

FELM  
DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION  
PROGRAM 2022-2025  
EVALUATION REPORT



Felm<sup>1859</sup>

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## Acronyms

BSF	Bienfaisance Sans Frontières, Centre for Mental Health and Counselling
CCA&M	Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DASSC	Development and Social Services Commission
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
DWS	Department for World Service
ECDD	Ethiopian Centre for Disability Development
EDAN	Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network
EECMY	Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus
EHRC	Ethiopian Human Rights Commission
ELDA	Ethiopian Lawyers with Disabilities Association
ELS	The Lutheran Church of Senegal
EQ	Evaluation Question

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FBO	Faith-based Organization
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
GGG	Gwai Grandmothers Group
HQ	Headquarters
HRBA	Human Rights-based Approach
ICC	Integral Cooperation Cambodia
IELCO	The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia
INGO	International Non-governmental Organization
KII	Key Informant Interviews
LI-BIRD	Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, Research and Development (part of LI-BIRD Nepal)
LSDO	Language and Social Development Organization
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MFA	Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland
MLMT	Multilingual and Mother Longue
MTE	Mid-Term Evaluation
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
OPD	Organizations of Persons with Disabilities
PMEL	Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
PER	Programme Effectiveness Review
SAHAS	Group of Helping Hands
SCS	South Central Synod
TCRS	Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
TUMA	Tumaini University Makumira
UMN	United Mission to Nepal
ZCC	Zimbabwe Council of Churches

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## Executive summary

Felm, the international agency of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, implements its international work in 24 countries. This program cycle (2022–2025) of the development co-operation programme, which constitutes a major component of Felm's overall 2023–2028 programme, was primarily funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (MFA). The program operated in nine countries across three continents, comprising 33 projects implemented by 23 local partner organisations (churches, faith-based organisations (FBOs), and civil society organizations (CSOs)). The total budget was EUR 28.3 million, and the program aimed to directly benefit over 434,000 rights-holders.

The program's long-term goal is to contribute to improved resilience and inclusion of marginalized groups in target areas, focusing on three outcome areas: Community Resilience, Inclusive Education, and Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The evaluation focused on three OECD-DAC criteria, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability, and applied the Scaling for Transformational Change framework (scaling up, scaling out, and scaling deep) as its core analytical approach. The evaluation utilized a mix-method approach, drawing on a desk review of 970 documents (including 18 sample projects), 38 Key Informant Interviews, an online partner survey (52% response rate), and thematic Focus Group Discussions.

### Key Findings

Overall **effectiveness** is assessed as high to moderately high, driven by adaptive management and strategic use of existing resources. Partners generally view the programme effectiveness very positively. The most significant factors contributing to achievements were strong local ownership and multi-faceted support from Felm. Many projects were consistently anchored in existing local community structures, and several successfully leveraged contributions of labor, time, or financial co-sharing, indicating strong ownership. Financial controls and accountability are robust and consistently verified by audits.

Evidence for effectiveness of outcomes beyond outputs remains limited, as reporting often focuses on output delivery (activity completion) rather than measurable change in people, systems, or institutions (outcomes). The fragmentation across numerous themes and priorities spreads resources and focus thin, potentially reducing overall effectiveness. Furthermore, internal capacity gaps in cross-cutting objectives and a strong reliance on regional programme managers that creates risks for bottlenecks were noted. External hindrances included governmental factors, political events, and climate shocks. Some partners also called for stronger local ownership and genuine partnership, perceiving decision-making as overly top-down.

The programme demonstrates emerging measurable **impact**. There is a positive impact on enhancing the resilience and inclusion of marginalized groups, particularly through economic empowerment and improved food security, evidenced by reduced food shortage months and increased household income.

The most consistent progress is visible in scaling deep (shifts in attitudes, practices, and agency at community and household level). This includes widespread adoption of climate-resilient agricultural practices and increased acceptance of persons with disabilities in the community. Scaling out (replication) is present, particularly where community-based models (like climate-smart agriculture or savings groups) respond to pressing needs, but evidence of spontaneous replication by unaffiliated actors remains thin. Scaling up (embedding approaches in laws, policies, and institutional systems) is the most constrained area, with few verified examples of formal adoption, resourcing, and enforcement by duty-bearers.

**Sustainability** has been deliberately embedded in design and delivery, emphasizing local ownership and participatory implementation. Partners express high confidence that positive results will continue beyond 2025 (over 70% in the survey). While a solid foundation is laid, the long-term viability of institutionalisation and funding mechanisms

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remains uncertain, as documentation focuses more on future plans than on verified independent continuation. The commitment to localization is visible, but knowledge exchange remains largely one-directional, flowing primarily from Felm to partners, limiting bi-directional learning and mutual knowledge sharing.

Commitment to **cross-cutting objectives** (CCO), namely gender equality, disability inclusion, climate resilience, and low-emission development, is clear in principle, but implementation is uneven and insufficiently systematized. Disability Inclusion: This CCO shows a strong, evolving approach, particularly in targeted disability rights projects, fostering rights-based advocacy and systemic change. However, in mainstreaming, projects often lack structured disability analysis, do not systematically use standardized data collection (like the Washington Group Questions), and lack routine accessibility measures.

Gender Equality: Achieved broad participation of women and some advances in leadership roles. However, sustainable impact is threatened by a focus on participation numbers without addressing deeper structural barriers (e.g., control over assets or unpaid care work) and a lack of systematic gender analysis to track transformative change.

Climate Resilience: The program effectively supported community-level resilience through DRM plans and adoption of climate-resilient practices. Yet, operationalization remains inconsistent across projects, implementation is uneven, and significant evidence gaps exist, including a lack of clarity on dedicated budget allocations.

## Conclusions and recommendations

The evaluation concludes that the Felm Development Cooperation Programme 2022–2025 has been effective in delivering planned activities and outputs and has contributed to meaningful improvements for rights-holders at the community level. The main challenge lies in the organisational structure and results culture, which, combined with the breadth of thematic areas, has limited the ability to consolidate and elevate successful local models into broader public systems. Moving forward, the opportunity is to build on islands of deep and localized change to achieve more deliberate, evidence-based scaling up and scaling out.

The summary of key recommendations includes:

**Strategic focus and effectiveness:** Concentrate efforts on a limited number of strategic priorities through coordinated, time-bound initiatives, such as thematic collective actions or action sprints, to mobilize organisational capacity and generate measurable results. Institutionalize the Programme Effectiveness Review (PER) for structured performance dialogue and mutual accountability.

**Results and learning:** Ensure the results matrix and reporting shift focus from activity completion (outputs) to measurable change in people, systems, or institutions (outcomes). Strengthen bi-directional learning mechanisms to enable partners to share expertise, innovations, and contextual insights back to Felm.

**Cross-cutting accountability:** Establish a clear accountability framework for CCOs by integrating them into the results framework with dedicated outcome indicators and assigned budget lines. Require a structured Do No Harm risk assessment for all CCOs. Develop minimum accessibility and inclusion standards for all projects and formalize partnerships with Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) as co-designers.

**Impact and sustainability:** Systematically package successful project evidence and lessons learned into guidance products (notes and briefs) tailored for national stakeholders and duty-bearers to influence policy and standards. Strengthen mechanisms for tracking and documenting the independent continuation of interventions beyond the programme cycle.

Table 1: Summary of evaluation findings and recommendations

Evaluation criteria	Key findings	Recommendations	Priority type
<b>Effectiveness</b>	1. Overall effectiveness is high to moderately high, driven by adaptive management and strategic use of existing resources. Evidence for effectiveness of outcomes beyond outputs remains limited.	<b>Ensure the results matrix and reporting support focus on outcomes and learning</b>  <b>Ensure that each project clearly articulates the pathway from output to outcome</b> , with explicit assumptions and indicators, and that in the results matrix outcomes describe measurable change in people, systems, or institutions, rather than completion of activities.	Structural/ Immediate
	2. Partners' view of the programme effectiveness is very positive	No recommended action	
	3. Fragmentation across numerous themes and priorities spreads resources and focus thin and might reduce overall effectiveness.	Moving into the next programme period, the programme <b>should build on areas of deep, localised change to pursue more deliberate, evidence-based scaling up and scaling out</b> , while safeguarding the rights-based, locally owned character that underpins its strongest achievements.	Strategic / Inception phase
		<b>Concentrate organisational efforts on a limited number of strategic priorities through coordinated, time-bound initiatives that could be called <i>thematic collective actions</i> or <i>action sprints</i></b> , that mobilize the full capacity of the organisation. These focused periods, approximately 3-5 months in duration, should align attention, advocacy, and resources around selected programme priorities to generate momentum, visibility, and measurable results. Campaigns may target major unfinished agendas, such as gender equality, disability inclusion, climate resilience, safeguarding, or leverage external opportunities for policy influence, partnership, and innovation.	Strategic / Immediate
	4. Financial controls and accountability are strong and consistently verified by audits and variance tracking; however, evidence on programmatic efficiency (cost-effectiveness) is limited.	<b>Institutionalize Programme Effectiveness Review (PER)</b> as a mechanism for performance dialogue and strategic accountability. The PER should serve as a structured, evidence-driven forum to assess progress, align actions across organisational levels, and reinforce mutual accountability and remove perceptions of top-down organisational culture.	Structural / Cyclical

Evaluation criteria	Key findings	Recommendations	Priority type
	5. Across the programme, the most significant factors contributing to achievements are strong local ownership and multi-faceted support from Felm.	No recommended action.	
	6. Several projects successfully required and leveraged contributions of labour, time, expertise, or direct financial co-sharing, which is a strong indicator of ownership.	No recommended action.	
	7. Across the programme, achievements were hindered by a consistent set of interconnected external and internal factors.	No recommended action.	
	8. The programme identifies relevant risks well, but mitigation and monitoring measures remain weak.	Strengthen the programme's risk management by requiring that priority risks, particularly those related to political violence, discrimination, exclusion and safeguarding, <b>have clearly defined and time-bound mitigation actions, designated responsible actors and explicit triggers for adaptation</b> , and that these are regularly reviewed and updated through partner reporting and annual programme review processes.	Technical / Next programme
	9. Some partners call for stronger local ownership and genuine partnership.	In the next programme cycle, <b>strengthen the programme's role as a facilitator of locally led change by more deliberately drawing on partner and community expertise and ensuring they have a stronger voice in strategic decision-making processes</b> (for example through co-design of programme priorities and structured partner and community consultations). See also recommendation under key finding 23 under sustainability.	Strategic / Next programme
	10. Output driven compliance culture often outweighs tracking for institutional changes, limiting a culture of results, learning, and adaptive management.	<b>Provide standard templates or short guidance notes</b> to help partners describe expected behavioural or institutional changes, not just deliverables in reporting. And organize periodic reflection on how outputs have contributed to outcomes, rather than just activity completion. Provide practical guidance on differentiating outputs (what we do) and outcomes (what changes as a result).	Technical / Immediate

Evaluation criteria	Key findings	Recommendations	Priority type
		<p><b>Require that key lessons and evaluation findings</b> are explicitly referenced in new planning documents, budgets, and partner guidance. Organise annual or semi-annual learning sessions at country or regional level to jointly review findings from evaluations, partner reports, and field experience</p>	Structural / Cyclical
		<p><b>Establish dedicated Results Managers</b> or equivalent roles to ensure clear accountability for tracking progress across outcomes and outputs. This function should maintain a strategic, organisation-wide view of how results are being pursued, identify areas of lagging progress, and facilitate evidence-informed follow-up. This will support the organisation in the shift from compliance-based reporting to strategic performance management.</p>	Structural / Immediate
	<p>11. The programme's strong reliance on regional programme managers shapes coordination and implementation and creates risks for bottlenecks.</p>	<p>No recommended action.</p>	
	<p>12. Governmental factors, political events and climate shocks often hinder implementation</p>	<p>No recommended action.</p>	
	<p>13. Felm's capacity sharing has strengthened partner organisations, though its application and impact remain uneven.</p>	<p><b>Institute a simple annual training cycle grounded in a needs assessment, map internal and partner expertise.</b> Co-create an annual training calendar where partners and local experts lead sessions alongside Felm. Training delivery could be included into the focused action sprints (introduced above), short intensive learning periods build around specific themes or skill gaps, followed by peer exchange and practical learning.</p>	Structural / Ongoing
	<p>14. Cross-cutting objectives are prioritised in principle, but their implementation is uneven and insufficiently systematised.</p>	<p><b>Establish a clear accountability framework for cross-cutting objectives by fully integrating them into the programme's results framework</b> with dedicated outcome indicators, reporting requirements, and assigned budget lines. Each project should explicitly demonstrate how gender equality, disability inclusion, and climate resilience and low-emission development are operationalised, tracked, and resourced.</p>	Structural / Immediate

Evaluation criteria	Key findings	Recommendations	Priority type
		<p><b>Require each project to operationalise its <i>Do No Harm</i> commitment by conducting a structured analysis of risks and mitigation measures</b> related to all cross-cutting objectives at both design and implementation stages, and by integrating these into project and programme risk matrices, with periodic review and updating.</p>	Technical / Immediate
		<p><b>Strengthen accountability for achieving cross-cutting objectives by clarifying roles and integrating cross-cutting objectives’ responsibilities into job descriptions.</b> To enhance ownership and implementation of the cross-cutting objectives, the programme should explicitly assign responsibility for cross-cutting results to Felm staff, including at the country and regional levels. Embedding cross-cutting objectives -related duties in job descriptions and not relying primarily on headquarters-based experts, would help distribute responsibility more evenly, reinforce accountability, and ensure that cross-cutting objectives are systematically advanced</p>	Structural / Immediate
		<p><b>Strengthen intersectional and gender-transformative approaches by embedding structured gender analysis across all projects</b> (ensure they are carried out and applied in programme/project design). To effectively identify and address harmful gender norms, the programme should systematically integrate gender analysis into programme design, implementation, and monitoring. This includes assessing power dynamics, structural barriers, and gendered risks from the outset, and using the findings to guide interventions, strengthen accountability, and track transformative change over time. Both the programme’s gender equality work and disability inclusion work would benefit from a more systematic application of an intersectional lens and explicit recognition of multiple and intersecting discrimination, especially as experienced by women with disabilities.</p>	Structural / Immediate
		<p><b>Develop minimum accessibility and inclusion standards for all projects</b> (e.g., accessible communication formats, assistive products, sign language, transport support) and ensure every partner integrates them into implementation. Formalise partnerships with Organisations of Persons with Disabilities as co-designers and advisors to operationalise CRPD principles in practice.</p>	Technical / Immediate

Evaluation criteria	Key findings	Recommendations	Priority type
	15. The programme has effectively supported community-level resilience through the development of DRM plans, capacity-building activities, and adoption of climate-resilient practices.	No recommended action.	
	16. The programme effectively adopts a dual approach, combining tangible improvements in access and learning environments with advocacy for systemic policy change. Evidence of measurable impact on learning outcomes and sustained policy implementation is still evolving.	No recommended action.	
	17. The programme demonstrates a strong and evolving approach to disability inclusion, moving beyond simple participation to fostering rights-based advocacy and systemic change.	No recommended action.	
<b>Impact</b>	18. The programme demonstrates a positive impact on enhancing the resilience and inclusion of marginalized groups, particularly through economic empowerment and improved food security.	<b>Systematically package successful project evidence and lessons learned into guidance products to influence policy and standards at national and sub-national levels.</b> To strengthen the uptake and institutionalisation of effective models, Felm and its partners should synthesise project-generated evidence, practices, and lessons into clear, user-friendly guidance notes and briefs tailored for national stakeholders and duty bearers. These products can support policy dialogue, inform national standards, and provide practical models for replication within public systems.	Strategic / Inception phase

Evaluation criteria	Key findings	Recommendations	Priority type
	19. Evidence for attribution of observed changes to the programme is present but varies in strength across projects.	<b>Develop a coherent country-level programme architecture to strengthen institutionalisation and sustainability of results.</b> This architecture does not need to take the form of a formal country programme, but rather a structured framework that brings projects together under shared strategic and coordination mechanisms. Such coherence would enhance alignment with national systems, advocacy, improve cross-project coordination, and create clearer pathways for scaling and sustaining successful models beyond the current implementation period.	Strategic / Inception phase
	20. The programme demonstrates emerging measurable impact	No recommended action.	
	21. Human rights principles are applied across the programme, with evidence of rights-based impacts for key groups.	No recommended action.	
<b>Sustainability</b>	22. Sustainability is embedded in design and delivery, emphasizing local ownership, capacity development, and participation, with early signs of independent continuation by communities.	No recommended action.	
	23. While the programme has laid a solid foundation for sustainability, the long-term viability of institutionalisation and funding mechanisms remains uncertain	<b>Strengthen mechanisms for tracking and documenting the independent continuation of interventions beyond the programme cycle.</b> The programme should establish simple, systematic approaches to monitor how programme interventions continue once external support ends. Strengthening these mechanisms will improve understanding of long-term sustainability and inform future programme design. As a minimum, future programmes should include a dedicated budget line for monitoring the sustainability of the previous phase. Concrete ways to do this in a cost-effective way could be to leverage community-led monitoring mechanisms, such as periodic updates from community committees and including sustainability assessments in the TORs of future evaluations, ensuring systematic follow-up 12 months after project closure.	Structural / Long-term

Evaluation criteria	Key findings	Recommendations	Priority type
	24. The impacts of the programme's cross-cutting objectives are only partially likely to sustain beyond implementation. While advocacy and collaboration show promise, institutionalisation of models remains limited, and monitoring gaps hinder evidence of lasting impact.	Reference to recommendations under Key Finding 13 under effectiveness.	
	25. Commitment to localization is visible through approaches that emphasize local ownership, shared learning and participatory implementation methods yet knowledge exchange remains largely one-directional flowing from Felm to partners.	<b>Strengthen bi-directional learning mechanisms to support meaningful localization.</b> To deepen local ownership and improve programme quality, Felm should establish mechanisms that enable partners to share their experiences, innovations, and contextual insights back to Felm and across the partner network. This could include partner-led workshops, joint reflection sessions, and feedback loops where local practices and lessons directly inform the programme and Felm staff.	Structural / Ongoing

## 1. Introduction

Felm (the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission) serves as the international agency of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. It operates in 24 countries through close cooperation with nearly 100 partner churches, faith-based actors, and other civil society organisations. A significant share of Felm's resources comes from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and its parishes, while additional funding is provided by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (MFA) and the European Union.

As one of Finland's largest civil society organisations engaged in global development, Felm's Programme 2023–2028 aims to promote inclusive and sustainable societies by driving structural changes that tackle the underlying causes of exclusion, discrimination, and vulnerability.

The Felm Development Cooperation Programme 2022–2025, which constitutes a major component of the overall programme, is primarily funded through the MFA's programme-based support. Building on the previous 2018–2021 programme cycle, it continues Felm's long-term development cooperation work. The programme focus is on the least developed countries and reaches out to the marginalized groups with an intersectional approach.

The programme is implemented in nine countries on three continents, and it comprises of 33 projects led by 23 local

partner organisations. Of the local partner organisations three are churches, six are faith-based organisations (FBOs) and 14 are other civil society organisations.

With a total budget of EUR 28.3 million of which EUR 24.5 million comes from MFA funding the programme is expected to directly benefit more than 434,000 rights-holders and 27,800 duty-bearers, reaching an estimated 2.2 million people indirectly.

