

# FINLAND'S *development* POLICY IN 2018

From myth to grounded paradigm –  
Finland as a defender of equality for women  
and girls in developing countries



Development Policy Committee



FINLAND'S  
*d e v e l o p m e n t*  
POLICY IN 2018

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Finland as a defender of equality for women  
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# Foreword

## by the chairpersons

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**W**omen and girls comprise over half of the global population. They are burdened by poverty, lack of education, discrimination, violence, and human rights violations. The UN's Sustainable Development Goals will not be achieved if one half of humanity is left on the sidelines. The skills and visions of women must be taken on board in order to develop societies, resolve crises, and build economies.

Against this backdrop it is well founded to make women and girls a priority area of development policy. Historically, Finland has been at the forefront in realising women's rights. It is only natural, then, that we highlight the theme as a priority area in development policy too. At a time when policies are conducted on women's bodies it is crucial that Finland speaks up loudly and clearly in defence of gender equality, the status and self-determination of women and girls. It's particularly important that Finland champions sexual and reproductive health and rights amidst tougher conservative resistance.

On the other hand, it is essential to recognise that women and girls are not a homogenous group even in developing countries. Women are in dissimilar positions depending on wealth, ethnicity, education, age, marital status, disability, where they live, and sexuality and sexual orientation. It is important that our development policy recognises multiple discrimination and seeks especially to strengthen the status of the most disadvantaged women and girls. It is also vital to note that the needs of women and girls are sometimes different,

and so should be greater recognition of and coherence concerning girls in development policy.

Finland is happy to be a paradigm of gender equality. But being such does not come about through declarations. The title can only be earned by virtue of work done. This is still a work in progress. The Development Policy Committee's assessment report demonstrates that the priority area is not sufficiently and consistently reflected in the development policy practice. The problem is that the priority choices are not sufficiently reflected in the distribution of funding, nor is the cross-cutting goal sufficiently coherent.

In terms of transparency, operability and political accountability, the priorities chosen must guide funding, performance goals and the principles of activity in all development policies and external relations. It is important that the focus on women and girls is reflected in both the country programmes and the funding of civil society organisations and the private sector instruments. The priority area should also be evident in humanitarian aid. It has to guide Finland's advocacy work and be conspicuous in foreign relations and trade policy.

Development policy has been subject to major cuts and changes. Funding was reduced by about 40 per cent. At the same time, the role of private sector instruments and investment financing in Finland's development policy grew. In a difficult situation, it is of paramount importance that the selected priority areas and principles direct the reorientation of operations. The priority areas of the development policy programme have not





registered sufficiently in the choices made, as the funding for priority area of women and girls fell drastically. Women and girls also do not appear sufficiently in the ownership steering of investment-oriented development instruments.

The Development Policy Committee's assessment report reiterates the need to create a sustainable foundation for Finland's development policy, one that consistently traverses government terms. Promoting gender equality is a natural part of development policy and foreign relations, so hopefully the theme will be embodied in the permanent foundation and continuum of development policy. This review also points out the need to raise the level of Finnish development funding and

to create a plan to increase it towards 0,7 per cent of Gross National Income. When in the future funding is increased in line with Finland's commitments, the priority area on women and girls should be a visible part of the new funding.

We wish to thank all those involved in preparing this report. The review process showed that the priority area of women and girls is extensively supported by stakeholders, political parties, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and civil society organisations. At the same time, there are also developmental needs in the implementation of the priority area. We believe that with sufficient combined will and knowledge we will be able to achieve a better development policy.

The chairpersons of the Development Policy Committee, on behalf of the women and girls of developing countries,

**Aila Paloniemi**

MP (Centre Party), Chair of the  
Development Policy Committee

**Hanna Sarkkinen**

MP (Left Alliance),  
1st Vice-Chair of the Development  
Policy Committee

**Saara-Sofia Sirén**

MP (Coalition Party),  
2nd Vice-Chair of the Development  
Policy Committee







## Summary and main pointers for the next government

**F**inland's development cooperation and policy needs to be reformed so as to better promote gender equality and more effectively bolster the situation and rights of women and girls. Finnish core values, international agreements, and positioning the situation and rights of women and girls as the focal point of development policy generate expectations by which Finland must credibly abide. Our commitment to realising the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development also requires this. The Development Policy Committee's review is impelled by the issue of how Finland could do even better in strengthening gender equality – to be something of a development policy paradigm. We have also tried to give a realistic overview of the state of Finnish development policy in terms of gender equality, and to present a vision for which Finland should strive in sustainable development.

Finland already focuses activities on countries and issues where there is a need and demand for strengthening gender equality in line with sustainable development. We have the proficiency and will to promote gender equality across the whole terrain of development policy, spanning bilateral development cooperation, civil society organisations, private sector operators, and research. Finland has been active in the EU and other international fora with respect to the sexual and reproductive rights of women and girls in particular. This work must be continued unequivocally. Also, within the country's foreign relations the UN Security Council's work on women, peace and security, and trade policy promoting the economic empowerment of women are expressly areas that in the future should be reinforced from the perspective of women in developing countries.

The overall view of the government term is nevertheless discrepant. There is a notable contradiction in the amount of development financing and its allocation. Finland gave priority to women and girls in development policy and yet funding for this focal area fell by about 40 per cent, part of unprecedented cuts to the development cooperation budget. The Development Policy Committee proposes that the government set a timetable within which Finland will increase its official development assistance to 0,7 per cent of Gross Domestic Income and devote at least 0,2 per cent of GDI to the least developed countries. The emphasis on gender equality work should also be reflected in the

allocation of funding. This is why the committee proposes that Finland must commit to the aims of the EU's Gender Action Plan, according to which gender equality must be either a major part or the principal objective of 85 per cent of all new programmes by 2020. There remains room for improvement among all actors in this respect. In recent years, funding for gender equality has been around 30 – 40 per cent of total Finnish development cooperation. The committee's position would concretise gender equality as a crosscutting objective, whereby all development cooperation sectors would evaluate their projects and programmes more thoroughly from a gender equality angle.

Such changes would guide Finland closer to international best practices, which the OECD also requires of us. They cover such things as having a coherent strategy, guidance, the equality analysis of the operational environment and situations, and statistical and outcome reporting practices. It's also important to continually learn from one's own activity and evaluations of it. The committee believes that it is through this that we can crucially improve the quality of work on gender equality.

Due to the increasingly prominent role in development policy of the private sector and financial investment in the form of capital and loans, there needs to be more systematic analysis of these from a gender perspective. It's therefore important that the Foreign Ministry foregrounds gender equality as one of boundary conditions for ensuring the development impact of Finnfund's ownership steering.

The Development Policy Committee considers it highly necessary that the situation and rights of women and girls are made one of the priorities of development policy. This, however, should be approached from the broader perspective of human rights, equality, and eliminating multiple discrimination. Finland should also clarify objectives concerning the rights of girls and draw up detailed guidelines for this.

Gender equality is a prerequisite for sustainable development, one that Finland should emphasise in all its activities. It's therefore warranted that development cooperation and policy have a more enduring basis than government terms of office. Reforms should start to be made during this government and include the next government term in the development policy report. Finland's Presidency of the EU in 2019 would be a natural occasion to showcase this reform agenda.



# Scope for improvement – even for a trailblazer

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Nationally, Finland has a long history of promoting gender equality. We have also actively defended the rights of women and girls in developing countries. Finland is often depicted as an equality trailblazer and paradigm of sustainable development.<sup>1</sup> Yet we have to be able to abide by this status credibly so that our good reputation doesn't become atrophied into mere myth.

Equality between the sexes is an essential part of Finnish values and outlook. This is why underlying the goal of boosting the status and rights of women and girls there is exceptionally robust and broad support, including within development cooperation and policy. Such support is reinforced by the understanding that no society can thrive without the equivalent input and equal rights of both sexes. The universal aims of sustainable development and Finland's development policy are entrenched in this assumption.

The 2016 Government Programme makes strengthening of the status of women and girls in developing countries an indispensable part of Finland's global responsibility. The report *Finland's development policy: One world, common future – toward sustainable development*, which fleshed out the points in the Government Programme, set strengthening the status and rights of women and girls as a development policy priority.<sup>2</sup> While this emphasis is new, gender equality has already been a vital aspect of development policy for decades. As a Nordic country that foregrounds equality, Finland is portrayed as an active exponent of the rights of women and girls, including internationally.

The hardening of attitudes globally highlights the need for actors such as Finland that can vindicate and support gender equality issues profoundly. Nonetheless, we too need to progress as a promoter of the role of women and girls. The long-term need for development is relevant to Finnish society too, in order for us to even out the pay gap between men and women, share care responsibilities more equally, and minimise violence against women.

There have been positive trends taking place globally in recent years, including the reduction of maternal mortality and improvement in girls' school attendance. Yet the reality for hundreds of millions of women and girls remains bleak. They face barriers to realising basic needs and rights more frequently than men and boys. The problems concern such things as ready access to nutrition and health services, and the possibility to obtain education and pursue livelihoods. Globally, the workload and amount of unpaid work borne by women are greater than that of men, but this is not reflected in

income, while unpaid domestic work done by girls often impedes school attendance and cuts the time they have for homework and studying.

The degradation of the environment worldwide, unsustainable use of natural resources, and impacts of climate change in many respects increase the burden on and vulnerability of women especially.<sup>3</sup> Desertification and drought often make it difficult to attend to food, water and energy needs, for which women are mainly responsible. Many extreme weather phenomena, as well as conflicts that are intensifying due to climate change, are aggravating the threats faced by women and girls. On the other hand, women have a key role in furthering the sustainable use of natural resources, as well as mitigating and adapting to climate change.

The specific needs and rights of women and girls also involve sexual and reproductive health, which continues to be a highly contentious human rights issue internationally. The often limited agency of women and girls to decide on matters that concern them is also evident societally in their having the weakest political and economic rights. But it is essential that women are able to influence development through policy, legislation, and peace

The hardening of attitudes globally highlights the need for actors such as Finland that can vindicate and support gender equality issues profoundly.

<sup>1</sup> The Development Policy Committee has, during the review process, established a clear need for independent research that would trace Finland's international role as a champion of gender equality.

<sup>2</sup> The new priority areas of development policy were set out in 2016 as follows: (I) The rights and status of women and girls have strengthened; (II) developing countries' own economies have generated jobs, livelihood opportunities and well-being; (III) societies have become more democratic and better-functioning; (IV) food security and access to water and energy have improved, and natural resources are used sustainably.

<sup>3</sup> Useful examples and overviews: *Gender and Climate Change – Asia and the Pacific, Policy brief 1, UNDP 2013* (p. 2–3) *Pocket Guide to Gender Equality under the UNFCCC, European Capacity Building Initiative 2017* (p. 3) *Gender and Climate Change: A Closer Look at Existing Evidence, Global Gender and Climate Alliance 2016* (contains numerous examples).

work. The economic status of women and their powers of decision-making in financial matters is a crucial gender equality indicator that has a sizeable multiplier effect. Its promotion necessitates special attention and expertise in all areas of development cooperation, from microloans to intergovernmental programmes and major financial investments. Women's land ownership and inheritance rights are also key elements of equality and economic progress in society. The lack of equal rights and opportunities is an impediment to economic development.

Gender equality  
must also be more  
resolutely promoted  
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focal point of development  
policy and all  
decision-making.



The promotion of the status and rights of girls in work on gender equality requires its own separate focus in parallel with that of women. The dismal situation of girls globally is reflected in statistics showing that the leading cause of death among teenage girls (15–19 year-olds) worldwide is suicide.<sup>4</sup> The second most common cause of death is linked to pregnancy and childbirth, contextualised by, among other things, child marriage, and girls' scant powers to decide about their own bodies and sexuality.

In addition, women and girls are particularly at risk of becoming victims of sexual violence and human trafficking. The risk of violence and exploitation for women and girls with disabilities is reckoned to be far greater

than for women and girls without disabilities. Being migrants and refugees also brings the human rights abuses against women and girls – such as honour violence – closer to everyday life in Finland. Finnish legislation must therefore be developed to respond to this changed situation.

Finland's extensive support for strengthening gender equality and the status and rights of women and girls worldwide is an excellent starting point. But the objective is an exacting one and greater attention needs to be paid to its planned implementation. There is a risk that a broadly accepted goal is envisaged as being realised automatically, without clear vision and guidance, adequate resources, assessment, and continuous learning that traverse government terms of office.

The Development Policy Committee considers it especially important that the status of women and girls is now made a distinct priority of development policy, reflected in the allocation of funds for development cooperation. Gender equality must also be more resolutely promoted as a facet of every focal point of development policy and all decision-making, in accordance with the principles of sustainable development and regardless of the actor concerned.

The purpose of this report is to prompt discussion on how Finland can more effectively further the situation of women and girls, and to offer recommendations for developing this work. We examine, among other things, how consistently and with what resources Finland advances this priority as part of its overall development policy. We base the assessment on Finland's international commitments and previous surveys of the subject. We begin with the position of women and girls in the recent history of development policy. The main parts of the report deal with and evaluate the policy of the current government. In each chapter we make specific recommendations for decision-makers and for planning purposes. In drawing up this report these have been deliberated on with representatives of political parties, special interest and civil society organisations, the UniPID Finnish university partnership network, and our own specialists. Finally, in line with our government mandate, we present a vision of how Finland could set out to become a model for strengthening the equal opportunities and gender equality of developing countries. ■









## The status and rights of women and girls in development policy

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While for decades gender equality work in Finland's development policy has been based on UN principles, at policy level approaches are poorly reflected in practical work. The tutelage and recommendations of implementation evaluations do not have a sufficient impact on activities.

**W**omen's equal rights with men were already recognised in the United Nations Charter of 1945. And the subject of Women and Development has been included in UN policy since the 1960s. Down the decades, the UN and its world conferences have posited women's rights as a prerequisite for development and the norms of member states. Finnish actors have been actively involved in this work from the outset. For example, the first woman Deputy Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations, Helvi Sipilä, played a decisive role in the United Nations' organisation of the first ever world conference on women's rights, in 1975, and the establishment of the special agency Unifem<sup>5</sup> to promote gender equality worldwide. These milestones led to the UN Decade for Women (1976 – 1985), during which gender equality and the end of gender discrimination, women's participation in development, and women's empowerment became an international goals. They are still reflected in the principles and objectives of the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Current gender equality work in Finland and in Finnish development policy is based on this foundation. Its cornerstones are the UN's 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

(CEDAW) and the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. These international benchmarks were later supplemented by, for instance, the Council of Europe Convention for the Prevention and Combating of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Agreement, 2011). In terms of foreign and security policy and its linkages to development policy, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (Women, Peace and Security) and the seven resolutions supporting it occupy a key role.

It has been hard to translate international norms into practice. No country has been able to do so fully. All countries that are party to the agreements face this problem. In Finland too the application of the gender perspective has taken place gradually and is a work in progress. In Finland's development cooperation work, a gender perspective highlighting women's empowerment was first made policy in 1986. Prior to this, the strengthening of the status of women had largely been rooted in separate projects, including literacy, small-scale production, and health projects targeted for women, and added to other activities, especially those aimed at women. But the promotion of gender equality in development policy has not always been axiomatic.



## International commitments guide Finland's development policy

### UN

**Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women** (CEDAW, 1979) is a legally binding agreement between the signatory states. It has been ratified by 189 states, including Finland. The convention obliges the development of legislation and the legal system to eliminate discrimination against women and to change cultural-related practices in order to improve women's status.

The implementation of the convention is monitored by a committee, to which the states report every four years. The committee presents its conclusions and recommendations on the basis of reporting by governments. The most recent

recommendations for Finland were given in 2014. The next time Finland will have to report is in 2018.

**Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action** (1995) is a strategic and political roadmap for achieving the goals of the CEDAW. The Declaration and Platform for Action pledge to guarantee full access to human rights and fundamental freedoms to all women and girls of the world without any discrimination. It stipulates the six most important areas for promoting women's rights: equality between women, education, health, security, social and economic status, and participation in decision-making.

<sup>5</sup> Since 2011 UN Women.

**Cairo International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and Programme of Action** (1994–1995) The conference agreed that gender equality, sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights should be taken into account in all operational programmes aiming for sustainable development. It also approved a 20-year programme to promote reproductive health and rights.

**UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (Women, peace and security)** (2000) aims to safeguard women and girls and their human rights in armed conflicts, promote the equal participation of women in peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction, and prevent gender-based violence. The Security Council had also adopted seven supplementary resolutions to Resolution 1325. In autumn 2008, Finland published its first national action plan to implement the resolution. The plan was updated in 2012 and covers the period 2012–2016. In the action plan, Finland emphasises prevention, participation and protection and emphasises a human rights based approach. The new operational program for 2017–2022 was completed in spring 2018.

**Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.** (2016) The action plan sets 17 sustainable development goals involving 169 targets for all countries. Sustainable Development Goal 5 of concerns achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and it includes five targets.

- **Government Report on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Sustainable Development in Finland – Long-term, Coherent and Inclusive Action** This is Finland's interpretation of the UN action plan during the current government term of office.

## EU

**EU Gender Action Plan (2016–2020).** Promoting gender equality is one of the key tasks of the EU. The EU Gender Action Plan on promoting gender equality in the union's external relations for the period 2016 – 2020 (GAP II) involves the Commission, member states, and the EU External Action Service. The difference to the previous Gender Action Plan

(GAP I) is that GAP I only concerns EU development cooperation, but GAP II also obligates gender equality work in other policy areas. What's new is that it commits to conducting systematic gender analyses and reporting using gender disaggregated data. GAP II has four thematic pillars: the physical and psychological integrity of girls and women, the promotion of women's and girls' social and economic rights, the strengthening of the voice and participation of girls and women and strengthening the EU institutional culture to support these goals.

## OECD/DAC

### **OECD's Development Assistance Committee, (DAC).**

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is one of the most important development cooperation bodies in the world. The DAC's mission is to develop policies to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of development cooperation and to act as a forum for members to discuss and exchange information. The DAC is a particularly important international authority for official development assistance (ODA) criteria and statistics, good practices and country reviews. As a member, Finland is committed to compliance with the DAC's recommendations and to using its guidelines. Member countries submit annual ODA statistics to the DAC and participate in regular audits. The central statistical instrument is the Creditor Reporting System (CRS), whereby the DAC monitors the targeting of development aid for different sectors, policy markers. The Gender Equality Policy Marker is the most important gender equality tool for monitoring member countries' efforts to target ODA for gender equality and women's rights.



## Gender equality out of the shadows towards mainstreaming

The Beijing Platform for Action introduced gender mainstreaming into decision-making and development policy. Mainstreaming means that the gender perspective is included in all decision-making and activity. In Finnish development cooperation we often talk of the *crosscutting approach*, which in practice amounts to the same thing. It refers to the inclusion of a gender mainstreaming perspective in all projects and all sectors of development cooperation, rather than focusing on specific measures to promote gender equality. Mainstreaming could be thought of as a strategic approach to the question of how gender equality should be promoted. With the crosscutting approach, we often talk of crosscutting themes or objectives, by which we mean *what* is to be mainstreamed. For example, in Finland's current development policy, crosscutting goals include, in addition to gender equality, climate sustainability and reducing inequality.

As far as the *crosscutting approach* is concerned, Finland has been in the lead, as crosscutting topics already featured in its first development strategy, in 1993, as part of a sustainable development policy. *"In all its development cooperation projects, Finland carries out the principle of gender equality and seeks, on the one hand, to make full use of it and, on the other, to develop women's and men's resources equally"*. As a part of bilateral collaboration, *"Finland considers promoting women's status and increasing participation and empowerment as an important social, political and economic goal in development cooperation."* Crosscutting has also been a key theme in the development policies of 2004 and 2007. The 2012 development policy programme made gender equality a crosscutting goal.

Under the Beijing Platform for Action, women's status and gender equality should be promoted through specific measures focusing on them and by mainstreaming the promotion of gender equality as a goal of all activities. These so-called *dual strategy* principles also serve as an analytical basis for the current development policy report and broader sustainable development: the strengthening of the status and rights of women and girls is both a separate focal point and a crosscutting aim.

Gender mainstreaming and crosscutting are concepts that can appear cumbersome and technical, but

their importance crystallises through application. For this to happen, the concepts need to be accompanied by a budget, plan, monitoring system, and guidance. Implementation should start from surveying the state of gender equality in a specific operational environment, in other words a gender analysis. This can ensure the appropriateness of activities in often very testing circumstances and in different cultures. The analysis should be based on an understanding the local situation from different perspectives. Its main purpose would be to make sure that activities really get to grips with the defects and power relations in the situations in question that are a barrier to strengthening gender equality.<sup>6</sup> In gender analysis, the different sexes are regarded as equally active protagonists as members of the community and of society, and not as the objects of measures. The analysis helps determine the best approach for development cooperation work and the level of ambition sought. It is also possible to broaden gender analysis into vulnerability analysis and identify groups that are at risk of being left out of development or, worse, of becoming the victims of violence and abuse. Failure to analyse can at worst lead to gender equality being undermined by inherently well-meaning actions.

