

# EVALUATION

WATER AS AN ENTRY POINT FOR PEACE MEDIATION



Ministry for Foreign  
Affairs of Finland

Volume 1 • Main Report



Evaluation On Finnish Water Diplomacy

2021/6A



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# **WATER AS AN ENTRYPOINT FOR PEACE MEDIATION**

## **EVALUATION ON FINNISH WATER DIPLOMACY**

### **Volume 1 - Main Report**

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**2021/6A**

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# EVALUATION ON FINNISH WATER DIPLOMACY

This evaluation report consists of two volumes. This is Volume 1 and is the main report.

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# Acronyms and Abbreviations

<b>ACCP</b>	Actors, Content, Context, Process (ACCP) Conflict Analysis Framework
<b>CFA</b>	Comprehensive Framework Agreement
<b>CMI</b>	CMI - Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organisation
<b>ENTRO</b>	Eastern Nile Technical Regional Office
<b>ETH</b>	ETH Zürich university
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EVA</b>	Evaluation Unit of the MFA of Finland
<b>FCA</b>	Finn Church Aid
<b>FELM</b>	Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission
<b>FIIA</b>	Finnish Institute of International Affairs
<b>FWF</b>	Finnish Water Forum
<b>HELCOM</b>	Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (Helsinki Commission - HELCOM)
<b>IKMP</b>	Information and Knowledge Management Programme
<b>IUCN</b>	International Union for Conservation of Nature
<b>LMC (M)</b>	Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (Mechanism)
<b>MFA</b>	Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland
<b>MRC</b>	Mekong River Commission
<b>NBI</b>	Nile River Basin Initiative
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>NWM (F)</b>	Nordic Women Mediators (Finland)
<b>ODA</b>	Official Development Assistance
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>PDR</b>	People's Democratic Republic
<b>PPA</b>	Policy Priority Area
<b>RBO</b>	River Basin Organisation
<b>SIWI</b>	Stockholm International Water Institute
<b>SMART</b>	SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound) goals
<b>SYKE</b>	Finnish Environment Institute
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNECE</b>	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
<b>USA</b>	United States of America
<b>USSR</b>	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
<b>WMO</b>	World Meteorological Organization



# Tiivistelmä

Arvioinnissa keskityttiin siihen, missä määrin resurssien ja erilaisten toimien strateginen koordinaatio edesauttoi vesivaroihin liittyvien jännitteiden ehkäisemistä tai lieventämistä. Lisäksi haettiin oppeja Suomen tulevaan vesidiplomatiatoimintaan. Tätä varten analysoitiin Suomen aiempaa toimintaa Mekong-joen alueella (1987-2015) ja Niilin valuma-alueella (2001-2015), Suomen ja Venäjän yhteistyötä (vuodesta 1961 nykypäivään) ja Suomen tukea YK:n Euroopan talouskomission (UNECE) vesivarjoja koskevan yleissopimuksen toteuttamisessa (vuodesta 1992 nykypäivään). Arvioinnissa käytettiin monimenetelmäistä lähestymistapaa, mukaan lukien sidosryhmien haastattelut ja olennaisten dokumenttien analyysi.

**Johtopäätökset:** Kansainvälisellä tasolla Suomi on jatkuvasti osoittanut kykynsä vastata riittävästi vedestä johtuviin jännitteisiin ja soveltaa näyttöön perustuvaa diplomatiaa ja teknistä tukea. Toimintastrategian puute on vaikeuttanut pyrkimystä vastata yhä kompleksisempiin ympäristöön liittyviin turvallisuusongelmiin (mukaan lukien laajemmat ilmastohaasteet). Kyseisen strategian tulisi varmistaa johdonmukaisuus, yhdenmukaisuus, sitoutuminen ja jatkuvuus haastavien ja monitahoisten turvallisuuskysymysten ratkaisussa. Vastuut, taloudelliset resurssit ja viestintä eivät vielä ole oletettujen tavoitteiden kanssa linjassa.

**Suosituks:** Suosituksissa ehdotetaan, miten voitaisiin luoda edellytykset: 1) ulkoasiainhallinnon diplomaattien ja muiden asiantuntijoiden erilaisten ammattikulttuurien yhdistämiseksi; ja 2) toteuttamiskelpoiselle vesidiplomatian toimintakehikolle.

*Asiasanat: Suomi; rauhanvälitys; monitahoiset konfliktit; vesidiplomatia*



# Referat

Utvärderingen försökte reda ut i vilken utsträckning strategisk samordning av resurser och aktiviteter bidrog till att förebygga eller lindra vattenrelaterade spänningar, och vilka lärdomar som kan dras för framtida vattendiplomati. I detta syfte granskade utvärderingen Finlands tidigare aktiviteter i Mekongbäckenet (1987-2015), Nilbäckenet (2001-2015), det finsk-ryska samarbetet (1961-idag), och den verksamhet som kommit till stånd genom FN:s ekonomiska kommission för Europa (UNECE) och dess vattenkonvention (1992-idag). Utvärderingen tillämpade flera olika metoder, inklusive intervjuer och skrivbordstudier av beskickningar och projekt.

**Slutsatser:** På det internationella planet fortsätter Finland bemöta vattenrelaterade spänningar på ett ändamålsenligt sätt genom att använda evidensbaserad diplomati och tekniskt bistånd. Finlands ambition att engagera sig i alltmer komplexa miljörelaterade säkerhetsfrågor (inklusive de bredare klimatutmaningarna) försvåras dock av bristen på en tydlig strategi. En sådan strategi bör säkerställa koherens, stringens, engagemang och kontinuitet att bemöta komplexa säkerhetsfrågor. Denna ambition återspeglas ännu inte i ansvarsfördelning, resurser och informationshantering.

**Rekommendationer:** Rekommendationerna syftar till: 1) att föreslå hur förutsättningarna kan skapas för att sammanjämka de olika arbetskulturerna som råder hos diplomater och specialister inom och utanför UM, samt; 2) att föreslå hur villkoren för en bärkraftig infrastruktur för vattendiplomati kan skapas.

Nyckelord: *Finland; fredsmedling; komplexa konflikter; vattendiplomati*



# Abstract

The evaluation focused on the degree to which strategic coordination of resources and activities supported the prevention or mitigation of water-related tensions and what can be learned for future engagement in water diplomacy. For this purpose, the evaluation analysed past Finnish activities in the Mekong basin (1987-2015), and Nile basin (2001-2015), the Finnish-Russian cooperation (1961-today), and the activities developed through the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Water Convention (1992-today). It applied a multi-method approach, including stakeholder interviews and desk analysis of missions and projects.

**Conclusions:** Within the international domain, Finland continues to demonstrate its ability to adequately respond to water-related tensions, applying evidence-based diplomacy and technical support. The ambition to respond to increasingly complex environment-related security concerns (including the broader climate challenges) is hampered through a lack of an operational strategy. Such a strategy should ensure coherency, consistency, commitment, and continuity in response to complex security concerns. Responsibilities, financial resources, and information position are not yet in line with the assumed ambition.

**Recommendations:** The recommendations aim: 1) to propose how the conditions can be created to bring the different professional cultures between diplomats and specialists within and outside of MFA together; 2) to propose how the conditions for viable water diplomacy infrastructure can be created.

**Keywords:** *Finland; peace mediation; complex conflict; water diplomacy*





tarkoitusta varten arvioinnissa analysoitiin Suomen aiempaa toimintaa Mekong-joen alueella (1987-2015) ja Niilin valuma-alueella (2001-2015), Suomen ja Venäjän yhteistyötä (vuodesta 1961 nykypäivään) ja Suomen tukea YK:n Euroopan talouskomission (UNECE) vettä koskevan yleissopimuksen toteuttamisessa (vuodesta 1992 nykypäivään).

## Metodologia

Ottaen huomioon vesidiplomatian nykytila Suomessa, arvioinnissa käytettiin kaksitahoista lähestymistapaa yhteisen oppimisen ja päätöksenteon helpottamiseksi. Ensimmäisessä osa-alueessa tarkasteltiin menneitä tapahtumia ja arvioitiin Suomen toiminnan vahvuuksia ja heikkouksia Mekongin ja Niilin alueilla, Suomen ja Venäjän rajavesisopimukseen liittyvää yhteistyötä ja UNECE:n vesisopimusta. Kussakin tapaustutkimuksessa haastateltiin sekä suomalaisia että ulkomaisia (paikallisia) asiantuntijoita ja diplomaatteja. Sidosryhmien kanssa tehtyjen haastattelujen lisäksi analysoitiin ulkoministeriön asiakirjoja Suomen motiivien ymmärtämiseksi. Kansainvälisiä diplomaatteja ja asiantuntijoita haastateltiin kerätyn tiedon paikkansapitävyyden varmistamiseksi useasta eri lähteestä.

Toisessa osa-alueessa pohdittiin tulevaisuutta keskittyen vesidiplomatian mahdollisuuksiin ja tulevien tavoitteiden ja intressien täsmentämiseen. Tätä tarkoitusta varten järjestettiin useita vuorovaikutteisia kokouksia (verkossa) arvioinnin viiteryhmän (*Reference Group*) kanssa. Tapaamisten tuloksena syntyi vesidiplomatiaa koskeva alustava muutosteoria. Tulevaisuuteen suuntautuva pohdinta ja yhteinen oppiminen olivat kuitenkin vasta prosessin alkua, koska Suomen vesidiplomatian kehitys on toistaiseksi alkuvaiheessa. Vesidiplomatiaa koskevan toiminnan laajuudesta tulevaisuudessa on vielä tehtävä päätöksiä.

## Löydökset

Tapaustutkimukset osoittivat, että Suomen toiminta liittyen vesivarojen hallintaan kyseisillä alueilla on perustunut strategiaan motiiveihin, kuten alueellisen yhdentymisen edistämiseen. Niilin ja Mekongin alueen toiminnan koordinointi on kuitenkin ollut rajallista suomalaisten poliittisten ja kehitysyhteistyön toimijoiden välillä. Tämä on vähentänyt strategisten tavoitteiden saavuttamista Kehitysyhteistyön äkillinen päättyminen niin Niilin kuin Mekongin alueella vuonna 2015 on heikentänyt jo aiemmin saavutettuja tuloksia. Toisaalta toiminta UNECE:ssä ja Suomen ja Venäjän välisessä rajavesiyhteistyössä on edistänyt onnistuneesti vesidiplomatian strategisia tavoitteita.

Arvioinnin tulosten perusteella Suomi ei tällä hetkellä ole tunnettu toimija vesidiplomatiassa. Suomalaiset diplomaatit on kuitenkin koettu päteviksi ja he ovat arvostettuja kansainvälisissä järjestöissä ja tapaamisissa. Alueellisissa kehityshankkeissa he ovat olleet kuitenkin vähemmän näkyviä ja aktiivisia hankkeiden mahdollisten poliittisten vaikutusten suhteen. Näytön perustella voidaan osoittaa, että Suomen lähestymistapa on vahvin silloin kun tekninen lähestymistapa on osa diplomaattista strategiaa. Jos tekninen lähestymistapa vesikysymyksiin tapahtuu erillään diplomatiasta, se ei tuota pysyviä vaikutuksia.

Suomalaiset ja kansainväliset haastateltavat identifioivat erilaisia useita vaihtoehtoja, joihin Suomen toiminta voisi jatkossa keskittyä. Näitä vaihtoehtoja ovat muun muassa johtava rooli avunantajien koordinoinnissa ja kansainvälisen vuoropuhelun edistäminen kohti kokonaisvaltaisempaa tutkimusta (*integrated research*) ja kapasiteetin kehittämistä valtiorajat ylittävien jokien valuma-alueilla.



Suomen vesidiplomatian tavoitteet ovat tällä hetkellä epäselvät. Vesidiplomatiassa mukana olevat toimijat toivovat tarkasti perusteltua päätöstä tulevan toiminnan painopisteestä. Lisäksi kansainväliset toimijat kannustavat Suomea kertomaan kansainväliselle yhteisölle tavoitteistaan ja panoksestaan koskien kansainvälistä vesidiplomatiaa.

Suomen vesidiplomatiaa koskevan lähestymistavan kehittäminen on täydessä vauhdissa, mutta tietojen vaihdon, toiminnan rahoituksen, henkilöresurssien, sisäisen koordinoinnin ja yhteisen oppimisen muodot eivät ole vielä vakiintuneet. Huolimatta rauhanvälityskeskukseen ympärille rakennetusta verkostosta, ulkoministeriön osastojen ja muiden ministeriöiden välisten toimien koordinoinnissa voi ilmetä käytännön ongelmia. Yliopistot ja yksityiset toimijat näyttävät olevan keskeisten ministeriöiden vesidiplomatiaa koskevien tavoitteiden edistämisen keskiössä. Rajalliset henkilö- ja taloudelliset resurssit kuitenkin vaikuttavat vesidiplomatian tarjoamien mahdollisuuksien hyödyntämiseen. Ulkoministeriön tavoitteiden saavuttaminen ja vesidiplomatiaverkoston kanssa tehtävän yhteistyön rakentaminen ministeriön tiedon tarpeita täydentäväksi on kuitenkin mahdollista. Tämän lisäksi kansainvälinen vesidiplomatiaan liittyvä toiminta lisää vaikuttamis- ja tiedonsaantimahdollisuuksia. Useat kansainväliset kumppanit ovat valmiita tukemaan Suomea. Mahdollinen riski tavoitteiden saavuttamiselle on se, että Suomen vesidiplomatian toimet perustuvat pääasiassa kehitysyhteistyön rahoituskriteereihin.

## Johtopäätökset

1. Suomella on hyvät edellytykset tulla lähitulevaisuudessa johtavaksi toimijaksi kansainvälisessä vesidiplomatiassa.
2. Ulkoministeriöllä ja vesidiplomatiaverkostolla on vahva motivaatio luoda kansainvälisesti arvostettua suomalaista vesidiplomatiaa.
3. Onnistunut vesidiplomatia edellyttää teknisen, tietoperustaisen yhteistyön ja diplomatian yhdistämistä sekä koordinointia niiden välillä.
4. Vastuualueita ja koordinointia koskevat epäselvyydet rajoittavat kykyä vastata lyhyen ja pitkän aikavälin tukipyyntöihin.
5. Suomea ei tunnusteta sellaiseksi tärkeäksi toimijaksi, jolla on oma erityinen osaamisalueensa vesidiplomatiassa.
6. Ulkoministeriön tavoitetasoa ja painopisteitä ei ole vielä määritelty selkeästi.
7. Rajallisten resurssien vuoksi ulkoministeriön on tehtävä strategisia valintoja. Vesidiplomatiaverkoston keskeiset kumppanit ovat valmiita olemaan tässä tukena, mutta ne tarvitsevat kannustimia pystyäkseen jatkuvasti tarjoamaan tietoa ja asiantuntemusta ulkoministeriölle.
8. Tietoa on paljon saatavilla, mutta tiedon tarpeita ja mahdollisia tietolähteitä ei ole tunnistettu.
9. Riittämätön tosiasioihin ja yksityiskohtiin perehtyminen, muiden kumppaneiden toiminnan sivuvaikutukset ja globaalin vallankäytön dynamiikka uhkaavat Suomen toimien tuloksellisuutta ja mainetta yhteistyön ja luottamuksen rakentamisessa.



## Suosituks

Suosituksissa ehdotetaan, miten voitaisiin luoda edellytykset: 1) ulkoministeriön ja sen ulkopuolisten diplomaattien ja asiantuntijoiden erilaisten ammattikulttuurien yhdistämiseksi; ja 2) toteuttamiskelpoiselle vesidiplomatian infrastruktuurille. Suositukset perustuvat keskeisiin vaiheisiin toimintaohjelman toteuttamiseksi. Arviointiryhmä pitää kaikkia näitä suosituksia välttämättöminä vesidiplomatiaan liittyvän toiminnan toteuttamiseksi kestäväällä pohjalla. Suositukset on ryhmitelty teemoittain sen mukaan mitä ehdotetaan parannettaviksi. Lisäsuosituksia on esitetty raportin luvussa 6.

*Suosittellaan, että ulkoministeriö:*

### TAVOITETASO

1. Päättää, millä tavoitetasolla Suomi sitoutuu ehkäisemään tai lieventämään vesivaroihin liittyviä jännitteitä. Päämäärän saavuttamiseksi ulkoministeriön tulisi työskennellä keskeisten ministeriöiden kanssa ja toiminnan tulisi perustua yhteiseen lähestymistapaan.
2. Laajentaa nykyistä 4P-ohjausryhmää osallistamalla muut keskeiset ministeriöt ja vesidiplomatiaverkoston toimijat, jotta voitaisiin ohjata Suomen vesidiplomatian pitkän aikavälin suuntaa.
3. Toimeenpanee olemassa olevan toimivallan puitteissa rauhanvälityskeskukseen ja muiden keskeisten osastojen vastuut ja kiinnittää erityistä huomiota osastojen väliseen koordinointiin.

### KAPASITEETIN KEHITTÄMINEN:

4. Valmistele toimenpiteitä, joilla mahdollistetaan nopeisiin välityspyyntöihin vastaaminen ja hakee siihen liittyviä oppeja ja malleja muilta vesidiplomatiatoimijoilta.
5. Vahvistaa koulutuksen ja tiedonvaihdon avulla ulkoministeriön ja sen kumppaneiden kykyä vastata veteen liittyviin jännitteisiin..
6. Investoi sellaisiin molempia osapuolia hyödyttäviin kumppanuuksiin, joiden kautta tietoa ja asiantuntemusta on helposti saatavilla.

### BUDJETTI JA RESURSSIT

7. Käyttää talousarvioprosessia sekä toiminta- ja taloussuunnittelu työkaluja pitkän aikavälin rahoituksen ja sitoutumisen mahdollistamiseksi.

### POLITIIKAT

8. Käyttää vesidiplomatiaa lähestymistapana, joka tarjoaa tulokulmia moniulotteisiin kehitysyhteistyön ja rauhanvälityksen kytkemistä toisiinsa ja ilmasto- ja siviilivälikonflikteihin ja edesauttaa niiden ratkaisemista.

### TIETO JA TIEDOTUS:

9. Identifioi ja hankkii tietoa, jota tarvitaan vesidiplomatian tehokkaaseen toteuttamiseen .



## **ORGANISAATIO**

10. Osoittaa henkilöstöä avainpaikoille seuraamaan kriittisiä vesivarojen hallintaan liittyviä julkaisuja, kehittämään läheisiä suhteita keskeisiin tutkimus- ja kansalaisyhteiskunnan kumppaneihin ja alan edustajiin. Ulkoministeriön tulisi luoda suurlähetystöilleen edellytykset vastata vesidiplomatian tietotarpeisiin.

## **UUDET PITKÄN AIKAVÄLIN ALOITTEET:**

11. Rakentaa tulevaisuuden toimia Suomen jo olemassa olevan toiminnan pohjalta.
12. Tunnistaa uudet pitkän aikavälin sitoumukset niin, että ne tukevat diplomaattisia tavoitteita.

## **SUOMEN ERITYISALUE:**

13. Tunnistaa Suomen vesidiplomatian erityisosaamisen ja lisää sen tunnettuutta viestinnällisin keinoin ja inspiroimalla muita.

## **YHTEINEN OPPIMINEN:**

14. Luo rauhanvälityskeskukseen kautta tilaisuuksia henkilöstön, yhteistyökumppaneiden ja päättäjien yhteiselle oppimiselle ja samalla tukemaan sopeutuvaa johtamista.



# Sammanfattning

## Inledning

Begreppet vattendiplomati och tillhörande metoder och verktyg är under utveckling i Europa, i USA och på andra håll i världen. Flera länder har intagit ledande positioner i särskilda nischområden inom vattendiplomati.

För att förbättra den finländska gensvaret på globala vattenrelaterade frågor tog fem finska ministerier (jord- och skogsbruksministeriet, arbets- och näringsministeriet, miljöministeriet, utrikesministeriet och social- och hälsovårdsministeriet) fram en internationell vattenstrategi med titeln ”Finnish Water Way” i 2018.

Vattendiplomati stöds av UM som arbetar med att införliva vattendiplomatikonceptet i den utrikes- och utvecklingspolitiska verktygslådan. Syftet är att stärka Finlands roll i internationella vattenrelaterade frågor och kopplingen mellan vatten och övriga fredsmedlande verksamheter. UM har även investerat i tillämpning av metoder för vattendiplomati i samarbete med partners (Finlands vattendiplomatinätverk). Finlands vattendiplomativ verksamhet samordnas för närvarande av det nyligen inrättade centret för fredsmedling, som är placerat vid UM.