Grounded in Felm’s mission to promote human dignity and justice, and in line with the 2030 Agenda’s commitment to leave no one behind, the the long-term goal of the Felm programme is to contribute to improved resilience and inclusion of people from marginalized groups in the programme target areas through three outcome areas:

1. Community Resilience: Strengthened community resilience to climate change and disasters.
2. Inclusive Education: Improved access to inclusive, quality education for children and youth from marginalized groups; and
3. Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Greater integration of the rights of persons with disabilities into government policies and practices, with active participation of persons with disabilities and their organisations.

These outcomes are interlinked, addressing resilience not only to climate challenges but also to broader social, economic, and institutional barriers. The programme’s approach emphasizes strengthening the capacities of rights-holders, duty-bearers, and civil society actors to foster knowledge, confidence, and dialogue for sustained inclusion and justice. The programme has four cross-cutting objectives: disability inclusion, gender equality, climate resilience, and low-emission development<sup>1</sup>.

Table 2: Programme summary

<b>Programme period</b>	2022-2025
<b>Budget</b>	28.3 million
<b>Projected direct beneficiaries/ rights holders</b>	434 000
<b>Projected direct beneficiaries/ duty bearers</b>	27 800
<b>Projected indirect beneficiaries</b>	2.2 million
<b>Expected impact</b>	Resilience and inclusion of people from marginalized groups improved in the programme target areas
<b>Programme outcome areas</b>	Community Resilience Inclusive Education Rights of Persons with Disabilities

## 2 Evaluation objectives and questions

This is the final evaluation of Felm’s Development Cooperation Programme 2022-2025. The evaluation focused on three selected OECD-DAC<sup>2</sup> criteria: impact, effectiveness, and sustainability. In terms of focus of the evaluation and the application of its findings, the more specific sub-objectives are the following:

<sup>1</sup> Climate resilience and low-emission development are often combined under a single cross-cutting objective in many programme documents.

<sup>2</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee

- Assess the impact and achievements vis-a-vis the programme objectives.
- Assess the effectiveness of the programme
- Assess the implementation and sustainability of the cross-cutting themes

The evaluation covered the full implementation period 2022-early 2025, all three thematic outcome areas and the programme countries, using representative project samples. The evaluation criteria and the key evaluation question (EQ) are presented below:

#### *Effectiveness*

- EQ1 To what extent have the program's objectives been achieved?
- EQ2 What key factors contributed to or hindered these achievements?
- EQ3 Have Felm's capacity-sharing efforts with partners resulted in new, lasting knowledge and expertise?
- EQ4 What have been the primary strengths and weaknesses of the implementation of cross-cutting themes (inclusion of persons with disabilities, gender equality, climate resilience)?

#### *Impact*

- EQ5 To what extent has the program enhanced resilience and inclusion among individuals from marginalized groups within the targeted areas? (impact statement)
- EQ6 To what extent can observed changes be attributed to the programme?
- EQ7 What signs of impact can be detected towards the end of the programme period?
- EQ8 To what extent are the human rights principles applied in the Felm programming?<sup>3</sup>

#### *Sustainability*

- EQ9 Have adequate conditions for sustainability been created in the programme design and by the intervention activities?
- EQ10 What is the long-term viability of the programme interventions?
- EQ11 To what extent are the impacts of the programme, especially those of the cross-cutting objectives, likely to sustain beyond the implementation period?<sup>4</sup>
- EQ12 To what extent has the programme been able to promote decolonial approaches for localisation efforts?

## 3 Evaluation methodology

### 3.1 Analytical approach

This evaluation applied scaling for *transformational change*<sup>5</sup> as its core analytical framework. Transformational change requires embedding results within systems, cultures, and communities in a sustainable and equitable way. The framework provided a way to assess not only what has changed, but also how deeply and sustainably those changes are

<sup>3</sup> The inception report states two separate questions related to HRBA: To what extent are the impacts human rights based? To what extent are the human rights principles applied in the Felm programming? Here the prior is assessed.

<sup>4</sup> The inception report initially included the following evaluation question: "To what extent are the impacts of the programme, and the results related to the cross-cutting themes, likely to sustain over time?" Given its close similarity to EQ11 and the overlap in findings, the two questions were subsequently combined.

<sup>5</sup> Moore, Michele-Lee, et al. 2015. "Scaling Out, Scaling Up, Scaling Deep: Strategies of Non-Profits in Advancing Systemic Social Innovation." *The Journal of Corporate Citizenship*, no. 58, 2015, pp. 67–84. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/jcorpcti.58.67>. Accessed 9 Feb. 2025. Omann, I., Kammerlander, M., Jäger, J. et al. 2020 Assessing opportunities for scaling out, up and deep of win-win solutions for a sustainable world. *Climatic Change* 160, 753–767 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-019-02503-9>

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likely to endure. The evaluation examined three interconnected dimensions of scaling for transformational change<sup>6</sup>:

- **Scaling up:** The extent to which programme objectives have been embedded in laws, policies, institutional frameworks, and governance structures. This dimension looked at systemic change at national and sub-national levels.
- **Scaling out:** The replication, adaptation, or expansion of effective models and promising practices across different geographical areas, population groups, or sectors. This dimension highlights reach and diffusion of inclusive development approaches.
- **Scaling deep:** The degree to which the programme has contributed to shifting norms, values, and cultural practices. This dimension probes changes in attitudes and relationships that address the root causes of exclusion and inequality.

*Transformational change* occurs where these dimensions intersect: when systemic reforms (up) are replicated widely (out) and internalized through social and cultural change (deep). The evaluation applied this framework across its three core objectives:

1. **Effectiveness** was assessed primarily through scaling out, examining how efficiently programme resources have generated replicable and adaptable results.
2. **Impact** was assessed by examining whether and how transformational change has occurred across the three scaling dimensions. Particular attention will be given to cases where these dimensions overlap, as this is where transformational change at the impact level can be most clearly identified.
3. **Sustainability of cross-cutting objectives** was assessed primarily through evidence of **scaling up** (lasting institutional commitment to gender equality, climate resilience, and disability inclusion) and scaling deep (enduring normative and attitudinal change). Where relevant, evidence of scaling out was used to show whether sustainable approaches have been adopted by multiple actors and communities.

See Annex 1 for the application of the “Scaling for Transformational Change” lens across evaluation criteria, indicating whether each scaling dimension is used as a primary or secondary lens.

The evaluation further analysed progress within the three outcome areas through the scaling lens according to the following:

- **Resilient communities:** assessing whether climate resilience models are institutionalized in governance frameworks (up), diffused across communities (out), and reinforced by community-wide changes in risk perception and practices (deep).
- **Inclusive, quality education:** assessing whether inclusive education is embedded in policies and service delivery systems (up), replicated across schools and regions (out), and supported by evolving social attitudes towards marginalized learners (deep).
- **Rights of persons with disabilities:** assessing whether disability rights are institutionalized in government policies and frameworks (up), extended through networks of organisations and service providers (out), and accompanied by shifts in norms and practices that strengthen participation and equity (deep).

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<sup>6</sup> For more information on how and where to start scaling in programming and different scaling frameworks see *Humanity & Inclusion “Scaling: Where to start?”* Available at: [https://www.hi.org/sn\\_uploads/document/scaling\\_where\\_to\\_start\\_gn\\_10.pdf](https://www.hi.org/sn_uploads/document/scaling_where_to_start_gn_10.pdf)

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Scaling for transformational change is the specialized analytical lens used to interpret and structure the evidence gathered under the evaluation criteria. The evaluation used this analytical framework to synthesize findings across the outcome areas. Particular emphasis was placed on identifying instances of overlap between scaling up, scaling out, and scaling deep, as these represent the strongest evidence of transformative change towards the programme's impact: improved resilience and inclusion of marginalized groups in the target areas.

### 3.2 Sampling strategy

The Felm programme operates in nine countries across three continents and comprises 33 projects implemented by 23 local partners: three churches, six FBOs, and fourteen other civil society organisations, including Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (ODPs). (See **Annex 2** for the Project Summaries). To generate credible programme-level findings within a desk-based design, the evaluation reviewed **a purposive sample of 18 projects (approximately 55% of the portfolio)**.

The construction of the sample of the 18 projects followed a clear sequence and a plan that reflects the programmes thematic and geographical focus:

First nine slots were allocated for each country, so that one project is picked from every nine partner countries. This also secures presence across Africa, Asia and Latin America. Second, the remaining nine slots were distributed to reflect the programme's geographic profile (Africa 56%, Asia 33%, Latin America 11%). Third, the sample was further weighted to mirror the programme's thematic profile: **resilience 59%, inclusive education 26%, and the rights of persons with disabilities 15%**).

This translates roughly into a total of 9–10 resilience-focused projects, four education-focused projects and 2–3 projects focused on the rights of persons with disabilities. Finally, the composition of implementing partners in the sample reflects the portfolio: about two church-led, four faith-based, and ten civil society-led projects (including Organisations of Persons with Disabilities). At least one project involving an Organisation of Persons with Disabilities is explicitly included.

Where multiple candidates met these conditions within the same stratum, choices favoured diversity of contexts (for example, urban and rural settings, degrees of fragility and marginalisation) and projects with stronger monitoring data. In sum, the 18-project sample provides complete country coverage, reflects the programme's geographic and thematic distribution, and maintains the mix of partner types, while remaining feasible for the evaluation's methods and timelines.

### 3.3 Evaluation sample

Based on the sample plan, following projects were included in the sample:

**Country coverage:** One project from each of the nine partner countries (Cambodia, Colombia, Ethiopia, Mauritania, Myanmar, Nepal, Senegal, Tanzania, Zimbabwe).

**Geographic distribution:** Africa 10, Asia 6, Latin America 2 (corresponding to the programme's geographic distribution by programme budget allocation respectively: 56% in Africa, 33% in Asia 11% in Latin America).

**Thematic balance / outcome areas:** 9 projects on resilience, 5 projects on inclusive education, 4 projects on the rights of persons with disabilities. These reflected the budget shares of the key outcome areas of the programme.

**Partner mix:** 9 civil society organisations, 5 church-led, 2 FBOs, 2 Organisation of Persons with Disabilities-led.

## Selection logic (applied in order)

- **Step 1:** one project per country (9 slots) to secure full country coverage across Africa, Asia and Latin America.
- **Step 2:** remaining 9 slots allocated by programme geography (Africa 5, Asia 3, Latin America 1).
- **Step 3:** fine-tuned to match the programme's thematic profile (target  $\approx$  resilience 59%, inclusive education 26%, rights of persons with disabilities 15%). Aligned with shares of the overall programme budget.
- **Step 4:** partner composition aligned as far as the file allows (including both faith-based

Based on the above sampling strategy, the following projects were included into the sample:

Table 3 Evaluation sample

Code	Project	Country	Outcome area	Partner type	Implementing agency
COK003	From Survivors to Agents of Change	Colombia	Persons with disabilities	FBO	Lutheran World Federation/ Department for World Service
COK002	Towards a New Model of Indigenous Education	Colombia	Inclusive education	Church	The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Colombia
ETK004	Advancing Disability Voice Project	Ethiopia	Persons with disabilities	OPD	Ethiopian Center for Disability Development
ETK005	Gambella Improved Livelihood and Resilience Project	Ethiopia	Resilience	FBO	Lutheran World Federation
ETK003	Habru Leghida Building Climate Resilient Communities Project	Ethiopia	Resilience	Church	Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus-Development and Social Services Commission
ETK002	Saylem-Gesha Livelihood Enhancement Project	Ethiopia	Resilience	Church	Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus-Development and Social Services Commission
MRK002	Development of Community Resilience Capacity	Mauritania	Resilience	CSO	Bienfaisance Sans Frontières
MMK002	MLE Development in an Ethnic Minority Area	Myanmar	Inclusive education	CSO	The Language and Social Development Organization
NPK005	School Mental Health Program	Nepal	Persons with disabilities	CSO	Centre for Mental Health and Counseling Nepal
NPK001	Strengthening Psychosocial Disability Rights	Nepal	Persons with disabilities	OPD	Koshish - National Mental Health Self-Help Organization
NPK004	Strengthening Farmers' Livelihood	Nepal	Resilience	CSO	Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, Research and Development

Code	Project	Country	Outcome area	Partner type	Implementing agency
SNK002	Home Language Education Programme	Senegal	Inclusive Education	Church	The Lutheran Church of Senegal
SNK001	Resilience and Livelihood Programme	Senegal	Resilience	Church	The Lutheran Church of Senegal
TZK002	Participatory and Integrative Teaching Approach	Tanzania	Inclusive Education	CSO	Tumaini University Makumira
TZK001	Inclusive Community Resilience	Tanzania	Resilience	CSO	Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service
ZWK003	Grandmothers' Care for Orphaned and Vulnerable Children	Zimbabwe	Resilience	CSO	Gwai Grandmothers Group

### 3.4 Data collection methods

Summary of data collection methods	Sample size
Key programme documents and sample project documents reviewed and/or consulted	970
Key Informant Interviews (online and offline)	38
Online survey to partners (response rate 52 %)	27
Online reflection workshops with partners on 25 September (38 participants), and 9 October (10 participants): 2,5 hrs each.	48
Three online Focus Group Discussions (1,5 hrs each)	24

A mix-method approach, including both quantitative and qualitative methods, was used for data collection, and to validate findings. Key data collection methods applied included:

**Desk review:** A critical analysis of key Programme Documentation, plus review of 18 sample projects' documentation including annual, and bi-annual reports, results matrixes and financial reports, and evaluations when available. This evaluation utilized Google's NotebookLM Enterprise research tool to manage and organize key themes across a large corpus of nearly 1000 documents. For a comprehensive list of documents consulted please refer to **Annex 3**.

**Key informant interviews (KII):** A total of 38 interviews were conducted with Felm staff and implementing partners to gain detailed insights and expert perspectives that broader data collection might not capture (see **Annex 5** for interview guides, and **Annex 9** for participants to KIIs). Most interviews were conducted online; however, interviews with Felm staff at headquarters in Helsinki were primarily face to face. Across 18 projects (typically 2–4 key personnel per project), 21 interviews were held with partners. In addition, 16 interviews were conducted with Felm representatives, including programme managers, thematic and financial advisers, PMEL staff, and regional directors.

**Online survey (Kobo Toolbox):** An online self-assessment questionnaire was designed by the consultants, distributed to all project staff and key local partners directly involved in the project. This tool gathered both quantitative and qualitative data on the programme's successes and challenges as perceived by different stakeholders. See **Annex 7** for the online survey questions. We received 27 responses by the deadline (response rate: 52%), which provides a solid level of representation. **All countries and projects were represented:** 12 CSOs, 10 FBOs, 2 (organisations of persons with disabilities) OPDs, 1 Church, 2. Majority of responses came from Nepal, Ethiopia.

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**Reflection workshop:** The workshops' aim was to promote collaborative reflection on the program's successes and challenges, enabling participants to build on the data gathered and engage in problem-solving and brainstorming to improve project implementation. The consultant team facilitated two online workshops on 25.9. & 9.10. 2025) for the partner representatives at the operational level as per Western and Eastern hemisphere times by invitation, a total number of participants in the reflection workshops was 38. (See **Annex 5** for the outline of the workshop).

**Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)** Thematic FGDs were organized with rights-holders of selected sample projects: 10 November on Climate Resilience with ETK003, 14 November on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities with NPK001, and 17 November on Inclusive Education with MMK002. (See **Annex 4** for the thematic FGD guides). The FGDs had a total of 24 participants (10, 7, 7 respectively).

See **Annex 8** for the evaluation matrix, which links the evaluation questions to the corresponding methods, data sources, and indicators. For the evaluation timeline and workplan see **Annex 10**.

### 3.5 Limitations

**Virtual consultations:** Most consultations with key informants were conducted virtually thus consultations may have been more superficial. In addition, the evaluation was conducted without access to project sites and with only limited virtual interactions with rights holders. This introduced the limitation that the inclusion of the perspectives of rights holders may not be fully captured in this evaluation. To address this limitation the evaluation team triangulated findings from various data sources, including survey results and thematic FGDs.

**Language barriers:** Conducting the evaluation in English may have limited the depth of engagement with non-English-speaking participants. To address this in the evaluation design, the evaluation team engaged with interpretation services (*English Spanish-English, English-French-English*), where needed. Furthermore, to overcome the language barriers the evaluation team applied reflective listening where the listener restates or summarizes what the interviewee has said to confirm understanding.

**Availability of Key Informants:** Reaching and securing the availability of several key informants proved challenging. Toward the end of the data collection and analysis period, escalating political unrest in Tanzania disrupted communications. Consequently, a number of planned interviews with project personnel and Felm staff could not be conducted. This reduced the amount of primary data available from these projects and, in turn, limited the depth of analysis initially anticipated.

The three thematic Focus Group Discussions were designed and intended to be conducted with rights holders with the help of local project staff. Despite this being communicated to the projects the focus group discussion with ETK003, was organized with project staff rather than rights holders.

**Attribution challenges:** The available data and evidence do not allow for a clear assessment of attribution. While programme contributions can be described, isolating the specific effects of the intervention from other contextual factors, parallel initiatives, and external influences is not possible with the current data and evidence. This limits the extent to which definitive causal linkages can be established.

## 4 Evaluation findings

This Final Evaluation was conducted in line with the Terms of Reference (ToR) (see **Annex 11**) and applied the following OECD-DAC Evaluation Criteria, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability.

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## 4.1 Effectiveness

This chapter focuses on effectiveness (the extent to which the programme is achieving its intended results across outputs and outcomes, including progress toward scaling deep, out, and up). However, a sound assessment on effectiveness is difficult to carry out in isolation from efficiency. The credibility of assessment depends partly on how economically resources are converted into outputs and outcomes, and whether delivery approaches represent reasonable value for money.

### EQ 1: To what extent have the program's objectives been achieved?

**Key finding: Overall effectiveness is high to moderately high, driven by adaptive management and strategic use of existing resources. Evidence for effectiveness of outcomes beyond outputs remains limited.<sup>7</sup>**

Based on multiple different data sources, including project annual reports, project evaluations, the online survey, and several KIIs, the programme demonstrates solid effectiveness in implementing planned activities and delivering outputs, with many projects meeting or exceeding quantitative targets<sup>8</sup>. At the same time efficiency remains vulnerable to different contextual and administrative constraints, which are dealt more in details under the Evaluation Question two (EQ 2) on factors that contributed to or hindered the achievements.

Evidence for effectiveness of outcomes beyond outputs remains limited: While the overall effectiveness of the programme is high and output targets are often met or even exceeded, reporting tends to focus primarily on demonstrating that activities were completed and resources produced, with less emphasis on whether these outputs translate into sustainable systems or behaviour-related outcomes.

Most capacity-building results are reported as numbers trained (56 staff trained, exceeding the target of 40 in KHK005) or showing knowledge gains (from 57.70% to 85.20% in KHK005), with little verification of skills acquired, applied, or sustained (i.e., outcome-level change).