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Unless there is a comprehensive gender analysis, the early and late stages in the life course of women are often overlooked, as is the extensive discrimination faced by women and girls with disabilities. Girls, especially, are at risk of being sidelined unless their special needs are recognised. Child marriages or the genital mutilation of girls are examples of practices that can place girls and women at odds with one another. On the other hand, women over the age of 50 are often invisible in development cooperation.

<sup>6</sup> For an example of a gender analysis see the Swedish version: *Gender analysis tool - Principles and Elements*, [www.sida.se](http://www.sida.se).

## Girls are invisible in international agreements

The majority of international documents are gender and age neutral. Girls are virtually invisible in international agreements that should be the cornerstones of girls' rights. The most important agreements, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) do not take into account girls and their special needs. International law is not sufficient for overcoming the obstacles girls face. Even when girls are mentioned, they are often just an afterthought, and the content of documents refers almost exclusively to women. They generally talk about children, teenagers, young people or women, but girls as their own group are ignored. The rights of girls, such as sexual and reproductive health and rights, which are considered controversial, are mentioned only occasionally in international law. Protect-

ing girls and ensuring that they can decide for themselves whether or not to have children or when or who they marry does not take place consistently. In addition, states have made reservations that disassociate them from certain obligations in international law and agreements concerning girls. The majority of reservations concern articles on sexual and reproductive health and rights and undermine states' commitment to the rights of girls. Many organisations also called for states to appoint a special UN rapporteur on the rights of girls, and that the CEDAW and CRC committees should draw up a Joint General Comment or General Recommendation that clearly defines the rights of girls.

*Source: Girls Rights are Human Rights, report (in Finnish) by Plan International Finland, 2018*

## Human rights based and crosscutting methods: two crucial gender equality approaches

Human rights based and crosscutting methods are mutually supporting and complementary approaches that promote gender equality from different perspectives. They can and should be used in parallel in development cooperation and development policy.

A human rights based approach views the rights and equality of women and girls from a judicial perspective. Gender equality is furthered through normative rights and obligations. The basis for this is international human rights standards and policies and their implementation. In using this approach, the underlying causes of inequality, discriminatory practices and uneven distribution of power are analysed. The human rights based approach also seeks to ensure that people are aware of their rights and are in a position to demand their fulfilment. The other aspect of the human rights-based approach involves the obligation of decision-makers and the judicial system to protect and enforce human rights. In practical development cooperation work this means strengthening the awareness of different groups, such as women and girls, of their rights, supporting ways for them to attain justice, and obliging states to comply with human rights conventions.

The crosscutting approach to gender equality (gender mainstreaming) is the globally accepted strategy that re-

quires gender equality to be included in all development policy activities: policy formulation, research, policy dialogue, resource allocation, planning, implementation and monitoring. With the crosscutting approach the starting point concerning equality is to examine the roles that men and women have in a given society. The aim is to protect equality practices and eliminate unequal practices. The crosscutting approach does not mean that that separate actions targeted at the needs of women and girls are not needed too. Both methods are needed in order to promote gender equality as effectively as possible.

The challenge of the crosscutting approach is often that it is perceived as a technical and bureaucratic development cooperation burden when carrying out projects, and equality in this case is a tick-box formality. However, the intention is to deepen and systematically put the crosscutting approach into practice, meaning to analyse all development cooperation activities in terms of what holds back gender equality and how best to promote it in them.

*Source: UN Practitioner's portal on Human Rights Based Approaches to Programming: <http://hrbportal.org/faq/what-is-the-relationship-between-a-human-rights-based-approach-and-gender-mainstreaming>*

## The gender equality strategy of the MFA – still a viable framework

In 2003 the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) produced its first – and at present its only – gender equality strategy and action plan for Finnish development.<sup>7</sup> This gave the rights of women and girls, and the promotion of gender equality, a central role in Finland's relations with developing countries. The strategy registers gender equality as one of the main goals of policy on development / developing countries, and the promotion of the rights of women and girls as a human rights policy priority. In addition, it already then aligned more equal relations between women and men to the preconditions for sustainable development, poverty reduction, and democracy. The action plan contained specific objectives, measures, and timeframes for the foreign affairs administration and for bodies conducting development cooperation. Its basis was Finland's Equality Act, which stipulates active gender equality promotion also in foreign relations.

The main aim of the strategy and action plan was to improve the effectiveness of Finnish development policy, particularly in the area of gender equality and women's rights, by 2007. It was to be realised by mainstreaming gender equality in all processes, methods, and operations. In this respect, it was thought essential to instigate development policy instruments, processes, and methods, determine staff responsibilities, and develop staff competencies. Activity would also be directed at points that further gender equality and women's rights. It was considered important too to support the gender equality objectives and strategies of partner countries and their CSOs, and of multilateral cooperation organisations.

The strategy and action plan contained a strong exposition of gender impact analysis, the importance of which was emphasised in the success of development cooperation. According to the programme, every activity in development cooperation, including Finland's own role in each situation, requires case-by-case evaluation. The results of the analysis would be taken into account when comparing different project alternatives, planning projects and setting targets.

The approach was to be systematically applied from 2004 onwards. Regrettably, the implementation and evaluation of the programme broke off with the change

of minister in 2007. Since then, Finland has not had an on-going and binding gender equality strategy and action plan. Failure to update the MFA's gender equality strategy and action plan has hindered the coherent realisation of the gender perspective. The strengthening of the status of women and girls has proceeded through the application of international practices, but without a national development policy strategy.

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This is one example of how important it would be to alter the operational culture of development cooperation and policy so that the core themes and work done ahead of them would traverse government terms of office or personnel changes. The elements of the strategy and action programme are still largely serviceable. They should also be utilised in reforming development cooperation and policy.

## Gender equality promotion and international practices

The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) last revised the instruments for tracking gender equality promotion in 2016.<sup>8</sup> Finland has taken part in developing these tools. The most important of them is the *Gender Equality Marker* system, which the DAC has required of all its members for the past couple

<sup>7</sup> *Strategy and Action Plan for Promoting Gender Equality in Finland's Policy for Developing Countries 2003 - 2007*, Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2003.

<sup>8</sup> *Handbook on the OECD-DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker*, OECD 2016.





of decades. The system provides minimum criteria and guidance on how to track the gender perspective in development cooperation projects. It also gives a common benchmark for development aid donor countries on funding trends in gender equality work, and increases both the quality of assistance and transparency. By using the system we can make apparent the extent to which development assistance is actually devoted to promoting gender equality, either through specific projects or as mainstreaming as an aspect of other development projects. Gender markers are a main part of the DAC's Creditor Reporting System (CRS), via which the public can obtain information on the purpose for which development aid is directed. However, we should note that this is no intrinsic guarantee of the projects' successful outcome, though the practice does improve the likelihood of success.

Gender markers also set minimum criteria for what things should be examined in activities promoting gender equality. Reasons should always be given for any

deviation from the guidance. The monitoring system particularly serves to monitor bilateral development assistance. In multilateral cooperation, it covers projects and programmes specifically aimed at furthering gender equality. Gender marker assessment is done at the start of projects and programmes. It therefore describes goals and not measurable effects, or how goals are to be achieved. However, gender markers play an important steering role in the design stage of development cooperation and in allocating resources for set objectives. *The system always requires gender analysis for each action.* This is important so that at least no project or activity will undermine gender equality or reinforce inequality. At best, gender analysis helps us perceive the dynamics and practices of discrimination and is not content merely to describe the state of inequality that is the end result of discrimination. Age and disability can also be taken into consideration in the analysis.

The DAC's gender marker system places development policy activities into three categories. A project is given



score 2 if gender equality is the principal goal. Score 1 denotes that gender equality is a significant goal. Score 0 is for projects that do not have a gender impact. Score 2 requires that a project has the promotion of gender equality as a clear goal. It must be based on a gender analysis, which also guides the project's design, implementation, and performance monitoring. There are clear indicators for tracking results, which can be used to track beyond immediate effects (output) to the outcome/impact phase. Data obtained from the results of the project is disaggregated by sex. The project also includes tracking and reporting of gender impacts. Also, score 1, a significant goal, requires at least one explicit gender equality objective and one gender-disaggregated indicator, which are used in tracking outcomes. Projects or programmes that have not been subjected to gender analysis should be excluded from the gender marker system and have statistics compiled on them separately.

Finland adopted the gender marker system in the early 2000s in tracking and compiling statistics on its development cooperation. It reports to the OECD annually on funding obtained for gender objectives, payments realised, and new projects. Finland has not yet started to comply with the revised 2016 OECD criteria. There are also areas in the country's development cooperation where the OECD gender marker system is not applied. For instance, private sector development cooperation instruments and financial investments require closer scrutiny in the light of gender equality objectives. We will look at this issue in more detail in the chapters that follow.

## Drawing on the EU Gender Action Plan

The EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) 2016-2020, the second in its series, incorporates a gender perspective into EU external relations and obliges member states and EU institutions to act accordingly within the EU and its partner countries. The action plan incorporates the OECD's minimum criteria for financial monitoring and practice but is much broader in scope. The GAP forms a framework for the interpretation of gender equality as an aspect of the union's values, as well as the legal and political basis for its implementation. Its approach also takes account of the Beijing Platform for Action, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (Women, Peace and Security), and the UN's 2030

Agenda for Sustainable Development. As in the Finnish report on development policy, gender equality is seen in the GAP as a separate and crosscutting objective. Its four main objectives are to ensure girls' and women's physical and psychological integrity; promote the social and economic rights of women and girls; strengthen girls' and women's voice and participation; and shift the institutional culture to more effectively deliver on EU commitments.

The strength of the EU's action plan is also its inclusion of monitoring in sustainable development monitoring. The European Commission, the EU High Representative, and the EU Member States all come within the sphere of responsibility for monitoring. The prerequisites for the plan's success are seen as leadership, an institutional climate conducive to gender equality, and ensuring adequate funding. The GAP necessitates systematic gender analysis in all of the EU's external activities and the collection of gender-disaggregated data. One of the main objectives of the GAP is to increase the coherence of EU action in promoting equality. Under the reporting system, indicators and responsible parties are determined for each measure. Thematic priorities, indicators, and exemplary actions are also set for each goal. The systematic use of the OECD gender marker system is an important part of the implementation of the GAP. Both the Commission and the member states report in the manner the system requires. The ambitious aim is for gender equality to be an important or principal objective (gender marker score 2 or 1) in 85 per cent of all new programmes by 2020. Finland as an EU country is also bound by this undertaking. If the gender analysis result is score 0, it must always be justified independently. This encourages the EU and its member states to reflect more closely on the significance of its activities from the perspective of furthering gender equality and pursuing it in all areas of development policy.

Finland took an active part in preparing the GAP, but its implementation in national policy is still on going. Because Finland channels a greater portion of its development cooperation funds through the EU, it is also important to invest in promoting gender equality in EU advocacy and action. In the light of preliminary information, Finnish support channelled via the EU in 2017 amounted to €211-million, accounting for almost a quarter of all funding for development cooperation.<sup>9</sup> Finland will also have to update its own activities to meet the level set by the EU Gender Action Plan.

<sup>9</sup> The corresponding figure was €173-million in 2015 (15 per cent of the official funding for development cooperation at the time). The development financing channelled through the EU is tied to the payment obligations of EU membership, so it could not be subject to cuts.

## Grounds for concern over previous estimates of gender equality in development cooperation

The implementation of gender equality and gender mainstreaming in Finnish development policy and cooperation was first evaluated in 2005.<sup>10</sup> This evaluation also acted as a situational review of the MFA's 2003–2007 strategy and action plan on gender equality. According to the evaluation, there was a positive mood at the ministry regarding gender equality, which was recognised as being essential to development goals. The biggest challenge, though, had to do with *practical implementation*. The crosscutting principle, the evaluation found, remained conceptually vague. This in turn made it hard for staff to understand what crosscutting work aimed to achieve in practical terms. And this was why it was difficult to apply the principle in decision-making on development policy, and it was partly for this reason that gender equality and a gender perspective often remained on the sidelines of decision-making. Equality issues were dealt with independently from the overall work at project and programme levels because gender analysis often did not figure in the design work. The evaluation further found that the lack of resources substantially slowed down the realisation of the gender equality strategy. Staff turnover was another problem identified and for this reason the evaluation stressed the need for continual training.

The 2004–2006 annual assessment devoted special attention to the marked discrepancy between the policy emphasis on gender equality and financial backing for it. For instance, at that time Finland did not have a single project in its long-term partner countries that had as its main focus the promotion of gender equality. Nor, more broadly, had mainstreaming progressed in the desired way. It was stated in the annual assessment that the commitment of at policy level to equality was not reflected in definite objectives.

The National Audit Office of Finland's 2008 report on crosscutting themes in development cooperation drew a similar conclusion. Overall, the crosscutting objectives of development cooperation were poorly evidenced in practice, and the importance of the issues had even diminished. Political importance did not influence decisions on support and the weight attached to gender equality did not translate into funding.

The MFA responded to the National Audit Office's evaluation by drawing up a new action plan on crosscutting goals in 2012. This included crosscutting goals in the ministry's work guidance, and the design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting guidelines of project administration. Training was to be arranged and a support team of advisors put together. Crosscutting goals would begin to be used as criteria for evaluating the quality of projects. An evaluation of the implementation of goals was included in the annual development cooperation report to Parliament.<sup>11</sup> The goals were incorporated into political dialogue, country negotiations, multilateral and EU cooperation, and development communications.

The 2012 guidelines affirmed that gender mainstreaming is a binding core principle, deviation from which must always be independently justified. The minimum goal is to ensure that activity causes no harm to gender equality. Project-specific gender impact assessments should therefore be carried out. Clear objectives and indicators to monitor progress must be set for gender equality. It is also necessary to fix definite objectives and means by which progress is to be achieved or which can ascertain that no harm is done.

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The MFA's *Impact evaluability assessment and meta-analysis of Finland's support to women and girls and gender equality 2017* corroborates the problems identified earlier.<sup>12</sup> Approaches at policy level do not get translated into actual work on gender equality and gender mainstreaming remains inadequate. Goals and indicators are also opaquely defined in programmes where gender equality is the aim. And they are not based on

<sup>10</sup> *Gender Baseline Study for Finnish Development Cooperation – Evaluation Report, Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2005.*

<sup>11</sup> Crosscutting goals: guidelines 16.8.2012 (in Finnish).

<sup>12</sup> The actual assessment done on the basis of this evaluability assessment was to be completed in August 2018.

<sup>13</sup> *Promoting gender equality in development policy – survey conducted for the Development Policy Committee's 2018 annual report, FIAN Consulting Ltd, 2018.*

systematic gender analysis. These deficiencies crucially impede the impact assessment of the particular area of focus, as well as the verification of long-term sustainable development outcomes.

The problems identified in previous evaluations also prompted the Development Policy Committee to conduct a survey this year.<sup>13</sup> This explored how the promotion of gender equality and the status and rights of women and girls can be taken into account in the development policy work of officials and superiors at both the MFA and embassies in Finland's bilateral partner countries. The survey was carried out in cooperation with the MFA and its results are available for use by the ministry. The *Gender Baseline Study for Finnish Development Cooperation Report* (2005), outlined in this chapter, was used as a benchmark for the preparation of questions and preliminary analysis of results.

In comparative terms, the results of the 2018 survey were very similar to those of over a decade ago. The new report confirms that the respondents feel that Finnish

development policy strongly supports the promotion of gender equality and that gender mainstreaming is a prerequisite for achieving development goals. According to the respondents, the disposition in the MFA and in the missions abroad is positive towards gender equality work. The respondents, the majority of whom were officials and advisors, are clearly committed to promoting the issue. The top leadership also supports it. Despite such commitment, the major challenges are chronic lack of funding and meagre staff resources, inadequate concrete basic guidance and analysis, and a need for training. The response rate among the leadership was markedly small, making it hard to make extrapolations. Perhaps the most significant finding of the survey is that the promotion of gender equality is not sufficiently consistent in all areas of development cooperation and policies, and the emphasis attached to it does not match its significance in terms of funding. We will come back to this in subsequent chapters and in the vision we set out. ■

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## Development Policy Committee recommendations:

- There must be stronger commitment to gender mainstreaming to be made more binding at each level of government, and compliance with international agreements and best practices.
- Gender analysis must be done in all areas of development cooperation, and make systematic use of the OECD DAC's 2016 gender marker system. Also, the MFA needs to consider deepening gender analysis to better identify vulnerable groups and to target development cooperation activities especially to benefit them.
- The continuity of gender equality work must be ensured beyond government terms of office and changes of personnel. The committee's next assessment of Finland's development policy, for 2019, will deal with this subject.
- The MFA needs to take into account in a more binding manner the recommendations of commissioned evaluations of the OECD-DAC, Development Policy Committee, and the MFA in implementing and reporting on development policy. Attention needs to be paid in programme evaluations to assessing outcomes and impacts according to gender and age.
- Finland must commit to the goals of the EU's Gender Action Plan, according to which gender equality must be either a significant part or primary target of 85 per cent of all new programmes by 2020. In addition, all actions should aim to promote gender equality.







# Past Development Policy Committee recommendations on gender equality in development cooperation

The Development Policy Committee has for a long time taken a consistent stance on gender equality in Finnish development policy and has called for further action to realise crosscutting goals.

For instance, in its 2006 annual report, the committee called for the mainstreaming of gender equality matters in all areas of development policy. It also expressed the hope that there would be more separate projects for promoting the rights of women and girls.

Two years later, the committee reiterated the point that socially marginalized groups, such as girls and women, should be more comprehensively involved in development through crosscutting themes.

*“When crosscutting themes are taken into account the designing development cooperation in all sectors, we are ensuring in the best possible way that development cooperation benefits the full spectrum of society,”* the committee explained in its 2008 annual report.

But in the same context the committee admits that incorporating crosscutting themes in development cooperation is a challenge and demands constant effort. Crosscutting themes must not remain a mere technical exercise, where separate bits are added about the significance of each theme to the programme or project plans during their implementation.

*“Marginalised groups, such as various minorities, as well as girls and women, must be included as equal actors in the whole process of development cooperation, both in planning and implementation and monitoring,”* the committee stated.

In addition to Finland’s bilateral development cooperation, the committee encouraged ensuring that crosscutting themes (including sexual health) are taken into account in the EU too.

*“During its Presidency of the EU, Finland must ensure that the inclusion of crosscutting themes draws on Finnish expertise,”* the committee stated in its 2006 annual report.

The committee has also provided guidelines on these issues for Finland’s work within the UN.

*“Finland needs to more clearly define its goals in the UN. Promoting gender equality is a natural area of activity. Finland must in particular support the implementation of the gender perspective as a crosscutting theme in all aspects of the UN’s work,”* the committee declared in its 2007 annual report.

In the same annual report it called for hastening national guidance on women, peace and security, based on UN Resolution 1325.

The committee has long been concerned that Finnish policies and pledges on promoting gender equality are not reflected sufficiently in practical development cooperation and resource allocation.

*“The MFA must increase financial and human resources, monitoring mechanisms, and training on crosscutting themes,”* the committee stated in its 2006 annual report.

In its 2015 annual report, the committee estimated that the pledges made in the government programme and the priorities of the Development Policy Programme would not be unequivocally reflected in the allocation of funding for development cooperation. The challenge facing crosscutting goals, on the other hand, remained one of verifying conclusive results.

In the same annual report, the committee called for long-term development policy, as development policy programme per government term of office does not serve long-term goals or provide adequate guidance to achieve them. It was therefore important that the main objectives and principles of development policy, such as the promotion of gender equality, be stabilised on a more permanent level. One option would be to have a Development Cooperation Act.



## How is Finland furthering gender equality in developing countries during the current government term?

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The UN's 2030 Agenda guides Finland's work on gender equality in developing countries. The National Action Plan for Sustainable Development (2017) and the Government Report on Development Policy (2016) also detail our commitments during the present government term. Financial support for gender equality work has nevertheless been reduced.

Unless the status of women is strengthened and there is gender equality, development will not be sustainable. This belief has been at the core of sustainable development from the outset.<sup>14</sup> The resolution for the UN action programme for sustainable development, or the 2030 Agenda, stipulates that the target of the whole programme and its 17 goals is to make human rights actual for everyone, achieve equality between the sexes, and strengthen the rights and opportunities of all women and girls. This policy therefore applies to all sustainable development and not just to individual goals. It is also binding on all UN member states. The 2030 Agenda requires systematic gender mainstreaming in the implementation of all goals and sub-goals of sustainable development.<sup>15</sup> However, the most prominent role is that of the separate goal of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (Goal 5). In addition, the status and rights of women and girls are included as specific targets in most of the other goals.