Vattendiplomati förenar diplomati med fokus på komplexa miljörelaterade frågor och säkerhetsfrågor, vilket inkluderar de bredare klimatutmaningarna. Tillvägagångssättet är därför av stor betydelse för fredsmedling.

Följande arbetsdefinition av vattendiplomati användes i utvärderingen: *Vattendiplomati är den strategiska samordningen av resurser och aktiviteter<sup>2</sup> som stödjer förebyggande eller lindring av vattenrelaterade spänningar.*

Syftet med denna utvärdering var att understödja den pågående processen inom UM med att integrera vattendiplomati i den utrikes- och utvecklingspolitiska verktygslådan, och öka ministeriets förmåga att vidta noggrant riktade åtgärder. Målet var att tillföra kunskap om Finlands framtida engagemang inom vattendiplomati, baserat på en analys av tidigare styrkor och svagheter och en analys av möjligheter och hot inom de relaterade områdena av vattensamarbete, fredsmedling och diplomati.

Utvärderingen fokuserade på i vilken utsträckning strategisk samordning av resurser och aktiviteter bidrog till att förebygga eller lindra vattenrelaterade spänningar, och vilka lärdomar som kan dras för framtida vattendiplomati. I detta syfte granskade utvärderingen Finlands tidigare

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2 Sådana resurser och aktiviteter omfattar:

- Medling och diplomati
- Skapa förtroende bland konkurrerande intressenter
- Främja en ömsesidig förståelse för gemensamma intressen
- Hantera osäkerheter/understödja faktasökning
- Organisera dialog mellan flera sektorer och på flera nivåer
- Utveckla förutsättningar för hållbar finansiering
- Kapacitetsutveckling för god vattenstyrning



verksamhet i Mekongbäckenet (1987-2015), Nilbäckenet (2001-2015), det finsk-ryska samarbetet (1961-idag), och den verksamhet som kommit till stånd genom FN:s ekonomiska kommission för Europa (UNECE) och dess vattenkonvention (1992-idag).

## Metod

Mot bakgrund av vattendiplomatins tillstånd i Finland och för att underlätta lärande och beslutsfattande, följde utvärderingen två spår. Ett spår var tillbakablickande med fokus på styrkor och svagheter inom Finlands verksamhet i Nil- och Mekongbäckenerna, det finsk-ryska samarbetet samt inom UNECE:s vattenkonvention. Inom ramen för fallstudierna intervjuade teamet både finska och utländska (lokala) experter och diplomater. Utöver samråd med intressenter granskades UM-dokument för att bringa klarhet i Finlands ambitioner. Utländska diplomater och experter intervjuades också för att kunna triangulera information.

Det andra spåret var framåtblickande med fokus på att identifiera möjligheter, ambitioner och framtida intressen. För detta ändamål hölls flera interaktiva möten (online) med utvärderingens referensgrupp. Dessa möten resulterade bland annat i en inledande förändringsteori, som ska ses som ett första steg i en process, då vattendiplomati är fortsatt under utveckling. Det finns ett behov av att besluta om framtida omfattning och aktiviteter.

## Resultat

Utvärderingen visar att Finland hade strategiska ambitioner för sina satsningar inom ramen för fallstudierna, till exempel att främja regional integration. Analysen tyder dock på begränsad samordning i Nil- och Mekongbäckenerna mellan berörda finska politiska aktörer och de som ansvarar för att hantera eller genomföra utvecklingssamarbete. Denna svaghet har varit en hämsko för Finlands strategiska ambitioner. Det abrupta slutet på utvecklingssamarbetet i Nil- och Mekongbäckenerna 2015 har vidare fått konsekvenser för de resultat som tidigare har uppnåtts. De aktiviteter som har genomförts inom UNECE:s verksamhet och det finsk-ryska samarbetet har bidragit till vattendiplomatins strategiska mål i positiv riktning.

Vidare visar utvärderingen att Finlands verksamhet inom vattendiplomati inte är allmänt känd. Finska diplomater är dock högt ansedda och uppskattade i internationella organisationer och möten. Däremot har finska diplomater varit mindre synliga och aktiva inom regionala utvecklingsprojekt vad gäller hanteringen av potentiella politiska konsekvenser. Det finns tydliga belägg för att diplomati kombinerad med tekniskt bistånd är en framgångsrik metod. Om det tekniska biståndet inom vattenfrågor är avskilt från diplomatin begränsas de långsiktiga effekterna.

Finska och internationella intervjupersoner föreslog olika alternativ till hur Finlands engagemang kan stärkas. Ett av dessa alternativ är att Finland skulle kunna ta en ledande roll i givarsamordning och underlätta internationell dialog för att främja integrerad forskning och kapacitetsutveckling i gränsöverskridande avrinningsområden.

Finlands målsättning för vattendiplomatin är för närvarande oklar. Aktörerna inom vattendiplomati efterlyser ett välgrundat beslut om vad framtida aktiviteter ska fokusera på. Internationella aktörer uppmanar också Finland att klargöra ambitionsnivån och hur man tänker sig bidra till internationell vattendiplomati.



Den finska strategin för vattendiplomati är under utveckling; upplägget vad gäller informationshantering, budget, personal, intern samordning och gemensamt lärande har ännu inte institutionaliserats. Trots det nätverk som byggts upp kring centret för fredsmedling kan praktiska problem uppstå mellan UM:s avdelningar och mellan olika ministerier. Universitet och privata aktörer verka utgöra ryggraden i den ambition som återfinns hos nyckelministerier att utveckla vattendiplomati. Begränsade personalresurser och medel utgör dock ett hinder. Emellertid finns det möjligheter att förverkliga UM:s ambition att omvandla vattendiplomatinätverket till ett partnerskap som gynnar alla parter och kompletterar UM:s informationsbehov. Ytterligare synergier kan erhållas inom det internationella vattendiplomatiområdet. Olika internationella partners har en uttryckt vilja att bistå Finland. En möjlig risk är att Finlands vidare satsning på vattendiplomati i mångt och mycket formas av de kriterier som måste uppfyllas för finansiering inom utvecklingssamarbetet.

## Slutsatser

1. Finland har goda förutsättningar att ta en ledande roll inom internationell vattendiplomati inom en snar framtid.
2. Det finns ett starkt intresse inom UM för att utveckla en internationellt ansedd finsk vattendiplomati.
3. En verkligt framgångsrik vattendiplomati fordrar en kombination av evidensbaserat och diplomatisk engagemang och samordning.
4. Otydligheter i fråga om ansvar och samordning leder till ett mindre effektivt gensvar på förfrågningar om kort- och långsiktigt stöd.
5. Finland anses inte vara en viktig aktör med en specifik nisch inom vattendiplomati.
6. UM har ännu ingen tydlig ambition och inriktning.
7. UM måste göra strategiska val för sina satsningar givet begränsade resurser. Nyckelaktörer inom vattendiplomatinätverket är villiga att ge sitt stöd men behöver incitament för att tillhandahålla kunskap och expertis till UM på ett långsiktigt sätt.
8. Det finns mycket kunskap, men behoven och möjliga informationskällor identifieras inte.
9. Otillräcklig *due diligence*, biverkningar av andra aktörers verksamhet och dynamiken i det globala maktspelet utgör ett hot mot Finlands effektivitet och rykte i samarbete och förtroendeskapande aktiviteter.

## Rekommendationer

Rekommendationerna syftar till: 1) att föreslå hur förutsättningar kan skapas för att sammanjämka de olika yrkeskulturerna som råder hos diplomater och specialister inom och utanför UM; 2) att föreslå hur villkoren för en bärkraftig infrastruktur för vattendiplomati kan skapas. Rekommendationerna följer de centrala faser som utgör genomförandet av ett verksamhetsprogram. Utvärderingsteamet anser att alla rekommendationerna är viktiga för en långsiktig utveckling av aktiviteter inom vattendiplomati. Rekommendationer har kategoriserats efter förbättringsområde. En mer utförlig beskrivning av rekommendationerna återfinns i kapitel 6 av denna rapport.



## **AMBITION**

1. Besluta om ambitionsnivån för UM:s engagemang för att förebygga eller minska vattenrelaterade spänningar. Driva detta engagemang tillsammans med nyckelministerier på ett unisont sätt.
2. Utöka den befintliga 4P-styrgruppen till att omfatta andra nyckelministerier och nätverket för vattendiplomati för att ge vägledning för den långsiktiga utvecklingen av finsk vattendiplomati.
3. Operationalisera det ansvar för vattendiplomati som tilldelats centret för fredsmedling och relevanta avdelningar inom befintliga ansvarsområden, med särskild tonvikt på samordning mellan avdelningar.

## **KAPACITETSUTVECKLING**

4. Utveckla en ad-hoc lösning för facilitering som är baserad på lärdomar från andra organisationer.
5. Genom utbildning och kunskapsutbyte stärka UM och dess partners kapacitet att hantera vattenrelaterade spänningar.
6. Investera i ett ömsesidigt fördelaktigt samarbete med finska partners för att säkra tillgång på kunskap och expertis.

## **BUDGET OCH RESURSER**

7. Utnyttja de möjligheter som ges inom budgetprocessen och verksamhetsplaneringen på medellång sikt för att säkerställa långsiktig finansiering och engagemang.

## **POLICYFÖRANKRING**

8. Behandla vattendiplomati som en metod för att skapa ingångar and påverka komplexa nexus/klimatrelaterade konflikter.

## **KUNSKAP OCH INFORMATION**

9. Finland bör identifiera nätverk och viktiga organisationer i partnerländer och införskaffa den kunskap som behövs för att effektivt bistå sin vattendiplomati.

## **ORGANISATION**

10. Tillsätt personal på nyckelpositioner för att följa upp viktiga vattenrelaterade ärenden och skapa nära relationer med grundläggande forskning, civilsamhällspartners och sektorrepresentanter. Finland bör underlätta för sina ambassader att tillmötesgå kunskapsbehovet inom vattendiplomati.

## **NYA LÅNGSIKTIGA ENGAGEMANG**

11. Bygg vidare på Finlands befintliga verksamhet.
12. Identifiera nya långsiktiga engagemang för att understödja diplomatiska målsättningar.

## **FINLANDS NICHE**

13. Identifiera den finska nischen och utveckla den vidare genom att klargöra ett ledmotiv och genom att informera och inspirera andra.

## **GEMENSAMT LÄRANDE**

14. Inrätta ett gemensamt utbildningsprogram för personal, partners och beslutsfattare genom centret för fredsmedling, för att stödja adaptiv ledning.



# Summary

## Introduction

The concept of water diplomacy and related approaches and instruments required for its operationalisation are being developed in Europe, US and elsewhere. Several countries have acquired leading positions in water diplomacy in particular niche areas.

To improve the Finnish response to global water-related issues, five Finnish ministries (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry; Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment; Ministry of the Environment; Ministry for Foreign Affairs; and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health) developed an international water strategy in 2018 entitled Finnish Water Way.

Water diplomacy is endorsed by MFA that is in the process of incorporating the water diplomacy concept in its foreign and development policy toolbox. The aim is to increase Finland's role in international water-related issues and better connect water with Finland's other peace mediation activities. MFA also invests in operationalising its water diplomacy approach with partners (the Finnish Water Diplomacy Network). Finland's water diplomacy activities are currently coordinated by the recently established Centre for Peace Mediation, located at the MFA.

Water diplomacy combines a diplomatic approach focusing on complex environment related issues and their links to security concerns, which includes the broader climate challenges. The approach is therefore of great significance for peace mediation.

The following working definition of water diplomacy was used in the evaluation: *Water diplomacy is the strategic coordination of resources and activities<sup>3</sup> that support the prevention or mitigation of water-related tensions.*

The purpose of this evaluation was to support the MFA in the process of incorporating water diplomacy in its foreign and development policy toolbox and increase the Ministry's preparedness to undertake carefully targeted actions. The objective was to generate knowledge about the possibilities for future engagement of Finland in the area of water diplomacy, based on an analysis of strengths and weaknesses of past activities and an analysis of opportunities and threats in the related fields of water cooperation, peace mediation and diplomacy.

The study focused on the degree to which strategic coordination of resources and activities supported the prevention or mitigation of water-related tensions. For this purpose, the evaluation analysed past Finnish activities in the Mekong basin (1987-2015), and Nile basin (2001-2015), the

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3 These resources and activities include:

- Mediation and diplomacy
- Creating trust among competing stakeholders
- Promoting a mutual understanding about the joint interests
- Dealing with uncertainties/ support fact-finding
- Organising multi-sector and multi-level interactions
- Developing conditions for sustainable financing
- Capacity development for good water governance



Finnish-Russian cooperation (1961-today), and the activities developed through the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Water Convention (1992-today).

## Methodology

Given the current status of water diplomacy in Finland, a two-track approach was adopted to facilitate joint learning and decision-making. One track looked backward, focusing on the strengths and weaknesses of Finnish activities in the Nile basin, Mekong basin, the Finnish-Russian cooperation, and under the UNECE Water Convention. Within each case study, the team interviewed both Finnish and foreign (local) experts and diplomats. In addition to stakeholder consultations, MFA documents were studied to obtain an understanding of Finnish motives. Non-Finnish diplomats and experts were also interviewed for triangulation purposes.

The second track looked forward, focusing on the opportunities and identifying the ambitions and future interests. For this purpose, several interactive meetings were held (online) with the members of the Evaluation Reference Group. These sessions resulted in an initial Theory of Change, among others. However, these forward-looking and joint learning activities represent only the beginning of the process, given that the development of Finnish water diplomacy is at an early stage for the time being. Decisions still need to be made about future scope and activities.

## Findings

The evaluation shows that Finland's engagement in the case studies was based on strategic motives, such as promoting regional integration. However, analysis indicates limited coordination on the Nile and Mekong basin activities between relevant Finnish political actors and those responsible for managing or implementing development cooperation. This approach has reduced the effectiveness of the strategic intentions. The sudden ending of the development cooperation in the Nile and Mekong basin in 2015 has added to the decline of the past results. The activities developed through the UNECE and the Finnish-Russian cooperation have been successfully contributing to strategic water diplomacy objectives.

The study found that Finland is currently not widely known for its activities in water diplomacy. Finnish diplomats are, however, well recognised and respected in international organisations and meetings. Within regional development projects, Finnish diplomats have been less visible and active vis-a-vis the potential political implications of ongoing development projects. Evidence shows that when a technical approach is part of a diplomatic strategy, the Finnish approach is a strong combination. If the technical approach to water issues occurs in isolation from diplomacy, it does not have an enduring impact.

Finnish and international interviewees identified varying options for further engagement by Finland. These options include, but are certainly not limited to, taking a leadership role in donor coordination and facilitating international dialogue towards strengthening integrated research and capacity development in transboundary river basins.

Finland's water diplomacy ambition is currently unclear. A well-justified decision on the focus of future activities is highly desired by the actors involved in water diplomacy. International actors also stimulate Finland to inform the international community about their ambition and contribution to international water diplomacy.



The Finnish approach to water diplomacy is in full development; arrangements concerning information flows, funds, human resources, internal coordination, and joint learning are not institutionalised yet. In spite of the network built around the Centre for Peace Mediation, practical problems may arise between MFA's departments and between partner ministries. Universities and private parties appear to be the backbone of the ambition of the key ministries to further water diplomacy. Limited human and financial resources, however, will constrain future possibilities. Nevertheless, opportunities are available to support the ambition of MFA and convert the cooperation with the Water Diplomacy Network into a jointly beneficial partnership that complements the information needs of MFA. Additional complementarity can be found in the international water diplomacy domain. Various international partners will be willing to collaborate with Finland. A possible risk for realising the future ambition is that the options to invest in Finnish water diplomacy are mainly shaped by the development cooperation funding criteria.

## Conclusions

1. Finland is well-positioned to become a leader in international water diplomacy in the near future.
2. There is a strong motivation within MFA to establish internationally respected Finnish water diplomacy.
3. Truly successful water diplomacy requires combining evidence-based and diplomatic commitment and coordination.
4. Insufficient clarity about responsibilities and coordination limits the effectiveness of responses to support short and long-term support requests.
5. Finland is not recognised as an important player with a specific niche in water diplomacy.
6. The ambition of the MFA and its focus is not yet clear.
7. MFA needs to choose possible engagements strategically given resource constraints. Key partners in the Water Diplomacy Network stand ready to support but require incentives to provide knowledge and expertise to the MFA on a sustainable basis.
8. There is much knowledge available, but the needs and possible sources of information are not identified.
9. Insufficient attention to due diligence, the side-effects of the activities of other partners, and the dynamics of global powerplay pose a threat to the effectiveness and reputation of Finland in cooperation and trust-building activities.

## Recommendations

The recommendations aim: 1) to propose how the conditions can be created to bring the different professional cultures between diplomats and specialists within and outside of MFA together; 2) to propose how the conditions for viable water diplomacy infrastructure can be created. The recommendations are based on the key phases in the implementation of a programme of activities. The evaluation team considers each of these recommendations essential in the sustainable development of water diplomacy-related activities. Recommendations have been grouped by areas that are proposed to be enhanced. More details regarding recommendations are given in Chapter 6 of this report.



### **AMBITION**

1. Decide on the ambition level of MFA's engagement in the prevention or mitigation of water-related tensions. Work on this engagement through a joint approach with the key ministries.
2. Expand the existing 4P-steering group with participation from other key ministries and the Water Diplomacy Network to provide direction to the long-term development of Finnish water diplomacy.
3. Operationalise the responsibilities for water diplomacy of the Centre for Peace Mediation and relevant departments within the existing mandates, with particular attention to cross-departmental coordination.

### **CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT**

4. Prepare supporting arrangements for ad-hoc facilitation by learning from other organisations.
5. Strengthen the capacity of the MFA and its partners to respond to water-related tensions through training and knowledge exchange.
6. Invest in a mutually beneficial partnership with Finnish partners through which knowledge and expertise are readily available.

### **BUDGET AND RESOURCES**

7. Use the possibilities of the budget process and medium-term operational and economic planning to ensure long-term funding and commitment.

### **POLICY EMBEDDING**

8. Treat water diplomacy as an approach that provides entry points and levers in complex nexus/climate-related conflicts.

### **KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION**

9. Finland should identify networks and key organisations on the ground and procure the knowledge needed to support its water diplomacy effectively.

### **ORGANISATION**

10. Dedicate staff at key positions to keep track of critical water-related dossiers and develop close relations with essential research, civil society partners, and sector representatives. Finland should enable its embassies to respond to the knowledge needs of water diplomacy.

### **NEW LONG-TERM ENGAGEMENTS**

11. Build on the existing Finnish activities.
12. Identify new long-term engagements in support of diplomatic objectives.

### **FINNISH NICHE**

13. Identify the Finnish niche and develop it by shaping the narrative and by informing and inspiring others.

### **JOINT LEARNING**

14. Set up a joint learning programme for staff, partners and decision-makers through the Centre for Peace Mediation to support adaptive management.



# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Rationale for this evaluation

This evaluation is commissioned by the Development Evaluation Unit (EVA-11) of Finland's Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA). The MFA is in the process of incorporating the water diplomacy concept in its foreign and development policy toolbox to increase Finland's role in international water-related issues. In addition, the aim is also to connect water better with Finland's other peace mediation activities. Therefore, the MFA is taking a leading role in the coordination of water diplomacy activities in Finland. For this reason, the evaluation report refers to the MFA as the lead actor in the development of water diplomacy-related activities of Finland. It adds to the importance of coordination and to the opportunities for adding weight to MFA's water diplomacy efforts that other key Ministries have international activities on water that contribute to the developing aspirations of Finnish water diplomacy.

**Water diplomacy provides an entry point in complex conflicts.**

In this evaluation, the following working definition of water diplomacy was used: *Water diplomacy is the strategic coordination of resources and activities<sup>4</sup> that support the prevention or mitigation of water-related tensions. Water is therefore seen as an entry point or as a lever for peace mediation that may and should relate to other issue areas playing out at different scales, such as energy security, navigation, boundary disputes, migration, livelihood security, identity politics, etc.*

## 1.2. Objectives, purpose and scope

### 1.2.1. Purpose

In line with the evaluation plan 2020-2022, the Unit for Development Evaluation of the MFA of Finland (EVA-11) commissioned a strategic evaluation to assess the potential of strengthening Finland's water diplomacy activities. The purpose of the study is to support the MFA in incorporating water diplomacy in its foreign and development policy toolbox and increasing its preparedness to undertake carefully targeted actions.

