the whole PPA 3, the document review referred more intensively to the MFA policy documents and drew on existing evaluations, especially when it comes to EQ2. The team identified six intervention evaluations relevant to Sub-theme 1 of PPA3 (peaceful, stable and just societies), in addition to the thematic and CP evaluations relevant to the other sub-themes. This was complemented by a collection of grey literature and academic publications relevant to the conceptual framework. Project-level documentation analysed for EQs 1, 3, and 4, also fed into EQs 2 and 5, as EQs 2 and 5 incorporated and built upon the findings of all other EQs, in conjunction with additional data.
- Under EQs 1, 3 and 4, the document review for the core scope also used policy documents (and regulations as applicable for EQ 1), and earlier evaluations, complemented by other MFA materials, relevant IO, INGO and CSO publications and reports. Additionally, the team reviewed project-level documents other than earlier evaluations:
 - The documents relative to the **extended project sample** included (not limitative) the key project cycle documents (project fiche, reports, and evaluations), plus relevant CPs and related evaluations.
 - For the **deep dive country**, the widest possible circle of documents was analysed, including project cycle documents, CPs, and relevant tertiary reports (government reports, CSO reports, publications by Finland's partners and multilateral organisations)

Direct observation: in the deep dive country, where possible, direct observation (e.g. physical conditions in which supported civil society and good governance actors operate; attitudes displayed by the actors) was used for validation and nuancing of the interviews' and documents' contents.

Quantitative data included the metadata already collected **on the portfolio** to establish trends. The method was extensively applied during the inception phase for sampling (see 2.2.2), providing the comprehensive mapping of interventions. In addition, the evaluation team collected, as relevant, quantitative data published about the country deep dive, such as World Bank data or national statistics.

Project sampling strategy

This section lays out the sampling strategy applied for this evaluation, including the approach to portfolio selection, sampling criteria, data collection methods, and the rationale for the country deep dive.

A strategy of “Russian dolls” categorisation of funding decisions:

- (i) **All funding decisions contributing to PPA 3:** all the MFA's actions within the scope of the evaluation, without a minimum funding threshold with at least some relevance. This corpus of funding decisions, which tends to overrepresent LCF interventions, informed mostly EQs 2 and 5. The team analysed it through quantitative data on the list of funding



decisions (already started above in the section on Portfolio analysis), as well as interviews with key informants having an overview on PPA3, and document analysis of relevant documents such as earlier strategic evaluations relevant to the entire PPA (e.g. evaluations on HRBA, Domestic Revenue Mobilisation), and thematic or intervention-level earlier evaluations on the PPA3 sub-theme of “Peaceful, Stable and Just Societies” which would otherwise be under-served. In addition, the team analysed other publications relevant to PPA3, and of course the MFA’s policy documents.

- (ii) **Within the above-mentioned list (i), the team identified a sub-corpus of funding decisions contributing to the sub-themes of democracy and civil society:** 394 projects with at least some relevance to the core scope (i.e. the two sub-themes). The analysis of this corpus was based on quantitative analysis of this sub-set of funding decisions (also started already in the above section on Portfolio analysis), plus discussion dedicated to the two sub-themes during interviews with key informants having an overview on PPA3. It served to discern trends and factors possibly bringing nuance to the corpus of all funding decisions contributing to PPA 3. It informed mostly EQs 1, 2, 3, and 4.
- (iii) **Within the above-mentioned list (ii), the team established another sub-corpus excluding funding decisions under €125 000.** This enabled the team to avoid overrepresentation of small funding decisions in the analysis of trends per number of decisions. Meanwhile, this sub-corpus affects only marginally the trends by funding amounts, as the total budget of decisions under the threshold is negligible within the full portfolio. This sub-corpus was analysed through quantitative analysis of funding decisions (also started already in the above section 1.3 Portfolio Analysis), as well as qualitative analysis of earlier project evaluations. The interviews covering the entire PPA3 also informed this sub-corpus, as for sub-corpus ii.
- (iv) **Within the above-mentioned list (iii), the team, in consultation with the reference group, identified a list of 30 projects constituting the “extended sample” of projects.** These projects were selected as representative of the “strongly relevant” projects in the full portfolio[2]. This sample heavily contributed to primary data extraction and analysis, with project-level interviews, and review of project-level documentation from project description to end report and evaluation report if any. Thanks to it, the evaluation team elaborated its key emerging findings on EQs 3 and 4, which in turn contributed to EQs 2 and 5, along with the data collected for all the above corpuses. This extended sample took into account (past and present) contexts of long-term partner countries as well as newly developed democracies. Annex 2 presents the full list of projects proposed for sampling.
- (v) **Country deep dive: Nepal. All PPA3-relevant projects** in the country, regardless of the level of relevance without a minimum funding threshold. This deep dive served to confront the hypothesis from all the corpuses above, with the realities on the ground. The findings emerging from the deep dive contributed to all EQs.

Funding decisions’ inventory method:

To identify all funding decisions which are relevant to PPA3 (i), and their sub-clusters (ii, iii, iv, v) described above, the evaluation team followed an iterative process:

- Request for a starting list of funding decisions from the MFA.
- Generation of a list of projects from the MFA’s OpenAid portal, for comparison.



- Cross-referencing every entry in both lists. This ensured no entry was missing, elimination of any double-entries, and consistency of the portfolio. Any significant deviation between both lists warranted a content review of the available information on the concerned funding decisions.
- Constitution of the full list of interventions contributing to the PPA3 through identification and removal of entries related to: MFAs' own administrative costs, other activities funded as administrative costs, subscription fees, communication activities, global education projects in Finland, evaluations, as well as individual activities such as support to country visits or training events. Also, education sector interventions earlier recorded under the same PPA with the current PPA3 in the MFA system, as well as other interventions without any clear linkage to the thematic scope of this evaluation e.g. due to absence of more suitable other PPAs were excluded from the analysis.
- Preparing a list of interventions contributing to the sub-themes of “Institutions and good governance” and “Participation and civil society”. The linkages of the interventions in the full list of interventions to the PPA3 were coded against the four sub-themes of the PPA3 based on a qualitative analysis of the project descriptions available in the list on funding decisions and OpenAid portal. Interventions related solely to the sub-themes on “Peaceful, stable and just societies” and “DRM” were removed from the list. However, the list includes interventions contributing parallelly to the two sub-themes in the core focus of this evaluation and to these other sub-themes of the PPA3 or PPAs.
- Preparing a list of interventions contributing to the sub-themes of “Institutions and good governance” and “Participation and civil society” with budgets above €125 000. Entries with lower budgets were identified and deleted in the list of interventions contributing to these sub-themes. These projects, often funded through the LCF, do not tend to generate extensive documentation, and their contribution is difficult to trace beyond specific country contexts, requiring interviews. However, these decisions will be covered in the sub-cluster ii above, and in the country deep dive.
- Systematic analysis of the level of relevance of every entry contributing to the sub-themes of “Institutions and Good Governance” and “Participation and Civil Society” with budgets above €125 000. This was done by the review and cross-referencing of the available documentation in the MFA's list on funding decisions and the OpenAid portal data. Following this, every intervention was rated on a scale of 3 (strongly relevant; clear relevance, indirect/unclear/weak relevance).

The level of relevance was assessed against the following criteria based on the MFA funding decision data and OpenAid data:

- *Strongly relevant projects*: interventions fully focusing on interventions including components strongly focusing on “Institutions & Good Governance”, and “Participation & Civil Society”, and directly contributing to the related MFA outcomes and outputs.
- *Projects with clear relevance*: interventions including clear elements related to the themes of “Institutions & Good Governance” and “Participation & Civil Society” within their objective setting and strategies, even though their primary focus has been on another thematic priority or sub-theme.



- *Projects with indirect/unclear/weak relevance*: interventions including strategies or activities indirectly or weakly contributing to the MFA outcomes and outputs related to the evaluation core focus, and interventions with project descriptions including unclear reference to potential relevance.
- Encoding of all relevant information for each entry. This led to a consistent portfolio of 251 entries (interventions). The portfolio provides systematic data organised into a set of 69 criteria/meta-data for all 251 entries.

Extended sample's sampling method:

For the list of 30 funding decisions, i.e. the extended sampled, the team used an iterative sampling process. Based on inception interviews, initial document review, and initial review of the information available on the OpenAid portal, the evaluation team established the following sampling criteria:

- 1) Delivery channel, aiming for balanced representation of:
 - INGOs
 - Finnish NGOs
 - Multilateral Organisations
 - Finnish Embassies in the concerned countries.
- 2) Financing Instrument: representation of all instruments represented, excluding local funds.
- 3) Geographic coverage, aiming for balanced representation of:
 - Global projects
 - Multi-country/regional projects
 - Single-country projects in Africa
 - Single-country projects in Asia/Pacific
 - Single-country projects in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)
 - Single-country projects in Europe
 - Single-country projects in Central Asia/Pakistan/Afghanistan.
- 4) Funding brackets, aiming for balanced representation:
 - Projects < €1 million
 - Projects between €1 and 5 million
 - Projects > €5 million
- 5) Thematic scope, aiming for balanced representation of sub-themes:
 - Projects marked as “Institutions/Good Governance”
 - Projects marked as “Participation/Civil Society”
 - Projects marked as both sub-themes



This resulted in an initial sample of 25 projects, which was then re-balanced with an additional 5 projects to correct for any deviations, and with extra projects proposed by the MFA following written consultation.

For this extended sample of projects, the evaluation team, with support from the MFA Evaluation Unit, collected the following documents:

- Project document/description including logframe
- Progress reports, where easily available
- Final report
- Evaluation report, if any.

Where possible, the evaluation team further held online interviews with resource persons in Helsinki, in Embassies, or in partner countries and organisations, who have an overview of one or, ideally, several projects within the extended sample.

Country selection and approach to the country deep dive:

As per the ToR, the evaluation team conducted one country deep dive. The team selected Nepal based on inception interviews and portfolio analysis, in accordance with the following criteria:

- Significant country portfolio. In Nepal, the team identified 12 projects above €125 000 with relevance to the sub-themes of “Institutions and Good Governance” and “Participation and Civil Society”.
- Presence of some projects with funding above € 1 million, ensuring plausible contribution stories.
- Ongoing cooperation with CSOs and government/local government partners on good governance and civil society, securing ease of access to informants, and rich qualitative data for contribution stories.
- Size of the country (over 29 million inhabitants) relative to the number and amounts of interventions, conducive to contribution analysis, with the recognition that attribution analysis would not be feasible.

The country deep dive served to confront emerging hypotheses from the full portfolio and the extended sample, with concrete contribution stories. For this purpose, the team collected the list of all projects within scope in Nepal, without a minimum funding threshold, including local support funds. For all these projects, it collected: Project descriptions, progress reports, final reports, any important publication or material (e.g. training material, study report, policy brief...), evaluation reports, if any, any other document deemed important by the Embassy and general documentation (CPs; country reports deemed relevant).

Sampled projects are listed in Annex 2.



Data Analysis

The tables on the EQs above present the analytical approach for each EQ.