The main aims of the previous UN Millennium Development Goals, the status and rights of women, and population conferences are combined under the gender equality goal of sustainable development. The goal establishes the promotion of gender equality and the strengthening of the rights and opportunities of women and girls as a universal aspiration. There are six targets that spell out this main goal. They prohibit all forms of discrimination against women and girls everywhere (5.1). There is a target on the prohibition of all forms of violence against women and girls, such as human trafficking and sexual and other exploitation in public or private spheres (5.2). In a similar vein, there is the demand to end all harmful practices such as child and forced marriages and female genital mutilation (5.3). The targets also call for the recognition of unpaid care and domestic work and the provision of public services, infrastructure, and social protection policies. The targets also seek to promote shared responsibility within the household and family as nationally appropriate (5.4). Women must also be guaranteed full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life (5.5). It is particularly significant that despite disagreement among the UN members, the gender equality goal was given a target whereby states should ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights in accordance with

the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences (5.6).

The gender equality goal also contains three additional rights-based targets. These state that all countries must carry out reforms giving women equal access to financial resources, ownership and management of land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance, and natural resources in accordance with national laws (5.a). States are also required to enhance the use of enabling technologies, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women (5.b). The objective is also to

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develop and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

Gender equality is also linked to more than 30 sustainable development targets. The targets are interlinked and the fulfilment of different ones depends on the realisation of others. Finland pursued this approach at the Agenda 2030 negotiations. Finland's activity has also played a distinctive part in terms of the substance of the targets. For example, it carried out important work on the goal on health to ensure that the sexual and reproductive health target (3.7) was included, despite political resistance. The target stipulates that by 2030 countries

<sup>14</sup> *Our Common future, the Brundtland Report 1987; and the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21*

<sup>15</sup> *Agenda 2030, paragraph 20.*

have to ensure access to the sphere of sexual and reproductive services, such as family planning, information and education, and ensure that reproductive health is included in national strategies and programmes. Finland played a prominent part in the Agenda 2030 negotiations so that this design remained in force. Finland was able to take advantage of the significant international work on this theme that President Tarja Halonen had carried out earlier.

Gender equality is also strongly linked to action against climate change (Goal 13), itself a crosscutting goal of Finnish development policy. Finland supports gender mainstreaming in international environmental and climate agreements and national climate plans.

## The Finnish 2030 Agenda plan obligates gender equality promotion

Finland and other developed countries need to take into account the goals of the 2030 Agenda in both their national planning and as partners with developing countries. As a partner, Finland consistently supports the efforts of developing countries to promote the goals and refrains from activities that might impact on them negatively. Development cooperation and funding is a crucial instrument for this. It is even more important that Finland's national and international actions are in line with the 2030 Agenda goals. Finland is committed to this too. The main responsibility for sustainable development and its financing rests with each country itself. Particular attention should therefore be paid to the financial resources required for sustainable development, such as tax revenue and international trade and investment in developing countries, and the Development Policy Committee's previous review (2017) provides recommendations on this. This particularly requires international economic policy that takes account of the poorest countries, trade that generates development, country-specific tax reporting by corporations, transparency, the eradication of corruption, as well as good governance and income redistribution policies at national and international level.

Finland's sustainable development policy is based on the government's 2030 Agenda action plan, the *Government Report on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable*

*Development. Sustainable Development in Finland – Long-term, Coherent and Inclusive Action*. This was completed in 2017, and it covers Finland's national and international activities for promoting sustainable development during the current government term. The implementation framework – perseverance, consistency and inclusiveness – and the monitoring and evaluation system is defined until 2030. The context is society's commitment to sustainable development in *The Finland We Want by 2050*.

Finland's development policy is part of this whole. It is based on the government report *Finland's Development Policy - One World, Common Future - Towards Sustainable Development*, adopted in February 2016. The policy preparation took place simultaneously with the finalisation and approval of the UN 2030 Agenda. The priorities for the development policy were, however, already set out in the 2015 government programme. The first of these concerns strengthening the rights and status of girls and women. Unlike the society's commitment to sustainable development, Finland's development policy lacks a corresponding long-term vision, which detracts from its systematic nature and coherence.

Under the 2030 Agenda, the focal points domestically are “A carbon-neutral and resource-wise Finland” and “A non-discriminating, equal and competent Finland”. Finland is committed to furthering these themes globally and, among other things, to supporting climate action by developing countries in line with the Paris Climate Agreement. In this context Finland emphasises the importance of all citizens, in particular the scope for the participation of women and youth in climate work and related decision-making. Correspondingly, Finland is committed to taking climate change into account in all development policies. A significant proportion of the €530 million financial investments available during the government term is to go to climate financing, and so should take account of the role of women and youth. According to the action plan, private sector development funders, such as Finnfund, will promote this trend. About 60 per cent of funding support from Finnfund will be directed to climate projects. Finland does not, however, stipulate a gender equality perspective in the planning or funding of activities. Neither does it systematically measure the impact of these activities on women's status and rights. Additionally, the emphasis on financial support is likely to have a bearing on the distribution of Finnish climate financing between adaptation and mitigation, with a fall



in the contribution of funding for adapting to the impacts of climate change in contravention of the Paris Treaty.

The government action plan strengthens Finland's commitment to non-discrimination, equality and the promotion of the status of women and girls globally. The plan raises these themes as a "key driver" for foreign and security policy advocacy. The plan does not specify where responsibility lies, but most of the goals fall under development cooperation and policy. However, the action plan makes plain the centrality of foreign and security policy and trade policy in achieving sustainable development. The shared theme for all external relations sectors is human rights. The plan also stipulates that Finland conducts an active human rights policy that emphasises non-discrimination, equality and participation rights.

As examples of important themes, the action plan highlights participation in policy decisions, women's economic empowerment (including entrepreneurship, leadership, and the right to training), ensuring sexual and reproductive health and rights for everyone, and preventing violence against women and girls. Finland also urges the implementation of UN Resolution 1325 (Women, peace and security), including women's participation in peace mediation. The plan stresses that Finland will concentrate its UN funding on the most prominent UN agencies in terms of the status of women and girls, whose main task is supporting developing countries in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and of which Finland is among the main funders.

The government action plan also supports the goal of achieving decent work throughout the world as part of sustainable, inclusive growth and employment for all. This includes measures to eradicate forced labour and child labour, particularly in its worst forms. Also, equality and non-discrimination in employment and equal pay are to be promoted. The same applies to employees' freedom of association and occupational health and safety. These goals are supported by the UN system (ILO) and, alongside from at the global level, in EU activity and development cooperation, as well as in some trade policy instruments. The goal is also to support the development of national legislation on labour and their implementation so that they comply with international standards throughout the world.

The section of the action plan on key measures refers to the implementation of the development policy report and the long-term compliance with the values

and principles of Finnish development cooperation. In addition, the action plan stipulates that, with respect to development finance, Finland's commitment to increase Official Development Assistance GNI to 0,7 per cent and to target at least 0,2 per cent of GNI for the LDCs should be taken into account.<sup>16</sup>

National indicators have been created for the Finnish commitment to sustainable development in Finland and the implementation of Agenda 2030. Follow-up includes global labour-related indicators concerning, for instance, preventing child labour. One indicator concerns Finland's climate financing. However, the assortment of indicators does not monitor the contribution of development finance allocated for women and girls, and this focus is not directly reflected in national monitoring.

## What does Finland seek in promoting gender equality?

According to the government report, the top development policy priority is the strengthening of the rights and status of women and girls. It is to support in particular Goal 5 of the UN 2030 Agenda, which aims for gender equality and the strengthening of the rights

The government action plan strengthens Finland's commitment to non-discrimination, equality and the promotion of the status of women and girls globally.

<sup>16</sup> Government Report on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Sustainable Development in Finland – Long-term, Coherent and Inclusive Action Prime Minister's Office Publications 11/2017

and opportunities of women and girls. The report posits gender inequality as one of the biggest problems in developing countries. Addressing the situation would strengthen the whole of society and help to realise the other development goals.

According to the report, Finland will provide active support so that:

- Women and girls are better educated and skilled
  - Women and girls have access to primary education, mid-level education and vocational and higher education that is comprehensive, high quality, and attentive to the gender perspective.
- Women and girls can use high-quality basic services more frequently
  - Women and girls have better access to high-quality basic services, and especially as users of health, education and social services.
- Women and girls have an increasing influence on political decision-making and participation in economic activity
  - women and girls have better opportunities and skills to participate in political decision-making and economic activities in the areas of business, resource use, and economy.
- The rights of more women and girls to make decisions about themselves are realised and violence and abuse against them diminishes
- The independence of women and girls and the right to decide on their own affairs will increase when their awareness and the opportunity to demand their own rights and make decisions about themselves improve. Men and boys will be increasingly involved in promoting gender equality. In addition, actions and services targeting violence and abuse against women and girls and the fight against trafficking in human beings will be improved.

## How does Finland undertake to act for the goals to be reached?

The development policy report states that Finland's approach hinges on activities that *have a direct impact on gender equality and on the know-how and opportunities of women and girls*. Finland will promote the capability of countries to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of women and girls, including sexual and reproductive health and rights. This includes removing obstacles to their realisation. Finland also commits to supporting the private sector in developing countries and its international partners so that they improve the scope for women to be employed, work as entrepreneurs, own property and participate in the economy.<sup>17</sup> Finland supports organisations promoting the role of women. The report also highlights the EU's international influence as an important channel. Finland pledges to advocate for international standards and practices to form a sustainable basis for the realisation of women's and girls' rights.

The development policy report of the current government term is intended as an independent policy orientation, and is not backed up by an action plan. It is very general in nature. The report does not mention gender mainstreaming and does not require gender analysis or the use of the OECD's gender markers. However, the section on the underlying principles and sustainable values of Finland's development policy stipulates that the design and implementation of all activities take into account Finnish values and principles and international obligations. This is done regardless of which sector or where and by whom development policy or cooperation is done. The values and principles generate long-term orientations for activity and they carry them over from one government to another. Gender equality and human rights are part of this very broad set of issues, making it highly challenging to monitor them.

Although its goal setting emphasises the word *rights*, the development policy report does not expand on this. The report refers to the UN Declaration of Human Rights and defines human rights as a key objective of development policy. The aim is to "strengthen the capacity of individuals and authorities to promote human rights as well as to assure that development cooperation is not discriminatory and people have an opportunity to

participate in decision-making". In the context of sustainable values, children's rights are commonly mentioned, but this is not amplified. The goal is termed "The rights and status of women and girls", according to the 2030 Agenda's goal. However, girls' rights are not defined, rather they remain part of the rights of women or children. Girls are also mentioned alongside women in the context of crosscutting goals. However, there is very little deeper scrutiny of the situation of girls, and their special needs pass unnoticed in the report.

In terms of achieving the goals of sustainable development, it is crucial to note that traditional equality work, in which all women or girls are addressed as a cohesive group, is ineffective. It does not tackle those factors that maintain discrimination and inequality. Finland's development policy must therefore be able to apply a more systematically so-called intersectional approach, where the different dimensions of inequality - including gender, age, disability, social status and wealth - are examined together. Finland's non-discrimination and equality laws also support this approach.

Finland's objectives are ambitious in inception and fully cover the various dimensions of the 2030 Agenda's gender equality goals (see p. 27 & p. 30). The idea is that Finland's actions will support developing countries' own efforts towards these goals. But the report does not explain in more detail how and on what scale Finland is to promote them. It also does not specify what kind of change and impact the goals seek or how such change will be monitored.

In its opening section on the priority areas of development policy, the report emphasises that equality is taken into account in all development policy. A specific theme is the protection and rights of women in conflict situations and their participation in the resolution of conflicts in accordance with international conventions and treaties and UN decisions, including Resolution 1325. But the report does not stipulate *how* Finland will concern itself with taking equality into account or monitor it in the case of women and girls. The worry is that Finland promises plenty of things that it cannot in practice advance or for which there simply are not the resources. ■

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## Development Policy Committee recommendations:

- Progress on gender equality goals should be reported to Parliament in terms of overall development policy as part of the monitoring of the 2030 Agenda and reporting on development policy outcomes.
- Finland's gender equality objectives require more strategic guidance to be implemented in the development policy report. The MFA should clarify what are the specific means and resources Finland seeks for its objectives.
- The government should set a timetable for Finland to raise official development assistance to 0,7 per cent of GNI and to direct at least 0,2 per cent of GNI to the least developed countries.
- When reporting on performance, Parliament will need to be told how much money has been allocated to each priority and how each focal supports the equality objective. Development policy outcomes in different sectors should be differentiated by gender.
- The MFA must ensure that its development policy takes into account simultaneously different dimensions of inequality, such as gender, age, disability, social status and wealth. Girls should be more prominently and clearly defined as part of the first priority of development policy and of the implementation of other priorities too. Finland should draw up detailed guidelines for girls to clarify this.





Women and girls in light of the facts:

# how does Finland realise its aims?

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The overall picture of the current government is contradictory. Finland places women and girls at the forefront of development policy, but at the same time funding for this priority area has been cut by over 40 per cent. Finland is pursuing ambitious objectives with even fewer human resources. Ambition often atrophies in practice, and gender equality does not receive sufficient coherence in all development cooperation, such as financial investments.

## 4a) Contradictory starting point: women and girls are a priority area but funding collapsed

### An important priority area requires clear guidelines

The purpose of the four priority areas underpinning Finnish development policy is to hone the development policy profile and help concentrate activity around them. These priority areas took effect in spring 2016, with the start of the implementation of the development policy report. The four priority areas constitute an important means of political communication domestically and internationally. Foregrounding the status and rights of women and girls as the first priority area itself sends out a clear message. But the report does not officially stipulate it as the most important issue, though in discussing the status and rights of women and girls it is often referred to as the first priority of development policy. This also raises expectations, the realisation of which has been considerably hampered by the fact that the priorities were announced in a situation where the government had six months previously cut the development cooperation budget by a total of €300 million. Because of the cuts, Finland's resources for gender equality promotion in developing countries declined alarmingly from the previous government period. And yet at the same time the level of intent was augmented.

The Development Policy Committee has previously argued that the importance of the priority areas should be reflected in funding, human resources, and Finland's policy advocacy work. The priority areas will not be realised of their own accord; they require planning and guidance. This in turn entails leadership and robust ownership, including within government. The goal is to monitor and evaluate priorities continuously.<sup>18</sup> They are to be regularly reported on to Parliament and to the general public in a transparent and clear manner. The government is committed to making its first outcomes report to Parliament by the end of 2018. This will also cover the promotion of women's and girl's status.

According to the development policy report, the priority areas are exhibited in leadership, development cooperation programmes and influencing strategies, as well as in guidance and results monitoring. However, no plan has been made public for this that would make it easier to monitor the priority areas from outside the MFA. It is therefore hard to get an overall perspective on the priority area. Although the development policy report provides a framework, it does not guide staff in their practical work.<sup>19</sup> The OECD has also drawn attention to this shortcoming in the peer review on Finland.<sup>20</sup> According to the OECD, a clear strategy would also help to clarify the goals set for the priority areas, facilitate their assessment and help Finland to cooperate with other donors and target countries.

In practice, the MFA has set the goal of realising the priority areas and their monitoring directly within the country programmes and impact plans without a view of the priority areas in toto. When preparing individual programmes, personnel use their own discretion prior to the drawing up of instructions and training materials of the current report. This includes devising instructions on gender analysis and crosscutting themes, but these guidelines lack compulsoriness and systematic training and application.<sup>21</sup> Without consistent instruction and guidance, the application of the gender perspective largely depends on the competence and interpretation of the individual MFA official. This can undermine work performance and monitorability nationally and internationally.

Apart from the fact that the status and rights of women and girls constitute their own priority area, they are also a crosscutting goal. The guidelines for crosscutting goals were to be updated during spring 2018 at the time of writing. This is needed because these goals have remained more or less the same across government terms of office and they are linked to the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

<sup>18</sup> Finland's Development Policy in 2017: How is Finland strengthening the economies, private sector and taxation capacity of developing countries? <https://www.kehityspoliittinentoimikunta.fi/en>

<sup>19</sup> Promoting gender equality in development policy – survey conducted for the Development Policy Committee's 2018 annual report, FIANT Consulting Ltd, 2018.

<sup>20</sup> OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews Finland 2017.

<sup>21</sup> The study commissioned by the Development Policy Committee also expressed the respondents' desire to arrive at concrete guidelines for carrying out gender analysis.

## Clarification of priorities underway

The internal “clarification of priorities” underway in the MFA is in order to respond to the difficulties of implementation and guidance during 2018. The goal of the priority area on women and girls is being clarified and demarcated. The point is to explicate various types of development goals (output, outcome and impact), plus the interrelationship of methods and activities. The women and girls priority area will also be scrutinised as part of overall development policy priorities. In this context, guidance on the priority areas is to be updated. The ministry will simultaneously develop results and statistical monitoring. The aim is that the further monitoring of the various priorities and their sub-objectives is strengthened, so that gender equality is consistently visible consistently in all Finland's impact strategies (see Chapter 4b). The priority areas lack theme-specific management; hence there is an effort at the MFA to bolster thematic cooperation and guidance. At the level of Finland's external relations, this work is also supported by an active Ambassador for Global Women Issues and Gender Equality (see chapter 4b).

The clarification of the priority areas is a crucial part of broader procedural reform in development policy. The aim includes strengthening strategic guidance and cooperation and to lighten the administration of development cooperation to achieve better results. This would allow staff the time to concentrate more on development policy content instead of on administrative tasks.

The Development Policy Committee considers the process currently underway particularly important. At the same time, it is worrying that the work to clarify the priority areas is being pursued in the run-up to a change of government. It is therefore important to ensure that the improvements that are instigated carry through to the next government term as part of a more long-term implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The aim must be that the work is based on international best practices in line with OECD and EU recommendations. The MFA's gender equality strategy (2003-2007) also provides useful material for the clarification work, such as on Finnish non-discrimination and equality laws.

The MFA has also wanted to ensure the continuity of work across government terms of office. In the discussion on long-term development policy, and concerning its own development work, the ministry has considered

it necessary that, regardless of changes in government, it should exercise longer-term guidance of the work of officialdom. Such clarification work is an important development and learning process that lays the basis for more sustained planning and persistent implementation. Its results could be used superlatively in drawing up the next development policy programme and in the implementation of the development policy during the forthcoming government term. According to the MFA, the clarification process is based on an outcome approach and has utilised the best international practices in the frameworks of the OECD and the EU. The changes would bring Finland closer to the approaches and concepts of other key development partners. This would also improve the coordination among ministries in implementing legislation on gender equality and non-discrimination.

Because the issue concerns internal and on-going reform efforts in the MFA, its external assessment at this stage is not easy. However, the Development Policy Committee considers it important that, in addition to the above-mentioned development priority areas, the ministry consider girls more systematically when formulating goals and guidelines. The ministry does not have separate guidelines or strategies for girls; rather girls' rights are seen as an adjunct to women's rights.

Boosting the status and rights of girls requires that we deconstruct the phrase *women and girls*, because gender equality work aimed at women does not always promote girl's rights. Girls are discriminated against not only by their gender but also by their age, curtailing their chances of deciding about their own body and future. Like women, girls do not form a homogenous group. Rather, the situation of girls belonging to different age groups and different sections of the population must be considered distinctly. For example, the UN Population Fund Unfpa has called for attention to be paid to the human rights of girls between the ages of 10 and 14, including the realisation of reproductive rights and sexual health care needs. This includes, for example, health education instruction at school.

On the other hand, we cannot simply assume that work on children's rights would directly improve girls' equality, as it does not necessarily intercede in discriminatory social norms affecting girls. The Convention on the Rights of the Child was drawn up to be gender neutral. Therefore, it is important to discern social norms from the perspective of both boys and girls. And it is »





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important that girls are taken into account in all development cooperation, not just in, say, the education or health sectors. This is the case in Nepal, for example, with water and sanitation projects. We should note that the food security of developing countries relies for food production mostly on small farmers, the majority of whom are women. However, these same rural girls and women tend to suffer most from food and nutritional insecurity. In the case of food security projects, teenage girls also require special attention. These needs, among other things, should be taken into account in updating the crosscutting goals.

## Budget cuts hit gender equality work

The prioritising of the status of women and girls in Finland's development policy took place in tandem with the most sweeping cuts to development cooperation, historically and in relative terms. In total, the government slashed €300-million from actual development cooperation. The proportion of GDI given to development cooperation was 0,59 per cent in 2014, but the following year it fell to 0,55 per cent and then to 0,44 per cent in 2016. It is estimated that the GDI share for 2017 was 0,41 per

cent and that it will subsequently drop to 0,38 per cent.

