

Deaconess Foundation

Programme Evaluation of the Development Cooperation
Programme 2022-2025

EVALUATION REPORT

8 November 2024

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1. Acronyms & Abbreviations

Apl	Appreciate Inquiry
CEDAW	Convention of the Elimination of all form of Discrimination Against Women
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DF	Deaconess Foundation
DI	Disability Inclusion
EC	European Commission
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GE	Gender Equality
GM	Gender Mainstreaming
GREVIO	Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence ¹
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
IC	Istanbul Convention
KII	Key Informant Interview
MFA	Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRAP	National Roma Action Plan
ODP	Organizations of Persons with Disabilities
OH	Outcome Harvesting
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
ToT	Training of Trainers

¹ GREVIO is the body of independent experts responsible for monitoring the implementation by the parties of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention).

2. Executive Summary

EVALUATION CRITERIA	KEY FINDING	RECOMMENDATIONS
<p>IMPACT</p>	<p>1. The programme has made notable progress in advancing the rights of marginalized groups through efforts in employment, policy advocacy, and psychosocial support.</p> <p>2. Some relevant emerging impacts could be captured more effectively within the programme's results framework.</p>	<p>No action required.</p> <p>Consider enhancing impact-level reporting to more comprehensively capture important Human Rights results: Consider adding qualitative elements to existing impact level indicators one, and two (see more details in the report page 17).</p> <p>Other potential (new) impact-level indicators to consider: Consider including an impact indicator that measures aspects like strengthened and more diverse civil society. This might be relevant considering the programme's strong emphasis on capacity-building, which partners have shown credible progress in achieving. Such an indicator could reflect whether the programme contributes to empowering civil society actors and increasing their diversity, and capacity to advocate.</p> <p>Additionally, an indicator focused on community-level cohesion and safety could be a valuable impact level result. While this is currently measured at the outcome level (e.g., "Increased participation of minorities, marginalised youth, and people affected by conflicts in local communities and societies" and "Ways of participation"), an impact-level measure could assess whether these participation efforts lead to enhanced community trust, reduced social tensions, or perceptions of safety within the community.</p> <p>No action required.</p> <p>Integrate human rights data and analysis: Incorporate comprehensive human rights data and context analysis into project assessments in projects that do not currently already do so (These concerns primarily projects implementing HRBA at progressive level). This would inform programme design and outcomes, ensuring stronger alignment with international human rights standards. There is not necessarily a need to conduct DF's own analysis, yet there is possibility to utilise existing data from the International human rights mechanisms (see more details in the report page 16).</p> <p>Deepen engagement with local rights-holder organisations, such as OPDs, to elevate their leadership roles in planning and decision-making, to ensure persons with disabilities have meaningfully role and voice in activities /project objectives concerning them.</p> <p>Consider intersectionality also in partnerships: Partner with specialised organizations, such as women's OPDs, to address multiple layers of discrimination and ensure projects reflect diverse perspectives, for example in women's empowerment related projects.</p> <p>Provide targeted awareness training on human rights to both local duty bearers, and other responsible actors, and family and community members of the marginalised persons in all projects. This would specifically concern persons facing multiple discrimination, or whose status in communities is extremely vulnerable</p>

EVALUATION CRITERIA	KEY FINDING	RECOMMENDATIONS
		<p>Consider expanding outreach to include young persons in prisons. Engaging young prisoners can promote rehabilitation, social reintegration, and long-term resilience, benefiting both their communities and society as a whole. This concern came from an anonymous source but the evaluation does not have other direct findings to support it. However, since it is such an important issue to consider, please note that this may be an issue to discuss: The free choice for the participants whether or not to share one's story needs to be always clearly communicated. While organisations specialised in supporting victims of violence have a good sense of the principle of consent, when working with the most marginalised this is important across the Programme and for all organisations, including MFA as the donor.</p>
RELEVANCE & COHERENCE	5. The agency of partners and participants has been developed well under the Programme.	No action required.
	6. DF has been effective in promoting partner-led ownership in both the design and implementation of the current programme.	No action required.
	7. DF projects are considered important to the regions/countries and DF is a valued partner.	No action required.
	8. DF's regional approach in Eastern Europe and Western Balkans, and East Africa, has been successful in fostering mutual learning and peer support among partners.	No action required.
SUSTAINABILITY	9. The programme has made substantial progress in providing livelihood and skills development for marginalized groups. However, despite positive outcomes, long-term impact and sustainability of the livelihoods is difficult to track and measure.	<p>Enhance tracking the sustainability of livelihood outcomes: Consider establishing mechanisms for tracking the long-term sustainability of employment and self-employment outcomes, including financial viability and job retention rates, at the end of the Programme. This could be done through follow-up surveys, tracer studies, by tracking of the community-based engagement and by establishing data sharing partnerships. Utilize the existing capacity of individual project partners such as JRS to develop Programme level tools.</p>
	10. Strengthening the evidence base on gendered and other structural barriers to accessing the labour market and employment would support the programme's long-term impact.	<p>Strengthen approaches to livelihoods that recognize gendered barriers. Data-driven solutions to identify and address the root causes of employment challenges would highly benefit the Programme, especially related to women's empowerment. This could include conducting gender-sensitive, or disability-sensitive market studies, developing strategies to improve access to finance for marginalized entrepreneurs, and advocating for policy reforms that promote long-term economic inclusion.</p> <p>Engaging with women-owned private businesses might be strengthened, as well as engaging men in communities, especially fathers and husbands, to support women's employment. In East Africa, ensuring that women entrepreneurs have mutual support could be an important first step. This kind of network could help women build confidence, share resources, and overcome challenges together, strengthening their businesses and advancing gender equality in entrepreneurship. Utilize existing capacity of individual project partners such as the regional project in Eastern Europe for modelling networking may be helpful.</p>
	11. Elements of sustainability have been embedded in the project design and	No action required.

EVALUATION CRITERIA	KEY FINDING	RECOMMENDATIONS
	<p>implementation through several mechanisms.</p> <p>12. Project partners express some confidence in the programme's sustainability, particularly on activities supporting capacity building, long-term support for marginalized communities, and organisational learning.</p> <p>13. In several countries the programme has successfully enabled young persons to start small businesses, often by providing initial capital, training, and networking opportunities.</p>	<p>No action required.</p> <p>No action required.</p>
<p>EFFECTIVENESS & EFFICIENCY</p>	<p>14. While systematic impact-level data is not yet available, there are promising signs of emerging impact.</p> <p>15. Cross-cutting objectives require more systematic guidance, implementation and monitoring.</p> <p>16. The programme has been successful in implementing gender parity (equal numbers of men and women's participation). The next step would require a more consistent and substantive gender equality mainstreaming across all projects.</p> <p>17. There is clear dedication and first steps in the programme for disability inclusion, but more systematic approach including partnerships with local Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (ODPs) would significantly strengthen it.</p>	<p>No action required.</p> <p>Detailed recommendation under section below.</p> <p>Deepen gender mainstreaming: Move beyond gender parity also in the projects not focused on women's rights to address structural gendered challenges by providing mainstreaming guidance and analysis tools to partners. All projects at the design stage should conduct a standardised gender analysis suited for project level (for instance through a joint template produced for the Programme and distributed to all projects). Link the Gender Analysis to all relevant Gender Equality Conventions, Treaties and Platforms for action of the region.</p> <p>The Gender Analysis would create the backbone for Gender Mainstreaming within all the projects. These analyses would show the contextual challenges but could still be easily comparable for Programme level analysis.</p> <p>Strengthen partnerships with OPDs: Consider mapping potential OPDs and assess their capacity needs in each project country to create long-term partnerships and capacity strengthening. Partner with women's OPDs to enhance intersectional approaches. Utilize experts like Abilis Consulting for mapping efforts.</p> <p>Develop accessibility checklists: Create checklists addressing physical, communication, digital, and web accessibility in collaboration with local OPDs to identify and localize accessibility barriers and solutions.</p> <p>Invest in Training of Trainers (ToT): Train individuals proficient in sign language and national languages to engage deaf and other disability communities Vamos Life Skills Trainings (or other similar), to foster better representation and meaningful role of disability communities in the programme. Peer-led training could also strengthen community ownership, peer support, and role modelling. Disability data collection purposes and methodologies:</p> <p>Provide clear guidance on disability data collection to inform project design, outcomes, and monitoring. Leverage DF's partnership with Abilis Consulting to build data disaggregation skills and knowledge. Also, conducting expert interviews with ODPs, and Key Informant Interviews and Focus Groups Discussion with persons with different disabilities, is a way of collecting information and data on the local barriers and enablers for persons with disabilities. Consider integration of Reasonable Accommodation budget for the program, and each project to allow efficient implementation of accessibility.</p>

EVALUATION CRITERIA	KEY FINDING	RECOMMENDATIONS
	18. Achieving the MFA Finland's minimum standard for screening climate resilience, low-emission development, and environmental protection requires investments	<p>Include clear and actionable Climate Resilience and Low Emission objectives, guidance and expertise in the Programme: Strengthen the integration of climate resilience into projects by developing environmental guidelines and monitoring frameworks for partner projects to ensure alignment with MFA minimum standards. In-house expertise, implementation guidance, screening tool and capacity building for partners is needed. Consider also partnerships with local environmental and climate change experts, organisations, academia etc.</p>
	19. The DF's projects have good Return on Investment and project staff is very committed	No action required.
	20. Strategic leadership as well as dedicated staff member on the cross-cutting objectives is needed	Conduct an assessment on the need for added staff positions under the Programme to increase its impact: data from the evaluation points out that at least a cross-cutting advisory position on Climate Resilience and Low Emission with a focus the Human Rights dimension at DF and a staff position at JRS in Kosovo to ensure e.g. follow up on livelihoods sustainability is needed (strongly linked to recommendation number 2). There may be a need for other additional human resources.
	21. A Programmatic approach to managing high stress work situations may be needed	Conduct an assessment on the need for a Programmatic approach to managing high stress work situations. It is recommended to add a budget line for the projects to invest in preventive mental health initiatives and humanitarian emergencies, particularly for staff working in high-risk environments or with very marginalised groups of people. Utilize existing capacity of individual project partners such as KRCT and OWDA in designing the Programme level approach.

Purpose, objectives, and scope of the evaluation: The evaluation of the Deaconess Foundation's (DF) Development Cooperation Programme (2022–2025) is the first evaluation of the programme since it began receiving funding from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. Covering January 2022 to September 2024, the evaluation aimed to identify key findings and provide actionable recommendations for the remaining programme period and the upcoming 2026–2029 phase. The findings will guide DF, partners and stakeholders in refining project implementation and strategy.

Evaluation methodology: The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach. Data collection included desk reviews, key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), an online survey, and evaluation visits to Ethiopia, Somaliland and Kosovo. Participatory methods such as mutual learning workshops enriched the process, fostering active engagement from partners and co-creation as well as validation of findings still retaining the necessary independent nature of the evaluation.

Evaluation questions: The evaluation addressed several key questions such as:

- **Impact:** How has the programme advanced human rights, and what can be done to strengthen its human rights-based approach?
- **Relevance and Coherence:** How is the programme building the agency of partners and participants, promoting partner-led ownership, and reaching the most vulnerable groups? How relevant is DF on a country level?
- **Sustainability:** Are the outcomes sustainable, and how has sustainability been embedded in the design and implementation?
- **Effectiveness and Efficiency:** Have the intended outcomes been achieved and how efficiently? Can cross-cutting objectives such as gender equality, non-discrimination, and climate resilience be better integrated?

Background of the Programme: The DF's development cooperation programme focuses on marginalised youth, minorities, and those affected by conflicts in eight countries: Belarus, Ethiopia, Kosovo, Moldova, Somalia/Somaliland, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Ukraine. Implemented through 15 projects with 17 local civil society partners, the programme seeks to foster inclusive societies by enhancing livelihoods, empowering civil society, and promoting peace and trust.

Summary of key findings

Impact: The programme has made notable progress in advancing the rights of marginalised groups through efforts in employment, policy advocacy, and psychosocial support. The DF programme implements a Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) credibly and generally with high quality.

Relevance and Coherence: The agency of partners and participants has been developed well under the Programme, and the DF has been effective in promoting partner-led ownership in both the design and implementation of the current programme. Also, DF projects are considered important to the regions/countries and DF is a valued partner. Several elements of sustainability have been embedded in the project design and implementation through several mechanisms.

Sustainability: The programme has made substantial progress in providing livelihood and skills development for marginalised groups. However, despite positive outcomes, long-term impact and sustainability of the livelihoods is difficult to track and measure.

Effectiveness and Efficiency: while systematic impact-level data is not yet available, there are promising signs of emerging impact. Cross-cutting objectives require more systematic guidance, implementation and monitoring.

Conclusion: In general, the Deaconess Foundation's Programme is progressing well and achieving its objectives. It is reaching the most marginalised groups in great partnerships with both local NGOs and state actors. The programme is efficient in advancing and supporting realisation of several human rights. The commitment towards the most marginalised distinguishes DF from many other international organisations.

Recommendations:

1. Consider enhancing impact-level reporting to more comprehensively capture important Human Rights results
2. Strengthen HRBA by integrating human rights data and analysis, deepening engagement with local rights-holder organisations, consider intersectionality also in partnerships, and provide targeted awareness training on human rights.
3. Enhance tracking the sustainability of livelihood outcome
4. Strengthen approaches to livelihoods that recognize gendered barriers
5. Deepen gender mainstreaming
6. Systematize implementation of disability inclusion
7. Include clear and actionable Climate Resilience and Low Emission objectives, guidance and expertise in the Programme
8. Conduct an assessment on the need for added staff positions under the Programme to increase its impact
9. Conduct an assessment on the need for a Programmatic approach to managing high stress work situations.

3. Purpose, Objectives and Scope of the Evaluation

The programme evaluation will be the first comprehensive evaluation of the Deaconess Foundation's development cooperation programme since Deaconess Foundation received its first programme-based funding in 2022 from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.

The purpose of the evaluation is to specifically identify lessons learned and best practices and to make recommendations for the remaining programme period and the planning phase of the new programme for 2026-2029. The findings of the evaluation will also give guidelines on designing the new projects under the new programme phase. The evaluation will also help the Deaconess Foundation to crystallise the added value in its operational sectors.

The results of the assessment will serve both internal and external audiences. Results will be shared with the program partners, project participants, donors, and other stakeholders.

The evaluation time phase will cover the period from the beginning of the programme (1 January 2022) until the start of this evaluation (September 2024). The evaluation will focus on the whole programme and all projects under its frame. It should be noted that the current programme partly leans on results achieved earlier by projects that started before the current programme period and which were integrated into the programme from 2022 onwards.

4. Evaluation Questions

As per the Terms of Reference (ToR) of this assignment, and the finalization and agreement on the questions during the inception phase, the purpose of the evaluation is to examine and answer the following que evaluation questions under the programme.

Impact

- How has the programme managed to advance the realisation of human rights of its participants?
- How could the programme strengthen its human rights-based approach?
- What are the next steps for the programme to progress to the next level of human-rights based development?

Relevance and coherence

- How can we develop the agency of the partners and participants within the programme?
- In what ways can we promote partner-led ownership in both designing and implementation of the new programme?
- How have we succeeded in reaching the most vulnerable groups and how can we ensure reaching them in the future?
- How Important has the project been in the particular region/country?
- What is the added value of this programme and the projects in each country?
- How have we succeeded in our regional approach?
- What benefits do partners gain from joint regional projects?

- How can we expand our regional approach and what benefits would that expansion bring?

Sustainability

- How sustainable are the results achieved under the strategic priority of livelihood and skills development of the most marginalised?
- How sustainability has been considered in the project design and implementation?
- To what extent has the programme contributed to creating decent sustainable livelihoods?

Effectiveness and Efficiency

- Have the intended outcomes and impact been reached?
- How can the integration of cross-cutting objectives (especially environment and climate change and disability inclusion) be strengthened in the implementation of the new programme?
- To what extent were the project's resources (time, budget, personnel, and materials) used in the most economical way to achieve the desired outcomes?

5. Evaluation Approach and Methodology

This evaluation has been carried out by applying a mixed method - approach combining both qualitative and quantitative data collection tools. The evaluation will applied Outcome Harvesting (OH) and Appreciative Inquiry (Apl) principles throughout the process - Apl to guide the framing of evaluation questions and discussions, focusing on the strengths and what works well, OH principles to track and document the specific changes that have resulted from these strengths and successful practices. Combination of both some core OH and Apl principles utilised in the process designing the evaluation, the interview questions, collecting and analysing the data, and when finalising the key findings, conclusions and recommendations.

Outcomes are harvested, not predicted: Outcome harvesting does not start with predefined indicators or outcomes. Instead, it collects information on outcomes as they emerge during the course of a program. This approach acknowledges that outcomes can be unpredictable and context dependent.

The focus is on what has changed: it emphasises identifying and documenting actual changes or outcomes that have occurred as a result of the program. This may include both intended and unintended outcomes or impacts.

Context matters: the approach recognizes the importance of the context in which the program operates. Understanding the contextual factors that influence outcomes is essential.

Credibility and verification: Outcome harvesting specifically requires a credible and transparent process. The information gathered should be verifiable, and efforts are made to ensure the accuracy of the data. The process of collecting the outcomes will be participatory, and the Deaconess Foundation selected stakeholders will participate in validating the findings.

