



Mid-Term Evaluation of Fida's Development Cooperation Programme 2022-2025

EVALUATION REPORT / 31 OCTOBER 2024

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Executive Summary

Fida's Development Cooperation Programme 2022-2025 *Towards the Future – A Safe Educational Path and Living Environment for Children and Youth* aims at contributing to improved access to quality education and safer living environments for children and youth in 10 Programme countries. It consists of four outcome components: Right to Education, Safe Living Environments, Strengthening of Partner Organization's Capacities, and Increased Commitment to Promote Children's Rights Globally.

The Programme is funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) with programme-based support for Finnish civil society organizations (CSOs), the total annual Programme budgets having been above 6.2 MEUR. It is implemented through 10 Country Programmes (CPs) in Eastern Africa (Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda), the Middle East (Iraq) and South and South-East Asia (Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal), as well as the Domestic Programme in Finland.

The purpose of the Mid-Term Evaluation was to assess the achievement of the planned results, lessons learned, and strengths and weaknesses of this Programme, and to provide recommendations to support its further development and planning of the next programme (2026-2029). The assessment covered all OECD/DAC evaluation criteria with emphasis on effectiveness, efficiency, and impact.

The Evaluation was conducted in August – October 2024 by an external evaluator contracted by Fida Headquarters (HQ). The evaluation methodology consisted of multiple methods, with emphasis on qualitative data collection and analysis. It didn't include field level data collection in Programme countries.

The assessment of Programme performance shows that Fida and its partner organizations have overall made good progress in ensuring the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the Programme. Fida's strong commitment to continuously develop its programme work forms a good basis for further developing the strengths and addressing weaknesses and challenges identified in this Evaluation.

Relevance: The Programme has strong relevance in all Programme countries and in Finland. Comprehensive context analysis during the planning phase together with Fida staff's strong familiarity with the CP contexts and partners' deep understanding of local realities have been essential in ensuring the relevance of the Programme. The Programme and its' thematic focus are highly relevant for the partner organizations. However, aims to address a wide range of partners' thematic priorities in different country contexts have contributed to weak focusing of the Programme.

Participation of beneficiaries in Programme planning and monitoring has strengthened, contributing to the relevance of the Programme to their needs and priorities. The level of participation of local authorities and CSOs has been strong, but there's clear need to strengthen and deepen the participation of rights-holders including children, youth, women, persons with disabilities as active stakeholders in these processes.

Coherence: Internal coherence is supported by coherent use of the Programme Theory of Change (ToC) and Results Framework throughout the Programme. However, the generic nature of the ToC and objective setting together with a wide range of sub-themes covered, has led to weak thematic focusing of the Programme.

The Programme is well aligned with the Finnish development priorities and SDGs, and links to relevant human rights instruments have been identified. However, the use of SDGs and e.g. human rights monitoring reports more instrumentally in the programming has been limited. This is an issue that would further support the relevance and strengthening of human rights and gender transformative elements within the Programme.

The Programme has cooperated widely with different development actors. Further strengthening of the cooperation with other NGOs and the private sector is needed especially to support resource mobilization, this being essential from the perspective of sustainability.

Effectiveness: The Programme has effectively made progress in achieving the expected changes in rights-holders' and duty-bearers' capacities. However, the level of progress has varied among the sub-themes. The progress is very clear in the formal education elements of the Programme. In inclusive education, despite strong progress in strengthening awareness, knowledge and skills on inclusion of persons with disabilities, there are still many barriers hindering and slowing down changes in behaviors and practices in communities and schools. This requires attention in the further development and resourcing of the Programme.

The Programme has been effective in strengthening awareness, knowledge and skills of relevant stakeholders on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and Psycho-Social Support. Related activities have supported the wellbeing of a high number of rights-holders in vulnerable situations. Remarkable achievements have also been achieved in economic security. In PSS, development of Training of Trainers approaches increases Programme effectiveness. Further strengthening and development of these kinds of structured approaches is essential also from the perspective of sustainability.

Important results have been achieved in the mainstreaming of three Cross-Cutting Objectives (CCOs). The work is more advanced in gender equality and disability inclusion, where the future focus should be on strengthening transformative elements in the Programme. In the CCO of environment and climate resilience, the work has been activity based, and development of strategic approaches for mainstreaming is needed.

Thematic support within Fida and to partners supports Programme effectiveness. However, there's a clear need to strategically develop the thematic support structures based on the current strengths and by addressing the identified weaknesses, while paying specific attention to context specific support needs.

Efficiency: The allocated financial resources are efficiently managed in the Programme. However, the weak thematic and geographic focus of the Programme clearly reduces the efficiency in the use of financial, human and time resources. This weakness needs to be systematically addressed in the planning of the next Programme. In defining the Programme focus a wider programmatic approach would be needed for enabling integration of interventions funded also by other sources than MFA into the Programme. However, also stronger investment in efficient resource mobilization and related human resources is needed.

Overall, Fida has strong programme management systems, processes and tools in place, and they are being developed on a continuous basis. The current indicator focused monitoring provides important quantitative information on progress made. Complementing this with strengthened qualitative monitoring and systematic monitoring of assumptions would be important. Analyzing this kind of more comprehensive monitoring data against the ToC, would better support monitoring of the feasibility of the intervention logic, positive trends and common challenges and their underlying factors, and identifying possible adjustment needs.

Fida's human resource management at the level of HQ and in relation to expats is well organized. However, it is important to address the main challenge related to weak coherence in human resource management policies and practices concerning Fida's locally recruited CP staff. Their number has been increasing as result of Fida's registration as an international or local NGO in Programme countries.

Impact: Despite weaknesses in the definition of planned impact and impact monitoring, there are important signs of development impacts in relation to the right to education and safe living environments. Strengthened school enrolment observed at the pre-primary, primary and secondary levels is an important early sign of longer-term impacts on improved access to education. The Programme has also contributed to children's right to rest, play, culture and arts through kids' and youth clubs. The SRHR and PSS related impacts are largely visible at the level of individuals. Also, in economic security and food security there are clear signs of positive impacts. However, for ensuring wider and sustainable development impacts, it is important to link these efforts to wider institutional structures in the Programme countries.

There are also areas of work where monitoring of impacts is not feasible or meaningful. In policy level advocacy and peace work efforts should be put in developing process focused monitoring.

Sustainability: Strong emphasis on changes in awareness, behaviors and practices forms a good basis for socio-cultural sustainability of the Programme. Also, institutional sustainability is overall well taken into consideration in the Programme. Strong emphasis on capacity development supports financial sustainability of the Programme.

Despite strong efforts made in strengthening the financial base of Fida's development cooperation, the actual results in terms of received funding remain modest. If Fida wants to effectively mobilize institutional funding, there's a clear need to increase related human resources in the HQ. Furthermore, increasing the contributions from partners to the Programme would be important not only from the financial perspective, but from the perspective of Programme ownership.

The Programme has systematically strengthened partners' capacities in finance and administration with good results. The practical and systematic support is appreciated and considered by partners as a clear added value of Fida compared to other funding partners. Also, partners' advocacy capacities have strengthened. In the Innovations, Technology and Corporate Cooperation (ITCC) component the progress has been modest.

Key findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
<p>Relevance</p> <p>Comprehensive context analysis and strong familiarity of Fida and partners with the local context support strong relevance of the Programme.</p> <p>Participation of beneficiaries in the planning and monitoring has strengthened. The level of participation is higher for local authorities and CSOs, and weaker for rights-holders.</p> <p>The Programme is relevant for the partner organizations. The highest priorities for partner organizations have also been the sub-themes where the Programme has been most effective.</p>	<p>The Programme is relevant to the development situations in operating contexts.</p> <p>Strengthened participation of beneficiaries supports the Programme relevance, but active participation of rights-holders as active stakeholders requires strengthening.</p> <p>The Programme is relevant to partner organizations. Addressing a wide range of partners' priorities has, however, contributed to weak thematic and geographic focusing.</p>	<p>i) Fida and its partners should develop approaches for strengthened participation of children, youth, women, persons with disabilities in the planning and monitoring of interventions as active stakeholders and agents of change.</p> <p><i>See also recommendations ii), iv)</i></p>
<p>Coherence</p> <p>The ToC and the Results Framework are coherently used in all Programme components. However, the generic nature of the ToC and objective setting together with a wide range of sub-themes covered, has led to weak thematic focusing.</p> <p>The Programme plans are well aligned with the Finnish development priorities and SDGs, and linkages to relevant human rights instruments have been identified. The use of SDGs and e.g. human rights monitoring reports more instrumentally in programming has been limited.</p> <p>Fida has coordinated and cooperated widely with different types of development actors. Strong emphasis has been on cooperation with local government actors, CSOs, and churches. Cooperation with the private sector has been more limited.</p>	<p>Coherent use of the ToC, and Results Framework support internal coherence, but the generic nature of the ToC and weak thematic focusing weaken it.</p> <p>The Programme is coherent with Finnish development priorities, and relevant international development and human rights frameworks. Strengthening of human rights and gender transformative elements would require more in-depth policy analysis.</p> <p>Strong cooperation with other development actors supports synergies and coherence with their work. Further strengthening cooperation with other NGOs and private sector is needed especially to support resource mobilization.</p>	<p>ii) Fida should sharpen and concretize the Programme ToC and objective setting. CPs should have their context specific focus within the scope of the Global Programme ToC.</p> <p><i>See also recommendations iv)</i></p> <p>iii) Fida and the partners should strengthen their coordination and cooperation with other NGOs and the private sector.</p>
<p>Effectiveness</p> <p>There's clear progress in strengthening knowledge and skills of duty-bearers and rights-holders on the Right to Education. In inclusive education, there are still many barriers hindering and slowing down adoption of inclusive practices. Weaker availability of services has affected the progress in vocational education.</p> <p>The PSS and SRHR work have been effective in strengthening capacities of relevant stakeholders and contributed directly to the wellbeing of a high number of rights-holders. In PSS good progress has been made in developing Training of Trainers approaches.</p> <p>Important results have been achieved in sustainable agriculture. Economic security activities have successfully promoted empowerment of women.</p>	<p>The Programme has made good progress in strengthening rights-holders' and duty-bearers' capacities, especially in formal education, PSS, SRHR, and economic security. Besides improvements in awareness, knowledge and skills, also changes in behaviors and practices are observed.</p> <p>Weak public sector structures in some areas of work (eg. vocational training, PSS, SRHR) affect the effectiveness in strengthening duty-bearers' capacities, but good approaches for addressing these gaps have been developed in CPs.</p>	<p>iv) Fida should strengthen and sharpen the thematic and geographic focus of its Global Programme and especially CPs (next programme cycle).</p> <p><i>See also recommendations i),ii), x)</i></p>

Key findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
<p>The Domestic Programme has met its output targets, but the outcome level results are affected by negative developments in the policy context and public opinion towards development.</p> <p>Important results have been achieved in the mainstreaming of CCOs, but related objective and target setting is weak. The work on Environment and Climate Resilience has been activity focused. In the CCOs on Gender Equality and Disability Inclusion transformative aspects in programming need to be strengthened.</p> <p>Thematic support is appreciated in CPs, but there's need to link it more closely to local contexts. There's a clear need to strategically develop the thematic support structures and related global level planning.</p>	<p>Important progress has been made in CCO mainstreaming, especially in disability inclusion and gender equality. Strategic planning is needed to strengthen the actual mainstreaming of the CCO on Environment and Climate Resilience.</p> <p>Thematic support has contributed to Programme effectiveness at the global level and in CPs. Strategic planning and context specificity of thematic support need strengthening.</p>	<p>v) Fida should continue developing CCO Markers. Regarding environment and climate resilience, strategic planning and strengthened resourcing is needed for moving from activity focus to actual mainstreaming.</p> <p>vi) Fida should strengthen global level strategic planning of the thematic support. Contextualization of the thematic support to CPs, and CP level focal point system should be strengthened.</p>
Efficiency		
<p>The financial resources have been sufficient to implement the plans. However, the lack of more comprehensive adjustments in the CPs in connection to cuts in funding has led to weak thematic and geographic focusing of the Programme, this in turn weakening the efficiency in the use of financial, human and time resources.</p> <p>There are gaps in human resourcing of resource mobilization, CCOs and ITCC work. The heavy workload of CP Managers requires attention.</p> <p>Fida's comprehensive programme management systems, processes and tools are continuously developed. The key further development needs are related to the use of indicators, strengthening of qualitative monitoring, and further developing ToC based monitoring.</p> <p>The personnel management within Fida is generally appreciated. The main challenge is related to weak coherence in HR management of Fida's locally recruited CP staff.</p> <p>The financial and risk management systems of Fida are in good shape and they are continuously further developed. Also, good communication within Fida and with partners is widely appreciated.</p>	<p>The funds allocated to the Programme and CPs are efficiently managed. However, the weak thematic and geographic focusing together with gaps in human resourcing weaken remarkably the Programme efficiency.</p> <p>Fida has strong Programme management systems, processes and tools in place. ToC based monitoring and reporting should be strengthened including more focused use of quantitative indicators, strengthening of qualitative monitoring, systematic monitoring of assumptions, and related analysis.</p> <p>Fida has strong personnel management systems in HQ, but there are weaknesses in the HR management for locally recruited staff that require attention.</p> <p>Fida has good risk management systems, and related processes have been strengthened.</p>	<p><i>See recommendations ij), iv), xii)</i></p> <p>vii) Fida should strengthen its human resources at the global level with a full-time staff with expertise in institutional funding. Efforts should be made to also address the gaps in human resources allocated to the CCO on Environment and Climate Resilience, and ITCC.</p> <p>viii) Fida should strengthen the use of ToC as the basis in Programme monitoring and learning.</p> <p>ix) The use of quantitative indicators should be reduced and sharpened, and feasible approaches for qualitative monitoring should be developed with its partners.</p>
Impact		
<p>Strengthened school enrolment is an important early sign of impacts on improved access to education at the pre-primary, primary and secondary level. Kids' and youth clubs have contributed to children's right to rest, play, culture and arts.</p>	<p>There are clear signs of positive development impacts under both outcome components. However, monitoring of development impacts has been weak due to vaguely defined planned impact and of related indicators.</p>	<p><i>See recommendations i), ii), iv), viii), ix)</i></p>

Key findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
<p>In SRHR and PSS there are visible impacts at the level of individuals. For achieving wider development impacts, attention needs to be paid to the effectiveness and sustainability of supported service provision structures.</p> <p>Impact level monitoring in advocacy and peace work is difficult, and efforts should be put in developing process focused monitoring.</p> <p>In economic security and food security there are signs of positive impacts, but for achieving bigger impacts linkages to wider value chains should be strengthened.</p>		<p>x) Especially in SRHR and PSS work, Fida and the partners should expand the use of developed training of training approaches, continue linking the work to existing government structures, and strengthen the monitoring of impacts at the level of rights-holders. In economic security the Programme should support linking community-based businesses to wider value chains.</p>
Sustainability		
<p>Strong emphasis on changes in awareness, behaviors and practices forms an important basis for socio-cultural sustainability of the Programme.</p> <p>Institutional sustainability is overall well addressed. In some sub-themes there are challenges related to weak governmental or other permanent structures for which context specific solutions need to be looked for.</p> <p>Strong emphasis on capacity development in the Programme supports financial sustainability.</p> <p>Fida has strengthened its resource mobilizations, but the results have so far been modest. Gaps in human resourcing and strategic programmatic planning have contributed to this.</p> <p>Fida has encouraged and supported partners in mobilizing resources to their own work and to the Programme, but the results have been overall modest.</p> <p>The Programme has systematically strengthened partners' capacities in finance and administration. Also, partners' advocacy capacities have strengthened, but there are still some conceptual unclarities and need for context specific training.</p> <p>ITCC includes essential elements from the perspective of sustainability. However, a strategic ITCC approach is still missing.</p>	<p>Socio-cultural, institutional and financial sustainability are addressed throughout the Programme.</p> <p>Despite some progress, Fida and its partners have not been very successful in diversification of their funding base. Within Fida related global level strategic planning and human resourcing has been weak.</p> <p>Good progress has been made in strengthening partners' capacities in finance and admin, and advocacy. For partners this is a clear added value of the Programme.</p> <p>Strategic planning and stronger resourcing of ITCC is needed.</p>	<p><i>See recommendations i), ii), iv), x)</i></p> <p>xi) Fida should strengthen sustainability planning in CPs with the use of sustainability categories.</p> <p>xii) Fida should take a more comprehensive programmatic approach to its development cooperation. It should create space within its Programme for strategic integration of new interventions funded also from other sources than only MFA.</p>

1. Introduction

Fida's Development Cooperation Programme 2022-2025 *Towards the Future – A Safe Educational Path and Living Environment for Children and Youth* aims at contributing to improved access to quality education and safer living environments for children and youth in 10 Programme countries in Eastern Africa, Middle East, and Asia. The purpose of this Mid-Term Evaluation was to assess the achievement of the planned results, lessons learned as well as strengths and weaknesses of the Global Programme, and to provide clear and actionable recommendations to support its further development and planning of the forthcoming programme (2026-2029). The Evaluation serves both accountability and learning purposes, with emphasis on the latter. The Terms of Reference of the Evaluation can be found in annex 1 of this report.

The assessment of Programme performance covered the whole Programme and its different outcome areas, and it has been conducted against the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria with emphasis on the *effectiveness, efficiency, and impact*. The Evaluation has also looked into the implementation of the Cross-Cutting Objectives of Gender Equality, Disability Inclusion, and Environment and Climate Resilience. Furthermore, it has examined the Programme's management system and quality assurance procedures.