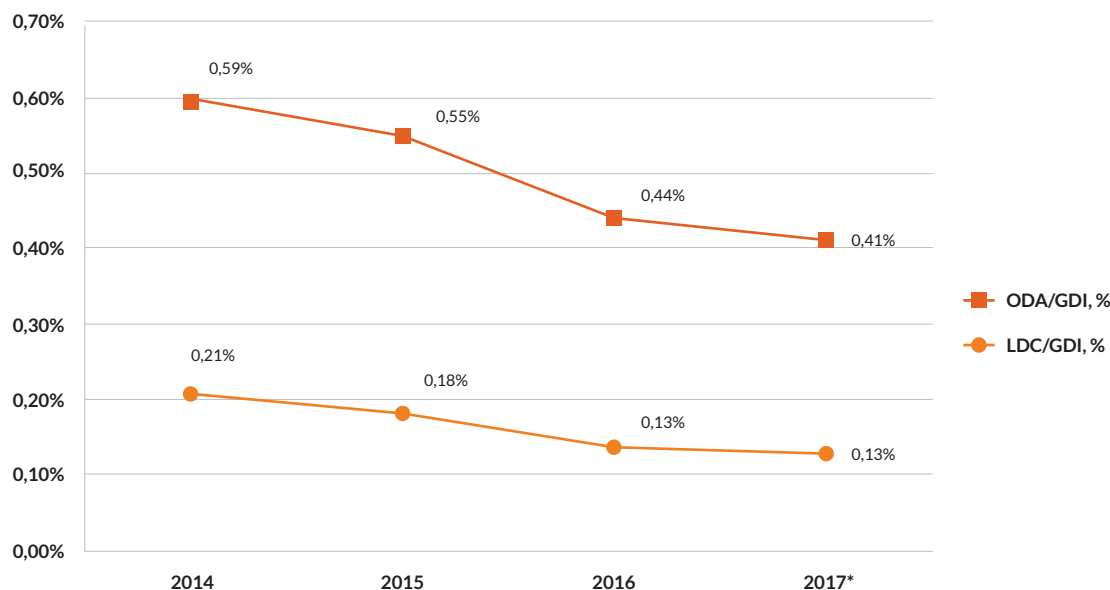
The trend is sharply at odd with the 2030 Agenda and its guiding goal (17) on financing, as well as with the commitments of the Addis Ababa Development Finance Conference. Under these the richest countries pledged to work as global partners with poorer countries and to support them on the path of sustainable development by directing 0,7 per cent of their GDI to development cooperation and 0,2 per cent to assist the poorest countries.<sup>22</sup> Although Finland has reaffirmed its commitment to these goals in the government programme and report, there is still no timeline for the government to realise the goal on financing. The recent peer review by the OECD DAC recommends that Finland develop a road map to achieve its goals. This would demonstrate that Finland seriously aspires to the goals of sustainable development and would increase its international credibility.

Development cooperation at present is less focused on the poorest countries than previously. Contrary to international commitments, the share of targeted payments to least developed countries (LDCs) declined to 0,13 per cent of GNI during 2016-2017 compared to 0,18 per cent in 2015. The change is troubling, as in 2012-2014 Finland's contributions were in line with the international level of recommendations for the poorest countries. The issue has received attention in the unanimous budget statements of Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee and in the OECD's most recent peer review on Finland's development policy.<sup>23</sup> The Development Policy Committee has also pronounced on this on several occasions. It is important that development cooperation helps the poorest people unreached by other cash flows.

As a result of the cuts, Finland has been diverging further from other Nordic and EU countries. Actually, 23 of the 28 EU member states increased their development cooperation budgets in 2016, and the EU, together with its member countries, remains the world's largest development cooperation donor. Germany, in addition to Denmark, Luxembourg, Sweden and the United Kingdom also achieved the international goal of channelling 0,7 per cent of its GDI to development cooperation.

Refugee reception costs are also reflected in the financing of development cooperation. In 2016, alongside actual development cooperation, other development cooperation, meaning projects other than those financed by the MFA in developing countries, increased by 50 per cent. Within Finland, the €118-million refugee

## ODA and LDC disbursements as a percentage of GDI 2014-2017



Source: Ministry for Foreign Affairs' Unit for Administrative and Legal Development Cooperation Matters

reception costs of 2016 were more than 200 per cent higher than the previous year.

Although Finland calculates refugee costs in accordance with the OECD guidelines for only the first year of entry and those with a positive asylum decision, Finland was in the light of its own statistics the largest recipient country in terms of its own development aid. The sum for 2016 corresponded to the aggregate development budget of the six largest partners.<sup>24</sup> After the number of refugees started to decline in 2017, the reception costs fell by about 40 per cent over the previous year to €69-million. This corresponds roughly to the support for the two largest aid recipients.

The cuts were made in full right from the start of 2016. The rapid schedule did not take account of new priorities or their funding needs. Neither did it allow for performance-based discretion, nor transition periods. MFA staff, diplomatic missions, and development organisations had to adapt to the situation quickly. The funding cuts severed cooperative relations, and the operational reorganisation and planning took considerable time away from carrying out actual development cooperation.

This situation is aggravated by staff cuts and frequent staff turnover. The staff deficit is particularly evident in the focus on women and girls. Despite the special emphasis, the number of advisors has not increased, but

tasks have been divided among several bodies. There is one person at the Development Policy Department who acts as the advisor on gender equality issues. This unsustainable situation is also picked up on in the OECD peer review of Finland.

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The impacts of the cuts have yet to be systematically studied, but they hit the priority area of women and girls from several angles. Bilateral cooperation and CSO subsidies dropped by about 40 per cent. The cut significantly reduced Finnish activities directly in partner countries. Aid to UN organisations also shrank, by almost 60 per cent. Top of the list for funding cuts were the UNDP (-94 per cent), the World Bank and, especially crucial in terms of promoting the status of girls, Unicef (-65 per cent). Despite having a special emphasis, Finland also cut support for the UN Population Fund, UNFPA, (-43 per cent) and the gender equality agency UN Women

<sup>23</sup> OECD *Development Co-operation Peer Reviews Finland 2017*; Committee for the Future, memorandum TuVM1/2017 vp, VNS 1/2017 vp, and the annual report of the Development Policy Committee for 2013, plus various statements by the committee over the last five years. See: [www.kehityspoliittinentoimikunta.fi](http://www.kehityspoliittinentoimikunta.fi)

<sup>24</sup> Compare: *KEPA Cuts to development cooperation complicate life for millions of people 26.9.2017* (in Finnish) and *The impact of Finland's development policy on realising the rights of women and girls* (in Finnish), report by Pia Lavila commissioned by Plan International Finland and the Finland National Committee for UN Women, available from these organisations.



(-29 per cent)<sup>25</sup>. The OECD peer review on Finland also states that Finland's resources do not meet the goals set on gender equality.<sup>26</sup> This is also by and large the view of the staff at the MFA.<sup>27</sup>

In putting the cuts into effect, the MFA allocated the remaining support to the organisations that it considered most important in terms of the priority area. The ambit of the cuts also extended to organisations that play an important role in promoting women's and girls' status and rights, such as the World Health Organization (WHO). Finland halted its support for them altogether. Support for agencies that are important from a gender equality perspective, such as the UN Environment Programme, UNEP, or the Consultation Group on International Agricultural Research, CGIAR, was also cut.

Finland's support for girls and women in developing countries decreased alarmingly because of the cuts compared to the previous government. Overall funding plummeted by as much as 44 per cent: in 2014 funding was €536,8-million while in 2016 it was only €298,7-million. The magnitude of the drop depends on the method of calculation and the method of classifying the projects and activities, to which we will return later in this chapter.

According to the OECD's gender markers, in 2012 Finland directed 39 per cent of its *bilateral* funding to gender equality work. In 2014, this was 44 per cent, increasing the next year to 50 per cent. The government's budget proposal for 2017, on the other hand, put the *total* amount of development cooperation devoted to promoting gender equality at 37 per cent in 2015 and 32 per cent in 2016.<sup>28</sup>

It should be noted that projects approved under this government term, in which women's and girls' status and rights are the *primary* goal, account for only about 10 per cent of the total development cooperation funding.<sup>29</sup> Although the funding percentage does not in itself give a full picture of the situation, it has received attention in economic and action plans within the MFA for the coming years. The sub-goals' figure is considerably higher.

There is currently no statistical information available on how Finland's support is divided between the various sub-goals of the priority on women and girls. We have presented them in more detail on page 30 of this report, and they concern education, basic services, political and economic influence, and the right to make decisions

about themselves. The shortfall is important, because without clear statistics, it is hard to assess whether Finland's support is evenly distributed to all these areas or whether it matches the objectives set or the weight of political rhetoric. So it is important that the problem of data collection and statistics is identified and attempted to be resolved.

For example, sexual and reproductive health and rights, under the goal on health, are given priority by Finland, and yet funding allocated to it does not correspond at all to its political profile. According to a calculation by European civil society organisations working on sexual and reproductive health and rights, Finland's funding for sexual health dropped by 57 per cent between 2016 and 2017. Funding for 2015 was €57,8-million, while the figure for 2016 was just €24,9-million. The main factor explaining the nosedive is the cuts to development cooperation and, consequently, to the UN Population Fund.<sup>30</sup>

The OECD peer review takes up Finland's development cooperation related to education and water and sanitation. Over 80 per cent of these projects support gender equality in the reported gender markers. This is a positive direction. On the other hand, gender-disaggregated information is not yet available for all of the priorities.

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<sup>25</sup> However, Finland remains the fourth biggest funder of UN Women.

<sup>26</sup> OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews: Finland, OECD 2017, p.18.

<sup>27</sup> *Promoting gender equality in development policy* – survey conducted for the Development Policy Committee's 2018 annual report, FIAN'T Consulting Ltd, 2018.

<sup>28</sup> Budget proposal 2018.

<sup>29</sup> Granted for 1.6.2015 – 31.12.2016.

<sup>30</sup> *European Donor Support to Sexual & Reproductive Health & Family Planning: Trends Analysis 2016-17*, Countdown 2030 Europe 2018.



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

## Difficulty in getting an overall view of gender equality funding

The Finnish reporting model makes it hard to assess the amount of funding for gender equality targets. The country has yet to affirm its compliance with the OECD's gender markers and related guidelines, renewed in 2016 and which the EU insists on, and instead reporting is done according to the old system. However, it is not possible to arrive at a clear picture of funding without a uniform and reliable classification and statistics based on gender analysis. It would require the correct use of, and sufficient proficiency in, the updated OECD gender marker system. At the MFA too the need for as accurate and reliable statistics as possible is considered important.

The results of the survey by the Development Policy Committee confirm this. Particular attention should be paid to the preparation and results of gender analysis. According to the survey, the vast majority of respondents did not think that gender analysis would be systematically carried out in the design of projects and programmes.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, a clear decision needs to be taken by the MFA on the introduction of the guidelines and gender markers, and action in accordance with it.

The overall picture of financing is also confused by the fact that Finland reports simultaneously in two different ways. In its international reporting it complies with the OECD method of calculation, reflecting the portion of funding devoted to gender equality. But with domestic statistics the MFA uses the so-called KEPO markers to monitor the allocation of funding on the goals of Finland's development cooperation priorities. They were created during the current government to monitor development policy priorities. With the KEPO-marker system, a project is either totally included or excluded depending on whether its main or partial goal is to promote equality in one of the development policy areas concerning women's and girls' status and rights.

Finland uses the KEPO markers in its domestic statistical reporting because it wants to include the general funding of international gender equality organisations. The OECD system doesn't permit this. Under its gender marker criteria, statistics only include bilateral development cooperation that has the promotion of gender equality as its primary or significant goal. With multi-lateral cooperation, statistics include only specific projects promoting gender equality, but not general funding support to agencies. This is so even in cases where the main task of the agency is to promote equality (e.g. UN Women). Finland now calculates general support, for

<sup>31</sup> *Promoting gender equality in development policy – survey conducted for the Development Policy Committee's 2018 annual report*, FIAANT Consulting Ltd, 2018.

instance for UN Women and the UN Population Fund, in the KEPO markers for gender equality funding. Finland compiles statistics on, for example, additional funding to the African Development Fund and the World Bank's International Development Agency for supporting the poorest countries as promoting gender equality overall.

The statistical compilation method is problematic because the figures of the two parallel statistics' gathering systems differ from one another significantly.

Inaccurate interpretations are possible if the statistics user is unclear about which system is in question. This makes it difficult to discern the overall picture of gender equality funding and supplies inaccurate information to domestic development policy decision-making and communications. It is therefore important that the different methods and purposes of compiling statistics are made clear to users, including outside the MFA.

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## Development Policy Committee recommendations:

- The amount of funding allocated to gender equality work and the relative percentage of it should be increased in line with Finland's international commitments. The total amount of development funding must be raised to 0,7 per cent of GNI, with at least 0,2 per cent of GNI allocated for least developed countries. In line with the EU Gender Action Plan, gender equality must be either a significant part or principal target of 85 per cent of all new Finnish programmes and projects by 2020.
- The priority area needs to be supported by a clear plan and guidance to facilitate practical application. It should be obligatory for such guidance to use the OECD gender markers, renewed in 2016, in all development cooperation planning and reporting.
- Guidance must involve the coherent implementation of gender analysis as the basis of action and compilation of statistics. The statistics should provide a clear picture of the targeted resources, actions, and results attained. The human resources for compiling statistics must also be strengthened.
- The monitoring of the priority area on women and girls also requires differentiated information on activities that promote its various sub-goals (education, basic services, economic and political empowerment, and strengthening self-determination) and their funding within the priority area.
- The MFA should define more clearly how the priority area on women and girls is implemented as a cross-cutting goal as part of overall development policy. This requires clear mandatory guidance for all development cooperation actors. Girls must not remain an adjunct of women; they also require special attention, including as a crosscutting theme.



## 4b) Finland is conspicuous on the development policy front – except in finance

### Gender equality in Finland's international advocacy work

The development policy report gives places greater emphasis the systematic and efficacious nature of Finland's international advocacy work. Together with development financing it is an important means of boosting the efforts and policy of development work from different directions. These may be, for instance, negotiations as a member of the EU, UN, and OECD. Coordinated meetings and steering groups of partner countries and the donor community are also channels of influence. Sometimes Finland's external influence transcends domestic processes. The country has been highly active in the OECD's gender network, GENDERNET, and was appointed to its leadership in 2017. This generates positive traction to bring national policy into line with OECD recommendations. Similarly, Finland will champion the implementation of the EU's new Equality Action Plan in the EU and in its external relations, while at the same time seeking to keep up with the pace of reforms required at national level.

Finland's reputation as a reliable partner will not be preserved if financial relationships become unpredictable, the outcomes of cooperation subject to disruptive breaks.

The boards of international organisations and development finance institutions are important vantage points for Finland because of their significant resources and political clout. It is in Finland's interest to check that the organisations improve their results and make optimal use of Finnish funding. This implies, however, that the level of Finnish funding corresponds to that of other actors. Cuts in development cooperation have eroded Finland's way on the boards and weakened the chances of Finns being selected for new tasks. In addition, the cuts have reduced the Finnish authority in discussions between the developing partners and the donor community. The negative impact is reflected beyond development cooperation in broader external relations and commercial partnerships. Finland's reputation as a reliable partner will not be preserved if financial relationships become unpredictable, the outcomes of cooperation subject to disruptive breaks. On the other hand, the scarcity of resources compels us to act more systematically.

### Influencing strategies set goals

Finland has drawn up influencing strategies for key institutions, in which priorities focus on Finland's role in the organisation in question. The fulfilment of the goals set out in the plans is to be monitored annually. In 2017 Finland had influencing strategies for 19 organisations. Those linked directly to the women and girls priority area are UN Women, UNFPA, and Unicef. The key agency in the area of humanitarian aid is OCHA. All influencing strategies for UN agencies contain both Finland's long-term-goals for change and its immediate goals. The long-term goals can include both the development of the organisation itself and points of emphasis on themes related to its activity. The influencing strategies also have definite indicators, means, information sources, and designated stakeholders. For

instance, in UN Women, Finland seeks to ensure that the organisations' long-term activities would emphasise women's leadership and participation in decision-making, including in matters related to peace, security and humanitarian activities. The goals are also the economic empowerment of women, the opportunity for women and girls to live without violence, and the reduction of multiple discrimination by strengthening the status and rights of the most vulnerable, especially women and girls with disabilities. Finland's short-term goal is that the above-mentioned themes be reflected in the UN Women's new Strategic Plan (2018-2021). The second immediate objective is that sexual and reproductive health and rights are taken into account in UN Women's aims and activities. Sexual and reproductive health and rights are a theme that Finland is systematically pursuing in UNFPA and Unicef. According to the influencing strategies, they will be promoted especially in conflict and fragile situations.

Finland's advocacy activity in OCHA emphasises the promotion of gender equality and the improvement of the status of people with disabilities. The goal for long-term change is that the needs and rights of women and girls are systematically taken into account in OCHA's policies and implementation. Another long-term goal is to develop the OCHA's work so that it better responds to the needs of people with disabilities in humanitarian crises, and bolsters disability rights. A new theme emerging in Finland's advocacy is that of strengthening the private sector's role. Somewhat surprisingly, though, sexual and reproductive health and rights are not among the dominant themes of Finnish advocacy.

It is also worth mentioning that in 2016 the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, UNRWA, approved a new gender equality strategy in accordance with Finland's objective. This was important for Finland, as there are special problems in exercising women's rights, health services, and education in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.<sup>32</sup>

With respect to the development banks, it has been highly much appreciated that Finland has highlighted the rights of women and girls as a conspicuous part of the World Bank Group's advocacy work. Finland's long-term goal here is to mainstream a human rights-based approach to the activities of the World Bank Group, to promote the rights and status of women and girls and to improve equal opportunities for people with disabilities. Finland seeks immediate change on a number of levels:

the World Bank's indicative programmes, regional programmes, and the additional financing negotiations of the International Development Agency (IDA), assisting the poorest countries. The advocacy goals include definite indicators, means, sources of information, and designated responsibilities. Finland was also involved in the World Bank Group's Gender Equality Advisory Body. In the World Bank's IDA18 supplementary negotiations, Finland succeeded with its voting group to ensure that gender equality remained a separate theme.

The simultaneous focus in different fora on the specific issues of Finnish importance for sustainable development is a significant positive change. This is shown, for example, in the Finnish humanitarian work and advocacy work at the World Bank. The bank-specific lobbying is naturally dispersed, as the players and goals are varied. For instance, Finland's advocacy work within the African Development Bank highlights sustainable growth and climate change mitigation from the environmental perspective, as well as the development of the education sector. The problem is that gender equality goals are not mentioned in this context. However, in many of the strategies of development finance institutions and in the MFA's advocacy plans, gender equality does figure as a crosscutting goal. In practice, Finland, particularly with the other Nordic countries, addresses gender equality objectives in all development banks in their ownership steering processes. For example, in the African Development Bank, Finland has actively participated in the Nordic voting group in promoting gender equality and funded inter alia the mid-term evaluation of the ADB's gender development strategy. Equality is also a main crosscutting target of cooperation with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

The influencing strategies are specific to each organisation and development bank. In their current form, they lack the crosscutting links between the priority areas of the development policy report and between organisations. The plans should be openly and easily attainable. Different stakeholder groups could be used to prepare them. In its 2017 annual report, the Development Policy Committee suggested that Finland should have a global influencing strategy to further policy transparency and openness. This would facilitate the monitoring of gender equality goals in international advocacy. It would also create pressure to raise the goals at forums where they are not yet sufficiently visible. These include, for

example, Finnish tax policy and the Tax and Development Action Plan. The National Audit Office has also arrived at similar conclusions. According to its audit, the MFA is active in international organisations that receive assistance from Finland, and the challenge is to form an overall picture of a large number of decentralised cooperation between different actors. Coordination and transparency is also desired.<sup>33</sup> According to the MFA, influencing strategies are being remodelled to be more extensive. The plans will also be based more on development policy priority areas and their impact targets. We should note that Finland's advocacy work is not borne solely by the MFA but by the whole government.

## She Decides – Finland at the forefront of the initiative despite the cuts

Sexual and reproductive health and rights have suffered greater setbacks recent years. The Decree signed by US President Donald Trump in 2017 (*Mexico City Policy / Global Gag Rule*) takes away at least \$US 600-million annually from all organisations involved in abortion services or counselling. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is also subject to cuts. As a result, the opportunities for poor women and girls to access the services they need are deteriorating, and there is an increase in unwanted pregnancies, dangerous abortions and maternal mortality. The strained international atmosphere further complicates the lives of women and girls in countries, where the attitudes to the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women are regressive. UNFPA estimated last year that 214 million women do not have access to safe contraception. Most of them live in the poorest countries and communities in the world. In these same areas the largest number of child marriages take place, resulting in underage pregnancies. In developing countries, the poorest 20 per cent of girls give birth to three times more children than those of the richest fifth. Birth rates are particularly high in poor rural areas.

Sexual and reproductive health is therefore widely linked to the goals of sustainable development. In order for a woman to be an empowered member of society, she should have the opportunity to decide on her own body and about when to have a child. The issue is also related

to the development of societies, when families can plan the size of their families and have a moderate number of children they are also able to provide more for childcare and education. The issue links to population growth and environmental issues. The UN's Sustainable Development Goals will not be achieved if family planning services are not attainable.