When assessing scaling up (policy change), the available documentation shows substantial engagement with duty-bearers, such as policy dialogues (NPK004) and training of officials (ETK004, NPK004), but records few verified instances of formal government adoption, integration into public systems (COK002), or budget allocations attributable to the programme. Similarly, for scaling out (replication beyond project sites), the desk review finds limited evidence: reports largely describe advocacy and outreach rather than documented diffusion or independent uptake of the programme's approaches, such as community-based models, inclusive service standards, or climate-smart practices by the governments:

As an example: there is direct evidence of influencing national-level institutions, such as in project ETK004, which collaborated with the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) to develop a disability inclusion strategy and engaged with parliament to establish a Disability Caucus. Evidence also exists at the local government level, where

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<sup>7</sup> A structural limitation in the outcome-level evidence relates at least partly to the programme's M&E design. Most programme outcome indicators, particularly in the climate-resilient communities outcome area, were scheduled for data collection only every two years (baseline 2022, mid-term end of 2023, endline end of 2025). This has left 2024 as a gap year without consolidated outcome data, which constrains the evaluation's ability to assess trajectories of change and effectiveness beyond outputs. Based on Felm staff, the original intention was to acknowledge that outcome-level changes take time to emerge and to reduce the monitoring burden on partners by avoiding heavy annual surveys. In practice, many partners nevertheless collected outcome data annually.

<sup>8</sup> Some projects, such as NPK005 and NPK001 show exceptionally high achievement rates and strong adaptive management.

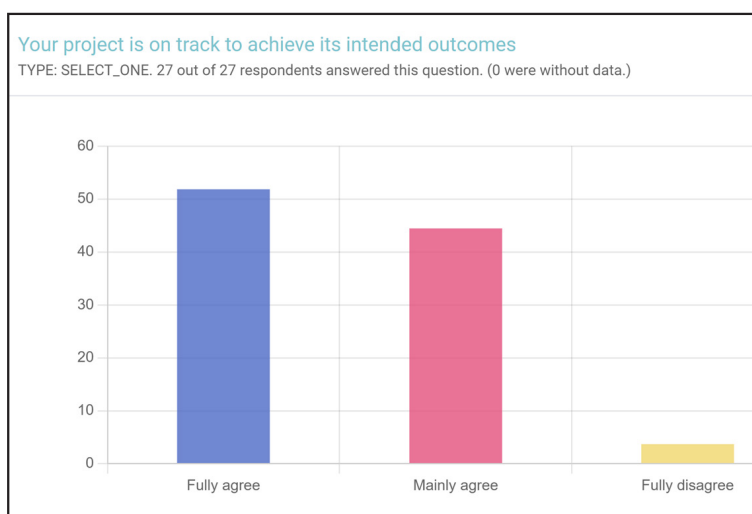
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Parent Self-Help Groups in project NPK005 are conducting lobbying meetings. **However, much of the evidence consists of advocacy efforts and training for officials, without yet confirming widespread policy adoption or budget allocation by government bodies.**

Generally, progress under the Outcome Area one on the Resilient Communities seems very efficient in agricultural practice adoption but is slower in establishing formal community structures and institutional change.

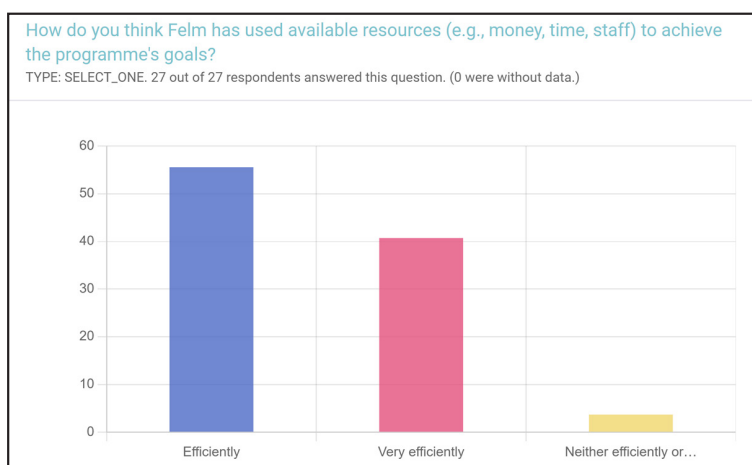
**Key finding: Partners’ view of the programme effectiveness is very positive.**

Partners’ perception regarding the overall effectiveness of the programme is very positive: based on the online survey, a clear majority fully agree the programme is effective (just over half), with most of the rest mainly agreeing. This suggests broad confidence in delivery and results from those engaged.



**Key finding: Fragmentation across numerous themes and priorities spreads resources and focus thin, and might reduce overall effectiveness.**

While several partners report high value for money and strong delivery on relatively small budgets, multiple interviews also highlighted fragmentation across numerous themes and priorities, which spreads resources and attention thin and dilutes impact<sup>9</sup>.



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<sup>9</sup> MTE (2024) also recognized that “there is a need for more cohesion and common goals across projects and programme overall to avoid working in silos.”

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Attempting to advance many priorities simultaneously leaves insufficient time for individual work planning and strategic thinking at partner and programme levels, which ultimately undermines effectiveness, slows delivery, and weakens learning and adaptation. The absence of concentrated periods of collective action, opportunities for visibility, policy influence, and organisational learning remain underutilized. Interviewees noted that while potential for synergies have been recognized and discussed within the programme they have not been utilized.

**Key finding: Financial controls and accountability are strong and consistently verified by audits and variance tracking; however, evidence on programmatic efficiency (cost-effectiveness) is limited.**

Overall, the evidence demonstrates a robust and consistent system of financial control and accountability across the programme. The vast majority of evidence (project sample documentation) consists of external audit reports and detailed financial reporting. These documents consistently verify that partners' financial reports align with their book-keeping, expenditures are supported by documentation, and costs are eligible under funding agreements. Budget utilization seems to be closely tracked, with detailed explanations provided for variances exceeding 15%, which are common due to factors like inflation (ETK003), procurement delays (ETK005), or postponed activities (NPK004). While financial compliance is strong, the evidence is weaker on assessing programmatic efficiency (cost-effectiveness). Some audit findings point to minor procedural weaknesses, such as heavy year-end spending (NPK001) or minor misclassifications (KHK001), but these appear to be isolated and are typically accompanied by management responses, indicating a functional monitoring and feedback loop.

## **EQ 2: What key factors contributed to or hindered these achievements?**

**Key finding: Across the programme, the most significant factors contributing to achievements are strong local ownership and multi-faceted support from Felm.**

Several projects (at least NPK004, ETK003, T'ZK002 T'ZK001, and COK002) under Felm seem to be consistently anchored in existing local community structures, with local authorities playing a meaningful role from the design stage onward. Having active collaboration with government authorities, and existing local structures.

As an example, NPK004 worked in close partnership with local governments to ensure that project objectives were fully aligned with municipal priorities and national policies on disaster risk reduction, climate adaptation, and livelihood resilience, thereby guaranteeing the sustainability and scalability of its interventions. The project also collaborated with provincial institutions, such as agricultural training centres, soil laboratories and agriculture development farm, to broaden access to essential services for vulnerable and marginalized communities.

Both the desk review and the KIIs provide extensive concrete evidence across multiple projects, particularly those focused on resilience, livelihoods, and education<sup>10</sup> that strongly links project results to deep community engagement, co-financing, and local ownership. This evidence confirms that when communities are actively involved in design, contribute resources, and see tangible benefits addressing their urgent needs, the projects achieve stronger outcomes and higher sustainability prospects.

**Key finding: Several projects successfully required and leveraged contributions of labour, time, expertise, or direct financial co-sharing, which is a strong indicator of ownership.**

At least the projects ETK003 and NPK003 successfully implemented a cost-sharing mechanism where target beneficiaries incrementally shared 28% of the cost of some project activities over the life of the project. This sharing strongly indicated beneficiaries' interest and increased ownership. Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) instituted group

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<sup>10</sup> Such as the ICRP, PAILA, SAKSHAM, CRE-MLE, and ZCC projects

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mandatory monthly saving schemes, accumulating considerable sums utilized by members for green micro-enterprises<sup>11</sup>.

## **Summary of practices that have strengthened and supported programme effectiveness**

### ***Deep community engagement and ownership<sup>12</sup>:***

- In many cases, communities have shifted from passive recipients to active agents by taking an active role in co-designing interventions, assuming leadership positions, and managing local assets such as community schools, disaster risk reduction (DRR) committees, and VICOBA groups.
- Locally led and rights-based approaches<sup>13</sup> have increased trust, relevance, and sustainability.
- Community participation in education and governance processes strengthened active citizenship and accountability.

### ***Community financial and in-kind contributions***

- Beneficiaries co-financed project activities, signalling strong ownership and shared risk; cost-sharing arrangements increased commitment to results and improved prospects for post-project continuity.
- Savings schemes and local savings groups (VICOBA, ISAL, CBOs) built financial self-reliance and more resilient livelihoods, effectively linking economic empowerment with social capital and long-term sustainability (e.g., TZK001, ZWK002).
- Communities contributed labour, materials, and technical expertise to establish and maintain local assets (for example, water systems and schools), accelerating delivery, lowering costs, and strengthening local commitment.
- Some local governments co-financed activities and integrated them into municipal plans and budgets, reinforcing institutional ownership, aligning with legislative responsibilities, and creating pathways for scale and sustainability.

### ***Alignment with community priorities and tangible benefits***

- Many interventions directly addressed everyday challenges, drought, food insecurity, and water scarcity, leading to measurable improvements (e.g., reduced food shortage months, improved school attendance).
- Climate-smart and conservation farming practices proved highly relevant and transformative, improving yields and resilience.
- Local governments adopted and financed climate-resilience plans (LDCRP), embedding project approaches into policy and practice.

### ***Based on partners view (online survey) on the most helpful factors contributing to achieve the project goals included the following:***

- Partnership with Felm was the most frequently mentioned success factor, selected by around 90% of respondents. This indicates that Felm's role as a facilitator, technical backstop, or strategic partner, was widely perceived as central to project success.

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11 *Final Report NPK004 Final Eval\_SAKSHAM Project LI-BIRD\_10.10.2025 / NPK003 PAILA Project Final Evaluation-2Rev.Version-26Sept2025*

12 *While community engagement was generally strong, evidence also shows that in some cases, at the household level, severe economic and climate-related pressures (KHK004, SNK002) compelled beneficiaries to prioritise immediate survival over participation in activities aimed at long-term behavioural change*

13 *ZWK002, KHK002, KHK004*

- Partnerships with local actors (e.g., communities, local authorities, or organisations) followed, selected by about 70% of respondents, underlining the value of strong local collaboration.
- Resources (funding or material support) were chosen by about 50%, suggesting that while important, financial inputs alone were not the primary determinant of success.
- Partnerships with local NGOs and Felm’s capacity support were selected less frequently (around 40–45%), indicating somewhat lower, but still notable, perceived influence.

Felm’s support is often cited as a critical enabler, not only through ‘essential’ financial resources but also through valued technical capacity building (and provision of key material assets). Effective implementation is further supported by peer-to-peer learning between partners and robust internal monitoring practices.

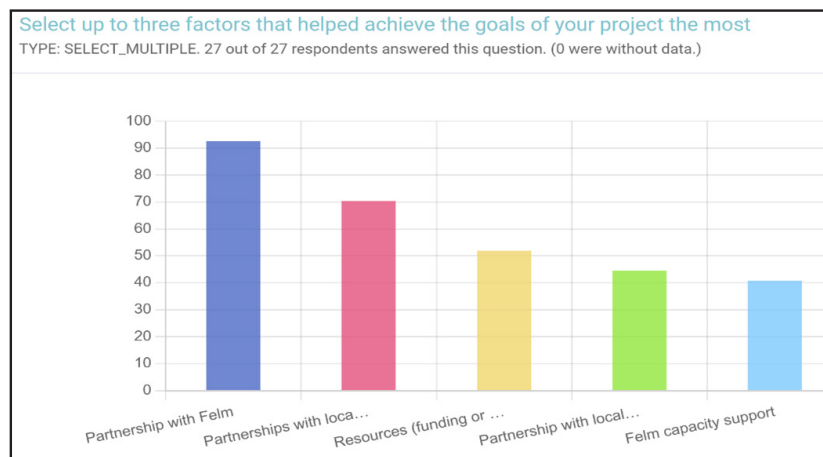


Figure 1 Factors that helped achieve the goals of your project the most

**Key finding: Across the programme, achievements were hindered by a consistent set of interconnected external and internal factors.**

Across multiple sources (key informants and the online survey), partners and Felm staff reported persistent difficulties recruiting and retaining skilled staff, particularly in remote areas. This in some cases has delayed implementation.

They also identified internal capacity gaps, noting that staff often lack confidence or specialised knowledge in cross-cutting objectives, including disability inclusion, gender equality, and climate resilience and low-emission development. This evaluation confirms that concern: while commitment to the cross-cutting objectives is evident, understanding of what effective mainstreaming requires is often shallow remaining largely at the level of promoting equal participation (gender equality and disability inclusion). This might contribute to less-than-optimal results under cross-cutting objectives.

**Key finding: The programme identifies relevant risks well but mitigation and monitoring measures remain weak.**

The programme’s risk management framework identifies and recognises a broad range of relevant external and internal risks, including those related to shrinking civic space, political instability and violence, armed conflict, financial management, safeguarding, however, many of the corresponding response measures remain generic and weakly operationalised, with limited specification of responsible actors, timelines, triggers and monitoring arrangements, making it difficult to assess whether these risks, particularly those linked to political violence, discrimination, exclusion and safeguarding, are being systematically monitored, mitigated and acted upon in practice.

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**Key finding: Some partners call for stronger local ownership and genuine partnership.**

In the online survey, and the related joint reflection workshop, several partners perceived decision-making as overly top-down and called for greater local ownership, trust, and meaningful participation especially in strategic planning. Concerns were most acute in cases where projects were discontinued: some partners reported that the decisions regarding closures were unilateral and were lacking transparency, despite their view that the projects directly contributed to Felm's strategic priorities.

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*The decision-making process was not properly done through the participation of all partners- Felm's decision was forcefully carried out in certain agendas and way forward, and development of new phase 2026-2029.*

Project partner, online survey

**Key finding: Output driven compliance culture often outweighs tracking for institutional changes, limiting a culture of results, learning, and adaptive management.**

The concrete evidence from various projects points to a programmatic culture where adherence to process milestones and production of immediate deliverables (outputs) typically outweighs the comprehensive tracking, funding, and realization of profound, institutional or behavioural change (outcomes).

Evidence from individual project evaluations suggests that the programme's results and learning culture would benefit from greater emphasis on capturing and using outcome-level evidence. Strengthening the focus on behavioural and institutional change, through clearer results logic, adaptive reporting templates, and systematic lesson consolidation, would help ensure that learning loops genuinely inform future planning, guidance, and partner support. For example, in KHK005 neither of the two planned lessons-learned reports had been produced by the time of the project evaluation<sup>14</sup>, potentially limiting institutional knowledge capture and learning.

**Key finding: The programme's strong reliance on regional programme managers shapes coordination and implementation and creates risks for bottlenecks.**

It was identified that there is a high person-dependence on pivotal regional programme managers in the Felm programme. This strong reliance on regional programme managers means that capacity and continuity at this level significantly shape coordination and implementation. When managers are well-resourced and stable in their roles, this model supports smooth delivery. However, limited resources or turnover can unintentionally create bottlenecks that may slow implementation and affect overall effectiveness, efficiency and learning. This has created operational bottlenecks and continuity risks, with negative implications for programming efficiency.

**Key finding: Governmental factors, political events and climate shocks often hinder implementation. Evidence indicates that scaling up was primarily hindered by governmental and political factors.**

Evidence indicates that scaling up was primarily hindered by governmental and political factors. Multiple projects (KHK001, KHK004, ETK004) reported that delays in securing approvals from government bodies, the slow pace of ministry-led processes (e.g., textbook development), and the non-implementation of national action plans directly stalled efforts to institutionalize project approaches.

Political events like national elections (KHK001, KHK004, NPK001) typically created slowdowns and limited access to duty-bearers for advocacy, as an example. Furthermore, unsupportive policy environments, such as government sub-decrees restricting community land management (KHK001) and the frequent transfer of trained government staff (NPK005), in some cases, created an unstable foundation for policy influence and systemic integration.

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<sup>14</sup> KHK005 External Evaluation Report-2025.

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*The biggest challenge has been navigating the complex political environment while maintaining program integrity and ensuring the safety of our staff and beneficiaries.*

Project partner, online survey

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*There have been armed conflicts and political instability. As a result of them, there have been frequent transportation blocks and telecommunication cut-offs.*

Project partner, online survey

Environmental and climatic shocks, such as droughts, floods, and erratic rainfall, directly undermined livelihood and food security activities at least in Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, and Nepal, often forcing a shift to emergency response. Flooding (ZWK003) also hindered expansion by diverting project resources and focus on immediate humanitarian response in existing areas rather than extending the project's reach.

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*The biggest challenges were climate change induced natural disasters, economic empowerment to the marginalised families need longer period than 4 years.*

Project partner, online survey

”

*The biggest challenges during the program implementation are: 1. Increased prices of different project inputs...” and “2. Inaccessibility of planned project inputs for beneficiaries. Increased cost of living due to devaluation of the currency...”*

Project partner, online survey

”

*The persistent drought, poverty and unemployment that worsened desperation in the district and province thereby straining efforts of grandmothers in their caregiving efforts.*

Project partner, online survey

### **Summary of partners' view on the most frequently cited hindering factors based on the online survey:**

**Climate or disaster shocks:** (~48%) showing that external shocks such as droughts, floods, or other climate-related events significantly disrupted project implementation and results.

**Policy or administrative barriers** (~45%) and political environment (~44%): indicating that policy changes, bureaucratic delays, or political instability were common constraints across contexts.

**Funding constraints** (~44%) suggesting that resource limitations or delayed disbursements affected the continuity and scope of activities.

**Moderate challenges included:** Security conditions, discrimination or social barriers, and staff turnover (each around 25%) reflecting the influence of local social dynamics and human resource limitations. Data and M&E limitations (around 22%): pointing to gaps in evidence generation and monitoring capacity that may have constrained adaptive management.

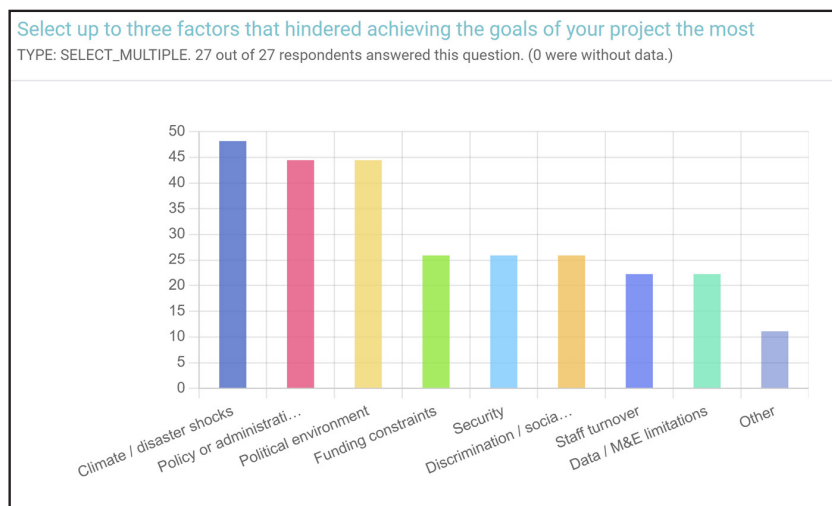


Figure 2 Survey responses of the question: “Select up to three factors that hindered achieving the goals of your project most”

**Based on the online survey, the most important elements that partners believe Felm should prioritise going forward to improve programme effectiveness include:**

**Strengthening peer learning and exchanges (74%) stands out overwhelmingly as the top priority:** Partners clearly see value in more structured opportunities to share experiences, learn from one another, and replicate effective practices across countries and thematic areas. This indicates strong demand for a learning-oriented network model, suggesting that peer exchanges are both motivating and practical in improving project outcomes.