Stakeholders' engagement in the entire process: Stakeholders are actively involved in the process of identifying and documenting relevant outcomes and impacts, by providing their perspective on

what changes have occurred, what has been successful and what works. This ensures the evaluation is inclusive and reflective of multiple perspectives.

Participatory process: The evaluation questions are finalized jointly in the inception phase. At later stages, stakeholders are engaged through Mutual Learning Workshops facilitating peer sharing and learning. Furthermore a final Mutual Learning Workshop is used to facilitate discussion and insights into the key findings of the evaluation report draft, building a layer of data for the final analysis, including recommendations.

Combination of evidence-based and storytelling: Combination of OH's rigorous requirement for evidence with Apl's narrative approach, create insightful stories of change that are both inspiring and grounded in real results (backed with evidence).

Utilisation of multiple data sources: Data for the evaluation can come from various sources, including interviews, storytelling, reviewing documents, using surveys, etc. Using multiple sources enhances the reliability of the findings.

Learning and adaptation: The process is flexible and iterative. As outcomes are identified, the approach may adapt to capture new information or dive deeper into specific areas of interest.

Evaluation as learning: focus of evaluation is not just assessing performance but also about learning and improving. The insights gained from the process can inform program adjustments and future planning.

Focus on equality and inclusion: It is important to consider the diverse perspectives and experiences of different stakeholders, including groups and people in marginalised positions and situations, to ensure that outcomes (recommendations) are inclusive and non-discriminatory.

Limitations

All evaluations have limitations related to time and resources. The evaluation team was able to visit Kosovo, Ethiopia and Somaliland, but not all partner countries. This has naturally resulted in more data representing these particular countries.

5.1. Data Collection Methods Applied in the Evaluation

Data collection method	Sample size
Key informant interviews	71
Focus group discussion participants	98
Online survey respondents	22
Mutual learning session I & II participants	24 (8 and 16)

This evaluation utilized both primary and secondary data, which were collected by using different methodological approaches:

For *secondary data collection* from the relevant sources, including programme documentation and context-specific observations, the evaluation utilized:

Desk review - critical analysis of key strategic guidelines and program and project documents (including results reports and previous evaluations when relevant) The comprehensive list of

documents shared by Deaconess Foundation (DF) and reviewed by the evaluation is included in the annex.

Partner country visit - includes context specific observations, this method is applied in more detail below, as the field trip also includes methods applied for primary data collection.

For *primary data collection* from the rights-holders, duty-bearers, and partners the evaluation utilised the following methods:

KoboToolbox online survey (anonymous) - This ensures a way to gather extensive feedback from a large number of programme staff. The survey included a mix of quantitative queries and qualitative questions for more detailed feedback. A total of 22 responses were received, representing partner countries of Belarus, Ethiopia, Kosovo, Moldova, Somalia or Somaliland Tanzania and Ukraine (20 responses), and two responses from DF Finland. The respondents included CEOs and executive directors, country managers, various programme and project level coordinators, managers and officers, experts or advisers. In addition, responses were received from data entry person, finance manager, peer educators, psychologist or counsellors. 14 of the respondents were women, and eight were men. The KoboToolbox survey questions are included in the annex.

Key Informant Interviews (KII) - KIIs involved targeted, in-depth conversations with individuals, with specialised knowledge or perspectives about the project, and their context. The interviews were carried out both online and face-to face. Participants to KIIs included programme partners, participants, DF Programme staff, relevant local duty bearers and rights holders. The KIIs were semi-structured, utilizing a predefined set of questions. However, not all questions were systematically asked in each interview, allowing flexibility to adapt to each unique situation as needed. The list of core questions utilized in KIIs agreed upon in the inception phase is included in annex. For data protection reasons, the list of participants interviewed has not been included to this report.

Focus Group Discussion - FGDs were used as a qualitative data collection method. In an FGD a selected group of relevant people discusses a given topic, issue or programme in-depth, facilitated by the consultant, providing instantaneous validation to each other's ideas as well as building on each other's insights. Participants to FGDs primarily included project participants and rights holders. The size of the groups varied from 3 up to 12 persons in each group. For data protection reasons, the list of participants in the FGDs has not been included in his report.

Partner country visit - a visit to East Europe (Kosovo: 8.9.- 14.9.2024) and East Africa (Ethiopia and Somaliland: 9.9.-18.9.2024) were conducted. A field trip in the project evaluation served as a hands-on method to directly observe project activities, impacts, and the context in which they occur. It allowed evaluators to gain a real-life understanding of the project's implementation, challenges, and successes, enriching the evaluation with practical insights. Many KIIs and all the FGDs were also carried out during these trips.

Two mutual learning sessions - To ensure a participatory evaluation process, two separate mutual learning sessions were organised. The first one with the DF programme team in Helsinki during the inception phase (3.9.2024), and the other one with all project partners during evaluation report writing / analysis phase (5.11.2025). The first learning session had eight participants from the DF Programme staff in Helsinki.

Based on Outcome Harvesting principles, participants collaborated in co-creating and validating the tentative findings and recommendations of the evaluation. This session was utilized to finalize the analysis in the final evaluation report. A total of 16 partners and DF programme staff participated in the session, representing projects from Ethiopia, Somaliland, Kosovo, Ukraine, Moldova, South Sudan, Tanzania, Belarus.

6. Background of the Programme

The four-year development cooperation programme of the Deaconess Foundation is built on the Foundation's long-term experience in development cooperation in Southern and Eastern Africa and Eastern Europe, its key competencies which have been developed along the Foundation's working history and the needs corresponding solutions proposed by the Deaconess Foundation's local partners. With its development cooperation programme, the DF aims at having an impact on the realisation of equality, inclusion and wellbeing among the most marginalised young people, minorities and those affected by wars. The DF implements its programme together with 17 local civil society actors through 15 projects in eight countries (Belarus, Ethiopia, Kosovo, Moldova, Somalia/Somaliland, South Sudan, Tanzania, Ukraine.)

The programme has six key outcomes which together aim at achieving impact²:

1. The capacity of the project partners and other targeted civil society actors has been strengthened.
2. Businesses operate more sustainably, and businesses and other employers employ more inclusively.
3. Services provided by local authorities and other service providers to marginalised young people and minorities are more inclusive, functional and of good quality
4. The roles and capacities of insider reconcilers to stabilise conflicts, and of officials to provide specialised psychosocial services are strengthened.
5. Participation and agency of the minorities, young people in marginalised positions and people affected by conflicts is increased in local communities and societies
6. Awareness in Finland has increased on development cooperation, issues related to young people in marginalised positions, minorities, and reconciliation, as well as of the business potentials in Africa

The DF's programme **includes three priority areas to achieve inclusive, equal, and reconciled societies.** The three priorities are understood and implemented as inextricably intertwined. By interlinking them, the Deaconess Foundation aims to decrease poverty and conflict risks under conditions of global, national, and local inequalities and crises.

Livelihood and skills development of the most marginalised: The programme offers young people facing marginalisation, minorities, the displaced, and persons with disabilities learning programmes, which develop their skills in personal life management and employability. To promote sustainable change, the programme cooperates with and builds the capacities of private and public sectors to better support people in marginalised positions in strengthening their livelihoods.

² Some projects have started before the programme and have not been designed under these outcomes.

Active and resilient civil society: The programme strengthens the skills of representatives of CSOs and marginalised groups in advocacy, policy influencing and networking. The programme also builds enabling environments and structures for dialogue between civil societies and governments.

Peace and trust in communities: The programme focuses on building awareness and skills of insider reconcilers and officials particularly on trauma and psychosocial support. Moreover, the programme interlinks community-based actions in reconciliation with national peace processes.

6.1. Summary of the Programme Objectives and Indicators 2022 - 2025³

Programme Impact (2022-2025)		Impact Indicators
Marginalised youth, minorities, and people affected by conflicts enjoy equal rights, opportunities, and psychosocial wellbeing in communities and societies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number and names of national policies and other institutional documents and actions that support the inclusion of minorities and youth. Number and percentage of targeted youth, minorities, and people affected by conflicts having increased equal access to employment services. Percentage of targeted youth, minorities, and people affected by conflicts whose wellbeing is improved. 	
Programme outcomes	Outcome indicators	Projects contributing
1.The capacity of project partners and other targeted civil society actors has been strengthened.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number and names of policy processes, partnerships, and networks in which project partners and other targeted civil society actors are involved. Project partners' and other targeted civil society actors' organisational and project management performance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empowerment of Roma Women (Kosovo) Supporting Socio Economic Re/integration of Repatriated and Refugees (Kosovo) Peace & Trust in communities MHF-Mandeeq (Horn of Africa) Trust & Peace ACRL (South Sudan) Youth Action for Future Youth Action for Skills (Ethiopia) Youth Agency in Mufindi (Tanzania) Mustaqbaldoon I & II (Somaliland) RWP (Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine) Roma Participation (Ukraine)
2.Businesses operate more sustainably and employ more inclusively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number and types of employers who have employed marginalised youth and minorities in target countries. Number of businesses who have increased knowledge of applying SDGs to businesses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting Socio - Economic Re/integration of Repatriated and Refugees (Kosovo) Youth Action for Future Youth Action for Skills (Ethiopia) Youth Agency in Mufindi (Tanzania) Mustaqbaldoon I, II (Somaliland) Kymppi 2.0 PARC (Finland)

³ More detailed summaries of each project, and their implementing countries are included in the annex.

<p>3. Services provided by local authorities and other service providers to marginalised youth and minorities are more inclusive, functional, and of good quality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved quality, inclusiveness, and functionality of services provided by local authorities and other service providers to marginalised youth and minorities. Number and names of documents which include specific needs of marginalised youth and minorities that are developed or revised by local authorities and other service providers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empowerment of Roma Women (Kosovo) Youth Agency in Mufindi (Tanzania) Mustaqbaldoon II (Somaliland) Roma Participation (Ukraine) RWP (Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine)
<p>4. Roles and capacities of insider reconcilers to stabilise conflicts, and of officials to provide specialised psychosocial services, are strengthened.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number and percentage of insider reconcilers and officials who, after the trainings, use new skills and knowledge in reconciliation work and specialised services for refugees or repatriated. Number of insider reconcilers participating in peace and reconciliation processes and the types of processes. Increased participation of minorities, marginalised youth, and people affected by conflicts in local communities and societies, and ways of participation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting Socio Economic Re/integration of Repatriated and Refugees (Kosovo) Trust & Peace ACRL (South Sudan) Peace & Trust in communities MHF-Mandeeq (Horn of Africa)
<p>5. Participation and agency of minorities, marginalised youth, and people affected by conflicts are increased in local communities and societies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number and types of civic actions, initiatives, campaigns, and policy dialogues implemented by minorities, marginalised youth, and people affected by conflicts. Number and percentage of minorities, marginalised youth, or people affected by conflicts who are employed, have established their own business, or have developed other decent livelihoods after the trainings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empowerment of Roma Women (Kosovo) Supporting Socio Economic Re/integration of Repatriated and Refugees (Kosovo) Youth Action for Future (Ethiopia) Youth Action for Skills (Ethiopia) Youth Agency in Mufindi ((Tanzania) Mustaqbaldoon I & II (Somalia/Somaliland) RWP (Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine) Roma Participation (Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine)
<p>6. Awareness in Finland has increased on development cooperation; issues of marginalised youth, minorities, and reconciliation, as well as the business potentials in Africa.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of people reached through different channels, including social media, articles, blogs, videos, and events related to DF's development cooperation activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications in Finland (related to DF's development cooperation) PARC (Finland)

7. Findings of the Evaluation

7.1. Impact

7.1.1. How has the programme managed to advance the realisation of human rights of its participants?

KEY FINDING: The programme has made notable progress in advancing the rights of marginalised groups through efforts in employment, policy advocacy, and psychosocial support.

The programme explicitly aims to promote equality and non-discrimination, with dedicated projects ensuring that marginalised groups—such as Roma communities, youth, women, and people affected by conflict—enjoy equal rights and opportunities. The programme also acknowledges intersectionality, recognizing how factors like gender, disability, immigration status, and ethnicity intersect to multiple discrimination. The programme document explicitly focuses on advancing the human rights of marginalised groups and aligns well with core human rights principles. Notably, projects such as the Roma Women initiatives have successfully delivered significant and sustainable human rights outcomes at the country level, including contributions to anti-discriminatory policies and establishing platforms to report discrimination in Kosovo.

Below are examples of some of the important human rights results so far:

Policy changes and duty bearers' capacity development

The 2022 and 2023 Programme Results Reports and some KIIs show substantial progress in policy advocacy and duty-bearer capacity especially in Kosovo and Ukraine.

For example, in Kosovo key policy advances have been made, with VoRAE helping to establish the National Strategy for Roma and Ashkali Inclusion and an employment mechanism for public sector jobs.

Furthermore, antigypsyism trainings for government officials have been beneficial. There is increased awareness on antigypsyism among duty-bearers, for instance in discussion with an employment officer in Kosovo their explanation on challenges Roma persons face in employment was focused on discrimination rather than racist stereotypes.

There are also successes on the EU level. On the EU Commission Remarks on the 2024 Enlargement Package Roma issues are high on the accession criteria list, partly due to DF partners' advocacy. The EC report on Kosovo mentions anti-gypsyism, a term used and advocated for by VoRAE.

In Ukraine in December 2023, the Cabinet of Ministers adopted the national Roma action plan and for the first time allocated funds for effective implementation of the national strategy for Roma integration and protection. In the field of education, work on the codification of the Romani language is ongoing.

In Tanzania, advocacy for inclusive hiring has prompted greater interest from employers in hiring marginalized youth and women.

In general, however, it appears that structural Human Rights successes on the duty-bearer level are at this stage of the Programme gained mostly in the European parts of the Programme.

Rights holders awareness of the rights and capacity to claim them

The DF programme has actively strengthened rights holders' awareness and capacity to claim their rights across regions:

In Kosovo, Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities gained knowledge of their rights through policy discussions and advocacy workshops, with organizations like VoRAE influencing the National Strategy for Roma Inclusion. In Ukraine: Collaborations with the Ombudsman's Office empowered the Roma community to understand and secure their rights, including legal protections for access to essential services. Repatriated and refugee women and girls are (and their families) also given knowledge about their rights and supported to claim them through different activities (home visits, provision of legal aid, information sharing sessions involving project participants, NGOs and central and local level officials, public information events)

In Somaliland and Ethiopia, marginalised youth received skills and employability training, boosting self-confidence and awareness of employment rights, with organizations like Y-PEER guiding job search and advocacy efforts.

Now I am certified, before I was engineer, with a contract, with low payment. Now I take full salary, I am certified and can seek jobs in other companies.

Project participant, Ethiopia

Before I was unskilled person, now I am skilled. Biggest change is self-development. Before the course in my family, I was lower member. The family did not see me as important, now I am important. Before I got this skill I had no motivation, no good relationship with family before.

Project participant, Ethiopia

There is also indication of successful awareness-raising among the general public related to minority rights: for instance, the cultural festival celebrating R/A/E cultures show positive signs of larger societal shifts in attitudes towards R/A/E communities.

Roma women's rights

The Roma Women's Power initiative in Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova has made significant contributions to the realization of human rights for Roma women, particularly in ensuring their right to identity through legal assistance for obtaining identification documents. This effort enables Roma individuals to access essential public services, such as healthcare, education, and social protection, which are fundamental human rights. Women's agency and empowerment was achieved through women' groups, peer to peer support and skills development in all countries in Eastern Europe.

Absolutely a huge transformation in the self-esteem and self-confidence of the women. Their digital literacy has improved, too.

Partner in Moldova

Employment and livelihoods: Based on the Programme Annual Reports, 2022 2023, over 600 people have gained employment or started businesses, especially in East Africa. This directly supports the right to work and decent livelihoods, a core economic right.

For example, in Belarus and Kosovo this is strengthened by informal networks of women entrepreneurs providing mentorship to Roma and refugee women, aiming to ensure support and resilience for new enterprises after project completion.

Vocational training and skill development: Across regions, vocational training programs are a central focus, aiming to equip marginalized communities, particularly youth, women, and minority groups, with practical skills for employment. These activities promote core rights related to education and economic empowerment by enabling individuals to secure stable work, supporting the right to education, and furthering the right to participate in economic life. Additionally, by enhancing employability and self-sufficiency, these initiatives can contribute to individuals' ability to claim other rights, such as access to health and social services.

Psychosocial well-being: In conflict zones, such as South Sudan, the programme's emphasis on psychosocial support and trauma healing has contributed to the realization of the right to health, particularly mental health. By addressing trauma and psychosocial needs, the programme has supported and often overlooked aspect of the right to health, particularly in post-conflict and vulnerable settings. In Kosovo, psychosocial support provided by KCRT to repatriated and refugee women has been very important especially to women who have experienced sexual violence, but an equally important aspect has been the work with duty-bearers. This effort has significantly enhanced their understanding and capacity to address the psychosocial needs of repatriated and refugee women and plays a crucial role in empowering repatriated and refugee women to stand up for themselves and demand their rights

The Vamos Life Skills Management Training has shown promising potential in empowering youth and supporting community involvement. In Ethiopia, Vamos-trained youth demonstrated high motivation and even took the initiative to establish similar life-skills support groups for local youth. This suggests the training's role in fostering self-management and peer support, with the potential to build sustainable community networks. This training has contributed to strengthened realisation of the rights to education, right to work, right to participate in cultural life, and community.

There is a difference between being included in the community or living in a lone environment. When you take the training...it helped to be part of the community. It is very or extremely important.