In the assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the Programme, specific attention has been paid to gaining understanding on the most impactful thematic areas and effective working methods. Based on the analysis on strengths, related good practices and other success factors, as well as weaknesses and their contributing factors, the Evaluation identified lessons learnt during the current Programme and made recommendations on how they could be applied in the strengthening of the ongoing programme, and in the planning and management of the upcoming programme (2026-2029).

The Evaluation was conducted in August – October 2024 by an external evaluator contracted by Fida Headquarters (HQ). The evaluation methodology consisted of multiple methods, with emphasis on qualitative data collection and analysis. Quantitative data analysis was done based on secondary data from Fida's monitoring e.g., in relation to programme indicators and Programme budgets and spending levels. Some quantitative data was also generated from online surveys conducted with Fida's programme staff and representatives of partner organizations.

The data collection methods included a comprehensive desk review of key documents related to Fida's Development Cooperation Programme. Furthermore, 30 semi-structured key informant interviews with Fida's programme staff in three regions and the HQ (18 interviews), representatives of eight partner organizations in Burundi, Iraq and Nepal (11 interviews), as well as a representative of the main donor, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (1 interview). As noted above, two online surveys, one for Fida's programme staff and one for partner organizations (one response per organization) were conducted during the period 16-30 September¹. The surveys were conducted with the Survey Monkey online tool. The participation rate for Fida's partner organizations was 100 % (16 responses, including one partial), and for Fida's programme staff 64 % (eight from Country Programmes, and three from the regional and nine from the global level).

A two-hour Learning Workshop with Fida staff was conducted 8 October 2024 in Teams to discuss the initial findings on strengths and weaknesses of the Programme, and related lessons learnt. The Workshop

¹ The survey for partner organizations was reopened 3 October to enable participation of one partner organization that had missed the survey invitations due to a technical problem.

participants (20) included Country and Regional Programme Managers, Global Advisors, and Programme Management from HQ. The outcomes of the workshop discussions contributed to the final stage of data analysis and report writing.

The Evaluation didn't include in-country data collection, and therefore no direct interaction with the beneficiaries and other external stakeholders or observation in the target areas of the Country Programmes (CPs) could be conducted. For this reason, the perspectives of these stakeholders have been analysed only based on available programme documents, monitoring data, and previous evaluations, as well as the perceptions of the Fida programme staff and representatives of partner organizations who have participated in the Evaluation.

Geographically the evaluation covered the whole Programme and its management at the HQ, regional and country level. Fida's all 10 CPs were covered through the desk review of key programme documents, online surveys, interviews of regional directors and programme managers as well as the discussions of the Learning Workshop. However, in three CPs (Burundi, Iraq and Nepal) also interviews of Fida CP staff and representatives of partner organizations were conducted in order to gain a more in-depth country level understanding on strengths, weaknesses and further development needs and opportunities in Fida's programme work.

While the advocacy, global education and communications work in Finland form an integral element of the evaluated Programme, the Evaluation focused primarily on Fida's programme work overseas. An external evaluation on Fida's Domestic Programme was conducted in 2022, and progress made after this evaluation was assessed through desk review and some HQ level interviews. Further details on the evaluation methodology and sample can be found in annex 2 of this report.

The evaluated Programme and its context are described in Chapter 2 of this report. Chapter 3 presents the evaluation findings per evaluation criteria. The evaluation conclusions and recommendations are presented in Chapters 4 and 5, and Chapter 6 presents the main lessons learnt from the ongoing Programme that could be useful in the further development of Fida's programme work and approaches in the future.

The evaluator would like to express her warmest thanks to all Fida staff and partners who have supported and contributed to the evaluation process.

2. Evaluated Programme and its Context

Fida's Development Cooperation Programme 2022-2025 *Towards the Future – A Safe Educational Path and Living Environment for Children and Youth* is based on Fida's Development Cooperation Strategy 2030 and its vision that by 2030 "Fida has contributed to strengthened human dignity, justice and peace". It aims to contribute to improved access to quality education and safer living environments for children and youth in Programme countries and strengthening their opportunities to influence their own lives.

Theory of Change and Programme Objectives

With the aim of contributing to the above noted development impact, the Programme Theory of Change is built on the thematic components on Education, Safe Living Environment, Partners' Capacity Strengthening and Communication and Advocacy, as well as the Cross-Cutting Objectives (CCOs) of Gender Equality, Disability Inclusion, and Environment and Climate Resilience promoted through a mainstreaming approach (see Annex 4 of this report).

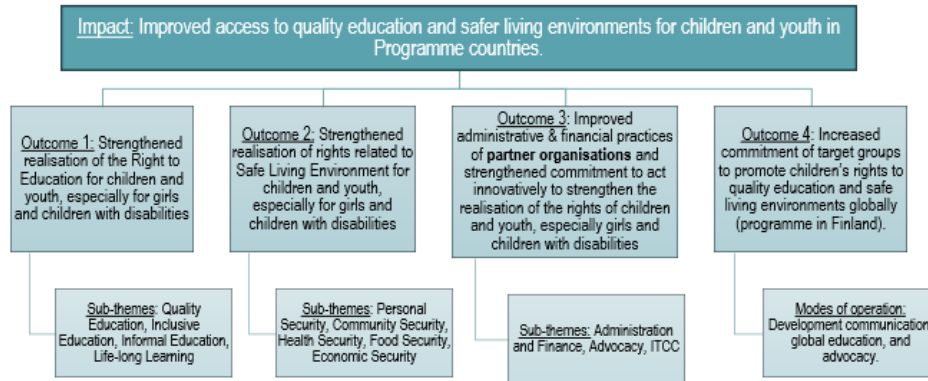
In line with the Human Rights-Based Approach the Programme aims at strengthening the awareness, knowledge and skills of partner organizations, local duty-bearers, and rights-holders to take action for strengthening accessibility, *quality* and *inclusiveness* of **education** for children and youth with focus on girls and children with disabilities. Parent's capacities to support children's schooling is also supported through *informal education* in parental groups, and children's capacity to learn and promote their rights is supported in children's clubs and children's parliaments. *Lifelong learning* is promoted by supporting youth returning to schools, through vocational training opportunities with specific focus on girls, women, and persons with disabilities, as well as parental literacy programmes.

The Programme promotes **safe living environments** through a holistic approach covering a comprehensive set of sub-themes. *Personal security* is promoted through strengthened awareness, knowledge and skills on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), and through empowerment of families by Psychosocial Support (PSS). At the *community level* peacebuilding and a sense of social cohesion between different groups is promoted. *Health security* is supported through hygiene education, improved access to sanitation facilities and hand washing spots, and improved access to and use of assistive devices for persons with disabilities. *Food security* is promoted through agricultural improvements and support to farmers in selling their products. Finally, *economic security* of families is promoted with support to entrepreneurship and saving and loan initiatives with emphasis on women and persons with disabilities.

As a sustainability strategy for ensuring longer-term support to the above-described development processes, and as a contribution to the strengthening of civil societies in the target areas, the Programme gives strong emphasis on strengthening of **partner organizations' capacities**. Partners are supported in strengthening their *administration and financial base*, and their *capacities in advocacy* on children's rights is strengthened. Their capacities to implement goal-oriented activities on *Innovation, Technology and Corporate Cooperation (ITCC)* is also supported.

In Finland the Programme contributes to its overall goal by promoting Finnish people's improved understanding on development cooperation and the results of Fida's Programme, as well as strengthened understanding among young people on underlying causes of global inequality and know how to advocate for change. This is promoted through development communication, global education, development, and advocacy towards Finnish decision-makers and authorities.

Figure 1: Expected impact and outcomes, and related sub-themes of the Programme.



Resourcing

The Programme is funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) with programme-based support for Finnish civil society organizations (CSOs). In line with the MFA self-funding requirements, over 15% of the Programme budget is funded with contributions from partners, and other sources in Finland and programme countries. The total annual Programme expenditures have been 6.36 MEUR in 2022 and 6.23 MEUR in 2023. The planned annual budgets for the latter half of the programme period are on a similar level. These costs and budgets cover the operations in CPs, the programme work in Finland, planning, reporting and evaluation, as well as administration (10%) costs.

Country Programmes

The Programme is implemented through 10 Country Programmes (CPs) located in Eastern Africa (Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda), the Middle East (Iraq) and South and South-East Asia (Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal)², as well as the Domestic Programme in Finland. Eight Programme countries are Least Developed Countries (LDCs) according to the DAC classification, and all of them are in the alert or warning category in the Fragile State Index. The civic space in these countries is narrowing, three of the countries being assessed as closed and five as repressed in the CIVICUS State of Civil Society monitoring (see Figure 2 below).

All CPs share outcome areas 1-3 with the Global Programme, but the more specific thematic focus on the level of sub-themes varies depending on the country context. In addition, all CPs work to achieve the CCOs. The Programme is implemented in partnership with local churches, NGOs and civil society networks, and in some cases government agencies.

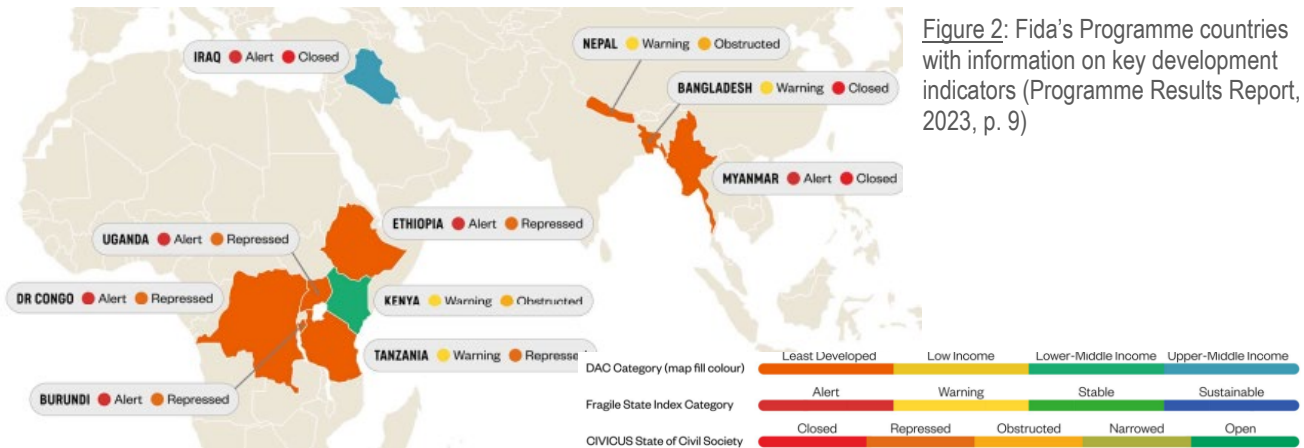


Figure 2: Fida’s Programme countries with information on key development indicators (Programme Results Report, 2023, p. 9)

² A CP in Syria was included in the original Programme plan, but it was dropped out due to money transfer restrictions.

3. Findings

3.1 RELEVANCE

The Evaluation has assessed the relevance of the Programme to the development situation in the countries of operation, and how consistent the Programme is with the priorities of beneficiaries, local implementing partners and other significant stakeholders.

Key findings:

- Comprehensive context analysis and strong familiarity of Fida and partners with the local context support Programme relevance.
- Participation of beneficiaries in planning and monitoring has strengthened. The level of participation is higher for local authorities and CSOs. There's clear need to strengthen the participation of rights-holders (children, youth, women, persons with disabilities) in Programme planning and monitoring.
- The Programme is relevant for the partner organizations. The highest priorities for partner organizations are the sub-themes where the Programme has been most effective.

3.1.1 Relevance to the development situation in the countries of operation

Fida's CP planning has included a wide range of analysis on the operating environment from the perspective of children's right to education and rights related to safe living environment for ensuring the relevance of the Programme to the local development situation.

The CP documents include analysis on the policy context from the perspective of the rights in focus. This analysis has covered relevant national legislation, and general level development policies such as national poverty reduction strategies and plans and Agenda 2030 plans. Also, various sectoral policies and strategies related to the thematic focus (e.g. education, agriculture, job creation) and the key rights-holder groups (children, youth, women, persons with disabilities) are reflected in the CP plans. The level of analysis varies from a brief description of relevant legislation and policies to more in-depth analysis on strengths and gaps in existing policies and their enforcement. If the aim is to strengthen evidence-based policy level advocacy in the future, this kind of in-depth analysis becomes increasingly important.

Also, the interviews indicate that Fida and its partners are aware of the relevant policy level developments and other processes, as well as changes in the operating environment in their countries. Risks related to natural disasters, political instabilities and conflicts are monitored and adjustments to the work plans are made accordingly. This supports the conclusions made in the previous evaluations on the strong relevance of Fida's CPs to the local development situation in Programme countries.

3.1.2 Relevance to the beneficiaries and other stakeholders

Since beneficiaries and other stakeholders could not be directly involved in this Evaluation, the analysis focuses on the level of their participation in CP planning and monitoring. The importance of a bottom-up approach in programming was emphasized by many interviews and reflected also in the reviewed documents. Fida's Localization Framework and Roadmap (2024) further strengthens this emphasis and provides guidance for strengthened participation of rights-holders, duty-bearers and other stakeholders.

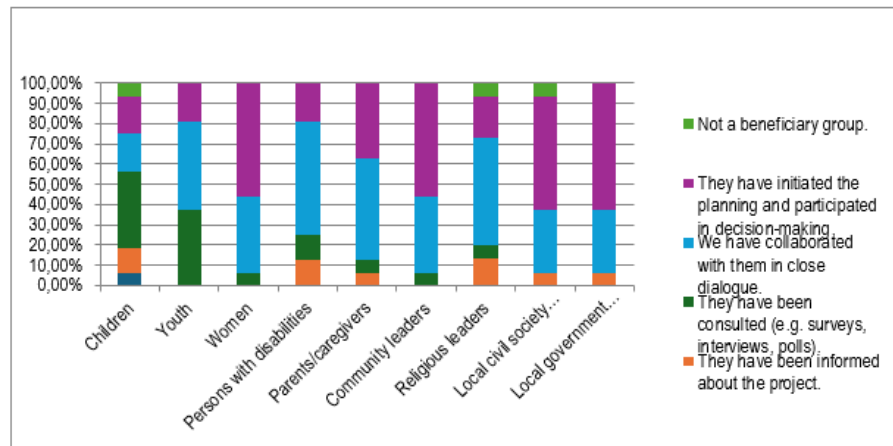
The interviews and survey results indicate that the level of participation of different stakeholders, especially in the Programme planning has strengthened compared to the past programme cycles. The use of different methods of involving beneficiaries, e.g. focus group discussions (FGDs), key informant interviews and surveys was noted to have increased and improved. However, concerns related to the level of participation especially

by children, youth and persons with disabilities were raised in the interviews, workshop with Fida staff as well as the survey responses. For example, in Iraq Fida has encouraged its partners to strengthen the involvement of beneficiaries in the monitoring for example during the visits to schools. However, it seems that not only in Iraq but also in other countries children, children with disabilities, and youth don’t play an active role in programme planning and monitoring. This finding is supported by the online survey results (figures 3 and 4) indicating that especially the participation of children in planning remained largely on the level of consultation. An even lower share of partners has actively involved children in monitoring. Overall, the level of participation by rights-holders in monitoring is clearly lower compared to planning. This applies to youth, women and persons with disabilities, and also to parents and other caregivers. Fida staff are aware of this gap as reflected in the survey responses (see figure 5 below). At the same time, for example time constraints and competing priorities affecting people’s possibilities and willingness to participate were brought up by several partners.

Several Fida staff and partners pointed out the strengthened and continuous interaction and cooperation with local government authorities in the planning, implementation and monitoring of CP activities. This is reflected also in the survey results. This close cooperation was confirmed also in the Evaluation of Fida’s work to strengthen local civil society.³ The interaction is in many cases a requirement by the government, but there’s clear indication that the interaction and cooperation go well beyond the level of formal requirements. For example, in Nepal partners cooperate closely with local authorities, and play a pro-active role in strengthening the dialogue between them and the communities and schools.

Also, involvement of other CSOs including community-based groups, local NGOs and bigger NGOs working in same target areas was brought up in the interviews and reviewed documents. The important role of local CSOs is also visible in the survey results (see figures 3 and 4 below). Meanwhile, the role of the central level government authorities in the planning and implementation has remained limited due to the community level focus of Fida’s strategies and work. Yet, there are exceptions such as Fida’s strong cooperation with the Ministry of Education in Burundi in the planning and monitoring of pre-primary education related capacity development activities. However, the origins of this cooperation are related to the government requirements for locally registered international NGOs.

Figure 3: Survey responses from partners on how the beneficiaries participated in the Programme planning (16 responses)



³ Seppo, M. & Dey, R., (2022) Evaluation of Fida’s work to strengthen local civil society in the Country Programmes in Bangladesh, Nepal, Burundi, Kenya and Uganda.