Levels of analysis:

The data analysis followed the Evaluation Matrix, which is closely aligned with the ToC, and ties every indicator to one or more scope circles: deep dive, extended sample, full portfolio, PPA 3 (See Figure 8 above). Following this principle, the team analysed the set of interventions' contribution to change, from one level of change in the ToC to the next, informed by the most relevant scope circle. Contribution analysis therefore strictly followed the ToC; it also mobilised and triangulated the most relevant data sets.

Qualitative analysis:

Qualitative textual analysis was used to analyse vast amount interviews and documents, both from the extended sample of 30 projects, and the interviews and documents related to the deep dive country Nepal (12 projects). The data were coded with the MAXQDA software programme, designed for qualitative and mixed-methods data analysis. Coding of the qualitative data (interviews, project documents, evaluation reports) enabled the evaluation team to organise, code, and analyse large volumes of textual data. The entire evaluation team participated in qualitative analysis of documents and interviews with coding based on the indicators defined in the evaluation matrix. In addition to project-specific data, the evaluation team also analysed secondary data (existing evaluations, academic publications, grey literature), and interviews of stakeholders beyond specific projects, particularly from the MFA. Identified existing evaluation reports relevant for PPA3 were also analysed using MAXQDA software. The reviewed documents thus included:

- Reports of earlier thematic and intervention-level evaluations
- Project plans/documents and MFA quality assurance group (laaturyhmä) documents of the extended sample and deep dive projects.
- Final project reports, and other key review documents of the extended sample and deep dive projects

With its user-friendly interface and a wide range of analytical tools, MAXQDA supported the systematic identification of patterns, themes, and relationships within data, making it a valuable resource for conducting in-depth qualitative analysis.

Quantitative analysis:

For the **core scope**, the quantitative analysis of the portfolio's meta-data, yielded deeper analysis of the project portfolio, such as funding trends, delivery channel, mapping of instruments, geographic focus, etc. For the evaluation universe and extended sample, the quantitative tools were utilised for assessing the longitudinal data on, for example, budget sizes and their fluctuation, thematic focus, funding instruments and delivery channels to establish related trends.



Use of AI and machine learning

The AI-assisted OpenEval tool, recently launched by the MFA Development Evaluation Unit, facilitates access to information from public evaluation reports related to Finland's development policy and cooperation. The evaluation team used this tool for constituting a corpus of relevant evaluation reports and extracting relevant report sections for further analysis.

Some interviews were recorded and transcribed with the assistance of automated transcription software (Fireflies). The interviewer subsequently reviewed and corrected the resulting transcripts to ensure accuracy and reliability.

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) compliant GOPA AI Chatbot was used to support initial review and translations of only those documents (e.g. evaluation reports or studies) that are publicly available. This internal chatbot, based on ChatGPT 4.1, does not share any information outside GOPA. It was noted that the GOPA AI Chatbot will not be used for any documents shared with the Evaluation Team that are not publicly available.

All use of AI followed the Policy on the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence in GOPA Consulting Group (approved in August 2023) and the policy and guidance from MFA and its Evaluation Unit. The policy includes not using any personal, sensitive or confidential data in AI prompts, prioritising privacy and confidentiality of client data, as well as critically reviewing and verifying the output of AI-generated content backed up with independent research, expert opinions and other reliable sources.

Machine learning was not used in this evaluation.

Limitations

Limitations were modest. Following the ToR, the evaluation covered only one country through fieldwork; however, this was mitigated by broad global interviews and extensive secondary evidence. Staff rotation in embassies and partner organisations affected institutional memory, but other available data helped compensate for this. Documentation quality varied across projects and years, affecting comparability. The lack of project evaluation reports, final reports, or clear results-based reporting in some interventions, together with the broad heterogeneity among the sampled projects, were the core reasons for not being able to use qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) in the evaluation as was originally planned. Robust QCA requires comparable, well-specified, and systematically collected information for identifying a unified and limited number of outcomes and factors. Upon full coding of document and interviews from the sampled projects (broad sample + Nepal), the team found that the outcomes were too varied to be captured in a QCA. Another option would have been to rate the projects as successful, partly successful, fully successful on the basis of their logframe. This would have reduced the number of outcomes. However, it would have required a unified and robust rating, which was impossible due to the unavailability of final reports and project evaluations for many projects. If we excluded these projects, we would have then ended with too small a sample for a meaningful QCA. For this reason, we relied more extensively on the qualitative analysis conducted by the team using the MAXQDA software as a tool for systematic coding of the evaluation data. The team therefore adjusted its approach: it used the coding not for a full-fledged QCA, but rather to identify the recurrent types of outcomes and factors, which are presented in EQs 2, 3, 4. No other major deviations from the original methodology occurred.



Annex 4: Policy documents guiding Finland's support for democracy, the rule of law and human rights

Finnish development cooperation policy is outlined in general and sector-focused policy documents authored by the MFA. The below table lists those of primary importance from a democracy, rule of law and human rights perspective. It presents the temporal scope, geographic coverage, thematic focus, and key messages and policy shifts of each of these.

Table 5: Overview of Finnish development policies with focus on democracy, rule of law and human rights.

MFA, "Ministry for Foreign Affairs democracy support policy", 2014

Thematic focus: "Broad democracy", including rule of law, democracy, human rights, good governance and anti-corruption.

Key messages and shifts:

Promoting democracy is important for stability and security. Democracy work should be based on the international promotion of human rights and the rule of law.

Democracy support should focus on the following:

- Political and economic participation of women and vulnerable, easily marginalised and discriminated groups;
- Conditions for civil society, in particular support for human rights defenders (HRDs);
- Rule of law, good governance, anti-corruption, free and fair elections, conditions for parliament, and multi-party systems.

The effectiveness of Finland's activities should increase through reduced fragmentation, deepened cooperation with selected "key partners", and increased coherence within the MFA and between Finland's national and international democracy work.

MFA, "Report on Development Policy Extending Across Parliamentary Terms", 2021

Thematic focus: Development cooperation generally. Outlines the activities and objectives of Finland's development policy and development cooperation.

Key messages and shifts:

Development policy is an integral part of the foreign and security policy, and peaceful democratic societies is one of Finland's five priority areas.

Finland should promote democratic development and the rule of law, including through support for the democratisation of political institutions, access to justice, the capacity of public administration, and good governance, as well as reforms of tax and budget systems, the prevention and peaceful resolution of conflicts, and freedoms of assembly, speech, and association.

There is a need for greater coherence and a long-term approach across parliamentary terms.

MFA, "Theories of Change and Aggregate Indicators for Finland's Development Policy", 2023 (updated)

Thematic focus: MFA's thematic priority areas for development policy and cooperation.

Key messages and shifts:

Provides ToCs with expected results and indicators for the five priority areas of Finland's development cooperation:

- Rights of women and girls



- Quality inclusive education
- Sustainable economies and decent work
- Peaceful democratic societies
- Climate and natural resources
- Under the priority area Peaceful democratic societies, the outcomes are:
 - More peaceful, stable and just societies with inclusive state-building processes (SDG 16.1)
 - More transparent, efficient and accountable public sector with strengthened judicial institutions and improved capacity and willingness of political decision-makers and authorities to strengthen democracy and promote rule of law (SDG 16.3, SDG 16.5, SDG 16.6, SDG 16.7)
 - The enabling environment for and capacity of the civil society and women, youth and persons with disabilities to influence and participate in decision-making has improved (SDG 16.7 and SDG 16.10)
 - Taxation capacity of developing countries is strengthened, and their tax systems are more transparent and inequality reducing (SDG 16.4, SDG 16.6 and SDG 17.1)

Finnish Government, “Government report on Finnish foreign and security policy”, 2024

Thematic focus: Operating environment, priorities and goals of Finland’s foreign and security policy

Key messages and shifts:

Finland’s foreign and security policy is founded on value-based realism. Finland works to strengthen international law and the rules-based international system.

A well-functioning democracy, the rule of law, human rights and a vibrant civil society are prerequisites for sustainable social development. The objectives of development cooperation will continue to be based on the SDGs.

Finland’s development cooperation focuses increasingly on aid-for-trade development funding. Its development policy should play a role in supporting Finland’s strategic economic relations.

Finnish Government, “Report on International Economic Relations and Development Cooperation”, 2024

Thematic focus: International economic relations, trade, and development cooperation. Complements the Government report on Finnish foreign and security policy.

Key messages and shifts:

Development cooperation remains an integral part of Finland’s foreign and security policy.

Development cooperation promotes the realisation of a well-functioning democracy, the rule of law, human rights and a vibrant civil society.

Trade and development policies are integrated to support both Finnish interests and the self-sufficiency of developing countries.

Increased attention should be paid to leveraging private financing as a means of covering development needs.

The Government will cut development cooperation during its term. The cuts will be implemented gradually, taking into account existing commitments. An increasing share of activities will focus on Ukraine.

The readmission of nationals and support for the international rules-based order are conditions for development cooperation.

The focus of Finland’s development cooperation will shift from bilateral CPs to development cooperation with Finnish Civil Society Organisations (CSOs).

Source: Evaluation team’s elaboration.



Annex 5: Overview of earlier evaluations, reviews and other assessments

The Evaluation of the HRBA in Finland's Development Policy and Cooperation assessed from various perspectives how HRBA has been applied in the MFA development policy and cooperation in support of the MFA human rights and development policies and provided recommendations for stepping up its implementation and effectiveness in different cooperation instruments (Christoplos, et al., 2023). The evaluation concludes that “HRBA has become solidly established within MFA and its partners as the most important common normative bases for Finland’s development cooperation” (*Ibidem*, p. 112). The report highlights strengthened capacities of rights-holders in marginalised situations to demand accountability as a result of Finland’s support, as well as the role of CSOs in providing a voice and supporting rights-holders in marginalised situations to overcome discrimination and isolation. However, progress in achieving transformative changes in the capacities and accountability of duty-bearers was found more limited. In terms of processes, the principle of non-discrimination was a prominent focus in plans and implementation, but it was mainly limited to gender equality and disability. At the same time, the report concludes the “principle of transparency has received strikingly little attention in Finnish development cooperation in general” (*Ibidem*, p. 113).

The evaluation found variation in HRBA application across cooperation instruments and modalities, this being most apparent in CSO support and FLC interventions and limited in private sector and Institutional Cooperation Instrument (ICI) interventions. The HRBA perspectives were found strong in bilateral and country programming. In multilateral cooperation, MFA’s policy level influencing work with multilateral partner organisations has focused on gender equality and the rights persons with disabilities, while HRBA has been addressed more comprehensively in multi-bi interventions (*Ibidem*, pp. 50–59, 112–113).

Limited resources for monitoring HRBA application and results within the MFA, as well as limited application of international human rights law and mechanisms in HRBA were identified as significant challenges (*Ibidem*, pp. 114–115). The evaluation recommends MFA to reaffirm HRBA as a core principle in its policies and practices, while shifting the practical promotion of HRBA “beyond the current ‘gatekeeping’ function to also provide incentives (resources) and regulations (reporting requirements) to encourage partners to undertake deeper human rights analyses and to monitor how these analyses are guiding implementation” (*Ibidem*, p. 116). Also, a deeper analysis of risks, power and political economy related to HRBA, especially in conflict contexts was recommended (*Ibidem*, p. 117).