Project participants, Somaliland

This training really affected my life in a better way, it helped me to work with the community and start my own video editing, graphic design business, and I got married.

Project participant, Somaliland

I am a different person. Before the training I knew nothing, today I am an educated person.

Project participant, Somaliland

KEY FINDING: Some relevant emerging impacts could be captured more effectively within the programme's results framework

Based on the evaluation, the current impact-level programme indicators may not always fully reflect all project /country level human rights achievements. There might be room to fine-tune or complement the existing indicators to better capture the broader human rights impacts already taking place and contributed by these projects in their respective countries.

Below are some observations of the current impact level indicators 1 and 2 in this regard:

The current impact indicator 1: Number and names of national policies and other types of institutional documents and actions that support the inclusion of minorities and youth is an important indicator about changes in the policy environment, e.g. enabling environment for implementing human rights. However, it could be strengthened by indicators that reflect human rights impacts on rights holders in the form of reduced discrimination, or improved access to justice etc showing the transformation behind the numbers, e.g. with more qualitative indicators.

The current impact indicator 2: Number and percentage of targeted youth, minorities and people affected by conflicts having increased equal access to employment services: emphasizing "increased equal access," the indicator acknowledges a core HRBA principle — the right to equal opportunity and access to resources, in this case, employment services. This reflects an effort to reduce systemic barriers that often prevent marginalized groups from accessing such services. Having an indicator that assesses the quality of those services or whether they actually result in employment or other meaningful outcomes, such as sustainable economic empowerment would show the impact of the change more strongly. This indicator alone does not capture whether systemic barriers or discriminatory practices are being reduced, which is essential from a human rights perspective.

By aligning the indicators more closely with emerging country level impacts, the program could provide a clearer and stronger picture of the contributions it is already making to meaningful change in people's lives and this way effectively demonstrates its advancement of human rights.

7.1.2. How could the programme strengthen its human rights-based approach?

KEY FINDING: The DF programme implements a Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) credibly and generally with high quality

The evaluation finds that the implementation (in projects) is well aligned with the overall programme level intention, demonstrating satisfying alignment with the respective MFA Finland's criteria at both the transformative and progressive project levels. However, since the related evaluation question seeks advice on how to further strengthen HRBA, the evaluation team has taken an extra level of scrutiny to identify potential opportunities for enhancement. These opportunities could include refining capacity-building efforts especially on the duty-bearer level, improving accountability mechanisms, integrating human rights assessments more systematically in all contexts and fostering stronger local partnerships to deepen the HRBA integration across all projects.

The Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) to development co-operation involves analyzing the human rights context, assessing the needs and capacities of rights holders and duty bearers, incorporating human rights principles like participation, accountability, empowerment, non-

discrimination, and equality, and aligning project objectives with international human rights treaties to ensure compliance with global standards.

Looking at these above core HRBA elements and criteria, as well as the programme documentation and the KIIs, the evaluation can conclude that the DF programme implements a Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) credibly and with high quality:

KEY FINDING: Projects currently at the progressive level of human rights integration could benefit from incorporating more human rights data and analysis into their context assessments and projects designs

According to the programme document, approximately half of the projects are committed to implementing HRBA at a **transformative level**, while the other half do so at a **progressive level**. Transformative projects focus on deep structural changes that challenge and alter existing power dynamics, ensuring long-term empowerment and systemic shifts in human rights practices. In contrast, progressive projects aim at steady improvements by embedding human rights principles more thoroughly in existing structures and practices without necessarily fully challenging those power dynamics. Additionally, MFA Finland has its interpretation of the HRBA, which includes different stages of HRBA⁴.

Around half of the projects currently seem to lack a dedicated human rights analysis in their design. Although at the same time, there are projects like *Roma Women's Power* that integrated HRBA diligently, and according to the indicated HRBA level (transformative).

Incorporating human rights assessments as part of the initial needs or context analysis for all projects would ensure that project planning and design are informed by a thorough understanding of human rights conditions on the ground and would strengthen the overall adherence of the overall programme to HRBA.

As an example, during the context analysis phase, the project team could leverage existing human rights reports, such as those from the CEDAW, GREVIO, Maputo Protocol, UN Security Council (UNSC) resolutions 1325 and 2250, the Beijing Platform for Action, and Universal Periodic Review (UPR) country reports, State Party Reports to Treaty Bodies and respective Concluding Observations and Alternative Reports by NGOS, or to assess the partner country human rights landscapes and to link the projects closely from the beginning to all relevant Human Rights frameworks in the region. By using these existing comprehensive assessments, the projects could identify gaps, such as weak enforcement or outdated regulations, without conducting separate reviews on their own.

In certain contexts, such as Belarus, using explicit human rights language, and implementing explicit human rights agenda, may pose challenges due to local sensitivities and restrictions. In these settings, focusing on economic rights—such as promoting access to employment, vocational training, and livelihood opportunities—can serve as a strategic and safer approach to advancing

⁴ **Sensitive:** At this stage, human rights are recognized in development activities, but the approach primarily ensures that basic human rights principles are respected, and negative impacts are minimized. **Progressive:** Projects at this stage incorporate human rights principles more thoroughly into their planning and implementation. There is a stronger focus on addressing discrimination, promoting participation, and ensuring that development activities actively contribute to human rights outcomes. This stage involves empowering both rights holders and duty bearers. **Transformative:** At this stage a full implementation of HRBA, where projects strive for impactful structural changes that challenge existing power dynamics, existing legislative and policy frameworks. This stage aims for systemic shifts that embed human rights into social, economic, and political frameworks, fostering long-term empowerment and sustainable change.

other human rights. This approach can support immediate economic empowerment, but it may also indirectly foster broader human rights outcomes by enhancing individuals' agency, dignity, and participation in society.⁵

While the programme has effectively facilitated the participation of marginalized groups, there is also potential to deepen its human rights-based approach by fostering stronger partnerships with specific rights-holders. Evaluation data indicates this is particularly crucial for persons with disabilities, who continue to be marginalized and often remain invisible, with their voices not systematically heard in projects and decision-making processes.

7.1.3. What are the next steps for the programme to progress to the next level of human-rights based development?

The programme is already performing well with a strong focus on human rights, facilitating participation among marginalized groups and engaging in impactful activities across regions. However, to deepen its human rights-based approach, some recommendations can be considered: The next step would involve incorporating a more explicit **human rights assessment** into its evidence-gathering processes systematically to all partner countries. This rights-based assessment for all the projects would also allow for more robust measurement of systemic change. **Strengthening meaningful participation of certain rights holders. Enhancing the capacity of local OPDs to advocate for policy and legal changes** is essential. OPDs play a vital role in driving long-term, sustainable change, and building their advocacy skills will help address local vulnerabilities (discrimination) through a rights-based approach.

Additionally, intensified **awareness and capacity building on the human rights** of highly marginalized individuals, including those facing multiple forms of discrimination, should be extended to local duty bearers, family and community members to foster non-discrimination and inclusion.

More concrete steps to consider to further strengthen HRBA are presented under the recommendations section.

7.2. Relevance and Coherence

7.2.1. How can we develop the agency of the partners and participants within the programme?

KEY FINDING: The agency of partners and participants has been developed well under the Programme

The relationships between DF and its implementing partners are reflective, co-operative and supportive. This approach and dynamic is in itself already conducive to developing the agency of its partners. This approach is based on DF values and is strengthened by concrete tools such as Partner Capacity Questionnaire and subsequent tailored trainings.

Furthermore, partners directly report that working with DF is a genuine partnership and they have strong agency.

DF's work with marginalized communities in Finland and with the priority themes of the Programme is widely appreciated by civil society and government partners' alike. The Deaconess Foundation's long history in social justice work brings them a rare kind of gravitas.

*DF is a role model for the team spirit and collaboration;
it feels like an equal partnership.*

⁵ Despite challenges, the Belarus DF partner has been able to report unofficially to the UN Treaty Bodies.

We get the guidance and requirements delivered in a very partnership style through a very participatory approach. They also take a leadership position when needed.

Project staff member in Kosovo

Most of the implementing partners directly represent the community they support and hence the participants' rights, needs and wishes are integrated coherently in the design and implementation of the projects. In some cases, however, where the focus on the marginalized group has been added on to the organization's mission later such as OWDA and youth, there is a need to integrate their perspectives into the design in a more systematic manner. Furthermore, co-operation directly with Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (ODPs) is needed to strengthen the priority area of the rights of persons with disabilities.

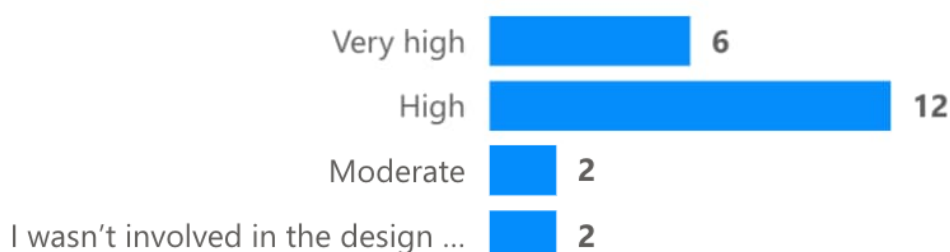
7.2.2. In what ways can we promote partner-led ownership in both designing and implementation of the new programme?

KEY FINDING: DF has been effective in promoting partner-led ownership in both the design and implementation of the current programme.

The KIIs, the FGDs and survey data all indicate clearly that a lot is being done very well already. Many partners shared that DF is particularly good at trusting their partners, enhancing their ownership while at the same time providing guidance and support. Many partners reported that DF, unlike some other donors, builds projects jointly with partners and based on the needs of the context rather than imposing their own agenda. This type of praise is rare in the development co-operation context, especially considering that partners were given multiple occasions to give feedback anonymously. Furthermore, the programme design process appears to have been through, extensive and conducted jointly and effectively with partners.

Additionally, the long-term nature of the projects supports partner-led ownership, as DF's sustained commitment to partner organisations helps navigate more challenging periods and gives them space to plan with impact and their priorities in mind. In the Mutual Learning Workshop II one DF staff member stated a reservation about the effectiveness of their approach, but since the evaluation found no indication of dissatisfaction on this matter at any point or in any data source from the partners' side, this reservation seems to be an exception. If there are more ambitious decolonial processes at DF that may influence the partnership dynamics, it is important to jointly design and agree moving to a more partner-led model.

4a. Local ownership in the design of the programme and its projects



7.2.3. How have we succeeded in reaching the most vulnerable groups and how can we ensure reaching them in the future?

KEY FINDING: DF is reaching the most vulnerable groups well, however, there is room for improvement in terms of ensuring more systematic and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities across the programme

In many cases the key to DF's success in reaching the most marginalised groups has been choosing the right partners. In general, partner selection has been done diligently and strategically through a systematic process. DF's partners are also very confident in their reach, as can be seen from the survey as well as KIIs and FGDs. At the same time, in Ethiopia and Somaliland, many partners are hoping for the project to expand beyond its current locations to achieve a wider reach.

3a. How well the project(s) succeeded in reaching the most marginalised groups in your country



In the online survey, 18 respondents considered the most vulnerable had been reached very well and 4 that they'd been reached somewhat well. Nonetheless, in disability inclusion, where the reach is consistently lower than the targeted 10% there is room for improvement across the Programme.

VORAE is an essential partner for us to reach Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian people, who are otherwise very difficult for us to reach.

Local employment official about DF's implementing partner VORAE in Kosovo

Overall the programme has been effective in reaching very marginalized communities, often facing multiple forms of discrimination and typically excluded from other initiatives and by other donors. However, there are still opportunities to expand this reach to specific groups, such as disability communities as highlighted in many sections in the report.

Another area worth exploring would include young persons in prisons. Early indications from work in Somaliland suggest that engaging young prisoners might yield a very high return on investment. Expanding outreach to young prisoners can have substantial and lasting impacts on their communities and society by promoting rehabilitation, social reintegration, and long-term resilience.

7.2.4. How Important has the project been in the particular region/country? What is the added value of this programme and the projects in each country?

KEY FINDING: DF projects are considered important to the regions/countries and DF is a valued partner

Many partners report that DF projects are very important especially due to their focus on the most marginalized people that other donors or international organizations are not focused on. This comes across consistently throughout the Programme.

The Deaconess Foundation’s work in Finland, for instance with the Roma community, the Vamos concept, and in the Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims, is seen as a great asset that partners and their countries can learn from. DF has also organized meetings with their partners and Sami activists, linking the marginalisation and decolonization discussion in Finland with partners’ efforts.

What emerges clearly from the KIIs and FGDs is that the partnership with DF is regarded as very relevant. In fact, 16 survey respondents described their partnership with DF as highly relevant, and six rated it as very relevant, highlighting the importance of DF to their work.

In Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans, DF has demonstrated notable success by leveraging grassroots data and presenting it at high-level European platforms, showcasing a unique combination of reach and credibility at both levels. This dual capacity adds significant value, as it ensures that community-level insights inform high-level discussions and policymaking.

1. Relevance of Deaconess Foundation partnership



The importance and added value of DF are also evident in their partnership approach. As part of project implementation, DF supports the institutional growth of partner organizations, a process that is strengthened by their long-term commitment.

Three examples:

DF has supported VORAE, a Roma Rights organization, in Kosovo from 2017 and facilitated their growing focus towards greater integration of women’s empowerment and political rights.

Through its partnership with DF, OWDA has significantly developed its expertise in youth work, expanding beyond its traditional role as a large humanitarian actor. This growth has been supported by capacity-building efforts, which have strengthened its ability to manage projects and engage with marginalised groups.

Similarly, Y-Peer has experienced notable institutional growth, particularly in administrative and organizational capacities, further enhancing its impact in the field of youth work. Both East-African organizations have benefited from the partnership, demonstrating significant development in both management and programmatic areas.

7.2.5. How have we succeeded in our regional approach and what benefits do partners gain from joint regional projects?

KEY FINDING: DF's regional approach in Eastern Europe and Western Balkans, and East Africa, has been successful in fostering mutual learning and peer support among partners.

The regional approach in Eastern Europe and Western Balkans, and East Africa has fostered mutual learning, peer support, and strengthened networks among partners. This approach is valued, with partners reporting that they can share insights, resources, and strategies tailored to each country's context. For instance, post-conflict experiences in Kosovo with Roma integration can inform efforts in Ukraine in the future, while the regional Roma Women's Power project connects partners in Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine. In Belarus, this collaboration led to the formation of the first Roma Business Network, with plans to expand regionally. Additionally, the regional framework has enabled flexible, collective responses during crises, leveraging regional support structures and resources.

In East Africa, collaboration on youth employment and peacebuilding initiatives has been beneficial, as similar challenges allow for shared solutions and strategies. For example, the Peace & Trust in Communities - Horn of Africa has connected peacebuilders and trauma specialists from Kenya and Somalia, supporting shared insights on trauma awareness, peacebuilding, and reconciliation. This collaborative approach has enhanced the programme's impact, evident through joint workshops and partnerships with institutions like Kenya's National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) and Somalia's Maandeeq Mental Health organization.

Key benefits:

- Enhanced knowledge sharing: Partners gain insights and strategies from others facing similar challenges, with initiatives like trauma healing in the Horn of Africa providing a model for cross-border mental health support.
- Strengthened networks: Regional projects establish networks that continue beyond the programme's timeline, with groups like the Eastern African Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Practitioners supporting long-term peace and reconciliation efforts.

7.3. Sustainability

7.3.1. How sustainable are the results achieved under the strategic priority of livelihood and skills development of the most marginalised?

KEY FINDING: The programme has made substantial progress in providing livelihood and skills development for marginalized groups. However, despite positive outcomes, long-term impact and sustainability of the livelihoods is difficult to track and measure.

The KIIs and FGDs in Ethiopia, Somaliland and Kosovo support the evidence from the reports: A common theme across the discussions is the positive impact of vocational training on youth and marginalized women, particularly in areas such as mechanics, beauty industry, infirmary, plumbing, secretarial skills, and tailoring.

Participants to KIIs and the FGDs consistently reported that these trainings have provided them with the skills needed to enter the job market or enhance their self-employment opportunities. For instance, several participants in the focus groups (Ethiopia and Somaliland) mentioned gaining employment as mechanics or plumbers after completing their training. The program has also contributed to economic empowerment, with multiple interview participants reporting starting their own businesses or securing full-time employment in local companies (Ethiopia, Somaliland).

At the same time, the programme currently lacks a robust mechanism for tracking the long-term impact of the livelihoods created. While the immediate outcomes (jobs created, businesses started) are reported, there is little data on how sustainable these livelihoods are after several years, or after the programme's support would end. For example, the ongoing financial viability of small

businesses established under the programme, or the retention rate of jobs created is not consistently monitored. There is no comprehensive tracking of the financial stability of businesses, or the longevity of jobs created under the programme. This limits the ability to understand whether the programme's interventions lead to permanent improvements in participants' economic conditions.

KEY FINDING: Strengthening the evidence-base on gendered and other structural barriers to accessing the labour market and employment would support the programme's long-term impact.

There is limited evidence on how the programme addresses structural barriers that prevent marginalized groups from achieving long-term economic success. For instance, apart from the projects focused on Roma women's empowerment, no specific market analysis appears to have been conducted from a gender perspective, which would highlight the gendered challenges in accessing the labour market and starting businesses. Similarly, there are no in-depth studies on the barriers faced by persons with disabilities in entering the workforce or sustaining businesses.