Figure 4: Survey responses from partners on how the beneficiaries have participated in the Programme monitoring (16 responses)

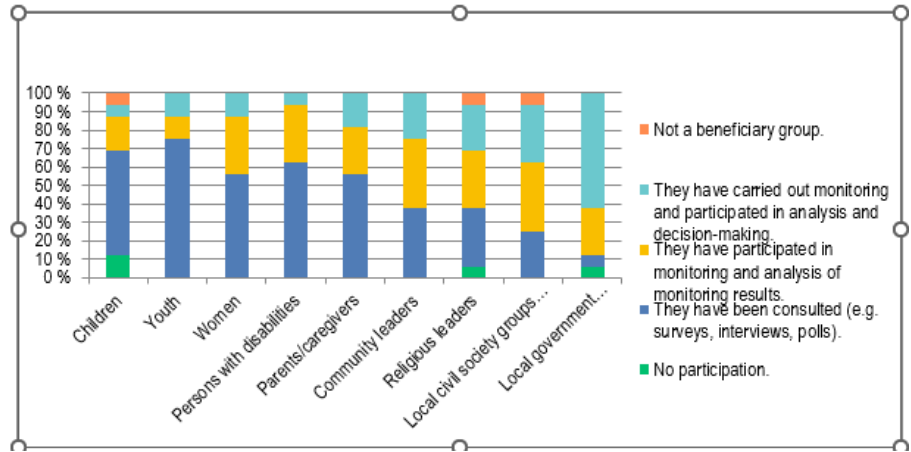
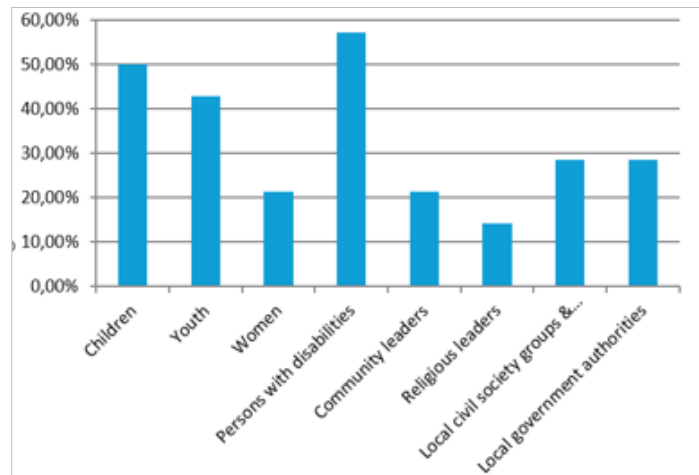


Figure 5: Survey responses from Fida staff on beneficiary groups whose participation should specifically be strengthened in programme work. (14 responses)



3.1.3 Relevance to the partners

Fida gives strong emphasis on equitable partnerships and strengthening of partners’ capacities as long-term development actors in their countries, as also noted in the evaluation on Civil Society Strengthening.⁴ The commitment to equitable partnerships is further confirmed in Fida’s Localization Framework (2024).

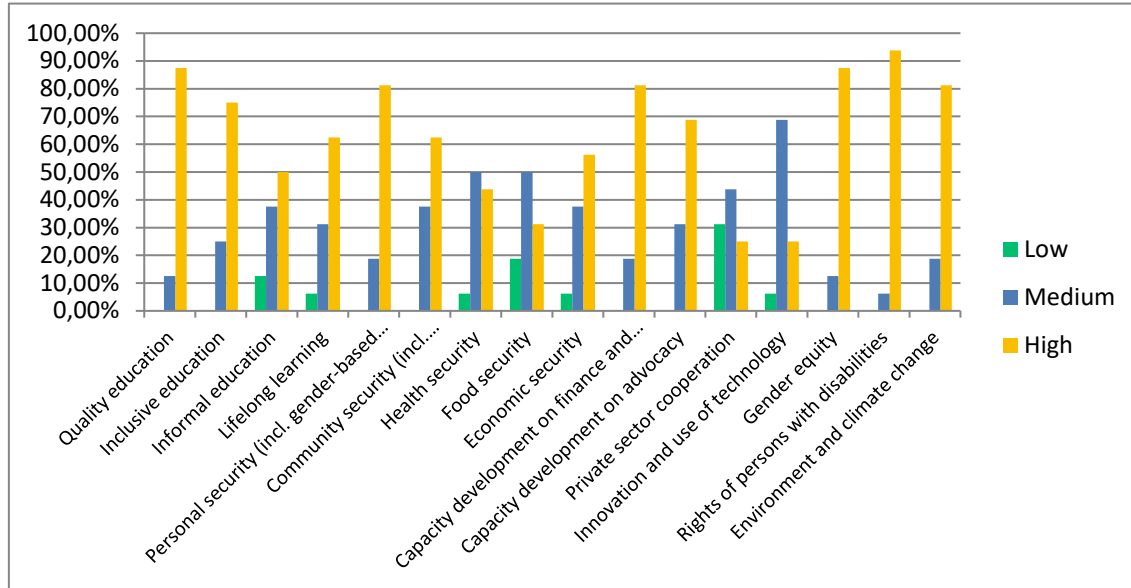
Partners played an active role in the planning of CPs. This is reflected in the strong alignment of the Programme with partners’ thematic priorities (see figure 6 below). The high relevance of Programme themes to partner organizations was confirmed also in partners’ interviews. However, some Fida staff brought up partners’ high dependency of funding from Fida, as an issue pushing partners to align their priorities with the focus of Fida’s Programme. At the same time, it’s clear that the very wide thematic scope of Fida’s Programme allows Fida to respond to a wide range of partner organizations’ priorities.

The survey results show that especially the sub-themes of quality education, inclusive education, personal security, capacity development on finance & administration, as well as the three CCOs are high priorities for a great majority of partner organizations. The sub-themes of health security, economic security, private sector cooperation, and innovation and use of technologies are given lower priority. These responses related

⁴ Seppo, M. & Dey, R., (2022) Evaluation of Fida’s work to strengthen local civil society in the Country Programmes in Bangladesh, Nepal, Burundi, Kenya and Uganda.

to the priority sub-themes are reflected also in Programme effectiveness, greatest progress understandably being made in thematic areas of high interest (see Section 3.3 further below).

Figure 6: Survey responses from partners on how high priorities the thematic areas covered by Fida’s Programme are to their own organization. (16 responses)



3.2 COHERENCE

In this Section the internal coherence, as well as the alignment of the Programme with the development priorities of Finland, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other relevant international frameworks and conventions are analyzed. Also, cooperation and complementarity with other development actors, and related strengths and weaknesses are assessed.

Key findings:

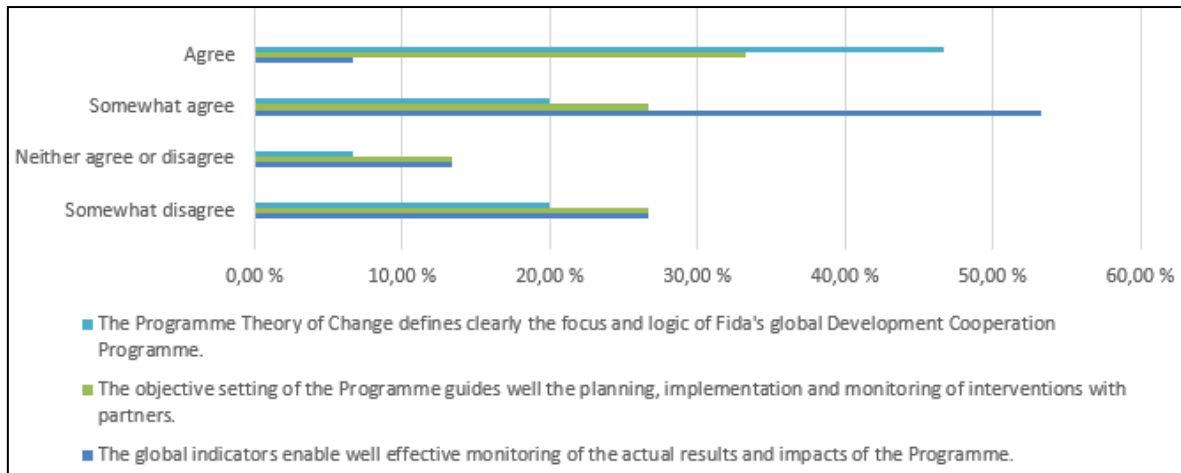
- The Programme ToC follows a holistic approach typical to community-based programming. The ToC and the Results Framework are coherently used in all Programme components. However, the generic nature of the ToC and objective setting together with a wide range of sub-themes covered, have led to weak thematic focusing. This weakens the effectiveness and efficiency as well as the internal coherence of the Programme.
- The Programme is well aligned with the Finnish development priorities and SDGs, and linkages to relevant human rights instruments have been identified. However, the use of SDGs and e.g. human rights monitoring reports more instrumentally in the programming has been limited.
- Fida has cooperated widely with different types of development actors in CPs and Finland, and to some extent also at the international level.
- In the cooperation with other development actors, strong emphasis has been on local government actors and CSOs, and church actors. Further strengthening cooperation with other NGOs and private sector is needed.

3.2.1 Internal coherence

Programme Theory of Change and Results Framework

As clearly reflected in the interviews of Fida programme staff and the online survey results the ToC is seen to define rather clearly the logic and focus of the Programme. Compared to the previous Programme (2018-2021), thematic focusing has strengthened, since community health including WASH has been integrated into the concept of safe living environment instead of being a separate outcome area. Furthermore, the ToC reflects a holistic approach where the primary aim to improve children’s access to education is supported not only in schools but through support to an enabling environment in communities. The importance of this approach was emphasized by many interviewees and highlighted also in some previous country level evaluations⁵. The need to have a broad understanding of the safe living environment and related sub-themes is justified by great differences among and within the operating contexts of CPs.

Figure 7: Online survey for Fida Staff: respondents’ views on the Programme Theory of Change, objective setting and indicators (15 responses)



The Results Framework has a simple structure, where the Programme contributes to the above described 3 outcomes (+ the outcome of the Programme in Finland) through a limited number of outputs. Outcome 1 and 2 have only one output each. While a simple Results Framework structure including limited number of outputs supports efficient programme management, it also may weaken the causal logic between different results levels. The impact and outcome statements both focus on the realization of certain human rights, and thereby the two results levels overlap with each other. Accessibility along with availability, acceptability and quality is one important feature used for assessing the realization of the right to education, and other human rights e.g. right to health, right to WASH. In this way the current outcome statements on education and safe living environments are wider and more ambitious compared to the access-focused impact statement.

As reflected in the new MFA Guidance Document on Results-Based Management (2023) the actual realization of human rights is rather within the *sphere interest*, than the *sphere of influence*, taking into consideration the various external factors and actors affecting development interventions. However, especially in the outcome component on safe living environment, the outcome level programme indicators bring the focus to

⁵ Pitkänen, O. (2023), Evaluation of the Fida’s Tanzania Country Programme: Tunandoto “We have a dream”. During the previous Programme cycle the importance of a holistic approach was also underlined in the evaluation of CP in Iraq (Pensala, V. & Heinonen, M. (2021) Evaluation on Iraq Country Programme: Promoting the Rights of the Child to Inclusive and Holistic Education and Development in Iraq Kurdistan 2018-2021.

changes in behaviors, structures and processes that are typical outcome level changes. At the same time, impact level indicators are missing and some of the outcome level indicators, especially under the education outcome, are measuring the realization of the right to education in the lives of children and youth.

The current output statements on improved capacities of rights-holders and duty-bearers cover the whole process from strengthened awareness, knowledge and skills to changes in their behaviors, structures, and processes, while the indicators used focus on typical output level changes in awareness, knowledge and skills.

The outputs of the outcomes on education and safe living environment cover many sub-themes (see figure 1 above). For this reason, the output statements remain very generic and abstract, while focus and target levels for these sub-themes are defined with programme indicators. This generic nature of the Programme outputs and lack of sub-theme specific articulation of expected outputs may have contributed to weaker thematic focus in CPs.

Country Programmes

The Programme Results Framework has been directly used as such in all CPs. The country level objective setting is identical with the global level result statements, and the monitoring of the progress towards the expected results is monitored by using indicators from a global indicator bank. In this way the ToC and Results Framework have well guided the country level programming and focusing of the work, as noted by many of the interviewed Fida staff and reflected in the online survey results (see figure 3 above). Furthermore, emphasis on the Partners’ Capacity Development as well as the CCOs on Gender Equality, Disability Inclusion, and Environment and Climate Resilience in the global Programme ToC has ensured that these aspects that are essential from the perspective of HRBA and sustainability are addressed in all CPs.

Especially in relation to the educational rights and safe living environment, having the same objective setting in all CPs doesn’t support context specific further focusing of country level programming. Or when this further focusing is done, the use of global results statements doesn’t support strengthening Fida’s country level profile and external communication on the specific added value of the CPs. For example, the strong focus on pre-primary education in Burundi, or the emphasis given on disability inclusion in Iraq are not explicitly reflected in the objective setting of these CPs. At the same time, the importance of defining the value niche and value added of Fida’s CP has been pointed out e.g. in the Evaluation of Fida’s Country Programme in Tanzania (2023) and the Evaluation of Fida’s work to strengthen local civil society (2023).

Table 1: Sub-theme coverage in Country Programmes (CPs)
Source: Annual Results Report, 2023

Outcome component	Sub-theme	# of CPs
Outcome 1: Right to Education	Quality Education	9/10
	Inclusive Education	9/10
	Informal Education	9/10
	Life-Long Learning	7/10
Outcome 2: Safe Living Environment	Personal Security	8/10
	Community Security	7/10
	Health Security	6/10
	Food Security	3/10
	Economic Security	8/10
Outcome 3: Strengthening Partner Organizations' Capacities	Capacity Building	10/10
	Advocacy	10/10
	ITCC	8/10

The original thinking in Fida had been that the global ToC and Results Framework would provide a flexible framework for CPs within which their context specific focus would be defined. The role of the current Programme in strengthening the focus on education in Fida’s development cooperation was highlighted by many interviewees. However, country context specific focusing has not worked as expected. Most of the CPs cover a great majority of the sub-themes (see table 1), and the need for strengthened thematic focusing and attention to country specific issues was strongly emphasized by most of the interviewed Fida programme staff. This is also

reflected in the use of Programme Indicators, that are very widely used in many CPs to cover a high number of sub-themes despite limited resources (see Section 3.4 on Efficiency).

3.2.2 Alignment with Finnish and international development priorities and frameworks

Finnish development priorities

The outcome areas and thematic focus of the Programme have clear linkages to the priorities of Finland's Development Policy defined in the Report on Development Policy across Parliamentary Terms (MFA, 2021) and the Theories of Change and Aggregate Indicators for Finland's Development Policy (MFA, 2023).

The Programme Outcome on right to education contributes directly to the Priority on Quality inclusive education by strengthening capacities of teachers, schools and other duty-bearers to improve the quality of education, and by promoting inclusive education especially for girls and children with disabilities. The Life-long Learning sub-theme strengthens access to vocational training for youth, and the Programme has also to some extent influenced education sector development through policy level influencing (e.g. in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Iraq).

The Programme also contributes to the priority area on the rights of women and girls by raising awareness on and promoting SRHR including prevention of sexual and gender-based violence as well as strengthening access to psycho-social support (PSS) in target areas, as well as raising awareness and mobilizing communities on the rights of persons with disabilities. The Programme Outcome 2 has also direct links to the priority area on sustainable economies and decent work through its components on economic security including vocational training, livelihood activities, and self-help groups. Also, strengthening of corporate cooperation under Programme Outcome 3 contributes to this development priority. Peacebuilding activities under Outcome 2 contribute to the priority area on peaceful democratic societies, and the food security and health related activities contribute to the priority area on climate and natural resources.

Fida's CCOs are fully in line with the CCOs of the Finnish Development Policy. Furthermore, the strong emphasis on strengthening the capacities and role civil society groups and organizations as development actors in target communities as well as investment in partners' capacity development are in line with Finland's emphasis on strengthening civil society in developing countries.

Finland's priorities have been redefined by the current Government⁶. While there are remarkable changes in these priorities and their resourcing, and an increasing emphasis is given to private sector participation, the areas of strength on rights for women and girls, education, and climate action, as well as Finland's continued support for civil society are well in line with Fida's thematic priorities and current programme work.

SDGs and Human Rights Conventions

In the planning of CPs, the alignment with the SDGs was analyzed and related linkages have been identified in all CP plans. In many CP plans, the relevant SDGs have just been listed, but there are plans (e.g. Nepal, Ethiopia and Myanmar), where more systematic analysis on the linkages of the programme objectives and thematic focus to specific SDGs has been included. The global level Programme Document includes more comprehensive analysis on the coherence of the Programme with the SDGs.

The global Programme Document also includes an analysis on the linkages of the Programme outcomes and CCOs to international human rights frameworks, with focus on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (pp. 12-13). In the policy context analyses of CP plans linkages to the CRC and CRPD, and in some cases also to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) have been indicated. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is only briefly mentioned in the global Programme Document. However, despite the high relevance of CEDAW to the Programme, more systematic analysis on it is missing from the CPs and global Programme level documents.

⁶ They are described in the Report on International Economic Relations and Development Cooperation published in July 2024.

In addition to the above noted human rights instruments, the policy context analysis in some CPs has covered also other international instruments and policies such as the UN Security Council resolution 1325 on Women and Peace and Security and 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security (Ethiopia Country Programme) or regional policies and programmes related to the agricultural development in Africa (DRC Country Programme).

The general level coherence of the Programme both with SDGs and the two key human rights instruments is evident. The interviews and progress reports clearly show their use in Programme implementation, e.g. in promoting child rights and rights of persons with disabilities under all outcome areas. The explicit use of SDGs is weaker, even though there are examples of activities that have explicitly been based on the SDGs, such as the curriculum for sustainable development education in Iraq developed by Fida's partner TOGETHER.

However, analysis on and the role of the Programme in addressing human rights challenges identified in human rights monitoring mechanisms such as reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child or the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, or Universal Peer Review (UPR) is missing from the plans and reporting. Similarly, the SDGs as a globally agreed framework for sustainable development are rather weakly reflected especially in the CP reporting. This kind of analysis would be useful for sharpening the Programme focus. It would also support policy level advocacy activities that increasingly take place within Fida's CPs. The importance of using the international and national legal and policy frameworks as guiding documents in the Programme was pointed out also in the recently conducted Gender Equality Study.⁷

3.2.3 Cooperation with other development actors

Country Programmes

Fida and its partners cooperate widely with different kinds of development actors at the local and national level (see figure 8 below). Fida's strategic focus on community level development is reflected in close cooperation with local government including local authorities and government service providers, and local CSOs including NGOs working on similar issues in same target areas. Also, cooperation with church actors is frequent, especially when partners are local church actors or Faith-Based Organizations (FBO). In peacebuilding work, the Programme promotes and facilitates dialogue with other religious groups e.g. in Myanmar and Ethiopia.