**Flexible funding modalities (44%) are the second most frequent request.** Nearly half of the respondents want more flexibility in how funds can be used, which reflects a desire for adaptive management, being able to respond to evolving contexts, crises, or opportunities without rigid budget lines. This links closely to efficiency and responsiveness.

**Greater decision-making power for local partners (37%) appears as another key theme.** This reflects a call for enhanced localisation, where partners can plan, adapt, and lead activities more autonomously. It points to a perceived imbalance in decision-making and a wish for deeper trust and ownership.

**Access to more expert support (37%)** suggests that partners value Felm’s technical assistance but want broader and more consistent access, particularly in specialised or cross-cutting areas (gender, disability inclusion, climate resilience, advocacy).

**Improved support on cross-cutting objectives (33%)** aligns with evaluation findings showing uneven mainstreaming of gender, disability, and climate across projects. Partners are asking for more practical, hands-on guidance to operationalise these principles.

**Simplified reporting and monitoring (26%).** Indicates that administrative burden remains an issue and that partners would welcome streamlined systems and templates that prioritise learning over compliance.

**Support for policy influence (11%)** remains a lower priority, suggesting that most partners still focus on community-level change rather than direct advocacy.

Table 4 What should Felm prioritise to improve effectiveness in the next programme phase (2026-2029)?

Value	Frequency	Percentage
Strengthen peer learning and exchanges	20	74.07
Make funding easier to use in different ways	12	44.44
Give more power to local partners to plan and lead	10	37.04
Provide access to more expert support	10	37.04
Improve supporting on cross-cutting objectives	9	33.33
Make reporting and monitoring easier	7	25.93
Give stronger support to change laws and policies	3	11.11
No change needed	1	3.7
Other	1	3.7

### EQ 3: Have Felm's capacity-sharing efforts with partners resulted in new, lasting knowledge and expertise?

**Key finding: Felm's capacity sharing has strengthened partner organisations, though its application and impact remain uneven.**

There is consistent evidence that Felm's capacity-sharing efforts result in new knowledge, particularly in financial management and disability inclusion.

The strongest evidence comes from partners who demonstrate lasting change by embedding learnings into their organisational systems, such as updating financial policies, adopting new M&E tools, or revising organisational strategies. Projects ZWK003, NPK004, and MMK002 show clear application of new skills, leading to concrete changes in practice and, in some cases, quantifiable results like increased participation of persons with disabilities in their activities.

However, the evidence is mixed across the programme. Several partners report attending trainings but provide only general statements about 'enhanced capacity' without specific examples of application the new knowledge or skills. The most effective capacity sharing appears to combine formal training with regular follow-up, monitoring visits, and peer-learning opportunities.

There is strong evidence of partners scaling up Felm-supported capacity sharing within partners own institutions, such as strengthen financial administration and management.

It was also identified that training provided by Felm is not necessarily always relevant to the partners: training offer is not consistently aligned with partner contexts or priorities. Trainings are often delivered as stand-alone, compliance-oriented sessions that are not strategically sequenced, resulting in variable relevance and limited uptake.

Existing expertise within the programme, among Felm staff, partners, and local specialists, is underused, and there is currently no systematic mechanism to map, and mobilise this knowledge.

*Trainings have tended to be repetitive and built around mandatory content that is not always relevant, tailored, or well contextualised.*

Key informant

From partners’ perspectives, the most valued forms of Felm support are technical guidance, structured monitoring and learning tools, and opportunities for cross-project exchange. These inputs are viewed as crucial for building partner capacity, improving project quality, and fostering a learning-oriented culture. By contrast, direct support for policy change is less developed and represents an opportunity for strategic strengthening.

Table 5 Which Felm support has been most helpful?

Value	Frequency	Percentage
Technical guidance	21	77.78
Monitoring evaluation and learning tools and templates	20	74.07
Sharing and learning between projects	18	66.67
Other	4	14.81
Support to change laws or policies	2	7.41

#### **EQ 4: What have been the primary strengths and weaknesses of the implementation of cross-cutting objectives (inclusion of persons with disabilities, gender equality, climate resilience)?**

**Key finding: Cross-cutting objectives are prioritised in principle, but their implementation is uneven and insufficiently systematised.**

This evaluation of the cross-cutting objectives, gender equality, inclusion of persons with disabilities, climate resilience, and low-emission development, assesses the extent to which the twin-track approach has been realised, combining targeted actions with mainstreaming and guided by do-no-harm. While the programme includes targeted projects on climate resilience and on the rights of persons with disabilities, gender is addressed primarily through mainstreaming across projects. In this section, we therefore focus chiefly on the mainstreaming dimension under the cross-cutting questions, while targeted actions are assessed mainly under the effectiveness of the relevant outcome areas. We also briefly comment on the overall success of the twin-track approach: how targeted measures and mainstreaming have worked together in practice.

Overall, the programme shows a consistent commitment to cross-cutting objectives, with a clearly articulated twin-track and three-pronged approaches, and routine disaggregation of data by sex, disability, and age (although Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability) are not yet widely applied). Awareness-raising is a notable strength, contributing to shifts in norms and behaviours (scaling deep).

While the *Operationalization of the cross-cutting objectives document*<sup>15</sup> offers a strong and structured approach, its application is not fully reflected in the results matrix. Key elements, such as the different cross-cutting levels, and the systematic assessment of *Do No Harm*, are not consistently integrated into monitoring frameworks. As a result, it remains difficult to assess how comprehensively the cross-cutting objectives are being implemented across projects.

<sup>15</sup> *Operationalization of the Cross-Cutting Objectives in Felm’s Development Cooperation Programme 2022-2025*

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Each cross-cutting objective is further analysed below.

## Gender equality

Across the programme, there is consistent and widespread evidence of intentional efforts to implement gender equality and promote women's participation. Most projects report collecting sex-disaggregated data and setting specific targets for participation of women in activities, often achieving or exceeding 50% participation in groups, trainings, and committees. Common strategies include prioritizing women-headed households, establishing women-only groups (e.g., savings and credit cooperatives), and conducting awareness workshops on gender equality related topics.

Stronger projects move beyond simple participation metrics to address structural barriers by promoting women in leadership positions within community structures and cooperatives, and by designing activities that challenge traditional gender roles and address gender-based violence. While reporting on activity completion and beneficiary numbers is strong, the evidence is weaker on the quality of participation and the resulting changes in decision-making power for women.

There is moderate evidence indicating shifts in norms and behaviours, for *scaling deep*.<sup>16</sup> Some projects report that women have greater voice and visibility in local meetings and community actions, some communities are moving toward shared responsibilities in education and household decision-making, and there are some educational activities that are expanding perceptions of acceptable roles for women in public and civic life. However, despite some indication of shifts in norms, ultimate decision-making often still rests with men, indicating persistent power gaps.

A key gap in terms of analysing the strengths of gender equality work, and gender mainstreaming more generally, is the lack of evidence on the quality and meaningfulness the participation of women; high attendance rates do not equate to influence in decision-making.

Apart from one project<sup>17</sup>, the evaluation did not find evidence of a systematic intersectional approach to advancing gender equality. Gender work largely treats “women” as a single group, with limited attention to how gender intersects with disability, age, location or socio-economic status. This weakens gender work by obscuring the specific barriers and risks faced by women who experience multiple discrimination, particularly women with disabilities. On the other hand, the one project that does apply an intersectional lens shows that such an approach can sharpen targeting and lead to more relevant, inclusive strategies.

There is limited evidence of impact on deeper structural issues like unpaid care work, control over assets, or reduction in gender-based violence. Furthermore, there is a significant evidence gap concerning all scaling dimensions, particularly scaling up (policy change) and scaling out (replication/expansion), where evidence is almost non-existent. Most reporting focuses on project-level outputs rather than systemic or lasting change.

The evaluation finds that, without a structured gender analysis<sup>18</sup> harmful norms are difficult to pinpoint, address, and verify, undermining both strategy quality and accountability for results.

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<sup>16</sup> As an example, KHK004 reports that 'women's voices are better heard and paid attention to in the local meetings' and that the project challenged norms by 'encouraging shared responsibilities in education and household decision-making'. COK002 notes that educational activities led to community discussions about 'other possible roles that women can have', resulting in more women participating in community actions. ZWK003 reports that women-led programs 'challenged gender norms' and workshops promoted 'shared responsibilities'. This suggests progress in changing attitudes and behaviors, although one project (KHK004) credibly notes that ultimate decision-making power often still rests with men.

<sup>17</sup> Her Resilience Enabled (XXK004)

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## Disability inclusion

The evaluation notes several positive developments in the implementation of the cross-cutting objective of disability inclusion. Many projects express a clear commitment to prioritising the participation of persons with disabilities, and disability is recognised as a cross-cutting issue across the programme. Some targeted initiatives demonstrate stronger practices, including collaboration with OPDs and the development of disability-focused training materials. These examples show that the programme has a foundation on which to build more systematic and transformative approaches.

However, the evaluation found no evidence of structured disability analysis in project design or baseline data collection. Projects do not include situation, or barrier analyses specific to persons with disabilities, such as mobility, sensory, psychosocial, intellectual, communication, or environmental barriers, resulting in interventions that risk being generic and missing key constraints.

Despite promising pilots, there is no systematic use of standard methodologies for data collection, such as the Washington Group Questions. This gap likely contributes to the very low reported participation of persons with disabilities in some projects and makes monitoring of inclusion unreliable.

Accessibility and reasonable accommodation measures are largely absent. There is limited evidence of routine integration of accessible information formats, adapted training approaches, sign language interpretation, assistive products, transport or escort support, caregiver inclusion, or accessible venues.

The quality of participation is also difficult to assess. While persons with disabilities are identified as a priority group, they are not consistently shown as co-designers, co-implementers, or decision-makers. Engagement with OPDs is not systematic and appears mostly limited to projects explicitly focused on disability rights or inclusion. This lack of meaningful partnership risks undermining key human rights principles and the obligations set out in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

Additionally, outcomes for inclusion are not measured. Projects report inputs such as livestock or start-up capital but do not provide disability-disaggregated outcome data related to income, market access, agency, voice, or reduced negative coping strategies.

Finally, accountability and protection mechanisms are not evidenced. The evaluation found no accessible feedback or complaint channels, no safeguarding or gender-based violence referral pathways tailored for persons with disabilities, and no systematic *Do No Harm* assessments addressing disability-related risks.

Overall, while commitment is visible and selected projects show promising practices, disability inclusion remains insufficiently operationalised and inconsistently monitored across the programme.

## Climate resilience and low-emission development

Climate considerations are formally acknowledged across the programme, with climate identified as a cross-cutting theme at both organisational and programme levels. Tools such as the climate marker are in use, and related trainings

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*18 Towards the end of the evaluation process, it was clarified by Felm that gender analyses have been conducted within the projects. However, the documentation of the results has been inconsistent, as there are no established practices for utilizing the findings. The analysis was based on a tool adapted from the Harvard Gender Analysis framework, which was further customised to the local context in collaboration with a local consultant. Nevertheless, these adaptations have not always proven effective, and the use of the tool has remained limited.*

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have been delivered. Reporting shows that climate and environmental sustainability are generally considered, and understanding of environmentally responsible implementation has strengthened.

However, evidence on how climate resilience and low-emission development are operationalised remains somewhat limited. The theme is at times overlooked or addressed only superficially, suggesting that conceptual clarity may be inconsistent across projects. Reporting mainly captures output-level information, such as participant numbers, rather than outcome-level changes, making it difficult to assess actual climate resilience gains. There is also no available information on budget allocations for cross-cutting climate activities, which would indicate the level of institutional commitment and prioritisation.

Furthermore, responsibilities for integrating climate resilience and environmental safeguards are not always clear. While a Do No Harm level in mainstreaming is referenced, structured risk assessment and anticipatory action are not consistently applied. Capacity gaps persist in some projects, and existing good practices are not systematically shared or scaled across partners. Overall, while foundational elements for addressing climate resilience and low-emission development are in place, the implementation remains uneven, with significant gaps in evidence, capacity, and institutionalisation.

### 4.3.1 Effectiveness by outcome area

The following findings focus on the effectiveness of the programme towards the outcomes, primarily focusing on projects in the sample that focus on climate resilience, inclusive education and disability inclusion, this section is not focusing on assessing the effectiveness of mainstreaming these across the programme.

**Outcome 1:** Strengthened community resilience to climate change and disasters

**Key finding: The programme has effectively supported community-level resilience through the development of DRM plans, capacity-building activities, and adoption of climate-resilient practices.**

There is widespread implementation of climate resilience activities, primarily focused on developing Village/Community Disaster Risk Management plans, conducting trainings, and promoting climate-resilient agricultural practices. Evidence is strong for the delivery of outputs like trainings and plan formulation. Several projects report high rates of household-level adoption of new practices (e.g., drought-tolerant crops, energy-saving stoves, new irrigation techniques), indicating progress towards outcomes. Institutional integration of approaches (scaling up) and their wider geographic replication (scaling out) remains limited and uneven across contexts.

Evidence for transformational change where project objectives are scaled up, out and deep is present but limited to one project, NPK004. For scaling up, NPK004 provides strong evidence that local government officials have integrated DRR and CCA provisions into their regular development plans and allocated budgets (NPR 2.36 million) for implementation. For scaling out, NPK004 reports that six of its promoted technologies have been introduced beyond the immediate project areas through the efforts of farmers, local governments, and other NGOs. There is consistent evidence of scaling deep such as positive signs of behavioral change including widespread adoption of climate-resilient agricultural practices (ZWK003, NPK004). There is some evidence of shifts in household power dynamics, with one project (NPK004) reporting women making the majority of decisions on selling certain products in a resilience focused project. The scaling deep dimension is also demonstrated through high reported adoption rates of climate-resilient practices at the household level. Projects KHK001 (65%), NPK004 (79% cumulative), and ETK003 (53.8%) all report a majority of targeted households employing climate-resilient agricultural practices.

**CASE OC 1 climate resilience: Habru Leghida Building Climate Resilient Communities (ETK003)**  
**Key achievements, and most important changes gathered from the FGD<sup>19</sup>**

**1. Improved capacity to cope with climate shocks**

- Irrigation interventions and water-management systems strengthened households' ability to withstand droughts.
- Adoption of drought-resistant crops increased food security and reduced the risk of crop failure.
- Rights holders report easier access to drinking water, reducing daily stress and vulnerability during dry seasons.
- Self-help groups and livelihood activities improved coping strategies and strengthened community resilience.

**2. Enhanced economic stability**

- Revolving funds supported income-generating activities and provided a buffer during climate shocks.
- Diversified livelihoods reduced dependence on climate-sensitive crops and increased household stability.
- Saving mechanisms helped families avoid extreme food shortages experienced in previous years.

**3. Strengthened inclusion and everyday improvements for women and marginalized groups**

- Meaningful improvements in daily life for women, particularly due to easier access to water and involvement in IGAs.
- Persons with disabilities received support through informal community collaboration, though formal OPD engagement remains limited.
- Seed money provided both direct and indirect benefits to rights holders, strengthening economic inclusion.
- Greater awareness of soil quality, watershed protection, and environmental management enhanced community agency.

**4. Lasting environmental and community-level change**

- Watershed management, tree planting, and soil conservation led to visible improvements in land quality and productivity.
- Infrastructure improvements strengthened nutrition, yields, and reliable harvesting cycles.
- Long-term water access and irrigation systems are contributing to sustained improvements in living standards.
- Careful selection and engagement of community members increased ownership and strengthened long-term sustainability.

**Outcome 2:** Improved access to inclusive, quality education for children and youth from marginalized groups; and

**Key finding: The programme effectively adopts a dual approach, combining tangible improvements in access and learning environments with advocacy for systemic policy change. Evidence of measurable impact on learning outcomes and sustained policy implementation is still evolving.**

The programme demonstrates a dual approach to inclusive education. Firstly, direct service delivery improvements are evident, with projects adapting school infrastructure, developing multilingual education materials, and facilitating the enrolment of children with disabilities. Secondly, there is a strong focus on systemic change through policy and advocacy, with significant activities aimed at training government officials, parliamentarians, and human rights institutions on disability rights and inclusive policies. Project KHK004 shows the most comprehensive evidence of on-the-ground service delivery. Across projects, outputs like trainings and infrastructure adaptations are well-documented, but evidence of resulting impact on learning outcomes and achieved policy changes is still emerging.

Transformational change under this outcome area lacks evidence. There is strong evidence of activities aimed at scaling up, but evidence does not yet confirm that governments have formally adopted new policies, integrated methods

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<sup>19</sup> For the other thematic FGDs, participants were rights holders, however, this FGD the group consisted exclusively of project staff.

into national systems, or allocated budgets as a result of the programme. There is no clear documentation of project models being spontaneously replicated by other CSOs, spreading from one community to another, or being geographically expanded by partners into new districts beyond the planned project areas (scaling out). While there are positive signs of shifting behaviors and norms (scaling deep), for instance parents are more willing to send children with disabilities to school the programme lacks a systematic approach to measuring these deeper changes in attitudes and practices.

### **Case OC 2 Inclusive Education: MLE Development in an Ethnic Minority Area (MMK002)**

#### **Key achievements, and most important changes gathered from the FGD:**

##### **1. New skills in mother tongue material development**

- Participants learned to systematically develop teaching and learning materials in local languages, including small books and storybooks.
- Training helped to understand the full process: planning, drafting, testing materials with community members, and revising the material step by step.
- Participants gained skills in formulating questions that promote higher-level thinking, not just repetitive learning.
- The value of mother tongue instruction became clearer: materials are now seen as tools to both improve learning and preserve language and culture.

##### **2. Most useful knowledge or skills received from the project**

- Visuals and pictures were highlighted as very useful for helping children connect learning to their environment.
- Songs and other interactive methods are considered effective for engaging children and supporting different learning styles.
- Test groups show that children enjoy reading and writing in their own language and want to learn more, which reinforces motivation and participation.
- Participants realised that material development is not only for “experts” or educators – community members can meaningfully contribute to producing relevant materials.
- Project support in the form of furniture, power stations and memory sticks has been practical, especially during power cuts and for storing and using video-based materials offline.

##### **3. Increased confidence and local ownership**

- Participants reported a shift from assuming only professionals can create teaching materials to recognising their own ability to design, draw and write them.
- Workshops, facilitation training and coaching have been crucial in building confidence to produce and use materials in literacy classes and community activities.
- Participants expressed satisfaction in seeing the materials being integrated into a programme, not just developed in isolation.

##### **4. Emerging sustainability, with some uncertainties**

- Skills in material development are seen as transferable and lasting: participants said they would continue producing teaching materials even if the project stopped, though printing costs remain a barrier.
- Participants expressed willingness to multiply their skills by training other community members.
- Memory sticks with videos and digital content offer a way to keep using materials offline beyond the project period.
- Piloting of the materials is still ongoing, and participants acknowledged uncertainties about scale and future resources, but they felt the capacity now exists locally “to continue and to make change in the community”.

##### **5. Role of mentoring and ongoing support**

- Mentoring, facilitation workshops and coaching were consistently mentioned as very helpful.
- Participants expressed appreciation for the close support received and a desire for similar projects and accompaniment to continue.