Example: The project document Youth Action for Skills in Ethiopia recognizes that cultural gender norms restrict the voices and representation of young women, making it difficult for them to publicly assert their rights, and that accessing the job market or starting business is more difficult for girls than it is for boys. In response, the project primarily aims to collect disaggregated data on vocational certifications and job creation rates for young men and women, while setting a target of 50% participation of women for their training.

Although the project monitors and disaggregates data by sex, it does not clearly outline how this data could inform future gender-specific interventions. Gathering data without an analysis or strategy for advocacy or intervention may reduce its effectiveness. The project could benefit from using the data to develop tailored programs or adjust strategies to better address specific, gendered needs or barriers that women face in accessing education, vocational training, labour market and / or starting a business.

I have met discouragement from men who do this business (tailoring). They are always discouraging me from this business. They have tried to get me to stop.

When I started the tailoring training, there were an equal number of men and women. They (women) also started tailoring but they have stopped for the first challenge, there was no commitment from them. I have no business partners or colleagues in the same business (tailoring)

Woman entrepreneur, Ethiopia

In conclusion, while the programme's efforts to engage employers in inclusive employment are important steps, the current actions alone might not be sufficient to overcome deeper systemic barriers, especially for young persons who face multiple forms of discrimination, such as those based on gender or disability, as an example. A more focused approach to addressing market access issues for new entrepreneurs—combined with policy-level advocacy to create a more inclusive economic environment—would likely strengthen the programme's impact. This could include conducting gender-sensitive, or disability-sensitive market studies, developing strategies to improve access to finance for marginalized entrepreneurs, and advocating for policy reforms that promote long-term economic inclusion.

7.3.2. How sustainability has been considered in the project design and implementation?

KEY FINDING: Elements of sustainability have been embedded in the project design and implementation through several mechanisms.

Elements supporting sustainability

Strong local ownership: One of the critical factors ensuring the sustainability of the program is DF's approach, which prioritises local knowledge and ownership. From the outset, local partners and stakeholders have played a significant role in the design and implementation of the projects. This ensures that the interventions are contextually relevant, responding to the specific needs and realities of the communities they work with. By embedding local expertise and ensuring strong ownership at every stage, the projects are more likely to endure beyond the life cycle of donor funding.

Strategically chosen local partners: The program has worked with carefully chosen local partners who have a deep understanding of the local context, as well as strong existing relationships both to the communities and state institutions. This has ensured that projects are contextually relevant and responsive to local needs.

Cooperation with local businesses: Collaboration with local businesses to foster employment opportunities for marginalized groups has been a key strategy. This approach ensures that skills training is aligned with market needs, increasing the likelihood of sustained employment. In many projects, market analysis has been conducted to better understand local economic demands, ensuring that training programs are directly connected to viable local economic opportunities.

Tailor-made learning paths and entrepreneurship support: The program has placed a strong emphasis on providing tailor-made learning paths that respond to the specific needs and contexts of project participants/rights holders. In regions where self-employment is often the most viable livelihood option, the program has provided start-up kits, formed savings and loan groups, and offered continuous mentoring support after training. These elements have been crucial in supporting participants in sustaining their livelihoods and ensuring the long-term impact of the projects.

Focus on individual development: A strong focus on individual empowerment through programs such as Vamos Life Management Skills Trainings and other training initiatives has played a vital role in sustainability. While not all training has resulted in starting businesses or direct employment, all interviewees consistently reported significant personal growth. They noted improvements in their self-confidence, their ability to see themselves as employable, and an enhanced sense of self-worth. Additionally, participants reported increased clarity and focus on their long-term goals, with many describing these changes as permanent or long-term. This emphasis on individual development has provided participants with valuable personal growth, even when immediate employment outcomes were not achieved.

The approach to personal development not only equips individuals with technical skills but also fosters confidence, leadership, and resilience.

This project is unique. This uniqueness of focusing on human development.

Other donors are constructing schools or drilling boreholes, this project (DF funded project) is constructing human beings.

Always when you are investing in human beings, it is sustainable. They will have the skill, the confidence also after.

Ethiopian partner

Elements challenging sustainability

Addressing multiple discrimination requires long-lasting work When initiatives are designed to target deeply marginalized groups, they often require significant, ongoing support to address the complex and multifaceted barriers and discrimination.

For marginalised communities, especially groups like the Roma, sustainable impact requires multi-generational work. Change is expected to be long-lasting as new generations benefit from the skills and behaviours instilled through project activities.

Project Partner, online survey

Challenging contexts: Many of the programme’s activities take place in areas affected by war, conflict, drought, or other crises. These conditions can disrupt programme implementation, limit access to participants, and deplete resources, impacting the programme’s ability to sustain its outcomes.

Biggest challenge is the geopolitical dynamics, the country is yet not stable almost 15 years after war. There is still too much small arms in the arms of civilians, then there has not been tangible development with the new government. They have postponed elections twice, that is shrinking democratic space. Brutal government that kills activists. Human rights activism is done in diaspora. Illiteracy is still an issue...and poverty...

Project Partner, South Sudan

KEY FINDING: Project partners express some confidence in the programme’s sustainability, particularly on activities supporting capacity building, long-term support for marginalized communities, and organisational learning

Based on the survey, 20 out of 22 said they think the results of the project are either very likely or somewhat likely to be sustainable. Although there are only six who responded, “very likely”, the open-ended responses indicate that the “somewhat likely” responses are related to either challenging contexts, or very high local demand, where the current resources might not be enough.

10a. Likelihood of achieved project results to be sustained after it ends?



The sustainability of results is challenged by high demands and insufficient staff, particularly in psychosocial support. To ensure long-term success, either the number of beneficiaries should be reduced, or the staff levels increased.

Project Partner (online survey)

On the other hand, more confidence for the sustainability of the results is expressed for the activities related to different capacity building initiatives, including institutional/ organisational capacity building, and in creating employment opportunities.

A focus on training state institutions and professionals in trauma-informed practices ensures long-term sustainability, as these trained professionals can continue providing support after the project's conclusion. Peer support groups led by psychologists are also expected to operate beyond the project timeline.

Project Partner (online survey)

Several beneficiaries were connected to potential employers or provided with resources to start their own income-generating activities, such as receiving equipment for tailoring businesses, which is likely to continue benefiting them.

Project partner (online survey)

Organizational learning has been strong, with projects focusing on local capacity-building, partnerships with stakeholders, and systems to create long-term employment opportunities for marginalized groups.

Project partner (online survey)

7.3.3. To what extent has the programme contributed to creating decent sustainable livelihoods?

KEY FINDING: In several countries the programme has successfully enabled young persons to start small businesses, often by providing initial capital, training, and networking opportunities

It is worth noting that in East Africa, the programme has shown clear, positive results; however, sustainability is not guaranteed. There is no systematic evidence yet that it creates lasting livelihoods, particularly for marginalized groups, as outcomes appear to vary depending on the specific community involved. While there are promising indications from East Africa, the context in Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans, the multiple discrimination creates more challenges for business creation, whereas there is indication of more sustainable results in employment.

*After training I was able to go to self-study. Foreign exchange and marketing.
I am now able to generate my own income.*

Project participant, Ethiopia

Promoting inclusive employment practices: Through its advocacy work, the programme has helped reduce discrimination in hiring practices, particularly for Roma communities, marginalized youth, and on persons with disabilities. This focus on inclusion is critical for creating opportunities that lead to long-term sustainability. For instance, in Kosovo, VORAE has managed to build pathways to business and employment through its internship program for the R/A/E youth.

The project has helped us a lot, we are now open to the labor market, before we didn't see how it could be possible in practice

Internship programme participant in Kosovo

The project has been a good experience. I have an employee, she had a difficult background, but she is very motivated to work and have profits from that, interested to invest in herself and to earn something for independence, not to depend on others

Business owner, Kosovo

Psychosocial support: Integrated **psychosocial support** has been a vital aspect of ensuring the long-term participation and well-being of programme participants. Tämä sisältää Sudanin toimet ja Vamos Life Skills Training. In Kosovo Refugee and Repatriated Women need psychosocial support in their integration back to everyday life and eventually employment.

7.4. Effectiveness and Efficiency

7.4.1. Have the intended outcomes and impact been reached?⁶

KEY FINDING: While systematic impact-level data is not yet available, there are promising signs of emerging impact

Based on the Programme Annual Reports 2022, 2023, and the Programme Results Framework 2022, 2023, the intended outcomes and impact of the programme are progressing well, with many outcomes either achieved or showing early signs of impact, although the full realisation of impact is still underway as intended for a Programme that finishes in 2025.

The collection of systematic impact-level results data was not included in the Annual Report process for 2022 and 2023. In 2023 DF collected impact level data from two projects as a pilot, and next time impact data from all projects will be collected at the end of the programme in 2025; and is therefore not included in this Evaluation.

However, looking at the programmes' accumulative results framework (2022, 2023) it is evident that the programme is efficient in achieving the intended results. The programme has significantly overachieved in forming partnerships and engaging networks. This suggests strong collaboration across sectors, which is a key factor for sustainability and scaling impacts. Results related to employer engagement in East Africa are promising, indicating effective programme delivery in this region. At the same time, there seems to be more challenges with engagement in East Europe, both in terms of employers (reaching only 20% of the target)⁷ and the indicator promoting sustainable business practices (SDGs integration, 0%) has not been in use.

The project started in 2021, so it is difficult to measure impact. At output level we have several (results): the youth's self-confidence has improved so much.

The main thing is human development.

Ethiopian partner

⁶This question is dealt under Effectiveness and Efficiency and not under impact, because the question was situated under this section in the ToR, and later approved during the inception phase.

⁷ As stated in the annual report 2023, this can partly be explained by the fact that only one project from Eastern Europe, which started in September 2022 in Kosovo with a limited economic empowerment component, contributes to outcome 2, whereas three projects from East Africa, which began in 2019 and 2021, contribute to it.

Early indications of impact

Improved psychosocial well-being: The programme's efforts in providing mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) have shown positive early results that may have lasting impact. Insider reconcilers and participants in the programme have reported improved psychosocial well-being, better trust within communities, and enhanced participation in peace and reconciliation processes. Training of social service officials on psychosocial support has been beneficial in Kosovo.

Transformations at individual and community levels. The evaluation notes from the KIIs and FGDs show significant transformations at both individual levels, which show early indication of emerging impact at community level. Although the results related to increased community level participation are measured at outcome level in the current Result Framework (*Increased Participation of minorities, marginalized youth and people affected by conflict in local communities and societies*), the emerging impact of this at the community level (i.e. how communities seem to be becoming safer), is not currently measured at outcome nor at impact level.

Participants in the Vamos training, and psychosocial training provided under YAM, have shown clear improvements in self-confidence, a stronger sense of self-worth. The early signs of these changes show a positive path where personal development gradually adds up to community-level impact (safer and more inclusive communities). While still preliminary and largely anecdotal, interviews reveal stories of increased community participation and signs of more active citizenship. Some community members have observed perceived reductions in local crime, though further evidence would be needed to confirm these trends. Additionally, secondary data sources indicated that reconciliation activities have contributed to notable decreases in election-related violence in some regions in Kenya by Peace & Trust in Communities - Horn of Africa -project.

Psychosocial training has changed the mindset of the young people, giving youth the motivation and the feeling of self-worth that helps them in social connection. The VCPCs and the project team have been mentoring the young people, which is also a big factor. Many of the young people especially mentioned psychosocial training as an important turning point, which gave them confidence and changed their perceptions of their opportunities. It has not only increased their participation on the community level, but the mindset change has e.g. decreased the level of thefts in the villages where the young people attending project activities come from.

YAM project evaluation

Rights education leading to policy changes:

Rights holders, particularly in Kosovo and Ukraine, have gained a deeper understanding of their rights and have become more active in their communities. This empowerment has led to greater participation in policymaking and advocacy for improved services leading also to changes on the duty-bearer level: In Ukraine for instance there have been great successes in the policy and institutional level. Thanks to the advocacy of DF Partner Chiricli, the National Roma Action Plan (NRAP) for the implementation of the Roma Strategy was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. The NRAP will be coordinated by the Inter-Ministerial Working Group. Five Roma NGOs, including Chiricli, were selected as members of this group.

KEY FINDING: The programme demonstrates strong efficiency in achieving its outcome-level results

The programme has made notable progress in achieving, and in some cases over-achieving, many of its intended outcomes, particularly in the areas of employment, capacity building, and reconciliation.

While the programme is on track, and many of the intended outcomes have been reached, such as creating employment opportunities and strengthening community capacities, the journey towards achieving full impact is naturally still in process. Early signs of progress, however, indicate that the programme is moving in the right direction, with participants reporting improvements in livelihoods, skills development, and community reconciliation efforts.

KEY FINDING: Programme has demonstrated adaptability in ongoing conflicts and emergencies

The programme's annual reports (2022, 2023) highlight the persistent challenges posed by ongoing conflicts and emergencies, such as the war in Ukraine and instability in South Sudan. These conflicts have naturally delayed the realisation of certain impacts. Nevertheless, the programme has demonstrated adaptability, continuously revising its strategies to operate effectively within these difficult contexts. Despite these obstacles, the programme has made measurable progress toward fostering stability and resilience within affected communities.

Below is a short summary of some of the results under all key outcome areas of the programme:

1. The capacity of the project partners and other targeted civil society actors has been strengthened.

Project partners and local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) have become more influential and better equipped to advocate for human rights and policy change. Many CSOs have actively participated in policy processes, contributing to systemic change and improving access to public services for marginalised communities.

Project partners repeatedly reported that DF has actively provided them with various trainings and support, study visits and mutual learning opportunities (between and among regional projects), Several partner organisations have been able to grow and become credible actors as a result of the partnership and the capacity development provided by DF.

2. Businesses operate more sustainably, and businesses and other employers employ more inclusively

The programme has worked closely with local businesses to promote inclusive hiring practices. For example, in Kosovo and East Africa (Ethiopia and Somaliland), employers have been encouraged to hire individuals based on skills rather than clan or ethnicity, promoting more inclusive recruitment. There are systematic reports from the young persons who have been employed as a result of the vocational training or internships provided by the projects.

3. Services provided by local authorities and other service providers to marginalised young people and minorities are more inclusive, functional and of good quality

Based on Programme Results Report (2022, 2023), in Kosovo, Ukraine and Tanzania, important progress has been made in improving the inclusiveness and quality of services provided by local authorities.

The programme has actively engaged in capacity building for local authorities. For instance, in Tanzania, the capacity of 16 Village Child Protection Committees was strengthened through safeguarding training, which has led to some improvements in service delivery for marginalized children and young persons with disabilities.

Programme's advocacy efforts and some policy reform processes have also led to more inclusive and accessible services for minorities in Eastern Europe, particularly by improving Roma access to municipal services in Ukraine. Reports about the needs of internally displaced Roma and Roma with disabilities were presented to relevant authorities, leading to better service provision and creation of important data on marginalized and previously under documented Roma persons.

We have collected information about the needs of the people with disabilities. We have a representative who is specifically speaking about the needs and situation of the people with disabilities on international fora like at the United Nations, OSCE and Council of Europe.

Partner in Ukraine from Chiricli, a Roma organisation

4. The roles and capacities of insider reconcilers to stabilise conflicts, and of officials to provide specialised psychosocial services are strengthened

In the Horn of Africa, insider reconcilers trained through the programme have played a critical role in stabilising conflicts and advancing peace processes. The programme has also integrated trauma healing and psychosocial support into peacebuilding and social services, which is a significant shift towards more sustainable reconciliation efforts and better services.

The training helped us, as social service providers, identify our importance when we meet someone and how to refer them to psychosocial support. It showed us the value of psychosocial support.

Training participant from state institutions, Kosovo

5. Participation and agency of the minorities, young people in marginalised positions and people affected by conflicts is increased in local communities and societies

The programme has successfully increased the employability of marginalised groups. For example, by 2023, over 613 individuals had found jobs, started businesses, or developed other sustainable livelihoods across regions such as Kosovo and East Africa. Marginalised youth, minorities, and people affected by conflicts have acquired valuable life management and employability skills, which have boosted their self-confidence and their economic independence.

6. Awareness in Finland has increased on development cooperation, issues related to young people in marginalised positions, minorities, and reconciliation, as well as of the business potentials in Africa

Partnering for Change (PARC) has been instrumental in starting discussions on decolonizing development work in Finland, initiating training sessions for Finnish NGOs and professionals to shift perspectives on the Global South. By collaborating with diaspora members, PARC organized

events like "country days" and impactful discussions, enabling diaspora voices to shape project narratives and engage Finnish stakeholders

Kymppi 2.0 organised events (e.g., country days on Nepal and Tanzania) to connect Finnish SMEs with local contexts, fostering sustainable business practices focused on human rights and environmental issues. It also engaged 224 participants in a hackathon, resulting in the creation of solutions related to climate action, showcasing Kymppi's commitment to SDGs and reinforcing its outreach to future entrepreneurs.

However, programme reporting and the KIIs suggest that more targeted campaigns and deeper engagement with Finnish business could further enhance these efforts.

7.4.2. How can the integration of cross-cutting objectives (especially environment and climate change and disability inclusion) be strengthened in the implementation of the new programme?

KEY FINDING: Cross-cutting objectives require more systematic guidance, implementation and monitoring

The programme document outlines three main cross-cutting objectives: Gender Equality, Non-Discrimination and Climate Resilience and Low Emission Development. While the DF programme states that it employs a "twin-track" (an approach combining both targeted /specific projects and mainstreaming the cross-cutting objectives across all projects) strategy for gender equality and non-discrimination the mainstreaming aspect of this strategy does not appear to be comprehensively implemented.