Compared to the partners, Fida CP staff has more interaction with national level stakeholders including government stakeholders in Ministries, INGOs, and intergovernmental organizations including the UN Agencies. The cooperation especially with national level government stakeholders is considered very important. Fida's national level cooperation has been related to formal registration related processes and reporting to the national level government, since in many countries Fida is registered as an international NGO (e.g. in Burundi, Iraq and Nepal). In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) Fida is already registered as a local NGO, and in Kenya, the process is ongoing for registering Fida as a local NGO. Furthermore, there have also been programme content related dialogue with government stakeholders. For example, in Burundi, Fida has advocated and cooperated with the Ministry of Education for strengthening the government support to pre-primary education the availability of such services being very low in the country.

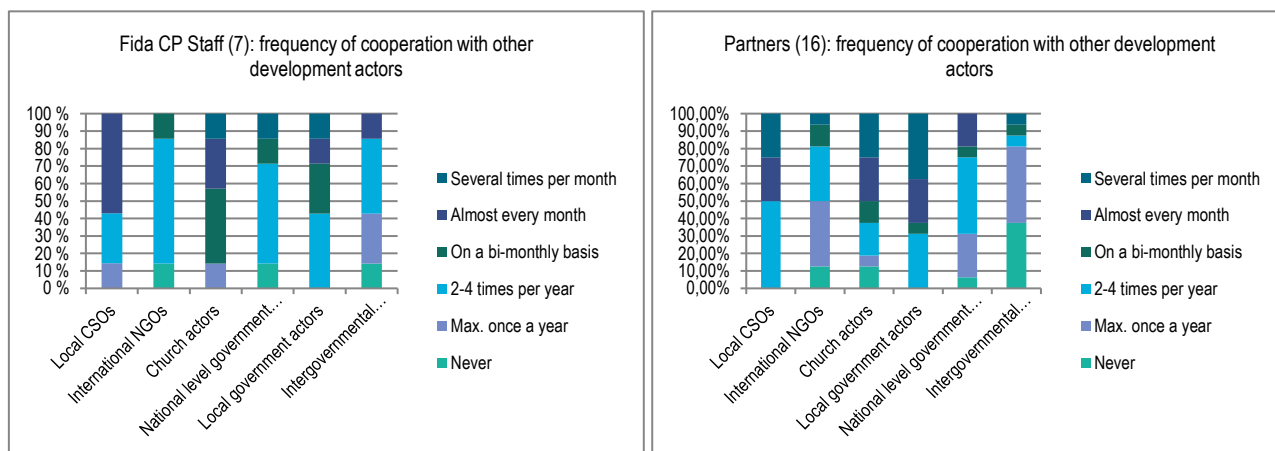
Fida has participated in the national level coordination and dialogue and joint fund-raising with other CSOs e.g. in EU-CORD country forums in Kenya, DRC, Nepal, Ukraine, Uganda, Bangladesh and Ethiopia. For example, in Nepal Fida participates in regular national level coordination meetings of INGOs and education sector working groups. Fida cooperates and coordinates also with the other funding partners of its partner organizations e.g. in relation to partner capacity development. In Bangladesh and Myanmar Fida even has a joint programme with PMU from Sweden. At the same time, the need to strengthen coordination with sister organizations was brought up by some interviewees.

⁷ Addressing Gender Inequality: Key Learnings from Fida's 2022-2025 Development Cooperation Programme, August 2024

There has also been thematic cooperation with other international CSOs. For example, Fida and its partners have cooperated with Abilis Foundation on disability rights e.g. in Tanzania, Myanmar and Nepal. In Tanzania Fida has also cooperated with Felm and a Tanzanian Organisation of Persons with Disabilities on SRHR for persons with disabilities. In Iraq Fida has facilitated the participation of partners in a national working group on mental health and PSS. CPs have also cooperated with Finnish universities (e.g. in Iraq and Tanzania) and local universities and training centres (e.g. in Iraq, Kenya, Nepal and Ethiopia).

Need to strengthen thematic and advocacy cooperation with other CSOs was brought up in interviews, survey responses, and the CP evaluations in Tanzania (2023) and Kenya (2022). The growing emphasis on local level fund-raising further increases the importance of cooperation with NGOs and with private sector actors. However, this requires both strengthened strategic planning and adequate resourcing of this cooperation, the CP staff being heavily burdened by various other tasks.

Figure 8: Online survey responses on frequency of cooperation with other development actors.



Finland and international level

In Finland, Fida participates actively in Programme Support Organizations’ cooperation, where e.g. MFA funding and programme management meetings are discussed. Fida is also a member of Fingo ry⁸ and participates in Fingo’s advocacy work focusing on Finnish development funding. However, other domestic advocacy cooperation has remained limited.

At the international level, Fida participates actively in the work of EU-CORD e.g. in advocacy, resource mobilization, and discussions on organizational development. Cooperation with other Pentecostal development organizations has strengthened during the past few years, especially in connection to the close Nordic collaboration in Ukraine and related fund-raising, but also more widely on the organizational level. Cooperation related to Fida’s thematic priorities with other development actors in Finland and at the international level seems to be limited to the connections developed by individual Fida staff members, e.g. to the Keeping Children Safe Network.

⁸ Fingo is the umbrella organization of about 260 Finnish CSOs working in the area of global development.

3.3 EFFECTIVENESS

The Evaluation has assessed the achieved progress in strengthening the knowledge of key stakeholders regarding children's right to education and to a safe living environment, as well as changes in related attitudes and behavior of rights holders and duty bearers.⁹ It has also assessed the level of success in mainstreaming the CCOs, and analyzed strengths, weaknesses and further development needs of Fida's thematic support structures.

Key findings:

- Clear progress has been made in strengthening knowledge and skills of duty-bearers and rights-holders on the Right to Education. In inclusive education, despite strong progress in strengthening awareness, knowledge and skills of key stakeholders, there are still many barriers hindering and slowing down adoption of inclusive practices. Achieving results in vocational education is more challenging e.g. due to weaker availability of services.
- The PSS and SRHR activities have been effective in strengthening awareness, knowledge and skills of relevant stakeholder. They have also impacted directly the wellbeing of a high number of rights-holders in vulnerable situations. In PSS good progress has been made in developing Training of Trainers approaches.
- Health and food security have remained small components. However, in food security important local level results have been achieved in promoting sustainable agriculture.
- The economic security activities have successfully promoted the empowerment of women. However, there's clear need to increasingly link the community level businesses to wider value chains.
- The Domestic Programme has met its output targets. At the outcome level negative developments in the policy context and public opinion towards development makes the work more challenging, but even more important.
- Important results have been achieved in the implementation of CCOs. Development of CCO Markers aims at addressing lack of clear objective setting observed as a weakness in this Evaluation. In the CCOs on Gender Equality and Disability Inclusion transformative aspects in programming need to be strengthened. In the CCO on Environment and Climate Resilience, development of strategic approaches is needed for moving from activity focus to actual mainstreaming.
- Thematic support is appreciated in CPs, but the importance of linking it more closely to local contexts is widely recognized. There's a clear need to strategically develop the thematic support structures basing on the current strengths and by addressing the identified weaknesses.

3.3.1 Progress in achieving the expected results

Outcome 1: Strengthened realization of the Right to Education for children and youth, especially for girls and children with disabilities

The desk review, online survey responses, interviews, and results of previous evaluations show clear progress in achieving results in the outcome on the Right to Education.

The Programme has supported strengthening of **quality education** in the target areas on Programme countries e.g. by building the capacities of teachers, other educational personnels and volunteers on inclusive and child-centered teaching and assessment methods and tools, by raising awareness and providing training on children's right to education among key stakeholders, and by improving the physical learning environments through infrastructural improvements. In the sub-theme of quality education, the Programme

⁹ Progress towards expected results under outcome 3 on strengthening partners' capacities is analyzed in Section 3.6.3 of this report.

has been able to achieve and exceed all its output indicator targets reflecting strengthened awareness and knowledge among key stakeholders. By the end of year 2023 globally over 5000 teachers and other educational personnel had been trained on children's right to education, and over 39 000 parents and other caregivers had been trained on the importance on the education and the rights of their children, including gender and disability. The capacities of over 2000 teachers to use new teaching methods, tools and skills had been strengthened.

The outcome indicator monitoring indicates clear improvements in the quality of teaching and learning environments, as well as strengthened support by caregivers and parents to the education of their children in Programme target areas. Even though the school enrolment at different levels is monitored in numbers and not in rates, the available monitoring data gives indication of strong improvements in the enrolment especially at the pre-primary and primary level but also at the secondary level. The analysis on the CPs of Burundi, Iraq and Nepal together with the previous evaluations and other sources of information provide numerous concrete examples of good progress made in strengthening positive behaviors and practices among duty-bearers and rights-holders, as well as improvements in the physical learning environments contributing to improved accessibility and quality of education for children. Examples of achieved changes in knowledge and skills as well as changes in behaviors and practices are provided in Annex 4 of this report.

In the area of **inclusive education**, the Programme has promoted accessibility of education with specific focus on children with disabilities and ethnic minorities. This has been done by making physical improvements to school premises, raising awareness and training teachers on educational rights and how to support the education of children with disabilities. Also, in the sub-theme of inclusive education, the Programme has achieved and exceeded the target levels of almost all output level indicators. By the end of 2023 there were in total 3242 teachers (1546 female) who had been trained on inclusive education and inclusive methods. Also, the targets related to strengthening the access of children from language minorities to bilingual education including their mother tongue had been clearly exceeded (target 600, achieved 1680 children including 874 girls and 84 children with disabilities). Furthermore, 268 schools had been supported to provide individual support to children with learning, behavioral or social difficulties.

The analysis on the CPs of Burundi, Iraq and Nepal together with other sources of information provide numerous concrete examples of good progress and important achievements also in promoting inclusive education (some reflected in Annex 4). However, challenges especially related to the multiple barriers still hindering the access of children with disabilities to education and learning were brought up in interviews, reports and in the evaluation on the three nexus country CPs. These barriers include e.g. slow processes in changing beliefs and attitudes towards persons with disabilities in families, communities, schools and among other duty-bearers. This contributes also to challenges in identifying persons with disabilities in target areas. Also, the issue of children with disabilities face barriers related to moving from their homes to schools because of lack of wheelchairs or inaccessible school journey. Furthermore, a lack of special education, e.g. for children with sensory disabilities in local schools was brought up.

These barriers are reflected also in the outcome indicator monitoring, where despite good progress, the results related to inclusion of children with disabilities have not reached or exceeded the set targets as they have in the case of children without disabilities. While the knowledge of parents, caregivers and teachers has improved, the targets for improved quality of education for children with disabilities have not been met despite good progress. By the end of 2023, 2372 children with disabilities (1236 females) benefited from improved quality of education in terms of teaching and learning environment, the target being 4533 children.

Also, under the sub-theme of **informal education** the Programme has largely met the output level targets in its efforts to ensure that children have opportunities to learn and interact with one another in informal classes outside school hours. By the end of 2023, the number of children attending informal classes and kids' clubs had increased from 21 816 to 33512. An increasing number of children with disabilities have access to kids' clubs and advocacy activities, but their number remains below the set target (61%). Participation of

parents and other caregivers in parents' meetings has been over double of the target level (24 604 persons including 19953 females). Also, participation of children in advocacy and decision-making in communities has increased, while the participation by children with disabilities remains below the set targets.

The progress reports show important achievements in the establishment of kids' and youth clubs and strengthening children's and youth awareness and knowledge e.g. on gender equality, SRHR, environment and climate resilience, as well as fun ways to learn academic skills. They have also a place for children to learn and perform arts and sports. In some kids' clubs for example in Burundi also PSS has been provided to the members. Regarding the outcome level results in terms of changes in behaviors and practices, in some CPs improvements in learning outcomes as well as children's participation in child rights advocacy are reported. However, drawing wider conclusions on the achievement of outcome results on improvements in the realization of the Right to Education is challenging within the scope of this evaluation. At the same time, kids' clubs contribute as such to the right of the child to rest, play, culture and arts (art. 31 of the UNCRC), even though this is not reflected in the Programme documents.

Lifelong learning has been promoted by providing opportunities for young people and parents to further their education and learn new skills. This has included support for youth (15–24-year-olds) in accessing technical/vocational programmes and community-based literacy training. The output indicator targets show that this sub-theme has been a rather small component within the education outcome.

Even though the set targets for support to accessing technical/vocational programmes were not fully met (73%), 1794 young people (822 females, 131 persons with disabilities) had been reached by the end of 2023. The outcome level data shows that the actual enrolment to vocational level education is behind the targets (54 %). Regarding the literacy training, there's some confusion in the global level monitoring data.

The low target levels and challenges in reaching them reflect common challenges especially related to the availability of vocational education in Programme countries. For example, in Burundi the CP has supported vocational training of young people in entrepreneurship and use of information technology. However, lack of facilities and teachers limits the access of students to vocational training. The evaluation on nexus countries also brings up challenges related to the availability of lifelong learning opportunities as well as low awareness among rights-holders on possibilities to study forward in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).¹⁰ In Ethiopia, the CP has taken a strategic approach by conducting research with the government job creation office to support development of more targeted vocational training and apprenticeships with a network of government and private sector institutions.

Outcome 2: Strengthened realization of rights related Safe Living Environment for children and youth, especially for girls and children with disabilities

As noted above, the outcome component is very wide, covering five rather comprehensive sub-themes implemented largely through community-based approaches.

Personal security has been supported through activities on children's and parents' psychosocial wellbeing and SRHR. Furthermore, there's a strong linkage between the sub-theme of personal security and the efforts in strengthening safe learning environments in schools through teacher training, kids' clubs and infrastructure improvements. Also, Fida's presence in many countries affected by conflicts further increases the importance of the sub-theme on personal security. For instance, the evaluation report on three nexus country CPs emphasizes the significant role of PSS and SRHR in DRC, where people are traumatized due to violence and sexual abuses.

¹⁰ Pitkänen, O. (2024), Evaluation of the Fida International's Country Programmes in Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, and Myanmar

Achievements related to personal security were appreciated by many interviewees and reflected also in the online survey results. The output level monitoring supports this perception of strong progress in achieving targets. Almost 29 919 persons (16 193 female, 21 715 children, 1695 persons with disabilities) had received PSS and were reported to be better equipped to cope with life's challenges by the end of 2023. This is over double the set target. This result is further supported by progress in strengthening the capacities of facilitators with skills related to basic counselling, trauma awareness and community resilience (in total 51, 8 persons with disabilities). Also, achieved results in strengthening SHRH knowledge and access to sexual and reproductive health care services have been remarkable (45 682 persons, including 29 338 females, 1109 persons with disabilities).

Outcome level monitoring indicates that awareness raising among different stakeholders, training of duty-bearers and volunteers, and improved access to counselling have led to safer SRHR practices and strengthened well-being and self-esteem among rights-holders. Development and strengthening of structures for provision of PSS services, such as the peer support groups in Iraq, are also remarkable outcomes contributing besides Programme effectiveness also to sustainability.

Under the sub-theme on **community security**, the Programme has equipped local community members, children and youth with skills for resolving conflicts and promoting peaceful environments. The output monitoring shows that good progress has been made in strengthening the skills and knowledge of religious, ethnic and other leaders on peacebuilding and strengthening social cohesion. The number of persons reached (16 559) was by the end of 2023 over 8 times the set target, while participation by women and persons with disabilities remained below the targets. Interreligious dialogue processes have taken place for example in Ethiopia and Myanmar.

Also, children and youth have been involved in community safety, peacebuilding and conflict resolution initiatives (in total 5340 including 2481 females, 404 persons with disabilities) e.g. through kids' and youth clubs or other community groups. However, efforts for strengthening knowledge and skills on peacebuilding and social cohesion more widely within communities have not so far reached the set targets (17%, 21 287 persons by the end of 2023). At the same time, for example in Ethiopia community consultations have played an important role in peacebuilding and promoting various people groups' rights.¹¹

Regarding changes in the behaviors and practices, the number of supported peace building processes is well beyond the set target (123/22). Also, the number of persons actively participating in social cohesion and peacebuilding activities has increased remarkably (53 443 persons by the end of 2023), even though only 52 % of the set target level. In addition, the programme has monitored changes in the number of children and youth who report feeling safer and more secure in their immediate environments. While also related improvements have been reported, the progress is well below the set targets (19%).

While the outcome indicators tell something about the progress made in peacebuilding efforts, quantitative data rarely manage to catch the actual significance of achieved results in this kind of long-term processes in fragile and often also unpredictable contexts where the work is affected by numerous external factors. In this kind of contexts already the fact of having dialogue processes ongoing is often a remarkable achievement as such. Furthermore, qualitative, participatory monitoring on whether children and youth feel safe and secure or on perceptions of participants on different dialogue processes could support both monitoring and learning while also contributing to the processes themselves.

In the area of **health security**, health practices as well as access to adequate sanitation and clean water are promoted. Also access to rehabilitation services and use of assistive devices for persons with disabilities is supported. The sub-theme has formed a rather small element in the Programme. By the end of 2023, the

¹¹ Pitkänen, O. (2024), Evaluation of the Fida International's Country Programmes in Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, and Myanmar

Programme had strengthened the knowledge 9099 persons (4893 females, 257 persons with disabilities) on preventive healthcare, rehabilitation of persons with disabilities and available healthcare services. It had also improved the access of 3104 persons (3159 females, 78 persons with disabilities) to basic sanitation and water supply.