**Outcome 3:** Greater integration of the rights of persons with disabilities into government policies and practices, with active participation of persons with disabilities and their organisations

**Key finding: The programme demonstrates a strong and evolving approach to disability inclusion, moving beyond simple participation to fostering rights-based advocacy and systemic change.**

The programme demonstrates a strong and evolving approach to disability inclusion, moving beyond simple participation to fostering rights-based advocacy and systemic change. Evidence shows a clear strategy of empowering OPDs creating platforms for self-advocacy, such as peer support groups, particularly for persons with psychosocial disabilities. Projects specifically focused on disability rights (ETK004, NPK001) provide robust evidence of influencing policy, building capacity of duty-bearers, and changing community norms.

In our sample, evidence of transformational change where project objectives are scaled up, out and deep is limited to one project, ETK004. For scaling up, there is evidence of influencing national-level institutions, such as developing a disability inclusion strategy with the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and engaging with parliament to establish a Disability Caucus. Under this outcome, however, widespread policy adoption or budget allocation by government bodies is limited in evidence. Evidence for scaling out is moderate. Project ETK004 also demonstrates organisational scaling by assisting the Ethiopian Lawyers with Disabilities Association (ELDA) to initiate new regional chapters. There is limited evidence of expansion into new geographic districts or spontaneous replication of models by other, unaffiliated CSOs. There is strong, direct evidence of scaling deep. Project ETK004 explicitly documents a transformation among OPDs from a 'charity-based model to a rights-based approach' where they actively claim their rights. From other projects evidence indicates improved self-esteem, confidence, and interpersonal relationships among members of psychosocial disability peer support groups, indicating a change in self-perception and challenging internalized stigma.

**Case OC3: Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Strengthening Psychosocial Disability Rights (NPK001).  
Key achievements, and most important changes gathered from the FGD:**

**1. Strong psychosocial and personal empowerment**

- Peer support groups and psychosocial counselling have helped participants reframe their situation: they no longer see themselves as the only ones suffering and feel their problems are manageable.
- Several participants describe a profound shift from isolation, shame and being called “mad” (including by family members) to feeling respected, proud and recognised in the community.
- After six months of counselling and group participation, some are now able to counsel others, indicating both improved wellbeing and new roles as resource persons.

**2. Increased confidence and ability to claim rights**

- Participants report that before the project they could not speak up even within their own households; heavy medication and stigma kept them passive.
- Through training, peer groups and involvement in an Organisation of Persons with Disabilities, they have gained confidence to speak in meetings, participate in group decision-making and take on leadership roles (e.g. treasurer of an Organisation of Persons with Disabilities).
- One participant now works as a psychosocial counsellor; others highlight that the ability to counsel others is itself part of their regained confidence and agency.

**3. Clear shift in community norms and attitudes**

- Community members used to use highly derogatory language about persons with psychosocial disabilities; participants report that this has significantly reduced.
- Traditional explanations (spirit possession, going to traditional healers) are being replaced by understanding that psychosocial conditions can be treated with medication and counselling
- Participants feel much safer and more accepted in their communities than before.

#### 4. Concrete changes in government response and services

- Previously persons with psychosocial disabilities were excluded from disability card schemes; advocacy has led to the introduction of disability cards for this group, administered by local government.
- Disability cards now open access to services and benefits, and government has allocated a specific budget (reported as 1 million) for training and awareness on psychosocial disability.
- Participants see this as a major shift from non-recognition to formal acknowledgement and support by authorities.

#### 5. Economic empowerment and practical skills

- The project has supported skills training such as tailoring and chicken farming; participants report earning income (e.g. selling products for 8,000 rupees), which reinforces self-esteem and social recognition.
- Being able to contribute economically is described as an important part of the change from being seen as a burden to being respected.

## 4.2 Impact

**EQ 5: To what extent has the program enhanced resilience and inclusion among individuals from marginalized groups within the targeted areas?**

**Key finding: The programme demonstrates a positive impact on enhancing the resilience and inclusion of marginalized groups, particularly through economic empowerment and improved food security.**

Evidence from multiple projects shows that households, including those headed by women and persons with disabilities, have successfully diversified their livelihoods and gained additional, more sustainable income sources.

One important dimension of assessing impact is examining how transformational the programme has been in changing norms and attitudes, particularly towards people in marginalised positions and situations. The online survey findings indicate a notable shift in partners' and communities' attitudes and norms towards greater inclusion and recognition of marginalised groups.

While inclusion in project activities is already widespread, leadership representation and institutionalised consultation practices remain less common, suggesting that the programme has initiated important social norm changes, but that deeper structural and institutional transformation is still in progress.

Survey responses suggest some progress toward greater inclusion of marginalized groups, though the extent varies. A majority of respondents (66.67%) indicated that marginalized groups are being engaged and that their views have some influence on activities. Smaller proportions reported observable changes in representation, with 18.52% noting that people previously left out are beginning to appear in leadership or other visible roles. Additionally, 14.81% mentioned that regular consultations with marginalized groups are taking place. Taken together, these responses point to emerging, though uneven, signs of improved inclusion.

*Table 6 How has your project influenced norms and attitudes?*

Value	Frequency	Percentage
Marginalized groups are actively included and their views influence activities	18	66.67
People who were left out before are now in leadership and other visible positions	5	18.52
Regular consultations with marginalized groups are taking place	4	14.81

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## EQ 6: To what extent can observed changes be attributed to the programme?

**Key finding: Evidence for attribution of observed changes to the programme is present but varies in strength across projects.**

Multiple project evaluations provide substantial evidence that most reported positive outcomes are strongly linked to project interventions, particularly where activities involved targeted training, provision of unique resources, or successful influence on institutional policy. In these cases, improvements in well-being, livelihoods, inclusion, and institutional practice can be credibly attributed to Felm-supported actions.

Then again, a primary weakness lies in the limited explanation of attribution methodology within project reports, many claim impact without clearly describing how the programme's specific contribution was distinguished from other influencing factors. Furthermore, significant data gaps remain for impact-level results in several projects (ETK005, SNK001, NPK001), which focus more on monitoring processes than on measurable outcomes.

Weaknesses in project-level monitoring and measurement further constrained the evaluation's ability to fully assess attribution. Strengthening adaptive and theory-based monitoring systems would enhance the programme's future ability to demonstrate causality and confidently assess its contribution to observed change.

**In summary, quantitative and qualitative data from several projects demonstrate clear causal links between project activities and tangible results:**

In Nepal (NPK005 – School Mental Health), demonstrates substantial and statistically significant improvements in student well-being, learning achievement, and emotional functioning were directly attributed to new teaching methodologies and tools introduced by the project.

In Myanmar (LSDO), stakeholders attributed major behavioural and mindset changes to project-led capacity building, describing themselves as “fully equipped” to plan and implement improved work processes.

In Nepal (NPK004 – SAKSHAM), household food security improved significantly, and was reflected in higher dietary diversity and reduced food insufficiency, clearly linked to project-supported climate-smart and livelihood activities.

In Cambodia (KHK005), safeguarding and disaster preparedness training resulted in significant knowledge gains among staff and community leaders and visibly changed local attitudes towards including children and persons with disabilities in community preparedness.

In Ethiopia (ETK001), long-term results are attributed to the project's catalytic influence in advancing inclusive education and Deaf leadership, with self-financing models emerging locally.

In Nepal (NPK003), transformation in women's agency and confidence is strongly linked to project-led training, mentoring, and exposure visits.

**Several projects explicitly acknowledge that outcomes were influenced by both project interventions and contextual factors:**

In Zimbabwe (ZWK002) improved food security and yields were largely attributed to Conservation Smart Agriculture promoted by the project, though good rainfall also contributed.

In Tanzania (TZK001), reductions in food shortage months and income gains were verified as project-linked but described as contributory, given parallel government and NGO activities.

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In Nepal (NPK001) the development of provincial mental health strategies was partly driven by project momentum yet recognised as the cumulative outcome of longer-term processes.

In Zimbabwe (ZWK003) attribution was more difficult to isolate due to overlapping community initiatives.

### **EQ7: What signs of impact can be detected towards the end of the programme period?**

#### **Key finding: The programme demonstrates emerging measurable impact.**

Across the programme, there are clear and quantifiable signs of impact, particularly within the Resilient Communities and Inclusive Education Outcome Areas. Several projects provide strong evidence of improved food security, demonstrated by a reduction in the number of 'food shortage months' (KHK001, NPK004) and widespread adoption of climate-resilient agricultural practices (KHK001). In education, projects report significant positive impacts, including increased student attendance and happiness (KHK004), decreased dropout rates, and improved learning achievements (NPK005). Evidence of impact on children's nutrition and well-being is also present (ZWK003).

Based on the endline evaluations, the most tangible evidence of impact is found in the following areas:

#### **Enhanced food security and economic stability among target households**

In Tanzania (TZK001), 56% of households reported improved income, and in Zimbabwe (ZWK002), 95% of households reported improved food security, and 82% reported increased income. Average maize yield in the Tanzanian ICRP project (TZK001) increased and surpassed the target. The adoption rate of Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) practices increased (TZK001) and adoption of drought-resistant seeds has risen. Savings and credit associations (VSLAs) enabled women and girls with disabilities in Burundi (XXK004) to invest in small-scale ventures, shifting many from dependents to providers.

#### **Systemic and institutional change**

There are also projects that demonstrated influence beyond the household level, embedding new knowledge and practices into partner and government systems: Advocacy efforts have contributed to the introduction of disability-specific budget lines in two Weredas in Ethiopia (ETK001). For the Her Resilience Enabled project (XXK004)<sup>20</sup>, the Ministry of Health replicated the Selian Hospital model for inclusive SRHR in regional hospitals.

In Tanzania (TZK002) achieved institutional change by integrating Gender-Responsive Pedagogy (GRP) and Language-Supportive Pedagogy (LSP) themes into reviewed curricula for teaching methodology courses at TUMA. Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) structures were established in all target villages (TZK001) and committees are actively managing risk reduction activities. In Zimbabwe (ZWK002), 100% of respondents reported awareness and access to Early Warning Systems (EWS).

#### **Transformative shifts in capacity, attitude, and social inclusion**

There is emerging evidence of scaling deep (normative/behavioral change). This is most evident in the Resilient Communities Outcome Area, where reports document widespread behavior change, such as '65% of households in the target communities are employing climate-resilient agricultural practices' (KHK001). Increased school attendance and caregiver reports on nutrition (ZWK003, KHK004) also suggest behavioural shifts in prioritizing education and child well-being.

Several projects also report changing attitudes towards persons with disabilities, reflected in greater acceptance, inclusion in community activities, and improved accessibility in project implementation. Persons with disabilities are increasingly able to participate. However, while these attitudinal and behavioural shifts mark important progress, more fundamental structural changes to address systemic discrimination remain limited and require sustained, long-term commitment.

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<sup>20</sup> This project was not included in the sample, but its endline evaluation was part of the Desk Review materials

## Partners' view on the most important changes

The highest proportion of respondents (around 65–70%) reported improvements in **livelihoods and income**, indicating that project activities are producing tangible economic benefits, often an early sign of sustained impact when coupled with strengthened resilience and market access.

**Social inclusion and reduced marginalisation were selected by about 60%**, suggesting progress in addressing exclusion and strengthening participation of vulnerable groups. This points to growing social cohesion and rights awareness at the community level.

**Around 50% observed reduced barriers to participation**, reflecting improved accessibility, empowerment, or attitudes toward inclusion, an important precondition for systemic change.

**Agency of women and girls (about 45%) and improved access to basic services (around 40%)** indicate that gender-related and service-delivery outcomes are beginning to materialise, though less uniformly than economic and social inclusion results. Fewer respondents (around 25–30%) reported improvements in authorities' responsiveness or new enabling policies, suggesting that while the programme is delivering community-level results, policy-level or structural impact is still emerging and may require longer timeframes and targeted advocacy.

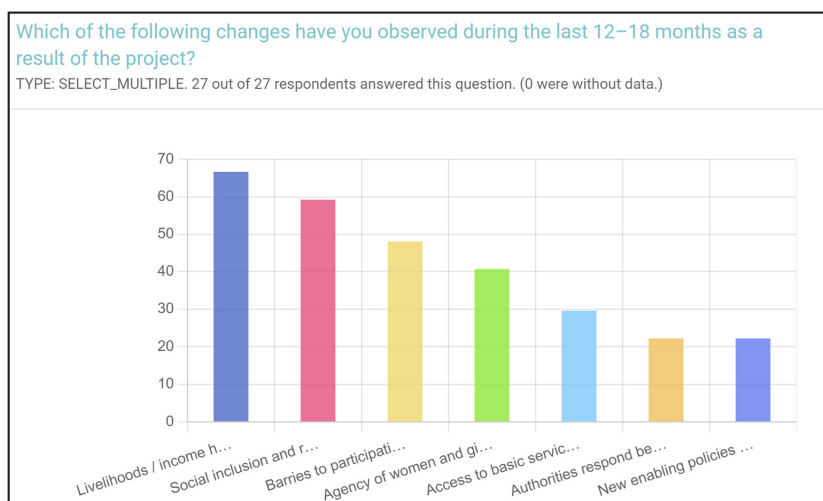


Figure 3 Which of the following changes have you observed during the last 12-18 months as a result of the project?

Table 7 Partners' View on Factors that Helped Reach Goals

Value	Frequency	Percentage
Partnership with Felm	25	92.59
Partnerships with local civil society organisations and community	19	70.37
Resources (funding or materials)	14	51.85
Partnership with local authorities	12	44.44
Felm capacity support	11	40.74

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**EQ 8: To what extent are the human rights principles applied in the Felm programming?**

**Key finding: Human rights principles are applied across the programme, with evidence of rights-based impacts for key groups.**

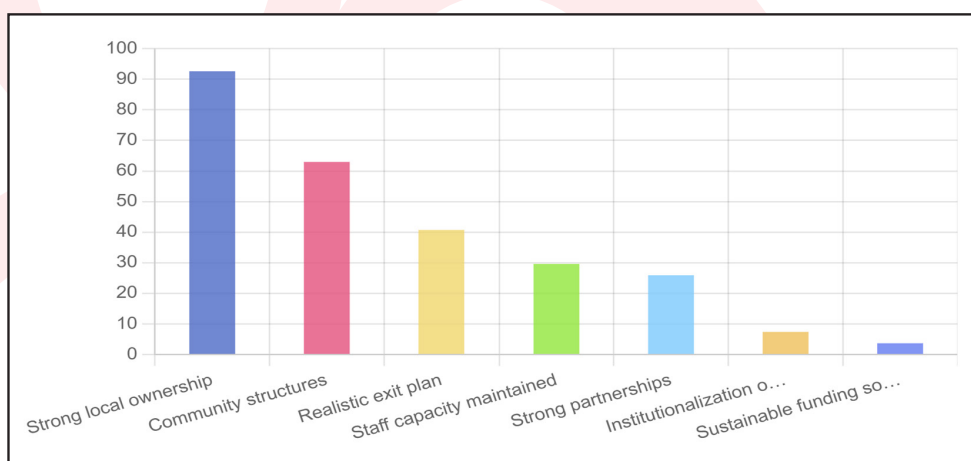
The programme's HRBA framework is a key strength, with many projects explicitly linking outcomes to the realization of specific human rights (e.g., UNCRPD, CRC). The programme's impacts are grounded in HRBA principles. Projects are consistently identifying rights-holders and duty-bearers. The evidence shows advocacy, lobbying, and training for duty-bearers (ETK004, ZWK003). There is clear evidence of impact in realizing specific rights, particularly for persons with disabilities, children, and women. Projects demonstrate tangible changes such as increased school attendance and happiness among indigenous children through access to (multilingual) education (KHK004), and improved food security contributing to the right to food (ETK002, NPK004). The programme shows success in empowering rights-holders to participate in decisions affecting their lives (ZWK003) and claim their entitlements.

### 4.3 Sustainability

**EQ 9: Have adequate conditions for sustainability been created in the programme design and by the intervention activities?**

**Key finding: Sustainability is embedded in design and delivery, emphasizing local ownership, capacity development, and participation, with early signs of independent continuation by communities.**

Sustainability has been integrated into both the programme design and intervention activities. This approach emphasizes several fundamental principles intended to secure long-term success, recognized also by partners (see Figure 4), including the strong local ownership, the development of local capacity, and participatory implementation involving communities and government actors. These design features appear to be translating into tangible results especially in the inclusive education outcome area. Emerging examples demonstrate that there is a potential for the communities to successfully continue activities and maintain structures independently, suggesting that the initial investment and design have the potential to yield sustained results.



*Figure 4 Existing Conditions for Sustainability according to partners*

**EQ 10: What is the long-term viability of the programme interventions?**

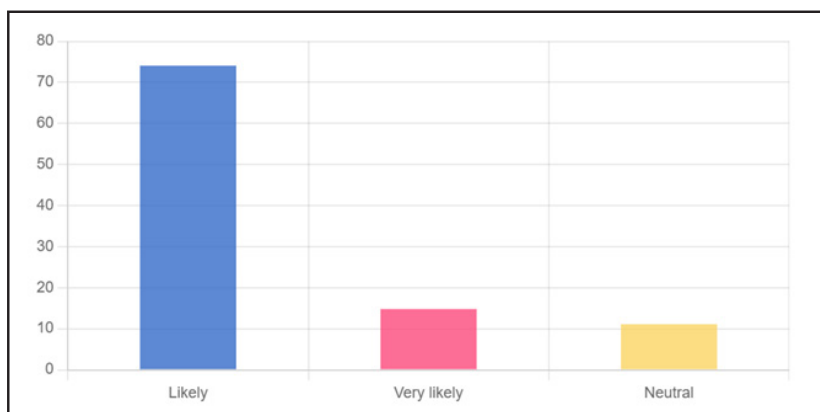
**Key finding: While the programme has laid a solid foundation for sustainability, the long-term viability of institutionalisation and funding mechanisms remains uncertain.**

Programme has embedded sustainability principles and established structures to support continuation such as local ownership and institutional engagement, and there are early signs of independent continuation by communities. Despite these promising signs, evidence of long-term viability of the programme interventions remains limited in scope. Much of the available documentation concentrates on planning, detailing the sustainability strategies, the underlying assumptions about how success will be achieved, and the future plans for continuation. Evidence that verifies the long-term, independent continuation of interventions remains limited. Concrete, documented proof of independent continuation by local communities and institutions is still largely lacking.

**EQ 11: To what extent are the impacts of the programme, especially those of the cross-cutting objectives, likely to sustain beyond the implementation period?**

**Key finding: The impacts of the programme’s cross-cutting objectives are only partially likely to sustain beyond implementation. While advocacy and collaboration show promise, institutionalisation of models remains limited, and monitoring gaps hinder evidence of lasting impact.**

Survey responses indicate a generally high level of confidence in the sustainability of the programme. More than 70% of online survey respondents judged it “very likely” that the positive results and changes introduced by the programme will continue beyond 2025, even in the absence of Felm’s direct support. While this reflects strong perceptions of local ownership and embedded practices, these findings should be interpreted with caution, as they represent stakeholder expectations rather than verified long-term outcomes.



*Figure 5 How likely do you think the positive results and changes brought about by the programme will continue after 2025, even without Felm’s direct support?*

The extent to which the impacts of the cross-cutting objectives are likely to sustain beyond the implementation period varies by cross-cutting theme.