In parallel to this evaluation, the MFA requested the Finnish Environment Institute (from now on: SYKE) prepare a project proposal ('4P': Pro-active Water Diplomacy for Peace, Prosperity and

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4 These resources and activities include:

- Mediation and diplomacy
- Creating trust among competing stakeholders
- Promoting a mutual understanding about the joint interests
- Dealing with uncertainties/ support fact-finding
- Organising multi-sector and multi-level interactions
- Developing conditions for sustainable financing
- Capacity development for good water governance



Partnership). The intervention is jointly funded by Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and it aims to put water diplomacy into practice through the Finnish Water Diplomacy Network. The project document was appraised as part of this evaluation, and these two exercises were coordinated throughout the evaluation process.

### 1.2.2. Objectives

The general objective of the evaluation is to generate knowledge about the possibilities for future engagement of Finland in the area of water diplomacy, based on an analysis of strengths and weaknesses of past activities and an analysis of opportunities and risks in the related fields of water cooperation, peace mediation and diplomacy. This evaluation did not evaluate individual projects per se. However, the case studies focused on *the degree to which strategic coordination of resources and activities supported preventing or mitigating water-related tensions*.

Given the current stage of water diplomacy in Finland, a step-by-step approach has been taken to facilitate joint learning and decision-making. This approach allowed those involved to identify past activities' strengths and weaknesses and identify opportunities to develop a solid base for future initiatives. The specific objectives are as following:

1. To identify the strengths and weaknesses of past water diplomacy-related activities of Finland, including the linkages to peace mediation. (Evaluation-track)
2. To assess the opportunities and threats for an engagement of Finland in water diplomacy. (Evaluation-track)
3. To include the ambition of the MFA and other Finnish key actors in the design of the evaluation process. (Joint learning-track)
4. To establish the current and longer-term ambition of the MFA and other Finnish key actors in the area of water diplomacy in concrete terms. (Joint learning-track)
5. To carry out an appraisal on how the 4P-project contributes to the refinement and the materialisation of the ambition. (4P-project-track)

### 1.2.3. Scope of the evaluation

#### Scope of the evaluation track:

Following a brief desktop study of past Finnish activities in the water diplomacy realm, the evaluation track focused on the following activities:

- Finland's water sector cooperation interventions related to water diplomacy carried out within the Mekong River Commission (MRC) and in the Nile River Basin Initiative (NBI).
- Finland's transboundary water sector cooperation with Russia.
- Finland's water diplomacy- related activities within the context of the UNECE<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> The case focusing on the activities within the UNECE was added in the inception phase of this evaluation.



Current diplomatic activities by the MFA were excluded from the scope of this evaluation, given the sensitive nature of diplomacy. Due to these constraints, the actions of Finland in, for example, HELCOM, WMO and Central Asia – among others – were not part of this evaluation. Therefore, this evaluation may sketch an incomplete picture of the Finnish track record vis-à-vis water diplomacy.

It should be noted that the *nature* of the activities differs from each other. While the activities within UNECE take place within the context of an international multilateral organisation, the cooperation with Russia is implemented through a joint transboundary water commission. On the other hand, the Mekong and Nile basin activities were (primarily) part of bilateral, regional development cooperation. This means that the diplomatic activities took place in different settings and, thus, generated different types of lessons learnt.

#### Scope of the joint-learning track:

The joint-learning track runs parallel to the evaluation track and is, therefore, restricted to the duration of the evaluation.

#### Scope of the 4P-project appraisal (the 4P-project-track)

In parallel to this evaluation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs requested SYKE to put water diplomacy into practice through the Finnish Water Diplomacy Network. To strengthen the joint activities, the evaluation executed a pre-appraisal on the 4P-project project documentation. The team coordinated the work and shared the findings shared regularly with the relevant parties.

### **1.2.4. Intended users of this evaluation**

The evaluation findings will be used by the relevant regional departments, respective embassies, the political department, the Centre for Peace Mediation, and the EVA-11. In addition, indirect stakeholders include the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the parties participating within the 4P-project, the members of the Water Diplomacy Network, and the Finnish Water Forum.

## **1.3. Structure of the report**

The report consists of two volumes. The first volume (this report) contains the main report, including summarised findings of the case studies, conclusions and recommendations. The second volume contains the detailed findings on which the summarised findings in this volume are based. The case studies included in the second volume are the Finnish-Russian cooperation, the activities of Finland through the UNECE, the Mekong Basin and the Nile Basin. The second volume also contains the annexes, including the Terms of Reference and the 4P-project appraisal.

After this introduction (Chapter 1), the next chapter discusses the methods and approaches (Chapter 2 Approach, methodology and limitations). Subsequently, a short overview presents the context of the global water diplomacy paradigm, the policy context of Finnish activities, and the specific contexts of the case studies. (Chapter 3 Context). Chapter 4 presents the summarised findings of the four case studies, findings based on the joint learning sessions, and findings derived from interviews



with Finnish experts, diplomats, and international peers. Finally, the evaluation questions are presented under the respective headings in the Findings chapter. The subsequent chapters discuss the conclusions (Chapter 5: Conclusions) and the recommendations (Chapter 6: Recommendations).



## 2. Approach, methodology and limitations

### 2.1. Approach

The evaluation assessed past activities and identified future possibilities.

From the outset, the team has adopted a two-track approach. One track looks backwards, focusing on the strengths and weaknesses of Finnish activities in the Nile and Mekong basins, the Finnish-Russian cooperation, and under the UNECE Water Convention. The second track looks forward focusing on the opportunities and identifying the ambitions and future interests (Figure 2.1). The findings on past strengths and weaknesses and the opportunities and future ambition are then reflected against the current situation (in terms of organisation, capacity, resources). Figure 1 below presents a graphical overview of the different objectives. It displays Objective 1 (the past activities of the MFA in the domain of water cooperation, peace and diplomacy) in relation to Objective 2 (the opportunities and the needs of MFA staff) and Objective 4 (the envisaged future role of MFA in the domain of water cooperation, peace and diplomacy). Finally, the entire evaluation is supported by a collaborative learning process (Objective 3) in which participants reflected on the past, current and possible future activities. Next, the appraisal of the 4P-project (Objective 5) has been a self-standing activity informing the evaluation.

Figure 1 The coherence of the objectives in the evaluation.



Source: developed by the evaluation team.

Below, a short description is given of each of the five objectives.



## Evaluation Track

Objective 1: To identify the strengths and weaknesses of past Finnish water diplomacy-related activities, including the linkages to peace mediation (Evaluation-track)

New water diplomacy-related initiatives are currently unfolding worldwide within and through (new) institutions and networks with different qualifications in relation to water diplomacy. Finland may contribute to peace mediation in complex environment-related conflicts, considering its expertise in conflict mediation and water resources management.

Objective 2: To assess the opportunities and risks for the engagement of Finland in water diplomacy. (Evaluation-track)

In the forward-looking track, a) MFA's ambition is explored (Objective 4); b) the opportunities and risks of future activities; c) the needs of the staff and partners are identified. This approach is essential because staff and partners should be served in their future needs and provide a way to help them identify objectives and reach an agreement on future water issues.

## Joint learning track

Objective 3: To include the ambition of MFA and other Finnish key actors in the design of the evaluation process. (Joint learning-track)

By designing the evaluation and the future ambition together with both the MFA and partners, forthcoming cooperation on joint water diplomacy activities will gain support and strength for the evaluation itself and beyond. The approach for a new strategy for Finnish involvement in international water diplomacy will need to be translated into concrete actions.

The findings of the backward- and forward-looking tracks allow the team and the Reference Group to reflect on the organisation of the current Finnish water diplomacy arena, including the resources that are available.

Objective 4: To establish the current and longer-term ambition of the MFA and other key Finnish actors in the area of water diplomacy in concrete terms. (Joint learning-track)

With the outcome of the two previous studies commissioned by the MFA, the desk study, the evaluation and the reflection meetings with the MFA and partners, an initial Theory of Change (ToC) have been developed. This ToC helps to identify steps to be taken to materialise MFA's ambition in concrete terms.

## 4P project track

Objective 5: To carry out an appraisal on how the 4P-project contributes to the refinement and the materialisation of the ambition. (4P-project-track)

In parallel to this evaluation, the MFA requested SYKE prepare a project proposal (titled '4P': Pro-active Water Diplomacy for Peace, Prosperity and Partnership). The intervention aims to put water diplomacy into practice through the Finnish Water Diplomacy Network. The evaluation undertook an appraisal of the project documentation with the purpose of strengthening those joint activities.



## 2.2. Methodology

In line with the requirements of the backward (Evaluation) and forward-looking (Joint learning) parts of this evaluation, different methods for data collection were used. The full methodology is included in Volume 2.

### Backward-looking evaluation track

Within each case study, both Finnish and foreign (local) experts and diplomats have been interviewed. Further, MFA archives have been consulted to obtain a complete understanding of Finnish motives. Non-Finnish diplomats and experts were also interviewed for triangulation purposes.

### Forward-looking and Joint-learning track

To identify future opportunities, interviews were held with local experts familiar with the past Finnish activities and international experts currently active in the water diplomacy domain. The joint-learning track started with identifying the goals and interests of the key stakeholders (through interviews and the Reference Group workshops). Following these meetings, the team organised two focused meetings for the members of the Reference Group, which resulted in an initial Theory of Change for Finnish water diplomacy, see Annex 5.

In addition, the evaluation identified critical building blocks that form the backbone of future water diplomacy related activities. They comprise organisation, niche (including ambition level), budget and resources, knowledge and information (including capacity development), policy embedding, and Finnish partnerships (Figure 2.2). The evaluation approached the topic from the perspective of these broad categories and they are reflected throughout the report in the findings, conclusions, and recommendations sections, among other analyses.

**Figure 2 Building blocks of Finnish water diplomacy**



*Source: developed by the evaluation team*



## 2.3. Limitations

The conclusions and recommendations are based on the information that was available to the evaluation team. As a consequence, only a selection of Finnish activities has been reviewed. Some of the current and more sensitive activities were left outside the scope of this strategic evaluation; the focus was primarily on water-related activities. Other types of interventions, such as conflict prevention projects, were not part of the evaluation and could arguably have been included. Because Finnish development cooperation interventions related to water diplomacy ended in 2015, details about the past diplomatic strategies, activities and impact were sometimes difficult to retrieve and required careful triangulation.

In the backward-looking track, the team has been *exploring* the strengths and weaknesses of past water diplomacy-related activities rather than *measuring* impact against intended or planned changes. This approach was adopted because diplomacy in itself does not follow the route of programmed activities. A methodological challenge has been the indiscernible and verbal nature of diplomatic activities. Whereas development cooperation activities are well documented in tenders, appraisals, project documents and evaluation reports, the diplomatic activities were reconstructed based on interviews and internal memos. As Finland had established long-term engagements in certain countries, this meant that informants with a rich knowledge were retired or could not be traced anymore. In turn, because most activities took place a long time ago, the team noticed that the accuracy of the gathered information varied. These challenges were circumvented by extensive triangulation with other experts and consultation of internal MFA memoranda.

In this context, it is relevant to mention that in this evaluation, ‘water’ is not regarded as a single, isolated domain but as an entry point for broader diplomacy. A broader definition of the concept facilitates dialogue on related environmental, social and political issues at different organisational levels. While water cooperation typically builds upon the assumption of shared objectives and mutual interests, water diplomacy concentrates on the political aspects of water and the trade-offs. Therefore, the concept of water diplomacy takes into account the differing interests among water users locally, regionally or across national borders. Tensions that may potentially arise are taken as given. Water diplomacy typically uses varying diplomatic tools and technical expertise to address complex challenges.

There are alternative definitions of the term water diplomacy. A methodological challenge has been the lack of reference in the past to water diplomacy [intentions] (the evaluation object), as the concept as such was not prevalent when these past activities were initiated. However, the activities which today are considered to be part and parcel of water diplomacy did exist. To overcome this difficulty, the evaluation focused on the strategic component of the water diplomacy concept<sup>6</sup>. In this evaluation, the following working definition of water diplomacy was used: *Water diplomacy is*

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6 Including the definition developed by Aalto University: "Water diplomacy provides a means to prevent and mitigate water-related political tensions by making simultaneous use of water know-how and diplomatic tools and mechanisms across multiple diplomacy tracks. [...] Water diplomacy, therefore, combines key aspects of foreign and security policy with development policy and peace mediation, with a focus on water and related resources under changing climate." (Salminen, Erik et al., 2019)



*the strategic coordination of resources and activities<sup>7</sup> that support the prevention or mitigation of water-related tensions.* Hence, the first step was to establish whether Finland has purposefully (and successfully) coordinated such resources and activities. Often, if the intention was not to prevent/ mitigate water-related tensions directly, the evaluation sought to establish whether Finland was able to build a successful track record in other essential less-political capacities.

The joint learning track started with identifying the goals and interests of the key stakeholders. However, as these goals were rather ambitious and not always in line with each other, the team took a step-by-step approach to identify the needs, desired ambition, goals and activities. For this purpose, the team organised two meetings for the members of the Reference Group, which resulted in an initial Theory of Change for Finnish water diplomacy.

As the team was forced to work from a distance (due to COVID-19) combined with the busy schedules of Reference Group members, the time for interaction and thorough discussion was limited. To overcome the lack of face-to-face interaction, several online workshops were organised as a means for interaction.

In addition, the triangulation gained strength through the continuing support from EVA-11 (who shared internal memoranda), the interaction with the 4P-project members, and the feedback from international community representatives.

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7 These resources and activities include:

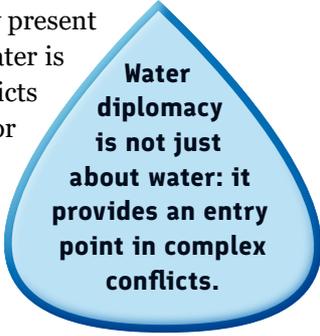
- Mediation and diplomacy
- Creating trust among competing stakeholders
- Promoting a mutual understanding about the joint interests
- Dealing with uncertainties/ support fact-finding
- Organising multi-sector and multi-level interactions
- Developing conditions for sustainable financing
- Capacity development for good water governance



## 3. Context

### 3.1. Global context

Although open water conflicts remain still relatively scarce, tensions are continuously present in various basins over surface and groundwater resources and in situations where water is used as an issue in other conflicts. In this regard, it should be noted that water conflicts are rarely about water alone: water is used, for example, in relation to the demand for drinking water (pollution), navigation (dams, siltation), food production, inland fisheries, energy production (hydropower dams), maintaining environmental flows and water as a cultural identity. Therefore, water-related tensions are typically about the differing water uses and needs of riparian states and other actors. Non-state actors are increasingly important in shaping the power dynamics within a conflict (Warner, Jeroen & De Man, Rens, 2020), which forces a different approach to peace mediation. Conflicts are also highly dynamic and should be regarded as complex social systems in which linear causality is inadequate (Lehti, Marko & Lepomäki, Maiju, 2017). *Water diplomacy should therefore be seen as an entry point for dialogue and peace mediation on a wider set of issues, not as an exclusive focus.*



**Water diplomacy is not just about water: it provides an entry point in complex conflicts.**

Water diplomacy as a concept is also gaining increasing international recognition to complement both transboundary water cooperation and foreign policy. For example, the European Union issued two Council Conclusions on water diplomacy in 2013 and 2018, stating that high-level political engagement is required to prevent and alleviate the conflict potential of shared waters and promote peace and stability. Globally, a variety of local, national, regional and international organisations, often linked to global research and development programs in river basins, are working in the field of water diplomacy. At the same time, approaches and instruments are being developed to operationalise the concept. Examples are the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace, the Geneva Water Hub, the Water Security and Peace Partnership, and the Blue Peace Index initiative. These activities have stimulated a joint up approach amongst diplomats, researchers and civil society organisations addressing the outstanding issues in this new domain.

### 3.2. The Finnish context

Finland has been a long-term supporter of transboundary water cooperation, peace mediation, and multilateral collaboration in different regions. The Mekong Basin, Central Asia and the Nile Basin are often referred to as examples. In the international arena, Finland initiated the UNECE Water Convention 1992 and UN Watercourses Convention 1997 and has continued to support their implementation. Domestically, Finland actively supports new activities such as the Centre for Peace Mediation, new training on water diplomacy, the Water Diplomacy Network, and the Finnish Water Forum.

Water has thus far been embedded in the development cooperation context. This approach has led to situations where water-related matters have touched political discussions; the topic has not found a natural place in the institutional context of Finnish ministries. With the establishment of

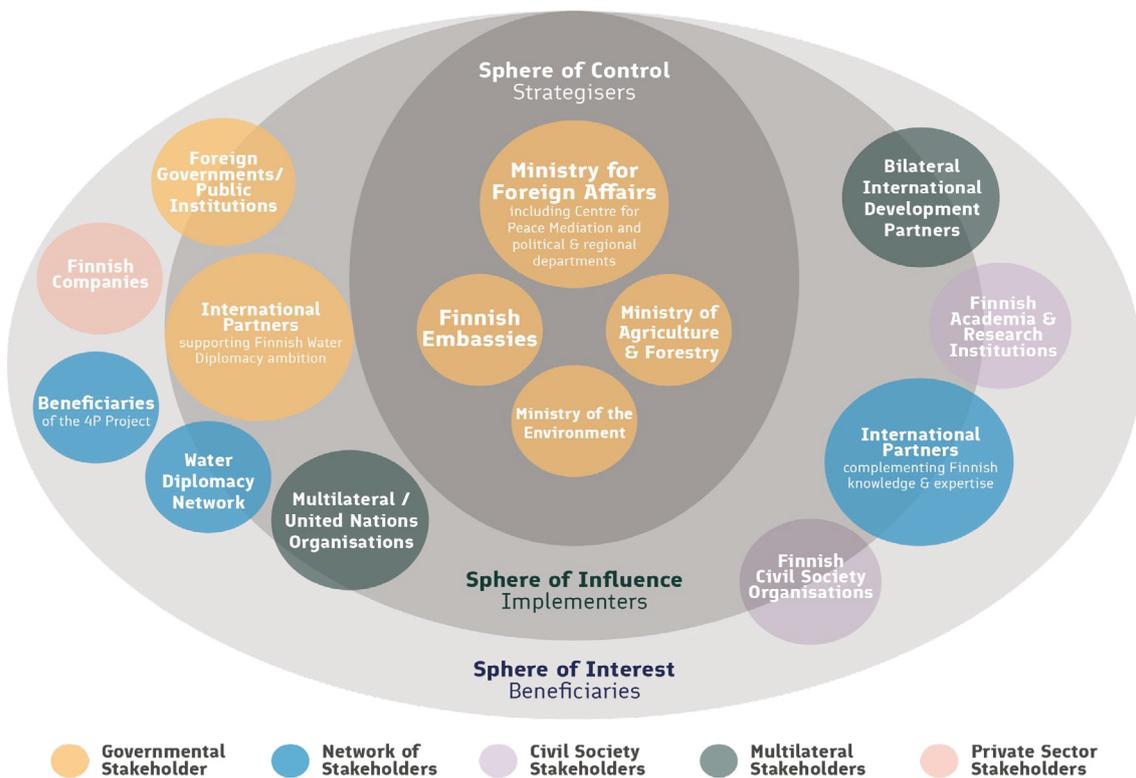


the Centre for Peace Mediation within the MFA, water conflict and diplomacy is one of the peace mediation priorities<sup>8</sup>. The fact that water diplomacy is one of the peace mediation priorities provides a point of departure for an enduring and more coherent water diplomacy programme.

**Finland's water diplomacy can be built on strong legacy.**

The Government of Finland's water diplomacy concept is presented in the 'Finnish Water Way' (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry; Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment; Ministry of the Environment; Ministry for Foreign Affairs; and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2018), the five ministries' international water strategy<sup>9</sup>. The strategy builds on three focus areas and related cross-cutting objectives. Here, water diplomacy is presented as preventive diplomacy in multi-track peace mediation. No exact definition is given here, but the scope of Finnish diplomacy can be interpreted from the section on 'Water for Peace' in which water diplomacy is discussed<sup>10</sup>. Hence, the water diplomacy concept complements water-related (development) cooperation and focuses on the political dimensions of cooperation. In Volume 2, Finnish and other international stakeholders active in the water diplomacy domain are listed. In the figure below (Figure 3), a schematic overview is given of the stakeholders most relevant to water diplomacy related activities.

**Figure 3 Overview of stakeholders relevant to Finnish water diplomacy.**



Source: developed by the evaluation team

8 The thematic priorities of the Centre for Peace mediation are women and youth in peace processes, water diplomacy, new technologies, religious and traditional peace makers and policy principles guiding multilateral organizations.