It is reported that this has led to improvements in sanitation and hygiene practices including handwashing and toilet use. The number of persons and especially children with disabilities using relevant assistive devices has increased. However, it is difficult to find more in-depth information on related results. The evaluation of the Kenya CP brings up the limited resources of the Programme in promoting water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), and recommended strengthening of collaboration with other agencies on these issues.¹² This may reflect a more general trend in Fida's Programme to increasingly focus on other aspects of health (SRHR, PSS) and use other channels for more general health education and WASH (schools, and kids' and youth clubs).

Through **food security** activities Fida strengthens the skills and know-how of beneficiaries to sustainably grow crops and manage livestock. This sub-theme has been included only in the CPs of Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. In these countries the knowledge of rural households on methods of increasing agricultural products has been strengthened (1938 households by the end of 2023), and 603 hectares of land has been regenerated or placed under sustainable land management.

For example, in Kenya, training in conservation agriculture has led to a mind shift towards growing of vegetables instead of earlier full focus on pastoralism. As result, increased average yields and improvements in household level food security has been reported. However, while these results are significant at the local level, at the Global Programme level the food security element remains very small.

Under the sub-theme of **economic security**, the Programme aims at equipping rights-holders with skills and knowledge to gain employment and establish small businesses. Related activities were included in most CPs (8/10). The output indicator monitoring, and progress reports shows strong emphasis on women's empowerment in economic security activities. Out of the 12 774 persons who had been equipped with new skills and knowledge to strengthen their livelihood and income generation possibilities 8654 have been women. Also, over half of the 854 persons who have gained or created a full-time job have been women.

The trained beneficiaries in different countries have established micro and small businesses (1345 by the end of 2023), that has further contributed to increased saving levels (7756 households). These outcome level results exceed clearly the set targets. While these results are positive and encouraging, the issue of the necessity to link these community level economic activities to wider value chains was brought up in some interviews. This would be essential for not only increasing the income and saving levels, but sustainably supporting households in rising from poverty. In Tanzania, cooperation with a state-run organization supporting small businesses in accessing government soft loan schemes, has strengthened the access of beneficiaries to larger markets including supermarkets and food processing industry.

Outcome 4: Increased commitment of target groups to promote children's rights to quality education and safe living environments globally (Programme in Finland)

The Programme in Finland has been implemented through development communication, global education and advocacy. As brought up in the evaluation report of the Programme in Finland the emphasis in the monitoring of activities in these programme components focuses largely on the volume and quality of conducted activities, while the possibilities for monitoring actual changes in knowledge and skills or behaviors and practices remain limited.¹³

¹² Otieno, S. (2022), Evaluation report for Kenya Country Programme (5040)

¹³ Tran-Nguyen, E. (2022), Fidan Kotimaan ohjelmaa arvioitiin

Development communication work has continued strengthening. Wide audiences have been reached through own channels including Fida Magazine, webpages, social media, and organizing campaigns. Cooperation with media influencers has exposed new people (10 000 people in 2023) to communication on children's rights. The media visibility has increased: the potential reach was 7,68 million reads in 2022, and 23,7 million reads in 2023.

Global education has continued to be implemented in schools through school visits covering both old and new schools. Targets set for number of lessons were reached in 2022 (276), while in 2023 the number of visits (181) remained below the set target. The feedback from teachers and students has continued to be positive. Fida continues developing global education materials and training volunteers for global education.

In **Advocacy** Fida has participated in the EU-CORD Network advocacy. In Finland it has closely cooperated with Fingo and Programme Support Organizations on parliamentary election and development funding related advocacy. It has reached big numbers of audience e.g. through communication campaigns and exceeded related targets. The progress in linking the policy level advocacy work in Finland to the evidence basis from CPs could not be assessed within the scope of this Evaluation.

The outcome level indicators and targets are challenging. The support by wider audience in Finland to development cooperation has decreased, while these trends are strongly affected by many factors beyond Fida's control. There were also serious budget cuts in Finland's development funding, that are related to the political and economic situation in Finland. However, there were some positive outcomes in advocacy: disability inclusion was integrated in the climate resilience work in MFA, and Fida's was being ordered to all Finnish parliamentarians. As noted in the earlier evaluation, in future programming attention should be paid to defining more concrete objectives and targets that are within the reasonable sphere of influence for Fida.

3.3.2 Mainstreaming of Cross-cutting Objectives

The CCOs of Gender Equality, Disability Inclusion and Environment and Climate Resilience have been integrated into all CPs at least to some extent through mainstreaming or CCO-specific activities. They have also been integrated into the contents and processes of development communication, global education and advocacy work.¹⁴

Fida continuously develops policies and guidelines to support CCO implementation in the Programme and conducts related capacity building. The mainstreaming in CPs has been guided by Mainstreaming Guidelines explaining the key concepts, CCO specific key issues, providing concrete examples and information about available tools and other sources of information, as well as checklists. Fida's strong emphasis on Disability Inclusion is reflected in these guidelines. In addition, mainstreaming of CCOs in programme management and implementation processes is supported with several Fida policies that have been further developed during the current programme cycle. These policies include Disability Inclusion Policy, Environmental Policy, Psychosocial Policy, Child Protection Policy and related guidelines, as well as Guidelines for the Prevention of Sexual Harassment, Violence and Exploitation. Similar policies have been developed by partner organizations with Fida's support (outcome 3). However, the recently conducted Gender Equality Study brings up the lack of a stand-alone Gender Equality Policy or Strategy in Fida that would guide transformative work for gender equality.¹⁵

¹⁴ Tran-Nguyen, E. (2022), Fidan Kotimaan ohjelman evaluaatio

¹⁵ Mesiäislehto, V. & al. (2024), Addressing Gender Inequality: Key Learnings from Fida's 2022-2025 Development Cooperation Programme

Progress in CCO implementation is monitored through T-reports three times per year, and CCO specific indicator monitoring. Monitoring data is disaggregated by gender and disability and as relevant by age group. However, difficulties in grasping the actual progress based on CP reports and indicators were brought up in some interviews and was observed also in the desk review. This challenge reflects the lack of clear objective setting for the CCOs within the Programme ToC and Results Framework. This gap is being addressed in the ongoing development of Fida's CCO Markers.

Within the thematic support structures there's a Global Team for each CCO. The Global Teams discuss, promote and support CCO work, and they also review the T-reports and provide CCO related feedback to the CPs. Especially the Disability Inclusion Global Team has been very pro-active in providing guidance and organizing training for Fida staff and partners. In the current Programme Fida doesn't have Global Thematic Advisors focusing on CCO work.

The CCO on **gender equality** aims to tackle structural barriers preventing gender equality from being fulfilled with strong focus on SRHR of girls and young women. The Programme has made progress e.g. in improving female representation in various ways within CPs. For example, in Nepal, the CP has worked to ensure the gender quota (at least 33% representation of underrepresented gender) defined in the national law in recruitments and in School Management Committees, youth clubs and Kids Clubs. Also in Ethiopia, female representation in staffing has increased, and some progress is seen in the strengthening of women's position within partner churches. At the community level, empowerment of women's Self-Help-Groups and other women's groups has been reported in many CPs.

The SRHR related activities have successfully promoted gender equality through awareness raising and training in different fora and through various channels with girls, boys, women and men e.g. on menstrual health management and prevention of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV). As reflected in the previous section, changes e.g. in increased school attendance by girls, reduction in early pregnancies, and prevention of early marriages have been reported in many CPs. Furthermore, for example in Nepal, infrastructural improvements including provision of menstrual pad disposal facilities, together with strengthened awareness on girls' right to education in schools and communities, has contributed to strengthened school attendance by girls.

The Gender Equality Study appreciates Fida's commitments and achievements in promoting gender equality. However, it also underlines the need for strategically deepening its gender work to become more transformative so that the root causes of gender inequalities are more systematically addressed. More detailed guidance for those efforts is provided in the Study report.¹⁶ Making the Programme ToC more focused, analytical and concrete, and thereby sharpening the Programme objective setting at all levels, would support this kind of efforts of further strengthening gender transformative elements within the Programme.

The CCO on **disability inclusion** aims at ensuring that persons with disabilities are able to participate in all Programme activities and are given opportunities to make their voices heard. The Programme has placed strong emphasis on disability inclusion both through mainstreaming and disability-specific activities. This is reflected in the gradual increase in the share of persons with disabilities in activities and in budget allocations made to promoting the rights of persons with disabilities. At the same time, challenges are faced under many sub-themes in meeting the targets set for participation of persons with disabilities. Some reasons for these challenges have been noted in the previous Section of this report.

However, clear progress has been made in the inclusion of persons with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities in the Programme. For example, in Iraq the Programme has had a strong focus on inclusion

¹⁶ Mesiäislehto, V. & al. (2024), Addressing Gender Inequality: Key Learnings from Fida's 2022-2025 Development Cooperation Programme

of persons with disabilities e.g. through its support to the Yes We Can Network formed by 50 local disability organizations and efforts in shifting the focus from charity to advocacy. In Ethiopia key stakeholders have been trained on inclusion of persons with disabilities in Programme activities leading to their increased participation in Self-Help Groups and related trainings. Also, in Tanzania there are Self-Help Groups established solely for persons with disabilities, and also a union of parents with children with disabilities has been established and registered.

Furthermore, in inclusive education important progress has been made in raising awareness and training key stakeholders including parents, teachers, school management and education supervisors on the right of children with disabilities to education and inclusive education methods and practices (e.g. in Iraq, Burundi, Bangladesh, Nepal and DRC). Disability inclusion has also been supported with infrastructural improvements. Rights of persons with disabilities has also been promoted more widely through community awareness raising and within training activities e.g. on SRHR. While more inclusive attitudes, behaviors and practices are reported, the long time needed for changing attitudes and behaviors towards persons with disabilities together with multiple other challenges faced in schools were brought up in interviews.

The ongoing process of developing a Disability Marker to support related mainstreaming work is important and will support also the development of related ToCs and objective setting in CPs. In this process the role of persons with disabilities will certainly be looked into not only as Programme participants but increasingly as Programme implementers in line with the *nothing about us without us* slogan. This is linked also to the need to gradually strengthen the self-identification of persons with disabilities in the Programme. There's a lot of expertise and strong commitment within Fida to move forward in these long-term efforts. However, these efforts need to be taken into consideration in the resourcing, and thereby also in the overall focusing of the Programme.

The CCO on **environment and climate resilience** is meant to be mainstreamed in all Programme activities with the aim of minimizing the environmental impact of the Programme and supporting beneficiaries to reduce their own impact on the environment and to adapt to the changing climate. However, the review of CP reports and interviews show that despite strong understanding on the importance and urgency on addressing these issues, the actual progress in truly mainstreaming environmental and climate resilience perspectives throughout the Programme is weaker compared to the two other CCOs.

Important work has been done e.g. in strengthening awareness and promoting action for environmental protection and climate resilience in schools, kids' clubs and communities. Tree planting has been done and followed up widely in many countries (in total 277 700 trees in 2022 and 2023). A significant achievement in promoting more structured approaches in sustainability education was achieved in Iraq, where the sustainability education curriculum developed by Fida's partner TOGETHER was adopted by the Ministry of Education of Iraq to be applied in the education system nationwide.

Environmental protection and climate resilience has also been promoted by increasing the use of energy efficient stoves in many countries and strengthening community level disaster risk reduction capacities. Good results in promoting sustainable farming have been achieved in relation to conservation agriculture and adoption of new climate resilient crops. Environmental sustainability has also been taken into account in office and travel practices of partners and Fida.

However, challenges in strategically mainstreaming this CCO throughout the Programme were raised by many interviewees. While many activities on this topic are successfully being implemented in different CPs, there's a lack of full clarity on Fida's niche in this work. Great needs and possibilities of integrating this perspective into different programme themes and other CCOs were also brought up, people from the marginalized groups being severely affected by climate change. However, more human and financial resources allocated to this kind of strategic work would be needed.

3.3.3 Thematic support structures

Fida’s thematic support structures have consisted of the following elements:

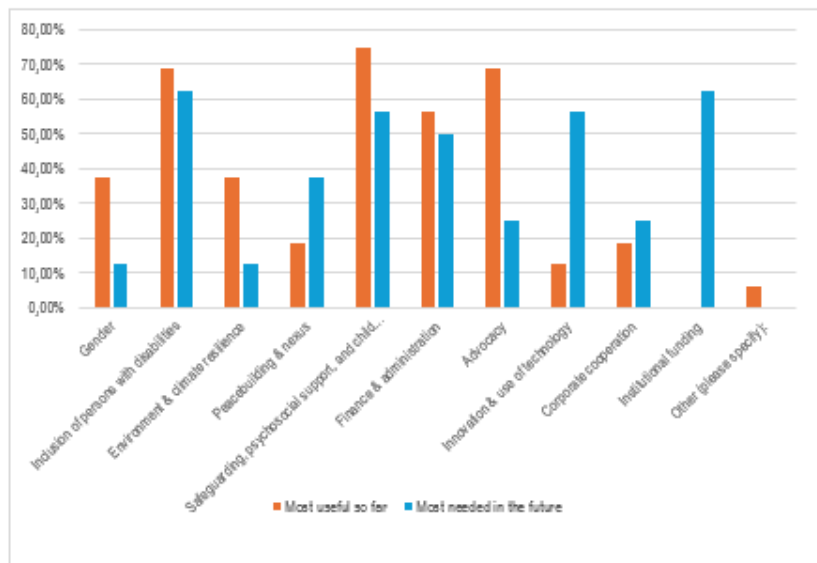
- a) Global Thematic Advisors have led the development of theme specific policies, manuals and other guidance documents, and training within Fida and with partners. They have also reviewed progress reports and provided related guidance to the CPs. They are in most cases based in programme countries, and their costs are included in the respective CP budgets, while they are supervised by the Regional Director. There are currently six Global Advisors with thematic focus on Child Protection/Safeguarding, PSS, SRHR, Partners’ Capacity Strengthening, Programme Cycle Management, and Peacebuilding¹⁷.
- b) Global Teams consist mainly of Fida staff from CP, regional and HQ levels and in some cases staff from partner organizations. They support quality development and know-how on topics related to Strengthening of Partners’, CCOs, and selected thematic sectors. Their role is to promote joint learning on these themes, and contribute e.g. to policy and tools development, training and review of progress reports.
- c) In addition to the Global Thematic Advisors there are also regional and country level advisors providing more continuous support to local level CP implementation. In addition, thematic focal points are increasingly being designated within CPs. In many countries there are already e.g. PSS, SRHR, and child protection focal points who collaborate with the Global Thematic Advisors e.g. in organizing country level training.

Global Teams in the current Programme:
Cross-cutting objectives (3): Gender incl. SRHR, GBV), Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, Environment & Climate Resilience
Strengthening Partners’ Capacities (4): Finance & Administration, Advocacy, ITCC, Institutional Funding
Thematic sectors (2): Peacebuilding, Safeguarding, PSS and Child Protection

Effectiveness from the perspective of CPs

The interviews and online surveys responses of Fida staff and partners indicate that thematic support on inclusion of persons with disabilities, safeguarding, SRHR and PSS, as well as finance & administration have been found most useful for CPs. Regarding future thematic support needs, both partners and Fida’s CP staff find continued support on disability inclusion, safeguarding, and finance and administration important, and clear need to strengthen support related to advocacy, innovation and use of technology as well as institutional funding is expressed. However, Fida’s CP staff express also the need for gender related support.

Figure 9: Online Survey for Partners: partner views on the topics where thematic support from Fida has been most useful and where it is most needed in the coming years.



¹⁷ Two of them work part-time in their Advisors.

The global level thematic support including online training on various topics and availability of guidelines is appreciated in CPs. At the same time, some interviewees raised the high volume of communication related to various topics this being challenging from the perspective of heavy workload and varying thematic priorities in CPs. The importance of and need for more continuous context specific support linking theories to local level practices and realities was brought up by many interviewees. In-country thematic support from global, regional or country level advisors and specialists was noted to have been very effective e.g. in training and developing approaches on SRHR, PSS, child protection and administration and finance. Context specific support has been available especially in countries and regions where the advisors are based.

The limitations of especially generic thematic online trainings were brought up both by interviewed Fida staff and partners. They were seen often to remain on a theoretical level, while discussions on context specific challenges and solutions were said to be weaker. Yet, the context specificity was seen to be of crucial importance in most topics, and especially on areas of work that are rather new in Fida’s CPs such as advocacy or peacebuilding. For strengthening the local level expertise on priority themes and strengthening the linkages between CPs and global level thematic support structures, thematic focal points are increasingly being appointed in CPs. Practices for strengthening the contextualization of thematic training have also been developed. For example, in a training process on SRHR with the CP in Kenya a series of short online training sessions is combined with a participatory country level face-to-face training.

Global level structures

The Global Teams were established during the previous programme cycle, but their thematic focus and composition have been updated at the beginning of and during the Programme. The interviews with Fida staff and online survey results clearly show that the extent to which the Global Teams have been active and effective varies greatly between and within the teams. While all Global Teams have produced some results, there are teams with remarkable outputs. For example, the Global Teams on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, on Safeguarding, PSS and Child Protection, on Administration & Finance as well as on Peacebuilding have developed e.g. policies, guidelines and training. Still, some teams have been rather passive or heavily dependent on the activeness of their leaders.