The Evaluation of Finland's support to DRM from 2016 to 2023 demonstrated increased **tax revenue collection and strengthened local tax administration capacities** in developing countries such as Tanzania, as well as influence on the global tax agenda (Vaillant, Bartholomew, & Nieminen, 2023). Strategic support to the African Tax Administration Forum (ATAF), OECD’s Tax Inspectors without Borders (TIWB) and UNDP’s Tax for SDGs, combined with support to civil society and research initiatives, and selected basket fund have positioned Finland as a credible and



influential partner despite its limited resources. Result examples of strengthened tax administration and increased tax collection include (*Ibidem* p. 49):

- “ATAF technical assistance helped to raise additional tax revenues in the excess of USD 190 million in member countries. Given Finland’s core funding of ATAF, some of this success can be attributed to Finland’s support.”
- “TIWB capacity building has helped raise more than USD 2.07 billion in additional tax collected”
- VERO’s technical assistance to Tanzania improved digitalisation (online filing from 79% to 95%) and taxpayer registration (from 3.2 to 4 million)

The evaluation found evidence of some contribution to strengthening tax transparency and accountability in the extractive sector through advocacy and awareness-raising by civil society organisations supported by Finland, such as Natural Resource Governance Institute (NRGI) which advocated for mining mineral contract disclosure in Ghana, built civil society capacity to hold the government accountable for revenue from the extractive sector in Senegal, and supported the development of civil society-led strategy to monitor subnational revenue collection and allocation in Democratic Republic of Congo (*Ibidem*, p. 53). The evaluation notes however, that “It is hard to ascertain if these initiatives can help increase citizen voice on tax-related issues, given the length of time it takes to achieve lasting and transformative results” (*Ibidem*, 2023, p. 53). Among basket fund contributions focusing on tax policy reforms, for instance Finland’s support to the Somalia World Bank MPF contributed to doubling DRM from 2013 to 2019 and helped Somalia to pave the way for debt relief and World Bank’s resumed support (*Ibidem*, 2023, p. 51–52). Finnish companies also contributed nearly EUR 700 million annually in taxes in developing countries (*Ibidem*, 2023, p. 30).

Gender equality was well integrated into the DRM initiatives, with increased focus on gender leading to achievements of partners beyond MFA support, such as the ATAF Women in Tax Network offering “an exclusive platform for African women in tax-related professions”, or new extractive industry EITI standards including “a stronger gender, social and environmental dimension and a gender-sensitive implementation guidance note” (*Ibidem*, p. 36). However, other CCOs and issues, such as non-discrimination or supporting the climate agenda, were less mainstreamed.

Limited cooperation between the Ministries for Foreign Affairs and Finance, as well as constrained human and financial resources, affected the optimal implementation of the Action Plans for DRM 2016–2019 and 2020–2023. The well-articulated action plans suffered from weak accountability mechanisms in the absence of result indicators and regular monitoring. Recommendations for the third Action Plan included clearer alignment with Finland’s policy coherence agenda in relation to international tax, bringing in the tax dimension to already established collaboration groups with relevant Ministries and other actors, and combining technical assistance with support for more transparent and equitable taxation systems, together with other donors.

The Meta-Analysis of CPs 2021–2024 assessed the contributions of CPs in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Palestine, Somalia, Tanzania, and Ukraine to achieved development results, and informing MFA’s future development cooperation planning (Palenberg, Bartholomew, Mäkelä, & Huhta, 2024). The analysis was conducted as a participatory process with MFA country teams (*Ibidem*, p. 3). The report highlights the evolving contexts, including some dramatic and unexpected developments e.g. in Afghanistan, Myanmar, Palestine and Ukraine, that had directly impacted the CPs (*Ibidem*, p. 8–9). It is concluded that “in country programming,



proactive planning for sustainability of results and resilience in view of unknown but likely future shocks becomes increasingly important” (*Ibidem*, p. 41). Also, the impact of the priorities of the new government in Finland and its austerity measures to CPs is noted. The broader role of CPs beyond development cooperation activities is highlighted, and the report concludes that “the Government of Finland’s priorities and austerity measures carry the risk of losing important footholds in partner countries” (*Ibidem*, p. 41).

The report concludes that the CPs have delivered results. In 2021–2022 the 10 CPs had achieved most of their planned results in their targeted impact areas despite significant challenges related to the Covid-19 pandemic, conflicts and regime changes in some countries (*Ibidem*, p. 40). All CPs have also contributed to HRBA and the CCOs of gender equality and non-discrimination, climate resilience and low emission development have been less in focus (*Ibidem*, p. 26–27).

Most CPs included impact areas on peaceful and democratic societies, and related results and challenges are highlighted in the country level analyses (*Ibidem*). For example, results in strengthening management of public resources for service delivery in Mozambique had been limited, but the achievement of the expected outcome was assessed as satisfactory in 2022 as the selection of indicators was updated. Good progress was reported in strengthening demand for accountability (*Ibidem*, p. 90). In Myanmar, expected outputs related to inclusive peace process and a path for federal democracy were largely achieved despite increasing levels of violent conflict deepening, while “the ultimate goal of better dialogue, peaceful solutions, and putting Myanmar back on a democratic development track remained far from being achieved” (*Ibidem*, p. 90) In Nepal, good progress had been made in support to the economic and political empowerment of women and people in vulnerable positions. Key results included adoption of a gender-responsive budget into the framework of national budgeting systems, development of gender, equality and social inclusion (GESI) mainstreaming plans of action by local governments, as well as UN Women’s support to strengthening the capacity of women and excluded groups as candidates in 2022 parliamentary election. (*Ibidem* p. 140)

MFA is recommended to continue and further develop a programme and results-based approach in bilateral cooperation and strengthening systematic scenario analysis and attention to resilience vis-à-vis possible shocks in country programming. (*Ibidem*, p. 43–45) Regarding changes in Finland’s policy priorities and resourcing, MFA should focus on “sustaining results and conserve, to the extent possible, existing access and influence in partner countries” (*Ibidem*, p. 43).

The Evaluation of the Finnish Development Policy Influencing in the EU demonstrates significant outcomes in MFA’s efforts to influence EU development cooperation policy, despite the fact that Finland’s development policy is largely in line with that of the EC and of many member states. The strongest results have been achieved in the priority area on the Rights of Women and Girls, and the CCO of gender equality (Mackie, Mikkolainen, Vaillant, & Ulla, 2022). Sub-themes of PPA3 are more weakly reflected in the main results, but for example Finland’s role in promoting topics related to governance, including human rights and taxation in Tanzania, as well as in influencing the language and content of the “EU Toolbox on HRBA” are mentioned (*Ibidem*, 2022, pp. 42, 51). The report recommends the MFA to “build on its evident successes in certain areas of influencing EU development cooperation (e.g. gender equality) to help improve its record in other areas” (*Ibidem*, 2022, p. 77). MFA is also recommended to improve prioritization of different objectives within EU influencing, differentiating more clearly between the needs of EU influencing in Brussels and in embassies, and improving clarity on prioritisation in partner-country settings (*Ibidem*, pp. 79–80).



The report concludes that “Finland has successfully used a variety of channels for influencing despite limited resources” and “it has made good use of working with coalitions of like-minded states in many, though not all areas” (*Ibidem*, p.69). This kind of coalition-building and cooperation in EU influencing is recommended to be extended (*Ibidem*, p. 78).

The Evaluation on Development Cooperation carried out by the Department for Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, including the Wider Europe Initiative (WEI) assessed Finland’s contribution to development impact in the region over the past (Webber, et al., 2021). The report highlights tangible positive changes in all areas of support, including sub-themes of the PPA3. It identifies cases of profound impacts of a transformative nature, including changes in policy, practice and attitudes that have had tangible results in improving the lives of persons in disadvantaged positions. For example, in Ukraine, Finland’s funding has contributed to Ukrainian government processes leading to progress in the alignment of national legislation with the EU, and macro-economic stabilisation of the country (*Ibidem*, p. 66). In Tajikistan, support to provision of free legal aid for women and girls in cases relating to domestic violence, lack of a marriage certificate, divorce, alimony, or child support, has contributed to changes in societal attitudes towards gender stereotypes. In Armenia, an FLC project engaging persons with disabilities, and especially young people, had gained widespread attention throughout the country through social media campaigns. (*Ibidem*, p. 66)

Even though Finnish projects have aimed to address social cohesion and societal priorities with some success, and despite some positive examples, achieving social sustainability of results has remained overall challenging. The generally difficult context for human rights and civil societies in the region, as well as the fragile situation in Ukraine, are remarkable constraining factors (*Ibidem*, p. 81).

The report notes that “Finnish added value mainly lies in its expertise in selected areas and its willingness to commit to long-term support even when headline results are not forthcoming”, and that “Finland is perceived as a small and specialised, and, despite its limited field presence, as a ‘hands-on’ donor” (*Ibidem*, p. 28). However, the effects of funding cuts, staffing reductions and staff turnover have weakened MFA’s ability to manage the development cooperation portfolio (*Ibidem*, p. 94).

MFA is recommended to strengthen internal strategic planning and establish an overarching vision for development cooperation for the whole region, as well as to adopt a more participatory approach in programming (*Ibidem*, p. 107). Also, mainstreaming civil society partners in the programmatic activities of the development cooperation portfolios of Finland should be strengthened basing on positive experiences from the FLC instrument in the region (*Ibidem*, 2021, p. 110).

The Evaluation on the Transition Process of Finnish-Vietnamese Cooperation in 2008–2020 analysed how Finland’s development cooperation has supported the transition concerning Vietnam’s gradual shift from a long-term development cooperation partner country to become a more diversified cooperation partner (van Gerwen, Nguyen, Laaksonen, Tung, & Kontro, 2021). It confirmed that during the transition process, Finnish development funding has decreased consistently, while commerce, trade and investment relations between Vietnam and Finland have grown (*Ibidem*, p. 68).

The importance of the Finnish CCOs on climate and environmental sustainability in the cooperation between Finland and Vietnam has increased, while poverty, social inclusion and gender equality have received less attention, especially in the private sector instruments. The report notes that



“civil society actors that can be powerful advocates in advancing CCOs and SDGs are experiencing more limited space to operate and participate in partnership.” (*Ibidem*, 2021, p. 99). Concerns related to the role of CSOs are raised also in the analysis on coherence. Overall, the coherence and synergy of different instruments has remained limited. The most critical finding is related to weaker alignment of the UN support with other instruments. It is noted that “Vietnamese stakeholders have expressed concern that UN support might not be strengthening the role and presence of local civil society as international CSOs and consulting companies often dominate the scene in UN project and programme implementation.” (*Ibidem*, p. 69–70).

The evaluation recommends MFA to continue policy dialogue with the Vietnamese Government on human rights and democratic participation of civil society and the private sector. Overall, MFA is recommended to strengthen strategic planning of transition processes, as well as improving communication with and involvement of all relevant stakeholders in transition and partnership processes by developing a targeted and phased communication plan with different stakeholder categories and groups (*Ibidem*, p. 127–129, 133–134).