The *She Decides* movement, set up by the Netherlands, together with Sweden, Denmark and Belgium, brings together various actors such as states, civil society organisations, foundations and businesses. The purpose of the movement is to mobilise political, social, and financial support for the promotion of sexual and reproductive health services and rights. The initiative has been able to collect €390-million so far. The movement seeks to ensure the continuity of organisations' activities and to create a more favourable climate for promoting goals in different countries. Finland also responded swiftly by being among the first countries to join the *She Decides* initiative. Finland does not invest in the separate fund but has redirected funding to organisations offering sexual health promotion and safe abortion, totalling some €20-million. The decision to do so is very important and welcome. At the same time, however, it should be noted that as a result of the budget cuts to development cooperation funding specifically for these organisations has been significantly reduced. For example, the funding cut to UNFPA was over 40 per cent. Finland's financial support should therefore be seen in this context as of symbolic importance. It does not replace the sustained and consistent policy that is expected from a country like Finland. At the same time, it should be noted that this €20 million was not new development cooperation money, rather a transfer within the development cooperation budget.

In addition to funding, the importance of political debate and role models is important for promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights. The basis of the *She Decides* initiative is a manifesto based on the right of women and girls to autonomy. The initiative has pioneers and champions from 36 countries and different backgrounds. The Finnish minister for Foreign Trade and Development Kai Mykkänen and his successor Anne-Mari Virolainen are among them. It is of the utmost importance that the *She Decides* network be an advanced forum for discussion that also has a positive impact on the broader international policy. Countries like Finland have an important role to play in the international

<sup>33</sup> Multilateral development cooperation, report of the National Audit Office 2017 (in Finnish with summary in English)





community's attention to sexual and reproductive health and rights. The same applies to sexual violence against women, and the right of young people to sex education and sexual health services and safe maternity. Minister Mykkänen has pointed out that *"Finland must play a stronger role in political discussions both in the European Union and in the UN. We must speak for those who have no voice."* *She Decides* is requisite because, apart from United States, the conservative states of, among others, Russia, Central Asia, Africa and in the EU are trying to stem the implementation of international human rights conventions and to undermine the UN's equality policy, especially concerning women's and girl's sexual and reproductive health and rights.

## Finland clamours for women's and girl's rights in the EU

The *She Decides* initiative and the international debate on women's and girls' reproductive health and rights have also challenged the European Union. The reform of the common development policy of the EU institutions and member countries also stipulated the consensus

view on this theme. The revised consensus adopted in June 2017 (*The New European Consensus on Our World, Our Dignity*) includes a stronger common take on gender equality as one of the fundamental values of the EU. It is, moreover, a crosscutting legal basis for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The policy also applies to political dialogue with developing countries.

Despite opposition from the conservative EU countries, the revised development vision text reinforces the EU's commitment to combating all forms of discrimination against women (UN CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration, and reproductive health resolutions. At the same time, it condemns violence and harmful practices against women and girls, such as child marriage and genital mutilation. In the spirit of *She Decides*, the EU commits itself to defending the right and responsibility of every person to decide on their sexual and reproductive health without discrimination, violence or coercion. In addition, the EU consensus places women and girls as the central protagonists in promoting development and as key players in humanitarian crises and peace processes. The EU also takes into account the important role of boys and men in promoting equality.<sup>34</sup> The EU Consensus does not refer to the EU Gender Action Plan to

Promote Gender Equality (2016-2020), but at the political level, these two approaches form the basis for gender mainstreaming in development policy.

Finland played an active role in upgrading the EU's development policy. Without the stand taken by like-minded countries, the entry on gender equality would have been considerably narrower in scope. In particular, we should note that despite the opposition of reactionary EU countries, the word *rights* was added with the sexual and reproductive health of women and girls. The addition is politically significant. The voice of conservative EU countries, however, is reflected in the consensus that the paragraph on sexual health and rights is the only one whose goals the European Union is to promote, and not the EU and its member states. It is very important that the Finnish missions cooperate closely with the EU delegations in the implementation of the EU Action Plan on Gender Equality and the implementation of the European Consensus in developing countries.

Finland has continued to exert an influence on matters following the adoption of a new development policy. Together with the Belgian, Dutch, Swedish, Danish and Luxembourg development ministers, Finland directly lobbied the EU Commissioner for Development to increase the EU's funding for sexual and reproductive health, comprehensive family planning, education, counselling, and preventive health programs. The countries have appealed to the Commissioner to use the influence of the EU in the UN and the African Union to promote these goals. Finland's payments to EU development cooperation have, despite the cuts, increased in recent years from €173 million to €211 million.<sup>35</sup> It is therefore highly important to ensure that the development funding granted by Finland contributes to the abovementioned goals.

## Development Policy Committee recommendations:

- In addition to agency-specific influencing strategies, Finland must formulate a global influencing strategy to systematically promote equality goals in different fora. This is requisite for the effective and transparent implementation of sustainable development.
- Finland must continue with its active approach and support other like-minded countries in order to maintain and advance international commitments to sexual and reproductive health and rights. This necessitates both more resources and a continuous effort to influence the development policy in international arenas. In addition to the general goal, Finland could give even greater emphasis to the status of the most vulnerable, as with the right of girls to decide about their own body.
- Finland should lead by example and ensure adequate resources for its operations. Finland needs to bring gender equality to its EU Presidency (2019) as one of the top issues in the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. Gender equality must also be more visible in EU development policy and funding.

<sup>35</sup> The development financing channelled through the EU is tied to EU membership payment obligations, so it has not been possible to subject it to cuts.

## 4c) Finland's development policy channels and gender equality goals

### Finland supports equality in partner countries with varied methods and emphases

According to the development policy report, Finland's development policy aims to promote the ability of countries to respect, protect and promote the rights of women and girls, including sexual and reproductive health and rights. The objective is also to remove barriers to the realisation of rights. Finland must make a direct impact on gender equality and women's and girls' skills and opportunities. Separate projects for development cooperation and the promotion of equality goals in all Finnish programmes are important tools for promoting the goals. But they are not enough. Equality should, in line with commitments, be an essential part of all activities, regardless of sector or actor. It is particularly important to integrate equality into wider policy influence and economic relations in partner countries. Promoting gender equality issues often requires subtle diplomacy, and sensitivity to the cultural environment and development challenges. In addition, the human rights-based approach emphasises women and girls as actors whose own voice and actions are an important force for change. Finland commits itself to this in its development policy report, the practical implementation and consistency of which we will now appraise.

The development country programmes provide a framework for Finland's equality work in the partner countries. They define the goals of cooperation, the forms of support to be used, the monitoring of results and management of risks. The programmes are based on the partner countries' own development plans, supported by Finland in accordance with the development policy report and international commitments. The 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda provides a common ground for cooperation. Cooperation areas will be agreed with other donors. At present Finland has eight country programmes: Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Mozambique, Nepal, Myanmar and

the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Finnish activity in Afghanistan is governed by the report and not a country programme. Because Finland is deciding on its development cooperation in Vietnam, cooperation will continue on the basis of a transition strategy. In addition, there are regional strategies for regional development cooperation in North Africa and the Middle East: Development Cooperation Programme 2017-2020: Middle East and North Africa, and the Finland's Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance Programme 2017-2020 for Syria and Iraq.

The updating of country programmes tries to take changes in the development policy into account. The latest round of updating started with the new Government Report on Development Policy (2016) and ended in March 2017. In practice, a large part of the projects funded by Finland have been launched during previous government periods - and in terms of long-term development cooperation goals this is how it should be. As a result of the new development policy report, a greater part of the health projects launched during this government period are related to sexual and reproductive health. New support is being directed to Somalia, Kenya, Afghanistan, Syria and international non-governmental organisations. Country programmes have also started to be developed on the basis of evaluations.

According to the country programmes' synthesis report (2017), the rights of women and girls are supported in all partner countries, albeit with different emphases and resources. Support is directed to targeted projects, mainstreaming the status of women, and as part of support for education, water and sanitation.<sup>36</sup> Each country programme lists and classifies its development cooperation objectives. They list the themes and priorities of the policy dialogue with the partner country. The dialogue aims are also reflected in the specific performance targets and indicators of the country programmes. The results of the programme are divided into impact, outcome and output. Gender equality is included as a goal in the policy dialogue with the partner countries in country programmes (with the exception of Afghanistan, which has no country



programme). Typically, each programme has two or three main goals aimed at long-term positive change (impact). Gender equality will become the top goal at the country programme level in the country programmes for Nepal, Kenya and Somalia. In Nepal, Finland is striving for permanent change that makes it possible for women and girls and vulnerable groups to enjoy better economic and political inclusion. In Kenya and Somalia, Finland aims at better implementation of the rights of women and girls. In addition, impact-level equality goals have been set at several levels at project and programme level whereby individual projects may be highly ambitious. For example, in Tanzania, gender equality work focuses on the country programme's second outcome area, which aims to promote decision making that is more accountable and inclusive of women. The aim is to promote women's inclusion in social and political decision-making and to increase women's leadership skills in societal work. With regard to Tanzania, the MFA will inspect the results framework so that at least the output level should be a measure of participation in decision-making by women. In Zambia, the long-running ILO Green Jobs project has aimed at creating decent jobs for women.

In other country programmes, the target level is lower. In part this comes down to the differences between countries and the division of labour between the other donor countries. In Afghanistan, Finland's performance targets are the improvement of the quality of the general education system and reduction of the gender gap, reduction maternal and infant mortality, and increase in women's employment opportunities. In Mozambique and Ethiopia, the performance targets are related to increased equality, gender equality and non-discrimination in basic education. In Myanmar monitoring focuses on how women's and girls' rights to access rights are being strengthened. In Zambia and Tanzania, direct performance targets have not been set for gender equality work.<sup>37</sup>

It is possible at present to compile gender-disaggregated information from the country programmes on the women and girls focus of the first target (Women and girls are better educated and more skilled). Under this, information is collected on education sector projects and programmes run in different partner countries. This so-called aggregate indicator measures the number of girls and the proportion of secondary school

learners in control year 1999 for education in the Finnish partner countries. The indicator is one of 11 monitoring instruments for measuring progress in development policy. Gender disaggregated information is also available selectively from other development priorities. The most important indicators are related to women's employment, the number of women-owned enterprises, and the number of female small farmers and food producers in the projects that Finland supports.

The situation in terms of mainstreaming is a challenge, in addition to gaining an overall picture and collecting information from separate projects. The evaluation of performance-based country programmes, completed in autumn 2016, states that country programmes acknowledge the importance of human rights and crosscutting objectives. Various ways to promote them are listed. However, according to the evaluation, there are no tangible goals set for crosscutting objectives. In addition, there is little information on the impact of these measures.<sup>38</sup> There has been an effort to address precisely these problems in the new country programmes.

It would be of paramount importance to promote coherent equality in all activities, especially in countries on which Finland does not have projects supporting gender equality. The OECD Peer Review of Finland (2017) also drew attention to the considerable disparities in the way officials monitoring projects take into account gender equality goals, particularly with regard to mainstreaming. At the country programme level, equality goals are also treated in a nonuniform manner. According to the OECD, this relates to the fact that programmes often lack clear gender equality targets and indicators for monitoring their gains. This makes it hard to keep track of outcomes.<sup>39</sup>

## Finnish funding for gender equality is targeted at fragile states

Fragile states on the list of Finland's partner countries receive quantitatively more targeted funding for gender equality goals.<sup>40</sup> In addition to impoverished and non-functional basic infrastructure, it is usually the case with fragile states that they have undergone a violent external or internal conflict or are living through

<sup>37</sup> Finland's country programmes 2017; and *The impact of Finland's development policy on realising the rights of women and girls* (in Finnish), report by Pia Lavila commissioned by Plan International Finland and the Finland National Committee for UM Women, available from these organisations.

<sup>38</sup> Fölscher, Alta & al. (2016) *Evaluation of Finland's Development Cooperation Country Strategies and Country Strategy Modality. Synthesis Report*. Evaluation Report 2016:3, MFA Finland

<sup>39</sup> *OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews Finland 2017*, pp. 34-35.

<sup>40</sup> The list of fragile states exists and is political in nature. There are, for instance, differences in the OECD and World Bank indexes concerning Ethiopia, Nepal, and Kenya.



a post-conflict 'transition phase'. It may be that conflict persists in some parts of the country or smoulders beneath the surface and undermines the stability of society. The code of conduct concerning Finland's fragile countries draws attention, in particular, to the deterioration of the status of women and girls in these situations. The child and maternal mortality rates are high and the reduction in child mortality has been slower than in other poor countries. Violence against women is more common in fragile states. Sexual violence in conflicts is also a serious problem. It is estimated that, all in all, a third of the population of fragile states are undernourished. Maternal malnutrition harms infant development already during pregnancy and negatively impacts on the entire lifespan. About a third of all HIV infections occur in fragile states. Also, there is not adequate potable water, and accessing it is a problem, which particularly affects women. In addition, there are serious shortcomings in access to basic education for children, especially girls, and the provision of essential health services.

According to statistics reported to the OECD, appropriations for Finland's development cooperation in fragile countries are fairly well targeted for gender equality

work. As much as 81 per cent of the total aid to Afghanistan was entirely or partially targeted in 2016. The figure for 2017 was 71 per cent. The figure is still significant, as Afghanistan is Finland's largest development cooperation partner in light of the funding. In Nepal, the proportion of gender equality work in 2017 will be even higher, up to 90 per cent. The amount grew by 15 percentage points over the previous year. In Kenya, too, the share of gender equality work has increased considerably over the previous year to 62 per cent, from 30 per cent in 2016. In Ethiopia and Somalia, however, the percentage has declined: in Somalia from 64 per cent to 49 per cent, and in Ethiopia from 68 per cent to 56 per cent.

Finland has also supported Afghanistan, Nepal and Kenya to develop their own action programmes to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (Women, Peace and Security). In addition, Finland finances a project to support Jordan and Tunisia in preparing Resolution 1325 action plans and to promote the implementation of Iraq's 1325 plan. In addition, the project will strengthen the capacity of the Arab League on the theme of Women, Peace and Security.

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# Synopsis of gender equality work in partner countries

Finland promotes the status and rights of women and girls in many different ways in bilateral development cooperation in partner countries. Nevertheless, long-term changes in support of gender equality are only present in three country programmes.

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**Afghanistan:** Poverty and the low level of security exacerbate gender inequalities and phenomena based on old and harmful traditions such as child marriage. Due to the instability of the operational environment, Finland is mainly active in collaboration with other international players. The decision is well founded and proportionate. Finland's priorities for assistance have been defined in the government's 2014 report to Parliament on Afghanistan, which will be updated in 2018. Afghanistan receives the most support among Finland's development cooperation partner countries, some €30-million annually. Finland supports women's and girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights in Afghanistan through Marie Stopes International (MSI). The amount of aid was 2.5 million euros for 2015-2017. Cooperation has been agreed until 2020. MSI provides women with information and high quality sexual and reproductive health services. The approach also involves men and boys in the issue. According to estimates, the organisation has succeeded in changing opinions at local level to be more favourable towards family planning. In 2017, Finnish-funded sexual and reproductive health services reached about 260 000 people in Afghanistan, including in rural and remote areas. About half of them received short and long-lasting contraceptive devices.

Finland has also supported literacy enhancement for women in Afghanistan under a UNESCO programme (2008-), which provides 1,2 million adults and young people with literacy education. Of them, 800 000 are women and girls. In addition, Finland

supports Afghanistan's refinancing, a quarter of which goes to developing teaching. Finland also supports the implementation in Afghanistan of UN Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security through UN Women. Finland's funding for this was €600 000 in 2017-2019. Finland has funded Unicef's water and sanitation programme by a million euros a year in recent years. Run in northern Afghanistan, the programme has paid particular attention to the fact that girls' sanitation facilities meet their needs. Finland also supports the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), whose main tasks are to promote the rights of women, children and people with disabilities, as well as human rights monitoring and education. Finland will support the commission's work by €2.2-million over the period 2014-2018.

**Nepal:** The country programme has three main objectives: improving health through clean water and sanitation, ensuring quality education for all, and strengthening the status of women and discriminated groups. The country programme amounts to €58-million for the period 2016-2019 (about €14.5-million a year). Equality goals have been included in all projects and their follow-up. The lack of gender equality in teaching has been an important objective of the Education Sector Programme project already at the planning stage. For example, socio-cultural challenges, such as child marriage and economic barriers, are among the biggest impediments to school attendance in Nepal. The sectoral programme



has taken into account training and increasing of the number of women teachers, specific support measures for girls, and the setting of certain minimum standards in elementary and secondary schools. One such is having mandatory separate and functioning toilets in all schools. In addition, gender equality and the inclusion of women and girls are part of the upper level goal of the project for the education sector (*Technical Assistance for Competence-Based Soft Skills Development in School Education in Nepal*). Promoting equality and participation is part of the content of educational materials and curricula. The equality aspect is also emphasised in the training of Ministry of Education officials and teachers. In water projects equality is included at all project levels. Women are prominently involved in water related decision-making processes, training and utilisation. Water projects make every day life easier for women and girls in particular, as water is traditionally their responsibility. In addition, the projects pay special attention to menstrual hygiene and prevalent taboos related to menstruation that violate women's human rights. In the western part of Nepal, the Rural Village Water Resources Management Project has considerable long-term development impacts and is of great importance for women's and girls' daily lives. The project is improving water management, public health, and sanitation. It also develops rural livelihoods and food security. In addition, its activities will improve preparedness for disaster situations and climate change. The total cost of the project is €60,2-million, of which Finland's contribution for 2016-2022 is €15-million. The cost share borne by the Nepalese government and operators comes to €25,2-million. Finland is also providing support for Nepal's water sector through another bilateral project.

The second phase of the Nepal Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project in Western Nepal (2013-2019) aims to improve the health status of the population in the project locale and to increase social and economic equality. In addition, Finland has supported a water supply and sanitation reconstruction project implemented by Unicef in the water sector to ensure clean water for more than half a million and sanitation for nearly three million people following the devastating earthquake of 2015. Finland cut its support of €4-million only a few weeks after the earthquake and continued funding for the project with €1-million in 2016. In total, Finnish-funded water and sanitation projects have directly benefited over one-and-a-half million Nepalese households and

schools (6/2015 – 12/2016). Finland is one of the sponsors of the UN Women's project *Advancing Women's Economic Empowerment – Ensuring Nepal's Sustainable and Equitable Development*. The project has been supported by €3,75-million for 2015 – 2017. The women, peace and security follow-up project (*Advancing Resilience and Empowerment*, (2017) supports UN Women's own strategic work plan focusing on the women, peace and security thematic and on reconstruction. Finland is also supporting via UN Women the planning and implementation of the National Action Plan of Nepal on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. Finland's support for the project runs to €0,4 million. Gender equality promotion also ties in with the UNDP project *Strengthening the Rule of Law and Human Rights in Nepal*. This has received €5,4-million from Finland for 2013 – 2017.

**Ethiopia:** The amount planned for the country programme runs to €55-million for the period 2016 – 2019 (some €13,8-million a year). Its main focal areas are the economic development of the countryside, guaranteeing clean drinking water and toilets for all, and ensuring education for all children. In addition, a conspicuous part of the country programme concerns strengthening women's land use rights. With Finland's support, for example, some 65 000 households have received a certificate of land use. Of these, 24 per cent are single-parent households. Finland also finances the UN Women's campaign on women's land rights, which includes, in addition to Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania. In developing education, Finland places particular emphasis on improving the quality of teaching and supporting the teaching of children with disabilities. Finland granted €19,8-million for 2014 – 2017 to improve the quality of education. In addition, a bilateral special education project has been given €2-million for 2013-2017. Building sanitation facilities is an important way to enable girls to continue their schooling. Finland's long-term support for improving Ethiopia's sanitation conditions has brought toilets for 1,4 million people in the last two decades. The aim of the on-going country programme is to extend the water supply to 900 000 Ethiopians from 2016 – 2019.

**Somalia:** the figures for maternal and child mortality are the highest in the world. This is influenced by the poor security situation and fragility of the state. The main

goals of the Finnish country programme are to respond directly to these challenges. The majority of aid is directed at realising the rights of women and girls. Finland's planned bilateral aid to Somalia is €25,7-million for 2017-2020 (about €6,4-million a year). A total of 58 per cent of funding for the country programme is allocated to basic sexual and reproductive health services, reducing maternity and child mortality rates, and projects aimed at eradicating violence against women and girls. The first priority area of the country programme is for increasing the well being of women and girls, which will be implemented mainly through the support of the UNFPA country action plan for Somalia by €10 million from 2017-2020. In addition, the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) health programmes have a special focus on the development of women's and children's health services. In spring 2017, the programme managed by Unicef, supported by Finland to a total of €15,5-million in 2014-2017, came to an end. The main aim of the programme was to reduce Somalia's maternal and child mortality by improving the health and nutrition status of the population. In the operational area, for example, maternal and infant mortality decreased significantly.