Following strengths and weaknesses affect the effectiveness of Global Teams:

Strengths	Weaknesses and challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teams led by Global Thematic Advisors whose main job is related to the topic or who have in-depth expertise on the topic have produced results. • For the Global Advisors the Global Teams are a useful forum to discuss, share information and perspectives, and get feedback. • A Global Team can be very productive even if it's not led by an Advisor, when the leader and the members have solid expertise and strong commitment. (e.g. the Global Team on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities) • Direct involvement of Fida's and partners' CP staff strengthens the effectiveness of Global Teams. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In several Teams the work is practically done by the leader, whose main work focuses on the topic. Participation by members is very limited due to lack of time and low priority given to the Global Team. • There are topics, such as Institutional Funding and Administration & Finance, where other existing structures (e.g. finance team and programme management) could be more suitable fora for discussions and strategic planning. • The level of expertise on the topic in focus varies greatly within and among the Teams. There are strong experts, but also staff who have only basic knowledge. • Involvement from Programme countries and partner organizations has been very limited, weakening the linkages to programme work and realities on the ground. All regions are not represented in all teams.

While it is seen that there's progress towards right direction in Fida's thematic support structures and processes, there's a clear need to further strengthen a strategic approach in their development. Regarding the work of Global Thematic Advisors, the ways they plan, develop and carry out their work vary greatly. While this kind of flexibility is important taking into consideration the differences in topic specific support needs, the necessity to strengthen strategic planning of the global thematic support for ensuring its global nature was brought up in the interviews. This kind of strengthened strategic planning would also support addressing the above noted challenges in the development of the Global Teams.

The importance of further strengthening the linkages of the thematic support structures to the CPs was strongly emphasized in the interviews and survey responses. The need to strengthen the contextualization of the support including training activities, and to increase South-South learning is evident. Further development of the focal point system was seen as an effective way for doing it. However, some interviewees pointed out the importance of avoiding making the focal point structures and related meeting procedures too heavy for CPs, and that also country specific needs and priorities would need be taken into consideration. This further increases the importance of overall strategic planning of the thematic support structures and processes as a whole.

3.4 EFFICIENCY

In the evaluation the sufficiency of resources allocated to the design, implementation and management of the Programme has been assessed. Also, the extent to which the available resources have enabled the CPs to achieve their expected outputs has been analyzed from the perspective of effectiveness of Programme management.

Key findings:

- There's no overallocation of funds within the Programme.
- Lack of more comprehensive adjustments in the CPs in connection to reductions in funding levels has resulted in weak thematic and geographic focusing of the Programme affecting the efficiency in the use of financial, human and time resources.
- Identified gaps in human resourcing are related to mobilization of IF, CCOs, and ITCC. Heavy workload of CP Managers requires also attention.
- Fida has strong programme management systems, processes and tools in place. The key further development needs are related to the use of indicators, strengthening of qualitative monitoring, and further developing ToC based monitoring.
- The personnel management within Fida is generally appreciated. The main challenge is related to weak coherence in HR management of Fida's locally recruited CP staff.
- The financial and risk management systems of Fida are in good shape and they are continuously further developed. Also, good communication within Fida and with partners is widely appreciated.

3.4.1 Sufficiency of allocated resources

Financial resources

The Programme financial reports show that there have not been over allocations of funds to any components of the Programme. The total annual expenditure of the Programme was 6.36 million euros in 2022 and 6.23 million euros in 2023. Over 80 % of the total expenditure has been allocated and used in operations overseas in CPs and regional level, and 7-8% has been spent for programme work in Finland. The biggest share of

resources has been allocated to Outcome 1 Right to Education (42 % in 2022 and 36% in 2023), while allocations to Outcome 2 Safe Living Environment have been slightly lower (30% in 2022 and 31% in 2023), the smallest component budget wise being Outcome 3 on Strengthening Partners' Capacities. The allocated funds have been practically fully spent.

The CPs had originally been planned with larger budgets, but due to budget cuts related to lower MFA funding levels the plans were adjusted. However, instead of replanning by further focusing, the adjustments had been made on the level of activities. While the financial resources have been sufficient to implement the planned activities, there has widely been a need for much greater funding. Challenges related to resources being spread too thinly cover a wide set of thematic issues in geographically sizable areas affecting the programme efficiency were brought up by many interviewees. The need to address this challenge has been underlined also in the previous evaluations.¹⁸

Furthermore, challenges related to inflation and other changes in the operating environment increasing the operating costs continue affecting CP implementation in many countries including e.g. Burundi and the nexus countries.

Human resources and time

Fida staff has strong commitment and motivation to Fida's programme work. However, lack of time and heavy workload especially in CPs was brought up in many interviews of Fida staff. The wide thematic and geographical focus has naturally affected also the use of human resources and time. More time is spent on travelling, and the monitoring, reporting and learning efforts are also spread thinly to a wide range of thematic issues in varying local contexts.

Also, some specific human resource and time constraints were identified:

1. Especially the CP Managers are overloaded with work, since their responsibilities cover a wide range of tasks including overall responsibility for the CP management and implementation, human resource and office management, government relations including registrations, other external relations and local resource mobilization. This workload needs to be considered in the further development of CP level work and human resourcing in the future.
2. Limited human resources have been allocated to mobilization of Institutional Funding (IF). Currently the responsibility lies heavily on the shoulders of CPs, while the HQ level resources have remained very limited (only part time). For example, the EU funding application processes take place during a short period of time and would require also specific expertise related to formulation of applications. The possibilities of CP teams to effectively carry out this kind of an intensive process without strong support from people with specific IF expertise is limited.
3. Issues related to the weak allocation of human resources to ITCC and some CCOs, especially Environment and Climate Resilience, were brought up in the interviews as an issue affecting the Programme effectiveness. At the same time, use of human resources and time in some weakly functioning Global Teams needs to be seen also as an efficiency issue.
4. The high staff turnover of local CP staff due to low salary levels was brought up in some interviews as a challenge affecting CP implementation. Fida's role in building their capacities strengthens their

¹⁸ Seppo, M. (2022), Evaluation of Fida's work to strengthen local civil society in the Country Programmes in Bangladesh, Nepal, Burundi, Kenya and Uganda; Pitkänen, O. (2023), Evaluation of the Fida's Tanzania Country Programme: Tunadoto "We have a dream"; Pitkänen, O. (2024), Evaluation of the Fida International's Country Programmes in Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, and Myanmar

possibilities to apply for higher paid jobs. Even though this is a challenge for Fida’s Programme, the investment in their capacities can be seen to contribute to the development of their countries.

5. While appreciating the systematic approach in Programme planning, some partners find Fida’s planning process very long from the perspective of communities. Due to lack of local level data collection this evaluation could not assess this issue further, but these remarks highlight the importance of taking into consideration also the limited time-resources of communities and programme beneficiaries in Programme development and planning.

At the same time, support from Fida staff to partners’ programme work seems to have been good, sufficient and continuous. In Iraq, the partners appreciated the easily accessible and timely support from Fida’s local and international staff. Positive feed-back on the sufficiency, quality and timeliness of support from Fida staff was also brought up in the interviews from partners in Nepal and Burundi.

3.4.2 Efficiency and Effectiveness of Programme Management

Monitoring and quality assurance

Fida has continuously and effectively developed its monitoring and quality assurance processes, tools and practices, as well as reporting of the Programme at the CP, regional and global levels. This is reflected in the survey results where most (12/15) respondents from Fida agreed or somewhat agreed that Fida has good practices in place for joint learning to support further development of the Programme. Quality and coherence in the planning, monitoring and reporting is supported by globally shared objective setting, and joint planning processes, tools and formats. At the CP and regional levels, Fida has developed comprehensive processes for reviewing progress, ensuring quality of reporting and joint learning. At the level of CPs, sharing and learning among partners is also supported through partner seminars or meetings. Furthermore, advisory support related to financial management and thematic issues from regional and global level also plays an important role in the Programme quality assurance.

The Programme monitoring is largely guided by and focusing on Fida’s global Programme Indicators that are strongly quantitative while including also qualitative aspects. The monitoring of achievement of set targets is supported by a traffic light system that is appreciated within Fida and by other stakeholders. However, weaknesses and further development needs related to the indicators and their use were identified.

High number of used indicators compared to the limited number of expected outcomes and outputs makes quantitative monitoring very heavy and time consuming. The number of indicators varies greatly among the CPs, but on average in total 71 indicators are used per CP (see table 2). The indicators focus mainly on numbers, and the use of e.g. rates (for example enrolment and completion rates) is not monitored, weakening the analysis on significance of the achieved results in context.

Table 2: Average number of indicators used by CPs in Fida’s different regions and globally.

Region	Average number of indicators used per country		
	Outcome	Output	Total
Global	27	44	71
Asia	16	35	51
Eastern Africa	34	51	85
Nexus countries (DRC, Ethiopia and Iraq)	27	41	68

While the Indicator Bank includes some guidance on the indicator specifications and monitoring methods, there’s remarkable space for differing interpretations. Gaps in the coherence in the use of indicators and monitoring practices were brought up in some interviews affecting the comparability of data between countries. There are also indicators that are more challenging to monitor quantitatively (for example feeling of safety, level of biodiversity or effective functioning) and that would therefore require very solid and coherent data collection methods. Furthermore, in the global level monitoring and reporting the practice of adding up indicator specific quantitative data from the CP Result Matrices (e.g. related to numbers of

trainings or beneficiaries) doesn’t support monitoring and assessment of how the Programme has globally made progress towards its country specific targets, and whether any regional or global trends affecting the level of progress could be identified. The traffic light system could be better used in the future to support this kind of global level analysis, learning, and reporting.

In numerous indicators the target levels have been reached and exceeded remarkably, but there are also indicators where target levels are far from being reached. Targets are adjusted each year during the annual planning. However, it’s clear that further adjustments would be needed in the target setting and, also in the indicators and methods of data collection.

An example of a good monitoring practice

In Iraq Fida has developed pre- and post-questionnaires used in peer support groups on psycho-social support, and this tool is being taken use also in other CPs including Kenya. With the questionnaires changes in the well-being of adults and children receiving PSS are monitored. This make visible the changes in people’s lives, which has been very motivating for programme implementors.

Regarding qualitative monitoring, the thinking in the Programme Management has been that the narrative reporting will serve the purpose of qualitative monitoring, while the indicators focus on quantitative monitoring. There has also been some training provided by HQ on qualitative monitoring methods. Focus group discussions, key informant interviews, community observation, and post-activity questionnaires seem to be widely used e.g. in Nepal, Burundi and Iraq. However, the practices and methods in qualitative monitoring and analysis of the collected data seem to vary greatly, and the need to strengthen and systematize

qualitative monitoring was emphasized also by many interviewees.

Challenges in qualitative monitoring are reflected also in difficulties getting information from partners on Programme impacts. At the same time, the ToC is not yet used as a framework for monitoring progress and contribution to impacts, as well as changes in the operating environment affecting the Programme assumptions. However, in Iraq the Fida and its partners has followed up the CP evaluation (2021) recommendations and made systematic efforts in strengthening ToC based monitoring and progress reporting. To support qualitative monitoring of outcomes and impacts, the CP has started to use the Most Significant Change Method.

The recent evaluation of Fida’s CPs in three nexus countries brings up a change that is likely to affect the future CPs in nexus countries. In the new programme 2026 – 2029, the Programme Support Instrument of MFA Finland enables 4- years applications combining development and humanitarian assistance¹⁹. It is evident that this change will require increased emphasis on adaptiveness and flexibility in the planning and monitoring of CPs in these countries.

Reporting

Fida has developed its Programme reporting on a continuous basis. Partners and CPs report on Programme progress three times a year, and there are solid processes for reviewing and discussing the reports at the country and regional levels. Also, thematic advisors provide inputs contributing to the quality of reports. During the past years Fida has especially put efforts into moving from activity focused reporting to reporting on changes. This has been reflected in the revision of reporting formats and training provided to CPs.

While the progress made in reporting was overall appreciated by both Fida staff and partners, the heavy workload in CP reporting was brought up by several interviewees. On the one hand, this workload is related to the strong indicator focus in Fida’s monitoring and reporting, and especially the high number of indicators used. However, also the reporting format implies quite a lot of repetition.

¹⁹ Pitkänen O. (2024), Evaluation of the Fida International’s Country Programmes in Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, and Myanmar

As an example of a good reporting practice, the CP of Iraq has made excellent progress in developing and strengthening ToC based reporting giving emphasis on analysis on causal relationships between outputs, outcomes and impacts, assumptions as well as qualitative results. However, Fida's results chains and report formats don't fully support ToC based reporting as noted also by some interviewees. This is on one hand related to the issue that Fida's outcomes and outputs are very generic and wide, so that reporting on one output alone includes a great variety of results. Having more specific outputs and outcomes would support analysis and reporting on the causal linkages between the output and outcome level changes instead of comprehensive lists of outputs and outcomes in different sections of the report.

Furthermore, in the monitoring of ToCs the logical direction in analysis is from outputs to outcomes and impacts. However, in the current format the reporting starts from outcomes that are difficult to understand, at least for an outsider, without linkages to outputs. This could be considered in the further development of reporting formats.

The ToC reporting is not clearly reflected in the global level reporting either. While the Global Programme reports provide comprehensive information about achievement under different outcome components and in the CPs, structured analysis on trends related to strengths, weaknesses and challenges in achieving expected results remains rather limited. Gradual strengthening of the ToC based reporting at the CP level would support monitoring of these kinds of trends.

The issue of a lot of information on achievements remaining hidden was brought up by many interviewees from Fida, and also in the evaluation of CPs in three nexus countries (2024). This is certainly to some extent related to the above noted challenges in reporting. However, it is important to consider also other sources and channels for collecting and sharing this kind of information e.g. by documenting and sharing issues brought up in partner gatherings or strengthening of Fida staff's trip reporting with thematic key questions.

Personnel management

The personnel management within Fida is well organized and functioning. Regarding the staff overseas, this applies especially to Fida's expat staff whose HR issues are managed by the HR Department of the Fida HQ.

In Programme countries a large part of local staff are employees of Fida's partner organizations. However, since Fida has registered itself as an international or a local NGO in an increasing number of countries, the number of Fida's own local staff is also increasing. For example, after its registration as an international NGO in Burundi, Fida has recruited five local staffs. In Iraq Fida has currently two and in Nepal six local staff.

The HR practices related to local staff, e.g. in relation to salary levels, vary between countries, and the need to develop a clearer organization level approach to these issues is being discussed. At the CP level HR Management has so far been largely on the shoulders of CP Managers, who have developed practices and tools to support this work. Overall, CPs have paid attention to strong teamwork and supported the participation of their staff not only in Fida's own trainings, but also other locally available training e.g. related to programme and financial management.

At the country level there have been processes that could support the development of Fida's global policies and practices on HR management for local staff. For example, in Nepal the job descriptions and staff titles are being reviewed. In Iraq, as follow-up to an internal audit recommendation, Fida's team has developed an HR Manual to support its HR Management. While there are differences in national legislations, the use of already developed tools in developing Fida's global policies and analyzing how they could be adapted to other country contexts should be considered.

Financial management

The interviews and the desk review materials including the review conducted by KPMG show strong progress in strengthening the financial management of the Programme at all levels²⁰. Core processes e.g. related to partner agreements, budgeting, accounting, financial reporting, internal and external auditing and procurements are in place being and continuously reviewed and developed. Furthermore, e.g. anticorruption policies and procurement guidelines have been updated.

There has been one misconduct case in Tanzania, that has been openly communicated and also analyzed. Recommendations related to improvements in the board selection, and internal control and communication with partners were made in the CP Evaluation conducted in 2023.

Fida has systematically supported its partners in strengthening their financial management systems including e.g. financial and anti-corruption policies, procurement practices, whistle-blowing mechanisms etc. This has been appreciated by interviewed partners and reflected in the reports on partners' capacity strengthening. Especially the usefulness and importance of internal audits was brought up both by Fida staff and partners. The recommendations made by internal auditors have helped the partners in improving e.g. planning and revision of anti-corruption and procurement policies.

Annoyance on programme funds being channeled through Fida's local offices was brought up by some interviewees and brought up also in the Evaluation of the Tanzania CP²¹. Partners would prefer receiving their funds to a euro account, while currently the funds are received in local currency.

Cooperation and communication within Fida and with partners

The communication and interaction within Fida and with partners receive positive feedback both from Fida staff and partners. Many interviewees from Fida noted that improvements in Fida's internal communication have been remarkable compared to the past. However, the survey responses from Fida staff indicate that as usual, there's also space for improvement. While 9/15 respondents agreed or somewhat agreed that *smooth communication within Fida and with partner supports effective management and implementation of the Programme*, 4/15 disagreed or somewhat disagreed, and 2/15 neither agreed nor agreed.

In Burundi, Nepal and Iraq both Fida's and partners' staff generally appreciated the close and smooth dialogue and interaction between Fida and partner organizations. Many partners noted that Fida staff are easy to approach and that they provide advice and support when needed in a flexible manner. However, there are also challenges. For example, in Burundi the cooperation and communication with the partner staff in CP management is very good and smooth. However, follow-up of agreed action points may sometimes be difficult due to competing priorities within the partner organization and its management. Also, getting information about the progress in local level programme implementation is sometimes challenging. Also, the evaluation of the CP in Tanzania (2024) brought up challenges in communication and joint monitoring with the local partner organization. At the same time, the capacities of Fida's CP teams to conduct local level monitoring in geographically widely spread target areas are limited.

Regarding Fida's internal communication, individual level in the use of different communication channels (e-mail, Teams, Whatsapp) were noted to hinder timely communication and sharing of information. Also, the need for further strengthening the communication across regional teams and with the Domestic Programme in Finland was emphasized by some interviewees. The importance of communication between and within the HQ staff implementing the Domestic Programme and the CPs was brought up also in the Evaluation of

²⁰ KPMG, Review of the Finnish CSO recipients of the MFA's Programme-Based Support, Fida International Ry, 14 December 2023

²¹ Pitkänen, O. (2023) Evaluation of Tanzania Country Programme; Tunandoto

the Domestic Programme (2022). It is essential for strengthening the evidence-basis of the domestic work on advocacy, global education and development communication.