The Evaluation of Selected Finland’s Country Strategies and Country Strategy Approach for Development Cooperation with Focus on Fragile Contexts highlights valuable results achieved through the Country Strategy approach in fragile contexts (Betts et al., 2020). For example, even though no progress in formal peace negotiations in Syria had been made, the use of International Impartial and Independent Mechanisms for assessing violations of international law was strengthened, and inclusive intra-Syrian dialogues and increasing the number of women participants was supported. In Afghanistan, demonstrable results in strengthened transparency and accountability of the Ministry of Interior payroll (LOFTA) were observed. (*Ibidem* pp. 58–59) However, the results have been individualised and fragmented and not steered by a clear fragility reduction agenda.

The report notes that Finland strongly articulated human rights concerns from a principled perspective within its policy dialogue and informal consultations. However, programmatic attention to human rights concerns was unsystematic, and attention to the International Humanitarian Principles, Do No Harm and Accountability to Affected Populations within humanitarian assistance varied. It is also noted that “a clear conceptual approach to state-building was lacking and funded programmes lacked a consistently medium or longer-term view in their designs”. (*Ibidem* p. 73, 76). Results on CCOs in interventions had mostly focused on inclusion of women and girls (*Ibidem*, 2020 p. 14). The evaluation recommendations included the need to enhance the technical rigour of Country Strategies in fragile situations, including enhancement of their analytical basis with strong attention to risks (*Ibidem*, p. 85–86). Also, ensuring more rigorous HRBA application was recommended (*Ibidem*, p. 88).

The Review of Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland Support to Human Rights INGOs covering the period 2022–2024 highlights that MFA’s support had enabled INGOs to address long-term human rights challenges while retaining the flexibility to respond to rapidly changing contexts, particularly in fragile settings. The INGO interventions had successfully elevated local human rights concerns into regional and international policy frameworks, effectively leveraging international mechanisms to address grassroots challenges. In addition to financial support, the MFA acted as a valuable partner through continuous dialogue and information sharing with INGOs. (Ödemark & Tran-Nguyen, 2026)

The review found that the INGO interventions had strengthened the capacities of human rights defenders, communities, and local organisations. They strengthened local actors’ engagement with duty-bearers, including national or local public authorities and companies, by facilitating their



interaction. Robust documentation, research, and reporting underpinned advocacy across all levels, and MFA support facilitated strategic organisational and movement strengthening among INGOs and partners. (*Ibidem*, pp. 30–38) The review concludes that INGOs have, through their engagement with local HRDs and civil society organisations and groups, enabled meaningful movement building and strengthened the global human rights system by providing technical expertise and promoting local participation (*Ibidem*, p. 43)

The review recommends MFA to sustain its support to Human Rights INGOs. MFA should more strategically articulate and leverage this funding envelope and use it for reinforcing a locally responsive global human rights system that supports movement strengthening, safeguards civic space, and enhances complementarities with Finnish NGOs and other funding channels. This will help sustain Finland's strong reputation as an effective supporter of international human rights grounded in local lived realities. (*Ibidem*, pp. 45–46).



Annex 6: Portfolio analysis

A portfolio analysis on MFA-funded interventions contributing to the priority area of “Peaceful democratic societies” (PPA3), covering the sub-themes of “Peaceful Societies”, “Institutions & Good Governance”, “Participation & Civil Society”, and “DRM” was conducted the following categories:

- (iv) All funding decisions during the years 2015-2022 contributing to PPA 3: all interventions with PPA3 as a primary or secondary priority and with at least some relevance to the above-noted sub-themes (534 interventions)¹¹
- (v) Within the above-mentioned (i), funding decisions contributing to the sub-themes of “Institutions & Good Governance” and/or “Participation & Civil Society” (394 interventions)
- (vi) Within the above-mentioned (ii), funding decisions excluding interventions with a budget below €125 000 (251 interventions).

It is noted that all these categories include interventions that also contribute to other PPAs. For example, many multi-country CSO interventions receiving programme support include components that have directly contributed to other PPAs outside the focus of this evaluation (MFA, 2020).¹²

During the period 2015-2022, the MFA approved in total €1046.0 million for interventions solely or partly contributing to the themes of the current policy priority area on “Peaceful Democratic Societies”. Out of this amount, €692.8 million were allocated to interventions with at least some relevance to the sub-themes of “Institutions & Good Governance”, and “Participation & Civil Society”, including €686.4 million to interventions with a budget above €125 000. However, it is important to note that with the available data it is not possible to calculate what proportion of this funding is specifically allocated to PPA3-related elements within the supported interventions.

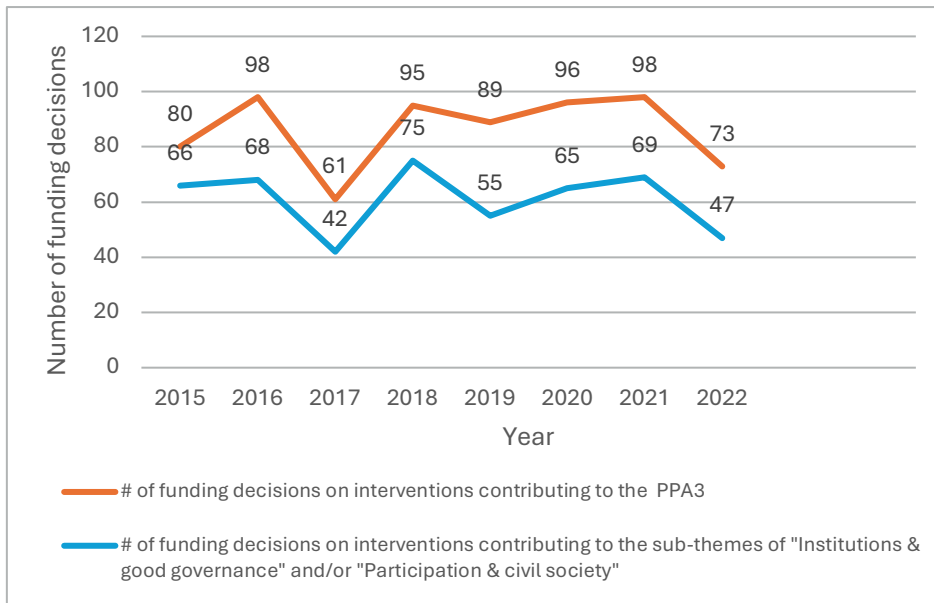
The analysis shows **fluctuation both in the number of funding decisions and especially the levels of approved funding** per year (Figures 8 and 9). The number of funding decisions related to the PPA3 has varied between 61 (in 2017) and 98 (in 2016 and 2021), while the number of decisions related to the core scope of this evaluation has varied between 42 (in 2017) and 75 (in 2018). At the same time, the levels of approved funding have fluctuated more significantly. The lowest total annual allocations have been €48.5 million for the whole PPA3 and €33.6 million for the interventions within the evaluation core focus in 2017, while the highest allocations that were made in 2021 were almost 6 times higher (Figure 9). While external factors, such as changes of government, have affected these trends, there are also other contributing factors. For example, the peaks in 2018 and 2021 are at least partly related to the Finnish CSOs’ programme support funding decisions (Figure 8).

¹¹ The criteria for assessing the level of relevance are presented in Annex 3 of this report.

¹² MFA’s own administrative costs, other activities funded as administrative costs, subscription fees, communication activities, global education projects in Finland, evaluations, as well as individual activities such as support to country visits or training events have been excluded from the analysis. Also, interventions reported under the PPA3 in MFA statistics without any clear linkage to the thematic scope of this evaluation e.g. due to absence of more suitable other PPAs have been excluded from the analysis. Core funding to UN Agencies and replenishments to financial development institutions have also been excluded from the quantitative portfolio analysis, but related partnerships are reflected the qualitative analysis of the evaluation.

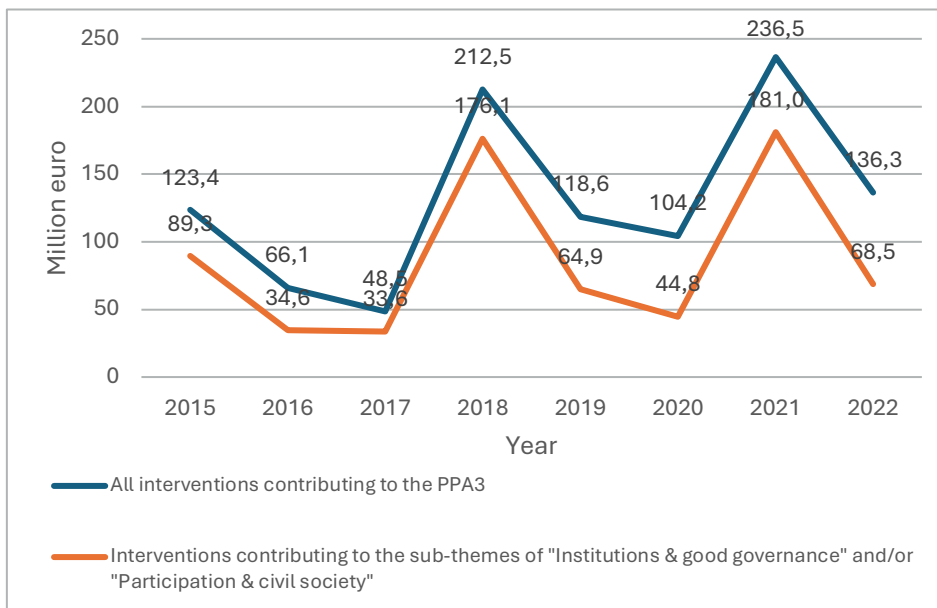


Figure 8: Number of funding decisions per year



Source: Evaluation team's elaboration based on MFA data on funding decisions and OpenAid data.

Figure 9: Total funding approved per year

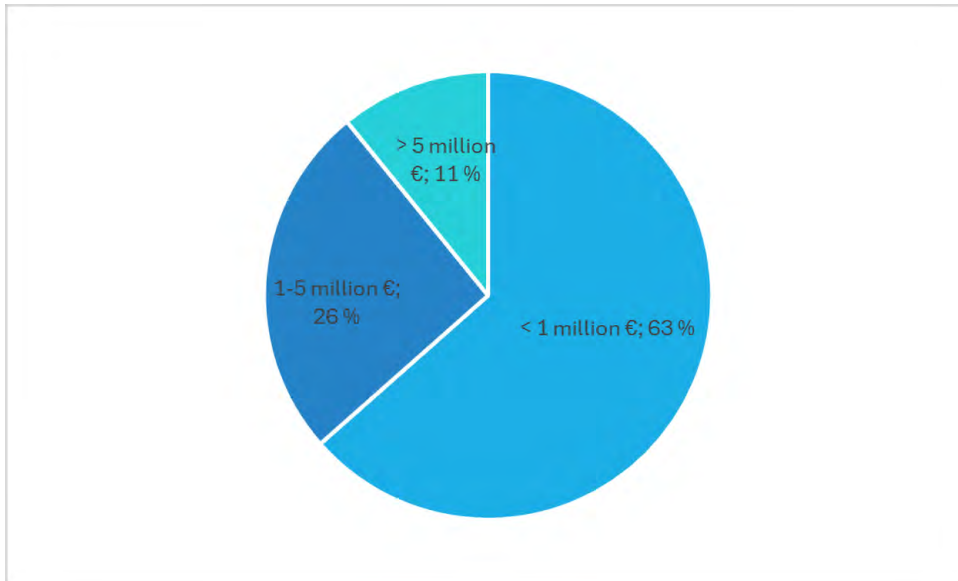


Source: Evaluation team's elaboration based on MFA data on funding decisions and OpenAid data.