Nearly 40 per cent of the funding is directed towards public administration and productive sectors (oil and fisheries), strengthening legislation, and countering corruption through the World Bank Fund. Finland's support to Somalia is holistic. Participation in the reconstruction of the country is through political dialogue, development cooperation, crisis management, and humanitarian aid.

**Kenya:** The country programme amounts to €34-million for the period 2016 – 2020 (about €8,4-million annually). This is often held up as an example of Finland's wide-ranging work to promote gender equality in partner countries. Kenya's country programme also received this recognition in the OECD peer review of 2017. Finland certainly plays a key role as it manages the coordination of other donors specifically on gender equality issues and engages in active dialogue with the Kenyan state. Cooperation with UN Women in the national implementation of UN Resolution 1325 also raises Finland's profile in Kenya. As part of it, Finland has been involved in training peacekeepers from more than 40 countries. Improving the status of women and girls is one of Finland's three main goals in Kenya. It

will be allocated 18 per cent of the total funding of the country programme. The programme covers improving the status of women in Kenya's legislation and the political system. Promoting women's entrepreneurship and economic activities are also important. Finland is also involved in the *Trade Mark East Africa* initiative, which particularly supports the cross-border trade by women in East Africa. Prevention of violence against women and girls is also an important theme in cooperation. For example, in 2016, Finland supported information work concerning sexual that reached 3 275 women and 2 037 men. Psychosocial support and legal aid were given to 698 women and 139 men. Gender equality is also reflected in other major sectors in the Kenya country programme, such as water and sanitation, and the forest sector.

**Tanzania:** Finnish support amounted to €50-million for the period 2016 – 2019 (about €12,5-million a year). Key themes are support for public finance reforms, in particular the development of the economic system, the improvement of tax collection and the public accountability of government. Linking them more extensively to good governance and the rule of law is of paramount importance in Tanzania's current political situation. The country has officially recognised that gender inequality is a major obstacle to the economic and political development of the country. The Constitution of Tanzania and the international commitments signed by the country (such as the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, CEDAW), in principle, guarantee women equal rights of land ownership. However, Tanzanian legislation and its implementation still contain many serious contradictions that sustain inequalities, such as the Marriage Law, which discriminates against women. In addition, laws are not being implemented properly. Customary law also significantly weakens the status and legal protection of women. Finland is strengthening women's rights and political involvement in cooperation with UN Women. In addition, Finland supports the development of women's leadership through the Institute of African Leadership for Sustainable Development, UONGOZI. In Tanzania's forestry sector, Finland is the largest donor, with particular emphasis on sustainable development, business development, and job creation. As part of the development of local communities, there has also been support for improving women's livelihoods and land







ownership rights. In the information society sector project, Finland has also supported the employment of women and the development of female entrepreneurship in recent years.

**Zambia:** The country programme (€30,4-million for the period 2016 – 2020, some €7,6-million a year) has two outcome areas – more responsible private sector development, and a more democratic and equitable society. The rights of women and girls are integrated into the two main themes within the country programme, but this is not elaborated on. In particular, gender equality is highlighted by the democracy and equality objective in the development cooperation work on Zambia's social security system. Finland devotes about a quarter of the country programme funding to this. In addition, Finland's support for the ILO's programme work in the country has increased the deployment of environmentally friendly and economically viable procedures and created hundreds of jobs that meet the ILO's decent work criteria.

**Mozambique:** Gender equality is a crosscutting goal of the country programme for 2016 – 2019. The programme specifically focuses developing the education sector, to which 67 per cent of the country programme's funding is allocated. The total amount of the programme is €52-million (€13-million a year). In addition to the education sector, Finland's other main goals are rural development and good governance supporting women and girls. In particular, the equality of education and the safeguarding of the basic needs of rural communities are key cooperation themes for Finland.

**Occupied Palestinian territory:** The general goal of development cooperation is to support the two-state solution to the Israeli and Palestinian conflict. Finnish support comes to about €22-million for 2016 – 2019 (€5.5-million a year). Operations focus on the education sector, to which almost 70 per cent of funding is devoted. The emphasis is on improving equal access to education and the quality of education for all children. Another focal area of the programme concerns improving people's living conditions and livelihoods in vulnerable areas (Gaza, East Jerusalem and the West Bank C-Zone). Cooperation will pay particular attention to the rights of vulnerable people, especially women and children. Palestinian CSO projects financed by Finland focus on empowering women.

**Myanmar:** This is Finland's newest partner country, where the goal is the transition from 60 years of military dictatorship to democracy. The current government was elected in 2016, but its status is fraught with difficulty. The situation in many areas is fragile. The most critical is Rakhine State, where violence and persecution against the Rohingya minority has forced 700,000 Rohingya to flee to Bangladesh as refugees. Finland supports among other things the humanitarian aid work of the Red Cross in Bangladesh on the border with Myanmar (€380 000 in 2017). It is also involved in the development of the education sector in the Rakhine region through a renewable co-financing programme. Finland's first country programme amounts to €34-million for the period 2016-2020 (€8.5-million a year). Development cooperation focuses on good and sustainable forest management, the building of conditions for peaceful, democratic and just development, and access by all children to quality education. The programme emphasises women's rights and participation in politics and the peace process, and the right of girls to education. Finland has financed the development of Myanmar's democracy and the rule of law by €4-million for 2016-2017 via UNDP. Finland provides support via UNFPA for improving women's and girls' status and access to rights and services in conflict areas. Services include sexual and reproductive health and support for victims of violence.

**Vietnam:** A long-term development cooperation partner country, in which Finland, like many other donors, is moving into other forms of cooperation. This decision is based on the country's economic growth and the decline in poverty statistics. Finland has also wanted to target its support in Asia to particularly fragile states. Amidst the on-going transitional period, the focus of cooperation will shift to commercial-economic cooperation and forms of support. Vietnam's development is overshadowed by its vulnerability. A major concern is climate change, which is a very concrete threat to the country. Despite economic growth and the promotion of development goals, ethnic and regional poverty, inequality, corruption and lack of political rights are still problems for Vietnam. Finland's bilateral development cooperation with Vietnam is about €5,4-million for the period 2017 – 2018. The central themes include forest management and innovation partnerships, and cooperation in the water and energy sectors and meteorology.



The transitional strategy mentions gender equality once, but does not provide specifics.

In the education sector, crucial to equality work, it is significant that more than half of all support related to teaching and training goes through sector programmes funded jointly by donors. Equality and gender equality are typically the core of these sectoral programs. One of the most important joint education programmes in the education sector is in Ethiopia, and Finland has played an important role in designing it. There are similar programmes being run in Nepal, Myanmar, Palestine, Mozambique, and Afghanistan.

In addition, there are projects related to gender equality being carried out outside the partner countries proper. For example, Finland has provided €1 million support for the period 2016-2018 to UNEP, UNDP, UN Women, and the UN Peace Building Support Office's joint programme Women, Natural Resources and Peace, in which three to four pilot projects are being carried out in conflict affected countries. Work is currently underway in Sudan and Colombia. The aim is to establish practices in target countries related to natural resource management that take into account gender equality and especially strengthen women's status. Based on pilots and other collected data, a toolkit is being devised to serve UN agencies, international organisations, and national actors.

#### **Syria, Iraq and neighbouring conflict-hit countries**

Gender equality promotion is one of the most important influencing goals of Finland's Syria-Iraq aid strategy, and Finland finances a wide range of projects. Finland is investing more than before in peace building

projects to support the Syrians' internal peace processes, especially in order to increase inclusiveness and women's participation. Women tend to suffer relatively more during conflicts, and this is so in Syria. The international community's aid plans do not take sufficient account of the gender perspective. An important policy priority for Finland is to exert an influence such that the needs of women and vulnerable groups are better taken into account in aid activities and that they have the scope to participate in the political discourse. In addition, Finland provides funding for UNFPA, which works to reduce the numbers of child marriages and maternal mortality and to support the victims of sexual crimes in Syria.

Finland promotes the continuum from the implementation of humanitarian aid to support interventions for communities' resilience, particularly in Syria's neighbouring countries. Priorities in this work include women's and youth employment, training, and support for start-ups and entrepreneurship. Finland supports the employment of local and refugee women in Jordan through UN Women. The regional SEMED Fund of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), which finances the growth of SMEs and hence employment, attends particularly to women's employment.

Finnish aid to the victims of the Syrian conflict for 2011 – 2017 has been some €150 million (€36 million in 2017) and for those of the Iraq conflict for 2014 – 2017 about €18 million (€4,5 million for 2017).

## Funds for local cooperation are needed for fragile countries

Funds for local cooperation could contribute to better gender equality and the status and rights of women and girls in fragile countries.

The MFA provides a Local Cooperation Fund (LCF) for development cooperation to Finnish embassies and roving ambassadors. In 2017, €3,5 million was spent on LCF projects. Cuts in development co-operation have affected LCF appropriations. In 2018, no new LCFs are being granted for Africa and the Middle East, nor the American and Asian regional departments. LCF projects are relatively small, but their management requires much work and risk management. For this reason some of embassies and roving ambassadors have not made use of them. On the other hand, in 2017, there were 155 LCF projects in 30 countries. The benefits of such projects are the speed of their introduction and the opening up of links to local civil society, different perspectives, and sources of information. In addition, they are able to deal with sensitive issues, for example in conflict environments, and make definite changes to the lives of the poorest people.

According to the criteria guiding LCF projects, the projects should serve the Finnish foreign, security and development policy goals as well as the human rights-based approach to development. Projects must promote human rights, a democratic and responsible society, the sustainable management of natural resources, environmental protection and the crosscutting goals of development policy. Gender equality or women's and girls' rights are not mentioned as separate objectives in the criteria. In projects implemented in 2017, gender equality was the primary goal of 32 (21 per cent) of the projects and was the significant goal of 45 (29 per cent) of the projects. Reproductive health was the primary goal of one project and the significant goal in four projects. Of the total funding of LCF in 2017, about 61 per cent were aimed for gender equality (59 per cent) projects and reproductive health (1.9 per cent).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Statistics compiled according to OECD-DAC gender markers

## Special challenges in humanitarian aid concerning women and girls

According to the UNHCR, there are at present more than 22,5 million UN registered refugees in the world. Altogether, about 65.6 million people have had to leave their homes, most of them within their own countries.<sup>41</sup> The greatest refugee burden is borne by poor and conflict-prone countries and regions, such as the Horn of

Africa and the Syria's neighbouring areas. The need for humanitarian aid in the world has risen to a record high. The international community's desire and ability to respond to ever growing needs seem to be alarmingly feeble. For instance, it has been possible to fund only half of the estimated aid requirement of the UN's appeal for emergency aid. There are now about 136 million people in need of acute humanitarian aid, and some 35 million of them are women and girls of childbearing age.

At present, as much as 80 per cent of humanitarian aid is needed in conflict areas. But climate change is also

<sup>41</sup> UNHCR *Global report 2016; Global Report on Internal Displacement*, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre 2016.

increasing natural disasters, which require a growing share of insufficient humanitarian funds. Natural disasters are already a greater cause of migration than wars and conflicts. Also, relatively stable developing countries have become refugees' countries of origin. The situation may further deteriorate in the future. The UN has predicted that population growth in sub-Saharan Africa will increase by a billion people by 2050. Young age groups are already at a record high. Humanitarian needs are also fuelled by the increase in population and inequality, the deterioration of the environment, climate change, the struggle for diminishing resources, the poor availability of food and poor governance. These factors cause instability and increase conflicts. It is therefore of the utmost importance that the European Union and countries such as Finland conduct a responsible and coherent foreign and climate policy, safeguard the resources for preventive development cooperation, and respond swiftly to acute humanitarian crises.

The danger is that acute humanitarian crises will continue to worsen, as has been the case for example in South Sudan, Iraq, Yemen and Syria. Similarly, it has been estimated that the refugee phase is prolonged in the lives of increasingly more people. This must be taken into account when planning humanitarian aid and development cooperation, which must strive to build a continuum between these forms of support. In particular, in the case of the Syrian and Iraqi conflicts, Finland is strongly profiled as the proponent of the continuum as well as of developing carrying capacity. It is equally important to actively identify solutions to shorten the refugee phase and in particular not to ruin the future of children and young people. In addition to caring for basic needs, it is important for children and young people to continue schooling and for adults have the opportunity to make a living. Crises create chaos, refugee migration to neighbouring countries, and overburdened camps make it difficult to realise this principle.

Humanitarian crises particularly affect women and place girls and young women in a more vulnerable position. Aggravated deprivation eliminates choices, adversely affecting girls for the rest of their lives. Interrupted school attendance, childhood marriage, underage pregnancy, and abuse proliferate under extreme circumstances. Even ever-intensifying climate change is feared to lead to a significant increase in the number of child marriages. Sexual and other violence against women multiplies during conflicts and is also used as

a means of warfare. In addition, women are in a weaker financial position from the outset, and this predisposes them to such things as forced labour. At the same time, healthcare is often weakened by the lack of services, drugs and personnel or by the destruction of infrastructure. In addition, maternal mortality and the number of sexually transmitted diseases and unplanned pregnancies are on the increase. The situation of pregnant women and nursing mothers is especially difficult. The lack of services is reflected among other things by the fact that in fragile states three out of five maternal deaths occur in the context of natural disasters or conflicts. In fragile states more than 500 women die in pregnancy and childbirth each day.

Inadequate funding weakens the ability of humanitarian donors to take into account people and groups with special needs. One of the most vulnerable groups in crisis situations is people with disabilities. Their needs must be taken into account already when planning assistance. There is a far greater likelihood of women and girls with disabilities being exposed to sexual violence compared to women and girls without disabilities.

## Humanitarian crises particularly affect women and place girls and young women in a more vulnerable position.

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Finland has provided support for efforts to strengthen sexual and reproductive health services in the context of conflicts and disasters, anticipating sexual and gender-based violence and helping victims of violence and protecting women and girls. Finland's financial support (€2,5 million in 2017) has been directed specifically at the Syrian crisis through the UNFPA. Finland has also supported girls' education in crises through CSOs, for example through the humanitarian work of Finn Church Aid. In addition, Finland has funded Unicef's production of



guidelines on the inclusion of people with disabilities in humanitarian work. Finland has highlighted in various forums the status of women with disabilities in particular in humanitarian activities, such as at the conference of the Global Action on Disability Network (GLAD).

UN Women, UNFPA and Unicef also receive general support from Finland that can be used for humanitarian needs. In addition to targeted aid, Finland, in line with its humanitarian aid policy, requires that all organisations supported by it mainstream gender equality into their humanitarian activities. Finland is actively contributing to the enhancement of equality and equality issues in the activities and strategies of the UN organisations, the Red Cross and the Red Crescent and civil society organisations. This is accomplished by introducing gender equality issues persistently and consistently in the management bodies of organisations. Finland has also highlighted the need to pay attention to preventing discrimination against and protecting female workers in crises, including at the high level panel on equality at the conference on Syria held in Helsinki last year. Humanitarian aid is also closely linked to Finland's forthcoming 1325 action programme.

Despite the burgeoning need, Finland cut its humanitarian aid at the beginning of the government term in 2015 by €13,7 million. However, the decision by the Minister of Foreign Trade and Development Kai Mykkänen to provide €14 million returned funding for humanitarian aid to the previous level. In 2016, Finland provided humanitarian aid totalling €92 million. Most assistance was for the Syrian crisis, South Sudan, Iraq, Yemen and drought-affected sub-Saharan Africa. In allocating aid, Finland also takes into account developing countries that are major refugee reception or transit countries.

In 2017 Finland provided humanitarian aid totalling €81,3-million. About a third of the humanitarian budget was allocated to the Middle East, the same amount to Africa, and the remaining third to UN organisations in the form of flexible general support. The 2018 humanitarian aid budget is €72,5-million. Compared to 2014, the peak year for humanitarian aid (€111.7-million), appropriations have dropped significantly, while humanitarian needs have increased apace. Finland has, however, remained on the list of the 20 top donors. If there is no additional funding for 2018, it is possible that we will drop from this group. However, our contribution to effectiveness is enhanced by the fact that Finland

complies in its financing with flexibility and international humanitarian principles.<sup>42</sup> Finland also receives recognition for this in the OECD-DAC peer review.<sup>43</sup>

## CSOs as supporters of gender equality

Civil society has been an important driving force in various countries over the years, due to which gender equality has emerged through civic movements and professional CSOs into political decision-making and legislation. CSOs are therefore not just a channel for development cooperation but have an autonomous role in the field of civic activity. They introduce innovations to the national debate and are forerunners in their practical implementation. On the other hand, these organisations act as watchdogs of power and demand that state actors be held accountable for policies that discriminate against women and girls. In addition, the organisations themselves implement different services. They seek, for instance, to get girls to attend school, support gender equality in teaching, or access to family planning. This work is linked to the structural reform of public services and the improvement of gender equality skills. CSOs can demonstrate that change is possible and encourage the public and private sectors to follow suit.

According to Finland's development policy, Finnish civil society is an important development tool, and the activities of CSOs form an integral and inseparable part of development policy. Cooperation with CSOs is based on the principles of the Government Report on Development Policy (2016) and the Guidelines for Civil Society in Development Policy (2017). The point of departure is that independent, vibrant, pluralistic, and multi-faceted civil societies create the conditions for the peaceful civic involvement of citizens and the realisation of human rights. Cooperation between organisations and the MFA is based on shared values and goals. At the same time, the approach of development policy is that CSOs are, in principle, actors independent of the state and that they define the objectives and practices of their work themselves. In practice, the funding decisions of the organisations are carried out in compliance with the development policy report and the civil society guidelines. Therefore, the focal point of women and girls, as well as the mainstreaming of gender equality, are equally binding on state-funded CSOs.

<sup>42</sup> They include the OECD-DAC's Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship and the *Grand Bargain* commitment of the World Humanitarian Summit.

<sup>43</sup> OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews: Finland, OECD 2017

The special value of CSOs is their ability to work in difficult circumstances and to cooperate with the most vulnerable groups of people that official development assistance or private sector cooperation cannot reach. In 2017, the independent review of programme-based support to CSOs commissioned by the MFA stated that this task is being realised.<sup>44</sup> The evaluation finds that the work of CSOs is cost-effective and achieves wide-ranging results even in difficult circumstances. The evaluation notes that the work of CSOs corresponds to the needs of local people and is well in line with development policy goals.

CSOs place an emphasis in their activities on having an impact on the discriminatory structures of society, increasing awareness and strengthening the capacity of authorities and local civil society. People facing multiple discrimination on account of gender, age, disability, ethnic background, and social class, are often the focal point of CSO work. Partner countries also consider CSOs to be important service providers. The organisations also carry out important advocacy and educational work in donor countries and seek to strengthen civil society in developing countries through their local partners and networks, and influence global development policy. Advocacy work is important at a time when civil society is being narrowed down in many developing countries and within the EU. The World Alliance for Citizen Participation, Civicus, estimates that only three per cent of the world's population live in countries where civil society can operate freely.<sup>45</sup>

The paring down of civil society's scope further complicates women's agency in often very male-dominated civil society settings in developing countries. Women's rights organisations and women's rights proponents face gender resistance and gendered risks such as sexual harassment or public disgrace. These risks may also have an impact on the families of those involved or on such things as property rights. The MFA's guidelines or the partnerships of Finnish CSOs do not yet sufficiently recognise the gendered nature of civil society. Internationally, funding for organisations promoting the rights of women in the South is decreasing.<sup>46</sup>

In the report on development policy, Finland considers the specific strengths of CSOs as being defending human rights and freedom of speech, strengthening independent media, and work on corporate responsibility issues. The added value of CSOs is also generated in the continuum of humanitarian aid activity and long-term development cooperation.

Women and girls have been a key theme in the work of Finnish CSOs. In 2016, 47 per cent of Finnish CSOs' payments were for projects where the primary or partial goal concerned gender equality. In the light of the goal of the EU Action Plan on Gender Equality (85 per cent), NGOs have some catching up to do. In total, the MFA provided CSOs with €65-million support in 2017. Programme-based support is the most significant form of support for development cooperation granted by the MFA to CSOs. It accounts for about 75 per cent of the total amount and involves 22 organisations. According to the evaluation of programme-based support of CSOs, such support has contributed to the complementarity of development cooperation between CSOs and the Finnish public sector. The overall rating of the activities of Finnish CSOs is laudatory. The challenges raised by the evaluation are also familiar from development cooperation. They relate to long-term performance, work sustainability and staying power, and strengthening local civil society. Observing crosscutting goals such as gender equality, was also highlighted as development goals.

