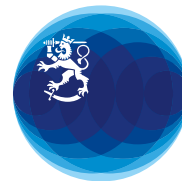


# 2025 Annual Report on Development Evaluation



Ministry for Foreign  
Affairs of Finland





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This report can be downloaded from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs website:  
<https://um.fi/development-cooperation-evaluation-reports-comprehensive-evaluations>

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# 1 Back to Basics: Organisational Accountability and Learning

The government term is nearing its end, with elections a year away. As always in development policy, the results and impacts achieved become visible only after several years. For this term, the policy guidelines for development cooperation were targeted in a new way. At the same time, the Ministry has restructured its organisation and division of labour, while the resources for its work have been significantly reduced—both in funding and personnel. In addition to these internal change processes, the international operating environment is undergoing a transformation that also affects the implementation and effectiveness of Finland's development policy.

In the midst of change, the core tasks of evaluation become increasingly important: supporting accountability on the one hand, and organisational learning on the other. Now we must examine how the various change factors affect results and the organisation's capacity to implement development policy. We need to work together to identify how, under these conditions and in this direction, we can achieve effective cooperation. If results cannot yet be demonstrated, we must at least assess whether the course is turning and to what extent objectives can be met. Evaluation evidence should support the preparation of new policy guidelines in the next government term as well as decisionmaking within the Ministry. The evaluation themes selected for 2026—trade, investment and development; women and girls; and the Institutional Cooperation Instrument (ICI)—are designed to meet these information needs. In addition, summaries are being prepared on evaluation findings related to Finnish agency and added value, as well as on resultsbased and knowledgebased management.

**In times of change, accountability and organizational learning become increasingly important. The key issue is how the drivers of change influence results and the organization's capacity to deliver development policy.**

Last year's review of Finland's support for digitalisation was well timed, as it supports future planning and implementation. The findings emphasise that Finland's most significant achievements stem from longterm commitment to digital development. The evaluation shows that support for digitalisation is particularly effective in advancing Sustainable Development Goals such as gender equality, economic growth and resilient infrastructure. Given the importance of the theme, we invited Aki Enkenberg, Chief Senior Specialist at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, to contribute a guest column reflecting on the promotion of digitalisation, technology and export.

To support the planning of an upcoming evaluation, the Development Evaluation Unit commissioned a synthesis of evaluations on the realisation of the rights of women and girls. The Unit also participated in and supported two joint evaluations: a Nordic joint evaluation of support to UN system and development bank trust funds, and an OECDled global joint evaluation of the development and humanitarian assistance response to the COVID19 pandemic.

From an international cooperation perspective, 2025 was an active year for the Development Evaluation Unit. In collaboration with International Development Evaluation Association [IDEAS](#), the [German Institute for Development Evaluation](#) (DEval) and [UNICEF's Evaluation Function](#), the



Unit produced an updated version of the guidance document on the use of country-led evaluations to advance the 2030 Agenda. With funding from the [Global Evaluation Initiative](#) (GEI), Tanzania's national evaluation system was strengthened by supporting the planning and implementation of a country-led sector evaluation using the newly updated guide. The Development Evaluation Unit also organised and chaired the annual two-day Nordic+ Heads of Evaluation Meeting in Helsinki in spring 2025.

In May 2025, we launched an AI-assisted tool at [OpenEval.fi](#). The platform serves as an open knowledge bank of development cooperation evaluations, enabling users to search and compile information related to Finland's development policy and cooperation with AI support. The service is the Ministry's first publicly available AI-assisted tool. It has attracted international interest, as similar tools are under development in several European countries. This tool is an important and long-anticipated step forward, enhancing the accessibility and usability of evaluation evidence and thereby strengthening accountability and organisational learning.

***Antero Klemola***

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



## 2 Op-Ed: Tracing the Long Arc of Finland's Digital Cooperation

**Aki Enkenberg**, Chief Senior Specialist, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland

Digitalization became part of development policy and cooperation at the beginning of this millennium, driven by technological perspectives. The era was characterized by an optimistic belief that free flow of information and new technologies could make the world a better place. Under the banner of ICT4D, projects sought to apply information and communication technologies developed in the global North to the needs of developing countries, as well as to support open and community-driven approaches to technology development. Solutions were designed for environments where resources were scarce and networks fragmented. Despite the inherently global nature of the internet, only a few companies were able to provide truly international digital services.

At the same time, the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS, 2003–2005) emerged as the first attempt to define objectives for leveraging technology in support of global development. Parallel to the WSIS process, Finland launched bilateral development cooperation initiatives in Southern Africa. These focused on innovation cooperation, information society development, and strengthening business activities in the ICT sector. The aim was to bridge the digital divide by enhancing local capacities.

During the 2010s, the spread of digital infrastructure and the rapid evolution of the digital economy transformed the operating environment. Development policy adopted a stronger emphasis on the private sector and private investments, reflected in the 2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development and in the Sustainable Development Goals. Network connectivity improved also in developing countries, and services offered by major US platform companies became global. The World Bank's 2016 World Development Report [Digital Dividends](#) emphasized that sustainable digital development is not possible without its analogue foundations: sound policies, legislation, institutions, and markets. Rather than focusing solely on the availability of connectivity, attention shifted to its affordability, quality, and relevance in people's everyday lives. By the end of the decade, the UN began renewing its digital agenda, eventually leading to the [Global Digital Compact](#) in 2025. At this stage, discussions were already centred on artificial intelligence.

Digital development is largely about concrete elements: cables, data centres, servers, end-user devices, and other infrastructure. All of these require substantial investments. Although the growth of the digital economy has been largely privately financed, there has also been a growing need for state-driven financing. China's Belt and Road Initiative triggered a geopolitical competition over infrastructure, to which Europe later responded through the [Global Gateway strategy](#)—both featuring strong digital pillars. In contrast, the geopolitical influence of the United States is based less on government-led investments and more on the global market dominance of its technology companies. The renewed focus on infrastructure has also highlighted the growing carbon footprint of digitalization.