To strengthen the DF Programme's approach, it will be important to clarify and streamline how cross-cutting objectives are actually mainstreamed⁸.

Below, the evaluation will take a more detailed look at each of the three cross-cutting objectives, including their guidance, implementation, and potential opportunities for improvement. The focus is on how these cross-cutting objectives are mainstreamed across the projects.

Gender Equality

KEY FINDING: The programme has been successful in implementing gender parity (equal numbers of men and women's participation). The next step would require a more consistent and substantive gender equality mainstreaming across all projects.

Four of the 15 projects under the DF Programme are specifically focused on women's rights and empowerment. Additionally, Gender Equality as a cross-cutting objective is relevant to all the projects under the programme.

Programme-level guidance: The programme emphasizes gender equality through both targeted actions, such as women's empowerment initiatives (primarily the Roma projects), and by mainstreaming gender considerations into all projects. Depending on the context, partners are expected to conduct gender analyses of the context and ensure that women are actively involved in project planning and implementation. The upcoming Gender Equality checklist being currently developed by DF will provide substantive support for the projects.

⁸ The need for more robust support in most cross-cutting objectives has been recognized by the international team, with initiatives underway to develop checklists for Human Rights-Based Approaches (HRBA), Gender Equality (GE), and Disability Inclusion (DI).

Implementation: In practice, the focus in the non-targeted projects has primarily been on achieving gender parity, often reported through outputs such as the number of women participating in activities or receiving training. However, broader elements of gender mainstreaming, such as addressing underlying structural barriers and conducting gender analyses, have not been fully implemented. This has in some projects resulted in a limited focus on the long-term systemic impacts of gender equality efforts, with the reports concentrating more on participation numbers than on measurable shifts in gender roles or rights, in other than the Roma women’s rights and repatriated and refugee women related initiatives.

Example: When gendered barriers to accessing the labor market are not identified and addressed, individual women are the ones who suffer most, facing discrimination and harassment in the workplace or in business settings. This not only limits their ability to participate and succeed but also diminishes their economic independence. However, the implications of these barriers extend far beyond the individual level. Persistent gender discrimination impacts society as a whole, perpetuating inequality, hindering overall economic development

Partners mostly report satisfaction related to the level of Gender Mainstreaming in projects, perhaps reflecting their understanding that parity is sufficient.

5b. Gender equality



Non-Discrimination

Four out of the 15 projects were focused on Roma rights. Only one project has a partner that can be classified as an ODP, but it is more focused on rehabilitation than explicit disability rights work, and at least one project has an ODP stakeholder involved in the project.

Programme-level guidance: Non-discrimination is a core objective, with the programme targeting marginalized groups— including ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, refugees and repatriated women —through capacity-building efforts and advocacy for more inclusive policies. The programme also encourages the active involvement of marginalized communities in decision-making processes.

Implementation: The non-discrimination objective is reflected in the participation of marginalized groups in many activities. However, in East Africa the implementation tends to emphasise their inclusion in activities, such as training or employment opportunities, without necessarily addressing the systemic or other barriers⁹ that perpetuate discrimination. On the contrary, partners in Eastern Europe and Western Balkans, such as VoRAE and Chiricl, supported duty-bearers’ work to draft non-discrimination legislation, and monitored and reported discrimination. Ethnic profiling,

⁹ Discrimination and harassment against women in girls in the labour market or in business, stigma and discrimination against persons with disabilities accompanied by physical, legal, economic, communication related barriers.

monitoring and preventing hate crimes, working with police and relevant stakeholders in this field are also an area of work in Ukraine and Kosovo especially.

Disability inclusion

KEY FINDING: There is clear dedication and first steps in the programme for disability inclusion, but more systematic approach including partnerships with local Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (ODPs) would significantly strengthen it

At the programme level, disability inclusion is a key component of DF's commitment to non-discrimination. The programme aims to ensure that persons with disabilities participate fully in all activities, estimating that 10% of the participants in programme activities are persons with disabilities. There is a targeted focus on employability programmes, such as in Tanzania, where youth with disabilities are provided opportunities to improve their skills and access decent livelihoods. The programme partners have also been provided with training on mainstreaming disability inclusion by Abilis Foundation. The DF has a clear commitment to implement disability inclusion, and the programme has made important progress in building the bases for required knowledge, skills and practices around disability inclusive programme implementation across its project partners and at the Programme level (DF international team).

Training was much better facilitated (than others) but I would be looking specifically for disability, because they have less chance, there is a need to build their skills, so training should be more accessible.

Project participant, Somaliland

In some countries (for example in Kosovo, Moldova, Tanzania, and Somaliland) some partnerships have been built with local ODPs or the Abilis Foundation and their local offices. In Ukraine Chiricli and local ODPs did together a study on Roma with disabilities. DF reports that in Moldova DF partner works closely with a women's ODP. In Ukraine Chiricli and local ODPs did together a study on Roma with disabilities. DF reports that in Moldova DF partner works closely with a women's ODP. However, KIIs firmly indicate that more often than not there are no systematic or meaningful partnerships between DF, its partners, and local ODPs. This was also discussed in the Mutual Learning Workshop II.

Based on the survey results, 13 out of 22 respondents think disability inclusion is implemented very well, whereas nine respondents think it is implemented somewhat well.

5c. Disability inclusion



KIIs in several projects have shared a concern around the need to do more, although in some contexts this might take more time, due to strong stigma associated with disability, as well as due

to general invisibility of persons with disabilities in some communities, and often the weak capacity of local ODPs.

*We need to design accessible physical and virtual spaces for people with disabilities.
This is one of the biggest challenges we have.*

Partner in Kosovo

*There's inadequate visibility and representation amongst people with disability on
committees at village level all the way up.*

Partner in Kosovo

*We have to start with the partnership with the disability rights organizations. It's
very, very essential in our context of the project and the country, and also involving
the people with disabilities in planning and decision making.*

Partner in Moldova

While there are many promising initiatives around disability inclusion, a comprehensive program level approach to implementing accessibility and disability inclusion is needed. Also, the few projects with more explicit disability focus, require strong ODP partnerships and the voice of persons with disabilities in them.

In the next phase, it will be crucial to establish more meaningful partnerships with OPDs across the whole Programme to ensure a rights-based approach and address structural barriers¹⁰ in a more systematic way. Conducting a mapping of potential local ODP partners in all of the Programme countries and assessing their capacity development needs, either prior to or early in the next programme phase, could provide valuable insights to advance the disability inclusion commitment. This initiative could be undertaken in partnership with Abilis Consulting and its country offices.

Practical guidance on how to take into consideration accessibility, accompanied by reasonable accommodation budget as a standard budget line in each project¹¹, would also help implement the disability inclusion comprehensively and in a more systematic way across the programme.

Disability data collection

Currently the projects collect disability data in a fragmented and inconsistent manner. With a standardized Programme approach to disability data collection significant risks related to privacy breaches, inaccuracy, and data reliability and comparability can be avoided.

¹⁰ Those barriers can include physical barriers, policy and legislative barriers, economic barriers, transportation related barriers, stigma and discrimination, communication related barriers etc.

¹¹In the context of disability inclusion, "reasonable accommodation" is an essential anti-discrimination measure that empowers individuals with disabilities to exercise their rights on an equal footing with others. This accommodation is tailored to benefit a specific person, potentially modifying or complementing standard policies and services, and can often be provided immediately in certain circumstances. Applicable across various settings, reasonable accommodation may or may not involve costs. Although it addresses the needs of one person, it often brings broader benefits. For example, an accessible pathway created for one individual can later be used by many, enhancing overall accessibility and participation (see more information from the CRPD, at least the articles 2, 5, 24, 27). It is recommended to have standard procedure for addressing requests for reasonable accommodation as well as a budget for covering potential costs of reasonable accommodation.

Defining disability is particularly challenging, and directly asking about disabilities may not always be appropriate - that methodology will only include those who self-identify as persons with disabilities typically leading to significant under-reporting. Importantly, the projects are not diagnosing anyone. Rather, there may be a need to monitor the participation of persons with disabilities in project activities and assess the accessibility, inclusion, and non-discriminatory nature of those activities by design, or the programme outcomes for persons with disabilities and the general population (the difference in outcomes between participants with and without disabilities). Each of these might require different methods fitting the purpose.

It is important to clarify these aspects within the programme. Establishing clear criteria and screening processes to understand why disability-disaggregated data is being collected, its purpose, and how it will be used to support programme implementation, and annual reporting can help ensure that data collection aligns with programme needs.

There are various ways to strengthen data on persons with disabilities, as well as to identify the specific barriers and enablers for their meaningful participation and the realization of their human rights.

Partnering with local ODPs to gain expert insights into local barriers is one effective approach. Additionally, conducting key informant interviews and focus groups with individuals with different types of disabilities is another valuable method.

Although the Washington Group Short Set of Questions (WG-SS) was originally developed for use in censuses and large-scale surveys, evidence shows that this methodology can also be applied for programme and project-level situation analyses and surveys. This approach can sometimes provide a more accurate and respectful way to monitor the participation and outcomes for persons with disabilities. However, applying this method requires proper training to ensure effective and appropriate implementation without using unsuitable prompts¹².

Overall, establishing clear guidance on disability data collection—specifying why, when, and how data will be collected (or assessing if it is already available)—is essential to effectively inform project design, desired outcomes, and monitoring and evaluation activities. This issue is being addressed through DF’s partnership with Abilis Consulting, which has provided training on disability inclusion for DF and its partners. Abilis Consulting has also highlighted the need to enhance skills and knowledge related to data disaggregation in its report.

Climate Resilience and Low Emission Development

KEY FINDING: Achieving MFA Finland’s minimum standard for screening climate resilience, low-emission development, and environmental protection requires investments

Programme-level guidance: Climate resilience is incorporated into the programme’s strategy by promoting environmentally sustainable practices and encouraging resilience-building activities in vulnerable communities. Partners are directed to integrate climate considerations into their projects, particularly those related to livelihoods and community development.

¹² Asking about disability or using the term “disability” should not be used together with WG-SS.

Implementation: While projects like sustainable agriculture in Ethiopia¹³ and Tanzania¹⁴ may have contributed to promoting climate resilience, the programme reporting mainly focuses on immediate outcomes rather than long-term resilience-building. For instance, activities such as reducing carbon footprints or introducing sustainable practices were mentioned, but their broader impact on community-wide climate resilience is not systematically measured or reported. There is limited data on how these efforts contribute to sustainable adaptation in response to future climate challenges.

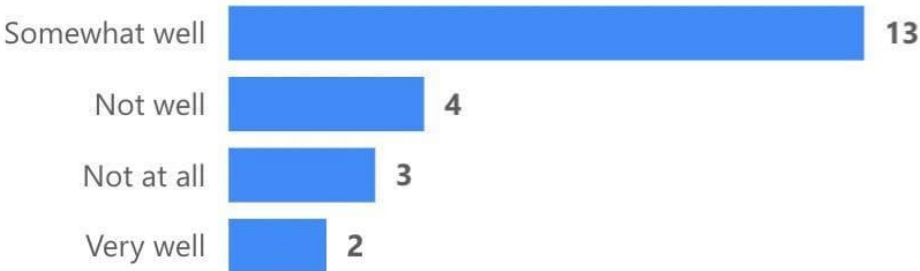
Additionally, clear guidance on implementing this cross-cutting objective appears to be lacking within the DF programme framework. Although the programme document notes that “the only emissions are aviation emissions, for which the needs of all international flights are carefully assessed,” there is no transparency or clarity on how such assessments are made.

Meeting the current MFA Finland¹⁵ requirement for the minimum standard of screening Climate Resilience, Low Emission Development, and Environmental Protection—especially with a focus on safeguarding biodiversity—necessitates a structured approach. This includes screening and, where necessary, assessing environment and climate-related risks, as well as the impacts of climate change, environmental degradation, and biodiversity loss on the intervention, meaning that DF should have a screening tool.

Furthermore, the capacity to implement Climate Resilience and Low Emission Development as cross-cutting objectives at the moment appears to be limited and it would benefit from additional programme and project level focus, as well as dedicated human resources / expertise in this area. The lack of a programme level practical guidance on the implementation of these objectives further limits the ability to address these objectives in a streamlined manner.

In the online survey, this cross-cutting objective received the lowest ratings, with only two respondents indicating that it was well addressed. Several respondents noted that their project does not focus on climate change, which is why they have not considered it, even though climate resilience, as a cross-cutting objective, should be considered in all projects. This indicates a gap between the intended programme-level integration of climate resilience and its actual implementation on the ground.

5d. Climate resilience and low emission development



¹³ 2022 Annual Report: Ethiopia the project includes urban agriculture projects aimed at increasing food security in regions affected by drought, particularly in the Somali region. The initiative promotes sustainable agricultural techniques to mitigate the impacts of prolonged droughts and food scarcity, which are heightened by climate change. Efforts also include skills training to help internally displaced persons (IDPs) and marginalized youth access alternative livelihoods beyond traditional pastoralism.

¹⁴ Annual Report 2022: Tanzania: the project focuses on developing sustainable forestry-related businesses that offer economic benefits while conserving natural resources. This initiative contributes to local climate resilience by engaging communities in forestry management, thus protecting natural ecosystems and helping mitigate the adverse effects of climate change

¹⁵ Guideline for the Cross-cutting Objectives of the Finnish Development Co-operation

7.4.3. To what extent were the project's resources (time, budget, personnel, and materials) used in the most economical way to achieve the desired outcomes?

KEY FINDING: The DF's projects have good Return on Investment and project staff is very committed

The budgets as a whole are commented on in KIIS and FGDs as well designed and mostly sufficient for the targeted objectives. However, in the survey, 12 out of 22 respondents note that resource limitations impact the outcomes of the projects. This may also reflect the changes in the beginning of the Programme that were needed to match the decreased allocated budget by the MFA.

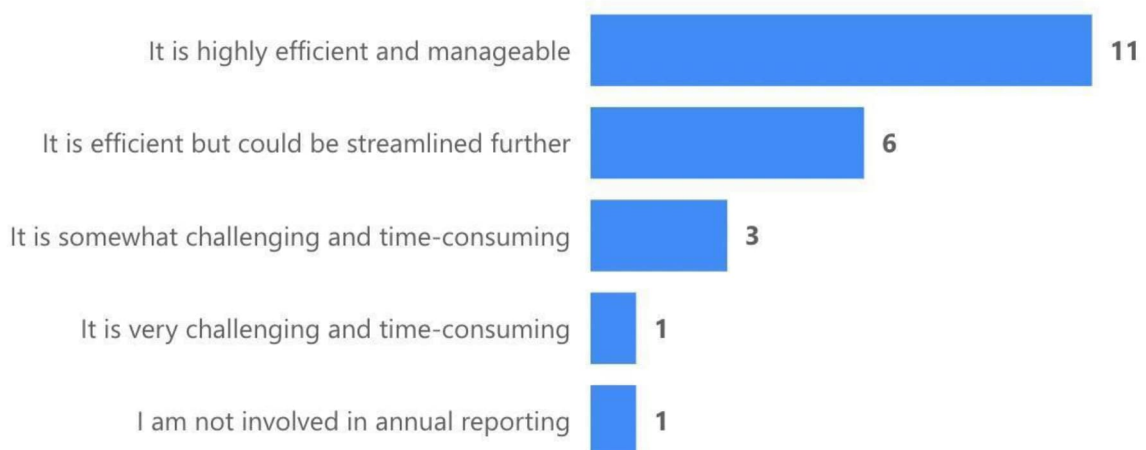
6b. Budget



The changes to the implementation plans were carefully made and there did not seem to be an insurmountable challenge between the budget and the project plans. The budgets mostly seem realistic, even though in some high stress or compound marginalisation context strengthening the human resources of the project may be advisable.

The KIIs and Survey indicate that DF budgets yield a good Return On Investment. Good quality results are achieved with relatively moderate budgets. Project staff also reports that the workload related to reporting is manageable and is not interfering with implementation.

7a. Workload involved in the annual programme reporting



The staff in Finland and project countries are very competent and mostly going above and beyond to implement the projects in high quality and ensuring ownership. The commitment towards meeting the objectives is very high.

At times, this commitment may influence the strategic use of human resources and there may be a need to assess the sufficiency of staff positions connected to projects in project countries and

Finland. For instance, JRS in Kosovo can only use a contracted specialist rather than a staff member to support the implementation and this may influence their impact negatively.

KEY FINDING: Strategic leadership as well as dedicated staff member on the cross-cutting objectives is needed

As highlighted in the previous section, the cross-cutting objectives of DF's Programme require additional attention and effort. A dedicated staff member with a clear and focused mandate for strategic leadership and providing support for the Programme countries in achieving and reporting on these cross-cutting objectives would be needed. It is recommended that the profile of such a position would entail specific understanding of Climate Change and its linkages to Human Rights, Gender Equality and Non-Discrimination. This human resource could help DF fully implement and integrate these goals across the Programme.

KEY FINDING: A Programmatic approach to managing high stress work situations may be needed

Currently at the project level, risk analyses are being carried out, and project-specific risks are being assessed and continuously monitored with the partners. DF has also started to use various tools for risk management (e.g. Granite, HaiPro). In Ukraine operations are currently led from three locations: Kyiv, Strasbourg, and Mukachevo, with the readiness to move the operations from Kyiv to Mukachevo if the security situation in Kyiv deteriorates.