9 Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry; Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment; Ministry of the Environment; Ministry for Foreign Affairs; and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health

10 "Capacity building through community and transboundary cooperation helps ease tensions related to and disputes over water. Institutional arrangements, such as international water conventions and agreements, combined with very concrete measures, such as the regulation of water flows and the monitoring of water quality, are viable ways to manage transboundary waters and increase trust. Societal capacity development and technological solutions protect societies from water-related external threats, such as acts of terrorism. Further, promoting water diplomacy, for example in multi-track peace mediation, helps to prevent new conflicts from arising. At the global level, coordinated and joint actions are needed for enhancing water security."



### 3.3. Context of the case studies

#### The UNECE Water Convention

UNECE was established as a multilateral platform in 1947 at the request of the UN General Assembly to facilitate the economic reconstruction of Europe in the post-war period. One of the key multilateral environmental agreements UNECE supports is the ‘Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes’ (adopted in Helsinki in 1992) or the Water Convention in short. The Water Convention was designed to prevent conflicts over pollution or water shortages.

The Water Convention is often compared with the ‘Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses’ (adopted in New York in 1997). Both conventions are mutually compatible, though some legal differences exist. Finland initiated both conventions, and Finland also actively supports their implementation.

#### The Nile Basin Initiative

The Nile River Basin covers a territory of 12 countries: Burundi, Central African Republic, Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. The Nile has two main branches: the White Nile and the Blue Nile. The Blue Nile branch, which rises in the Ethiopian and Eritrean highlands, represents about 85% of the total annual discharge of the Nile Basin. In contrast, the remaining 15% flows from the White Nile, coming from the African Great Lakes region. The confluence of these two tributaries lies at Khartoum in Sudan, from which the Nile emerges and flows north towards the Mediterranean Sea.

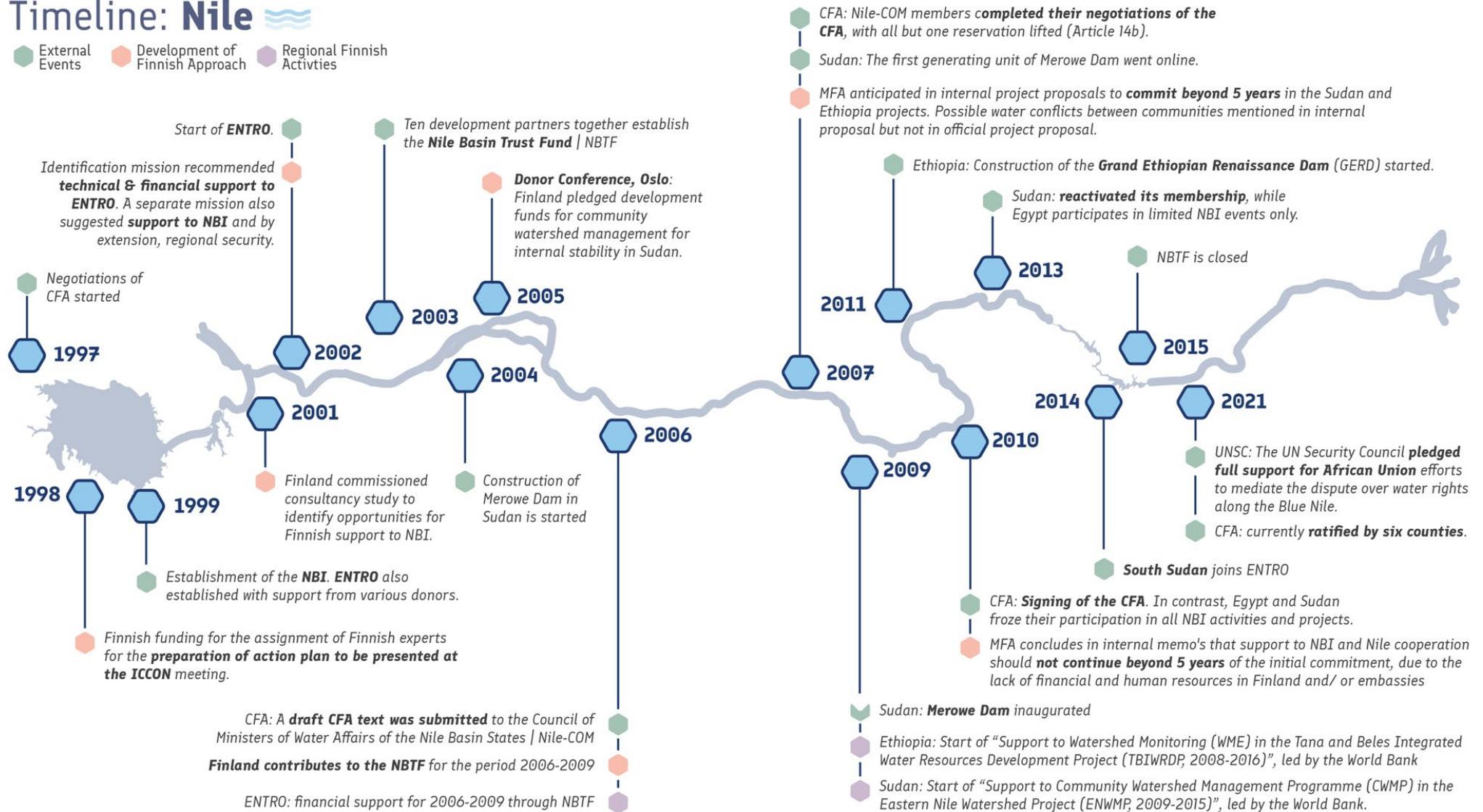
Under the 1929 agreement between Egypt and Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, Egypt has the right to veto projects upstream on the Nile that would affect its water share. Economic constraints, external pressures and internal strife have precluded upstream countries of the Nile from developing their water resources, allowing Egypt to take full advantage of downstream water flow. However, upstream countries have experienced considerable population growth, economic development and political consolidation over the last decade.

To find a mutually acceptable basis for cooperation in the Nile basin, the riparians established the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) in 1999. It is an intergovernmental partnership to develop ‘the river in a cooperative manner, sharing substantial socioeconomic benefits, and promoting regional peace and security’. The NBI was conceived as a transitional institution until the negotiations around a permanent Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA) could be finalised and a durable institution created. A schematic overview of the events in relation to the joint management of the Nile is depicted below (Figure 4).



Figure 4 The Nile basin.

## Timeline: Nile



Source: developed by the evaluation team



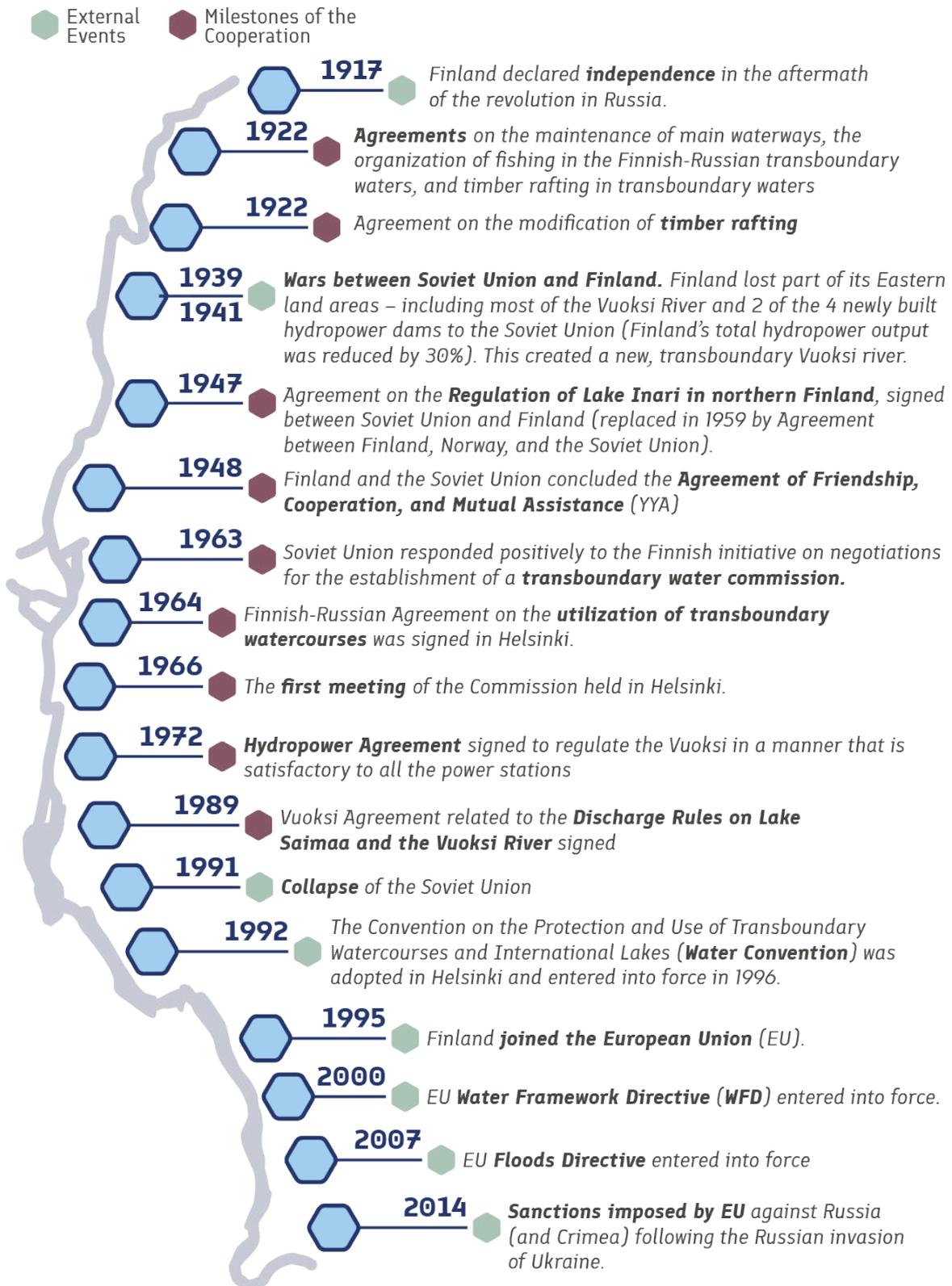
## Finnish-Russian cooperation

Finland and Russia share 19 major transboundary watersheds, of which the Vuoksi is the most important. Finland and the Soviet Union began transboundary water cooperation soon after Finland gained its independence in 1917. Issues that were addressed included log floating and fishing. While the two Soviet-Finnish wars (Winter War and Continuation War) were bitter and the general atmosphere was hostile, the importance of the Vuoksi for both countries forced them to start negotiations on transboundary river cooperation immediately after these wars. The Finnish-Russian Agreement on the utilisation of transboundary watercourses was signed in Helsinki in April 1964. The agreement defined the principles of the joint use of the transboundary waters of Finland and the Soviet Union. The arrangement covered the hundreds of transboundary watercourses between the countries and provided a general framework to regulate them all.

A Transboundary Water Commission was established in 1965. From the outset, the Commission became a significant cooperation body that maintained relations between Finland and the Soviet Union. At the same time, it managed transboundary water cooperation for the benefit of both countries. Managing water issues was a relatively efficient way to maintain dialogue between the governments of Finland and the Soviet Union (water was hence used as a lever). Recent changes, including the water quality objectives under the European Water Framework Directive and the international sanctions that EU countries have imposed on Russia, have posed both new challenges and possibilities for the collaboration between the two countries. A schematic overview of the events in relation to the joint management of the Vuoksi River is depicted below (Figure 5).



Figure 5 Finnish – Russian cooperation on transboundary waters (the Vuoksi river).



Source: developed by the evaluation team



## Mekong River Commission

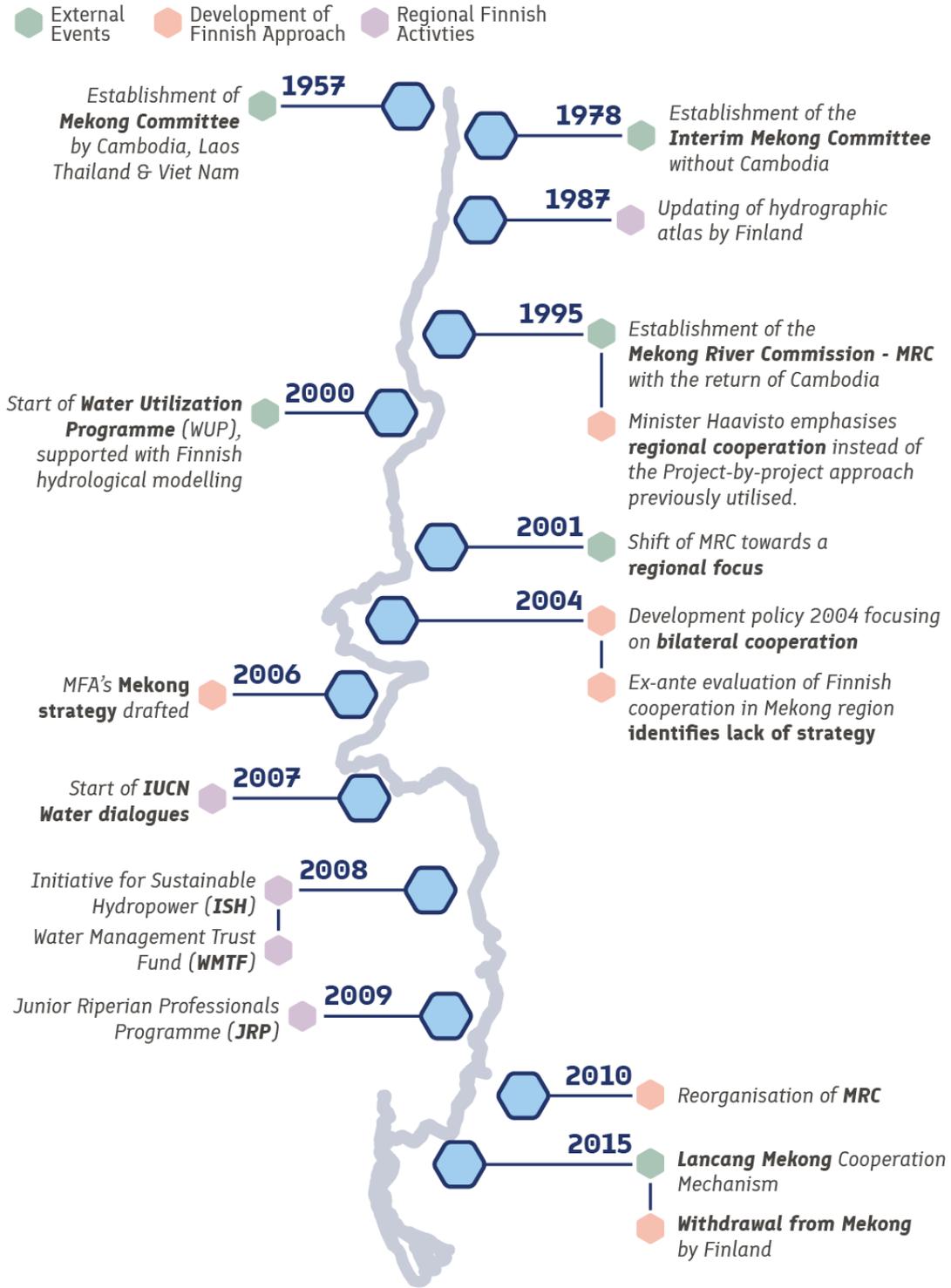
Two cooperative mechanisms on water operate across the Mekong Region. The first is the Mekong River Commission (MRC), formed in 1995 under the Agreement on the Cooperation for the Sustainable Development of the Mekong River Basin ('the 1995 Agreement'). The MRC is an inter-governmental agency whose membership comprises Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Vietnam, excluding China and Myanmar. Its mandate is restricted exclusively to the Mekong mainstream. The institution is consensus-based, but it has no regulatory authority, nor is it independent. Moreover, its mandate does not encompass engagement with actors outside of its membership.

The second cooperative mechanism is the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Mechanism (LMCM), established in 2015 with all six Mekong countries. Its principles were ratified as the Sanya Declaration in March 2016. The LMCM is led by China, who, in 2018, indicated that the LMCM was a response to "...a rising backlash against globalization and protectionist sentiments and a lack of momentum in East Asian cooperation". The LMCM has a diffused focus that includes a Water Cooperation Centre located in Beijing. Intra-regional relations remain highly bi-lateral. The lack of MRC independence is a reflection of national reluctance to cede any sovereignty. A schematic overview of the events in relation to the joint management of the Mekong are depicted below (Figure 6).



Figure 6 The Mekong basin

# Timeline: Mekong



Source: developed by the evaluation team



## 4P project

The aim of the 4P project is to strengthen Finland's ability to implement proactive foreign and security policy activities and active peace mediation to prevent and resolve water-related conflicts in a world of climate change and resource scarcity. This can be achieved by strengthening the intercession of Finland's two international strong areas of strength – peace and water expertise – through a cross-border and inclusive approach to actors from different sectors, covering water safety levels from individual to local and national, regional and global. The aim is to ensure that societies are able to guarantee a sufficient amount of water of adequate quality for the well-being, livelihoods and development of all people while maintaining the good state of ecosystems and preventing water-related problems. In addition, fair and good governance management of water can serve as a platform for cooperation and peace construction in fragile and conflict zones.

In order for Finland and Finnish actors to play an active role in the field of water diplomacy, Finland must support the addition of Finnish experts in peace mediation processes involving water diplomacy, strengthen/increase Finnish water diplomacy influence in the EU and internationally, and strengthen the implementation of international border water agreements by supporting the active participation of Finnish experts; and meet the training and skills needs of the Finnish water diplomacy network. Consequently, the project focuses on strengthening Finnish water diplomacy activities through three result areas:

- A: *Water diplomacy as part of mediation activities;*
- B: *International water diplomacy cooperation;* and
- C: Strengthening national water diplomacy expertise.

*Project management, coordination and communication* is the fourth result area D. The implementation of the project will be an integral part of the operation of the water diplomacy network and its strengthening. The project will act as a catalyst for possible other Finnish-funded water diplomacy projects that can focus on different thematic areas and processes that support water safety. The theory of change in order to achieve this broader objective will be specified, for example, in the water diplomacy evaluation project, but it is provisionally described below for this project.



## 4. Findings

### 4.1. Past water diplomacy-related activities of Finland, including linkages to peace mediation

*This section presents the evidence on the first objective, which is to identify the strengths and weaknesses of past water diplomacy-related activities of Finland, including the linkages to past peace mediation. Due to the sensitive nature of mediation activities, current activities were excluded.*

*Water diplomacy combines a diplomatic approach focusing on water-related issues, which includes the broader climate challenges and their links to security concerns. The concept of water diplomacy and related approaches and instruments that are required for its operationalisation are in full development in Europe. Several countries have developed leading positions in water diplomacy in particular niche areas.*

*The evaluation shows that Finland's engagement in the case studies was based on strategic motives, such as promoting regional integration. However, the analysis indicates limited coordination on the Nile and Mekong basin activities between relevant Finnish political actors and those responsible for development cooperation. This challenge has reduced the effectiveness of the strategic intentions. The sudden ending of the development cooperation in the Nile and Mekong basin in 2015 has added to the decline of the past results. On the other hand, the activities developed through the UNECE and the Finnish-Russian collaboration have been successfully contributing to strategic water diplomacy objectives.*

*In spite of the network built around the Centre for Peace Mediation, practical problems may arise between MFA's departments and between partner ministries.*

*Finnish diplomats are well recognised and respected in international organisations and meetings. Within regional development projects, Finnish diplomats have been less visible and active vis-a-vis the potential political implications of ongoing development projects. Evidence shows, however, that when a technical approach is part of a diplomatic strategy, the Finnish approach builds a strong combination. If the technical approach to water issues occurs in isolation from diplomacy, it does not have an enduring impact.*

#### 4.1.1. The context of water diplomacy

*This finding addresses the context in which water diplomacy is developed and how this context shapes new options for cooperation. It shows that environmental issues are increasingly linked to the security concerns of traditional diplomacy.*



**Finding 1. finding The water diplomacy domain is in full development in Europe, US and elsewhere. Several countries have developed a leading position in water diplomacy by addressing critical issues in preventing and mitigating water-related tensions.**

The current climate and security challenges ensure that water diplomacy is currently receiving the full attention of the international diplomatic community. In close coordination between diplomats, researchers and civil society experts, new global initiatives have been launched that contribute to developing a professional water diplomacy toolbox. For example, Switzerland focuses on protecting water resources during conflict (taking a humanitarian approach). Germany takes a wider encompassing approach to environmental diplomacy by branding its efforts as climate diplomacy. The Netherlands concentrates on the physical ‘root causes’ of water conflict (through the Water, Peace and Security Partnership). In contrast, Sweden (through the Stockholm International Water Institute – SIWI) brings parties together under the Shared Waters Partnership (see a brief overview of international actors in Annex 6). However, Finland is not yet active in the global water diplomacy domain. Notwithstanding, Finnish researchers are contributing through academic publications about water distribution and diplomacy.