**The aim of the UN's Global Digital Compact is to advance a human-rights-based digital future that supports the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.**



Development policy increasingly discusses the rise of transactional approaches, which is also evident in the digital sector. Financing is more often tied to the interests of donor countries or the participation of their companies in projects. This trend increases the role of multinational technology companies, unless viable local alternatives exist. Behind this transactional shift lie economic interests but also aspirations for stronger value-based engagement—for example, harmonizing digital regulation and defending human rights. At the same time, there is a risk that building local capacities may be deprioritized, even though it constitutes the foundation for sustainable development.

The long trajectory of Finland's digital cooperation reflects these global shifts in the operating environment. Finland's role has evolved from that of an early pioneer to one actor among many. The role of bilateral cooperation in this sector has narrowed, while the importance of multilateral and EU-implemented cooperation has grown. In recent years, private-sector collaboration and investments have gained significant prominence, including through development finance institutions and Finnfund. The involvement of Finnish actors and the use of Finnish expertise in digital development initiatives is now a mainstreamed objective.

[The review of Finland's digital cooperation](#) carried out in 2025 provides confidence that we have made the right choices along the way. Finland is a more influential actor at multilateral tables than its size would suggest, and Finnish values—such as gender equality—are visible on the global digital agenda. Our ability to initiate new activities is comparatively strong. Nevertheless, challenges remain. The assessment recommends strengthening results-based management, stakeholder cooperation, and policy coherence, as well as improving implementation capacity by delegating more responsibility to other public actors.

**Finland is a disproportionately influential actor in digital development, and Finnish values, such as gender equality, are visible internationally.**

The recent emphasis on [technology foreign policy](#) within Finland's foreign and security policy reflects an ambition to conduct more strategic and cross-government cooperation on international technology issues. Digital development objectives have been incorporated into the technology foreign policy priorities launched in 2025. The aim is to ground digital cooperation funding and activities more clearly in Finland's strengths and to align them with Finland's and the EU's external influence objectives. At the same time, societies, individuals, and the environment must be better protected from risks stemming from technological development.

Amid accelerating geopolitical competition, the relevance of the rules-based international system is also weakening. The digitalization-related goals agreed within the UN no longer guide countries' actions as they once did. New alliances and initiatives are emerging alongside them. In this landscape, the EU remains an essential anchor for Finland. [The EU's international digital strategy](#), published in 2025, envisions Europe as a more prominent global actor. Finland's decision to prioritize cooperation through the EU is therefore consistent. The EU's approach is value-driven yet pragmatic: digital partnerships with countries in the global South create new economic opportunities and support the European model of digital regulation.

In this rapidly changing environment, results-based management, evidence-informed decision-making, and the evaluation functions that support them are indispensable. Development cooperation increasingly involves close collaboration with the private sector and other external actors, requiring agility and openness from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. While states will continue to play a significant role as enablers of digital development, successful implementation increasingly depends on the broad expertise found within Finnish society and companies—expertise that must be effectively integrated into future efforts.

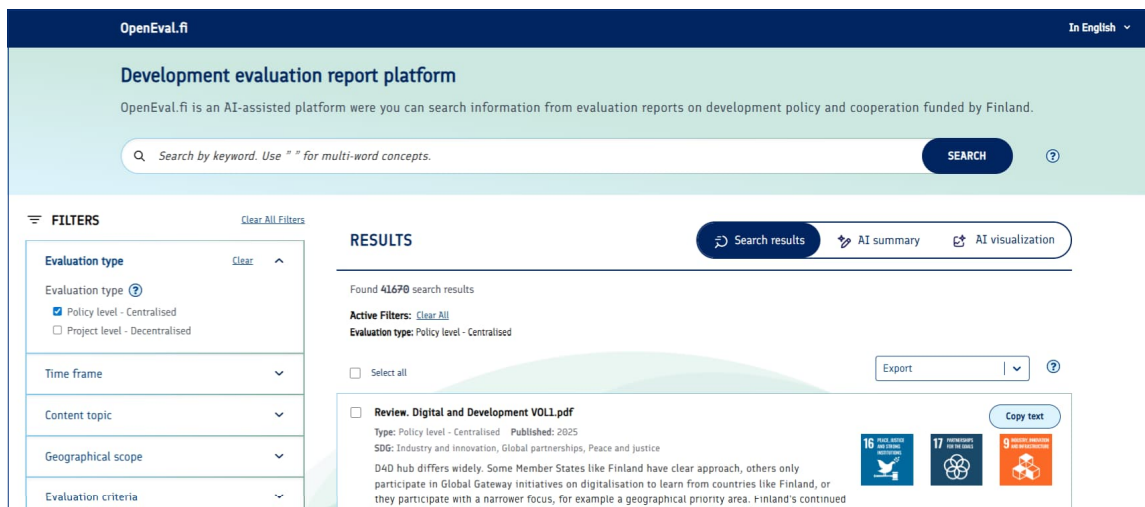


### 3 AI-Assisted Tool OpenEval

In May 2025, the Development Evaluation Unit launched [OpenEval](#), an AI-assisted tool that serves both the Ministry and domestic and international stakeholders. OpenEval is the Ministry's first AI-enabled public good, and it has significantly advanced the Ministry for Foreign Affairs' broader AI development efforts. The service functions as an open knowledge base for development evaluations, enabling users to search and compile information related to Finland's development policy and cooperation with the support of artificial intelligence. The tool contributes to the Ministry's and the wider government's digitalization and AI objectives.

**The AI-assisted OpenEval serves as an open, publicly accessible knowledge base for development evaluations.**

Development evaluations contain a vast amount of information. The new tool makes it easier to access this information through intelligent simultaneous searches. OpenEval supports, for example, officials who prepare projects, analyses, or various communication materials. With OpenEval, users can easily form comprehensive overviews of different thematic areas and, for example, search for outcome examples verified by evaluations by theme. The Development Evaluation Unit uses the tool in preparing the evaluation plan, in designing new evaluation assignments, and in annual reporting—of which this report provides an example.