Disability inclusion demonstrates the strongest and most evolving cross-cutting objective toward sustainable impact, moving beyond mere participation toward rights-based advocacy and systemic change. There is evidence that disability rights efforts are influencing policy, building the capacity of duty-bearers, and changing community norms. Main activities focus on systemic change by training government officials, parliamentarians, and human rights institutions on disability rights and inclusive policies. Furthermore, there is emerging evidence of institutionalisation, such as municipal budget allocations for project themes. The sustainability strategies focus on empowering OPDs and creating platforms for self-advocacy. There is credible evidence of reduced stigma and increased empowerment, and documented behavioral changes, such as persons with disabilities becoming members of local committees. Overall, there is a clear pattern of strengthening the voice and agency of persons with disabilities to claim their rights, which is foundational for long-term sustainability.

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While the programme demonstrates widespread efforts in implementing cross-cutting objective of gender equality, sustainable impact is threatened by a failure to institutionalize changes at a higher level and address deep structural barriers. Thus, impacts demonstrate moderate community-level sustainability and low systemic sustainability. The programme shows that women are taking on leadership roles in mainstream community groups. Stronger projects address structural barriers by promoting women in leadership positions within community structures and cooperatives and by designing activities that challenge traditional gender roles. There is credible evidence of fostering normative and behavioral changes.

A key weakness is the focus on reporting participation numbers without effectively addressing deep-seated structural barriers, such as women's limited access to leadership roles or land ownership. Consequently, evidence for institutional policy adoption (scaling up) is weak or absent, and reporting is weaker on the quality of participation and resulting changes in women's decision-making power.

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*In development work, long-term sustainability is the ultimate goal and measure of impact. All efforts should be directed toward encouraging duty bearers to take full responsibility. However, influencing the government or other duty bearers remains challenging. In many cases, progress is slower than expected, and NGOs often continue to carry out roles that ideally should be led by the government. That said, it's important to acknowledge that the government is gradually taking steps to assume more responsibility.*

Project partner, online survey

The sustainability of the cross-cutting objective of climate resilience is still somewhat compromised by superficial integration, a lack of institutional commitment, and significant evidence gaps. There is strong evidence for the delivery of outputs, such as developing Village/Commune Disaster Risk Management (DRM) plans and conducting trainings. Several projects report progress towards outcomes with high rates of household-level adoption of new practices (e.g., drought-tolerant crops, energy-saving stoves). Evidence for scaling, specifically institutionalisation is not consistent. A major evidence gap exists for climate resilience, and the lack of information on budget allocations for cross-cutting theme activities suggests a low level of institutional commitment necessary for long-term sustainability.

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*Achieving long-term climate resilience and food security requires a clear transfer of responsibility to governments and duty bearers. While projects demonstrate effective community models, lasting impact depends on integrating these into government policies. Influencing government leadership remains challenging, as institutionalizing climate and food security strategies often progresses slowly [...]. Persistent advocacy, capacity-building, and policy dialogue are essential to ensuring climate-resilient food systems beyond the lifespan of projects.*

Project partner, online survey

**EQ 12: To what extent has the programme been able to promote decolonial approaches for localisation efforts?**

**Key finding: Commitment to localization is visible through approaches that emphasize local ownership, shared learning and participatory implementation methods yet knowledge exchange remains largely one-directional flowing from Felm to partners.**

The programme has established a foundation for promoting localization by integrating features into its design and activities that are essential for shifting control and power. This is demonstrated primarily by empowering local community structures like Village Development Committees and School Management Committees to lead project activities.

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This approach is particularly well-evidenced in the education sector, where local committees are involved in planning, teacher selection, school management, and mobilizing community resources, indicating genuine ownership. A decolonial approach is evident in projects promoting mother-tongue based education and the development of culturally relevant materials, shifting away from externally imposed norms (e.g. COK002, MMK002).

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*Earlier we thought that only professionals can develop learning materials. Now we know that community can produce learning materials and everyone can provide input in the process.*

A rights holder, FGD

Despite these developments, majority of the knowledge exchange embedded into the programme still mainly flows from Felm to partners, indicating limited realization of decolonial, mutual shared learning in practice.

## 5 Concluding remarks

Overall, the evaluation finds that the Felm Development Cooperation Programme 2022–2025 has been **effective** in delivering planned activities and outputs and has contributed to meaningful improvements in people’s lives in often very challenging contexts. Many projects meet or exceed quantitative targets, and partners themselves express strong confidence in the programme’s effectiveness and relevance. At the same time, there are consistent gaps in documenting whether these outputs translate into sustained outcome-level change in people, institutions, and systems.

The programme’s **impact** is particularly visible in enhanced resilience and inclusion of marginalised groups at community level. Evidence points to improved livelihoods and food security for vulnerable households, including those headed by women and persons with disabilities, increased school attendance where inclusive education models are in place, and strengthened psychosocial wellbeing through peer support and self-help groups. There are also documented shifts in social norms, such as greater acceptance of persons with disabilities and increased participation of women in groups and local structures, even if decision-making power remains unequally distributed in many settings.

**Sustainability** is a relative strength in terms of design and early implementation. Local ownership, community contributions and the establishment of local structures are deliberately built into many projects, and there are first signs that some communities and institutions are ready to continue activities without direct programme support. Survey responses show high partner confidence that positive changes will last beyond 2025. Yet the evidence base for long-term viability remains narrow: documentation focuses more on plans and assumptions than on verified continuation, and institutionalisation of approaches in public systems, long-term budget commitments and formal responsibilities is still evolving. This is especially visible for the cross-cutting objectives, where sustained impact will depend on stronger institutional anchoring and clearer accountability.

Across the programme, commitment to the **cross-cutting objectives** of gender equality, disability inclusion and climate resilience is clear in policies, guidance and partner discourse, but implementation is uneven and not yet fully systematised. Mainstreaming gender equality has achieved broad participation by women and some advances in leadership roles yet lacks systematic gender analysis and evidence on deeper structural change related to power, unpaid care, control of assets or gender-based violence. Disability inclusion shows some of the most promising practices, especially in dedicated disability rights projects, but most interventions still lack structured disability analysis, standardised data collection and consistent accessibility measures, and do not always position Organisations of Persons with Disabilities as genuine co-designers. Climate resilience is recognised and often present in project narratives and trainings but is frequently addressed at output level without clear responsibilities, budgets or evidence of sustained changes in risk management and environmental practice.

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## Scaling deep:

Across the programme, the most consistent progress is visible in scaling deep (shifts in practices, attitudes, and agency at community and household level).

Outcome Area on Climate Resilience demonstrate widespread uptake of climate-resilient agricultural practices, reduced food-shortage months and strengthened local savings and solidarity mechanisms, indicate that many households have begun to internalise new ways of managing risk and crating bases for more sustainable livelihoods.

Under outcome areas on Inclusive Education and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities projects, parents, teachers and local leaders increasingly recognise the right of children and persons with disabilities to participate in school and community life; OPDs and psychosocial self-help groups have moved from charity-oriented roles towards rights-based advocacy and peer support. Gender equality efforts have helped normalise women's participation in groups, savings schemes and community structures, and there are emerging, though still modest, shifts in perceptions of women's leadership and the unpaid care work in households.

## Scaling out:

Scaling out is most visible where models directly respond to pressing livelihood, food security and education needs, and where communities have been actively engaged in co-design and co-financing the initiatives. Conservation and climate-smart agriculture approaches, savings groups and community-based disaster risk management committees have been adopted by a high proportion of targeted households, and in at least one case (NPK004) technologies have spread beyond the initial project sites through farmer-to-farmer diffusion, local government promotion and other NGOs.

Similarly, some inclusive education practices and mental health models are beginning to be replicated within partner organisations and, to a limited extent, across institutions such as teacher training colleges. However, in most outcome areas, evidence of spontaneous replication or geographic expansion beyond planned project areas remains thin: reports describe outreach, awareness and training, but rarely document independent uptake by new actors at scale.

## Scaling up:

Scaling up (embedding programme approaches in laws, policies and institutional systems) is where progress is most constrained but not absent. The strongest examples are concentrated in a small number of projects. Under resilience, at least one local government has integrated DRR and climate change adaptation provisions into development plans and allocated budgets, signalling an early but concrete form of institutionalisation.

In disability rights, engagement with national institutions has contributed to a disability inclusion strategy within a national human rights commission, the establishment of a parliamentary disability caucus, and disability-specific budget lines at local level, alongside organisational strengthening and expansion of OPDs. In education, there is evidence of curriculum change in a teacher training institution around gender-responsive and language-supportive pedagogy.

Yet across the programme as a whole, verified examples of formal adoption, resourcing and enforcement of new standards by duty-bearers remain relatively few; political instability, staff turnover in government, restrictive policy environments and administrative delays have frequently slowed or stalled institutional uptake.

The evaluation finds only a small number of cases where scaling up, out and deep clearly intersect to approach transformational change, notably in selected resilience (NPK004) and disability rights (ETK004) initiatives. In these cases, locally relevant models have diffused beyond initial groups, norms and power relations have shifted in favour of

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marginalised rights-holders, and elements of the approach have begun to be embedded in public institutions or OPD structures. However, such examples are still the exception rather than the norm. For most projects, change remains most visible at the level of improved practices and attitudes among direct participants, with weaker evidence of systemic reforms or broad-based replication.

Finally, the analysis highlights a strategic tension at programme level. Felm’s strong HRBA orientation, commitment to localisation and emphasis on working through churches, faith-based organisations, civil society and Organisations of Persons with Disabilities have generated deep, contextually grounded change, but the breadth of themes and priorities, combined with a compliance-oriented results culture, has limited the organisation’s ability to systematically consolidate, package and elevate successful models into broader public systems. Moving into the next programme period, the opportunity is therefore not to “scale more activities”, but to build on these islands of deep and localised change to achieve more deliberate, evidence-based scaling up and scaling out, especially in disability inclusion, climate-resilient livelihoods and inclusive education. While safeguarding the rights-based, locally owned character that underpins the programme’s strongest achievements.

Finally, the programme embodies an important but incomplete shift toward localisation and more equal partnerships. There is clear evidence of local leadership in many interventions, especially where community committees lead planning and implementation and where mother-tongue and culturally relevant approaches are used. At the same time, partners point to decision-making that can feel top-down, and knowledge exchange still mostly flows from Felm to partners rather than being genuinely mutual. This suggests that Felm is well positioned, but not yet fully realised, to act as a facilitator of locally led change, drawing more deliberately on partner and community expertise and ensuring they have a stronger voice in strategic choices for the next programme cycle.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the programme has created substantial and valued change for rights-holders and partners, particularly at community level, and that it is broadly on track in relation to its objectives on climate resilience and inclusive education and rights of persons with disabilities. The main opportunities for the next phase lie not in doing “more of everything”, but in sharpening strategic focus, deepening HRBA and cross-cutting objectives related implementation and practice, strengthening mutuality in partnerships, and investing more systematically in outcome-level evidence and institutional anchoring so that promising models can be sustained and expanded through local and national systems.

## 6 Recommendations

### EFFECTIVENESS: Recommendations to strengthen programmatic approach

1. Ensure the results matrix and reporting support focus on outcomes and learning: **Ensure that each project clearly articulates the pathway from output to outcome, with explicit assumptions and indicators**, and that in the results matrix outcomes describe measurable change in people, systems, or institutions, rather than completion of activities.
2. Moving into the next programme period, the programme should **build on areas of deep, localised change to pursue more deliberate, evidence-based scaling up and scaling out**, while safeguarding the rights-based, locally owned character that underpins its strongest achievements.
3. **Concentrate organisational efforts on a limited number of strategic priorities through coordinated, time-bound initiatives that could be called *thematic collective actions or action sprints***, that mobilize the full capacity of the organisation. These focused periods, approximately 3-5 months in duration, should align attention, advocacy, and resources around selected programme priorities to generate momentum, visibility, and measurable results. Campaigns may target major unfinished agendas, such as gender equality, disability inclusion, climate resilience, safeguarding, or leverage external opportunities for policy influence, partnership, and innovation.

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4. **Institutionalize Programme Effectiveness Review (PER)** as a mechanism for performance dialogue and strategic accountability. The PER should serve as a structured, evidence-driven forum to assess progress, align actions across organisational levels, and reinforce mutual accountability and remove perceptions of top-down organisational culture.

5. **Strengthen the programme's risk management** by requiring that priority risks, particularly those related to political violence, discrimination, exclusion and safeguarding, have clearly defined and time-bound mitigation actions, designated responsible actors and explicit triggers for adaptation, and that these are regularly reviewed and updated through partner reporting and annual programme review processes.

#### **EFFECTIVENESS: Recommendations to strengthen outcome level results quality and tracking**

6. **In the next programme cycle, strengthen the programme's role as a facilitator of locally led change** by more deliberately drawing on partner and community expertise and ensuring they have a stronger voice in strategic decision-making processes (for example through co-design of programme priorities and structured partner and community consultations).

7. **Provide standard templates or short guidance notes** to help partners describe expected behavioural or institutional changes, not just deliverables in reporting. And organize periodic reflection on how outputs have contributed to outcomes, rather than just activity completion. Provide practical guidance on differentiating outputs (what we do) and outcomes (what changes as a result).

8. **Require that key lessons and evaluation findings** are explicitly referenced in new planning documents, budgets, and partner guidance. Organize annual or semi-annual learning sessions at country or regional level to jointly review findings from evaluations, partner reports, and field experience.

9. **Establish dedicated Results Managers** or equivalent roles to ensure clear accountability for tracking progress across outcomes and outputs. This function should maintain a strategic, organisation-wide view of how results are being pursued, identify areas of lagging progress, and facilitate evidence-informed follow-up. This will support the organisation in the shift from compliance-based reporting to strategic performance management.

10. **Institute a simple annual training cycle grounded in a needs assessment, map internal and partner expertise.** Co-create an annual training calendar where partners and local experts lead sessions alongside Felm. Training delivery could be included into the focused action sprints (introduced above), short intensive learning periods build around specific themes or skill gaps, followed by peer exchange and practical learning.

#### **EFFECTIVENESS: Recommendations to strengthen cross-cutting objectives**

11. **Establish a clear accountability framework for cross-cutting objectives by fully integrating them into the programme's results framework** with dedicated outcome indicators, reporting requirements, and assigned budget lines. Each project should explicitly demonstrate how gender equality, disability inclusion, and climate resilience and low-emission development are operationalised, tracked, and resourced.

12. **Require each project to operationalise its Do No Harm commitment** by conducting a structured analysis of risks and mitigation measures related to all cross-cutting objectives at both design and implementation stages, and by integrating these into project and programme risk matrices, with periodic review and updating.

13. **Strengthen accountability for achieving cross-cutting objectives by clarifying roles and integrating cross-cutting objectives' responsibilities into job descriptions.** To enhance ownership and implementation of the cross-cutting objectives, the programme should explicitly assign responsibility for cross-cutting results to Felm staff,

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including at the country and regional levels. Embedding cross-cutting objectives -related duties in job descriptions and not relying primarily on headquarters-based experts, would help distribute responsibility more evenly, reinforce accountability, and ensure that cross-cutting objectives are systematically advanced.

**14. Strengthen intersectional and gender-transformative approaches by embedding structured gender analysis across all projects** (ensure they are carried out and applied in programme/project design). To effectively identify and address harmful gender norms, the programme should systematically integrate gender analysis into programme design, implementation, and monitoring. This includes assessing power dynamics, structural barriers, and gendered risks from the outset, and using the findings to guide interventions, strengthen accountability, and track transformative change over time. Both the programme's gender equality work and disability inclusion work would benefit from a more systematic application of an intersectional lens and explicit recognition of multiple and intersecting discrimination, especially as experienced by women with disabilities.

**15. Develop minimum accessibility and inclusion standards for all projects** (e.g., accessible communication formats, assistive products, sign language, transport support) and ensure every partner integrates them into implementation. Formalise partnerships with Organisations of Persons with Disabilities as co-designers and advisors to operationalise CRPD principles in practice.

## IMPACT

**16. Systematically package successful project evidence and lessons learned into guidance products to influence policy and standards at national and sub-national levels.** To strengthen the uptake and institutionalisation of effective models, Felm and its partners should synthesise project-generated evidence, practices, and lessons into clear, user-friendly guidance notes and briefs tailored for national stakeholders and duty bearers. These products can support policy dialogue, inform national standards, and provide practical models for replication within public systems.

**17. Develop a coherent country-level programme architecture to strengthen institutionalisation and sustainability of results.** This architecture does not need to take the form of a formal country programme, but rather a structured framework that brings projects together under shared strategic and coordination mechanisms. Such coherence would enhance alignment with national systems, advocacy, improve cross-project coordination, and create clearer pathways for scaling and sustaining successful models beyond the current implementation period.

## SUSTAINABILITY

**18. Strengthen mechanisms for tracking and documenting the independent continuation of interventions beyond the programme cycle.** The programme should establish simple, systematic approaches to monitor how programme interventions continue once external support ends. Strengthening these mechanisms will improve understanding of long-term sustainability and inform future programme design.

**19. Strengthen bi-directional learning mechanisms to support meaningful localization.** To deepen local ownership and improve programme quality, Felm should establish mechanisms that enable partners to share their experiences, innovations, and contextual insights back to Felm and across the partner network. This could include partner-led workshops, joint reflection sessions, and feedback loops where local practices and lessons directly inform the programme and Felm staff.