#### 4.1.2. Logic and strategy for water diplomacy activities until 2021

This section addresses the degree to which strategic coordination of resources and activities supported preventing or mitigating water-related tensions in the case studies. The findings show that the activities in the Nile and Mekong basin were politically motivated but became technical projects due to their embedding in development objectives. This change was reinforced by the lack of diplomatic guidance over the development projects and inadequate water diplomacy strategy.

**Finding 2. Finnish activities in the Nile and Mekong basin were politically motivated but became technical projects due to their embedding in MFA development objectives.**

At the start of the Eastern Nile Technical Regional Office (ENTRO), Finland’s diplomatic intention was to mitigate conflict and encourage Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia to manage the Nile’s water resources better. While the intent was to prevent or mitigate water-related tensions, the approach was technical due to its embedding in MFA development objectives. Due to the intervention of local Finnish staff, ENTRO was transformed into a politically relevant organisation that fitted in with the overall political context. Other Nile-basin activities appear to have had a strictly technical focus, only indirectly linked to possible conflict prevention intentions.

**Funding through ODA funds diluted political intentions.**

Activities in the Mekong were driven by diplomatic intent, though not necessarily identical to what can be identified as water diplomacy. Finland was exploring what could be done to enhance regional integration and development in Asia. As the establishment of the MRC seemed to unify the interests of the region, Finland saw it as an opportunity to promote environmental protection leading to a diplomatic goal of regional integration. Despite these intentions, Finland’s support to the Mekong water sector is generally regarded as technical, not explicitly oriented towards averting tensions or mitigating it when it has occurred.



The motivation for continued engagement with the UNECE and the Water Convention appears multi-faceted. Some international and Finnish interviewees recognised that Finland is applying a pragmatic policy of well-balanced socio-economic and political interests by offering its expertise to promote positive development. Other interviewees, referring to the past, mention the (legitimate) self-interest of establishing strong international bonds in the presence of a strong neighbour.

The intention of the bilateral arrangements between Finland and its neighbours is clear to outside observers, as there was a genuine need to agree upon the environmental concerns and water management issues in the transboundary waters.

The past strategies can be seen as the first steps towards a water diplomacy strategy. Most of these strategies did not materialise sufficiently in relevant activities that could contribute to water conflict prevention or mitigation.

**Finding 3. Within the regional development cooperation projects, Finnish diplomatic support for the projects was limited.**

The Finnish activities in the Nile and Mekong basin were implemented as development cooperation interventions and were technical in nature. The diplomatic support or strategic deployment of resources and activities was limited.

To interviewees in the Mekong and Nile basins familiar with Finland's activities in their respective regions indicated that the reason for starting past Finnish activities was unknown to them. They generally appreciated the technical support but were unaware of possible water diplomacy-related intentions. Informants from the Mekong Basin indicated that if the overall intent with Finnish support to the Mekong water sector was hydro-diplomacy, it is impossible to assess the extent and degree that it may have contributed to hydro-diplomatic outcomes. It can be argued that their work did contribute in a 'preventive' way to informing potential water-related disputes with scientific knowledge.

Several interviewees criticised the lack of cooperation between the embassies and the field teams in the Mekong and Nile basin, which was needed when technical issues required political support. According to some interviewees active in the Mekong region, Finland's focus on development cooperation rather than political aspects kept Finland out of a diplomatic core, where sensitive and often confidential discussions are held. This approach resulted in inadequate collaboration between diplomats and technical experts. Finnish diplomats were either too occupied with other obligations or were not vocal in plenary discussions. On some occasions, the diplomats have shared, for example, their position on hydropower with the international donor community.

**Finding 4. The sudden ending of the development cooperation activities of Finland in the Mekong and Nile Basin has negatively affected the sustainability of some of the Finnish activities and Finland's credibility as a long-term partner.**

The sudden departure of Finland in 2015 from the Mekong Basin and Nile Basin has negatively surprised Finnish (Bangkok Embassy, SYKE, Aalto University) and foreign stakeholders, given the networks and relationships that Finnish experts had established by then. The departure added to underlying problems of insufficient institutionalisation in a highly demanding and changing context. In the Mekong, the withdrawal coincided with the MRC's decentralisation, adding to the existing issues. For example, Finnish hydrological models were found too complex to maintain,



and the withdrawal also contributed to the decline of the Information and Knowledge Management Programme (IKMP). Ethiopian interviewees considered the Finnish monitoring systems too expensive to maintain. The decline was reinforced by the lack of a clear exit strategy. However, ENTRO continues to be operational even though Finland left.

Participants in the joint learning session expressed their concerns by mentioning that: *“The political engagement in water conflict resolution has ended before you have completed something. We should get rid of this phenomenon. Water diplomacy is an ultramarathon where engagement should last for decades.”* Hence, long-term engagement to a region or theme is considered essential by the participants to obtain results in water diplomacy.

**Finding 5. A clear water diplomacy strategy based on coherency, consistency, commitment and continuity is missing.**

Although Finnish activities in the Nile and Mekong basin were politically motivated (such as conflict prevention, increased cooperation), the materialisation in concrete activities has been led by development cooperation objectives and are therefore closer to water cooperation as water diplomacy. Water – as an entry point for peace mediation – seemed to have been part of the strategy. However, it appears that there has not been sufficient and systematic coordination between the political department, departments responsible for development cooperation (regional departments), and Finnish embassies. Continuity then ended with the sudden Finnish departure from the Nile and Mekong basins.

**An operational strategy to address environment-related complex conflicts is missing.**

A Finnish water diplomacy strategy is to be guided by the 2018 International Water Strategy or the ‘Finnish Water Way’ (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry; Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment; Ministry of the Environment; Ministry for Foreign Affairs; and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2018): the shared international water strategy of the ministries of Agriculture and Forestry; Economic Affairs and Employment; Environment; Foreign Affairs; and Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. Finland’s water diplomacy concept is mentioned twice in the strategy as part of the broader Water for Peace initiatives. Here, water diplomacy is presented as preventive diplomacy in multi-track peace mediation, complementing water-related (development) cooperation and focusing on the political dimensions of cooperation. However, as the international water strategy is a policy of five ministries, water diplomacy may go beyond the purview of foreign affairs alone. The Action Plan, which accompanies the strategy and is updated annually, seems outdated. The latest publicly available version is from March 2019. Organisation-wise, the MFA has initiated the Centre for Peace Mediation in October 2020 and has been supporting the Water Diplomacy Network since its establishment.

**Finding 6. Water diplomacy as an entry point for complex conflicts does not feature in the policy priority areas of Finland’s development cooperation.**

Finland takes a long-term perspective on development cooperation (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 2021), focusing on the following four priorities (PPAs):

1. Strengthening the status and rights of women and girls, with an emphasis on sexual and reproductive health and rights.
2. Strengthening the economic base of developing countries and creating jobs, with an emphasis on innovations and the role of women in the economy and female entrepreneurship.



3. Education, well-functioning societies and democracy, with an emphasis on high-quality education, improved tax systems and support for democracy and the rule of law.
4. Climate change and natural resources, with an emphasis on strengthening adaptation alongside mitigation of climate change, food security and water, meteorology and disaster risk prevention, forests and safeguarding biodiversity.

Water diplomacy as an approach to complex environment related tensions is not mentioned in any of the PPAs. Particular relevant Outputs and Indicators in the document include:

- Output 3.1. More inclusive peace processes and peaceful resolution of conflicts (p42)
- Output 1.4. Promoting Integrated Water Resources Management, including in transboundary waters. (p49)
- Indicator: Increased coherence within UN system on water; transboundary water conventions (UN- ECE 1992 + UN 1997) being ratified by new countries. (p59)

### 4.1.3. Organisation of the water diplomacy-related activities

This section addresses how water diplomacy-related activities are rooted in Finnish policy and practice. It finds that the activities are based on a network structure with the Centre for Peace Mediation at the centre of activities. Although responsibilities are formulated, some of these may conflict with the responsibilities of other departments and key ministries. Also, diplomats and specialists working on water diplomacy related activities are embedded in different working cultures within the MFA.

**Finding 7. Finland's water diplomacy activities are currently based on a network structure with the recently established Centre for Peace Mediation at the centre of activities. Clear responsibilities appear missing.**

The case studies analyses in Volume 2 describe how water diplomacy-related activities were organised in the past. In this finding, we focus on the current setting, as it provides the starting point for future water diplomacy activities of MFA.

**Responsibilities within MFA may overlap.**

Water diplomacy forms one thematic focus area for Finland's peace mediation work: Finland relies on and supports several policies both domestically and internationally. While the Action Plan for Mediation (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 2011) sets the general policy context, the recently established Centre for Peace Mediation within the political department of the MFA oversees Finland's peace mediation activities that include the role of women and youth in peace processes, water diplomacy, new technologies, religious and traditional peace makers and policy principles guiding multilateral organizations<sup>11</sup>. The Centre supports the departments<sup>12</sup> of the MFA in their activities. The website of the Centre lists various responsibilities. However, it is

<sup>11</sup> <https://um.fi/peacemediation> Website consulted on 28 September 2021.

<sup>12</sup> Responsible for policy coordination are the: Political Department, Department for External Economic Relations, and Department for Development Policy. Regional matters are handled by four departments: Department for Europe; Department for Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia; Department for the Americas and Asia; and Department for Africa and the Middle East. The Department for Communications is the eighth department.



to be seen how some of these responsibilities<sup>13</sup> can be practically implemented given the responsibilities of other departments and other key ministries. The evaluation team is sensitive to the understanding that, given its recent establishment, the exact role of the Centre within the MFA is yet to be established.

The regional departments provide the eyes and ears on the ground. They are first responsible for identifying opportunities and coordinating activities. They could hence play an essential role in the development of water diplomacy-related opportunities. Interviewees, however, expressed a concern that their funding is diminishing and the activities of the regional departments are increasingly strained. Thus, a clear role of the regional departments in developing the water diplomacy strategy appears to be missing.

Specific mandates are not yet established and are, therefore, a concern according to the evaluation team. The mandates determine who should coordinate and is responsible for different matters. They are crucial for the effective operation of future water diplomacy activities. Coordination, in general, is required for the organisation of how people should work together, including time allocation, budgeting, information gathering, systematised learning and quality control. It is yet unclear what the mandate of the Centre for Peace Mediation is in relation to the regional departments and the political department and how coordination will be organised.

Several interviewees express that Finland is a small country through which it is easy to get the 'right people' together if needed, such as from the Water Diplomacy Network. The 2018 Finnish Water Strategy expresses the same sentiment<sup>14</sup>. Informal networking appears to be an effective strategy in the early stages of the water diplomacy programme. However, it has delayed establishing concrete focus and responsibilities.

The activities carried out through the UNECE Water Convention are supported by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the Ministry of the Environment, SYKE and the MFA. In addition, the UNECE continues to receive Finnish core funding, allowing Finland a continuous presence in this diplomatic arena.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment for South-Eastern Finland coordinate their activities and have responsibilities in the cooperation with Russia. In addition, the Ministry of the Environment provides coordination in the Water Convention related matters and the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive, which is an important instrument in developing dialogues in the European region.

The organisation of the Finnish private organisations is discussed under Finding 17.

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13 <https://um.fi/peace-mediation> Website consulted on 2 October 2021.

- Centre for Peace Mediation is responsible for the following issues
- mediation, including conflict prevention, peace processes and national dialogues
  - keeping informed about international mediation policy and exerting influence (EU, UN, OSCE)
  - coordinating general mediation policy and mediation projects in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs
  - promoting the thematic priorities of mediation (women, youth, water diplomacy, new technologies, religious and traditional communities)
  - serving as a contact point in mediation matters in national and international contexts
  - managing the appropriations allocated to mediation
  - organising courses on mediation and building capacity

14 "We have exceptionally good cross-sectoral collaboration on water issues between our ministries, research institutes and civil society. One example of this is a national interministerial working group that discusses and coordinates Finland's international activities on water. In addition, the Finnish Water Forum brings together actors in both the public and private sectors."



**Finding 8. Diplomats and specialists working on water diplomacy are embedded in different working cultures within the MFA.**

**There are different working cultures within the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs.**

The evaluation identified differences in working cultures between the diplomats and the specialists within MFA. The needs of both groups are different. Nevertheless, they need to work together in peace mediation (on-the-ground trust-building activities and fast-response mediation) to identify and support opportunities. Whereas diplomats desire to be flexible in responding to diplomatic support requests and not be locked into results-based management of activities, development departments generally need to provide openness about progress and achievements. This is comparable to one of the conclusions in the CMI-evaluation, noting that too much priority to linear planning is detrimental to an insightful approach to the complexity of conflicts (Brusset, Emery & Sterland, Bill, 2016). The context in which activities are also deployed often requires a reframing of strategic diplomatic aims into technical activities, in which case coordination is needed at some points in time. In addition, as Finnish interviewees indicate, providing facilitation support requires more attention for modesty and giving credits for success to the parties. In contrast, the tradition is to be much more proposing to recipient countries in development cooperation.

#### **4.1.4. Impact of Finnish water diplomacy (and related) activities**

This section addresses the impact of Finnish activities in projects and organisations of various nature. It finds that Finland stimulated integrative approaches in development projects, which contributed to the prevention of water-related tensions. Within the UNECE, Finnish actors are well respected for their contributions, particularly when diplomacy was built on technical water-related projects. If technical water-related projects operated in isolation from diplomacy, possible gains in the prevention or mitigation of tensions were limited.

**Finding 9. Finland stimulated integrative approaches to development activities and has in that sense contributed to the prevention or mitigation of water-related tensions.**

Water diplomacy requires a joint effort from different disciplines to adequately address water-related tensions. This understanding is also reflected in the government report on Finnish foreign and security policy (Government of Finland, 2020), notes that Finland's good international reputation and experience in mediation and water issues offers a possibility of combining mediation, diplomacy and transboundary water sector cooperation to solve international water-based conflicts.

The majority of interviewees in the Nile and Mekong basins recognise the ability of Finland to build trust through capacity building and solid evidence-based approaches. Several interviewees specifically mention that Finland stimulated an integrated approach to development activities concerning gender, livelihoods and human rights. For example, this was the case in the IUCN dialogues, which Finland supported. However, the focus on development cooperation has diluted the need and opportunities for diplomatic support in the case of the Mekong and Nile. In that case, its legacy provides a respectable entry point for further diplomatic dialogue.



**Finding 10. Within the UNECE and in international donor meetings, Finnish diplomats are well recognised and respected.**

According to several international interviewees, the Finnish character is relatively modest, trusting and focusing on the substance of the issues at hand. Sometimes, this approach comes to the detriment of the Finnish partners themselves, as it occurs at the expense of Finnish (shared) control over project and programme policies. Nevertheless, Finland has a good reputation<sup>15</sup> and respect in the international water community, mainly because of its active role in UNECE and UN Watercourses Convention. Furthermore, Finnish knowledge of transboundary cooperation is rooted in the experience with neighbouring Russia. Therefore, it has provided Finnish experts with credibility with other countries.

The long-term cooperation with Russia on the transboundary rivers is often presented as a hallmark of successful cooperation (although some mention that the cooperation did not go without struggle). The agreements helped hydropower production, reduced the negative impact of floods and prevented damage to the environment in both countries. Continuous contextual changes (collapse of the USSR, implementation of the Framework Directive, etc.) posed strains on the cooperation. Still, the basis for sustained cooperation appears to be the firm mandate, the mutual dependency and the quality of the working relations between the parties.

**Evidence-based approaches create synergy with Finnish diplomacy.**

*Present, supportive and leading:* Finland is visible in the UNECE, the New York Group of Friends of Water, and some donor-coordination meetings. International interviewees feel that Finns are of goodwill; they are open and willing to share their experiences. In the Group of Friends of Water, the Finnish Permanent Representation is considered involved and brings in good ideas. In the Mekong, Finland is given credits for providing (untied) funding to both the MRC and civil society and; for extending the scope beyond water (gender, livelihoods, fisheries and human rights).

*Reliable and unbiased:* Several international interviewees mentioned that nobody is against Finland, as they do not carry ulterior motives. In addition, they have no historical burden as a colonial power. In working relations, some remark that Finland's position has been very consistent and reliable, stimulate a very bottom-up approach. According to one interviewee, some countries exposed to the influence of a large neighbour feel more inclined to trust and work with Finland. Overall, Finland is therefore seen as an unbiased European actor within track 1 diplomacy. Moreover, primarily through the chairmanship in the UNECE working bodies, Finland is seen as an unbiased dialogue facilitator.

**Finding 11. Diplomacy built on technical water-related projects creates synergy. If technical water-related projects operate in isolation from diplomacy, possible gains in the prevention or mitigation of tensions are limited.**

Case studies show that limited coordination on the Nile and Mekong basin activities between relevant Finnish political actors and those responsible for development cooperation negatively affected the potential water diplomacy gains (see earlier findings).

<sup>15</sup> This finding is in line with previous evaluations, consider for example, the evaluation reports on: Country Strategy Approach in Fragile Contexts (Betts, Julia et al., 2020) and the Finnish Development Policy Influencing Activities in Multilateral Organisations (Palenberg, Markus & Katila, Marko, 2020).



When Finnish activities have been embedded in diplomatic rigour, such as in the UNECE and the Finnish-Russian cooperation, they have been successful, and their contribution to the strategic water diplomacy objectives has been more visible. Through the work done within the context of the UNECE, Finland has been able to contribute to water diplomacy in a highly effective<sup>16</sup> manner. Key appears to be evidence-based diplomacy and a shared language between professionals with similar backgrounds.

## 4.2. Demand for Finnish water diplomacy

This section addresses the opportunities and risks for the engagement of Finland in water diplomacy. It finds that Finland is currently not known for its activities in water diplomacy. Opportunities to directly engage in the prevention or mitigation of water-related tensions are limited. However, Finnish and international interviewees identified varying options for further engagement by Finland. These options include taking a leadership role in donor coordination or facilitating international dialogue towards strengthening integrated research and capacity development in transboundary river basins and promote the exchange of experience in the framework of international bodies. However, global powerplay may restrict Finland's opportunities and maintaining the public image of Finland requires constant due diligence.

**Finding 12. Finland is currently not known for its water diplomacy leadership. International actors suggest Finland step forward and inform the international community what they want to achieve and contribute to international water diplomacy.**

Participants in the joint learning sessions indicate that Finland is regarded as a trusted partner by other countries and actors. They do not feel the need to make themselves known and assume that they will eventually be recognised in the international water domain. According to some international interviewees, Finnish diplomats take the discussion down to a technical (policy analysis) level where they have solid capacity. Finns provide technical assistance designed to enhance dialogue and share their transboundary cooperation history and water expertise.

**Finland's  
ambitions  
are not well  
known.**

However, according to several international interviewees, Finland is not known for its water diplomacy leadership, like the Dutch, Swedes or Swiss. One informant mentioned that *"If Finland wishes to engage [...] in the water sector, it will need to indicate its interest and engagement."* To several international interviewees<sup>17</sup>, it is not clear what the added value of Finland is to the global water diplomacy arena. Another interviewee asked: *"What will be their niche?/ And what does Finland want to achieve?"* Efforts are needed to make a Finnish ambition known to the broader community. Nevertheless, there is some recognition of the importance of visibility, considering the branding exercise (Maabrändityöryhmä, 2010) that was undertaken in 2010 and in which water diplomacy was referred to several times.

<sup>16</sup> Although with (at least for now) relatively limited impact: great tracts of global fresh water are unrepresented by either the UN Watercourses Convention, or UNECE Water Convention. No country in the Mekong has acceded to the latter. Vietnam has formally expressed interest in the Water Convention and requested assistance to investigate the benefits.

<sup>17</sup> Interviewees 2, 37, 42, 54, 76, 98. Various dates, 2021.



**Finding 13. Varying options to engage in water diplomacy can be furthered by Finland.**

The case study interviews and interviews with international actors resulted in the identification of various opportunities for further engagement. Opportunities to directly engage in the prevention or mitigation of water-related tensions appear limited, based on the interviews. Other options for further engagement by Finland are identified and range from taking a leadership role in donor coordination or in other international frameworks relevant to water cooperation or facilitating international dialogue towards strengthening integrated research and capacity building in trans-boundary river basins.

As the mentioned opportunities differ in nature and the organisational level of engagement (from local to international), the team organised the identified options<sup>18</sup> based on the type of engagement in the list below.