OpenEval helps increase administrative transparency and opens Finland's development policy and cooperation to citizens and stakeholders. It is intended to complement other tools and data sources, such as the [OpenAid.fi](#) platform. The tool strengthens organizational learning and development. Lessons learned from the pilot have been actively shared within the Ministry's AI working group.

The Development Evaluation Unit was responsible for OpenEval's design and project management. The tool was developed in cooperation with the Ministry's IT specialists and the AI working group, and implemented in collaboration with CGI. These actors also formed a broader steering group overseeing the project. The process was carried out in a participatory manner and involved consultation with multiple stakeholders. Internal and external testers participated in the three-phase testing, and the tool was refined based on their feedback.



In addition to the launch event in June, the tool has been actively presented across the Ministry, including in internal trainings and during the Development Cooperation Results Day in August 2025. In September, the Development Evaluation Unit organized a webinar together with CGI for public sector actors on OpenEval and the use of AI in processing extensive text datasets. The webinar generated strong interest. In October, the Unit arranged internal training and guidance for the tool's rollout and presented it to the Expert Working Group of the Development Policy Committee. The annual Evaluation Day showcased the tool to domestic stakeholders in December 2025. The tool was widely communicated through both social media and traditional media channels.

Development of the tool will continue. The Development Evaluation Unit welcomes feedback.



## 4 Results of the Evaluations

### 4.1 Strategic Evaluations Completed in 2025

This chapter provides a concise overview of the objectives, findings, and recommendations of the strategic evaluations completed in 2025, as well as selected highlights of development policy results verified by the evaluations. [Reports of the evaluations conducted by the Development Evaluation Unit](#) are available on the Ministry for Foreign Affairs' website. [Project- and programme-specific evaluation reports](#) can also be found on the website, along with other evaluation-related materials such as the Evaluation Manual. Evaluation information is also available in a consolidated format through the publicly accessible OpenEval service, as explained above.

#### Review: Finland's Support for Digitalization

The [Digital and Development Review](#) assessed how Finland supported digitalization in its development policy and cooperation between 2018 and 2024, and what impact this support had on advancing the Sustainable Development Goals. The review provided an overview of the achievements and challenges of this cooperation and issued recommendations concerning Finland's role in international digital development.

The objective of the review was to generate information on future options for Finland's digital development cooperation and on the results achieved to date. It focused in particular on EU and other multilateral cooperation. According to the review, Finland's most significant achievements stem from its long-term commitment to digital development. Finland's support has played a meaningful role in advancing several Sustainable Development

Goals, particularly those related to gender equality, economic growth, and infrastructure. Support to UN and EU programmes—including the Global Digital Compact and Global Gateway—has been central. Finland's advocacy in multilateral cooperation has been strong, helping to advance key national priorities, such as gender equality and inclusion. These themes have been promoted through, for instance, the Generation Equality campaign and various international partnerships. Results have also been achieved at country level, for example through the digitalization of Ethiopia's land administration register. HAUS Development Centre and Finnfund play an important role in leveraging Finnish expertise.

**Finland's long-term support for digital development has played a significant role in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals.**

The review identified challenges in Finland's digitalization cooperation: the mobilization of small and medium-sized enterprises and Finland's visibility in multilateral cooperation. Further development of investment instruments and funding models remains necessary. The review recommended a more targeted, strengths-based strategic approach and increased visibility for Finnish expertise. It also called for improved incentives for Finnish actors and stronger dialogue and cooperation within Finland. In addition, recommendations included mainstreaming digital development into evaluations and analyses, preparing a capacity-development plan, and introducing a digital marker.



## Synthesis: The Rights of Women and Girls

The Development Evaluation Unit commissioned a synthesis of evaluation reports from 2015–2025 to compile existing evidence on gender equality, the rights of women and girls, and the rights of persons with disabilities in preparation for future evaluations.

Finland's added value in promoting the rights of women and girls has been rooted in our strong expertise in gender equality, non-discrimination and a human-rights-based approach, as well as in our ability to integrate these themes into other sectors such as education, climate and agriculture. We have been able to influence far beyond our size by effectively coordinating and leading other donors, advancing gender mainstreaming in multilateral organisations, and providing both technical expertise and flexible funding mechanisms in crisis situations.

**Finland has actively advanced the rights of women and girls. Its added value has been rooted in strong expertise and the ability to integrate these themes into sector-specific cooperation.**

Finland's credibility has been reinforced by our domestic achievements in gender equality and good governance, which have built trust among partners and enabled us to engage even in politically sensitive contexts. We have also worked actively with the Nordic countries and other like-minded donors, further strengthening our influence. Our long-term, consistent presence in partner countries has deepened relationships and made our policy engagement more sustainable.

Taken together, these factors have created significant added value for Finland—beyond what our financial contributions alone would suggest—and positioned us as a credible and impactful international advocate for gender equality and human rights.

The synthesis summarised the factors identified in evaluations that have either enabled or hindered progress toward gender equality.