## Annexes

### Annex 1 Application of the “Scaling for Transformational Change”

<b>Evaluation Criterion</b>	<b>Scaling Up (Policies &amp; Institutions)</b>	<b>Scaling Out (Replication &amp; Reach)</b>	<b>Scaling Deep (Norms &amp; Values)</b>
<b>Effectiveness</b>	Secondary: assess institutional enablers/barriers for performance	Primary: assess efficiency in generating replicable and adaptable results	Secondary: examine cultural or attitudinal support for effectiveness
<b>Impact</b>	Primary: assess embedding of results in laws, policies, and institutions	Primary: assess replication of models across projects, groups, and countries	Primary: assess shifts in norms, practices, and power relations (e.g. climate resilience, inclusive education, disability rights)
<b>Sustainability</b>	Primary: assess lasting institutional commitment to gender equality, climate resilience, and disability inclusion	Secondary: assess adoption of sustainable approaches across actors and communities	Primary: assess normative and attitudinal changes supporting sustainability

Annex 2 Project summaries and sample

Theme	Project name	Recipient Country or area, name	Initial Year	Project Focus	Implementing agency	SDG target
RES	Livelihoods, Protection and Peace Building	Colombia	2011	The project aims for communities to adapt and protect their livelihoods in the face of regional conflicts and climate change, with participants, especially women, leading conflict resolution and contributing to protection, social cohesion, and risk management.	Lutheran World Federation/Department for World Service	1;2;13;16
RES	Communities for Life	Colombia	2018	This project aims for indigenous, Afro-Colombian, and peasant communities to establish community life, care for themselves and their living environment, and recover from social and armed conflict.	The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Colombia	1;2;16
PWD	From Survivors to Agents of Change	Colombia	2014	The project aims to improve the quality of life of landmine survivors and enhance their ability to defend their rights through their own organisations, also participating in activities to prevent further accidents.	Lutheran World Federation/Department for World Service	10;16
EDU	Towards a New Model of Indigenous Education	Colombia	2022	The project aims for indigenous communities to implement a quality model of education which respects their own context, culture, and mother tongue, improving children's opportunities and the quality of life of their communities.	The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Colombia	4
PWD	Social and Educational Program for the Deaf	Ethiopia	2011	The project aims to address challenges faced by deaf and hard of hearing people through teacher training in sign language and inclusive education, production of quality educational materials, and creating awareness on disability issues.	Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus-Development and Social Services Commission-South Central Synod-School for the Deaf	3;4;10
RES	Saylem-Gesha Livelihood Enhancement Project	Ethiopia	2017	The project aims at improving the food security of minorities who are the most vulnerable group in the area through diversifying income sources, increasing agricultural productivity, increasing forest conservation, and promoting agroforestry practices.	Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus-Development and Social Services Commission	2;15;13

Theme	Project name	Recipient Country or area, name	Initial Year	Project Focus	Implementing agency	SDG target
RES	Habru Leghida Building Climate Resilient Communities Project	Ethiopia	2020	This project aims at addressing the negative effects of climate change and contributing to building community's resilience through rehabilitation of degraded lands, employing climate-smart agriculture, enhancing gender equality and climate literacy.	Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus-Development and Social Services Commission	1;2;3;5;6;7;13
RES	Gedio Community Resilience Enhancement Project	Ethiopia	2022	The project aims to address challenges of land degradation and limited livelihoods by rehabilitating degraded lands, promoting natural resource conservation, and diversifying income to enhance climate change adaptation capabilities and livelihood opportunities.	Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus-Development and Social Services Commission	1;2;13
RES	Gambella Improved Livelihood and Resilience Project	Ethiopia	2022	This project focuses on improving the livelihoods of refugees and host communities, increasing their resilience to climate change shocks, and enhancing adoption of climate change mitigation and adaptation practices through education, awareness, and green economy promotion.	Lutheran Word Federation	1;2;3;7;8;10
PWD	Advancing Disability Voice Project	Ethiopia	2022	The project's main focus is to strengthen the overall capacity of OPDs to advocate for their rights, improve evidence-based advocacy, and create a platform for UNCRPD monitoring and collaboration among stakeholders.	Ethiopian Center for Disability Development	1;5;10
EDU	Cultural Relevant Education for Indigenous Peoples	Cambodia	2013	The project strengthens the capacity of parents and education authorities to support inclusive, mother-tongue based pre-education, formal, and non-formal primary education for indigenous children in a safe and learner-friendly environment.	Integral Cooperation Cambodia	4

Theme	Project name	Recipient Country or area, name	Initial Year	Project Focus	Implementing agency	SDG target
PWD	The Futures of Young People with Disabilities	Cambodia	2019	The project supports children and youth with disabilities to access suitable high-quality education and training, while increasing public understanding of the rights of persons with disabilities.	Epic Arts	4;10
RES	Climate-Sustainable Indigenous Livelihoods	Cambodia	2022	Through the project, indigenous communities improve their food security and livelihoods in the changing climate by learning new skills, restoring and protecting forest cover and water resources, and preparing for natural disasters.	Integral Cooperation Cambodia	1;2;
RES	Resilient Communities around Kampong Som Bay	Cambodia	2022	As a result of the project, poor people, especially women, in coastal communities adapt to and apply training received on production, marketing, and financing, manage natural resources sustainably, and participate in climate adaptation and disaster risk management.	Morodok	1;2; 14;15
EDU		xx				4
PWD		xx				4;5; 17
RES	Development of Community Resilience Capacity	Mauritania	2022	The project builds the sustainability of Hodh El Chargh's communities through strengthened and diverse livelihoods and means to adapt to climate change, reducing disaster risks and integrating unemployed young people into working life.	Bienfaisance Sans Frontières	7.1; 8.5; 8.6; 13.1; 13.3.; 13b
RES	Food Security and Resilience Programme	Mauritania	2022	As a result of the project's activities, the food security of beneficiary communities is improved, and the ability of households to adapt to climate change is strengthened, while also promoting the rights and status of vulnerable groups like people with disabilities.	ONG Actions	2.1; 2.4; 5.1.; 13.3

Theme	Project name	Recipient Country or area, name	Initial Year	Project Focus	Implementing agency	SDG target
EDU	Multilingual Education Program	Nepal	2018	The project aims to increase equitable education opportunities and access to quality inclusive education for all children, especially for the poor, marginalized, ethnic, and language minority groups, and children with disabilities.	United Mission to Nepal	4
PWD	School Mental Health Program	Nepal	2018	The project aims for school-going children and adolescents to develop to their full potential and improve learning results as their psychosocial well-being grows stronger, through increased teacher capacity and promotion of child protection policies.	Centre for Mental Health and Counseling Nepal	4;3
RES	Strengthening Farmers' Livelihood	Nepal	2022	The project aims at realization of the right to food and livelihood for approximately 21,000 persons of the target communities, as well as their improved climate change adaptation and disaster risk management, by organizing and capacitating beneficiaries.	Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, Research and Development	1;2;8
RES	Climate Resilient Villages	Nepal	2022	The aim of this project is to improve women-friendly, environmentally sustainable, and climate-resilient livelihoods of vulnerable and marginalized communities, increasing food production, nutrition, and income through ecological agriculture and green market enterprises.	Group of Helping Hands (SAHAS) Nepal	1;2;8
PWD	Enhancing Well-being of Migrant Workers	Nepal	2022	As a result of the project, migrant workers and their families have improved their mental health and psychosocial wellbeing, and returnee migrant workers are engaged in self-employment, business, or other livelihood initiatives.	Centre for Mental Health and Counseling Nepal	1;5;3

Theme	Project name	Recipient Country or area, name	Initial Year	Project Focus	Implementing agency	SDG target
PWD	Strengthening Psychosocial Disability Rights	Nepal	2022	This project aims to respond to the needs of persons with psychosocial disability by supporting their recovery, building strong networks, empowering them about their rights, and sensitizing families and communities for social inclusion and livelihood improvement.	Koshish - National Mental Health Self-Help Organization	10.3; 16
EDU	Home Language Education Programme	Senegal	2016	As a result of the project, people in the project area receive better education as the quality of education improves and mother tongue teaching becomes more common, strengthening the right of children and adults to quality education in their mother tongue.	The Lutheran Church of Senegal	4.1; 4.2; 4.6; 10.2; 13.3
RES	Resilience and Livelihood Programme	Senegal	2022	At the heart of the project is adaptation to and mitigation of climate change, improving food security and reducing livelihood risks for the people in the Foundiougne area, with a special focus on marginalized groups like women, children, and people with disabilities.	The Lutheran Church of Senegal	10.2; 12.2; 12.5; 13.3
EDU	Participatory and Integrative Teaching Approach	Tanzania	2018	PITA project aims at equal access to quality education for young people in Tanzania through a participatory learner-centred approach and by supporting the development of a competence-based curriculum.	Tumaini University Makumira	4;5; 13
RES	Inclusive Community Resilience	Tanzania	2022	The project aims to improve the resilience of communities, including the most vulnerable members, by training smallholders in climate-resilient farming practices, diversifying income, and supporting environmental awareness through school clubs.	Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service	1;3; 13

Theme	Project name	Recipient Country or area, name	Initial Year	Project Focus	Implementing agency	SDG target
PWD	Her Resilience Enabled	Tanzania, Burundi	2022	This advocacy project supports OPDs to lobby for inclusion in climate and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) related policy processes and projects, including building a center of excellence for inclusive SRHR services in Tanzania.	Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network	3;5;13
RES	Grandmothers' Care for Orphaned and Vulnerable Children	Zimbabwe	2018	The project aims at increasing access to nutritious and adequate food, quality education, and psychosocial care and support for vulnerable children and bringing financial sustainability to their households by strengthening skills and livelihood opportunities.	Gwai Grandmothers Group	1;2;13
RES	Scaling Up Livelihoods and Resilience Program (SULRP)	Zimbabwe	2022	The aim of this project is to improve livelihoods and build resilience for vulnerable populations in targeted communities by enhancing DRR and management, climate adaptation and mitigation, diversified livelihoods, and food security.	Zimbabwe Council of Churches	1;2;10;13

<b>Summary of the sample projects' details (outcome areas, partner type, countries and continents)</b>	
<b>Outcome area</b>	<b>Number of projects</b>
Resilience	9
Inclusive education	5
Persons with disabilities	4
<b>Partner type</b>	
Civil society organisation	9
Church	5
Faith-based organisation	2
Organisation of Persons with Disabilities	2
<b>Country</b>	
Cambodia	2
Colombia	2
Ethiopia	4
Mauritania	1
Myanmar	1
Nepal	3
Senegal	2
Tanzania	2
Zimbabwe	1
<b>Continent</b>	
Africa	10
Asia	6
Latin America	2
<b>Total number of sample projects</b>	<b>18</b>

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*Annex 3 List of documents consulted*

**Name of the document:**

1. Ohjelma-asiakirja sopeutettu
2. 2024-Linjaus-ilmastokestävyydestä
3. 2025-Linjaus-ihmisoikeuksista
4. 2025-Linjaus-rauhan-ja-sovinnontyöstä
5. 2025-Linjaus-taloudellisesta-oikeudenmukaisuudesta
6. 2025-Linjaus-vammaisten-henkilöiden-oikeuksista
4. Riskimatriisi sopeutettu
7. 5.b Henkilöstölista sopeutettu
8. Selvitys ulkoministeriön läpileikkaavien tavoitteiden toimeenpanosta
9. ANNEX Myanmar Sustainability considerations
10. Annex 1\_ Result Matrix
11. Annex 2\_ Budget
12. Annex 3\_ PMEL plan and ToC
13. Annex 4\_ Innovations and private sector linkages
14. Annex 5\_ Communication plan
15. Annex 6\_ Global education plan
16. Annex 7\_ Country analysis.pdf
17. FELM MTE Report Final 25102024
18. FELM Project Manual 2022
19. Felm Concept Note food security
20. Felm Käyttötarkoituksenmuutos 3\_2025
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25. JT approved Felm Programme 2023-2028 01 04 2022 version final (1)
26. Liite 1. Kehitysyhteistyöohjelman vuosisuunnitelma 2023
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30. Liite 2 Tuenkäyttösuunnitelma 2025
31. Liite 2. Tuenkäyttösuunnitelma 2023
32. Liite 2. Tuenkäyttösuunnitelma 2024
33. Liite 3 Henkilöstösuunnitelma 2024
34. Liite 3. Henkilöstösuunnitelma 2023
35. Liite 3. Henkilöstösuunnitelma 2024
36. Liite 4 Hankekuvaukset (1)
37. Liite 4 Hankekuvaukset.
38. Liite 4. Hankekuvaukset 2023.
39. Liite 4. Hankekuvaukset 2024
40. Liite 5 Päivitetty tulomatriisi.
41. Liite 5. Päivitetty tulomatriisi 7.12.2023.
42. Liite 5. Päivitetty tulomatriisi 9.12.2022.
43. Liite 6 Ohjelman puoliväliraportti
44. Liite 6. Kolmoisneksus-määrittelyasiakirja
45. Liite 6b\_luottamuksellinen\_Myanmar Sustainability considerations
46. Liite 7 Johdon vastine puoliväliraporttiin 2024

- 
47. Linjausten ohjeistus
  48. MFA-Felm vuosineuvottelu 2025
  49. PMEL plan of the Felm Development cooperation programme 2022-2025
  50. Päivitetty riskitaulukko Q1\_2024
  51. Päivitetty tuloskehikko 31.8.2022.
  52. Päätös 40\_36\_2025 Käyttötarkoituksenmuutos 4\_2025 (ID 70243)
  53. Ruokaturva KYT-ohjelmassa 22-25
  54. Selvitys siirrettävistä varoista
  55. Selvitys siirrettävistä varoista (1)
  56. Suomen Lähetysseuran strategia 2023 - 2028, hyväksytty hallituksen kokouksessa 1.2.2022 (ID 49825).
  57. The triple nexus approach at Felm\_print version 19012023.
  58. ToC.
  59. muutoshakemuksen 1-2023 tiedoksianto UH2023-009078 (3)
  60. muutoshakemuksen 1-2025 tiedoksianto UH2025-007963 (ID 69757)
  61. muutoshakemuksen 2-2025 tiedoksianto UH2025-017866 (ID 69759).
  62. muutoshakemuksen 3-2025 tiedoksianto UH2025-023457 (ID 69754).
  63. muutoshakemuksen 4-2025 tiedoksianto UH2025-035682 (ID 70341).
  64. muutoshakemuksen tiedoksianto UH2024-012486 (ID 63763).
  65. toolkit\_building-resilience\_english.

Sample project documents of 18 projects, a total of 888 documents, and 17 project evaluations.

Total number of documents consulted and/or reviewed = 970

## Felm Programme Evaluation 2025 – Thematic Focus Group Discussions

### Purpose:

To collect outcome-level insights from final beneficiaries on changes, challenges, and sustainability across Felm’s thematic areas: inclusive education, climate resilience, and rights of persons with disabilities.

**Duration:** 1.5 hours (90 minutes)

**Mode:** Online (Zoom)

**Participants:** 10–15 final beneficiaries per key outcome (climate resilience, inclusive education, rights of persons with disabilities)

**Facilitation:** external consultants

### FGD Structure and timing

Section	Duration	Description
Welcome and introductions	10 min	Purpose, confidentiality, and participant introductions
Main discussion	65 min	Thematic questions by topic (below)
Reflection and closing	15 min	Summary, validation, and final reflections

### FGD 1: Climate Resilience

**Theme:** *In what ways communities have become stronger and more prepared to face climate change, and what helps these good changes last.*

**Number of participants:** 10-15

#### Suggested projects to be involved:

- Cambella Improved Livelihood and Resilience, Ethiopia
- Habru Leghida Buidling Climate Resilient Communities, Ethiopia
- Strengthening Farmers’ Livelihood, Nepal
- Grandmothers’ Care for Orphaned and Vulnerable Children, Zimbabwe
- Inclusive Community Resilience, Tanzania

#### Key questions to be discussed in the group:

##### Effectiveness

1. What has most helped your community to better cope with droughts, floods, or other climate challenges?
2. Who has benefited the most from these new practices — and who has been left behind?

##### 5.3.2 Impact

1. What important, lasting changes have you seen in how people prepare for or respond to shocks?
2. How have cooperation, inclusion, or attitudes within the community changed?

##### 5.3.3 Sustainability

1. Are these good practices likely to continue without project support? Why or why not?
2. What local actions or support would help ensure that resilience keeps growing?

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## FGD 2: Inclusive Education

**Theme:** *How learning has become more inclusive and meaningful for all children and youth, and what makes these changes sustainable.*

### Suggested projects to be involved:

- Participatory and Integrative Teaching Approach, Tanzania
- MLE Development in an Ethnic Minority Area, Myanmar
- Cultural Relevant Education for Indigenous Peoples, Cambodia
- Towards a New Model of Indigenous Education, Colombia
- 

### Key questions to be discussed in the group:

#### 5.3.4 Effectiveness

1. What has changed most in schools or learning for children who used to be excluded (e.g., girls, children with disabilities, language minorities)?
2. What made these changes possible: new teaching, community involvement, or other support?

#### 5.3.5 Impact

1. How have attitudes toward inclusion and diversity in education changed among teachers, parents, and communities?
2. What difference do you see in how children participate, learn, or feel about school now?

#### 5.3.6 Sustainability

1. Are inclusive teaching and learning practices continuing on their own?
2. What needs to happen to make inclusive education part of normal school life in the future?

## FGD 3: Rights of Persons with Disabilities

**Theme:** *How persons with disabilities have gained stronger voice, participation, and rights in their communities, and how this can continue into the future.*

### Suggested projects to be involved:

- From Survivors to Agents of Change, Colombia
- Strengthening Psychosocial Disability Rights, Nepal
- Advancing Disability Rights, Ethiopia

### Key questions to be discussed in the group:

#### 5.3.7 Effectiveness

1. What has helped persons with disabilities in your community to know, claim, or exercise their rights?
2. How have families, organisations, or leaders supported this change?

#### 5.3.8 Impact

1. What are the most visible positive changes in how persons with disabilities are respected or included?
2. How have attitudes or decision-making roles changed at community or local authority level?

#### 5.3.9 Sustainability

1. What still needs to change for equality and participation to be sustained?

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## Annex 5 Key informant interview guide

Please note: This is a general interview guide, which will be tailored to each key informant's area of expertise to allow for more in-depth and specific probing.

### Interview Guide 1

Key informants: Felm Programme Managers, Advisors (Thematic, Financial, PMEL), Regional Directors

#### Introductions and purpose of the interview (5 min)

##### Effectiveness (15 min)

1. To what extent do you feel the programme's objectives have been achieved?
2. What factors (internal/external) have most contributed to success?
3. What challenges or barriers have hindered progress?
4. In what ways have Felm's capacity-sharing efforts with partners resulted in new and lasting expertise?
5. What do you see as the main strengths and weaknesses in implementing the cross-cutting themes (disability inclusion, gender equality, climate resilience)?

##### Impact (15 min)

1. How has the programme contributed to resilience and inclusion of marginalized groups in target areas?
2. What observable signs of impact are evident at this stage of the programme?
3. How much of this impact can reasonably be attributed to the programme?
4. Which changes are most likely to sustain beyond the programme period?

##### Sustainability (10 min)

1. How well were conditions for sustainability built into programme design and activities?
2. How do you assess the long-term viability of interventions?
3. How sustainable are the achievements in cross-cutting themes likely to be?
4. To what extent has the programme promoted localisation and decolonial approaches?

##### Closing (5 min)

- Are there any important points we have not covered?
  - What key recommendations would you highlight for future programming?
- 

### Interview Guide 2

Key informants: Partners involved in operational and programmatic work

#### Introductions and purpose of the interview (5 min)

##### Effectiveness (15 min)

1. How well do you think the project has achieved its objectives in practice?
  2. What has helped most in reaching the results?
  3. What have been the main challenges?
  4. How has Felm's support contributed to building your organisation's knowledge, skills, or expertise?
  5. How have cross-cutting themes (disability inclusion, gender equality, climate resilience) been integrated?
- What worked well and what was difficult?
-

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## Impact (15 min)

1. What changes have you seen in the resilience and inclusion of marginalized groups in the communities where you work?
2. What signs of impact are visible as the programme period comes to an end?
3. To what extent do you think these changes can be linked directly to the programme?
4. Which of these changes are most likely to last into the future?

## Sustainability (10 min)

1. How well did the project prepare communities and organisations for continuing results after the programme ends?
2. How sustainable are the project's results in your view?
3. How likely are achievements in disability inclusion, gender equality, and climate resilience to continue?
4. Has the programme promoted stronger leadership and ownership by local actors? If yes, in what ways?

## Closing (5 min)

- Is there anything else you would like to add?
- What one or two suggestions would you give for future projects?

### *Annex 6 Online reflection workshop*

## Duration 2-2,5 hours

**Objectives:** The reflection workshop will be an interactive session designed to engage partners in collective learning and discussion around the preliminary findings. Through presentations, group discussions, and joint problem-solving, participants will reflect on the programme's main successes and challenges, exchange perspectives, and co-create practical recommendations for strengthening future implementation.

## Agenda

Time	Activity	Content & activities
10 min	Welcome & introduction	Facilitators (consultants) open the workshop, outline objectives, introductions and/or icebreaker.
15 min	Setting the stage	Consultants present emerging evaluation findings (effectiveness, impact, sustainability, cross-cutting themes).
25 min	Reflection on successes	Small group discussions: Based on the presentation, identify key successes, what worked well, positive changes for communities. Groups share 2–3 highlights.
25 min	Reflection on challenges	Small group discussions: identify main barriers, contextual challenges, gaps in cross-cutting themes. Groups share 2–3 key challenges.
30 min	Problem-solving	Mixed-group or plenary work: explore solutions, ways to build on successes, overcome challenges, and generate recommendations for future programming.
10 min	Plenary synthesis & way forward	Facilitators cluster and summarize key themes; discuss how reflections will feed into evaluation and planning.
5 min	Closing	Final reflections: each participant shares one key takeaway. Facilitator thanks participants and outlines next steps.