**1. Engagement through international organisations:**

- Finland is already active in international organisations and is much appreciated for its support.
- New opportunities include: future water and climate change issues are extremely challenging and require integrated cross-sectoral approaches. Finland could facilitate dialogue and empower diplomatic, economic and water-related actors to identify mutual understandings and effective solutions.



**2. Engagement through international partnerships:**

- The interviews reveal different options for Finland to engage with partners in international initiatives, depending on the niche in which Finland decides to engage. Support is actively offered to Finland by representatives from different countries.

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<sup>18</sup> As the opportunities come from non-Finnish interviewees and were specifically addressed to Finland, the opportunities may read as recommendations.



### 3. Support change in existing norms and ideas for the greater good:

- Leading the international community in the development of integrated diplomacy<sup>19</sup> that addresses the upcoming multi-dimensional security challenges.
- Focus on the people who are not represented in the water diplomacy negotiations, like the indigenous peoples, non –national communities. Finland can give voice to the voiceless and bring other (non-western) values to the table with support from CSOs/ NGOs.



### 4. Facilitation and mediation:

- Continue supporting quiet diplomacy and conversations (for which Finland is highly appreciated).
- Based on the interviews, there is currently no demand for third-party involvement in preventing or mitigating water-related tensions in the Mekong or Nile basin. However, Finland could use different entry points to provide discrete support to diplomatic processes.
- New opportunities include a) Facilitating conflicts that are less crowded with other international diplomatic actors, b) Providing independent and quick response mediation support to all parties.

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<sup>19</sup> Integrated diplomacy addresses the “need to integrate change and continuity, different agendas and arenas, different diplomatic processes [and the importance of] collaboration between professional diplomats and the representatives of a variety of international actors.” (Hocking, Brian et al., 2012)



## 5. Coordination of international activities:

- Strengthen the convening and coordination role of international donors in water diplomacy-related action arenas. There is competition within the donor community, sometimes to the detriment of the basin. Finland can play a key role in donor coordination and the creation of an overview of activities.
- EU cooperation on the topic of water diplomacy can be strengthened as no shared communication structure currently exists. EU Council conclusions about the role of water in EU's external relations and partnerships are to be developed in 2021. Finland could play a role in the establishment of such communication.



## 6. Capacity building and research support:

- Strengthen the capacity of transboundary RBOs and supporting organizations in the Nile and Mekong basin. Research and capacity building has to be integrated into a basin-wide, holistic perspective and based on the actual needs.
- Independent studies and research support focusing on the inter-dependencies between riparian countries and the net benefits that each country can accrue through cooperation will help reinvigorate trust and confidence.



## 7. Forum and outreach:

- Convene the leading European powers by, for example, organising a high-level conference that fits the niche of Finnish water diplomacy.
- Provide training and channel expertise from the network to specific target groups in Finland and abroad.



Each of these opportunities provides contributions to the development of the international water diplomacy domain. Possible future engagement in any of these opportunities requires strategic choices about the allocation of human resources and funding. Support can be delivered through, for example, global or regional multilateral organisations or bilateral cooperation. In addition, diplomatic support and coordination should be part of all types of engagement. These choices can be informed by Finland's strengths in, e.g. multilateral organisations.

**Finding 14. Future complexities may complicate the diplomatic course of action.**

Several interviewees in the case study countries point to possible complexities, which may be difficult to control and limit the course of future diplomatic action. Examples given in this direction are the lack of coordination/ overview of the activities of other Finnish actors or a possible lack of due diligence in future activities carried out by the ministry or key partners. Hence, in order to remain effective, Finland is asked to be careful and unbiased in responding to assistance requests and discuss their intention with other countries beforehand and, for example, carry out a thorough technical and stakeholder analysis of the local situation.

**Finding 15. Global powerplay may restrict Finland's opportunities and require due diligence.**

New diplomatic or development cooperation activities in the Mekong or Nile basin might be affected by the regional geopolitics and tensions between China and the USA or the current tensions between the up- and downstream countries in the Nile basin. Also, the Finnish-Russian cooperation could be affected by the changing political priorities of Russia. Any (third-party) involvement, though perhaps desirable, risks becoming part of the powerplay. Therefore, careful political deliberation (with partner countries) is required before any engagement.



### 4.3. Current and longer-term ambition of the MFA and other key Finnish actors in the area of water diplomacy

*This section answers objectives 3 and 4 and discusses the assumed ambition of the MFA and key Finnish actors- and the required resources. The findings of this section are based on the results of the joint learning sessions and interviews with international actors.*

*Finland's water diplomacy ambition is currently unclear. Therefore, a well-justified decision on the focus of future activities is highly desired by the actors involved in water diplomacy. International actors also stimulate Finland to inform the international community about their ambition and contribution to the international water diplomacy domain.*

*The Finnish approach to water diplomacy is in full development; arrangements concerning information flows, funds, human resources, internal coordination and joint learning are not institutionalised yet. However, limited human and financial resources will constrain future possibilities. Universities and private parties are the backbone of the ambition of the key ministries to further water diplomacy. Nevertheless, opportunities are available to support the ambition of MFA and convert the cooperation with the Water Diplomacy Network into a jointly beneficial partnership that complements the information needs of MFA. Additional complementarity can be found in the international water diplomacy domain. Various international partners will be willing to collaborate with Finland.*

*A possible risk for realising the future ambition is that the options to invest in Finnish water diplomacy are mainly shaped by the development cooperation funding criteria.*

#### 4.3.1. Finland's water diplomacy ambitions

Based on interviews and joint learning sessions with representatives from the Finnish MFA and other organisations, an initial Theory of Change is developed. While the overall intention is clear, there are reasonable doubts about how to realise a possible ambition with current resources. The initial Theory of Change requires further development and is not yet aligned with other policy areas.

**Finding 16.** The evaluation found that MFA and members of the Water Diplomacy Network are motivated to establish internationally respected Finnish water diplomacy. Therefore, a well-justified decision on the focus of future activities is highly desired by the Finnish actors involved in water diplomacy.

Limited resources need to be strategically focused.

Based on the interviewees with Finnish representatives of MFA, participants of the Reference Group and several participants of the Water Diplomacy Network, the team recognises the drive to establish a solid international Finnish water diplomacy.



The discussions during the Theory of Change workshops yielded various valuable comments about the ambitions, SMART goals, resources, activities, outputs, and criteria and reflections about Finland's strengths, weaknesses, and possible opportunities and risks. The discussions show that the road towards Finnish water diplomacy is not fully delineated. There are reasonable doubts about how to realise a possible ambition with current resources. Participants indicated the need to make a well-justified decision on the focus of future activities, as such a decision helps to make the most out of the current limited resources. *A long-term focus, however, does not preclude ad-hoc water diplomatic activities.*

The focus is not yet informed by obligations in other policy areas, such as in crisis management (Parliamentary Committee on Crisis Management, 2021). It is to be expected that future activities could overlap.

The assumed Ambition as developed in the joint Theory of Change meetings reads as follows:

### Ambition

**Finland shows a strong intention to contribute to water diplomacy.**

Within ten years, Finland will be **internationally recognised and requested** as a leading partner in water diplomacy, able to broker resolutions to disputes in longstanding multi-faceted water-related conflicts. In these resolutions, water is a positive **bridging factor** in peace, development and stability. Finnish capacity builds on its experience and expertise in **un-biased facilitation, water cooperation and diplomacy**. Core to the Finnish competence is the **strong partnership** between the key ministries, including political and thematic staff on the one hand and the Finnish water diplomacy network on the other hand. This intertwining allows the MFA to **quickly respond** to requests based on solid knowledge. Furthermore, a long-term programme assures that MFA-staff is sufficiently equipped in **facilitating water-related tensions**. At the same time, the research sector can provide **state-of-the-art knowledge** to the MFA on upcoming tensions.

### Breakdown of ambition

1. To be better **recognised and requested** by the international community as a leading partner in water diplomacy.
2. To be a partner in **international projects** that add value to Finnish activities.
3. To **strengthen the capacity of the MFA** in (ad-hoc) facilitation in water-related conflicts in order to increase the sustainability of the water diplomacy activities.
4. To employ a **multi-disciplinary approach** in multi-faceted water-related disputes in order to advance **integrated sustainable resolutions**.
5. To ascertain the **long-term sustainability** of water diplomacy activities based on a jointly beneficial partnership between MFA and the Water Diplomacy Network.

The SMART goals pertaining to the ambition are included in Volume 2.



### 4.3.2. Finnish partners' roles in the constructive development of a Finnish water diplomacy sector

This section addresses the role Finnish partners can play in the constructive development of Finnish water diplomacy. It shows that the organisations interested in water diplomacy and supporting the MFA are only loosely linked to the assumed ambition of the MFA. However, the universities and private parties are the backbone of the ambition of the key ministries to further water diplomacy.

**Finding 17. The organisations interested in water diplomacy and supporting the MFA are only loosely linked to the assumed ambition of the MFA. Many of these organisations are the backbone of the assumed water diplomacy ambition.**

There is substantial expertise in Finland – both practical and scientific – provided by universities and private sector actors. Finnish civil society organisations have been and continue to be very active in conflict prevention, peace mediation and water management. Examples include CMI - Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation (formerly Crisis Management Initiative, CMI), Finn Church Aid (FCA) and the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (Felm), all of which have important international networks. In addition, many of the private sector actors maintain good relations with MFA.

CMI - Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation is particularly worth mentioning in this regard. The Foundation is an independent Finnish organisation that works to prevent and resolve conflicts through dialogue and mediation and was founded in 2000 by Nobel Peace Laureate and former President of Finland Martti Ahtisaari. The organisation has a team of 100 experts in more than 20 countries. Its total income in 2020 was 9.5 million, of which only 49% came from the Government of Finland. CMI receives mediation supports requests from MFA and closely coordinates activities with MFA. Staff is also exchanged between both organisations to support the build-up of expertise. CMI has not specifically worked on water diplomacy in the past, but its participation in the Water Diplomacy network indicates its interest.

The Water Diplomacy Network, under the leadership of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, participates in the development of Finland's peace mediation policy. The activities of this group are centred around the Water Diplomacy Network, which was established in May 2019. It is an unofficial body without independent decision-making powers. The network is an advisory community of practitioners, aiming to further develop the water diplomacy approach and coordination. Its purpose is to harmonise, unify and strengthen a Finnish form of water diplomacy as a part of preventive peacebuilding in international fora and project-based initiatives worldwide. The Water Diplomacy Network consists of about 60 experts (as of March 2021) from various organisations<sup>20</sup>, coming from ministries, universities and institutions. The experts are active in the water sector, natural resources, climate change and peace mediation. In addition, the Finnish Water Forum (FWF), established in April 2009, aims

**Universities and NGOs are the backbone of a Finnish water diplomacy.**

<sup>20</sup> Aalto University, AFRY, AFRY, Centre for Economic Development, Delegation of the European Union to Namibia, Embassy of Finland, FCG International, Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA), Finnish Water Forum (FWF), Häme University of Applied Sciences, CMI - Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation, MFA, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ministry of the Environment, NIRAS, Office of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, SYKE, Tampere University, UEF, University of Eastern Finland (UEF), and University of Helsinki.



to bring its 130 members<sup>21</sup> together. However, some interviewees felt that the Forum could play a more substantial role in representing Finland.

In addition, about 16 Finnish women mediators engage in the network of Nordic Women Mediators<sup>22</sup> (NWM Finland). This network, launched in 2015, brings together women from the five Nordic countries with professional expertise in conflict mediation, negotiation and peacebuilding. The network is also part of the Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediator Networks<sup>23</sup>. The Finnish members have diverse professional backgrounds, including politics, MFA, multilateral and regional organisations and CSOs (NWMF, 2019). The development of these networks coincides with the increasing global attention for the critical role of women in water management and the underrepresentation of women in high-level diplomacy in transboundary water negotiations<sup>24 25 26</sup>. Also, the conceptual development of (women) peace mediation is rooted in Finland, consider, e.g. Piiparinen, Touko & Brummer (2012) and Väyrynen, et al. (2018).

Next, the Finnish universities and institutes (like Aalto University, University of Eastern Finland, SYKE, Finnish Institute of International Affairs, etc.) support the activities of MFA, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the Ministry of the Environment in various ways. For example, leadership and policy-relevant research are provided to the working bodies of the UNECE Water Convention (notably by SYKE); scientific support is provided to the Finnish-Russian cooperation; project management is offered to FinWaterWEI II Programme in Central Asia and the 4P-project; studies are carried out<sup>27</sup>, and new approaches are being developed<sup>28</sup>.

Therefore, the universities and private parties are the backbone of the ambition of the key ministries to further water diplomacy. A complete analysis of the interests and expectations about their role in future water diplomacy activities is beyond the scope of this evaluation.

Some participants of the water diplomacy community in Finland have also participated in the training given by ETH Zurich, organised by MFA on conflict mediation and the ACCP conflict analysis framework<sup>29</sup>. However, a systematised way of knowledge acquisition required to support water conflict prevention or mitigation is not institutionalised.

The participants in the joint learning sessions indicated that long-term investments are needed to establish a knowledge platform. It would allow the research community and NGOs to invest in sound data collection and, in return, provides for 'on-demand data requests' that support the diplomatic process.

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21 Representing research institutions, NGOs specialised in the water sector, and companies dealing with water-related technologies, consulting or design

22 <https://nordicwomenmediators.org/finland/> Website consulted on 28 September 2021.

23 <http://www.globalwomenmediators.org> Website consulted on 28 September 2021.

24 <https://climate-diplomacy.org/magazine/cooperation/no-peace-without-water-no-water-without-peace-and-neither-without-womens> Website consulted on 28 September 2021.

25 <https://www.sivi.org/what-we-do/women-in-water-diplomacy> Website consulted on 28 September 2021.

26 <https://flows.hypotheses.org/5728> Website consulted on 28 September 2021.

27 For example: (Salminen, Erik et al., 2019)

28 Including the pathways approach: (Keskinen et al., 2021)

29 <https://mas-mediation.ethz.ch/tools/accp-conflict-analysis-framework.html> Website consulted on 28 September 2021.



### 4.3.3. Capacity and learning

This section addresses the implications of the assumed ambition for the required capacity and expertise, including adaptive management through joint learning. The findings demonstrate that to become an adaptive and responsive organisation or network, constant learning and reflection are needed. The shortage of human resources, however, limits the effectiveness of the response to complex conflicts.

#### **Finding 18. Implementing water diplomacy requires up-to-date multi-disciplinary knowledge and continuous learning.**

The required methods and instruments (*tools*) to implement the water diplomacy concept in practice are globally being developed (Finding 1). These new concepts shed light on the kind of situated *knowledge* required to support the water diplomacy processes effectively. The organisation of tools and expertise requires *embedding* in the MFA infrastructure. As both tools and knowledge are subject to change, *continuous and joint learning* is needed, supporting flexible and robust responses.

*Knowledge.* Obtaining up-to-date, multi-disciplinary knowledge sensitive to the different viewpoints of those involved is critical because water-diplomacy typically addresses multi-scale, multi-faceted conflicts. Multi-disciplinary scientific knowledge is being used to support the activities under, e.g., the Water Convention. The inclusion of, for example, local perspectives about a conflict situation is not structured yet. Still, it could supplement the Finnish water diplomacy processes. Much of the required expertise in Finland is dispersed among (retired) staff within the MFA (including embassies), other key ministries and representatives of various (Finnish and local) organisations. A key role rests with the research organisations and civil society organisations, who can provide critical insights. Knowledge acquisition has been geared for through the new Finnish water strategy, the establishment of the Centre for Peace Mediation, the academic research carried out, the activities developed through the 4P-project, and the joint discussions through the Water Diplomacy Network. A coordinated and continuous effort is required to bring this knowledge together.

**Systematic and collective learning is essential.**

*Embedding.* As the concept is relatively new in Finland, water diplomacy (in an integrated and strategic set of activities) is not yet fully embedded or institutionalised in policies or organisational arrangements. Therefore, water diplomacy activities are ad-hoc and Finnish actors are trying to understand the concept, the implications the topic has for their work, and how they can contribute to its implementation. In this context, the participants to the joint learning sessions discussed responsibilities (who should coordinate water diplomacy) and identified required support (visualisation of negotiation tracks, systematising lessons learned, quick release of funds, the delegation of everyday management work, among others).

*Continuous and joint learning.* Systematic and collective learning by both MFA staff and key partners (within other ministries and supporting research and civil society organisations) is essential for a responsive and resilient programme. This learning should involve activities, mechanisms to anchor the knowledge in the organisation and decision-making on how to respond to the lessons learned. In the current inception phase, these do not yet seem not to be fully operational yet. The joint learning process within MFA and with partners is not coordinated or anchored into the MFA



at this stage. The 4P-project proposal suggests some training activities<sup>30</sup>, which, however, is not the same as joint learning.

The theoretical foundations of cooperation around shared resources and best approaches to implementing water diplomacy in practice still need to be further developed in better acceptance and improved effectiveness. Concepts and approaches, such as multi-level water governance, adaptive water governance, mutual-gains concepts and instruments for benefit sharing need to be further developed and operationalised. New tools are required within a programmatic approach that diagnoses water problems, identifies intervention points, and proposes sustainable solutions that are sensitive to diverse viewpoints and values applied under conditions of ambiguity and uncertainty as well as changing and competing needs.

A summary of the main challenges for the water the diplomacy community of practice are:

The ability to build trust among competing stakeholders. Stakeholders have different and sometimes conflicting claims about water. Moreover, there is often insufficient and ill-informed communication between the various actors involved, who often adopt inflexible positions.

The ability to organise multi-sector and multi-level interactions. Water is intrinsically linked to food, energy and the environment. If it is addressed in isolation from these other sectors in the nexus - and with climate change in particular - the solutions to our water problems will be uninformed and almost certainly result in counterproductive outcomes.

The ability to manage a growing multi-actor policy environment. The international arena is no longer exclusively be the domain of ministries of foreign affairs and diplomats. So much so that the plurality of actors and instruments that are emerging to enhance water security has become a complication in practice and should be addressed accordingly.

The ability to deal with uncertainties. Conflict and cooperation over water resources are afflicted with uncertainties: the unpredictability of developments, incomplete knowledge, or conflicting views on the seriousness of a problem, its causes and potential solutions. Therefore, it is crucial to find pragmatic ways to deal with uncertainties in water management practice. Specific knowledge areas such as systems analysis, policy analysis and decision-support systems can play an essential role in dealing with unpredictable events and planning.

Sustainable financing: Many national governments and donors are hesitant to finance processes without clear outcomes and timelines. However, preventing identified future conflicts and avoiding deteriorating performance of water (and environment, etc.) systems may prove less costly and less complex than reacting afterwards.

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30 "C1. Water diplomacy courses

In activity C1, a training package is implemented annually for Finnish water diplomacy actors, with the aim of both strengthening competence and co-developing, learning and networking in cooperation. At the same time, the training offers the possibility of transferring the so-to-be-made system to the quiet information from more experienced experts in the field. The training packages will look at the different methods and themes of water diplomacy, including the sharing, management and international agreements of border waters, as well as methods of peace and conflict resolution. The training will take advantage of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), global water partnership (GWP) and partners Massive Online Open Course (MOOC) on governance for transboundary freshwater security, whose selected themes will be the subject of aggregation discussions and complementary lectures. The activity also supports, in selected cases, the participation of members of the water diplomacy network, e.g. in the development of water diplomacy networks. Geneva Water Hub or University Partnership, as participants or expert surveyors."

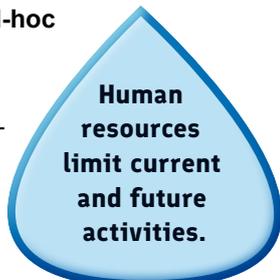


Sustainable legacy: Capacity building for water diplomacy and good governance among all stakeholders is essential for a sustainable legacy of (water) diplomacy.