Risk management

Since early 2022 Fida has systematically updated its Risk Management structure. At the Global Programme level, a strategic-level mapping and analysis of risks was conducted, and a Risk Management Plan was prepared following the risk categories of strategic, operational, financial and hazard risks. For each risk, a risk level has been defined, risk management and mitigation measures identified, and residual risk calculated. Similarly, country level risk management plans have been prepared regularly reviewed in each CP.²²

Based on the findings and recommendations of the review conducted by KPMG by the end of 2023, some further improvements have been made to the Programme risk management. Timely risk-related reporting to the global level has been strengthened and risk management has been included as a permanent agenda item of the Management Group and Board meetings. Also, improvements have also been made to Fida's Whistle-blowing system e.g. for ensuring confidentiality in the treatment of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (PSEAH) related cases.

The current risk management system is generally considered functioning and solid by Fida and partner staff. Continuous monitoring and analysis of risks is seen of crucial importance taking into consideration e.g. the increasing conflicts, political instabilities as well as frequent occurrence of natural hazards in many programme countries. Conflict analysis and use of *Do No Harm* has been strengthened in conflict affected countries. The question of possible language barriers in accessing Whistle-blow channels was brought up by one interviewee from a partner organization in Nepal. While within the scope of this Evaluation it was not possible to have a closer look into the accessibility of these channels, this is an issue requiring continuous attention generally in all organizations.

Fida's CPs in bordering countries collaborate in risk management. For example, the Fida teams in Burundi and DRC communicate closely on security situation in the border areas of the two countries including movement of militia groups in DRC.

The strong adaptiveness of Fida's programme has been highlighted e.g. in the recent evaluation on Fida's CPs in three nexus countries (2024). The fact of Fida's partners being local actors deeply familiar with the target communities supports strong adaptiveness in programme work. At the same time, Fida's adaptive approach in the programme implementation has been appreciated by partners. For example, in Iraq adjustments have been made smoothly to work plans e.g. in case of unexpected school closures or delays caused by unexpected government policies. However, the need to strengthen more strategic CP level analysis on adaptation needs in constantly changing operating environments was brought up in the interviews. This may not only be related to the management of external risks, but also to the capacity of Fida to address internal weaknesses affecting programme efficiency (e.g. related to the thematic and geographical focus) during the programme cycle.

²² Programme Annual Results Reports 2022 and 2023

3.5 IMPACT

The analysis on the internal coherence of the Programme (section 3.2.1) brings up the vagueness in the way how the Programme impact has been defined. It is overlapping with the outcome statements, and no indicators or other tools for systematic impact monitoring have been in use in the Global Programme. However, based on the human rights-based thinking (reflected in the discussions with Fida staff and the ToR of the Evaluation), the Programme impact is about changes in actual realization of the human rights of people living in the target areas to which the strengthened capacities of duty-bearers and rights-holders as results of the Programme have contributed to. Hence, this analysis has focused on signs of development impact related to the right to education and rights related to safe living environments, and possible changes needed in the Programme for strengthening the impact.

Key findings:

- The strengthened school enrolment is an important early sign of longer-term impacts on improved access to education at the pre-primary, primary and secondary level. It's still too early to assess the actual impact of the Programme on the completion of education. Kids' and youth clubs have contributed to children's right to rest, play, culture and arts.
- In SRHR and PSS there are visible impacts at the level of individuals. For achieving wider development impacts, attention needs to be paid to the effectiveness and sustainability of supported service provision structures.
- Impact level monitoring in advocacy and peace work is difficult, and efforts should be put in developing process focused monitoring. However, there are some impactful policy level achievements showing the added value of evidence-based advocacy.
- In economic security and also food security there are signs of positive impacts. For achieving bigger impacts linkages to wider value chains should be strengthened.

3.5.1 Progress in contributing to planned impact

Right to education for children and youth

Local level

The analysis on Programme effectiveness shows clear improvements in the quality of teaching and learning environments, and in the support from caregivers and parents for the education of their children. Strengthened capacities of teachers and other education professionals and volunteers together with community level awareness raising and mobilization has resulted in increased school enrolment especially at the pre-primary and primary level but also at the secondary level.

The strengthened school enrolment is an important early sign of longer-term impacts on improved access to education at the pre-primary, primary and secondary level. Regarding gender equality, the progress has been equally good for girls and boys, while at the secondary level, the girls' enrolment still falls behind boys. The challenges related to inclusive education for children with disabilities described earlier in this report are reflected in lower numbers of children with disabilities enrolled at all levels. Their share is the highest at the pre-primary level (2,2% of all enrolled children).

Monitoring data on completion of education at different levels also indicates improvements from pre-primary to secondary level. In pre-primary education the increase has been radical, and the trend has been positive also in the primary and secondary levels. However, especially on primary and secondary levels, it's still rather early to assess the actual impact of the Programme on the completion of education.

While slightly more boys are enrolled to primary and especially secondary education, the completion numbers are clearly higher for girls. Longer-term monitoring of these trends, and also from the perspective

of persons with disabilities, as well as analyzing their underlying factors would be important for ensuring the Programme contribution to the realization of the right to education for marginalized children and youth.

Changes in learning results are not systematically monitored in the current Programme. In several interviews and desk review materials reference was made to improvements in children's learning, but more comprehensive data is lacking.

In vocational and non-formal education, the education services are largely provided by other stakeholders than government duty-bearers, and especially availability of vocational education is an issue affecting accessibility. This is reflected also in the related monitoring data on enrolment. It is important to develop strategic approaches for strengthening institutional sustainability in vocational education related efforts (as done for example in Ethiopia through research and networking). However, also the significance of impacts on the lives and rights of individuals benefiting from these activities needs to be recognized.

While positive education related impacts on children's learning in kids' and youth clubs have been achieved, it is difficult to monitor the contribution of these activities to the actual realization of their right to education. However, these clubs contribute to the realization of children's right to rest, play, culture, and arts, this being an issue to be taken into consideration in the future planning, monitoring, and reporting of the Programme.

Regional and national level

Focus on local/community level development is clearly defined as Fida's priority in its Programme Strategy, and this focus has guided the current Programme. However, there are signs of remarkable policy level impacts to which Fida and its partners have clearly contributed to through evidence-based advocacy. The solid local level experience has played a critical role in achieving these results that can be expected to have system-wide impacts.

Impactful policy level achievements:

- In Iraq, the adoption of a "Sustainability in Education" package developed by Fida's local partner, TOGETHER, received high-level recognition from the Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Planning in 2023 and a decision was made to roll out its use in schools across the country.
- Also, in Iraq the Ministry of Education of the Kurdistan Regional Government took a decision in 2023 to implement the "Special Education Guidelines", created by Fida's local partner in Iraq, Halabja Disabled Organisation. The regional government took also a decision to hire eight new teachers to support students with disabilities.
- In DR Congo, following advocacy by Fida's local partner, CEPAC, a law was passed in 2023 that exempts children with disabilities from certain school fees at the secondary level.

Rights related to safe living environments for children and youth

In relation to safe living environments, the definition of development impacts requires a slightly different angle compared to the Right to Education, where the government duty-bearer structures responsible for the implementation and protection of human rights are clearer.

As noted earlier, the PSS and SRHR activities have improved access to counselling and people's SRHR practices, as well as strengthened well-being and self-esteem among rights-holders. Development and strengthening of PSS service provision structures, such as the peer support groups in Iraq, are also remarkable outcomes contributing to Programme to longer term development impacts. The PSS and SRHR activities have impacted the wellbeing of a remarkable number of rights-holders living in highly vulnerable situations (29 919 persons have benefited from PSS and 45 682 from SRHR activities). For PSS, a tool has been developed for structured monitoring of individual level impacts, but information about use of this kind of tool in SRHR was not found. Further development of this kind of a method would be important for getting

solid evidence on the Programme impacts at the level of individuals. At the institutional level, attention should be paid to the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of the supported service provision structures.

Regarding the community security sub-theme, in peace work it is generally acknowledged that planning of long-term impacts is extremely difficult in highly unpredictable operating environments. In these contexts, the focus is often on the output and to some extent on the outcome level. From this perspective, some achievements e.g. related to the ongoing dialogue processes in Myanmar and Ethiopia are remarkable results of the Programme. As noted in Section 3.3.1 on Effectiveness, qualitative monitoring of these kinds of processes would support learning and identification of small but significant results.

Regarding food security and economic security, the Programme has had impacts on beneficiary households in terms of strengthened food security and increased income. From the perspective of human rights and poverty reduction, achieved income levels should be analyzed against the level of the living income, and food security against the definitions of the right to food.

3.5.2 Needed changes for strengthening impact

Based on the conducted analysis as well as the results of previous evaluations the following key issues to be taken into consideration in the further strengthening of Programme impacts have been identified:

- It is important to more clearly define the planned impacts to better monitor the progress in achieving them. This would also support the focusing of the Programme, that is necessary for strengthening its efficiency and effectiveness and thereby impact.
- In HRBA the human rights norms and standards (for example related to the right to food and living income) should be used as a framework in the planning, monitoring and further development of the Programme. This would also help in making some existing human rights impacts visible (e.g. children's right to rest, play, culture and art).
- In food security and economic security, linking the local level work to wider value chains is essential for achieving bigger impacts.
- From the HRBA perspective, in quantitative monitoring of impacts, it would be important to pay more attention to the rates in the realization of different aspects of human rights especially in the education sector. This would provide valuable information on those who are not reached. Especially in disability inclusion, this implies, however, investment in systematic self-identification of persons with disabilities.
- Quality Education is one of the priority sub-themes of the Programme. However, at the impact level monitoring the quality aspect in terms of improved learning outcomes is not systematically monitored at the Programme level. Gradual development of feasible approaches for this purpose is needed.
- Especially in peace work and advocacy, the monitoring should also in the future focus on output and outcome levels. Qualitative monitoring of processes would enable identification of achieved positive changes and constraints to be addressed.

3.6 SUSTAINABILITY

The Evaluation has assessed the strengths and weaknesses of the Programme in relation to the sustainability of the achieved results, with specific attention to the sustainability of efforts addressing power dynamics affecting the situation of the most marginalized groups including women, girls and persons with disabilities. Furthermore, the level of success in broadening the financial base in Finland and in Programme countries has been analyzed, as well as progress made in strengthening the capacities of partner organizations to promote sustainable development and operate sustainably.

Key findings:

- Strong emphasis on changes in awareness, behaviors and practices forms an important basis for socio-cultural sustainability of the Programme. These are long-term processes, where attention needs to be paid both to the empowerment of rights-holders from marginalized groups, and on those who are upholding discriminatory practices.
- Institutional sustainability is overall well taken into consideration in the Programme. In some sub-themes there are challenges related to weak governmental or other permanent structures for which context specific solutions need to be looked for.
- Strong emphasis on capacity development in the Programme supports financial sustainability.
- Fida has clearly strengthened its resource mobilization efforts, but the results have so far been modest. There's a clear need to invest in human resourcing and strategic programmatic planning.
- Fida has encouraged and supported partners in mobilizing resources to their own work and to the Programme. While there's some progress, the results have been overall modest.
- The Programme has systematically strengthened partners' capacities in finance and administration, and related results are visible in the Programme management. Also, partners' advocacy capacities have strengthened. However, increasing the conceptual clarity on advocacy, as well as strengthening the linkages of advocacy trainings to local contexts is needed.
- ITCC includes essential elements from the perspective of sustainability. However, a strategic approach in related programme work is still missing. Weak allocation of human resources for this purpose is an issue to be addressed.

3.6.1 Sustainability of achieved changes

Socio-cultural sustainability

The Programme has given strong emphasis to strengthening awareness, knowledge and skills and thereby behaviors and practices of rights-holders and duty-bearers on issues related to the right to education and safe living environments for children and youth. This work has covered nine sub-themes with specific focus on girls, children with disabilities, and women as marginalized groups. These themes include also some very sensitive human rights issues e.g. related to gender-based violence (GBV), female genital mutilation (FGM), other sensitive aspects of SRHR, deeply rooted discrimination of persons with disabilities, and gender-based discrimination. The root causes of these human rights challenges are deeply in the underlying power dynamics within local societies.

As reflected in the analysis on effectiveness, the Programme has made clear progress in strengthening awareness, knowledge and skills in communities and among children and women on their rights and ways to promote them. Especially in relation to the right to education, clear changes have been achieved also in the practices of duty-bearers including teachers and other education professionals. All these changes form an important basis for longer-term sustainability of Programme results.

Achieving socio-cultural sustainability especially on issues related to discrimination of marginalized groups implies long-term behavior change processes. This has clearly come up in the discussions related to

challenges in promoting disability inclusion in CPs. Furthermore, the empowerment of rights-holders is an essential element in these change processes. The analysis of the level of participation of different stakeholders in Fida's CP planning and monitoring indicates, that there's need to strengthen the role of girls, children with disabilities and women as subjects in the Programme and related development processes.

The Study on Gender Equality brings up the need for strengthening in-depth analysis on the root causes of gender inequalities.²³ This would support the Programme in effectively addressing the human rights problems not only from the perspective of rights-holders but also those upholding discriminatory practices.

Institutional sustainability

The extent to which institutional sustainability has been addressed varies within the Programme depending on the theme in question and also local contexts. In the outcome of Right to Education, the formal education structures are strengthened primarily at the level of schools but with involvement of local authorities and municipality/district/provincial level education sector officials. Also, strengthening of community support to children's education is done with the existing government structures and traditional community level structures, such as School Management Committees and Parent Teacher Associations as well as community leaders.

In the non-formal elements of the education component, and as possible also in the outcome on Safe Livelihoods there's a clear aim to work with or strengthen the existing government structures or other service providers (e.g. vocational training institutions, health posts, government departments responsible for agriculture, disaster risk management etc. or NGOs providing services). In addition, community level structures (development committees, leaders, volunteers and CBOs) play an important role in the Programme. However, in the case of many sub-themes institutional sustainability is a challenge, as earlier e.g. in relation to PSS, some aspects of SRHR, vocational training. Also, working in conflict affected countries makes strengthening of institutional sustainability even more challenging. Solutions to address these challenges depend on the context.

Financial sustainability

The Programme has a strong emphasis on capacity development and support to local stakeholders in mobilizing resources to local development processes. In community-based processes, the Programme has built the capacities and supported beneficiaries in mobilizing resources. For example, in Nepal the communities and School Management Committees have been able to mobilize government resources to school development. Also, tree planting has been supported by the government. In Kenya and Burundi, government resources to schools have been mobilized through advocacy. However, it's clear that in most Programme countries mobilizing government resources to local development processes is very challenging.

3.6.2 Success in broadening the financial base

Fida's development cooperation

The current Programme is mainly funded with programme support funding from MFA Finland. The required self-funding is mobilized from Finland and partly from partners in Programme countries. During the current Programme efforts have been made to broaden the financial base of both Fida's development cooperation and the work of its partners.

²³ Mesiäislehto, V. & al. (2024), Addressing Gender Inequality: Key Learnings from Fida's 2022-2025 Development Cooperation Programme

Fida has clearly strengthened its networking with other development organizations at the international level e.g. in EU-CORD and other likeminded organizations with the aim of joint mobilization of funding from institutional funding (IF) sources. Joint proposals have been made e.g. with Nordic sister organizations in relation to the joint programme in Ukraine. Some applications are currently pending, but so far, the actual results have been rather limited.

In Programme countries Fida has strengthened its country level networking with other development NGOs and actors and looked for opportunities to create consortia for resource mobilization. Especially in Eastern Africa, Fida has actively participated in the EU-CORD forums, where strategic plans for fund-raising with other organizations have been made, concept notes developed, and consortia formed. In Tanzania Fida has received EU funding as a member of a consortium with Felm, and some other smaller scale funding from Finnish NGOs. In Tanzania and Kenya funding proposals have been submitted also to several other donors including Embassies and companies with limited results so far. However, the preparedness to mobilize funding to Fida's development cooperation has clearly strengthened in Eastern Africa.

EU funding proposals have been made also in other Programme countries, e.g. in Nepal, but without success so far. Mobilizing resources from the private sector has also remained limited, even though some private sector partnerships have been developed. E.g. in Myanmar and Bangladesh, a private sector partnership has enabled use of tables in teaching digital contents.

Based on the desk review and interviews of Fida staff the following main challenges affecting the broadening the financial base of Fida's development cooperation were identified:

1. Insufficient human resources in HQ to support Programme countries in labor intensive funding application processes requiring specific expertise e.g. on EU funding. The capacities of Fida's CP staff to take full responsibility for funding application processes are limited e.g. due to heavy workloads.
2. Weak wider programmatic approach beyond the MFA funded Programme in Fida's development cooperation. The need to develop a wider Programme to which funding also from other sources including IF and corporate funding could flexibly be applied during the programme cycle, would support more strategic efforts in broadening the financial base.
3. There's a need to further strengthen the sustainability planning and related tools/templates in the Programme.
4. Fida's strengthened resource mobilization as a registered NGO in the Programme countries has raised concerns in some partners, requiring careful attention in partner relationships.

Partners

In Programme countries Fida has encouraged and supported its partners to diversify their funding base and mobilize resources also to the Programme. Some progress has been made, but overall, the results have been rather modest so far. While there would be possibilities to mobilize local resources, for example from small donations from church members, the actual levels of contributions from partners have remained very low. This has raised concerns on partners' commitment to the Programme in the previous evaluations.²⁴

However, there have been also positive developments. In Nepal, the partners have mobilized funding from local government and in-kind community contributions to school improvement activities, as well as in-kind

²⁴ Seppo, M. & Dey, R., (2022) Evaluation of Fida's work to strengthen local civil society in the Country Programmes in Bangladesh, Nepal, Burundi, Kenya and Uganda.