Most programme-based partnership CSOs take gender equality into account in a crosscutting context in their operations, but there are differences in levels of ambition and reporting. Gender equality is included in the design of projects, but actual gender analysis is rarely sufficiently systematically implemented. Typically, gender equality is approached from the point of view of women's participation, and measuring closely focuses on direct output targets (so-called output levels).<sup>47</sup>

The evaluation commissioned by the MFA examined the gender equality work of organisations and of the programme-based partnership CSOs highlighted Plan International Finland, for example, whose tasks are entirely related to women and girls. Its projects are specifically aimed at improving the status and rights of the most vulnerable girls through structural change. Women's rights are also the core activity of Political Parties of Finland for Democracy, Solidarity Demo at the heart of the action, including the Party for International Democracy Co-operation - Demo, Solidarity and the Free Church Federation in Finland. Demo focuses on strengthening women's role in politics through support for civic and political rights. In the work of Solidarity, the role of women is promoted by strengthening women's livelihoods and self-esteem and by preventing violence against women, in particular genital mutilation. The financing of the Abilis Foundation, supporting



<sup>44</sup> Chapman, Nick & al. (2017) *Evaluation on Programme Based Support to Civil Society Organizations*, MFA 2017.

<sup>45</sup> *State of Civil Society Report*, Civicus 2017.

<sup>46</sup> *Watering the Leaves, Starving the Roots: The Status of Financing for Women's Rights Organizing and Gender Equality*, AWID 2013 ja *Donor support to southern women's rights organisations*, OECD 2016.

<sup>47</sup> Chapman, Nick & al. (2017) *Evaluation on Programme Based Support to Civil Society Organizations*, MFA 2017.

## Finnish CSOs in partner countries

A number of Finnish CSOs carry out development cooperation projects in Finnish partner countries in collaboration with local CSOs. Finnish organisations play an important role in strengthening local civil society. CSO projects also complement the Finland's bilateral country programmes. It is important to take advantage of the special expertise and experience of organisations from different sectors in order to realise these goals. Here, we present CSO projects funded by the MFA. The organisations' other funding complements this aggregate and in particular strengthens human rights and gender equality in these countries.<sup>1</sup>

In **Ethiopia**, Finnish CSOs are funded by €2–3 million a year. The organisations support the country's education sector and rural development.

In **Kenya**, CSO activities focus on promoting human rights, and the status of women and people with disabilities. Support has been given to more than 20 CSOs amounting to about €5 million a year. For example, women affected by violence have received the services they need in the Kibera slum in Nairobi, as well as in the Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps.

In **Mozambique**, Finnish CSOs are involved in strengthening democratisation, promoting human rights, the education sector, improving transparency in governance, securing debt sustainability, and the sustainable use of natural resources.

In **Somalia** CSO projects are run to promote women's and children's rights, health care, the education sector, and rural development. The Somali community in Finland plays an important role in CSO development cooperation. Support for CSO projects in Somalia amounts to about €3 million a year.

In **Tanzania**, more than 20 Finnish organisations have projects focusing on providing services and support for a democratic, equal and open society. CSOs support Tanzania's development, particularly in education, health care and human rights.

In **Zambia**, Finnish CSO activities support the development of a participatory and better functioning society and in strengthening governance. In particular, work supports the political involvement of women and cooperation concerning the status of children.

In **Afghanistan**, there were five Finnish CSOs running activities in 2017. Total support for the CSOs was about €500 000. Their activities focus on promoting the health and wellbeing of vulnerable people, education, taking account of specific groups; empowering ethnic minorities; and educating women journalists.

In **Myanmar**, there are about 10 Finnish CSOs, through which some €1.5–2 million a year is channelled. CSOs implement both development and humanitarian aid projects. They support democratisation, improving the status of people with disabilities, women's entrepreneurship, and the development of education.

In **Nepal**, the budget of 10 Finnish CSOs working in the country was €1 million in 2017. The CSOs' activities include improving education, health, the rights of people with intellectual disabilities, and food security, as well as the development of business and skills in various fields.

Finland also finances Finnish CSO projects in the **Occupied Palestinian Territory**. In 2017, €590 000 was disbursed to CSOs to support, among other things, child protection and rights, and the development of Palestinian livelihoods.

<sup>1</sup> For more on this see: <https://www.kepa.fi/vaikuttamistyo/kehitysyhteistyön-tulokset/ulkoministerion-tuki-kansalaisjärjestöjen-kehitysyhteistyölle-2017>

people with disabilities, also makes rights of women and girls a priority. The Finnish Red Cross promotes the participation of women, girls and other vulnerable groups in all their community-based projects. The evaluation of programme-based support highlights a health project in Myanmar Kayah. It was seen that the women involved in the project were significantly more active and courageous participants in decision-making at community level. In addition, many organisations that receive project support conduct work on the gender equality goal.<sup>48</sup>

## Gender equality more prominently part of strengthening the private sector and financial investments

The Development Committee's previous review (Finland's Development Policy 2017) dealt with Finland's role in promoting the economy, private sector and taxation capacity of developing countries. The context of the assessment was the need to understand the change that had taken place in development policy towards private sector cooperation and the financial aspect of development funding. Our approach was that the new emphasis is important and welcome. We also recommended a number of ways to improve development outcomes, transparency, and accountability. Our point of departure was the notion that promoting the economy, the private sector and taxation capacity in developing countries will in the long term support the prosperity of developing countries and people's wellbeing, if the benefits are fairly shared. This, however, requires many economic, trade, labour market and tax policy solutions to ensure that the benefits of prosperity are distributed to all population groups and to create decent jobs for more and more people. These issues are an important part of the wider 2030 Agenda, to which developing countries have signed up.

*The Development Policy Committee's appraisal was that women's economic rights are often weaker than men's. This needs to be taken into account in all of Finland's activities. Without a gender and human rights perspective, the goals of strengthening the economy, the private sector and the taxation capacity in developing countries will not transpire.*

The Development Policy Committee's assessment points out that in the current government term the range

of development cooperation instruments focuses on the role of Finnish companies in the development of the private sector of developing countries. This is an important but by itself is too narrow a perspective. It will consequently be even more important in the future to look at how and under what conditions the strengthening of the economy and the private sector in developing countries responds to people's rights and needs in those countries. The committee's view is that Finland should strive to make economic benefits more accessible to the poorest people, *specifically women and girls*. It is also important to strengthen developing countries' own resources base, basic prerequisites for entrepreneurship, economic policy, and the wider distribution of economic benefits even in the poorest countries. We can do this in various ways in the spirit of sustainable development. A good example of this is the Women's Bank, a voluntary community that has run for 10 years to support the work of women in developing countries to overcome poverty. It has collected €12,5-million, which has directly helped 56 000 women and indirectly assisted 300 000 people via families and village communities.

New innovations and solutions that generate enterprises have a growing role to play in addressing the challenges of sustainable development. For example, business activity on renewable energy and clean technologies has numerous development impacts. Energy intake creates the preconditions for enterprise creation, and their expansion and growth, and so economic prosperity. Care must be taken to enable women and girls to benefit from these development impacts in Finnish-funded development projects. In addition, it is important that all actors, activities, and forms of development cooperation complement each other.

In putting together this report, we have increasingly realised that women are one of the most important resources for the private sector and poverty reduction in developing countries. That is why we particularly like the development policy report's assertion that "*Finland will support the local private sector and its international partners to encourage them to improve the chances of women to find employment, work as entrepreneurs, own property and participate in the economy*". The realisation of this sub-goal still requires special attention, however. In particular, strengthening women's entrepreneurship in developing countries requires targeted resources and coherence in the country programmes. Also, development cooperation financial instruments and exports





PHOTO: MILMA KETTUNEN

promotion for the private sector should serve this goal. The development impact should be considered from a human rights point of view, and in this context especially from a gender perspective.

Finland's development policy should more emphatically highlight the leading role of women in developing countries' economies and in developing entrepreneurship, so as to roll back poverty and inequality. Establishing equal opportunities for the private sector in developing countries creates vocational education and training of girls and women and an operational model for life-long learning. Additionally, allowing girls and women to engage in business and entrepreneurship must be a strong focus in developing the business environment.

In its 2017 report, the Development Policy Committee noted that the number of jobs and the number of supported companies in developing countries (both total number and gender-disaggregated data) form the core of development policy performance monitoring. For instance, in 2015 a total of 63 131 jobs were created with the support of Aid for Trade, of which 42 per cent were for women. The statistics do not specify by gender how many jobs matched ILO decent criteria. Moreover, performance monitoring does not pay attention to the factors or structures that maintain gender inequalities, such as the culture of the operating environment. This

would also require a change in setting objectives, which we called for in our assessment. In the future, it should be stressed that women's economic position and rights awareness will improve with the growth in the number of decent jobs.<sup>49</sup>

The key recommendation of the committee's assessment was that attention should be paid to the gender perspective in each Finnish-funded private sector support instrument (*Finnfund, Finnpartnership, Business with Impact BEAM and Public Sector Financing Facility PIF*). In addition to job creation and occupational safety, such activity should be able to assess the ILO's decent work minimum objectives and the gender marker system required by the OECD's Development Assistance Committee. The latter measures gender equality. Additionally, we stated that an explanation of the use of gender markers should be added to the Finnfund ownership steering memorandum. However, the Development Policy Committee finds it regrettable that it did not receive a satisfactory response from the MFA concerning the recommendations on the private sector instruments as requested.

According to Finnfund's Development Results publication (2016), the companies that Finnfund has invested in directly employed 29 950 people. About 9 500 were women (32 per cent). The corresponding figure

<sup>49</sup> These include among other things the right to adequate pay, workers' freedom of association and right to organise and a ban on discrimination and forced labour.

for 2015 was 9 140, or 36 per cent. Women accounted for just over a third of business loan recipients.<sup>50</sup> By the end of 2016 financial institutions funded had made 1,7 million micro-loans totalling €1,8-billion. The total value of small business loans was €2,3 billion. In particular, women account for a significant proportion of micro-business recipients: gender-specific financial institution reporting show more than three-quarters (76 per cent) of micro-credit recipients were women. In the case of small business loans, the corresponding proportion of women was over a third (38 per cent).

According to Finnfund's Annual Report 2016, Finnfund monitors human rights impact assessments, UN corporate and human rights principles, and the ILO's decent work principles. According to the latest follow-up report by Finnpartnership (2012-2016), women accounted for 39 per cent of the jobs created by supported companies.<sup>51</sup>

It is also positive that, according to Finnfund's updated ownership steering memorandum of December 2017, Finnfund will introduce the DAC's gender marker system in new investment decisions in 2018. The MFA will explore the inclusion of gender markers in the 2019 follow-up table on ownership steering on the basis of the experiences of the 2018 implementation process. Finnfund has been actively involved in monitoring the development impact, including in terms of gender equality goals. Gender equality is an important criterion for scoring in Finnfund's development effect assessment tool (DEAT). Likewise, in Finnpartnership's guidelines gender equality is a criterion in the assessment of projects funded.

Finnfund's introduction of the gender markers is a welcome addition but one that alone is not sufficient. According to the MFA, Finnfund is Finland's most important instrument in developing the economy and the private sector of developing countries. An appreciable amount of Finnish loan and capital development funds gets channelled to it. This is why gender equality and the strengthening of women's status should also be reflected in the main goals set by the MFA for Finnfund. But this is not the case, as the ownership steering memorandum contains no reference to gender equality or the strengthening of women's status. According to the memorandum, however, Finnfund's operations are to be evaluated in relation to development policy goals. It is therefore glaringly contradictory that a primary focus of development policy and the crosscutting objective of all Finnish development actors are not taken into account in ownership

steering. This is so despite the fact that women's participation in economic decision-making and operations is a specific goal of Finland's development policy.

The MFA has also set four framework conditions for Finnfund to ensure the implementation of development policy lines and the widest possible development impacts. Again, gender equality does not feature. It is therefore very important that these shortcomings be examined in Finnfund's forthcoming evaluation (2018). These should be dealt with no later than by the next updating of the ownership steering memorandum. At the same time, it is really important that Finnfund itself continues to further evaluate and monitor the development impact of the projects it finances, including from a gender perspective.

Gender equality and the strengthening of women's status are crucially related to other loan and capital-based financial investments, in addition to Finnfund. In 2017, loan and capital investments accounted for €130-million, and funding will continue to be the same during 2018-2019. This is therefore a total of €530-million in funding for the entire government term. At present it is not clear how systematically crosscutting gender equality steers investment decisions. The Climate Change Programme of Finland and International Finance Corporation, which started at the end of 2017, aims to promote gender equality. This is Finland's most important funding for international climate work, which is committed to implementing a gender perspective in climate change mitigation and adaptation. Gender-disaggregated data is also used to monitor projects whenever possible.

The Development Policy Committee has previously stipulated that financial investments are a major asset for development policy goals, which should be carefully targeted and closely monitored for their development impacts.<sup>52</sup> This requires a more transparent information flow and utilisation of the expertise of different stakeholder groups already at the planning phase of financial investments. Transparency is also justified by the fact that the framework conditions for the targeting of financial investments are essentially the same as in all other areas of development cooperation: investment targets must be in line with the Finland's development policy goals and the stipulations for implementation. Investment must also meet the OECD-DAC's development cooperation criteria.

In this respect, more attention should be paid to the fact that financial investment promotes the status of women

<sup>50</sup> *Jobs, prosperity and sustainable development for developing countries: Development impact of Finnfund investments 2016*, and Annual Report 2016, Finnfund 2017.

<sup>51</sup> *Development impacts 2016 – 2012 business partnership support projects final progress report*, Finnpartnership 2017.

<sup>52</sup> Development Policy Committee press release: *Transparency in the allocation and use of financial investments*, 5.10.2017.

and girls, in particular economic empowerment. In addition - and unlike other development cooperation - investments must meet terms set by Eurostat's specification that an investment is not counted as a public expenditure in national accounts. In order to meet the criteria for financial investment, the investments must have a credible yield and return, as well as loan interest and repayment plan. The MFA supervises the realisation of development cooperation criteria. It would be logical, then, that investments that further the crosscutting approach and in particular the promotion of women's and girls' status would also have a special emphasis in ministerial decisions. The MFA also monitors the realisation of yield and return criteria. Statistics Finland makes a prior assessment of each financial investment in order that it meets Eurostat's specification. This does not rule out development policy guidance.

The Development Policy Committee has stressed that it is also extremely important to look at financial investments

from the perspectives of the primary development policy goal, namely the reduction of poverty and inequality, as well as human rights fulfilment, and target countries' governance and civil society actors. Financing investments should be used in a manner complementary to various forms of development financing and the composite of actions and in line with internationally agreed performance rules for successful development cooperation. Financial investments should above all increase the resources needed for achieving Finland's key objectives and the sustainable development goals in developing countries. It is important in this context to recall Finland's Agenda for Sustainable Development, which emphasises in particular the role of women and youth in climate finance decision-making and as beneficiaries. For this reason, development actors such as Finnfund and other private sector instruments that conduct financial investments must comply with the Sustainable Development Action Plan.

## Development Policy Committee recommendations:

- Gender equality, and the status and rights of women and girls should be more coherently evident in Finland's activities in partner countries and in the country programmes guiding them. In addition to separate projects, gender equality goals must be promoted in all aspects of Finland's activities.
- Finland should continue to target humanitarian aid to vulnerable groups and take into account, in particular, groups that face multiple discrimination. Sexual and reproductive health and rights must be consistently asserted, including in humanitarian advocacy work.
- Finland must ensure adequate funding for gender equality work, especially for the most disadvantaged groups of people. CSOs should also highlight gender equality as a significant or primary goal in 85 per cent of their projects in line with the EU recommendation.
- The development of private sector instruments and financial investments should be viewed more extensively from a gender perspective. In addition, women's economic position and awareness of labour rights must be reflected in the development of the private sector and entrepreneurship in a crosscutting, consistent and participatory manner in all forms of development cooperation.
- According to the recommendations of the OECD-DAC, the MFA should clarify its goals in support of the private sector and prepare a separate policy, the implementation of which should be reported to Parliament. Private sector support instruments must be guided by commitments on sustainable development and development financing, the Paris Climate Agreement, gender equality goals and human rights considerations.
- The MFA should set gender equality as one of the framework conditions of Finnfund's ownership steering in the next update of the ownership steering memorandum in accordance with the 2030 Agenda Action Plan and the Government Report on Development Policy.

## Women involved in promoting clean energy

Development Policy Committee considers it important to include the gender perspective in the field of renewable energy. The consequences of climate change primarily impact women, and it is expressly women in developing countries who suffer from the lack of sustainable energy solutions.

On the other hand, the input of women is needed to curb climate change and increase the use of clean energy. This is the aim of *Women's Entrepreneurship for Sustainable Energy*, launched by the UN Women and UNEP in 2015, which aims to promote women's entrepreneurship and at the same time increase the use of clean energy in developing countries. The programme is being run in Morocco, Indonesia, India, Myanmar, Senegal and Bolivia.

Increasing renewable energy makes it possible to decentralise energy production, whereby energy can be produced locally in small units, for example in households and village communities. This opens up new earning opportunities for women. They can, for instance, produce electricity on solar panels and sell it to their neighbours to charge cell phones.

New forms of energy can ease women's daily lives in many ways and improve the wellbeing of the whole family. Women are responsible for the vast majority of household energy needs, especially in rural areas. For example, obtaining fuel for cooking is their responsibility, and collecting firewood can take several hours.

The uptake of clean forms of energy also plays a major role in the health of families as the amount of air pollutants from burning solid fuels is reduced.

A UN Women and UNEP programme in India is training 50 000 women in using and selling renewable energy. Donations collected by the Finland National Committee for UN Women are also being devoted to the project, which runs from 2017–2021.

At present, just over half of Indian households in rural areas fall within the electricity distribution network. Under the UN programme, women are being trained to integrate decentralised and clean energy solutions for use by households, small businesses, and agriculture. They can also obtain extra income by selling, installing, and maintaining clean energy equipment.

Technological development and the rapid reduction in the price of equipment expedite the uptake of renewable energy in developing countries. However, the UN programme emphasises that in addition to access to technology, improved gender equality necessitates the transformation of social structures and attitudes that restrict women's activity. The exploitation of renewable energy and related business activities also require funding schemes that women can make use of. Various types of micro financing programmes are good examples of this.

The Development Policy Committee believes that the integration of the woman's perspective on promoting renewable energy is highly suited to Finland's development policy, the priorities of which include promoting gender equality and sustainable development. This could, for instance, be the focus of renewable energy projects carried out with financing from Finnfund.



## 4d) Women and girls in Finland's foreign relations:

### Finland committed to the empowerment of women in international trade<sup>53</sup>

The issue of women, trade and development came up again in international trade discussions in the autumn 2017. There has, of course, been a lively debate on the matter for decades, but it has remained on the back burner in multilateral and bilateral trade negotiations. The WTO Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires last year was no exception to this. However, during its preparation, a process was launched which resulted in the Joint Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment by 120 WTO members.<sup>54</sup>

Finland contributed to the creation of the declaration and is one of its signatories, who are committed to cooperation in strengthening gender responsiveness in trade and development policies. The commitment links international trade directly to the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and the UN's CEDAW. The point of departure of the declaration is the idea that inclusive sustainable economic growth and sustainable development cannot be realised without a gender perspective. The declaration emphasises the importance of international trade and investment and calls for the dismantling of barriers to women's participation in national and international economies.

Change will not occur by itself; it requires action rooted in knowledge and analysis. Consequently, the concrete actions that the signatories undertake include among other things information exchange and analysis of existing measures to promote women's participation and empowerment. The WTO countries also pledge to disseminate best practices on trade-related gender analysis and monitoring, and develop gender-based data collection and statistics. Signatory donor countries must also ensure that development aid for trade supports a trade policy that takes account of gender. The declaration also includes a plan to move different themes forward.

They include promoting women's entrepreneurship, identifying barriers to economic activity encountered by women, access to finance and financial assistance, and women's participation in public procurement markets and value chains. Of particular importance is the question of the most recent Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), which is substantially related to how customs and export practices, as well as transit streamlining, can help to promote women entrepreneurs in particular. The declaration does not take a position on the potential negative development impacts of free trade agreements. The implementation of the declaration will be monitored and reported on in 2019.

The subject matter of the declaration is also integral to the International Trade Centre's *SheTrades* initiative. This started in 2015 and has largely the same forces behind it, and the ICT's leadership is also the driving force behind the WTO declaration. Like *She Decides*, *SheTrades* defines itself as a global movement that combines different actors. Its main goal is to connect one million new female entrepreneurs to the market and to benefit from trade by 2020. The guiding principle of the initiative rests on the estimation that the promotion of women's economic equality would increase global GDP by up to \$US28-trillion (28 000 billion) by 2025.<sup>55</sup>

*SheTrades* is part of the ITC Women and Trade programme, funded by five governments. Finland has been a major donor to the project from the outset. Finland's *SheTrades* support is focused on four thematic entities: SME participation in value chains, strengthening trade and investment organisations in developing countries, facilitating trade procedures and improving the conditions for women entrepreneurs. In 2017 Finland supported these themes to a total of about €32 million. The main focus was on improving the conditions for women entrepreneurs (€1 157 000) and SME support (€782 000). In spring 2018 Finland will negotiate with ITC on future support. Finnish cooperation with the World Customs Organisation (WCO) in eastern and southern Africa is important for trade flows and facilitating trade by

<sup>53</sup> For more on this issue see: *What does gender mean at the WTO, and who benefits?* Trommer S. & Hannah E. (2017) <http://blog.policy.manchester.ac.uk/posts/2017/10/gender-trade-wto-who-benefits/>

<sup>54</sup> *Joint Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment on the Occasion of the WTO Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires in December 2017*, WTO 2017.