Source: (Huntjens, P. & De Man, R., 2017) allocation and access of water resources determine the well-being, prosperity and stability of societies worldwide. However, the demand for water rises along with population growth, urbanization, and increased domestic and industrial use, while climate change acts as a threat multiplier for water and food insecurity. According to the UN,<sup>1</sup> in 2025 nearly 2 billion people will live in conditions of absolute water scarcity, and two thirds of the world's population will be in areas of water stress, which is already leading to situations of unbalanced distribution and tensions among users. The scale, urgency and complexity of these challenges requires an inclusive, comprehensive and international approach combining diplomacy, innovation, partnerships and new funding mechanisms. Multi-track water diplomacy is required to navigate the complexities of building cooperation, undertaking collaborative or joint investments in shared river basins, and addressing local or community-based conflicts. This policy brief reflects the outcomes of brainstorming sessions on water diplomacy during the World Water Week 2015 and the 'Water diplomacy in South Asia' workshop (WG4

**Finding 19. The shortage of human resources within MFA hampers the response to ad-hoc support requests, possibly related to a lack of focus.**

During the workshops and interviews with Finnish MFA staff, the shortage of human resources, especially within the regional departments, is often referred to as a restraining force. *“To maintain the current level of activities is already stretching the resources. However, if MFA wants to play a significant role, we need to have dedicated financial and human resources to keep the engagement going,”* said participants in the joint learning sessions. In this connection, the importance of the regional departments and embassies is emphasised. The regional departments play a crucial role in operationalising the ambition. They provide the “eyes and ears” on the ground and a gateway to support preventive measures through existing support modalities geared more towards conflict prevention and conflict solving.



The shortage of human resources occurs, for example, when MFA staff have to support ad-hoc facilitation activities, as a consequence of which existing projects being put on hold. In addition, this shortage is related to the group's small size with experienced facilitators and the lack of sufficient trained successors who can stand in for or support the group of seniors. Adding to these limitations is the MFA's staff rotation, hampering knowledge embedding and build-up.

Hence, these deficiencies limit the effectiveness of current and possible future activities. The potential consequence is that, if resources are strained even further, the development of future water diplomacy activities might come to a complete stop.



#### 4.3.4. Potential collaboration for Finland with other regional and international actors promoting water diplomacy

This section addresses the potential collaborations Finland could develop. These collaborations could either complement the Finnish knowledge and expertise or provide Finland with opportunities to act in water diplomacy related activities. Several opportunities exist, and the international community is willing to support Finland in realizing its ambition. However, international partners would like to be informed about Finland's strategic choices around whom it wishes to engage with, its niche and its intentions.

##### **Finding 20. Existing collaborations and partners can supplement Finland's knowledge needs and support Finnish international engagement in water diplomacy.**

Participants in the joint learning sessions valued partnerships as a means for Finland to contribute to the overall goal of water conflict prevention and mitigation. They emphasised that Finland is willing to collaborate and highlight the low barriers between different sectors and actors. However, less attention is paid to the adequacy of those partnerships and the needs of Finland in realising its ambition.

Partnerships may help Finland to fill gaps in its strategy without spending too many resources. E.g., one participant indicated: "*we need to have some kind of predictive mechanism that informs us where the conflicts are likely to occur [...]*". However, this predictive mechanism is already available in the (Dutch) Water, Peace and Security Partnership. Other initiatives to which Finland can connect are, for example, the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace and the Blue Peace (Index) initiative.

**Once strategic choices are made, complementary international partnerships can be identified and established.**

It is good to distinguish between international partners and activities that can 1) complement the Finnish knowledge and expertise; 2) provide Finland with opportunities to act in water diplomacy related activities. Concerning the latter, the possibilities for Finland mentioned by interviewees in the Mekong region are to join forces with other initiatives in the region. Examples include the regional peace-building that Switzerland is considering, Sweden's regional program, partnering with Australia (given its long experience in the regional water sector), or advancing Finnish interests through the EU's regional presence. Also, specific international partners are offering their support to Finland. However, as mentioned before, international partners would like to be informed about Finland's strategic choices around whom it wishes to engage with, its niche and its intentions.



### 4.3.5. Funding requirements

Current funding for water diplomacy related activities is either limited or unpredictable in the long run for the Finnish partners and does not sufficiently match the assumed ambition. A possible risk for realising the future ambition is that the options to invest in Finnish water diplomacy are mainly shaped by the development cooperation funding criteria.

**Finding 21. Current funding for water diplomacy activities is very limited and does not sufficiently match the assumed ambition. A possible risk for realising the future ambition is that the options to invest in Finnish water diplomacy are mainly shaped by the development cooperation funding criteria.**

Two types of funding needs are to be distinguished: 1) Funding is required for MFA staff and organisation of support through the network of (inter)national partners (supporting the participation in international and regional multilateral organisations). 2) Funding is also required to execute short and long-term projects (supporting bilateral and multilateral development cooperation projects). The size of the required funding depends on the future ambition.

Interviews and discussions with Finnish MFA and non-MFA staff provide indications of future needs. Current financial support for academic research and other organisations that support ministerial activities in international organisations is already considered too unpredictable or limited to support the MFA in the long run.

**Current funding level does not ensure long term continuity.**

A possible risk for realising the future ambition is that the options to invest in Finnish water diplomacy are shaped by the funding criteria. MFA can mainly invest development funds, which are restricted for use in the OECD’s list of ODA-Eligible Countries. There are other limited funds for the internal MFA organisation and activities for the 4P-project. The other ministries and the UNECE Water Convention may apply funds based on different criteria.

Funding is assured for the 4P-project, with a total budget of 713.000 Euros (Table 1), which guarantees some continuity for the period up to 2024. The funding appears to contain funds for both activities (research, mediation missions, training, petty cash) as well as limited funds for project coordination, research and communication. The funding is catalytic and based on the expected support by the Water Diplomacy Network to MFA. The project funding is based on annual funding from Centre for Peace Mediation, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the Ministry of the Environment. If significant funding is required, sources indicate that it must come from Peace Mediation Center or from the regional departments.

**Table 1 The initial annual financial framework for the 4P project**

<b>FINANCING (IN K EURO)</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
Centre for Peace Mediation	93	100	100	100
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	40	40	40	40
Ministry of the Environment	40	40	40	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>180</b>

Source: 4P project document



Separate funding has been made available to support the activities under the Water Convention (core funding of 200 000 euros per year). Furthermore, the Finnish-Russian cooperation is in financial terms part of the overall transboundary waters cooperation (with Sweden, Norway and Russia) embedded in the Government of Finland's 2021 budget under the budget line "Expenditure on the use and management of water resources", totalling over €14 million<sup>31</sup>.

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31 Relevant extracts from the budget include:

**Crisis management**

Maintenance costs of the Finnish crisis management forces (estimated appropriation): € 53,080,000

Participation of civilian personnel in crisis management (fixed budget): € 17,585,000

Peace mediation (fixed budget): € 3,000,000

This appropriation may be used:

1. the costs of peace mediation activities and the strengthening of the related capacity in which Finland participates
2. bilateral and multilateral projects in support of peace mediation
3. the payment of expenses incurred by experts working in international organizations and similar organizations;
4. state subsidies for projects supporting peace mediation
5. to hire a number of personnel corresponding to a maximum of two person-years for fixed-term positions.

**International development cooperation**

Actual development cooperation (transfer appropriation for 3 years): € 761,059,000

Democracy and the rule of law (transfer appropriation 2 years): € 3,000,000

- This appropriation may be used to pay state subsidies to actors promoting the development of democracy and the rule of law in the field of activity of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- The state grant awarded from this appropriation may cover the full amount of the total costs of the action for which the grant is awarded.
- The appropriation is budgeted on a payment decision basis.
- This appropriation may also be used to recruit staff for fixed-term duties equivalent to one person-year.



## 5. Conclusions

This evaluation focused on a specific form of diplomacy: water diplomacy as a way of preventing or mitigating (transboundary) water-related tensions. It departed from the understanding that water diplomacy is the strategic coordination of resources and activities that support the prevention or mitigation of water-related tensions. Hence, it sought to establish the degree to which Finland has purposefully (and successfully) coordinated such resources and activities. We drew nine main conclusions based on the information gathered through the case studies analysis, the joint-learning and the triangulation.

### 5.1. What works - strengths and opportunities

**Conclusion 1. Finland is well-positioned to become a leader in international water diplomacy in the near future.**

*This conclusion is based on Findings 9, 10, 13 and contributes to Recommendations 11, 12, 13.*

Finland has, in principle, the right set of competencies to become a future leader in water diplomacy: Finland's past activities created a respected legacy, a good reputation within international diplomacy and contributed to building knowledge and experience. Currently, an active network is being developed in Finland that could support future activities. As a result, new opportunities are available through which Finland can advance its interests in water diplomacy.

**Conclusion 2. There is a strong motivation within MFA and the wider water diplomacy network to establish internationally respected Finnish water diplomacy.**

*This conclusion is based on Finding 16 and contributes to Recommendations 1.*

The analysis showed that within the MFA and with private sector partners, there is a strong interest and willingness to start the programmatic development of water diplomacy. This mindset is reflected in the commitment of the ministries to the International Finnish Water Strategy, the founding of the Centre for Peace Mediation, the establishment of the Water Diplomacy Network, and the support to relevant activities, including the 4P-project. However, the ministerial commitment is also dependant on the political will of the current and future governments.

**Conclusion 3. Truly successful water diplomacy requires combining evidence-based approaches and diplomatic commitment and coordination.**

*This conclusion is based on Findings 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 11 and contributes to Recommendations 4, 5, 6, 14.*

When the technical and evidence-based approach is brought to service diplomacy (such as in the UNECE and the Finnish-Russian cooperation), the approach provides a strong combination that could provide the required competencies to deal with the complex water-related challenges.



## 5.2. What does not work - challenges and limitations

### ORGANISATION

**Conclusion 4. Insufficient clarity about responsibilities and coordination limits the effectiveness of responses to support short and long-term support requests.**

*This conclusion is based on Findings 2, 3, 5, 7, 17 and contributes to Recommendations 2, 3.*

Water-related conflicts can be complex: containing unexpected issue linkages and uncertainties. Water diplomacy support therefore requires a resilient organisation that can swiftly respond to these complexities when requests are made. An essential next step was made with the establishment of the Centre for Peace Mediation in October 2020. Coordination between the water diplomacy related activities seems currently missing, although Finnish actors have shown that they are able to reach out and organise swiftly when circumstances require. Embassies and Ambassadors in all partner countries should have the same understanding and same goal. When the opportunity comes, Finland should act by being prepared and coordinated if it wishes to become a meaningful player.

The Finnish network approach to the organisation of water diplomacy activities within Finland appears to be an effective strategy in the early stages of the water diplomacy programme. It has, however, delayed establishing concrete focus and responsibilities. Clear mandates are not yet established and are therefore a concern according to the evaluation team. Mandates determine who should coordinate at the headquarter level (political department or the department for development policy) and between headquarter and embassies. Clear mandates are crucial for the effective operation of future water diplomacy activities.

Coordination is required to align the increasing number of Finnish activities: within the MFA, between the key ministries, between the MFA and the Water Diplomacy Network, the MFA and the international activities in which the MFA would like to partner, and the current and future longer-term engagements. Coordination should concern the application of available resources in line with the ambition, deployment of staff in ad-hoc support activities and related practicalities, internal policy alignment, knowledge acquisition through the network and international partners, (internal) training, organisation of events and joint learning. Without overview and coordination, efficiency and synergy will not be possible: the limited diplomatic support or coordination within (multi/ bi) lateral development cooperation projects limited the potential impact of Finnish initiatives on the prevention or mitigation of water-related tensions.

The consequences of insufficient coordination between the diplomatic and technically-oriented activities work two ways. Diplomatic processes may be ill-informed about the technical possibilities and constraints. In contrast, the technical activities may need information about the political issues they are running into. To get to fully functional water diplomacy, investments are needed that support the integration between work cultures within MFA.

Joint learning about the constraints and interests of those involved is essential for establishing a vivid community of experts who lack a shared organisational structure. The joint learning, however, is not systematised yet.



## FINNISH NICHE

**Conclusion 5. Finland is not recognised as an important player with a specific niche in water diplomacy.**

*This conclusion is based on Finding 12 and contributes to Recommendation 1.*

The Finnish approach to water and diplomacy is well-regarded. However, international partners are unaware of a Finnish water diplomacy ambition. According to the evaluation team, new practices to becoming better known should be rooted in a widely accepted ambition and concrete activities and fit the Finnish way of organising. An excessive preoccupation with recognition (like through the 2010 branding exercise) may detract from the development of substantive experience and examples of water-diplomatic success.

## AMBITION

**Conclusion 6. The ambition of the MFA and its focus are not yet clear.**

*This conclusion is based on Findings 1, 5, 6, 16 and contributes to Recommendations 2, 8, 10, 13.*

A programmatic approach to developing water diplomacy should be supported by the key stakeholders and be attainable. This evaluation has shown that Finnish water diplomacy is supported by the key stakeholders within and outside MFA. This evaluation and the findings obtained through the joint learning sessions will also help make Finnish water diplomacy attainable. Therefore, a step-wise approach facilitating collective learning and decision-making with the key stakeholders is required for the next phase: getting towards a well-justified ambition and goals informing the programme of activities. Such justification will make activities more effective and increases the international visibility of Finland.

The participants in the Theory of Change workshops have jointly created a strong starting point for the ToC, including the future ambition. This ToC will serve to inform the focus and future activities. Specific goals required for building a programme on Finnish water diplomacy activities are not yet fully crystallised. Overall, the future ToC and activities are to be based on coherency, consistency, commitment and continuity.

Although the ministries have expressed their commitment to establishing Finnish water diplomacy, the findings from the interviews and the joint learning sessions do not provide clarity on what the MFA desires to provide to the development of Finnish water diplomacy. The strong track record informs Finland's current approach to water diplomacy in conflict mediation and the technical approach to water in development cooperation projects. A full-fledged programme on water diplomacy may require uncomfortable choices to be made (e.g. on mandate).



## BUDGET AND RESOURCES

**Conclusion 7. MFA needs to choose possible engagements strategically given resource constraints. Key partners in the Water Diplomacy Network stand ready to support but require incentives to provide knowledge and expertise to the MFA on a sustainable basis.**

*This conclusion is based on Findings 13, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21 and contributes to Recommendations 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12.*

Opportunities for Finland are identified through which Finland could further its interest in water diplomacy, see Finding 13. These opportunities require different investment types in building networks, obtaining information, staff costs, and on-the-ground investments.

Funding is required for both activities and the water diplomacy infrastructure: a) Maintaining current activities (such as through the UNECE and the Finnish-Russian cooperation) and new short- and long-term activities in focus. b) Development and operation of the water diplomacy infrastructure, including learning and knowledge acquisition activities.

Financial resources need to be secured to assure the long-term continuity of the water diplomacy activities. Still, they may, in part, become available through close coordination of existing funds. Considering the dependence on development budgets, the focus of the ambition is also steered by the list of eligible Official Development Assistance countries.

It has been indicated that MFA will not provide additional staff in the short term. The shortage of human resources within the MFA is restraining the possibilities for taking up new activities. As a result, past and current activities seem to struggle to fulfil all expectations. This situation implies both adjustments to the assumed ambition and the degree of coordination and external support.

Key ministries have committed funding for water diplomacy, and they do work that is directly relevant to the aims of water diplomacy. However, depending on the ambition level, it does not seem sufficient. Activities covered through existing budget lines, including those proposed in the 4P-project, could continue. Still, if the ambition level is any higher, the funding needs to be adjusted with the ambition immediately.

However, as there is already knowledge and expertise readily available through the Finnish Water Diplomacy Network, possibilities exist in utilising the capacity of the Finnish partners in the work. In addition, coordination and arrangements supporting MFA staff facilitate using the resources within the institution. Moreover, various international partners are willing to collaborate with Finland.

The partners currently providing support to MFA indicate their need for long-term funding. However, it appears that existing instruments for predictable long-term funding are not used to ensure the commitment of those actors. Through a justified decision on the focus of future activities, Finland can provide long-term targeted funding for (Finnish) partnerships with research and civil society organisations. They can, in return, support the water diplomacy objectives of MFA. In this context, it is important to refer to the report on *Development policy across parliamentary terms*, which contains over 15 references to water and the long-term objectives of the Centre for Peace Mediation.



## KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION

**Conclusion 8. There is much knowledge available, but the needs and possible sources of information are not identified.**

*This conclusion is based on Findings 1, 14, 15, 18, 20 and contributes to Recommendations 5, 9, 10, 11.*

Before any interference in multi-scale, multi-faceted water-related tensions, a thorough understanding of the water system's physical characteristics and historical, legal and socio-political dimensions is required. Having up-to-date multi-disciplinary knowledge will allow evidence-based action to be carried out by the MFA.

Part of the knowledge can likely be found in existing international activities. International water diplomacy is in full development, led by a group of predominantly European countries but also national research institutions and (global) organisations, contribute to the buildup of knowledge (see Volume 2 for a more comprehensive overview of actors). Traction is gained with the conceptual and pragmatic development of water diplomacy approaches addressing particular niches and knowledge gaps. Also, within Finland, leading researchers are developing the water diplomacy concept and tools. Obtaining this knowledge requires continued investment in (international) research and knowledge partners and efforts of the network of Finnish embassies etc.

An assessment by the MFA and partners of knowledge needs and gaps is not carried out, given that the focus of ambition is not yet delineated.

## RISKS MANAGEMENT

**Conclusion 9. Insufficient attention to due diligence, the side-effects of the activities of other partners and the dynamics of global powerplay pose a threat to the effectiveness and reputation of Finland in cooperation and trust-building activities.**

*This conclusion is based on Findings 14, 15 and contributes to Recommendations 2, 3, 5, 8, 9, 10.*

Water diplomacy has to touch on a much wider number of issues, and there should be an understanding of the broader picture. Water diplomacy would be only one small piece in a large foreign policy puzzle where pieces are linked to several other pieces. Water diplomacy should be introduced in the MFA in this larger context.

Before starting development cooperation activities, training, etc., thorough (stakeholder) analyses are required that inform MFA about the possible political implications and mitigation strategies. During interventions, the activities could have received more diplomatic support when that was needed. Also, the exit from activities lacks the required diplomatic support to maintain strong relations with the host countries.

Next, as Finland is internationally active in contributing to the training and development of activities and approaches (in the framework of the Water Convention), technical consultancies (various firms) and carrying out research (SYKE, universities), the public image of Finland is shaped by those activities as well. The MFA and embassies appear not to be constantly aware of these cases, which may have adverse consequences for Finnish diplomatic activities.



Last, water diplomatic support is not only subjected to the dynamics of the parties at the negotiation table; it is also influenced by dominant parties not represented. Thus, despite the best efforts of Finland, it may unwillingly become part of the global powerplay. Therefore, the water diplomacy ambition should be informed not only by the costs and benefits for Finland but also by the potential political risks.



## 6. Recommendations

These recommendations have been drafted as strategic and operational actions that can be taken by the MFA, which commissioned this evaluation, although it is acknowledged that there are other members in the Finnish (government) network of water diplomacy practitioners. Wherever possible, the team highlights the implications for those other actors as well.

The evaluation acknowledges the differences in working cultures within MFA between diplomats and specialists and recognises the need that any recommendation should match internal organisation and cultural and professional practices. The aim of these recommendations is, therefore, twofold: 1) to propose how the conditions can be created to bring the different professional cultures within and outside of MFA together; 2) to propose how the conditions for viable water diplomacy infrastructure can be created.

### AMBITION

**Recommendation 1. Decide on the ambition level of MFA's engagement in the prevention or mitigation of water-related tensions. Work on this engagement through a joint approach with the key ministries.**

To support the decision-making process, the team identifies different ambition levels (see Figure 7), which correspond to the different degrees of complexity of environment-related conflicts. These levels also allow for activities to be phased, with certain activities that can be taken up at a later point in time.

- Business as usual: The team assumes, considering the current establishment of the Centre for Peace Mediation and the 4P-project, that there is a desire to establish Finnish and advance water diplomacy capabilities. The team did not, therefore, consider a 'business as usual' scenario.
- Ambition level 1: At this level, the team assumes that the current course of activities is further developed, as set out by the establishment of the Centre for Peace Mediation and the initiation of the 4P-project. However, in the team's estimation, this momentum will not be sustained over the long run if certain additional actions recommended below are not implemented.
- Ambition level 2: This ambition level adds to the previous level and includes the development of new opportunities within existing human and financial resources.
- Ambition level 3: At ambition level 3, the MFA mobilises human and financial resources to support a fully responsive and flexible network (MFA, key ministries, network) that is able to respond to short and long-term support requests.



The recommendations are structured around a five-step approach comprising:

1. Getting ready
2. Collection and interpretation of information to better inform diplomacy and policy making
3. Decision-making and implementation of activities
4. Joint learning
5. Sharing and influencing.

At each step, the recommendations are ordered by the preferred ambition level.

**Figure 7 Schematic depiction of the relation between complex environment-related security issues and the investments needed to facilitate adequate responses.**



Source: developed by the evaluation team

## STEP 1: GETTING READY

### AMBITION LEVELS 1, 2, and 3

**Recommendation 2.** Expand the existing 4P-steering group with participation from other key ministries and the Water Diplomacy Network to provide direction to the long-term development of Finnish water diplomacy.