ENABLERS	BARRIERS
<b>TECHNICAL FACTORS</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An early gender mainstreaming strategy and clear targets for women's participation.</li> <li>• Mobilisation of experts, such as gender and human rights specialists, strengthens programme quality and ensures adherence to principles.</li> <li>• Systematic support for women's leadership.</li> <li>• Collaboration with local religious and traditional leaders to prevent gender-based violence, female genital mutilation and child marriage.</li> <li>• Peer learning and study visits, such as the visit of Mozambican parliamentarians to Finland.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weak implementation of gender equality actions even when human rights are included at the design stage; gender strategies and action plans often remain incomplete.</li> <li>• Programmes may provide services to women and girls without strengthening their ability to claim their rights, limiting real impact.</li> <li>• Gender perspectives are missing or poorly integrated into monitoring and evaluation: gender targets are not set, and sex-disaggregated or otherwise disaggregated data is insufficient.</li> <li>• High turnover among project staff and government officials, combined with limited technical gender expertise, causes delays and weakens institutional memory and continuity.</li> </ul>
<b>STRUCTURAL FACTORS</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexible financing instruments enable rapid deployment of gender experts during crises.</li> <li>• Strategic cooperation with international organisations increases the impact of publications and initiatives, as well as funding for gender equality work.</li> <li>• Integration of cross-cutting objectives into core programmes strengthens participation and non-discrimination.</li> <li>• Long-term partnerships and staff continuity build trust and deepen impact.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget cuts reduce programme scope and sustainability; four out of nine bilateral programmes were discontinued, and the remaining ones faced additional reductions.</li> <li>• Delays in fund transfers from Finland and in partner countries' co-financing contributions hinder planning and implementation.</li> <li>• Limited human resources constrain Finland's influence in multilateral forums.</li> <li>• Gaps in coordination and harmonisation lead to fragmented actions and missed synergies.</li> </ul>
<b>CONTEXTUAL FACTORS</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political commitment and institutional frameworks in partner countries to advance gender equality.</li> <li>• Political stability and access to operational environments support long-term programming. Flexible models also work in fragile contexts.</li> <li>• Strong civil society networks and community structures provide effective platforms for delivering gender equality programmes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political instability and security risks complicate planning, prevent access to target areas, and may undermine earlier results frameworks.</li> <li>• Deeply rooted cultural and social norms restrict women's participation and slow progress, even when formal mechanisms exist.</li> <li>• Geographic and accessibility challenges, especially in remote areas, hinder achievement of objectives and, for example, the recruitment of women.</li> <li>• External crises, such as pandemics, shift attention away from gender equality and weaken efforts to prevent violence against women, even as risks increase.</li> </ul>

The report is internal. Its findings were presented to key ministry personnel and used in planning the evaluation commissioned on the topic.

### Joint evaluation: Nordic Trust Fund Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation was to assess whether pooled funds are effective channels for advancing Nordic development policy objectives, supporting the multilateral system, and achieving development results. The evaluation covered Nordic contributions to funds administered by the UN, the World Bank and the African Development Bank. The analysis focused on UN and World Bank funds supported by at least three Nordic countries, and African Development Bank funds supported by at least two Nordic countries during 2013–2023. A broader portfolio analysis covered the years 2004–2023.



The evaluation questions examined the Nordic countries' rationale for supporting the funds, the ways in which they participated in fund operations, and whether this engagement has been successful from a Nordic perspective. Where possible, the evaluation compared the support provided by the different countries and identified lessons from Nordic cooperation.

Conclusions: Nordic funding to pooled funds increased steadily over a long period, but this upward trend halted in 2022—only to rise again in 2023 due to Norway's major contribution to the World Bank's Ukraine trust fund. Support to the African Development Bank remained stable, though at a lower level. The analysis shows that multi-donor funds provided the Nordics with a useful mechanism for supporting the multilateral system while simultaneously advancing Nordic thematic and country-level priorities. Although the Nordics used pooled funds strategically, this support was generally not well aligned with the multilateral organisations' own strategies.

**Through multi-donor trust funds, the Nordic countries can support the multilateral system and advance Nordic thematic and country-level priorities.**

While the Nordic countries had achieved some successes together, they noted that in their policy-influence efforts they more often sought broader partnerships with like-minded countries rather than relying solely on Nordic cooperation. Despite their strong policy convergence on key themes and priorities, Nordic cooperation on pooled fund contributions and engagement within the funds remained limited. Support strategies varied between countries depending on their priorities and available human resources. In cases where fund managers' political role, convening power and scale were effectively utilised, the funds delivered mainly satisfactory results, with some examples of sustainable and transformative change. However, communicating results to national stakeholders proved difficult.

The evaluation shows that global and regional funds were particularly relevant and effective in advancing global public goods, and that they offered clear comparative advantages for fund-based support. The funds also naturally contributed to aid effectiveness and efficiency in development cooperation.

The recommendations emphasise the deliberate and strategic use of funds, taking into account their role in development financing and the need for more selective fund choices. The evaluation further recommends linking Nordic contributions more closely to multilateral organisations' strategies and policy dialogue with them. It highlights the need to map active fund support, update and prioritise commitments, and make systematic use of lessons learned—both positive and negative—regarding factors influencing fund effectiveness and impact.

The recommendations also encourage exploring opportunities to strengthen Nordic cooperation where it is appropriate and where it creates economies of scale, reduces administrative burden and promotes joint learning. In addition, the evaluation calls for improved communication on results achieved through pooled fund contributions to ensure that decision-makers and the public, both in the Nordic countries and in partner countries, are aware of the investments made.

## **Strategic Joint Evaluation of the International Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic**

EVA-11 participated in the COVID-19 Global Evaluation Coalition's [joint evaluation](#), which examined the international cooperation and humanitarian assistance provided in response to the COVID-19 crisis during 2020–2022. The evaluation focused on relevance, coherence, effectiveness, and the



efficient use of resources. It draws on an extensive evidence base, including case studies, interviews, financial flow analyses, and syntheses of previous evaluations.

A key finding was that, although resources were mobilised quickly, the targeting of assistance was not always effective or equitable. Existing financing channels enabled rapid response but were not always well suited to the specific needs of a pandemic. Approaches driven narrowly by national interest proved ineffective, whereas solutions grounded in international solidarity and reciprocity produced better outcomes.

Multilateral actors, such as UNICEF, WHO, and the wider UN system, played a central role. Their existing structures, agreements, and experience enabled a relevant, timely, and cost-effective crisis response. Several countries, including Finland, Sweden, Norway and the United Kingdom, supported these actors with flexible funding, thereby ensuring the complementarity of different financing modalities.

The Nordic countries intensified their cooperation early in the pandemic, which improved strategic alignment. According to the evaluation, Finland's Ministry for Foreign Affairs performed well even without pre-established crisis response models, but it would have benefitted from stronger preparedness, particularly in staff resource management and results monitoring.

Finland significantly increased its development assistance during the pandemic and responded to requests from both long-term and new partners. In Nepal, Finland played a notable role, as only a few EU member states maintain bilateral development cooperation there. During the crisis, cooperation with local civil society organisations proved especially important. The repatriation of staff from many countries complicated the consistent delivery of assistance and increased pressure on remaining personnel, yet operations continued, nonetheless.