Small to medium-sized projects have formed a major share of the funded interventions. 63% of the interventions contributing to the PPA3 as a whole and 67% of those contributing to the sub-themes of "Institutions & Good Governance" and "Participation & Civil Society" have had a total budget below €1 million. Only 10-11 % of the funded interventions have had total budgets exceeding €5 million. (Figures 10 and 11).

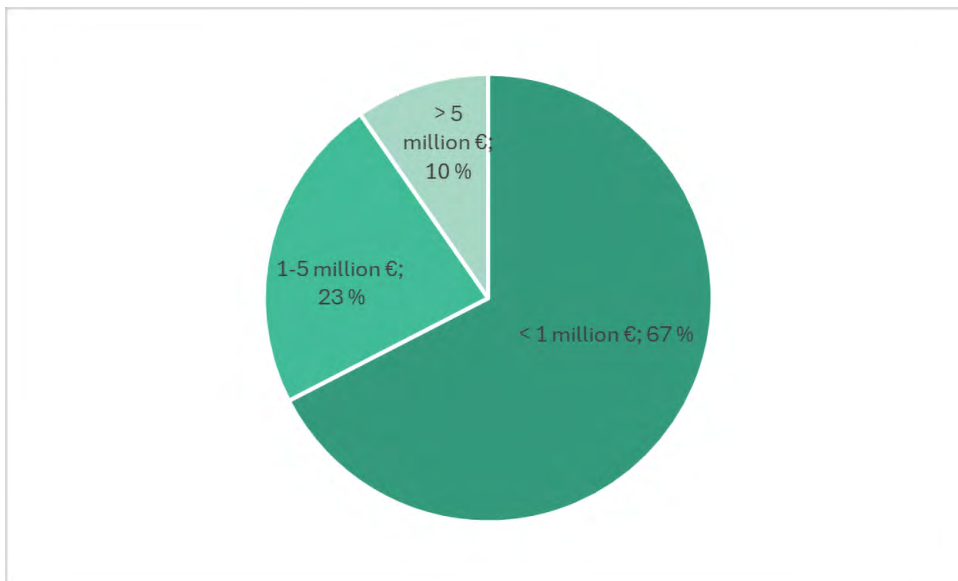


Figure 10: Distribution of the interventions contributing to PPA3 per funding bracket (N=534)



Source: Evaluation team's elaboration based on MFA data on funding decisions and OpenAid data.

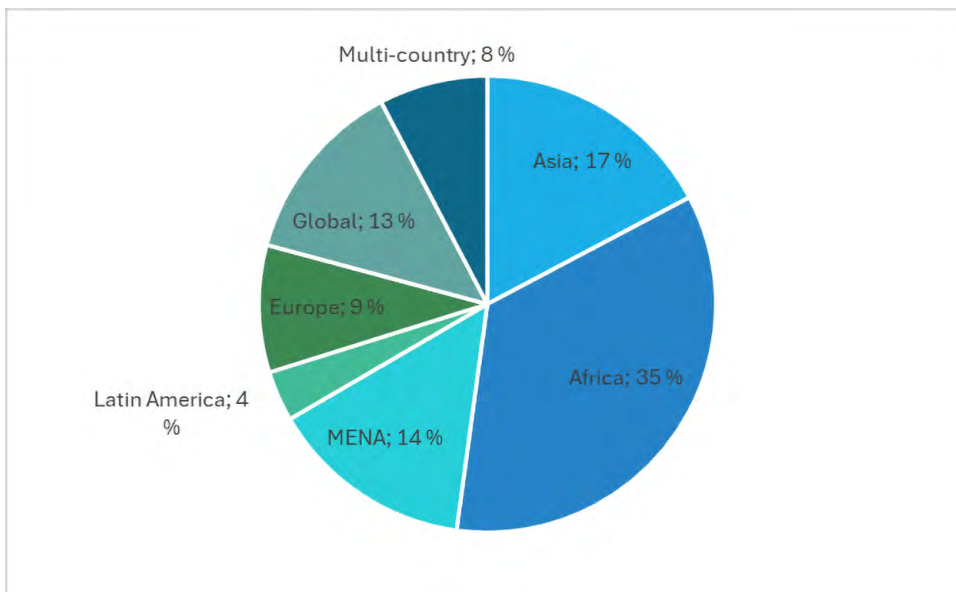
Figure 11: Distribution of the interventions contributing to the sub-themes of "Institutions & Good Governance" and "Participation & Civil Society" per funding bracket (n=394)



Source: Evaluation team's elaboration based on MFA data on funding decisions and OpenAid data.

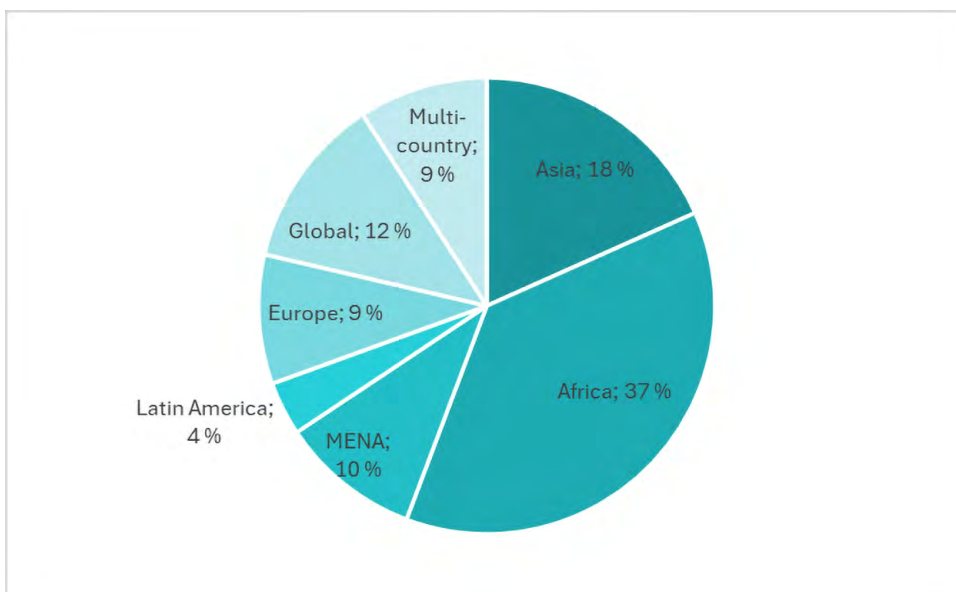
In all three categories analysed, the most significant share, **over one third of interventions, has been implemented in Africa**, while 17-18 % of interventions have been implemented in Asia (Figures 7, 8 and 9). A significant part of the interventions with a budget above €125 000 contributing to the sub-themes of "Institutions & Good Governance" and "Participation & Civil Society" are implemented at the global level (19 %) through partnerships with INGOs and international organizations or in multiple countries in two or more regions (15 %) especially through programme support to Finnish CSOs (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Geographic distribution of all interventions contributing to PPA3 (N=534)



Source: Evaluation team's elaboration based on MFA data on funding decisions and OpenAid data.

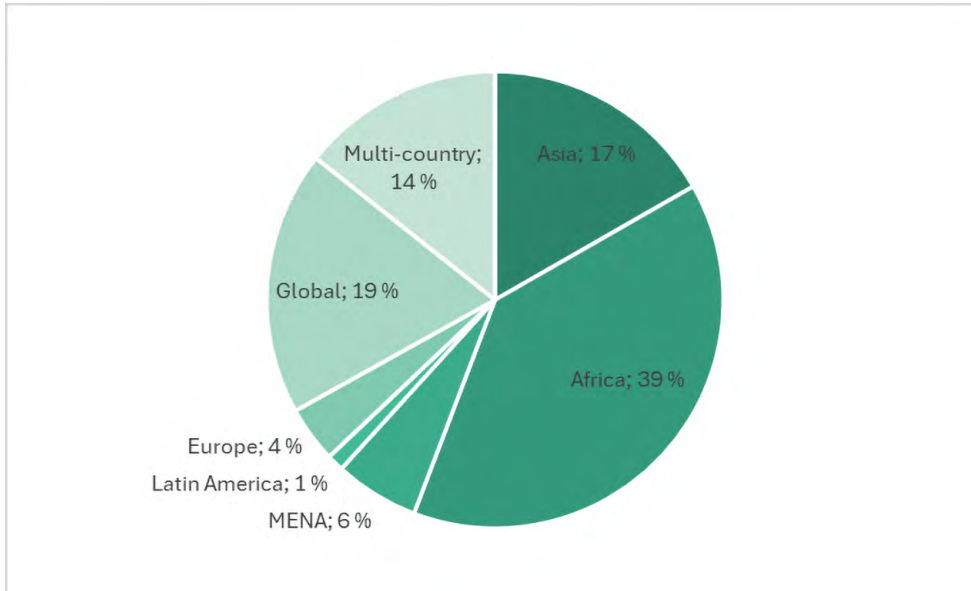
Figure 13: Geographic distribution of all interventions contributing to the sub-themes of "Institutions & Good Governance" and "Participation & Civil Society" (n=394)



Source: Evaluation team's elaboration based on MFA data on funding decisions and OpenAid data.



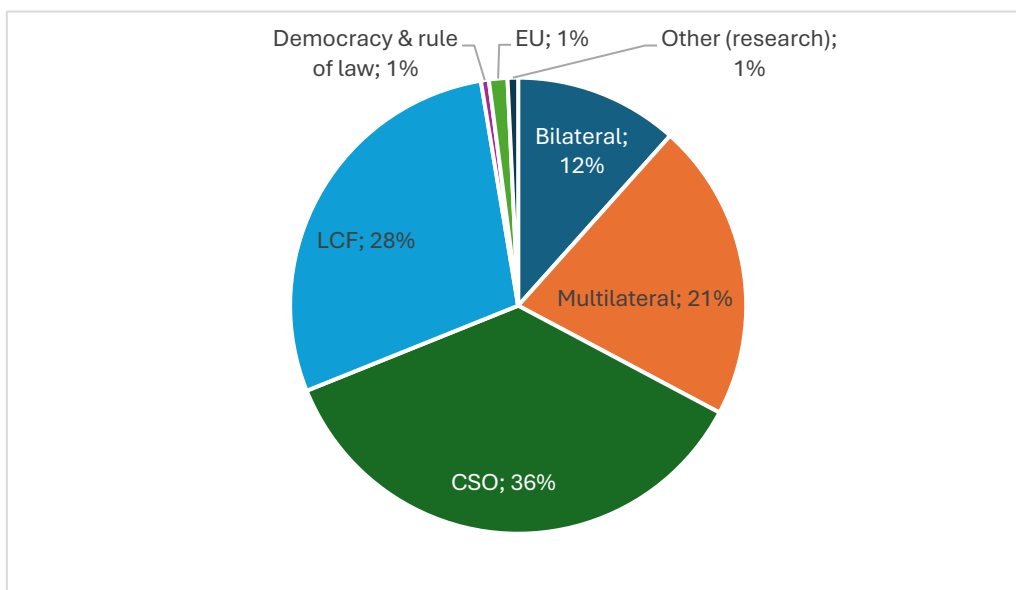
Figure 14: Geographic distribution of the interventions contributing to the sub-themes of “Institutions & Good Governance” and “Participation & Civil Society” with a budget above €125 000 (n=251)



Source: Evaluation team’s elaboration based on MFA data on funding decisions and OpenAid data.