The Annual Programme Report 2023 notes, and also reflected in some of the KIIs, that many partners were required to provide emergency support even in places where humanitarian or crisis work was not their expertise or part of the project objectives. This was also raised at the Mutual Learning Workshop II.

Considering that the DF programme works with very marginalized people and in contexts with high external stress factors, it would be beneficial to assess whether additional support to mitigate the strain on implementing partners' staff is needed more widely, and if it should be integrated into the overall programme level approach.

When working with marginalized communities, even in relatively stable conditions, there is a risk of re-traumatization and staff burnout, which carries both high human and financial costs. The most cost-effective approach is to ensure that project staff, both in Finland and in other project countries, have manageable workloads and a supportive work environment that prioritizes mental health.

8. Conclusions

In general, the Deaconess Foundation's Programme is progressing well and achieving its objectives. It is reaching the most marginalized groups in great partnerships with both local NGOs and state actors. The programme is efficient in advancing and supporting realisation of several human rights.

Strong commitment to marginalized groups: The programme has been successful in engaging marginalized communities. Efforts in these regions have led to meaningful changes in human rights awareness, livelihood opportunities, and increased self-confidence, especially among Roma communities, women, marginalized youth, and persons with disabilities. The commitment towards the most marginalized distinguishes DF from many other international organizations.

Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA): The evaluation finds that the implementation of HRBA in projects is well aligned with the overall programme level intention, demonstrating satisfying alignment with the respective MFA Finland's criteria at both the transformative and progressive project levels. However, should there be a wish to ensure further alignment to HRBA in all projects, there are opportunities to refining capacity-building efforts especially on the duty-bearer level, improving accountability mechanisms, integrating human rights assessments more systematically in all contexts and fostering stronger local partnerships to deepen the HRBA integration across the projects, especially those committed to progressive HRBA implementation.

Effective and respectful partnerships. The relationships between DF and its implementing partners, NGOs and state actors alike, are reflective, co-operative and supportive. DF is a very well-respected, professional partner who has a great deal to offer to their partners and the context they work in. The programme's partnership approach has effectively developed local capacity, empowering partners and beneficiaries alike. This model supports sustainable outcomes and promotes local agency in project design and execution.

Effective work with duty-bearers in Eastern Europe and Western Balkans. DF has managed to achieve results with state actors repeatedly especially in Kosovo and Ukraine and on multiple levels of government.

Effectiveness and efficiency: DF demonstrates efficiency achieving the intended results. Many outcomes are on track, with participants benefiting from employment opportunities and reconciliation activities. Despite conflicts in Ukraine and South Sudan, the programme has demonstrated flexibility and ability to implement activities.

Sustainable long-term livelihoods: While there are positive immediate outcomes, such as employment and business startups, the sustainability of these livelihoods remains difficult to track. In East Africa, outcomes are more positive, while Eastern Europe and Western Balkans face more systemic challenges that hinder the sustainable impact of livelihood initiatives.

Need for enhanced cross-cutting objectives implementation: Under gender mainstreaming, the programme has been successfully implementing gender parity. There is a need to deepen the approach to gender mainstreaming to address more substantive gender equality issues. There is strong commitment towards disability inclusion, however for instance meaningful partnerships with OPDs is required to ensure more substantive inclusion work. Additionally, climate resilience was rated as the least integrated objective and has least progress as an objective, suggesting a need for clearer guidance and capacity on this front. These objectives are vital to ensuring that the programme not only meets its immediate goals but also contributes to broader, long-term impacts on gender equality, non-discrimination, and climate resilience.

Efficient use of resources: While there is a strong return on investment and high commitment from staff, some areas, particularly high-stress work environments and leadership on cross-cutting objectives, would benefit from more resources.

Sustainability: While the programme's vocational training and capacity-building efforts have positively impacted marginalized communities, tracking long-term impact and the financial sustainability of businesses remains limited. In East Africa, success in livelihoods is more evident. In Eastern Europe and Western Balkans, the Programme has managed to achieve policy changes. The programme's policy advocacy efforts have led to significant policy shifts and capacity development among duty bearers, enhancing their ability to support marginalized communities.

Regional collaboration: The regional approach in Eastern Europe and Western Balkans, and East Africa has fostered valuable knowledge sharing, advocacy, and peer support, strengthening networks critical for sustainable peace and economic growth. Regular learning and sharing sessions for the whole Programme could strengthen the Programme's cross-fertilisation.

9. Recommendations

1. **Consider enhancing impact-level reporting to more comprehensively capture important Human Rights results:** Consider adding qualitative elements to existing impact level indicators one, and two (see more details in the report page 17).

Other potential (new) impact-level indicators to consider: Consider including an impact indicator that measures aspects like strengthened and more diverse civil society. This might be relevant considering the programme's strong emphasis on capacity-building, which partners have shown credible progress in achieving. Such an indicator could reflect whether the programme contributes to empowering civil society actors and increasing their diversity, and capacity to advocate.

Additionally, an indicator focused on community-level cohesion and safety could be a valuable impact level result. While this is currently measured at the outcome level (e.g., "Increased participation of minorities, marginalised youth, and people affected by conflicts in local communities and societies" and "Ways of participation"), an impact-level measure could assess whether these participation efforts lead to enhanced community trust, reduced social tensions, or perceptions of safety within the community.

2. Strengthen HRBA

- a. **Integrate human rights data and analysis:** Incorporate comprehensive human rights data and context analysis into project assessments in projects that do not currently already do so (This concerns primarily projects implementing HRBA at progressive level). This would inform programme design and outcomes, ensuring stronger alignment with international human rights standards¹⁶. There is not necessarily a need to conduct DF's own analysis, yet there is possibility to utilise existing data from the International human rights mechanisms (see more details in the report page 16).
- b. **Deepen engagement with local rights-holder organisations,** such as OPDs, to elevate their leadership roles in planning and decision-making, to ensure persons with disabilities have meaningfully role and voice in activities /project objectives concerning them.
- c. **Consider intersectionality also in partnerships:** Partner with specialised organizations, such as women's OPDs, to address multiple layers of discrimination and ensure projects reflect diverse perspectives, for example in women's empowerment related projects.
- d. **Provide targeted awareness training on human rights** to both local duty bearers, and other responsible actors, and family and community members of the marginalised persons in all projects. This would specifically concern persons facing multiple discrimination, or whose status in communities is extremely vulnerable
- e. **Consider expanding outreach to include young persons in prisons.** Engaging young prisoners can promote rehabilitation, social reintegration, and long-term resilience, benefiting both their communities and society as a whole.
- f. This concern came from an anonymous source, but the evaluation does not have other direct findings to support it. However, since it is such an important issue to consider,

¹⁶ International human rights standards such as CEDAW, CRC, CRPD, etc.

please note that this may be an issue to discuss¹⁷: **The free choice for the participants whether or not to share one's story needs to be always clearly communicated.** While organisations specialised in supporting victims of violence have a good sense of the principle of consent, when working with the most marginalised this is important across the Programme and for all organisations, including MFA as the donor.

3. **Enhance tracking the sustainability of livelihood outcomes:** Consider establishing mechanisms for tracking the long-term sustainability of employment and self-employment outcomes, including financial viability and job retention rates, at the end of the Programme. This could be done through follow-up surveys, tracer studies, by tracking of the community-based engagement and by establishing data sharing partnerships. Utilize the existing capacity of individual project partners such as JRS to develop Programme level tools.
4. **Strengthen approaches to livelihoods that recognize gendered barriers.** Data-driven solutions to identify and address the root causes of employment challenges would highly benefit the Programme, especially related to women's empowerment. This could include conducting gender-sensitive, or disability-sensitive market studies, developing strategies to improve access to finance for marginalized entrepreneurs, and advocating for policy reforms that promote long-term economic inclusion.

Engaging with women-owned private businesses might be strengthened, as well as engaging men in communities, especially fathers and husbands, to support women's employment. In East Africa, ensuring that women entrepreneurs have mutual support could be an important first step. This kind of network could help women build confidence, share resources, and overcome challenges together, strengthening their businesses and advancing gender equality in entrepreneurship. Utilize existing capacity of individual project partners such as the regional project in Eastern Europe for modelling networking may be helpful.

5. **Deepen gender mainstreaming:** Move beyond gender parity also in the projects not focused on women's rights to address structural gendered challenges by providing mainstreaming guidance and analysis tools to partners. All projects at the design stage should conduct a standardised gender analysis suited for project level (for instance through a joint template produced for the Programme and distributed to all projects). Link the Gender Analysis to all relevant Gender Equality Conventions, Treaties and Platforms for action of the region.

The Gender Analysis would create the backbone for Gender Mainstreaming within all the projects. These analyses would show the contextual challenges but could still be easily comparable for Programme level analysis.¹⁸

6. **Systematize implementation of disability inclusion:**
 - a. **Strengthen partnerships with OPDs:** Consider mapping potential OPDs and assess their capacity needs in each project country to create long-term partnerships and capacity strengthening. Partner with women's OPDs to enhance intersectional approaches. Utilize experts like Abilis Consulting for mapping efforts.
 - b. **Develop accessibility checklists:** Create checklists addressing physical, communication, digital, and web accessibility in collaboration with local OPDs to identify and localize accessibility barriers and solutions.

¹⁷ Perhaps as part of the decolonization process, looking at what consent means between donors and recipients of funding due to the inherent power imbalance.

¹⁸ Some useful background information on Gender Analysis can be found for instance from European Institute for Gender Equality <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/tools-methods/gender-analysis> or Oxfam <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/quick-guide-to-gender-analysis-312432/> Or CARE Rapid Gender Analysis <https://insights.careinternational.org.uk/in-practice/rapid-gender-analysis>

- c. **Invest in Training of Trainers (ToT):** Train individuals proficient in sign language and national languages to engage deaf and other disability communities Vamos Life Skills Trainings (or other similar), to foster better representation and meaningful role of disability communities in the programme. Peer-led training could also strengthen community ownership, peer support, and role modelling.
 - d. **Disability data collection purposes and methodologies:**
Provide clear guidance on disability data collection to inform project design, outcomes, and monitoring. Leverage DF's partnership with Abilis Consulting to build data disaggregation skills and knowledge. Also, conducting expert interviews with ODPs, and Key Informant Interviews and Focus Groups Discussion with persons with different disabilities, is a way of collecting information and data on the local barriers and enablers for persons with disabilities.
 - e. **Consider integration of Reasonable Accommodation budget line** for the program, and each project to allow efficient implementation of accessibility.
7. **Include clear and actionable Climate Resilience and Low Emission objectives, guidance and expertise in the Programme:** Strengthen the integration of climate resilience into projects by developing environmental guidelines and monitoring frameworks for partner projects to ensure alignment with MFA minimum standards. In-house expertise, implementation guidance, screening tool and capacity building for partners is needed. Consider also partnerships with local environmental and climate change experts, organisations, academia etc.
 8. **Conduct an assessment on the need for added staff positions under the Programme to increase its impact:** data from the evaluation points out that at least a cross-cutting advisory position on Climate Resilience and Low Emission with a focus the Human Rights dimension at DF and a staff position at JRS in Kosovo to ensure e.g. follow up on livelihoods sustainability is needed (strongly linked to recommendation number 2). There may be a need for other additional human resources.
 9. **Conduct an assessment on the need for a Programmatic approach to managing high stress work situations.** It is recommended to add a budget line for the projects to invest in preventive mental health initiatives and humanitarian emergencies, particularly for staff working in high-risk environments or with very marginalised groups of people. Utilize existing capacity of individual project partners such as KRCT and OWDA in designing the Programme level approach

ANNEXES

List of Documents Received and Reviewed

Programme level documentation

- Programme document 2022-2025
- Programme Results report 2022

Projects under the Programme 2022-2025

#reconciliation Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan, Kenya

- Project document (ended 2022)
- Annual narrative report 2022
- Evaluation report

Empowerment of Roma Women Kosovo

- Project document
- Annual narrative report 2022
- Annual narrative report 2023

Kymppi 2.0, Filantropia, Filoksenia ja HDL

- Project document (ended 2022)
- Annual narrative report 2022
- Evaluation report

Mustaqbaldoon I Mustaqbaldoon, Somaliland (Y-PEER)

- Project document (ended 2022)
- Annual narrative report 2022
- Evaluation report

Mustaqbaldoon II, Somaliland (Y-PEER) jatko

- Project document (started 2023)
- Annual narrative report 2023

Partnering for Change, Self-implemented in Finland by Deaconess Foundation, Filantropia ry and independent consultant Mwila Agatha Zaza,

- Project document (started 2023)
- Annual narrative report 2023

Peace and Trust in communities – Horn of Africa (MHF- Mandeeq) Mary Hoch Foundation; Maandeeq (implementing partner in Somalia)

- Project document
- Annual narrative report 2022
- Annual narrative report 2023

Roma Women's Power I, Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus

- Project document (ended 2022)
- Annual narrative report 2022
- Evaluation report

Roma Women's Power II jatko Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus

- Project document (started 2023)
- Annual narrative report 2023

Strengthening Roma minority's participation in policy and decision making in Ukraine

- Project document
- Annual narrative report 2022
- Annual narrative report 2023

Supporting socio-economic re/integration and ensuring equal participation rights for repatriated and refugee women and girls in Kosovo

- Project document
- Annual narrative report 2022 (from partner JRS)
- Annual narrative report 2022 (from partner KRCT)
- Annual narrative report 2023 (from JRS)
- Annual narrative report 2023 (from KRCT)

Trust and Peace – peacebuilding from the ground (ACRL), South Sudan

- Project document
- Annual narrative report 2022
- Annual narrative report 2023

Youth Action for Future, Ethiopia

- Project document (ended 2023)
- Annual narrative report 2022
- Annual narrative report 2023
- Evaluation report

Youth Action for Skills, Ethiopia

- Project document (started 2024)

Youth Agency in Mufindi, Tanzania,

- Project document
- Annual narrative report 2022
- Annual narrative report 2023
- YAM evaluation draft of 30.9.

Core Questions for KIIs and FGDs

Impact:

- Share concrete examples of the project's most important achievements? What in your opinion have been transformative changes?
- In what ways has the programme contributed to the realisation of human rights among the beneficiaries? Can you provide concrete and specific examples?
- What challenges have you encountered in trying to implement a human rights-based approach? How have you addressed them?
- How have you ensured that the programme's design and implementation are aligned with human rights principles? What gaps or areas for improvement have you identified?

Relevance and coherence:

- How have you engaged with partners and participants to develop their agency and ownership of the programme? What strategies have worked well?
- In what ways have you ensured that the programme is relevant to the people in most vulnerable positions /situations? What challenges have you faced in this regard? What kind of needs analysis was made?
- Provide concrete examples, how the project has enhanced disability inclusion /and or gender equality? How do you monitor this?
- How important do you think the programme has been in the specific regions or countries where it is implemented? What unique value does it bring to these areas? Provide a concrete example of what added value this project brings in the region, country, etc?
- How did this project align with other projects working on the issue? How was it ensured that there was no duplication?

Sustainability:

- How have you integrated sustainability into the project design and implementation? What measures have you taken to ensure that the results are sustainable?
- To what extent do you think the programme has contributed to creating sustainable livelihoods for the beneficiaries?
- Which of the results are likely to remain after the closure of this project?

Effectiveness and efficiency:

- Have the intended outcomes of the programme been achieved?
- What factors have contributed to or hindered the achievement of these outcomes?
- In your opinion, what works particularly well in this project? (what should not be changed)?
- In your opinion, what are the major challenges for this project? (what should be changed)?
- How have you incorporated cross-cutting objectives, such as environmental sustainability and disability inclusion, into the programme? What could be improved in this area?
- To what extent were the project's resources (time, budget, personnel, and materials) used in the most economical way to achieve the desired outcomes?

Key Informant Interview (KII) Questions for Beneficiaries/Rights Holders

Impact:

- Can you describe any changes in your life since you started participating in this programme? How has your access to education, employment, or other rights improved?
- What do you think is the most critical change in your life? Can you provide one concrete example of what has changed?

Relevance:

- Do you feel that the programme has effectively reached the most vulnerable people in your community?
- Who might be still being left out? How could it improve in reaching others who are still left out?
- In what ways has the programme been important to you and your community? How important would you say the project was to you and your community (from a scale of 1-5, 5 is the highest)?

Ownership and participation:

- How were you involved in planning the project? And in the decision-making processes of the programme? Did you feel that your voice was heard and valued?
- What changes or improvements would you suggest making the programme more relevant to your needs?

Sustainability:

- Have the skills and support you received from the programme helped you to achieve sustainable employment or income? Do you feel confident that these changes will last?
- What additional support do you think you need to sustain your livelihood in the long term?

Effectiveness:

- Have the goals of the programme been achieved from your perspective? What specific outcomes have you seen in your life or community?
- How well do you think the programme has addressed gender equality, disability inclusion, rights of persons with disabilities, or environmental sustainability? Do you have concrete examples?

KoboToolbox Online Survey Questions

Deaconess Foundation's Programme Evaluation Survey

The information gathered through this survey will be used to inform and overall assess the *Deaconess Foundation's* Programme For Development Cooperation 2022-2025 and its relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

The survey should take about 10-15 minutes to complete, and your responses will be kept confidential. The evaluation consultants, Elina Nikulainen and Katariina Sario, will have access to the survey data.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

I am:

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary/Third gender
- Prefer not to say

Current role or position within the programme?