The overall message of the evaluation is two-fold: international cooperation was largely able to respond to the acute needs of the pandemic quickly and effectively, but the crisis also exposed structural weaknesses that must be addressed in the future. Innovative approaches, strengthened collaboration, and flexible financing mechanisms proved particularly valuable.

**The evaluation finds that international cooperation during the COVID-19 pandemic responded to urgent needs largely quickly and effectively, but the crisis also exposed structural shortcomings.**

## 4.2 Highlights from evaluations

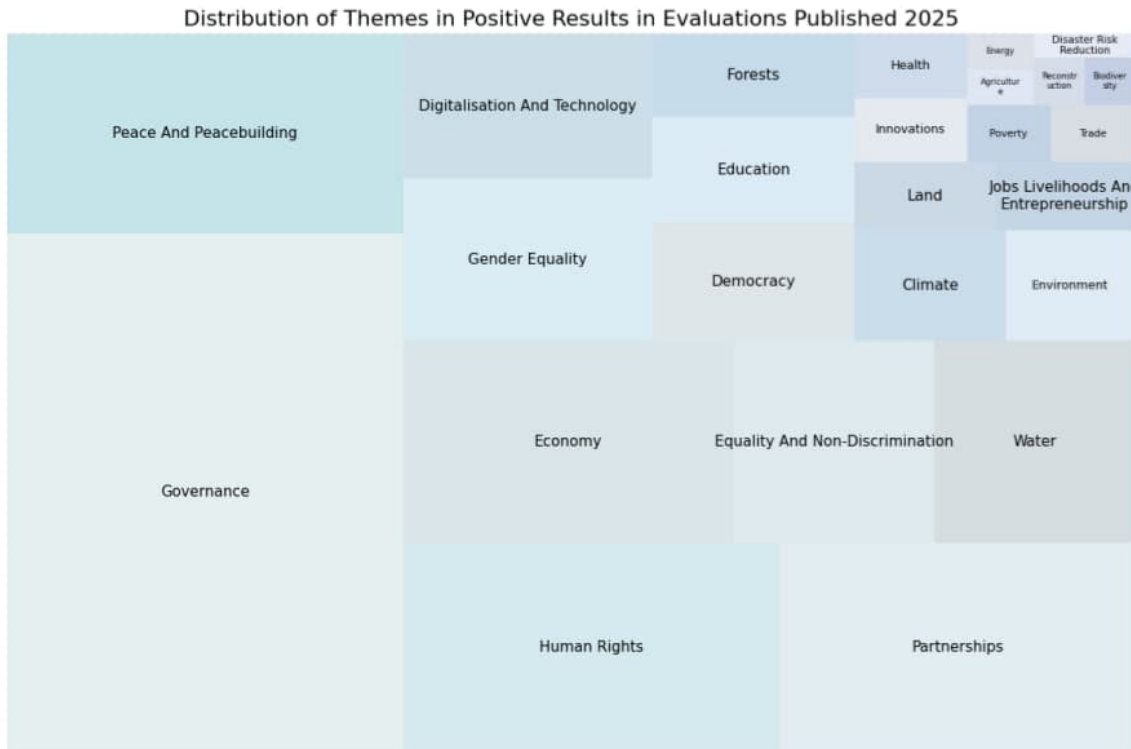
This section presents selected overarching findings from the evaluations published in 2025, as well as achievements and results verified in the evaluation reports published in 2024–2025, in line with Finland's development policy objectives and priority areas. Additional results can be found in the original evaluation reports and in the OpenEval.fi tool.

The content of the project, programme, and strategic evaluations published in 2025 and submitted to the OpenEval database by the reporting deadline highlighted results at the local and community levels, inclusiveness and participation, partnerships and stakeholder engagement, as well as contributions to reconciliation. This overall picture is partly influenced by the larger share of decentralised evaluation reports in the dataset.



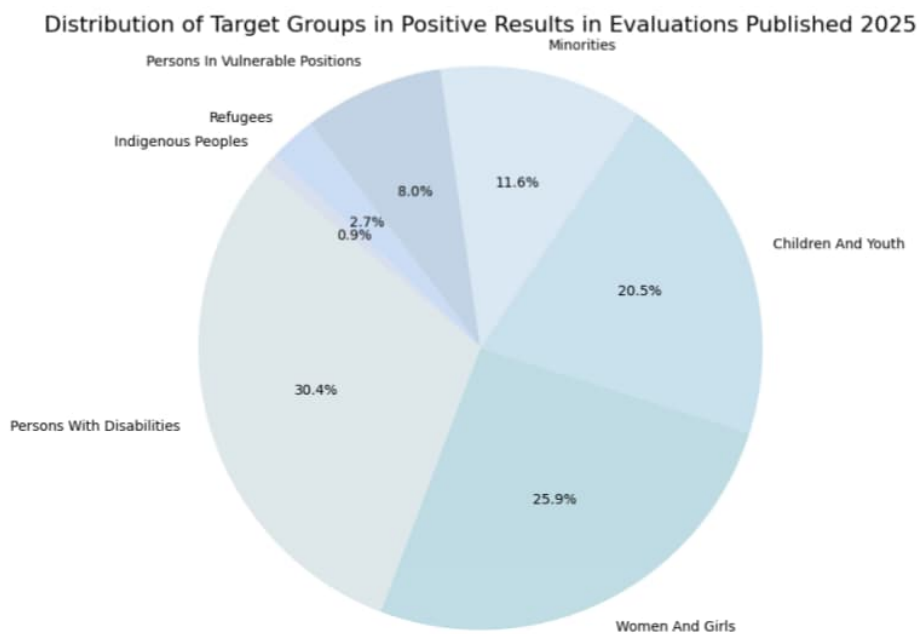


The evaluations conducted in 2025 report positive development results particularly in areas related to governance and human rights, the economy, and partnerships, as well as peacebuilding.



Source: OpenEval

According to the evaluation reports published in 2025, positive results have been achieved particularly among persons with disabilities, women and girls, as well as children and young people.