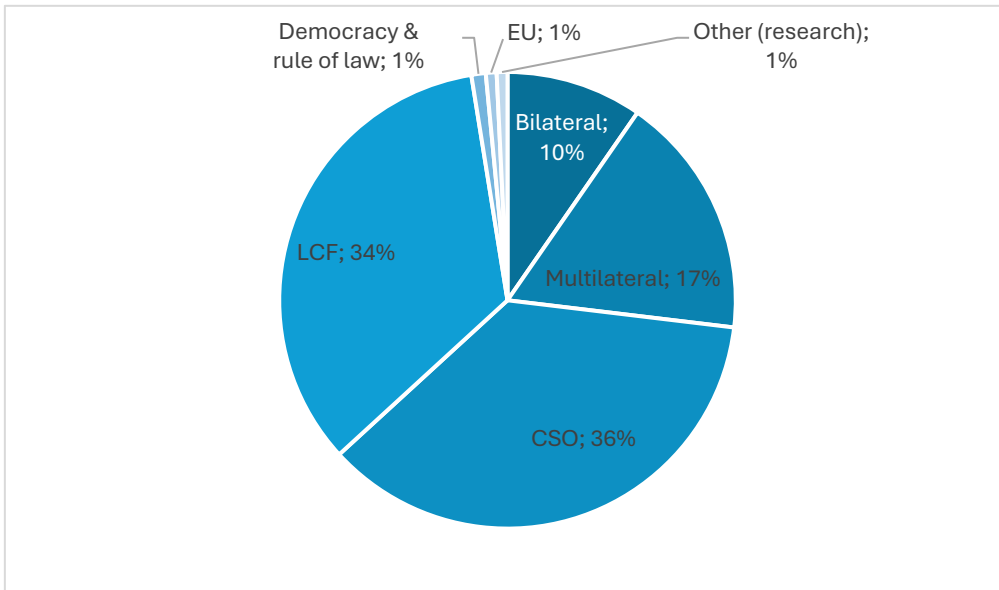
Support for CSOs is strongly represented in the whole portfolio. 36% of all interventions contributing to PPA3 have received CSO support, including project, programme, or core funding to Finnish and international NGOs, and 28 % are supported with LCF, LCF-funded projects being largely implemented by local CSOs in MFA partner countries (Figure 10). This emphasis is also reflected in the interventions contributing to the sub-themes of “Institutions & Good Governance” and/or “Participation & Civil Society”, and half of the related interventions with a budget exceeding €125 000 have received CSO support (Figures 11 and 12). This difference is due to the generally small size of LCF projects. Also, multilateral and bilateral funding play an important role in MFA’s support to the PPA3 as a whole and the sub-themes of “Institutions & Good Governance” and “Participation & Civil Society” (Figure 10 and 11).

Figure 15: Distribution of all interventions contributing to PPA3 per funding instrument (N=534)



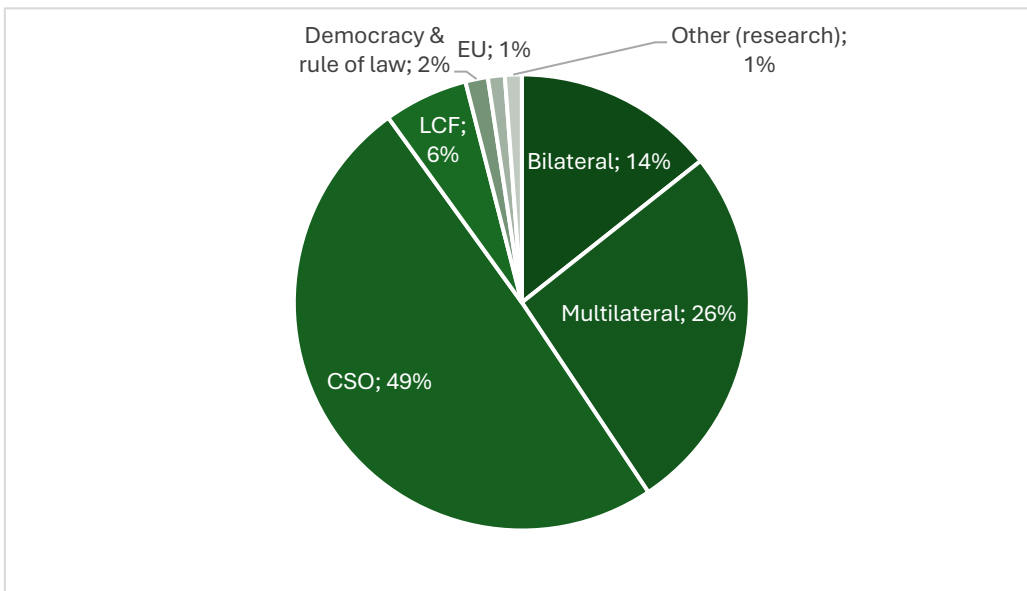
Source: Evaluation team’s elaboration based on MFA data on funding decisions and OpenAid data.

Figure 16: Distribution of all interventions contributing to the sub-themes of “Institutions & Good Governance” and “Participation & Civil Society” per funding instrument (n=394)



Source: Evaluation team’s elaboration based on MFA data on funding decisions and OpenAid data.

Figure 17: Distribution of the interventions contributing to the sub-themes of “Institutions & Good Governance” and “Participation & Civil Society” with a budget above €125 000 per funding instrument



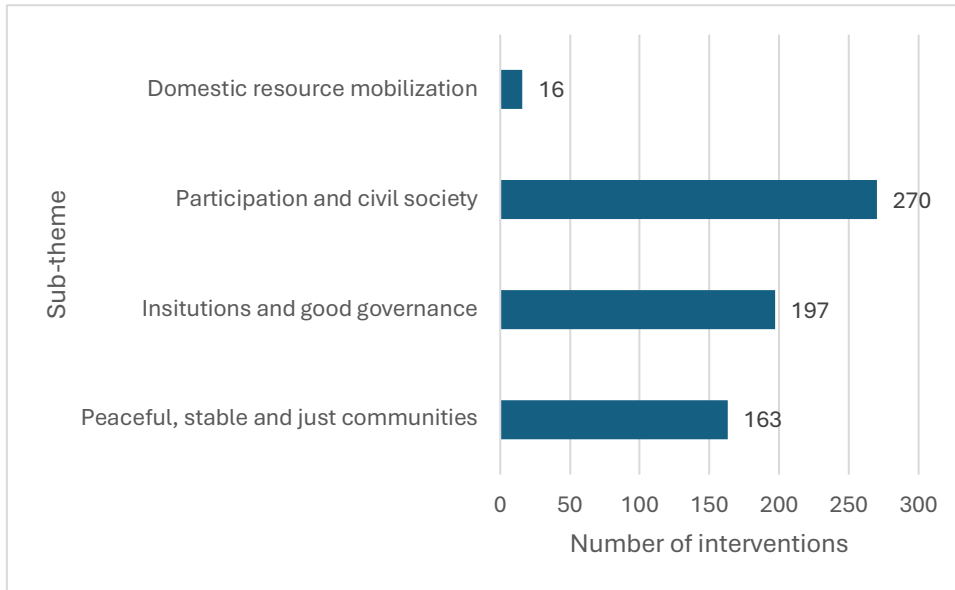
Source: Evaluation team’s elaboration based on MFA data on funding decisions and OpenAid data.

The large share of interventions implemented by CSOs is also reflected in the distribution of funded interventions per sub-theme. An analysis conducted based on brief project descriptions indicates that almost half of the interventions contributing to the PPA3 as a whole have been at least to some extent related to the sub-theme of “Participation & civil society” (Figure 13). This trend is also reflected in the interventions within the evaluation core scope (Figure 14). The number of interventions contributing to the sub-theme of “DRM” is rather small.



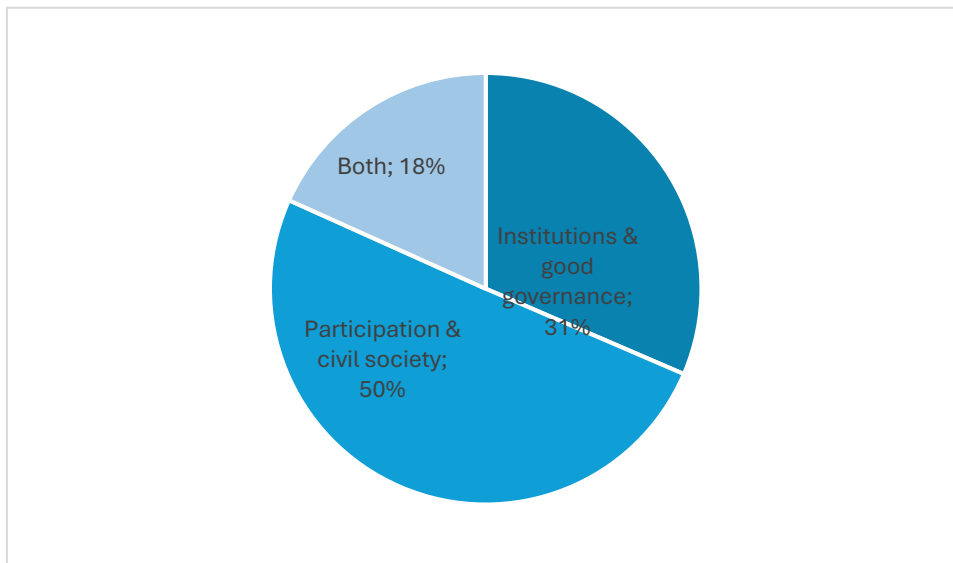
An important share of the interventions has contributed to several sub-themes of the PPA3. The rough analysis on the interventions with a budget exceeding €125 000 within the core focus of this evaluation indicates that over one fifth of the interventions contribute both to the sub-theme of “Institutions & Good Governance” and “Participation & Civil Society” (Figure 15). Furthermore, several of interventions contributing to one or two of these sub-themes also contribute to the sub-themes of “Peaceful Societies” and/or “DRM”.