- CEO, Executive Director, Secretary General or equivalent
- Country manager
- Area manager
- Program manager
- Project manager or officer
- Project coordinator
- Expert or Advisor
- Psychologist or any type of counsellor
- Other (please specify)

In which country are you stationed in?

- Finland
- Belarus
- Ethiopia
- Kosovo
- Moldova
- Somalia or Somaliland
- South Sudan
- Tanzania
- Ukraine
- Other (please specify)

Which of the six main programme outcomes are you mainly involved with or contribute to? (choose all that apply)

1. Outcome 1: The capacity of the project partners and other targeted civil society actors has been strengthened.
2. Outcome 2: Businesses operate more sustainably, and businesses and other employers employ more inclusively.
3. Outcome 3: Services provided by local authorities and other service providers to marginalised young people and minorities are more inclusive, functional and of good quality
4. Outcome 4: The roles and capacities of insider reconcilers to stabilise conflicts, and of officials to provide specialised psychosocial services are strengthened.
5. Outcome 5: Participation and agency of the minorities, young people in marginalised positions and people affected by conflicts is increased in local communities and societies

6. Outcome 6: Awareness in Finland has increased on development cooperation, issues related to young people in marginalised positions, minorities, and reconciliation, as well as of the business potential in Africa
7. Other: please specify: _____

SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. How relevant has the partnership with Deaconess Foundation's been for your project country/-ies?

- Highly relevant
- Very relevant
- Somewhat relevant
- Not relevant

Please elaborate your response, if necessary: _____

2. How effectively does the project/s contribute to the programme's strategic priorities: (4-step likert scale: 1= Does not contribute - 4= contributes significantly + does not apply to my project(s))

- Peace and trust in communities
- Active and resilient civil society
- Livelihoods and skills development of the most marginalised

Please elaborate your response, if necessary: _____

3. To what extent has the project/s succeeded in reaching the most marginalised groups in your project area

- Very well
- Somewhat well
- Not well
- Not at all

Please elaborate your response, if necessary: _____

4. How would you describe the local ownership in the design of the programme and its projects?

- Very high
- High
- Moderate
- Low
- Very Low
- I wasn't involved in the design phase

Please elaborate your response: _____

5. How well are the following topics implemented in your project(s) (5-step likert scale: 1= not at all - 5= very well)

- Human rights based approach (HRBA)
- Gender equality
- Disability inclusion
- Climate resilience and low emission development

Please elaborate your response: _____

6. How efficiently are the following resources used to achieve the desired outcomes in your project(s)? (4-step likert scale: 1=very inefficiently - 5 =very efficiently)

- Time
- Budget
- Personnel
- Materials

Please elaborate your response if necessary: _____

7. How would you rate the workload involved in the annual programme reporting (e.g., data collection, data disaggregation, analysis, writing)?

- It is highly efficient and manageable
- It is efficient but could be streamlined further
- It is somewhat challenging and time-consuming
- It is very challenging and time-consuming
- I am not involved in annual reporting

Please elaborate your response: _____

8. Reflecting on your experience with the program, what barriers or challenges have reduced the project/s impact

- **Resource limitations:** Limited funding, materials, or personnel.
- **Community ownership:** Difficulty in involving the community, and relevant local actors.
- **Capacity limitations:** Lack of skills, knowledge, or experience to effectively implement the program.
- **Policy and regulatory constraints:** Legal or policy barriers
- **Coordination and communication:** Challenges in coordination among stakeholders or communication gaps
- **Context-related challenges:** External factors such as conflict, economic crisis, drought, or environmental or social conditions that impact the program.
- **Other** (please specify):
- **There have been no barriers or challenges**

9. What factors have contributed most to the successful implementation of your project(s)?

- Adaptive and responsive project management
- Commitment of project staff
- Adaptability and resilience in challenging situations
- In-depth understanding of local contexts
- Positive relationships with beneficiaries and stakeholders
- Strong alignment with community needs and priorities
- Strong and supportive partnership between the implementing partners and the Deaconess Foundation
- Strong leadership and decision-making capabilities in project/s
- Other (please specify): _____

10. How likely is it that the results achieved by your project/s will be sustained after it ends?

- **Very likely:** The results are expected to be maintained and continue to benefit the community without additional support.
- **Somewhat likely:** The results may be sustained with some continued support or follow-up.

- **Somewhat unlikely:** The results may not be sustained without significant additional resources or support.
- **Very unlikely:** The results are unlikely to be sustained and may diminish quickly after the project ends.
- **Uncertain:** It is unclear whether the results will be sustained without further support.

Please elaborate your response if necessary: _____

11. **What do you consider to be the most significant change (positive or negative) that has occurred as a result of the project?** Please describe the change, who was affected, and how it came about, including the critical activities or interventions that enabled this result. (Please write a short response (maximum 2-4 sentences)).

Thank you for your important contribution to the programme evaluation process!

Summary of the Projects Included in the Evaluation

A total of the following 15 projects are included in the evaluation:

1. Roma Women's Power I - Fostering the Inclusive Participation and Economic Empowerment of Roma Women (completed)

Implementation years: 2019 - 2022. Countries of Implementation: Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus

Operating environment: The project operates in Eastern Europe, focusing on Roma communities in Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus. These regions are characterised by socio-economic challenges, especially for Roma women, who face high unemployment rates and significant barriers to participation in economic and civic life.

Key objectives:

- Empower Roma women economically by providing training and resources to improve their employability.
- Enhance the inclusive participation of Roma women in their communities, with a focus on economic rights as a foundation for broader civic and political engagement.
- Develop and implement a Roma Women's Regional Operative Program focused on economic empowerment.

Key beneficiaries/rights holders: Roma women in Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus.

Key stakeholders/duty bearers: Helsinki Deaconess Institute, local Roma Women's CSOs, community organisations, and international partners focused on Roma inclusion and human rights.

2. Roma Women's Power II - Fostering the Inclusive Participation and Economic Empowerment of Roma women (ongoing)

Implementation years: 2023 - 2025. Countries of Implementation: Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus.

Operating environment: The project operates in Eastern Europe, focusing on the Roma communities in Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus. These regions are characterised by significant socio-economic challenges and widespread discrimination against Roma women. The project builds on the results of the previous phase (2019-2022) to further enhance the participation and empowerment of Roma women.

Key objectives:

- Promote the political participation and influence of Roma women in decision-making processes.
- Increase the economic empowerment of Roma women and girls through training and employment opportunities.
- Expand the space and capacity of Roma Women Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in these countries.

Key beneficiaries/rights holders: Roma women and girls in Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus.

Key stakeholders: Belarusian Roma Diaspora & Centre of Equal Rights CERE, Roma Women Network MOLDSOLIDARITATE, International Charity Organization Roma Women Fund CHIRICLI,

Helsinki Deaconess Institute Foundation, The Association of Entrepreneurs with Disabilities of the Republic of Moldova, and local authorities.

3. Empowerment of Roma Women (ongoing)

Implementation years: 2022 - 2024. Country of implementation: Kosovo.

Operating environment: The project operates in Kosovo, focusing on the marginalised Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities. These groups face significant challenges, including discrimination, exclusion from the labour market, and limited access to education and social services.

Key objectives:

- Empower Roma women through economic and political participation.
- Advocate for the recognition of antigypsyism as a root cause of exclusion.
- Implement educational support and labour market interventions to increase employment opportunities for Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian women.

Key beneficiaries/ rights holders: Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian women in Kosovo.

Key stakeholders/ duty bearers: Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians (VoRAE), local authorities, public and private institutions, Kosovar Gender Studies Center, Employment Agency of the Republic of Kosovo, The Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo.

Strengthening Roma minority's participation in policy and decision making in Ukraine (ongoing)

Implementation years: 2021 – 2024. Country of implementation: Ukraine.

Operating environment: The project operates in Ukraine, where the Roma community faces significant challenges, including discrimination, lack of access to identity documents, education, social and health services, and housing. The operating environment is further complicated by the ongoing conflict in Eastern Ukraine and high levels of corruption.

Key objectives:

- Enhance the participation of the Roma minority in policy and decision-making processes.
- Support the effective implementation of Ukraine's National Strategy for the Protection and Integration of the Roma National Minority (2021–2025) and its Regional Action Plans.
- Address inequalities faced by the Roma community, particularly in accessing essential services and opportunities.

Key beneficiaries/rights holders: Roma minority communities in Ukraine, particularly in the regions of Zaporizhzhia, Volyn, Odesa, Transcarpathia, Chernotsy, Kyiv, Dnipro, Cherkassy, Poltava, Vinnitsa and Chernihyv.

Key Stakeholders/ duty bearers: International Charity Organization Roma Women Fund CHIRICLI, Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human rights, Ukrainian government, local authorities, UNWOMEN, CSOs and other human rights organisations working to improve the situation of Roma in Ukraine.

4. Supporting socio-economic reintegration and ensuring equal participation rights for repatriated and refugee women and girls in Kosovo (ongoing)

Implementation years: 2022-2025. Implementation country: Kosovo

Operating environment: The project operates in a post-conflict environment in Kosovo, focusing on the re/integration of repatriated and refugee women and girls. The operating environment involves various socio-economic challenges, including limited access to employment, discrimination, and the need for psychosocial support.

Key objectives:

- Support the sustainable socio-economic reintegration of repatriated and refugee women and girls.
- Ensure equal participation rights for these vulnerable groups in Kosovo.
- Strengthen the capacities of municipal and state institutions to provide adequate and inclusive psychosocial and reintegration services to these groups in vulnerable positions.
- Provide legal and psychosocial support as well as economic empowerment services to the project participants.

Key beneficiaries/rights holders: Repatriated and refugee women and girls in Kosovo, officials from the municipal and central levels involved in the reintegration process

Key beneficiaries and stakeholders/ duty bearers: KRCT, JRS, Local authorities, community leaders, NGOs, and international partners involved in the reintegration and support of these groups in vulnerable situations.

5. Youth Agency in Mufindi (ongoing)

Implementation years: ongoing (2021-2024). Country of Implementation: Tanzania.

Operating environment: The project operates in the Mufindi District of Tanzania, focusing on a rural area with significant socio-economic challenges. The youth in this region face barriers to education, employment, and civic participation, which the project aims to address through targeted interventions.

Key objectives:

- Empower youth in Mufindi through education, vocational training and psychosocial support.
- Enhance the organisational and project management capacities of local partners as well as the capacities of Village Child Protection Committees to provide support to young people.
- Improve the employability and life skills of marginalised youth in the region.

Key beneficiaries/rights holders: young people in difficult situations in the Mufindi District, Tanzania.

Key stakeholders/duty bearers: Foxes Community and Wildlife Conservation Trust, Village Child Protection Committees, local authorities, community organisations, educational institutions, and private businesses, the Tanzania Association for Professional Counsellors and psychotherapists, University of Iringa, and INUKA Rehabilitation Hospital.

6. Youth Action for Future (completed)

Implementation years: Finished (2021- 2023). Country of implementation: Ethiopia

Operating environment: The project operates in Ethiopia, targeting youth who have experienced trauma and are facing socio-economic challenges. The operating environment includes limited access to education, employment opportunities, and mental health services, particularly for marginalised youth.

Key objectives:

- Empower traumatised youth to take charge of their well-being and contribute to their personal and community development.
- Provide vocational training, entrepreneurial skills, and job placements to support the integration of youth into society.
- Strengthen the organisational and project management skills of partners involved in youth development.

Key beneficiaries/rights holders: Youth aged 15-29 in Ethiopia, including both male and female participants.

Key stakeholders/duty bearers: Organization for Welfare and Development in Action (OWDA), local authorities, and community organisations, Naadiga CURIS, and private sector.

7. Youth Action for Skills (ongoing)

Implementation years: 2024 - 2025. Country of implementation: Ethiopia (Somali Region).

Operating environment: The project operates in Ethiopia's Somali Region, focusing on youth in cities of Jijiga and Gode. The region faces high youth unemployment rates and a lack of educational opportunities, which contribute to socio-economic challenges and marginalisation of the youth.

Key objectives:

- Provide skills training and Vamos life management skills to youth to enhance their employability.
- Support youth in establishing businesses, particularly in sectors identified as having high potential through feasibility studies.
- Partner with local youth-led organisations to offer additional support, such as talent competitions, peer mentoring, and organisational capacity building.

Key beneficiaries/rights holders: Youth in the Somali Region of Ethiopia, including those facing unemployment and marginalisation.

Key stakeholders/duty bearers: Helsinki Deaconess Institute Foundation sr., Organization for Welfare & Development in Action (OWDA), Naadiga CURIS (a local youth-led organisation), local authorities, and community organisations, and private sector.

8. Mustaqbaldoon I (completed)

Implementation years: 2019 - 2022. Country of implementation: Somaliland

Key objectives:

- Provide vulnerable youth in Somaliland with life management skills and professional training, based on the successful Vamos concept used in Finland.

- Promote access to education and employment for marginalised youth, including those from minority groups and young women.
- Strengthen the organisational capacity of local partners to support youth development initiatives.

9. Mustaqbaldoon II (ongoing)

Implementation years: 2022 - 2025. Country of Implementation: Somaliland

Operating environment: The project operates in Somaliland, where youth face significant challenges, including high unemployment, lack of educational opportunities, and multiple forms of marginalisation. Marginalised groups, such as youth with disabilities, IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons), returning refugees, and young single mothers, prisoners, persons suffering from addictions.

Key objectives:

- Provide life management and professional skills training to youth, particularly focusing on marginalised groups.
- Enhance the organisational capacity of Somaliland Y-PEER, a local youth organisation, in project administration, Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL), and thematic areas.
- Empower youth, especially young women, through entrepreneurship training and support.

Key beneficiaries/rights holders: Vulnerable youth in Somaliland, including those with disabilities, IDPs, returning refugees, and young single mothers.

Key stakeholders/duty bearers: Deaconess Foundation, Somaliland Y-PEER, local authorities, and community organisations.

10. Peace and Trust in communities – Horn of Africa (ongoing)

Implementation years: 2022 - 2025. Main countries of implementation: Somalia, Kenya¹⁹, Ethiopia, South Sudan.

Operating environment: The project operates in the conflict-affected regions of the Horn of Africa, focusing on local reconciliation practitioners known as "insider reconcilers." These individuals play critical roles in transforming conflicts within their communities but often lack the necessary support and resources.

Key objectives:

- Support the leadership, well-being, and outreach of insider reconcilers who are actively working to transform conflicts in the Horn of Africa.
- Facilitate social healing circles for women, youth, and elders, recognizing their unique positions and influence within their communities.
- Promote integration of MHPSS (Mental Health and Psychosocial Support) with peacebuilding processes in the region.
- Strengthen the link between local peacebuilding efforts and formalised national and international peace processes.

Key beneficiaries/rights holders: Insider reconcilers (community leaders, faith leaders, women

¹⁹ Only few regional activities are organised in Kenya due to security reasons in South Sudan; and few other activities that feed back into the regional level.

leaders, youth leaders, minority leaders) in the Horn of Africa.

Key stakeholders/duty bearers: Mary Hoch Foundation (MHF), Maandeeq Mental Health, Simad University local authorities, international peacebuilding organisations, and community groups

11. #reconciliation (completed)

Implementation Years: 2021 - 2022. Countries of implementation: Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan, Kenya

Operating environment: The project operates across multiple countries in East Africa, focusing on regions affected by conflict and political instability. The operating environment involves complex social and political dynamics, with significant needs for peacebuilding, reconciliation, and transformative justice processes.

Key objectives:

- Facilitate transformative reconciliation processes in conflict-affected regions.
- Support inclusive peace processes that address the root causes of conflict.
- Strengthen the capacity of local partners and communities to engage in peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts.

Key beneficiaries/rights holders: Local communities, peacebuilders, and conflict-affected populations in Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan, and Kenya.

Key stakeholders/duty bearers: Al Amana Centre (AAC), ACRL FELM, Inclusive Peace (IP), Mary Hoch Foundation (MHF), local authorities, and international peacebuilding organisations.

12. Trust and Peace – peacebuilding from the ground (Ongoing)

Implementation years: 2022 - Ongoing. Country of implementation: South Sudan.

Operating environment: The project operates in South Sudan, a region marked by prolonged conflict and instability. The operating environment includes challenges related to trauma, reconciliation, and the need for peacebuilding efforts at the community level.

Key objectives:

- Facilitate peacebuilding efforts from the grassroots level in South Sudan.
- Train insider reconcilers (religious leaders, community leaders, women in faith, youth interfaith) in trauma awareness and psychosocial support, reconciliation and peacebuilding
- Provide rights holders with resources to engage directly with duty bearers to foster trust and peace.

Key beneficiaries/rights holders:

Direct beneficiaries: insider reconcilers (religious leaders, religious actors such as women of faith, interfaith youth, community peace actors); Indirect beneficiaries: community members

Key stakeholders: African Council for Religious Leaders – Religions for Peace (ACRL-AfP), Inter Religious Council of South Sudan and international peacebuilding organisations

13. Kymppi 2.0 (completed)

Implementation years: 2021 - 2022. Country of implementation: Finland

Operating environment: The project operates within Finland, focusing on sustainable development and responsible business practices, with an emphasis on increasing awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and human rights among Finnish businesses and organisations.

Key objectives:

- Promote the integration of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in business strategies of Finnish companies.
- Enhance responsible communication and climate action within the business community.
- Facilitate collaboration between Finnish organisations and international partners to support sustainable development.

Key beneficiaries: Finnish businesses and organisations.