Source: OpenEval



# Results Highlights

Evaluation reports published 2024–2025

 <p><b>GENDER EQUALITY – SOMALIA</b> Partner Representative: "Gender equity has been effectively mainstreamed in the program by actively involving women in the training sessions on conflict management, trauma healing, and governance" <i>(National Reconciliation and Local Governance in Somalia Project. Final evaluation for 2025, 49)</i></p>	 <p><b>DOMESTIC REVENUE – TANZANIA</b> Risk-based audit practices were adopted and taxpayer services improved, with increased use of digital tools <i>(Evaluation: Technical Assistance to Tanzania Revenue Authority 2025, 21)</i></p>	 <p><b>GENDER ADVOCATE</b> Stakeholder: "The leading role of Finland as advocate and staunch supporter of the rights of women and girls was evident." <i>(Meta-Analysis: Country Programmes 2021–2024, 2024, 24)</i></p>
 <p><b>EDUCATION SECTOR – MOZAMBIQUE</b> Monitored primary and secondary schools that meet quality targets is 85.6% and 81.5% respectively in 2022 and is well above targets. <i>(Evaluation: Finnish Support to Education in Mozambique, 2024, 43)</i></p>	 <p><b>CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT</b> Hands-on institutional cooperation in Asia supports climate and environmental objectives and capacities for fundamental services such as weather forecasting, air pollution and water quality monitoring. <i>(Evaluation: ICI Cooperation in Asia, 2025, 15, 29–32)</i></p>	 <p><b>DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT</b> Finland has been successful in mainstreaming inclusion objectives in digital development, while inclusion outcomes show mixed results <i>(Review: Digital and Development 2023, 35)</i></p>
 <p><b>PRIVATE SECTOR COLLABORATION</b> New NGO–business partnerships were created in Kenya, Uganda and Somalia. <i>(Evaluation: Fingo Programme 2022–2025, 2024, 26)</i></p>	 <p><b>HUMAN RIGHTS</b> Due to sustained advocacy, more than ten human rights mechanisms and forums have received statements and other materials on women's rights, children's rights and discrimination issues in ESC rights for indigenous groups. <i>(Evaluation: Realizing Rights for All 2024, 45)</i></p>	 <p><b>INCLUSIVE EDUCATION</b> 3242 teachers (1564 female) were trained on inclusive education and inclusive methods, and 2372 children with disabilities (1325 female) benefited from improved quality of education in programme areas during 2022 – 2023. <i>(Mid-term Evaluation: Fida programme 2022–2025, 2024, 42–3)</i></p>
 <p><b>PRIVATE SECTOR COLLABORATION</b> Finland's support has raised Finnish companies' interest in and understanding of Ukraine's market <i>(Final Project Evaluation of the Finland Ukraine Trust Fund at NEFCO 2024, 33)</i></p>	 <p><b>DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT</b> Finland actively supported the UN processes that lead to the adoption of the Global Digital Compact <i>(Review: Digital and Development 2025, 42)</i></p>	 <p><b>PRIVATE SECTOR COLLABORATION</b> Innovative partnering with private sector unions and associations have provided services to entrepreneurs to increase market competitiveness and market demanded skills <i>(Mid-term Evaluation: TARABOT. Supporting Transformative Resilience in Palestine Programme 2024, 45-46)</i></p>
 <p><b>INCLUSIVE WASH</b> Female representation in the community Water Users' and Sanitation Committees increased to 55.3 %. Women, Dalits, Janajatis and in some communities also some persons with disabilities were present and outspoken <i>(Mid-Term Evaluation of Sustainable WASH for All in Nepal 2025, 19-20)</i></p>	 <p><b>PRIVATE SECTOR COLLABORATION</b> Support to Tanzania's public administration reform contributes to enhancing Tanzania's business enabling environment. <i>(Evaluation. Technical Assistance to Tanzania Revenue Authority 2025, 25)</i></p>	 <p><b>RULE OF LAW</b> In Ukraine, a new law on national minorities was passed and the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combatting Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence was ratified. <i>(Meta-Analysis Review. Country Programmes 2021-2024, 231)</i></p>
 <p><b>PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES</b> Over 1,250 persons with disabilities received legal aid, and disability rights were elevated in legal reform discourse for the first time. <i>(Final Evaluation: Strengthening Rule of Law and Human Rights Protection in Uzbekistan UNDP 2025, 23)</i></p>	 <p><b>PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES</b> The UN Disability Strategy has proven to be a relevant and timely instrument for advancing disability inclusion across the United Nations system and served as a catalyst for systematic change. <i>(Evaluation. United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy 2025, 102).</i></p>	 <p><b>CLIMATE AND DISASTER RISK</b> Teachers, school administration and municipalities have been trained on climate change and awareness about developing Disaster Risk Reduction Plans has been increased in Nepal. <i>(Mid-term evaluation. Felm Programme 2022–2025, 2024, 31)</i></p>



## 5 Reporting back in 2025

During 2025, the Development Evaluation Unit requested departments and units of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs to report on the actions they had taken based on the management decisions of six evaluations. The reporting covered the following evaluations:

- Economic Development, Job Creation and Livelihoods
- Knowledge Management and Decision Making in Finland's Development Policy and Cooperation
- Evaluation of the Transition Process of Finnish–Vietnamese Cooperation in 2008–2020
- Development Communications amidst Global Crises and Polarized Discussion
- Metaevaluation of the MFA's [Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland] Project and Programme Evaluations in 2017–2020
- Evaluation of Finnish Development Policy Influencing in the European Union

The reporting back for the first three evaluations (economic development, knowledge management, and the Vietnam transition process) had been carried over from the previous year, as an insufficient number of responses had been received at that time. These were addressed at the meeting of the Development Policy Steering Group on 28 May 2025. Key measures taken in response to the evaluations' recommendations included further strengthening support for the private sector and improving its results monitoring; undertaking development actions related to staffing, digital tools and results reporting; and integrating development cooperation funding into the Team Finland framework. The reporting back on the transition process highlighted that, in recent years, it had not been possible to plan or implement a proper transition strategy, as budget cuts had forced the rapid discontinuation of country programmes.