Figure 18: Number of interventions contributing to each sub-theme



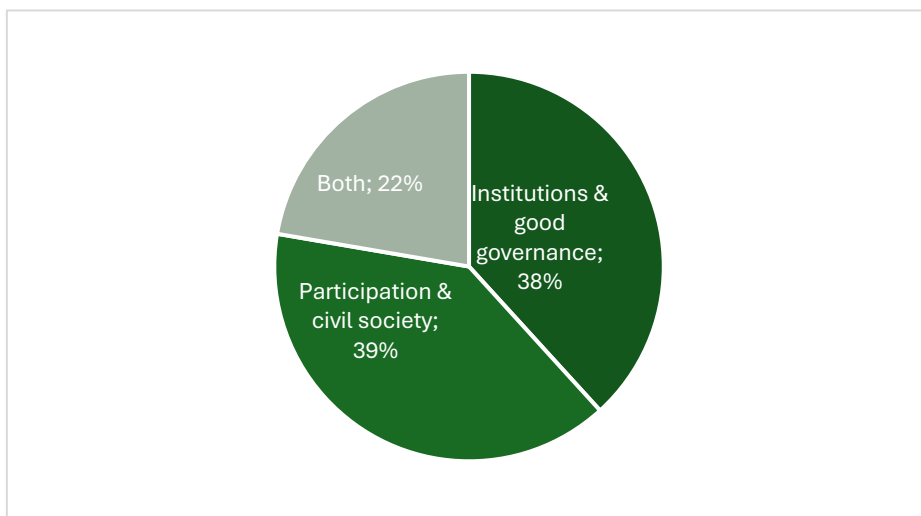
Source: Evaluation team’s elaboration based on MFA data on funding decisions and OpenAid data.

Figure 19: Distribution of the interventions per the sub-themes of “Institutions & Good Governance” and “Participation & Civil Society” (n=394)



Source: Evaluation team’s elaboration based on MFA data on funding decisions and OpenAid data.

Figure 20: Distribution of the interventions with a budget above € 125 000 per the sub-themes of “Institutions & Good Governance” and “Participation & Civil Society” (n=251)



Source: Evaluation team's elaboration based on MFA data on funding decisions and OpenAid data.



Annex 7: List of interviewees

Positions and Organisations Interviewed

MFA FINLAND AND FINLAND'S EMBASSIES		
1	Director	Unit for Civil Society
2	Team leader	Unit for UN Development Issues
3	Desk officer, UNFPA, UNDP, UNOPS	Unit for UN Development Issues
4	Desk officer, Multilateral development banks	Unit for Development Finance and Private Sector Cooperation
5	Senior Adviser, Development Policy	Unit for Human Rights Policy
6	Senior Specialist, Development Policy, Nepal	Unit for South Asia and Southeast Asia
7	Senior Specialist, Development Policy, Nepal	Unit for South Asia and Southeast Asia
8	Senior Specialist, Development Policy, Afghanistan and Central Asia	Unit for South Asia and Southeast Asia
9	Senior Specialist. Senior Adviser, Development Policy	Deputy Director General, Asia and Oceania
10	Senior Specialist. Development Policy	Unit for Eastern and Southern Africa, Horn of Africa Team
11	Team leader	Unit for the Middle East and the Gulf
12	Team leader, Eastern partnership (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Belarus)	Unit for Eastern Europe
13	Senior Adviser, Development Policy Regional Cooperation, Ukraine	Unit for Eastern Europe
14	Head of Cooperation	Embassy of Finland in Addis Abeba, Ethiopia
15	Coordinator, Development Cooperation Good governance	Embassy of Finland in Maputo, Mozambique
16	Senior Adviser, Development Policy	Embassy of Finland in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
17	Coordinator of local development cooperation projects	Embassy of Finland in Bucharest, Romania
18	Senior Specialist, Kenya affairs	Embassy of Finland in Nairobi, Kenya
19	Head of mission	Embassy of Finland in Nairobi, Kenya
20	Senior Adviser, Development Policy	Deputy Director General
21	Senior Specialist, Development Policy	Unit for Civil Society
22	Former Head of Mission	Embassy of Finland in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
OTHER FINNISH ORGANISATIONS		
23	Director	Rule of Law Centre, University of Helsinki
24	Secretary General	Development Policy Committee
25	Team Leader, Ethiopia	Niras Finland



UN		
26	Team Leader, Public Effectiveness and Responsive Institutions Cluster	UNDP in the Kyrgyz Republic
27	Expert	UNDP in the Kyrgyz Republic
28	Expert	UNDP in the Kyrgyz Republic
29	Project Analyst	UNDP in the Kyrgyz Republic
30	Chief Technical Advisor	UNDP in Ethiopia
31	Senior Programme Advisor	UN Women Myanmar and UN Women Kenya
32	Programme Manager	UN Women Tanzania
OTHER INTER-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS		
33	Head of International IDEA Myanmar Programme	International IDEA
34	Project Co-ordinator	OSCE ODIHR – International cooperation section
FINNISH CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS		
35	Project Specialist, East Africa and Nepal	Foundation for Media and Development (Vikes)
36	Project Specialist, Central America	Foundation for Media and Development (Vikes)
37	Executive Director	Taksvärkki – Operation a Day's Work
38	Team Leader, Senior Adviser	KIOS Foundation
39	Adviser for Grant Making Programme in South Asia	KIOS Foundation
40	Human Rights Specialist, Development Manager	Deaconess Foundation
41	Project Manager	Kalevi Sorsa Foundation
42	Programme Manager	Abilis Foundation
43	Director, Advocacy and Learning	Fingo Finnish Development NGOs
44	Executive Director	Demo Finland
INTERNATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS		
45	Director Programs & Administration	DefendDefenders
46	Director of Development & Operations	Front Line Defenders
47	Institutional Grants Manager	Front Line Defenders
48	Executive Director	Stichting Onderzoek Multinationale Ondernemingen (SOMO)
ORGANISATIONS IN PARTNER COUNTRIES		
49	Acting Executive Director	Legal and Human Rights Centre in Tanzania
50	Executive Director	Instituto Mozambicano Para Democracia Multipartidária
51	Scientific Director	Instituto des Estudos Sociais e Económicos
52	CEO	UONGOZI Institute



NEPAL		
53	Programme Director (Nepal)	Interpedia
54	Vice Chair	Water Finns
55	Country Director (Nepal)	FELM
56	Programme Manager	LSV / Physicians for Social Responsibility – Finland
57	Development Manager	Finnish Red Cross
58	Head of Cooperation	Embassy of Finland, Kathmandu, Nepal
59	Special Adviser, Natural Resource Management and Climate Resilience	Embassy of Finland, Kathmandu, Nepal
60	Senior Specialist, Education	Embassy of Finland, Kathmandu, Nepal
61	Special Adviser, Education and Human Rights	Embassy of Finland, Kathmandu, Nepal
62	Coordinator, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion, WASH	Embassy of Finland, Kathmandu, Nepal
63	Development Cooperation Coordinator, Human Rights	Embassy of Finland, Kathmandu, Nepal
64	Board Member	National Human Rights Commission
65	Executive Director	Environmental Camps for Conservation Awareness (ECCA), partner for Taksvärkki
66	Country Director, Nepal	Finn Church Aid
67	President	Federation of Nepali Journalists
68	Director for Asia and Pacific Region	International Commission of Jurists
69	Project Officer	International Commission of Jurists
70	MEL Specialist	International Commission of Jurists
71	Secretary	LAHURNIP (Lawyers' Association for Human Rights of Nepalese Indigenous Peoples), partner of KIOS
72	Chairperson	LAHURNIP (Lawyers' Association for Human Rights of Nepalese Indigenous Peoples), partner of KIOS
73	Director	LAHURNIP (Lawyers' Association for Human Rights of Nepalese Indigenous Peoples), partner of KIOS
74	Programme Assistant	LAHURNIP (Lawyers' Association for Human Rights of Nepalese Indigenous Peoples), partner of KIOS
75	Vice-chair	LAHURNIP (Lawyers' Association for Human Rights of Nepalese Indigenous Peoples), partner of KIOS
76	Programme Coordinator	LAHURNIP (Lawyers' Association for Human Rights of Nepalese Indigenous Peoples), partner of KIOS
77	President	Nepal Bar Association
78	Vice-president	Nepal Bar Association
79	Executive Committee Member	Nepal Bar Association
80	Executive Committee Member	Nepal Bar Association
81	Secretary General	Nepal Bar Association
82	Head of Programmes	Nepal Bar Association



83	Chairman	CAHURAST-Nepal, partner for FELM
84	Project Coordinator	CAHURAST-Nepal, partner for FELM
85	Staff member	CAHURAST-Nepal, partner for FELM
86	Staff member	CAHURAST-Nepal, partner for FELM
87	Head of Programme, Nepal	International IDEA
88	Joint Secretary	Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration (MoFAGA)
89	Senior Divisional Engineer	Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration (MoFAGA)
90	Senior Divisional Engineer	Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration (MoFAGA)
91	Section Officer	Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration (MoFAGA)
92	Section Officer	Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration (MoFAGA)
93	Chief Technical Advisor	SUSWA
94	Deputy Team Leader	SUSWA
95	Field Specialist	SUSWA
96	GEDSI (Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion) Specialist	SUSWA
97	Communication and Visibility Officer	SUSWA
98	Programme Specialist, Gender Responsive Inclusive Governance Thematic Area	UN Women Nepal
99	Programme Coordinator	Abilis Foundation, Nepal
100	Executive Director	Center for Appropriate Technology Nepal (CATN), partner for WaterFinns
101	Senior Expert	Center for Appropriate Technology Nepal (CATN), partner for WaterFinns
102	Chief Technical Advisor / Team Leader	COWATER
103	Consultant for GEDSI & HRBA Strategy and Action Plan development	COWATER
104	Team Leader	CWISH, partner for Interpedia
105	Political Affairs Officer	Delegation of the EU to Nepal, Kathmandu
106	Deputy Head of Cooperation	Delegation of the EU to Nepal, Kathmandu
107	Senior Programme Manager	Delegation of the EU to Nepal, Kathmandu
108	Trainee	Delegation of the EU to Nepal, Kathmandu
109	Country Manager	Finnish Red Cross, Nepal and Bhutan
110	Deputy Minister	Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs
111	Programme manager	Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs
112	Executive Assistant	Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs
113	Deputy General	Department of Water and Sewerage Management



114	Project Coordinator	FEDO (Feminist Dalit Organization), partner for KIOS Foundation
115	Programme Manager	FEDO (Feminist Dalit Organization), partner for KIOS Foundation
116	Executive Director	FEDO (Feminist Dalit Organization), partner for KIOS Foundation
117	Specialised in criminal and constitutional law	GenZ activist
118	Secretariat Member specialised in communication and elections	GenZ Movement Representative at PM's Office
119	Youth leader and activist	GenZ activist
120	Chairperson	Informal Sector Service Centre INSEC
121	Head of Documentation Programme	Informal Sector Service Centre INSEC
122	Head of Advocacy	Informal Sector Service Centre INSEC
123	Senior Officer	Informal Sector Service Centre INSEC

In total, the evaluation team interviewed 103 informants, including 59 male and 64 female. To the best of the team's knowledge, no interviewee had another gender.