Key stakeholders: Caritas Finland, Filantropia ry, Filoksenia ry, Deaconess Foundation, Finnpartnership, and other business and NGO partners involved in promoting sustainable development.

14. Partnering for Change PARC (ongoing)

Implementation Years: 2023 - 2024. Countries of implementation: Finland

Operating environment: The project operates in Finland where the Development Co-operation NGOs are slowly waking up to global discussion about justice, power and decolonization brought about for instance by the Black Lives Matter movement. Finnish companies also need information and exposure to sustainable business opportunities in Africa.

Key objectives: The purpose of the project is to present the reality of countries south of the Sahara, challenging the traditional development cooperation narrative. The project approaches this issue from three different perspectives:

- It aims to influence development organizations and their role and responsibility in diversifying the Finnish perception of developing countries.
- It provides various opportunities for Finnish small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to learn about the potential of African countries from a business perspective, while emphasizing the importance of responsibility and understanding the local context.
- It also involves a communication campaign targeting the general public [to present the reality of countries south of the Sahara] will be implemented in the second year of the project.

Key beneficiaries/rights holders: Finnish Development Co-operation staff, Finnish wider public, local entrepreneurs in partner countries (such as Kenyan and Nigerian startups)

Key stakeholders/Duty bearers: Finnish small and mid-sized companies' staff, Finnish business lobbying organisations as well as Finnish governmental organisation such as Finnpartnership ja Team Finland

Brief Context of the Programme Partner Countries

Belarus²⁰

Projects implemented:

Roma Women's Power (I & II) - Fostering the Inclusive Participation and Economic Empowerment of Roma women

Belarus is a presidential republic characterised by an authoritarian government under President Alexander Lukashenko. The political landscape is marked by stability, albeit through significant political repression, lack of democratic processes, and control over media and civil society. Following the disputed 2020 presidential elections, the country has experienced protests and civil unrest, which have been met with harsh crackdowns by the government.

Economically, Belarus has an industrial-based economy with substantial state control. Despite moderate poverty levels, international sanctions have exacerbated economic challenges. Human rights in Belarus are a significant concern, with widespread abuses, political repression, and limited freedom of expression. Gender equality is supported by law, but women often face discrimination in the labour market and political sphere.

Roma women in Belarus face significant social and political marginalisation. The Roma community, one of the most disadvantaged ethnic groups in Belarus, experiences pervasive discrimination and social exclusion. Roma women often endure compounded discrimination due to both their ethnicity and gender, resulting in limited access to basic rights and services.

Roma women in Belarus frequently encounter systemic discrimination in various aspects of life. They have limited access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. Gender-based violence is a significant issue within the Roma community, and Roma women often lack adequate protection and support from law enforcement and social services. Traditional gender roles and cultural practices further restrict their participation in public and economic life.

Poverty is widespread among the Roma community in Belarus, with Roma women being particularly affected. Many Roma families live in substandard housing conditions with limited access to utilities and sanitation. Economic opportunities for Roma women are scarce, and they often rely on informal and insecure jobs, contributing to their precarious living conditions. Efforts to alleviate poverty among Roma women require targeted interventions and inclusive economic policies.

Ethiopia

Projects implemented:

- **Youth Action for Future**
- **Youth Action for Skills**

Ethiopia is a federal parliamentary republic that has seen major political reforms in recent years. Despite these reforms, the country faces periodic ethnic and political conflicts, most notably in the Amhara and Tigray region. The peace agreement with Eritrea marked a significant milestone, although internal tensions persist.

²⁰ European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC): Provides legal defence and advocacy for Roma communities facing human rights abuse

Economically, Ethiopia has a growing economy heavily reliant on agriculture. However, high poverty rates, especially in rural areas, remain a challenge. Human rights issues include political repression, ethnic violence, and abuses particularly in conflict areas. While there has been progress in gender equality through legal reforms, traditional practices such as early marriage continue to pose challenges.

Situation of young people in Ethiopia²¹

Young people (The UN defines youth as persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years), in Ethiopia, comprising a significant portion of the population, face various challenges and opportunities within a complex political and social landscape.

Somali Region²²

The Somali region in Ethiopia, is located in the eastern part of the country and is predominantly inhabited by ethnic Somalis. The region has faced significant challenges in areas such as youth employment, education access, and human rights.

The region has a complex human rights landscape, characterized by reports of abuses by security forces and inter-ethnic tensions. Minority groups within the region, such as non-Somali ethnic communities, often face discrimination and limited access to resources. Human rights organizations have noted cases of arbitrary detention, suppression of political dissent, and restrictions on freedom of expression.

The region is prone to natural and man-made conflicts, with drought being a significant driver of poverty and marginalization. Severe and recurring droughts have profound human rights implications, as they lead to food insecurity, displacement, and competition over scarce resources. These conditions often exacerbate social and ethnic tensions, contributing to conflict and further hindering development efforts.

Youth employment

The Somali region has one of the highest youth unemployment rates in Ethiopia. Due to limited economic opportunities, many young people struggle to find meaningful employment, often turning to informal and low-paying work. Economic development has been hampered by recurring conflicts, underdeveloped infrastructure, and limited investment, which further exacerbates unemployment challenges.

Access to education

Access to education in the Somali region remains limited compared to national averages. While there have been some improvements in primary school enrollment rates, secondary and higher education access is still problematic due to factors such as inadequate infrastructure, lack of trained teachers, and sociocultural barriers. Girls face additional obstacles, including early marriage and traditional gender roles that restrict their educational opportunities.

²¹ Ministry of Education, Ethiopia, UNICEF Ethiopia, ILO Ethiopia

²² Human Rights Watch. ILO Report: Youth employment Opportunities in the Digital Economy in Ethiopia: Afar and Somali Regions

Finland

Project implemented:

- **Kymppi 2.0**
- **Partnering for Change (PARC)**

The image of Africa and other regions of the so-called Global South is still quite one-sided in Finland. Especially related to the reality of countries south of the Sahara challenging the traditional image of development co-operation is needed for the general public as well as NGOs and businesses. Some Finnish Development Co-operation NGOs have already started decolonization and anti-racist activities, but more support and long-term vision is needed. Finnish companies also need information and exposure to sustainable business opportunities in Africa.

Kosovo²³

Project implemented:

- **Empowerment of Roma Women**
- **Supporting socio-economic re/integration and ensuring equal participation rights for repatriated and refugee women and girls in Kosovo**

Kosovo is a parliamentary republic that has made strides in stability and economic development, although tensions with Serbia and internal political challenges persist. The government continues to push for EU integration and reforms to enhance economic prospects.

The country's economy is developing, with significant contributions from international aid and remittances. Human rights have improved, but issues like corruption and ethnic discrimination remain. Legal frameworks support gender equality, yet inconsistent implementation results in ongoing disparities. Poverty and unemployment rates are high, particularly among minority communities. Legislative improvements have been made for disability rights, but practical implementation is lacking.

Roma women

Roma women in Kosovo face significant social and political marginalisation, experiencing a double burden of discrimination based on both their ethnicity and gender. As one of the most disadvantaged ethnic groups in the country, the Roma community, and particularly Roma women, struggle with systemic exclusion and limited access to basic rights and services.

Roma women in Kosovo are frequently subjected to systemic discrimination and social exclusion. Access to education, healthcare, and employment is limited, leading to significant challenges in achieving basic human rights. Gender-based violence is a serious issue within the Roma community, and many women lack adequate protection and support from law enforcement and social services. Traditional gender roles and cultural practices further restrict their participation in public and economic life.

High levels of poverty are prevalent among the Roma community, many Roma families live in substandard housing conditions with limited access to utilities and sanitation. Economic opportunities for Roma women are scarce, and they often rely on informal and insecure jobs, which

²³ European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC): Provides legal defence in cases of human rights abuses against Roma.

contribute to their precarious living conditions. Efforts to alleviate poverty among Roma women require targeted interventions and inclusive economic policies

Repatriation

Most of the readmitted persons in Kosovo come from Western European countries and are repatriated against their will. Repatriation support is not specifically designed for women and girls. Upon their arrival, women are often faced with difficult economic conditions, lack of financial resources, as well as poor social support. These families also often cope with their own feelings of being unsuccessful in creating a life they dreamed off abroad and feel stigmatised by the surrounding community which leads to self-isolation and lack of motivation to settle and recreate life from scratch in their country. Such difficult conditions and lack of perspective frequently lead to increased anxiety and depressive moods, creating additional pressure on the family (especially women) and emphasising the need to increase their well-being and functionality level. Multiple vulnerabilities prevent the repatriated and refugees from accessing psychosocial and economic empowerment services to increase their socio-economic well-being and from active engagement in establishing a better life and in society. Some available studies show specific difficulties with reintegration of children.

Refugees

Women and Girls with International Protection Status (WGIPS) face specific challenges and protection risks in transit, including family separation, psychosocial stress and trauma, health complications - particularly pregnant women, risks of exploitation and gender-based violence. There are studies that indicate how gender roles and biological factors played a role in challenges relating to accessing mental health services and the major facilitators identified are service availability and awareness in resettlement countries, social support, and the resilience of refugee women to gain access to mental health services. According to the governmental laws and policies of Kosovo, depending on their status, refugee women have rights to municipal services, including here assistance for integration into society, employment and the right to professional training. However, they need to be supported with information and access towards available services to fulfil their rights and increase their psychosocial well-being.

Moldova²⁴

Project implemented:

- **Roma Women's Power (I & II) - Fostering the Inclusive Participation and Economic Empowerment of Roma women**

Moldova operates as a parliamentary republic but experiences political instability with frequent government changes and persistent corruption issues. The government is making efforts towards EU integration and implementing reforms to combat corruption.

Moldova's economy is largely agricultural, with significant remittances from abroad playing a crucial role. Human rights challenges include human trafficking, corruption, and judicial independence issues. While legal provisions exist for gender equality, women, particularly in rural areas, continue to face discrimination. High poverty levels are prevalent, especially in rural regions. Unemployment rate is high, leading many young Moldovans to seek better opportunities abroad. As one of the

²⁴ European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC): Provides legal defence in cases of human rights abuses against Roma

most marginalised groups in the country, Roma women endure compounded discrimination due to their ethnicity and gender, resulting in significant barriers to accessing basic rights and services.

Roma women in Moldova have limited access to human rights protections. They frequently encounter discrimination in accessing education, healthcare, and social services. Gender-based violence is prevalent within the Roma community, and many cases go unreported due to distrust in law enforcement and judicial systems. Traditional gender roles and cultural norms further restrict their opportunities for empowerment and participation in society. Many live in impoverished conditions with inadequate housing, poor health, and limited access to clean water and sanitation. Economic opportunities are scarce, forcing Roma women to rely on informal and insecure employment, which perpetuates their vulnerable status. Comprehensive poverty alleviation programs are essential to improve the living conditions of Roma women.

Somalia/Somaliland

Projects implemented:

- **Mustaqbaldoon (I & II)**

Somaliland is a self-declared independent republic that operates with a democratic framework, although it is not internationally recognized. The region is relatively stable compared to Somalia and conducts regular democratic elections. Efforts are ongoing to gain international recognition and improve governance.

The economy of Somaliland is small, relying on livestock, remittances, and informal trade. The human rights situation is better compared to Somalia, but challenges remain with freedom of expression and political rights. Gender equality faces significant obstacles, with high levels of gender-based violence and limited opportunities for women. Poverty is widespread, with limited economic opportunities.

Situation of young people in Somaliland²⁵

Education: Limited access to quality education remains a challenge in Somaliland. While primary school enrolment rates have improved, secondary and higher education access is limited, particularly for girls and youth in rural areas. The quality of education is often compromised by a lack of qualified teachers, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient resources, resulting in low educational outcomes.

Employment: Somaliland's youth face one of the highest unemployment rates in the world. Many young people struggle to find job opportunities due to a lack of skills, limited economic growth, and a mismatch between education and market needs. A significant portion of the youth workforce is employed in the informal sector, which offers low wages, poor working conditions, and limited job security.

Civic engagement: Youth in Somaliland face limited opportunities for meaningful civic engagement. Although the youth population is large and energetic, they often encounter barriers to participating in decision-making processes, governance, and community activities. Traditional social structures, lack of political will, and limited civic education contribute to the marginalisation of youth in civic life. Youth in Somaliland have played a crucial role in peacebuilding efforts, particularly in the aftermath of conflict. They have been involved in initiatives aimed at promoting reconciliation, social

²⁵ ILO Report on Youth Employment, UNICEF Education Report

cohesion, and community development. However, their contributions are often under-recognized and under-supported.

South Sudan

Projects implemented:

- **Trust and Peace – peacebuilding from the ground (ACRL)**
- **#Reconciliation – towards transformative processes and outcomes** (implemented in Horn of Africa, in South Sudan among other countries)

South Sudan is a presidential republic that remains highly unstable, with ongoing civil conflict and political violence despite peace agreements. The political environment is fragile, and peace deals are often violated.

South Sudan's economy is heavily oil-dependent, but conflict has severely affected economic stability. Human rights conditions are dire, with severe abuses, including violence against civilians and lack of basic freedoms. Gender equality is a significant challenge, with high levels of gender-based violence and limited rights for women. Poverty is extremely high, exacerbated by ongoing conflict.

Tanzania

Projects implemented:

- **YAM - Youth Agency in Mufindi**

Tanzania is a presidential republic that is generally stable but has faced concerns about political repression and shrinking civic space in recent years. The government has been making efforts to improve economic policies and tackle corruption.

Human rights concerns include limitations on freedom of expression and assembly, though there have been recent improvements. Gender equality is supported by legal frameworks, but cultural practices and gender-based violence remain significant issues. Poverty has decreased, but remains high in rural areas. Youth unemployment is high, and initiatives are being implemented to enhance vocational training and employment opportunities for young people.

Situation of young people in Tanzania²⁶

Education: In Tanzania, youth education faces challenges such as limited access to quality education, particularly in rural areas, and a high dropout rate, especially at the secondary level. Efforts are ongoing to improve access and quality through government and non-governmental initiatives, focusing on expanding infrastructure, teacher training, and implementing new curricula.

Employment: Youth employment is a significant concern, with high levels of unemployment and underemployment. Many young people work in the informal sector, which offers limited security and low wages. The government has launched programs to promote entrepreneurship, vocational training, and job creation to address these issues, but progress has been slow.

Civic engagement: Civic engagement among Tanzanian youth is growing, driven by increasing access to information and communication technologies. Youth are becoming more involved in community development, social movements, and political processes. However, barriers such as

²⁶ UNICEF Tanzania, Ministry of Education Tanzania, ILO TZ UNDP TZ.

limited civic education and economic challenges still hinder broader participation. Initiatives to promote youth leadership and participation in governance are being developed to encourage more active engagement.

Ukraine²⁷

Project implemented:

- **Roma Women's Power (I & II) - Fostering the Inclusive Participation and Economic Empowerment of Roma women**
- **Strengthening Roma minority's participation in policy and decision making in Ukraine**

Ukraine is a semi-presidential republic that faces political instability and ongoing conflict with Russia in its eastern regions, with attacks all around Ukraine. The government is focused on EU integration and implementing anti-corruption measures.

Ukraine has a developing economy that is significantly challenged by conflict and necessary economic reforms. Human rights have seen legislative improvements, but issues with corruption, judicial independence, and conflict-related abuses persist. Gender equality is supported by legal protections, but gender-based violence and employment disparities remain prevalent. Poverty rates are high, particularly in conflict-affected areas. Disability rights have a legislative framework, but implementation is weak. Youth unemployment is high, with many young people facing barriers to stable employment and seeking opportunities abroad.

The Roma minority in Ukraine is one of the most marginalised and vulnerable ethnic groups in the country. The Roma community faces significant challenges in areas such as education, employment, housing, and access to healthcare. Discrimination and social exclusion are widespread, leading to limited opportunities for Roma people to integrate fully into Ukrainian society.

Education levels among the Roma are generally low, with many children facing barriers to attending school, such as poverty, lack of documentation, and discrimination. This contributes to a cycle of poverty and marginalisation.

In terms of employment, many Roma work in informal, low-paying jobs with little job security. The lack of education and vocational training further restricts their employment opportunities.

Civic engagement and political representation of the Roma in Ukraine are limited. The community is underrepresented in local and national politics, and their voices are often not heard in decision-making processes.

Evaluation Matrix (separate attachment)

Ethical Considerations

The evaluation will take into consideration the highest ethical principles. The interview materials will be kept for six months after approval of the evaluation report and destroyed after that.

²⁷ Council of Europe - Roma and Travellers Division, ERRC (European Roma Rights Centre)

Among the principles will be:

Confidentiality: Ensure that all personal and sensitive information is kept confidential and is not disclosed.

Informed consent: Obtain informed consent from all participants, making sure they understand the purpose of the evaluation and the use of the data collected.

Integrity: Conduct the evaluation with honesty and integrity, presenting findings truthfully and accurately.

Respect for people's rights and dignity: Honour the autonomy, decisions, and privacy of individuals, respecting their rights and inherent dignity throughout the evaluation process. Act without bias.

Responsibility: Uphold professional standards, ensure the most rigorous data triangulation within the parameters of this evaluation, be accountable for the consultant's conduct and evaluation's outcomes.

Safety for survivors of violence: Should any of the interviews or FGDs disclose experiences of violence, referral to support services will be provided according to the local context. No disclosure of violence victimisation will be pressured, coerced or otherwise knowingly obtained without prior clear discussion and consent.