Responses for the development communications, metaevaluation and EU influencing evaluations were collected in late 2025 and early 2026. These will be submitted to the Development Policy Steering Group for consideration in 2026.

During 2026, reporting back will also be carried out for the following evaluations:

1. Evaluation of Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) in Finland's Development Policy and Cooperation
2. Evaluation of Finland's Initiatives Focused on Enhanced Domestic Resource Mobilization (DRM)
3. Evaluation of Finland's International Climate Finance 2016–2022
4. Right to Education, Right to Learn – Finland's Development Cooperation in the Education Sector



## 6 International cooperation

### Country-led evaluations as drivers of sustainable development

The Development Evaluation Unit, in cooperation with the International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS), the DEval Institute and UNICEF's Evaluation Office, produced a guidebook on the use of country-led evaluations to advance the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals: [Country-led evaluation to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. A guide for evaluation commissioners, managers and evaluators.](#)

This second, updated edition of the guide provides practical advice for conducting country-led evaluations of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and presents perspectives based on country experiences from Finland, Nigeria, Costa Rica, Colombia, Ecuador and Uganda. New chapters discuss, among other topics, how to initiate a country-led Agenda 2030 and SDG evaluation and how the results of such evaluations can be used. The guide also highlights the importance of integrating gender perspectives and inclusiveness.

**The guide provides practical tips for conducting evaluations and insights drawn from different countries' experiences in using country-led evaluations to advance the Sustainable Development Goals.**

The guidebook was launched in March 2025 at the IDEAS & NDB-IEO 2025 Conference in Rome, themed "Multidimensional Evaluation for Advancing Impact and Change". The Development Evaluation Unit participated in the launch event and panel discussion, which emphasised the urgency of carrying out national evaluations before 2030, in line with the UN General Assembly resolution 77/283 (adopted in 2023) calling for strengthened Voluntary National Review (VNR) processes through country-led evaluation. The conference also addressed other current topics, including climate change, gender equality and human rights, innovative methods (such as syntheses, geospatial analysis and artificial intelligence), as well as the evaluation of systemic change. The partner organisations also held a publication webinar in May, which generated broad international interest among practitioners in the field. Finland's two national sustainable development evaluations continue to receive well-deserved attention.

French and Spanish translations of the guidebook are currently in preparation.

### Global Evaluation Initiative (GEI) supports evaluation capacity in developing countries

The Development Evaluation Unit has supported the World Bank's Global Evaluation Initiative since its inception. The initiative strengthens evaluation capacity in developing countries by improving public monitoring and evaluation systems, increasing evaluation skills, and sharing tools and knowledge. By the end of 2025, GEI had strengthened monitoring and evaluation systems in 34 countries, enhanced the skills of more than 20,700 individuals through 195 training events, implemented 59 technical support programmes, developed 33 capacity development strategies and 13 Monitoring and Evaluation System Analyses (MESA), and produced 442 monitoring and evaluation knowledge products.



The Development Evaluation Unit has actively participated in GEI's Steering Committee and contributed to shaping the initiative's direction, including the review of the completed evaluation report and the preparation of a new strategy in 2025. The Unit was interviewed several times to support the assessment and further development of GEI's activities. The expertise and active engagement of the Unit have been appreciated. The GEI programme manager also visited Finland to discuss topics of importance to Finland.

The year 2025 was also characterised by close monitoring of ongoing activities. Funding granted in 2024 supported, among other things, the Government of Tanzania's evaluation system and processes. Learning-through-practice was applied in the planning and implementation of a country-led sector evaluation, drawing on the newly published guidebook and incorporating capacity-strengthening elements. In addition, GEI's partner, the CLEAR, Centre for Anglophone Africa, organised a five-day training in Tanzania in May for fifteen civil servants to strengthen public sector monitoring and evaluation. The training formed part of a broader training package. Feedback collected by the organisers was highly positive regarding quality, relevance and usefulness.

*"The useful thing in this training is that I will use the knowledge taught in improving the approach to conducting monitoring and evaluation for the projects we are implementing in my institution." – Training Participant*

*"Evaluation procedures, Theory of Change and Result Chain, data quality protocols — these are all very useful in accordance with my work." – Training Participant*

*"This training is very important in my work because I did not have a background in M&E, and now the Government has established an M&E unit, and I am part of that unit. So this training is very important to me." – Training Participant*

The Development Evaluation Unit granted GEI continuation funding for 2025–2026. The new strategy will be implemented in line with its priority areas. In Tanzania, activities will continue based on lessons learned in previous phases. A new component includes strengthening civil servants' skills in artificial intelligence.

## **EvalNet and Nordic+ Evaluation Directors' annual meeting in Helsinki**

The Development Evaluation Unit actively participates in both international and domestic expert networks that promote the quality and use of evaluation. Internationally, development evaluation is guided by the Evaluation Network (EvalNet) of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC). The network consists of representatives from member states' evaluation functions as well as evaluation units of multilateral actors, including international financial institutions and UN organisations. Under the coordination of EvalNet, general guidance on development evaluation, evaluation criteria, and quality standards have been developed. These largely steer and define the implementation of evaluations globally. In addition to developing guidance, EvalNet collects evaluation plans and completed evaluations from member states into a shared information system, supports and coordinates joint evaluations, produces knowledge on best practices, supports and compares evaluation functions, and organises annual conferences and thematic working groups.

Evaluations commissioned by the Development Evaluation Unit, as well as its international engagement, have supported the broader operationalisation of foreign and security policy objectives. Together with the European Commission, the Nordic+ group (11 countries), and the OECD DAC



EvalNet network, Finland has engaged in active dialogue and the exchange of experiences on evaluating support to Ukraine. The Development Evaluation Unit has also successfully encouraged the Commission’s participation in these discussions. Key themes at the final meeting of 2025 included the need to update evaluation norms and guidance, supporting evaluation capacity in developing countries, evaluation in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, evaluation as part of climate action, and the use of artificial intelligence in synthesising evaluation evidence.