Annex 8: Key informant interview guidelines

Evaluation of Finnish support for democracy, rule of law (RoL) and human rights – with focus on Civil Society and Good Governance (2014-2024)

Semi-structured Data collection Interview Template – MFA Staff

Due to frequent rotation within the MFA, and the likelihood that interviewees have served both in Helsinki and in the field during the period under review, a single template is provided for interviewees in Embassies and in Helsinki.

INTERVIEWEE(S)	
Function(s)	
Date of the meeting	
Interviewer(s)	
Location	Online/Kathmandu/Other
In confidence/shareable	In Confidence

Introduction

Thank you very much for your time. My name is ... and I work for the consultancy company GOPA, which has been contracted by the Development Evaluation Unit of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (MFA) to conduct the evaluation of Finland’s support for democracy, rule of law and human rights, with focus on Civil Society and Good Governance.

The evaluation will inform the MFA on the relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of its support in these areas, in line with the various development policy and cooperation instruments over the period 2014-24. Secondly, the evaluation will provide recommendations to maximize the effectiveness and impact of the implementation of Finland’s support for democracy, rule of law and human rights in the future.

The aim of this interview is to gather your experience, perception, and opinions about the key shifts, successes, challenges, and the factors leading to them, in the Policy Priority Area “Peaceful Democratic Societies”, with particular focus on support to good governance and civil society, since



2024. Your contributions will be analysed, along with those of many other interviewees, and in view of rich documentary data. We appreciate your time and openness in support of this evaluation.

All team members have signed a non-disclosure commitment, and any discussions are fully confidential. You will not be quoted in an identifiable fashion at any point afterwards. Your name will be included in the list of people interviewed in an annex to the report, unless you prefer that it is not included (please indicate your preference now). After our discussion, the data will be analysed by the evaluation team. All non-public or confidential information will be used only for the purpose of this evaluation and will not be disclosed to third parties.

Request authorisation to take notes on the computer.

Questions

- 1. What is your role with regard to Finland's support to civil society and to good governance? With regard to the Policy Priority Area "Peaceful Societies" (PPA3) of the 2021 Development Policy?**
- 2. How has the division of labour in the MFA evolved with regard to these thematic areas, and how has this affected programming and delivery?**
- 3. In your opinion, how conducive to supporting good governance and civil society have the successive MFA policy documents proven? How conducive to the broader PPA 3?**

References if needed:

MFA, Ministry for Foreign Affairs democracy support policy, 2014

MFA, Report on Development Policy Extending Across Parliamentary Terms, 2021

MFA, Theories of Change and Aggregate Indicators for Finland's Development Policy, 2023

Finnish Government, Government report on Finnish foreign and security policy, 2024

Finnish Government, Report on International Economic Relations and Development Cooperation, 2024

- 4. How relevant to persisting and emerging needs and challenges would you say the MFA's programming and design has been, in the areas of good governance and civil society support? In the broader PPA3? Any examples where adaptation has worked better/worse?**
- 5. How have you consulted with stakeholders, particularly CSOs (local, Finnish, international), Governments, women/men, youth, persons with disabilities, and marginalised groups, during your own design and programming activities for good governance and civil society? When defining your agenda for dialogue with national or international partners? During the delivery of projects (if applicable)? While advising your colleagues about these thematic areas?**
- 6. What are the most significant changes you have observed in the areas of democracy, human rights and rule of law, respectively, which Finland's support has contributed to?**



Prompt if necessary, depending on interviewee's profile: legislative changes; policy changes; changes in the practices and attitudes of duty bearers; changes in inclusive and effective public services delivery; changes in the space for civic participation and civil society; changes in terms of transparency and public oversight (including free media); changes in access to redress for violations.

- 7. How do you think these changes have affected, particularly CSOs (local, Finnish, international), Governments, women/men, youth, persons with disabilities, and marginalised groups?**
- 8. From your experience, what are the key success factors for Finland to elicit positive change in good governance and civil society?**
- 9. What distinguishes Finland's role in supporting good governance and civil society, in the context of multiple international partners?**
- 10. Any particularly successful/difficult examples where the MFA pooled or was a driving force among strategic allies (e.g. other international donors, national/ local champions of change)?**
- 11. What changes are needed, if any, to further increase the relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of Finland's support to democracy, human rights and rule of law?**

Snowball (if relevant)

Would you recommend us to interview someone in particular?

Any additional documents you may share?



Evaluation of Finnish support for democracy, rule of law (RoL) and human rights – with focus on Civil Society and Good Governance (2014-2024)

Semi-structured Data collection Interview Template – International partners

This template concerns multilateral organisations, other donors, Finnish NGOs and International NGOs.

INTERVIEWEE(S)	
Function(s)	
Date of the meeting	
Interviewer(s)	
Location	Online/Kathmandu/Other
In confidence/shareable	In Confidence

Introduction

Thank you very much for your time. My name is ... and I work for the consultancy company GOPA, which has been contracted by the Development Evaluation Unit of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (MFA) to conduct the evaluation of Finland’s support for democracy, rule of law and human rights, with focus on Civil Society and Good Governance.

The evaluation will inform the MFA on the relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of its support in these areas, in line with the various development policy and cooperation instruments over the period 2014-24. Secondly, the evaluation will provide recommendations to maximize the effectiveness and impact of the implementation of Finland’s support for democracy, rule of law and human rights in the future.

The aim of this interview is to gather your experience, perception, and opinions about the key shifts, successes, challenges, and the factors leading to them, in the Policy Priority Area “Peaceful democratic societies”, with particular focus on support to good governance and civil society, since 2024. Your contributions will be analysed, along with those of many other interviewees, and in view of rich documentary data. We appreciate your time and openness in support of this evaluation.

All team members have signed a non-disclosure commitment, and any discussions are fully confidential. You will not be quoted in an identifiable fashion at any point afterwards. Your name will be included in the list of people interviewed in an annex to the report, unless you prefer that it is not included (please indicate your preference now). After our discussion, the data will be analysed by the evaluation team. All non-public or confidential information will be used only for the purpose of this evaluation and will not be disclosed to third parties.

Request authorisation to take notes on the computer.



Questions

1. On what occasions have you cooperated with the Finnish MFA, or with a Finnish-funded project, and in which capacity?
2. How relevant would you say the project(s) were to the persisting and emerging needs in the areas of good governance and civil society? To the needs of CSOs (local, Finnish, international), Governments, women/men, youth, persons with disabilities, and marginalised groups?
3. How would you describe the consultations between your organisation, the Finnish MFA, and other stakeholders during the design of the project(s) and during its implementation, and has your opinion been considered?
4. What has this cooperation changed for your immediate beneficiaries?
5. In a broader sense, what were the most significant changes you have observed as a result of the project(s)?

Prompt if necessary, depending on interviewee's profile: legislative changes; policy changes; changes in the practices and attitudes of duty bearers; changes in inclusive and effective public services delivery; changes in the space for civic participation and civil society; changes in terms of transparency and public oversight (including free media); changes in access to redress for violations.

6. How do you think these changes have affected, particularly CSOs (local, Finnish, international), Governments, women/men, youth, persons with disabilities, and marginalised groups?
7. From your experience, what are the key success factors for this type of projects to bring about positive change in good governance and civil society?
8. What distinguishes Finland's role in supporting democracy, human rights and rule of law, in the context of multiple international partners?
9. Any particularly successful/difficult examples where the MFA pooled or was a driving force among strategic allies (e.g. other international donors, national/local champions of change)?

Snowball (if relevant)

Would you recommend us to interview someone in particular?

Any additional documents you may share?



Evaluation of Finnish support for democracy, rule of law (RoL) and human rights – with focus on Civil Society and Good Governance (2014-2024)

Semi-structured Data collection Interview Template – National and local partners

INTERVIEWEE(S)	
Function(s)	
Date of the meeting	
Interviewer(s)	
Location	Online/Kathmandu/Other
In confidence/shareable	In Confidence

Introduction

Thank you very much for your time. My name is ... and I work for the consultancy company GOPA, which has been contracted by the Development Evaluation Unit of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (MFA) to conduct the evaluation of Finland's support for democracy, rule of law and human rights, with focus on Civil Society and Good Governance.

The evaluation will inform the MFA on the relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of its support in these areas, in line with the various development policy and cooperation instruments over the period 2014-24. Secondly, the evaluation will provide recommendations to maximize the effectiveness and impact of the implementation of Finland's support for democracy, rule of law and human rights in the future.

The aim of this interview is to gather your experience, perception, and opinions about the key shifts, successes, challenges, and the factors leading to them, in the Policy Priority Area "Peaceful democratic societies", with particular focus on support to good governance and civil society, since 2024. Your contributions will be analysed, along with those of many other interviewees, and in view of rich documentary data. We appreciate your time and openness in support of this evaluation.

All team members have signed a non-disclosure commitment, and any discussions are fully confidential. You will not be quoted in an identifiable fashion at any point afterwards. Your name will be included in the list of people interviewed in an annex to the report, unless you prefer that it is not included (please indicate your preference now). After our discussion, the data will be analysed by the evaluation team. All non-public or confidential information will be used only for the purpose of this evaluation and will not be disclosed to third parties.

Request authorisation to take notes on the computer



Questions

1. **On what occasions have you cooperated with the Finnish Embassy in your country, or with a Finnish-funded project, and in which capacity?**
2. **How relevant would you say the project(s) were to the persisting and emerging needs in the areas of good governance and civil society in your country/ community? To the needs of CSOs (local, Finnish, international), Governments, women/men, youth, persons with disabilities, and marginalised groups?**

Prompt for CSOs: how did the project(s) adjust to any changing context for your and peer organisations, E.g. shrinking/expanding civic space?

3. **Have you been consulted during the design of the project(s) and during its implementation, and has your opinion been considered?**
4. **What has this cooperation changed for you? For your institution/organisation?**
5. **In a broader sense, what are the most significant changes you have observed as a result of the project(s)?**

Prompt if necessary, depending on interviewee's profile: legislative changes; policy changes; changes in the practices and attitudes of duty bearers; changes in inclusive and effective public services delivery; changes in the space for civic participation and civil society; changes in terms of transparency and public oversight (including free media); changes in access to redress for violations.

6. **How do you think these changes have affected, particularly CSOs (local, Finnish, international), Governments, women/men, youth, persons with disabilities, and marginalised groups?**
7. **From your experience, what are the key success factors for this type of projects to bring about positive change in good governance and civil society?**
8. **What distinguishes Finland's role in supporting democracy, human rights and rule of law, in the context of multiple international partners in your country?**
9. **Any particularly successful/difficult examples where the MFA pooled or was a driving force among strategic allies (e.g. other international donors, national/ local champions of change)?**

Snowball (if relevant)

Would you recommend us to interview someone in particular?

Any additional documents you may share?



Ministry for Foreign
Affairs of Finland