<sup>55</sup> *The power of parity: How advancing women's equality can add \$12 trillion to global growth*, McKinsey Global Institute report 2015.





women. The objective is to support the implementation of TFA by providing training and specialist assistance to regional customs organisations. Finnish Customs also provides the project with its expertise and training contribution. The first phase of the project has ended. In future it would be possible to further extend the training if Finland's funding continues. Important themes are the eradication of the harassment of women entrepreneurs and speeding up the transit and customs processes. Finland's support for Trade Mark East Africa, in particular within the framework of Kenya's country programme, is essentially related to these goals.

The Joint Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment is also important because it prompts WTO members to reflect on the impact of trade and the related agreements from a gender perspective. For example, in the European Union, the impact assessments of free trade agreements became mandatory already by the early 2000s, but gender analysis has remained in the background or has not been implemented at all. Among the dozens of bilateral free trade agreements, including those involving the poorest countries, the EU-Chile free trade agreement is the first where gender equality is involved in the negotiating mandate. The EU will also continue to promote investment facilitation in the WTO, as well as trade and women's economic empowerment. It is important to note here that the economic empowerment of women is not a separate sub-area, but should be integrally linked to all negotiation and impact assessments. The EU's own Gender Action Plan obliges this too. So it is necessary to strengthen the gender perspective in EU trade agreements alongside the SheTrades initiative, and to boost the stats on sustainable development and labour market rights. Finland and Sweden have funded a study by UNCTAD on the effects of free trade agreements, particularly on developing countries, since 2012. Particular attention will be given to the Economic Partnership Agreements between the EU and Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. The study profiles the role of women in trade sectors, identifies and analyses the impact of trade agreements on women, and makes definite recommendations for the contracting parties.

## Foreign and security policy: Finland, women, peace and security

The aim of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (Women, peace and security) is to protect women and girls in armed conflicts, promote the equal participation of women in peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction, as well as to prevent gender based violence. The Security Council adopted the resolution unanimously in 2000 and it has since been supplemented seven times. The resolution is important for its combining of foreign and security policy, development policy, human rights, domestic policy, and humanitarian action around a common goal. In Finland it forms part of the government programme.

Women, Peace and Security acts as a consolidated agenda for domestic and foreign policy and it has been brought to the forefront of the implementation of the Finland's Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Government Report on Development Policy announces ambitiously that "*Finland will strive to secure the protection and rights of women in conflict situations and their participation in the resolution of conflicts in accordance with international conventions and treaties and UN decisions, including Resolution 1325*". According to the Government Report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy (2016), Finland advocates the increasing participation of women in establishing peace and security. Women's and girls' rights are also the focal points of Finnish human rights policy. The agenda enjoys political support from the highest level of state leadership.

The content of the actions is specified in the third Women, Peace and Security Finland's National Action Plan (2018 – 2021) to be published in the spring of 2018. Since 2008, Finland has had two such national plans, of which the 2012-2016 programme was more targeted than its predecessor. It also gained much prominence when Finland campaigned for membership of the UN Security Council. The third action programme aims to be more ambitious. Finland should be able to consider the women, peace and security totality taking into account boys and men, and give more weight to women and girls in the most vulnerable groups. Refugees, trafficking in human beings, violent extremism, and arms trafficking are to be included in the new action plan.

<sup>55</sup> *In-depth Analysis The EU's Trade Policy: from gender-blind to gender-sensitive?* European Parliament publications, Elina Viilup July 2015, DG for External Policies Department.

The MFA leads a national 1325 follow-up group to monitor national implementation of the action plan, composed of the ministries and stakeholders responsible for this implementation: the MFA, Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of Defence, Finnish Defence Forces, Ministry of the Interior, and Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. There are in addition representatives research members in the follow-up group of the CSO 1325 network. The ministries and stakeholders concerned are to report to the Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee on the implementation of the action programme.

In the new 1325 action plan, Finland has five broad focus areas. The first is to ensure the meaningful participation of women in conflict prevention and peace building, including from the planning of peace processes to negotiations and to implementation and follow-up. The second objective is to strengthen the meaningful participation of women in conflict prevention and peace building. This crucially involves the economic and political empowerment of women, the improvement of legal protection, the inclusion of the gender perspective in disarmament, and the prevention of the spread of extremism. The third objective is to mainstream the gender perspective in the security sector and crisis management. This includes, among other things, balancing the gender distribution and incorporating a gender perspective into planning, implementation and evaluation as well as crisis management training. The fourth objective concerns the protection of women and girls and the strengthening their rights in crises. In practice, this means eradicating impunity for more serious international crimes, especially sexual and gender-based violence. In addition, the aim is to strengthen the gender perspective in humanitarian aid activities, the protection of women and girls in migration, and the protection and safeguarding of persons advancing human rights. The fifth objective is crosscutting in nature, obliging Finland to promote the above-mentioned goals in the policies, strategies and activities of international and regional organisations and to encourage the creation of national action plans.

A results framework and performance chains have been drawn up for the action plan, but the performance indicators are still under preparation. CSOs in particular have stressed the importance of effective indicators for monitoring. Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee has also raised this issue in its opinion on the previous action programme.<sup>57</sup>

In the light of current performance, Finland has invested in the implementation of the 1325 Action Plan especially in the area of crisis management. Of experts assigned by Finland in the area of civilian crisis management in 2016 about 40 per cent were women, while the EU average was about 20 per cent. Gender parity is also monitored as a global indicator in the implementation of Finland's sustainable development. In election observation missions, Finland has attained a balanced representation of women and men. In the field of military crisis management, Finland had a total of 366 personnel at the end of 2016, of whom 21 (6 per cent) were women. In addition, Finland has dispatched human rights and gender equality advisers to civilian and military missions. In the light of the figures, Finland is carrying out the programme in Finland well in these respects. The international dimension of the programme, though, requires greater attention.

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The CSOs involved in the 1325 work issued a shadow report in 2017 on the implementation of the 2012 – 2016 action plan.<sup>58</sup> It states that implementation has proceeded quite well for several of the goals but that it is not yet at a sufficiently strong level. Over the coming years, attention should be paid in particular on focus clarification, coordinating measures, and stipulating responsibilities. The shadow report also draws attention to the fact that

<sup>57</sup> UaVL 9/2016 vp– UTP 28/2013 vp, Parliament 2016.

<sup>58</sup> Finland's 1325 network shadow report 2017:

<http://www.1325.fi/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/1325-varjoraportti-2017-FINAL.pdf>



the participation of women in conflict areas receives very little attention, and the same goes for conducting gender analyses. During the planning for the new action plan, Finland decided to include women from partner countries in the planning and preparatory process at three different hearings. But this did not come about.<sup>59</sup> The shadow report also calls for a broader approach to different forms of discrimination. The opinion of Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee also called for a more effective implementation of the action programme.<sup>60</sup>

According to the MFA, an improvement in the new 1325 action plan over the previous one is that in its goals it takes better taken into account of women in conflict areas. Conflict and situation analysis is also referred to as the basis for planning, but actual gender analysis is not systematically evident. This is problematic because Finland's conflict analysis guidance does not in itself contain a gender perspective. In the new action plan,

gender analysis is mainly linked to crisis management activities. In spring 2017 the research community issued two critical statements expressing concern at the lack of gender analysis and comprehensive research, as well as the lack of participation of actors from conflict areas.<sup>61</sup>

The status of 1325 action plan and the political support it receives are not reflected in the financing of its implementation in fragile countries. Finland has been a major contributor to the creation of national action plans. Unfortunately, cuts in development cooperation also hamper Finland's 1325 work. In Nepal, for instance, Finland has stopped funding its implementation. Funding has been cut in other countries too since 2013. This takes away the basis for the action plan's goal of supporting 1325 work. The Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs also considers it important that there are adequate appropriations and human resources set aside for work of Finland's national 1325 action plan. ■

## Development Policy Committee recommendations:

- Finland should continue actively on the SheTrades front and channel development funding to women's economic empowerment in accordance with declaration of WTO member states. Finland must ensure that the promotion of its trade and investment, and its influence on EU trade policy, support women's economic empowerment.
- Finland must advocate for the scrutinisation of Finnish, EU and WTO international free trade agreements from a gender perspective.
- Finland must pay particular attention to the continuity and implementation of 1325 work in developing countries. This will require sufficient resources and for Finland to give women and CSOs in developing countries a greater role and emphasis as 1325 actors.
- The equal involvement of civil society and the diverse use of research data should be seen as an integral part of Finland's quality 1325 work.

<sup>59</sup> Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe National Action Programme (NAP) Academy, Autumn 2016.

<sup>60</sup> Statement of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Finnish Parliament (in Finnish) UaVL 9/2016 vp– UTP 28/2013 vp, Parliament 2016.

<sup>61</sup> For statements from the research collective see: <http://blogs.helsinki.fi/gpshelsinki/2017/06/27/helsinki-gps-esittaytytutkijoiden-lausunto-suomen-3-1325-toimintaohjelman-luonnoksesta/> and <http://politiikasta.fi/tutkijoiden-kannanotto/> (in Finnish).

# 5.

- VISIO -

## From myth to grounded paradigm

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When pursuing ambitious goals it is important to remain grounded. Having a realistic perspective of our own activities is the first step towards the exemplary promotion of gender equality in developing countries.

## Finland encompasses both myth and paradigm

**T**he Development Policy Committee's assessment of Finland as an international affirmer of gender equality induces both praise and criticism. Our prestige, our international activity, and our good reputation as a sustainable development actor create solid preconditions to go even further. There is competence in gender equality work among all development actors, but if we take the best international commitments and practices as a touchstone there is still scope for improvement by all.

The National Action Plan for Sustainable Development and the Government Report on Development Policy provide major policy lines for Finland's activities, the successful implementation of which still requires more clearer leadership, planning and knowledge-based monitoring. In addition to surveys and evaluations, strengthening the knowledge base requires more independent scientific research.<sup>62</sup> Finland focuses its activities on countries and themes where there is a need and demand for strengthening gender equality according to sustainable development. Equality and the most vulnerable people and groups of people – often expressly women and girls – have been identified as an important common thread running through development cooperation and humanitarian aid. This, however, needs to be further strengthened and must traverse government terms.

Finland's credibility is undermined by the collapse of targeted funding for gender equality work. The amount is even further away from international commitments like the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. In addition to the total amount of targeted funding, the *relative* funding contribution and the numbers of personnel devoted to the gender targets do not correspond to the political weight of the priorities of the focus areas or the expectations pervading them within the development cooperation. The cuts made to development cooperation have in practice targeted gender equality work. This must change and the volume of development cooperation must increase. Finland has to stick to its international financial commitments (0,7 per cent of GNI for development cooperation and 0,2 per cent for support to the poorest countries). In addition, we are bound by the Paris Climate Agreement, the goals of the 2030 Agenda, and the international rules on development cooperation.

Finland is party to the EU's Gender Action Plan. Under it, 85 per cent of all new programmes and projects must serve gender equality either as a significant part or primary objective by 2020. Careful implementation of this commitment would ameliorate current shortcomings when promoting gender equality both through targeted actions and as part of every development policy focus. This requires a clear decision and guidance to implement the commitment.

Finland should also face openly issues related to gender equality in development cooperation and politics, so that we can develop ourselves as a force for gender equality. These problem areas include the low impact of long-term development performance and still deficient performance monitoring, as well as the lack of clear guidelines that in turn weakens the position of

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gender considerations in planning and compiling statistics. Despite *gender mainstreaming*, gender equality is still weak in development cooperation and development policy. Girls in particular are still left in the background within the emphasis on women and girls. Financial investments must also be harnessed more effectively for equality work.

The MFA's on-going development of procedures needs to break this negative pattern. It should also be remembered that this is a question of global

<sup>62</sup> The assessment of Finnish feminist policy researchers of Finland at this point in time takes a far more critical approach than that of the Development Policy Committee.





responsibility for Finland and the state administration. Financing for development cooperation is in the hands of each respective government. It can ultimately affect how far Finland is willing to invest in the status and rights of women and girls in developing countries.

We need to decide on the direction in which we want to go. If we are satisfied with the current situation, Finland's role as a global pioneer in gender equality will remain a myth. At the same time, we will be lagging far behind the sustainable development ideal. Becoming a paradigm requires that we attend to our strengths, but also that we take heed of the facts and the correct the problems we have mentioned above. To do this there needs to be a significant and permanent change of heart.

## What needs to change for Finland to become a paradigm?

To bring about sustainable development requires that present and future governments commit to goals that transcend government terms and the mandates of specific actors. Women and girls have been an integral part of Finland's development cooperation and policy for decades. The Sustainable Development Agenda affirms this objective and obliges its realisation in the long term. It is therefore justified that the objectives and principles of development cooperation and development policy, as

well as the development of working methods, be given a more permanent basis. Changes to priorities, guidelines and work quality requirements that happen with each government term undermine the performance and predictability of operations and, above all, the benefits for women and girls in developing countries. Therefore, the Development Policy Committee proposes that the promotion of the status and rights of women and girls must be actualised as a key priority for Finland's development policy and that clear targets for it are set as part of a broader approach to non-discrimination and equality. This would give the on-going development cooperation process a longer-term perspective on sustainable development and would allow for the consolidation of best international practices. This would strengthen the leverage and binding nature of reform work and improve the performance of development cooperation.

Finland must also engage in an open debate on what sort of level of ambition we set for gender equality work in developing countries and in influencing matters internationally. There is a need for a clear decision on what are the role and importance of gender equality and non-discrimination goals in development policy. Is it currently *the most important* of the four priority areas now, or just *one of the four*? This choice actually has great practical meaning. In any case, the current formulation will require a coherent promotion of the status and rights of women and girls in all development



policies and sustainable development. If Finland wants to be an example and paradigm, a coherent implementation of gender equality must be ensured in the strategies and in the ownership steering and follow-up of the MFA and the government. Gender equality goals should also be included in reporting to Parliament on development policy performance and sustainable development.

There needs to be greater thought given in Finland to the sort of change and extent Finland seeks in its equality work. Long-term gender mainstreaming goals in bilateral development cooperation are currently present in three of the nine country programmes. However, the current goals of the Government Report on Development Policy provide possibilities for very fundamental positive changes in the status and rights of women and girls.

The current approach nevertheless requires an emphasis on *how* Finland pursues its goals. There is an imbalance between ambitious aims and available performance data. We continue to measure *the numbers of women or beneficiaries involved*. It is still not enough to report change in relation to the causes and structures that maintain inequality. How we do this in each country and situation requires case-by-case analysis. The results of gender analysis will clarify the goals of

activities and their follow-up. As a paradigm, Finland should pay particular attention to this. The resources available for equality work must at all times match the political weight of the focal area and the level of ambition we set for it.

There has been debate in recent years on the strengths of Finland's development policy, of which for instance sexual and reproductive health and rights have come to prominence internationally. And yet cuts in development cooperation highlight the need to prioritise and centralise existing resources. For example, in the OECD peer review, Finland has received special praise for the 2030 Agenda's *Leave no one behind* approach concerning people with disabilities and the most vulnerable groups. In line with this approach, Finland should examine the status of women and girls of different ages and facing different forms of discrimination.

As a paradigm, Finland should promote a more systematic and coherent approach to equality in all development policies, including in private sector support and financial investments. Finland should also realise the economic empowerment of women, including all trade and foreign policy instruments. For this to happen, Finland must ensure that the promotion of trade and investment as well as its influence on EU trade policy and free trade agreements supports this objective. Women's entrepreneurship and economic activity are important as it supports the strengthening of the financial resources of developing countries. Therefore, Finland's development policy should be strongly involved in nurturing girls' entrepreneurship and economic agency. Also, continuing work on UN Resolution 1325 (Women in Peace and Security) should pay particular attention to giving greater weight to the women's and non-governmental organizations in developing countries.

Being a paradigm means  
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## What will change entail?

The *paradigm* comprises many different elements – from technical details to broad political lines and their implementation. Promoting gender equality in development cooperation does not happen by itself but requires leadership, clearer chains of responsibility, and stronger ownership among different stakeholders. The key features for paradigmatic activity are operational quality, consistency and continuity. The different operating environments and their challenges must also be carefully considered.

Strengthening developing countries' gender equality should be seen as an integral part of Finland's sustainable development policy. Change also requires financial resources in line with international commitments. In addition, national level implementation of the EU Gender Action Plan and the 85 per cent stipulation is a challenge to all parties - Finland's bilateral development cooperation, CSOs, and private sector actors – to increase the amount of gender equality in their work. This challenge covers not only development cooperation but also foreign relations. The change in perspective is significant: besides asking how our actions promote gender equality in developing countries, we have to be able to account for why gender equality is not the goal of our activity or why an activity has no effect on it. The fact that we are still below the EU average in this respect should urgently prompt us to look at our current operations and the changes needed. At present, Finland is still has a way to go to being a paradigm: the total share of development cooperation contributing to gender equality remains at 37 per cent, and for the CSOs, the latest figure is 47 per cent (2016). In addition, gender equality is lacking in the framework conditions guiding the development impact of ownership steering for the largest financial investor, Finnfund, even though women are beneficiaries in many of the projects.

Being a paradigm means having a realistic and knowledge-based view of yourself and your actions. A paradigm country learns from both its mistakes and successes. This approach persists even amid the pressures of diplomacy and politics. The temptation to inflate our own role has increased to an even greater extent in the aftermath of the cuts and pressure to get results. This should be cautioned against. We must retain transparency and space for critical debate. Ultimately, it is verified development impacts and results that determine whether or not we are a paradigm. Our own evaluations and the OECD peer review are important, but it is equally crucial to get feedback from our partner countries and other stakeholders. Being a paradigm is not the title we award ourselves; rather it is earned through our actions as others see us. Being a paradigm is a state that we strive for in our activities. And we should bear in mind that development is about partnerships, so in such cooperation it is good to leave titles like 'paradigm' to one side.

One of the major changes needed in the priority area concerning women and girls is to open up the dual concept. Promoting girls' status and rights requires separate consideration alongside that of women as part of the totality of the priority area. If women and girls are given equal emphasis, it will be reflected in actions taken. Girls need to be considered comprehensively in different sectors in order to achieve a deeper change for girls in terms of discriminatory attitudes, social norms and values. In addition, girls should be taken into account in certain specific issues, such as sexual and reproductive health and rights. Because of their age and gender, girls are subject to multiple discrimination. The collection of data disaggregated by gender and age and performance evaluation makes their actual situation visible.<sup>63</sup> Finland must also act actively in international fora to bring girls from the margins to the centre of development policy. There is a clear place for this vision on the terrain of international sustainable development.

## Words into deeds

The groundwork to realise this vision must be initiated during the term of the current government. The on-going reforms at the MFA must respond to both the technical and policy problems that we have dealt with in this report. There must also be a debate on how Finland is practically implementing the EU Gender Action Plan and improving coherent gender equality promotion regardless of the actor. The Finnish EU Presidency in 2019 would be a natural platform for demonstrating reforms and an exemplary gender equality-enhancing development policy. It is important that Finland is able to present itself as an innovator in relation to the common EU goals. In this way we will also show that we are credibly committed to realising the long-term sustainable development of Agenda 2030. Development cooperation and development policy requires a longer basis and design than government terms. We appeal to the political parties to introduce this idea in the next government programme. The goal of non-discrimination and gender equality must be the lasting foundation of this development policy. ■





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1.1.2016 – 31.12.2019

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Aila Paloniemi, MP  
Substitute: Anniina Ruottu, Ph.D., M.Soc.Sc

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- **Foreign Ministry's partnership organisations**  
Julia Ojanen, Programme Director at Plan Finland  
Substitute: Miikka Niskanen, Director of Humanitarian Aid, World Vision Finland
- **Women and girls priority area (UNWOMEN, UN Association, Family Federation of Finland, Finnish Youth Cooperation – Allianssi):** Elina Multanen, Executive Director, Finland National Committee for UN Women (2016 -2017) and Elina Korhonen, Expert, Family Federation of Finland (Väestöliitto) (2018 – 2019) Substitute: Helena Laukko, Executive Director, UN Association



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- **Ministry of Justice:** Director, Ms. Johanna Suurpää, (Niklas Wilhemsson)
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- **Department for Africa and the Middle East:** Senior Adviser, Mr. Pertti Anttinen

## Secretariat

- Dr. Marikki Stocchetti, Secretary General
- MA Katja Kandolin, Coordinator







Development Policy Committee

The Development Policy Committee is an advisory body appointed by the Government to monitor and evaluate Finland's activities in the policy areas which concern developing countries. The Committee also assesses the quality and effectiveness of development cooperation and monitors the level of public development cooperation appropriations. The Committee is representative in terms of parliamentary and social representation.

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