In spring 2025, the Development Evaluation Unit organised and chaired the annual two-day meeting of Nordic+ Evaluation Directors, held in Helsinki. The main themes of the meeting were: evaluation of support to Ukraine, challenges for evaluation amid changes in development policy, assessment of support for the green and clean transition, and AI solutions for the work of evaluation functions. Representatives from all Nordic countries, the Netherlands, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Canada, Lithuania, Germany, and Estonia, as well as the Secretary-General of the OECD DAC EvalNet network, participated in the meeting and its discussions. The European Commission contributed to the thematic discussion on evaluating support to Ukraine, and the UN Evaluation Group participated in a workshop on utilising AI in evaluations and improving access to evaluation information. Over lunch, the heads of evaluation held discussions with Under-Secretary of State Pasi Hellman on the current state and future prospects of evaluation, as well as international trends in development policy.

**The Development Evaluation Unit organized a meeting of the Nordic+ Evaluation Directors in Helsinki.**

### International interest in Finland’s use of AI

The launch of the OpenEval AI tool generated widespread international interest. In September, the Development Evaluation Unit organised an English-language webinar that attracted around 400 registered participants. The audience included both domestic and international stakeholders, such as representatives of multilateral organisations, civil society organisations, the private and public sectors, and academia. In addition to presenting the tool, participants were asked about the potential benefits of AI-based tools like OpenEval. The responses formed a word cloud highlighting several potential benefits and use cases—many of which are also recognised by the Development Evaluation Unit.





The tool was presented at the Nordic+ Evaluation Directors' meeting held in Helsinki in May. The Development Evaluation Unit was also invited to speak at several international webinars and working groups on the use of artificial intelligence and on OpenEval. In September, the tool was presented at, among others, the OECD Working Party on AI and the Nordic Evaluation Working Group; in October at a panel organised by Ireland's evaluation function; and in December at a webinar hosted by the UN Evaluation Group (UNEG).

In addition, evaluation functions in several countries — including the United Kingdom, Germany and Switzerland — have expressed interest in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland's Development Evaluation Unit as an international frontrunner and have been in active contact while developing their own similar tools. Multilateral actors such as OECD EvalNet, the Multilateral Performance Network (MOPAN), and several UN agencies currently developing their own applications have also shown interest in the OpenEval tool. Lessons learned from the tool were compiled in an OECD publication: [\*Using AI to make the most of evaluation evidence in Finland.\*](#)

### **Cooperation with the MOPAN network**

The Development Evaluation Unit has participated in the work of the MOPAN (Multilateral Performance Network) technical working group, which has prepared MOPAN's new methodology, MOPAN 4. As of early 2026, MOPAN 4 replaces the previous methodological framework, MOPAN 3.1, for assessments of multilateral organisations. MOPAN 4 is based on systems thinking. The updated methodology includes a clarified theory of change, incorporates an analysis of the operating environment, and revises the indicator framework to better capture complex contexts, current realities and challenges, as well as organisational effectiveness. MOPAN 4 was formally approved at the Steering Committee meeting held in May 2025.



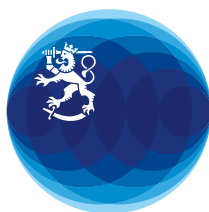
## Annex 1: Strategic evaluations during 2019–2025

- Joint Nordic evaluation of contributions to trust funds. (Publication forthcoming).
- Strategic Joint Evaluation of the International Development and Humanitarian Assistance Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic (2025): [Link to the report](#)
- Digital and Development – Review of efforts of Finland’s development policy and cooperation in accelerating inclusive digitalisation (2025): [Link to the report](#)
- Synthesis: Finland’s support to Gender Equality and the Rights of Women and Girls (2025)
- Meta-analysis of Country Programmes 2021–2024 (2024): [Link to the report](#)
- Evaluation of Finland’s Initiatives Focused on Enhanced Domestic Resource Mobilization (DRM) (2023): [Link to the report](#)
- Right to Education, Right to Learn – Finland’s Development Cooperation in the Education Sector (2023): [Link to the report](#)
- Evaluation of Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) in Finland’s Development Policy and Cooperation (2023): [Link to the report](#)
- Evaluation of Finland’s International Climate Finance 2016–2022 (2023): [Link to the report](#)
- Development Communications amidst Global Crises and Polarized Discussion (2023): [Link to the report](#)
- Review of the MFA’s Support to International Recruitment (2023): [Link to the report](#)
- Review of the Use and Utility of Centralised Evaluations (2023): [Link to the report](#)
- The System-Wide Evaluation of the United Nations Development System Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19 (2022): [Link to the report](#)
- Evaluation of the Finnish Development Policy Influencing in the European Union (2022): [Link to the report](#)
- From Reactivity to Resilience. Assessment of the Response of Finnish Development Policy and Cooperation to the Covid-19 Pandemic (2022): [Link to the report](#)
- Catalysing Change. Evaluation on Finland’s Humanitarian Assistance 2016–2022 (2022): [Link to the report](#)
- Metaevaluation of project and programme evaluations in 2017–2020 (2022): [Link to the report](#)
- Water as an Entry Point for Peace Mediation. Evaluation on Finnish Water Diplomacy (2021): [Link to the report](#)
- Evaluation on the Transition Process of Finnish-Vietnamese Cooperation in 2008–2020 (2021): [Link to the report](#)
- Evaluation on Development Cooperation carried out by the Department for Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, including the Wider Europe Initiative (WEI) (2021): [Link to the report](#)
- Evaluation of Economic Development, Job Creation and Livelihoods (2021): [Link to the report](#)
- Evaluation of Finnish Development Policy Influencing Activities in Multilateral Organisations (2020): [Link to the report](#)
- Adapting for Change: Country Strategy Approach in Fragile Contexts (2020): [Link to the report](#)



- Developmental Evaluation of Business with Impact (BEAM) Programme (2019): [Link to the report](#)
- “How do we Learn, Manage and Make Decisions in Finland’s Development Policy and Cooperation” (2019): [Link to the report](#)
- Joint Nordic Organizational Assessment of the Nordic Development Fund (2019): [Link to the report](#)
- Evaluation on Forced Displacement and Finnish Development Policy (2019): [Link to the report](#)

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