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## Annex 7 Online survey for partners

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your valuable perspectives on Felm's Development Cooperation Programme 2022-2025 are essential for its final evaluation.

All your responses will be kept confidential and used solely for the purpose of this evaluation. No personal identifying information will be linked to your answers, and the findings will be presented to Felm only in an aggregated and anonymized manner.

Only the external consultants, Virpi Mesiäislehto and Katariina Sario, will have access to your full responses.

**Estimated time to complete: 15-20 minutes**

### Overall reflections and recommendations

What do you consider the **greatest success or achievement** of Felm's programme during 2022-2025?

(Open text) \_\_\_\_\_

What was the **biggest challenge or area for improvement** for the programme during 2022-2025?

(Open text) \_\_\_\_\_

Based on your experience, what are your **top 1-3 recommendations** for Felm to improve its programming in the next phase (2026-2029)?

(Open text) \_\_\_\_\_

### Programme planning

**Partner organisations (including your own, if applicable) were well engaged in the planning of the Felm program**

- Fully disagree
- Mainly disagree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Mainly agree
- Fully agree

**Effectiveness (1 = do not agree, 5 = fully agree)**

**Your project is on track to achieve its intended outcomes**

(Likert 1-5)

**How do you think Felm has used available resources (e.g., money, time, staff) to achieve the programme's goals?**

- Not at all efficiently
- Inefficiently
- Somewhat efficiently
- Efficiently
- Very efficiently

If you responded 1, or 2, please clarify your response briefly: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Select up to three factors that helped achieve the goals of your project the most** (multi-select, max 3):

- Partnership with Felm
- Partnership with local authorities
- Partnerships with local civil society organisations and community
- Resources (funding or materials)
- Capacity support from Felm
- Other (specify” if chosen)

**Select up to three factors that hindered achieving the goals of your project the most.**

- Funding constraints
- Staff turnover
- Security
- Policy or administrative barriers
- Discrimination / social norms
- Climate / disaster shocks
- Data / M&E limitations
- Political environment
- Other (specify” if chose)

**To what extent have ideas or approaches from your project been applied in other projects, communities, sectors, or areas?** (*Please select the option that best describes your experience.*)

- Applied in only one place.
- Applied in some new places or with new groups.
- Applied widely in different places, groups, or sectors.
- Applied broadly beyond the programme and integrated into existing services and structures.

## **Impact**

**Which of the following changes have you observed during the last 12–18 months as a result of the project?**  
(multi-select, max 3):

- Authorities respond better to individuals’ needs
- New enabling policies or practices have been put in place
- Livelihoods / income have improved
- Barriers to participation have reduced
- Agency of women and girls has strengthened
- Access to basic services has improved
- Social inclusion and respect has increased
- Other (specify)

**How well have your project’s objectives influenced local policies and institutions?**

*Select one that best applies to your project.*

- Not applicable (our project’s objectives didn’t include influencing local policies or institutions)
- No changes in local policies or institutions observed.
- Objectives mentioned in plans or strategies. Some small or one-time money allocated.
- Objectives made official by integration into policies or rules. Regular budget lines allocated.
- Objectives are built into services and government systems, regularly carried out and monitored.

**How would you describe your project’s reach to people, places and sectors?**

- Applied only within the scope of our project
- Applied in a few new places or with some new groups

- 
- Applied in new places, groups, or sectors
  - Spread widely in new places, groups, or sectors outside the project's direct work

### **How has your project influenced norms and attitudes?**

*Select one that best applies to your project.*

- It has raised awareness but little actual change.
- Marginalized groups are invited to participate, but their voices don't really count.
- Some behavior change.
- Regular consultations with marginalized groups are taking place.
- Marginalized groups are actively included and their views influence activities.
- Changes in social norms and power relations are visible. People who were left out before are now in leadership and other visible positions.

### **Sustainability**

#### **How likely do you think the positive results and changes brought about by the programme will continue after 2025, even without Felm's direct support**

(Likert 1–5)

#### **Which conditions for sustainability are in place now? (select up to three most relevant):**

- Strong local ownership
- Institutionalisation of new policies and practices
- Sustainable funding sources
- Community structures
- Staff capacity maintained
- Strong partnerships
- Realistic exit plan
- None.
- Other (specify)

#### **What are the main risks to sustainability at the moment?**

- Funding gaps
- Staff turnover
- Restrictive laws/policies
- Political pushback
- Security/access constraints
- Deep-rooted stigma or discriminatory attitudes and behaviours
- Other (specify)

#### **HRBA and cross-cutting objectives**

##### **To what extent have you been able to implement cross-cutting objectives in your project?**

- Gender equality (Likert 1-5: fully integrated to not integrated at all)
- Disability inclusion (Likert 1-5: fully integrated to not integrated at all)
- Climate resilience and low-emission development (Likert 1-5: fully integrated to not integrated at all)

##### **How well do you think your project follows the HRBA principles in planning and implementing?"**

(likert)

- **Participation & inclusion** (people are meaningfully involved)
- **Non-discrimination & equality** (no one is left out)

- 
- **Accountability** (duty-bearers are held responsible for their human rights obligations and commitments)
  - **Empowerment** (people know and can claim their rights)
  - **Link to human rights standards** (work is based on laws and rights treaties)

**To what extent are marginalized groups (e.g., persons with disabilities, minorities) involved in planning, implementing, and reviewing the project?**

- Not at all
- ...
- ...
- ...
- Very well

## **Learning and support**

**Which Felm support has been most helpful? (multi-select, max 3):**

- Technical guidance
- Monitoring evaluation and learning tools and templates
- Sharing and learning between projects
- Support to change laws or policies
- Other (specify)

**What should Felm prioritise to improve effectiveness in the next programme phase (2026-2029)? (select up to three):**

- Provide access to more expert support.
- Make reporting and monitoring easier.
- Strengthen peer learning and exchanges
- Make funding easier to use in different ways.
- Improve support on cross-cutting objectives
- Give more power to local partners to plan and lead.
- Give stronger support to change laws and policies.
- No change needed
- Other (specify)

## **Background and demographic information**

We want to remind you that all your responses will be kept confidential and used solely for the purpose of this evaluation. No personal identifying information will be linked to your answers, and the findings will be presented to Felm only in an aggregated and anonymized manner. Only the external consultants, Virpi Mesiäislehto and Katariina Sario, will have access to your full responses.

- Name of your organisation (open text)
- Project: (drop down menu)
- Outcome area (single select): Resilience; Inclusive education; Rights of persons with disabilities
- Country (single select): Cambodia; Colombia; Ethiopia; Mauritania; Myanmar; Nepal; Senegal; Tanzania; Zimbabwe
- Partner type (single select): Church; Faith-based organisation; Civil society organisation; Organisation of Persons with Disabilities; Other
- Your role (single select): Executive Director, Project Director, Project manager, Project Coordinator, Adviser; M&E / learning; ; Other

Annex 8 Evaluation matrix

Separate attachment.

Annex 9 List of participants to Key Informant Interviews

<b>Felm staff</b>	<b>Number KIIs</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Advisers	6	
Directors & managers	4	
Regional directors & managers	6	
Regional adviser	1	
Country directors	3	
<b>Project</b>		
Cultural Relevant Education for Indigenous Peoples / KHK004	1	
Resilient Communities around Kampong Som Bay / KHK001	2	
From Survivors to Agents of Change/ COK003	1	
Towards a New Model of Indigenous Education / COK002	1	
Advancing Disability Voice Project /ETK004	2	
Gambella Improved Livelihood and Resilience Project /ETK005	1	
Habru Leghida Building Climate Resilient Communities Project /ETK003	1	
Saylem-Gesha Livelihood Enhancement Project / ETK002	1	
Development of Community Resilience Capacity / MRK002	-	No response was received to the interview invitation or the follow-up invitation.
MLE Development in an Ethnic Minority Area / MK002	4	
School Mental Health Program /NPK005	1	
Strengthening Psychosocial Disability Rights/ NPK001	-	No response was received to the interview invitation or the follow-up invitation.
Strengthening Farmers' Livelihood/NPK004	1	
Home Language Education Programme/SNK002	1	
Resilience and Livelihood Programme/SNK001	-	No response was received to the interview invitation or the follow-up invitation.
Participatory and Integrative Teaching Approach / TZK002	-	Due to political unrest in Tanzania, interviews had to be cancelled, and some Key Informants could not be reached.
Inclusive Community Resilience /TZK001	-	Due to political unrest in Tanzania, several interviews had to be cancelled or could not be scheduled.
Grandmothers' Care for Orphaned and Vulnerable Children/ZWK003	1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	

Annex 10 Workplan and timeline

Main activity /Deliverable	August	September	October	November	December
Contract finalized & kick off meeting					
Materials delivered to consultants					
Finalizing methodology, data collection, evaluation matrix, timeline etc.					
Inception draft report submitted		1			
Inception report meeting		4			
Desk review					
Online survey designed					
Online survey submitted for Felm's comments		8			
Online survey designed and opened			15-22		
KIIs & FGDS (offline and online)					
Joint reflection workshop with selected partners online				25.9. & 9.10.	
Data analysis and draft report writing					
Presentation of the initial findings to Felm				31	
Draft report finalized & disseminated for comments					13
Written comments received from Felm					21
Finalizing the report based on comments					
Submission of the final evaluation report					28
Presentation of key findings & recommendations					3

## Felm Development Cooperation Programme 2022-2025

### Terms of Reference

#### for Consultancy Services for the Implementation of a Final Evaluation

## 1. Background

### 1.1 Felm

Felm (The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission) is an agency of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland for its international work. Felm currently works in 24 countries with almost 100 partner churches, faith-based and other civil society organizations. A large share of Felm's funding comes from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and its parishes. As one of the largest Finnish civil society organizations working in global development, Felm receives funding from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (MFA) and the European Union.

**The Felm programme 2023-2028** aims towards inclusive and sustainable societies by striving for structural changes to address underlying causes of exclusion, discrimination, and vulnerabilities.

**The Felm Development Cooperation Programme 2022-2025** forms a large part of the Felm programme and is mainly financed by the MFA programme-based support instrument.

### 1.2 Programme to be evaluated

The Felm Development Cooperation Programme 2022-2025 follows the previous programme cycle 2018-2021 and continues Felm's decades-long development cooperation work. The programme focuses on three thematic areas: climate resilience, inclusive education, and the rights of persons with disabilities. Geographically the programme emphasizes the least developed countries and reaches out to the marginalized groups with an intersectional approach.

The programme is implemented in nine countries (Cambodia, Myanmar, Nepal, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Mauritania, Senegal, Colombia) on three continents, and it comprises of 33 projects led by 23 local partner organizations, out of which 3 are churches, 6 faith-based organizations and 14 other civil society organizations.

**The total budget** of the four-year programme is EUR 28,3 million, of which the MFA provides EUR 24,5 million. EUR 3,8 million is provided from Felm's own funding sources. The total budgeted project expenditure is EUR 23,1 million, and advisory support EUR 4,2 million. The programme is estimated to reach a total of 434.300 rights-holders, 27.800 duty bearers and about 2,2 million indirect beneficiaries. The direct beneficiaries are members of the communities - men, women, youth and children, as well as the local administration and government bureaus in the intervention areas. Indirect stakeholders include local, cross-national and international CSO networks and state actors, universities, research institutes and private sector actors.

**The Theory of Change** of the Felm development cooperation programme is based on Felm's mission on promoting human dignity and justice around the world, and the Agenda 2030 pledge of leaving no one behind. The long-term goal of the programme is to contribute to improved resilience and inclusion of people from marginalized groups in the programme target areas, with focus on:

OC 1) **Resilience to climate change and disasters** strengthened in vulnerable communities. This OC area focuses on resilience of communities to cope with and address the constantly growing threat posed by climate change to the

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lives and survival of people from marginalized groups living often in highly vulnerable communities.

OC 2) **Access to inclusive quality education** improved especially among children and youth from marginalized groups. This OC area focuses on the realization of the right to education for children and youth who are still largely excluded from the education systems due to their poverty, disability, gender, ethnic background, language, location, etc.

OC 3) **Rights of persons with disabilities** being integrated into government policies and practices with active involvement of persons with disabilities and their organizations. This OC area focuses on the realization of the human rights of persons with disabilities as equal citizens who are increasingly heard and able to take part in decision-making in their communities and societies.

These outcomes are linked to resilience in the context of climate change, but also in helping systems, communities, and individuals to withstand and recover from various challenges. Under the outcome areas the programme aims at achieving measurable changes in behaviour, practices, processes, and structures at the levels of households, communities, local governance, service provision, and policy development. Local civil society actors play a key role in promoting and advocating for these changes that are seen as essential preconditions for sustained resilience and inclusion in the long term. The results are expected to be achieved by strengthening the capacities of rights-holders, duty-bearers, and civil society actors in relation to awareness, knowledge, skills, confidence, commitment, dialogue and creation of an enabling environment.

The programme is guided by **four cross-cutting objectives**: inclusion of persons with disabilities, gender equality, climate resilience, and low-emission development. In the mainstreaming of the cross-cutting objectives, a three-level approach is applied. The minimum standard for the programme and all projects is that no harm is done (level 1). Some programme elements and projects take a more pro-active role in promoting the cross-cutting objectives (level 2). The most advanced level aims at transformative changes in relation to these objectives (level 3).

### **Previous evaluation**

Felm commissioned a **Mid Term Evaluation (MTE)** of the development cooperation programme in 2024, covering the first two implementation years 2022-2023. The MTE focused on the relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of the programme. It was searching evidence on the progress and achievements so far and identified strengths and possible gaps. The specific objectives of the MTE were to assess the programme theory of change as well as progress and achievements vis-a-vis the programme objectives so far, and the implementation and progress of the programme's cross-cutting objectives. The MTE provided recommendations for steering the programme during the last two years of implementation, and information to support the coming development cooperation programming.

### **Purpose and objectives of the final evaluation**

The purpose of the final evaluation of the Felm Development Cooperation Programme 2022-2025 is to gain evidence on the impact and achievements of the programme towards the end of the programme period. This will be done by analyzing, drawing conclusions and making recommendations on the achievements, challenges, good practices and lessons learnt in the implementation of the programme. The evaluation will focus on three selected OECD-DAC criteria: **impact, effectiveness, and sustainability**.

In terms of focus of the evaluation and the application of its findings, the more specific sub-objectives are the following:

- Assess the impact and achievements vis-a-vis the programme objectives
- Assess the effectiveness of the programme
- Assess the implementation and sustainability of the cross-cutting themes

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The report and results of the evaluation will be shared and used within Felm and with programme partners and participants as well as with other relevant stakeholders, to support accountability, learning and decision making, and for further development of the programme and projects.

## Evaluation questions

The evaluation questions related to **effectiveness** will describe the achievements towards programme outcomes, including cross cutting themes. Implementation of the crosscutting themes of gender justice, rights of persons with disabilities and climate resilience will be highlighted. Questions related to **impact** will focus on detecting early signs of impact, and questions related to **sustainability** will focus on sustainability of the crosscutting themes. The evaluation questions will be further refined together with the consultant(s) during the inception phase of the evaluation.

### Effectiveness

- To what extent have the program's objectives been achieved?
- What key factors contributed to or hindered these achievements?
- Have Felm's capacity-sharing efforts with partners resulted in new, lasting knowledge and expertise?
- What have been the primary strengths and weaknesses of the implementation of cross-cutting themes (inclusion of persons with disabilities, gender equality, climate resilience)?

### Impact

- To what extent has the program enhanced resilience and inclusion among individuals from marginalized groups within the targeted areas? (impact statement)
- To what extent are the impacts of the programme, and results related to the cross-cutting themes, likely to sustain over time?
- To what extent can observed changes be attributed to the programme?
- What signs of impact can be detected towards the end of the programme period?

### Sustainability

- Have adequate conditions for sustainability been created in the programme design and by the intervention activities?
- What is the long-term viability of the programme interventions?
- To what extent are the impacts of the programme, especially those of the cross-cutting themes, likely to sustain beyond the implementation period?

The questions may be precised in the beginning of the evaluation.

## Scope of the evaluation

The evaluation will cover the implementation years of the programme from 2022 to early 2025, with a focus on programme level analysis. Geographically all the nine programme countries and 32 partner projects will be covered through representative samples. Thematically all programmatic and cross-cutting themes will be covered, with special focus on implementation and sustainability of the cross-cutting themes. Detailed analysis of the project level or travel to project sites is not expected.

## Methodology

The consultant(s) will design a detailed evaluation approach and methodology as part of the assignment. Both quantitative and qualitative methods will be used to validate findings, such as focus group discussions, reflection activities, and workshops. Some activities will be conducted online, while others will take place in Helsinki, Finland. Key participants include Felm staff, local partners, and programme beneficiaries. The exact number of participants will be concluded with Felm at the start of the evaluation.

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The key source of information include:

- Annual programme reports 2022-2025 and annexes
- An adequate sample of final project evaluation reports of the development cooperation programme 2022-2025
- Plans and annual reports of projects included in the sample
- Other relevant documents identified by the evaluator
- Interviews of key persons identified in consultation with Felm

## Deliverables

The expected deliverables of the assignment are:

1. **Inception Report:** A concise description of the approach, methodology, and sampling, including research tools to be used, finalized evaluation questions and possible sub-questions, and the final work plan.
2. **Draft Final Report:** A draft version of the final report in English.
3. **Final Report:** The final report in English (maximum 40 pages), incorporating the following sections: Executive Summary, Introduction, Methodology and Process, Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations.
4. **Annexes:** This should include a List of Documents Reviewed, List of Persons/Partners Interviewed/Surveyed, Data Sheets, Tools Used, and other relevant annexes.
5. **Presentation:** A presentation on the evaluation outcomes for Felm staff and partners.

## Timeframe

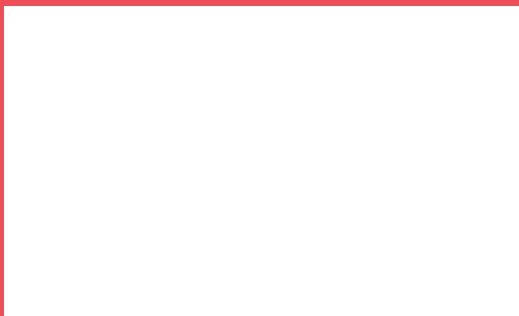
The assignment is estimated to start during Q3 2025 and expected to be completed in November 2025.

### Tentative timeline

This is not a full-time assignment, but the workdays will be allocated to the tentative timeline (August-November 2025). The consultant/consortium shall prepare a detailed work plan in the beginning of the consultancy. The timeline and deliverables will be updated based on the evaluation design and detailed workplan by mutual agreement between the evaluator and Felm.

### Action / Deliverable

Start of the assignment	1st August
Inception meeting with Felm staff	Beginning of August
Inception report	1st September
Draft evaluation report	31st October
Validation meeting to present the findings and draft report to Felm	mid-November
Final report	28th November
Presentation on the evaluation outcomes to Felm staff and partners (online)	December (date to be confirmed)



With support from  
Finland's development  
cooperation