Currently, a steering group exists between the MFA, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, focusing on the 4P-project. Its tasks have been defined as: supporting and guiding the project manager; monitoring implementation; approving work plans and reports; outlining and supporting project communication; and promoting Finland's water diplomacy debate.



The evaluation team recommends that the steering group is expanded with representation from the Water Diplomacy Network. Instead of only supervising the 4P-project, the steering group should provide strategic support/guidance to the long-term development of Finnish environment-related diplomacy and arrange the coordination between the ministries and the network at appropriate levels.

**Recommendation 3. Operationalise the responsibilities for water diplomacy of the Centre for Peace Mediation and relevant departments within the existing mandates, with particular attention to cross-departmental coordination.**

Actively inform the embassies about the Finnish interest in environment-related security issues and provide them with the required responsibilities and information for adequately responding to, and informing, the home office (Centre for Peace Mediation).

Clarify the roles and responsibilities regarding the organisation of water diplomacy with the regional and political departments.

Centralise the coordination of water diplomacy activities in one place. Given its overview over other peace mediation activities, the Centre for Peace Mediation would be a logical place. Strong coordination will be needed to make the most efficient use of available resources. Coordination responsibilities will include:

- Joint activities within MFA and with partners on water diplomacy dossiers
- Mobilisation of ad-hoc activities, including the release of necessary (financial) resources
- Information gathering
- Systematised learning and quality control

In the interests of the MFA, maintain an overview of the activities of Finnish organisations active in water and conflict prevention.

## **CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT**

**Recommendation 4. Prepare supporting arrangements for ad-hoc facilitation by learning from other organisations.**

Ad-hoc arrangements can, for example, be informed by the experience of the Finnish Red Cross or the Dutch Risk Reduction Teams. Activities that should be carried out include:

- The establishment of a roadmap for rapid response
- Arrangements for quick funds (travel, ad-hoc hiring of experts)
- Arrangements for the temporary replacement of staff
- Knowledge acquisition.



**Recommendation 5. Strengthen the capacity of the MFA and its partners to respond to water-related tensions through training and knowledge exchange.**

- Strengthen the quality of water diplomacy by including different disciplines in the diplomatic teams.
- Develop a recurring training programme on water diplomacy for existing and future diplomats.
- Ascertain long-term knowledge transfer by allowing seasoned Finnish experts to share their knowledge and experience in negotiation and facilitation with a younger generation of diplomats through training and mentoring.
- Strengthen water-diplomacy ‘awareness’ within political and thematic departments through training and improved communication.
- Organize regular focused knowledge exchange meetings with diplomats, academia and civil society by organising training, sharing field experiences, etc.

**Recommendation 6. Invest in a mutually beneficial partnership with Finnish partners through which knowledge and expertise are readily available.**

Select key Finnish organisations that can provide the required knowledge and the on-the-ground expertise needed by MFA to support conflict prevention or mitigation (see the identification of knowledge gaps). Particularly in areas where there is no active development assistance. The information gaps could pertain to diplomatic insights or information about ongoing developments on the ground (about programmes, counterparts, financing etc.) and inform policy exchange, technical cooperation or research, or promote Finnish expertise and business. With this information, politically relevant issues could be addressed faster and more effectively.

The actors supporting MFA will have different interests and expectations for water diplomacy work. Identifying their interests will enable them to contribute more effectively to Finnish water diplomacy objectives, which is crucial for the future sustainability of water diplomacy activities. Different partnership modalities should therefore be explored: e.g. the Dutch National Knowledge Platforms/Dutch Diamond approach in which close cooperation is established between the MFA, universities, civil society, private parties, and think tanks. The Aalto University reports also provide some indication of partnerships to invest in. Their reports identified the two most natural partner countries and water diplomacy actors for Finland: the Swedish Shared Waters Partnership (SIWI) and the Swiss Blue Peace Initiative, whose key actors are the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs and, particularly, the Geneva Water Hub under the University of Geneva, which they suggested as priorities. In addition, the report recommends close monitoring of the EU’s water diplomacy activities. Development budget should be allocated to support Finnish partners (including academia and CSOs) in their support for water diplomatic activity.

## **BUDGET AND RESOURCES**

**Recommendation 7. Use the possibilities of the budget process to ensure long-term funding and commitment.**

Secure and target resources for water diplomatic activities, in line with the ambition and the key areas in which Finland wants to build a track record (complementing the demands of diplomats



and development practitioners and taking into account ODA demand and criteria). (Re)allocate financial resources for activities accordingly.

Maintaining current activity levels is already stretching resources. If MFA wants to play a significant, global, water diplomacy role, dedicated financial and human resources will be needed to maintain engagement. More affluent resources are available for activities in ODA-eligible countries. Other resources need to be mobilised for operations elsewhere. To a limited extent, they may come from partner ministries. These concerns could be addressed by executing the current Development Policy across Parliamentary Terms.

## **POLICY EMBEDDING**

### **Recommendation 8. Treat water diplomacy as an approach that provides entry points and levers in complex nexus/climate-related conflicts.**

Alongside MFA's new ambitions in peace mediation and water diplomacy, and taking into account development cooperation as a key instrument in these interventions, indicate the importance of environment-related peace mediation in complex conflicts, by including it in development cooperation policy, with an emphasis on (among other things) water diplomacy.

## **STEP 2. COLLECTION AND INTERPRETATION OF INFORMATION TO BETTER INFORM DIPLOMACY AND POLICY MAKING**

### **AMBITION LEVEL 2 - 3**

*An evidence-based approach to water diplomacy* is proposed, supported by continuous monitoring, evaluation (of threat and risk), and research to identify the emerging conflict. With 83 embassies around the world, Finland is well-positioned to empower its diplomatic missions in focal countries to gather and analyse water-diplomacy relevant knowledge. To achieve this, *a shift is proposed to bring on-the-ground level Finnish diplomatic assets better into play* by strengthening the roles primarily in (a) knowledge gathering and leveraging; and (b) long-term diplomatic interventions. This would also entail strong coordination and two-way communication between embassies in focal areas and MFA/ Centre for Peace Mediation.

*Strategic decisions:* from the outset, Finland will need to make three key strategic decisions:

- Choice of geography: based on research and analysis, in what countries will Finland focus its water diplomacy? We refer to these as 'focal geographies'. Obviously, these depend on the likelihood of water-related conflict; and also on the value that Finland can add to resolving this in terms of global strategic positioning, capabilities, including previous experience and knowledge of conditions in the area.
- Choice of the theme: what angle of water diplomacy will Finland focus upon? For example, representing minorities and marginalised groups in the peace process.
- Where in the 'conflict trajectory' would Finland wish to intervene: long-term preventive diplomacy, short-term peace-making, or long-term peace-building, or some combination of all three? In what follows, it is assumed that a combination of all three is selected.

This proposal yields two recommendations:



## KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION

**Recommendation 9. Finland should identify networks and key organisations on the ground and procure the knowledge needed to support its water diplomacy effectively.**

*Long-term monitoring of conflict potential in focal countries:* this should serve as the basis for understanding and analysing water resources-related challenges that may yield conflict outcomes. While changing biophysical conditions should be monitored and understood, more important is the *anticipated human reaction (both political and humanitarian) to severe hydrological and ecosystem change* – upon which emerging conflict will eventually be based. To achieve this, Finland will:

- Carry out in-depth research on the needs of the relevant local and national actors, in line with the decision on the focus areas. Identify through an assessment the knowledge and capacity needs to:
  - organise and facilitate dialogues between stakeholders (based on a thorough understanding of the technical, historical, legal and socio-political dimensions);
  - technically understand, analyse and communicate integrated water resources management related problems;
- Determine in what ways research responsibilities can be distributed across other complementary partners.
- Identify what the MFA can provide internally and what expertise is available through the Finnish Water Diplomacy Network and others.
- Identify the international partners and institutions that can support the MFA with the required information.
- Develop a continuous assessment of the conflict potential in focus countries.

*Data verification methods will need to be established:* Monitoring of security situations of necessity draws upon ‘patchy’, often anecdotal data and information. Clear standards for how these data can be verified (via, for example, triangulation) will need to be established. Research quality, relevance and interpretation should – at least in part – be gained by entering it into *dialogue with stakeholders*, based on a thorough understanding of the technical, historical, legal and socio-political dimensions. The abilities of Finnish experts should also be relied upon to interpret data and knowledge emerging from focal countries.

## ORGANISATION

**Recommendation 10. Dedicate staff at key positions to keep track of critical water-related dossiers and develop close relations with essential research, civil society partners, and sector representatives. Finland should enable its embassies to respond to the knowledge needs of water diplomacy.**

To ensure that the water diplomacy efforts are informed by internal expertise and to facilitate coordination internally and with other ministries, *a senior member of staff within MFA should be designated to focus continuously (i.e. with a long perspective) on water issues*. MFA could consider designating a water director/lead who, through coordination, could also link to the implementation



of Finland's International Strategy. Dedicated water diplomacy staff will help to establish Finland as an international source of water diplomacy. Such persons would ideally identify water diplomacy opportunities for Finland and build up a network around the Finnish niche. The same would apply to staff at Finnish embassies in focal countries, like the past and current position at the Finnish Embassy in Addis Ababa.

*Embedding water diplomacy research and monitoring in embassies in focal countries.* Finland should also consider creating senior, hydro-diplomatic roles in its embassies. For example, a First Officer (Water and Climate Change), revealing the strategic importance Finland places in water diplomacy. Such diplomats would also have a clear mandate to research and monitor evolving water security situations. A possible complementary or alternative strategy would be to forge close relations with closely aligned Finnish non-state actors that already have these capabilities, such as CMI.

*Such officers will need clear qualifications that include:*

- The ability to assess and evaluate the political-economic/ecological context of the focal country's water resources.
- The ability to review data and intelligence from a variety of sources – specifically with a view to triangulating data and analysis.
- Have significant networking abilities – given that networks will be (a) a key source of knowledge; and (b) enable triangulation.
- Diplomatic, mediation and convening skills that draw on a toolbox of water diplomacy strategies and fora.
- Strong in-country experience and linguistic ability.

Such officers will draw upon *both political and development cooperation resources* in an effort to maintain peace.

*Provide clear response guidelines to water diplomacy officers:* officers will have clear guidelines as to when, in an escalating situation, s/he should invoke other senior staff at his/her embassy (e.g. the ambassador); and or MFA and/or Centre for Peace Mediation capacity.

*Systems for fast and informal information exchange will need to be established* via direct and informal communication lines between embassies and the home office/ Centre for Peace Mediation or the regional departments. While knowledge and interpretation move up from embassies,

*MFA and/ the Centre for Peace Mediation should, inter alia, support monitoring and research activities* in focal countries by:

- Vectoring data and knowledge from embassies based elsewhere in the arena (for example, other countries in a shared river basin).
- Bring to bear both national (from the Centre for Peace Mediation) and international (e.g. the UN) capabilities in the event that the conflict escalates.
- Bring to bear global data sets – e.g. remote sensing – to strengthen knowledge and awareness at the focal country level.
- Mobilise national or global expertise to support analysis and understanding of the conflict.



- Deployment of a variety of tools to explore different scenarios to identify and evaluate the risks of a potential conflict escalating.
- To develop in-house capacity to rapidly respond to an escalating situation that lies beyond the scope and capacity of the embassy in the focal country.

### **STEP 3. DECISION-MAKING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIVITIES**

#### **4P PROJECT**

##### **AMBITION LEVEL 1**

Continue with developing the short-term activities as described in the 4P-project document. The team refers to the appraisal document for recommendations instead of repeating them here.

#### **NEW LONG-TERM ENGAGEMENTS**

##### **AMBITION LEVEL 2**

###### **Recommendation 11. Build on the existing Finnish activities.**

Short-term responses: identify responses that fit within the current resourcing and build on the legacy of Finnish activities.

Long-term responses: Identify, based on the UNECE Water Convention Programme of Work, options for longer-term engagements that provide opportunities for (ad-hoc) diplomatic support.

Explore opportunities to coordinate international (donor) activities: Strengthen international donors' convening and coordination roles in water diplomacy-related action arenas. There is competition within the donor community, sometimes to the detriment of the basin. *Finland can play a key role in donor coordination and the creation of an overview of activities.*

##### **AMBITION LEVEL 3**

###### **Recommendation 12. Identify new long-term engagements in support of diplomatic objectives.**

Invest in longer-term (bi and multilateral) nexus projects in close cooperation with the diplomatic and technical staff. These projects provide gateways to obtain local knowledge and develop strong networks with local counterparts. In line with a future ambition and the possible (political) risks, make a motivated decision with both the development cooperation and political departments on the focus area(s)<sup>32</sup> for long-term engagement (not necessarily for ad-hoc mediation). Such motivated decisions allow efficient use of available human and funding resources and approach partners with whom to cooperate in joint activities. Previous studies carried out by Aalto University and the University of Eastern Finland provide some guidance in making this decision. With the increasing

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32 Focus can be placed on the areas where (ground) water-related tensions are likely to occur (regional transboundary conflicts, internal water conflicts, conflicts on water quality, navigation, etc.); or where Finland already has a strong presence. Focus can also be placed on a specific level of engagement, like international conventions and institutions. The level of engagement should be in line with the identified resources and risks and the identified ambition on water diplomacy.



complexity of intra-country conflict, more coordination with, and support to, local CSOs and Finnish NGOs is needed. Identify with the Finnish research and civil society organisations how they can support these opportunities and what resources they require.

## **STEP 4: SHARE AND INFLUENCE**

### **FINNISH NICHE**

#### **AMBITION LEVEL 2**

**Recommendation 13. Identify the Finnish niche and develop it by shaping the narrative and by informing and inspiring others.**

*Share.* Share the Finnish experience and approach to water diplomacy related activities with the international peer community through conferences, training, etc. A possible key narrative could be the ability of Finnish diplomats, specialists, and practitioners to work together in the water sector, based on the Finnish track record and the desired ambition. Finnish (geopolitical and historical) experiences in the Finnish-Russian cooperation, UNECE and HELCOM provide credibility to Finnish activities. Develop media engagement plans with the posts and the home office. Ensure that all departments and posts are aware of the water diplomacy strategy.

*Influence.* Address the need for a change of existing paradigms: Take a leading role in the international community towards developing integrated diplomacy that addresses, for example, the upcoming social challenges resulting from water conflicts and climate change. If such a focus is deemed appropriate, focus on the people who are not represented in the water diplomacy negotiations, like the indigenous peoples, non-national communities. Finland can give voice to the voiceless and bring other (non-western) values to the table with support from CSOs/ NGOs. A concrete opportunity is to organise a high-level conference on the niche Finland wants to be known for in line with the policy priorities.

## **STEP 5: JOINT LEARNING**

### **JOINT LEARNING**

#### **AMBITION LEVEL 1**

**Recommendation 14. Set up a joint learning programme for staff, partners and decision-makers through the Centre for Peace Mediation to support adaptive management.**

Systematic and collective learning by both MFA staff and key partners (within other ministries and supporting research and civil society organisations) is essential for a responsive and resilient programme. This learning should involve activities, mechanisms to anchor the knowledge in the organisation and decision-making on how to respond to the lessons learned. Invest in long-term and joint learning activities with the partners to improve the effectiveness of partnerships and responses. A concrete step required next step is the further development of the initial Theory of Change.



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# Evaluation Team

## **Rens de Man, Team leader**

Rens de Man has over 25 years of broad professional experience as a strategic advisor, evaluator, researcher and facilitator in varying international contexts. Mr De Man was trained in land and water governance, conflict studies and mutual gains negotiations at Utrecht University, Wageningen University and Tufts University/Harvard. He is currently finalising his PhD research, which focuses on the drivers of institutional change in national decision-making within the context of water shortages.

Mr De Man held positions at the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency, Wageningen University, Water Partner Foundation, The Hague Institute for Global Justice and (currently) P2 Consultancy. With these organisations he carried out complex policy evaluations, strategic studies, trainings and facilitation processes for Ministries of Foreign Affairs, International NGOs and other public and private organisations.

His country experience includes among others: Australia, Cambodia, Costa Rica, India, Israel, Jordan, The Netherlands, Palestine, Thailand, Yemen and Zanzibar. He published and presented various papers at international conferences. Through his assignments, he developed a strong expertise in analysing the complex interactions and facilitation of stakeholders operating in the physical, social, economic, political and legal domains in transboundary water cooperation and water diplomacy.

In this evaluation, Mr De Man acted as a team leader, and has taken responsibility for all final deliverables and the coordination of other team members' contributions.

## **Hannu Vikman, Senior Evaluator**

Hannu Vikman has more than 40 years of professional experience that covers urban/municipal infrastructure as well as water resources and environmental management and a variety of development assignments in Finland and abroad. Mr Vikman has been extensively involved in all stages of project cycle, including project identification, formulation, management, monitoring and evaluation, and advisory services. He has also been involved in development of legislation, policy formulation, strategic planning and sector financing. His experience covers, in addition to consulting and management of consulting, 12 years in the water and environmental sector administration in Finland, focusing on sector planning, inter-municipal infrastructure planning and sector financing, two years in the Department for International Development Cooperation in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA).

In this evaluation Mr Vikman focused on Finland's past water diplomacy experience, particularly transboundary cooperation with Russia and Finland's undertakings in the Nile and Mekong Basins.



### **Imeru Tamrat Yigezu, Country specialist, Ethiopia**

Imeru Tamrat Yigezu has more than 25 years of professional experience working in various capacities in the water and environment sector, including working as a consultant and in the academia in the areas of land right and administration, land governance, environmental policy and governance, water resources management, human rights, and civil society organizations. He has a long-standing experience representing Ethiopia as a negotiator in the Nile Basin and international environmental negotiations. Imeru currently serves as a member of the Human Rights Committee of the United Nations Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (2021-24). He has participated in a number of evaluations as part of a consultancy team in a number of projects financed by the government of Finland and Sweden in Ethiopia.

### **Kim Geheb, Country Specialist, Lao PDR**

Dr Geheb is a seasoned social-scientist with 16 years of experience in Southeast Asia and a long-time focus on the political economy and governance of shared rivers, water-based conflict, benefit-sharing, and ecosystem services. He maintains large regional networks in the government, donor, research and NGO communities, and is well integrated into regional water and natural resources dialogues and debates. Dr Geheb has served as a Senior Program Officer at the Mekong River Commission (2003-2007), as the Regional Coordinator for the CGIAR Challenge Program on Water and Food (2009-2014), focussed on the Mekong River Basin; and Regional Coordinator for the CGIAR Research Program on Water, Land and Ecosystems (2014-18), focussed on the Mekong, Salween, Irrawaddy and Red River Basins. He currently serves as the Principal Scientist for the Mekong Region Futures Institute, and is based in Vientiane, Lao PDR, where his work focusses on the political economy of regional water governance, and on influencing policy and governance directions with research-based evidence. Dr Geheb holds a doctorate from the School of African and Asian Studies at the University of Sussex, UK. Under this evaluation, Dr Geheb's role has been to contribute his experience with Mekong Basin water diplomacy; to conduct interviews seeking to appraise water diplomacy in the basin and Finland's contribution to it, and to contribute his findings and analysis to the final report. He has also provided inputs and comments to the report as a whole.

### **Saila Toikka, Emerging Evaluator**

Saila Toikka has 11 years of experience as a project and programme professional, mainly for UN agencies. Saila has gained insight into a wide range of topics relating to sustainable development, climate change, and environment and security, as well as inclusive local governance in fragile contexts. Her main area of expertise is in developing monitoring and evaluation systems and methods for effective development programming. She has managed and coordinated 15+ project evaluations in the Evaluation Office of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) as well as participated in strategic evaluations as an evaluation team member. In addition, Saila has worked in Monitoring and Evaluation for the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in Uzbekistan and Afghanistan, and most recently for Finland's largest development NGO.

Holding a Master's Degree in Public Administration, she has also studied International Development, and completed numerous professional training courses. These include a leadership



programme on Evaluation and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Claremont Graduate University/UNITAR, and Impact Evaluation with the University of East Anglia.

In this evaluation process Saila's main task was contributing to the pre-appraisal of the 4Ps project document as well as provide inputs for the finalisation of the evaluation report. Her role and learning objectives were defined in the emerging evaluator capacity development plan.

**Pirkko Poutiainen, Evaluation Management Services (EMS) Coordinator**

Pirkko Poutiainen, is a senior development cooperation practitioner with extensive experience in evaluation (especially related to MFA Finland), working with multilateral organisations (such as the World Bank) and gender equality. She is also an expert on Finland's development cooperation.



# VOLUME 1 • MAIN REPORT



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