Pitkänen, O. (2024), Evaluation of the Fida International's Country Programmes in Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, and Myanmar

contributions from the government to tree planting. Some progress has also been made mobilizing resources from the private sector, when local banks and a hospital have supported partners' activities.

In Iraq, where the Programme will phase out by the end of 2025, Fida has supported its partners in applying development funding from various sources, e.g. by reviewing and commenting funding applications and writing recommendation letters. This has been well appreciated by the partners, who are now looking for replacing funding from other sources. The partners are not fully relying on Fida's funding, but the funding situation among the partners varies. They have received funding from INGOs, UN and Embassies. One of the partners has started mobilizing resources by selling an educational game.

3.6.3 Strengthening of partner organizations' capacities

The above discussed diversification of the financial base is one element of the wider efforts of the Programme to strengthen partner organizations' capacities (outcome 3). Clear progress has been made in strengthening partners financial and administration capacities through development of user-friendly financial systems and related capacity building, development of organizational policies (e.g. on ethics, anti-corruption, safeguarding and child protection). Progress is monitored through Organizational Capacity Health Checks conducted with each partner organization; a method developed by Fida. The Health Check results have shown progress, e.g. in financial staff's capacities, development of financial systems and internal policies, and functioning of teamwork in the development of finance and administration. The achieved results are clearly appreciated by partners, and they are also visible in the management of CPs.

The Programme has also aimed at strengthening partners' capacities to conduct advocacy for the fulfilment of the rights of children and youth. This has been done through advocacy trainings (in total 22 100 participants in 2022-2023), and support to networking and partners' advocacy initiatives. The advocacy initiatives have varied from local level campaign activities and lobbying to national level advocacy, some major achievements of which being reflected in previous sections of this report. Progress in strengthening partners' advocacy capacities have been monitored through annual Advocacy Capacity Assessments by using a tool adopted from UNICEF. In the interviews some concerns were raised on remaining unclarities on the concept of advocacy that easily gets mixed with general awareness raising. This kind of confusion could be observed also in reviewed progress reports. Fida's support to advocacy is appreciated by partners. However, the need to better and more concretely link related capacity building to local contexts was emphasized by several interviewees.

The third output component on strengthening of partners' capacities is related to ITCC. Under this output partnerships e.g. with universities and the private sector have been developed for strengthened use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in development processes. Besides strengthened use of ICT, promoted innovations have also included e.g. development of Training of Trainers approaches. The component has also included efforts for strengthening collaboration with the private sector.

However, desk reviews and conducted interviews clearly indicate that despite strategic planning made during the previous programme cycle, this component has not clearly taken its shape. The concept of ITCC remains unclear for many stakeholders, and strategic programming in this area has been weak. One important challenge brought up in several interviews was lack of staff focusing on developing this area of work in Fida. At the same time, the crucial importance of the issues covered under the title of ITCC both for the partner organizations and Fida's development cooperation is widely recognized.

4. Conclusions

The assessment of Programme performance and related strengths and weaknesses shows that Fida and its partner organizations have overall made good progress in ensuring the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the Programme. The strong commitment to the Programme and its aims in Fida is reflected in continuous programme development work. This forms a good basis for further developing the strengths and addressing weaknesses and challenges identified in this Evaluation.

Relevance

The Programme has strong relevance in all Programme countries and in Finland. This has been ensured in CPs with comprehensive context analysis during the planning phase. Also, the strong familiarity of Fida staff with the local context and partners' deep understanding of local realities are important factors supporting the relevance of the Programme to the development situations in the countries of operation. The Programme and its' thematic focus are, also, highly relevant for the partner organizations. However, aims to address a wide range of partners' thematic priorities in different country contexts have contributed to weak focusing of the Programme weakening the effectiveness, efficiency and impact.

Participation of beneficiaries in Programme planning and monitoring has been strengthened, contributing to the relevance of the Programme to their needs and priorities. The level of participation of local authorities and CSOs in these processes has been strong, but there's clear need to further strengthen and deepen the participation of rights-holders including children, youth, women, persons with disabilities not only as sources of information but as active stakeholders in these processes.

Coherence

The internal coherence of the Programme is supported by coherent use of the Programme ToC and Results Framework throughout the Programme. However, the generic nature of the ToC and objective setting together with a wide range of sub-themes covered, has led to the above noted weak thematic focusing of the Programme. This is an issue that needs to be addressed in the planning of the next Programme.

The Programme is well aligned with the Finnish development priorities and SDGs. In the Programme planning links to relevant human rights instruments, especially CRC and CRPD, have been identified at the Global Programme level and in CPs. However, the use of SDGs and e.g. human rights monitoring reports more instrumentally in programming has been limited. This is an issue that would further support the relevance of the Programme and strengthening of human rights and gender transformative elements within it.

The Programme has cooperated widely with different development actors, especially at the local but also national level in Programme countries. At the HQ level Fida cooperates mainly with other development NGOs. Cooperation with private sector actors has remained more limited. Strengthening of the cooperation with other NGOs and the private sector is needed especially to support resource mobilization, this being essential from the perspective of Programme sustainability.

Effectiveness

Overall, the Programme has effectively made progress in achieving its expected results related to changes in rights-holders' and duty-bearers' capacities. However, the level of progress has varied among the sub-themes. The progress is very clear in the formal education elements. In inclusive education, despite strong progress in strengthening awareness, knowledge and skills on inclusion of persons with disabilities, there are still many barriers hindering and slowing down changes on the level of behaviors and practices in communities and schools. These challenges require attention in the further development and resourcing of the Programme.

In the outcome on safe living environments, the Programme has been effective in strengthening awareness, knowledge and skills of relevant stakeholders on SRHR and PSS. Related activities have contributed to increased wellbeing of a high number of rights-holders in vulnerable situations. In PSS good progress has been made in developing Training of Trainers approaches contributing to increased Programme effectiveness. Further strengthening and development of these kinds of structured approaches in cooperation with service providers and relevant government duty-bearers is essential not only from the perspective of Programme effectiveness but also sustainability. Remarkable achievements have also been achieved in the sub-theme of economic security, e.g. in the development of micro and small businesses. However, linking these community level businesses to wider value chains is essential for strengthening development impacts and sustainability.

Important results have been achieved in the implementation of CCOs despite lack of clear objective setting and targets. The work is more advanced in gender equality and disability inclusion, where the future focus should be in strengthening transformative elements in their mainstreaming. In the CCO on environment and climate resilience, the work has been activity based, and development of strategic mainstreaming approaches is needed.

Thematic support within Fida and to partners contributes importantly to the Programme effectiveness. However, there's a clear need to strategically develop the thematic support structures based on the current strengths and by addressing the identified weaknesses, while paying specific attention to context specific support needs.

Efficiency

The allocated financial resources are efficiently managed throughout the Programme. This is supported by a strong financial management system and capacity-building support provided to partners. However, the weak thematic and geographic focus of the Programme clearly reduces the efficiency in the use of financial, human and time resources. This is a priority issue to be addressed in the planning of the new Programme. Furthermore, a wider programmatic approach would be needed for enabling integration of interventions funded also by other sources than MFA (e.g. EU and corporate funding) into the Programme. Also, stronger investment in efficient resource mobilization and related human resources is needed.

Overall, Fida has strong programme management systems, processes and tools in place, and they are being developed on a continuous basis. The current indicator focused monitoring provides important quantitative information on the progress made. Complementing this with strengthened qualitative monitoring as well as systematic monitoring of programme assumptions would be important. Analyzing this kind of more comprehensive monitoring data against the ToC, would enable identification of positive trends and common challenges, and their underlying factors within the Programme, and thereby assessment of the feasibility of the intervention logic. This would support making timely adjustments to Programme strategies as needed.

Fida's human resource management at the level of HQ and in relation to expats is well organized. The main challenge to be addressed is related to weak coherence in human resource management policies and practices concerning Fida's locally recruited CP staff. Their number has been increasing as result of Fida's registration as an international or local NGO in Programme countries.

Impact

Despite weaknesses in the definition of planned impact as well as related monitoring, there are important signs of development impacts both in relation to the right to education and safe living environments. Strengthened school enrolment observed at the pre-primary, primary and secondary levels is an important early sign of longer-term impacts on improved access to education. The Programme has also contributed to children's right to rest, play, culture and arts through kids' and youth clubs, even though this perspective has not been reflected as such in the discussions or documents.

The SRHR and PSS related impacts are largely visible at the level of individuals, and also in economic security and food security there are clear signs of positive impacts. However, for ensuring wider and sustainable development impacts in the long run, it is important to link these efforts to wider institutional structures in the Programme countries. At the same time, there are areas of work where monitoring of impacts is not feasible or meaningful. In policy level advocacy and peace work efforts should be put in developing process focused monitoring.

Sustainability

Strong emphasis on changes in awareness, behaviors and practices forms a good basis for socio-cultural sustainability of the Programme. Also, institutional sustainability is overall well taken into consideration in the Programme. Furthermore, strong emphasis on capacity development supports financial sustainability of the Programme.

Despite strong efforts made in strengthening the financial base of Fida's development cooperation, the actual results in terms of received funding remain modest. Putting the responsibility fully on the shoulders of CP staff is not feasible, even though they have an important role in proposal development. If Fida wants to effectively mobilize institutional funding, there's a clear need to have a full-time staff with IF expertise in the HQ. Furthermore, increasing the contributions (even small ones) from partners to the Programme is important not only from the financial perspective, but from the perspective of Programme ownership.

The Programme has systematically strengthened partners' capacities in finance and administration with good results. The practical and systematic support is appreciated and considered by partners as a clear added value of Fida compared to other funding partners. Also, partners' advocacy capacities have strengthened. While also ITCC includes essential elements from the perspective of sustainability, related progress has so far been modest due to lack of strategic programming.

5. Recommendations

1. Fida should strengthen and sharpen the thematic and geographic focus of its Global Programme and especially CPs. In the planning of the next Programme, priority should be given to the sub-themes that are most effective or have shown great potential in the current Programme. Specific attention should be paid to the geographical focusing within countries. Cost-effective approaches like model schools in education could be used for promoting good practices more widely in target areas e.g. through evidence-based advocacy, and also for mobilizing new resources for Programme expansion.

Furthermore, in case of cuts in the funding levels, the principle of thematic and geographic focusing should guide adjustments to CPs. Cuts across the board should be avoided to the extent possible. *(related to all evaluation criteria)*

2. In the planning of the next Programme Fida should sharpen and concretize the Programme ToC so that it will truly guide the Programme planning, implementation, monitoring, and learning. This should be done by narrowing and concretizing the thematic focus (see recommendation 1) and by sharpening the causal logic between different results levels. Tying the ToC to a defined timeline supports its further focusing and concretization. Also, having more than one output per outcome would support making the expected results more specific.

Directly copying the Global Programme ToC to the CPs should be avoided in the future. However, it should be ensured that the CPs and their ToCs are formulated within the scope of the Global ToC. *(related to all evaluation criteria)*

3. Fida and its partners should develop approaches for strengthened participation of rights-holders (children, youth, women, persons with disabilities) in the planning and monitoring of interventions as active stakeholders and agents of change. It's important to keep in mind that these are context specific gradual processes, where existing civil society actors such as organizations of persons with disabilities and kids' and youth clubs can play a key role. In the development of related good practices, time and other limitations affecting the capacity and willingness of people to participate need to be considered. It is also clear that development of related good practices needs to be resourced adequately. *(related especially to relevance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability)*

4. Fida should continue its good work related to CCOs and development of CCO Markers for further defining related objective setting and targets. Regarding gender equality and disability inclusion, the CCO Markers should guide strengthening transformative elements in the Programme where the root causes of discrimination are systematically analyzed and addressed. In the CCO on environment and climate resilience, strategic planning and strengthened resourcing is essential for moving from activity focus to actual mainstreaming. *(related especially to effectiveness)*

5. Fida should strengthen global level strategic planning of the thematic support to CPs and Global Programme development provided by Global and other Thematic Advisors, and Global Teams. The Global Teams' structure should continue to be used in CCOs and other themes where it has been effective and useful (including Safeguarding. However, for example in relation to Finance and Admin, and IF linking the work of Advisors/Experts to the relevant existing structures and mechanisms within the organizations (e.g. the finance team and the development cooperation & humanitarian assistance management team) would be a more effective way to continue the work.

In order to support South-South and South-North learning, and to ensure that CP perspectives and realities are reflected in the Global Programme level learning and programme development, the CP level focal point system should continue to be strengthened.

In thematic support to CPs, efforts should be made to link and adjust e.g. training to the local context. If possible, online training should be complemented with face-to-face sessions as done currently in the SRHR related capacity building. Furthermore, use of locally available training opportunities should be encouraged. *(related especially to effectiveness)*

6. Fida and partner organizations do important development work on issues such as SRHR and PSS where the institutional duty-bearer structures are weak or sometimes even in-existent. Fida and the partners should continue strengthening this work by using the developed training of training approaches, linking the work as possible to existing government structures, and strengthening the monitoring of impacts at the level of rights-holders. In economic security it is important to aim at linking the community-based businesses to wider value chains e.g. by supporting local micro and small businesses in certification, standardization, and marketing of their products. *(related to effectiveness, impact and sustainability)*
7. Fida and the partners should strengthen their coordination and cooperation with other NGOs in advocacy and institutional fund raising. Strategic long-term dialogue and cooperation with the private sector actors should be strengthened for developing corporate partnerships and mobilizing corporate funding to programme work. *(related especially to coherence and sustainability)*
8. Taking into consideration the aims of diversifying the financial base of Fida's development cooperation, and strengthening corporate cooperation, Fida should take a more comprehensive programmatic approach to its programming. Instead of focusing solely on the MFA funded Programme, it should create space within its Programme for strategic integration of new interventions funded from other sources. This would enable strategic long-term mobilization of institutional and corporate funding. Promoting this kind of a programmatic approach also in partner organizations would strengthen partner organizations' programming capacities and support their own resource mobilization efforts. *(related especially to efficiency and sustainability)*
9. Fida should strengthen its human resources at the global level with a full-time staff with expertise in institutional funding. Efforts should be made to also address the gaps in human resources allocated to the CCO on Environment and Climate Resilience, and ITCC. *(related especially to efficiency)*
10. In the further development of Programme planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning specific attention should be paid to the following issues:
 - Fida should reduce radically the number of quantitative indicators used in the Global Programme and especially in CPs. The formulation of joint indicators should be sharpened and specifications guiding coherent data collection should be improved. In many cases monitoring of rates is more useful compared to numbers of beneficiaries.
 - Fida should develop with its partners feasible approaches for qualitative monitoring. While qualitative indicators may be used, other methods especially for outcome level monitoring should be gradually introduced. For example, the Most Significant Change, outcome harvesting, case studies, peer assessments are useful methods for qualitative monitoring that could be considered. It's important to test the selected qualitative monitoring approaches before wider application within the Programme.
 - Fida should strengthen the use of the ToC in Programme monitoring and learning. Analyzing quantitative and qualitative monitoring data on results and assumptions against the ToC, would support more systematic monitoring of the feasibility of the Programme intervention logic, related trends, as well as possible adaptation needs in the ToC and implementation strategies.

- Especially in peace work and advocacy, monitoring should focus on output and outcome levels. Efforts should be made to develop related process monitoring. The above-mentioned qualitative methods could be used for this purpose.
- In the further development of its T-reporting formats, Fida should pay attention to the ToC approach. Changing the reporting order (first outputs and then related outcome) would support analysis on the feasibility of intervention logic and related trends.
- In the sustainability planning the sustainability categories of financial, institutional, socio-cultural, technical and environmental sustainability should be used to support concretizing the plans.

(Related to effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability)

6. Lessons Learned

Holistic approaches where the human rights in focus are promoted through multiple strategies in collaboration with various relevant stakeholders including rights-holders, government duty-bearers, parents and caregivers, other community stakeholders and CSOs, have proved their effectiveness. Holistic approaches are essential especially when a programme focuses on the rights of marginalized groups. At the same time, for example challenges faced in disability inclusion related programming show that barriers affecting the lives and rights of people from marginalized groups are multiple, and addressing their root-causes through participatory processes takes time and resources. This further highlights the importance of adequate geographic and thematic focusing in development programming.

When partner organizations work holistically on many thematic issues in geographically wide areas in their countries, this is naturally reflected in their priorities and expectations towards Fida as a funding partner. While balancing between the expectations of partners and financial realities is difficult, strategic thematic and geographic focusing is of crucial importance for maximizing effectiveness, efficiency and impact of a programme.

In many thematic areas where Fida and its partners work, the government service structures are still weak or in-existent. In the efforts to move from support to service delivery to more sustainable approaches, the Training of Trainers and peer support structures developed in Fida's PSS work are a good strategy that can be used also in other themes.

Many good results and developments within a programme remain easily unnoticed if the monitoring is too strongly based on indicator focused quantitative monitoring. Participatory qualitative monitoring with strong involvement of rights-holders is essential for making these issues visible. Besides supporting monitoring, reporting and further development of programme work, this kind of monitoring processes can themselves contribute to behavior change and strengthened ownership among programme beneficiaries by raising awareness and drawing attention to aimed changes.

The efforts of diversifying the funding base of an organization's development cooperation require strategic planning and adequate resourcing. Mobilization of institutional funding especially from EU is labor intensive and requires intensive work inputs within limited periods of time on short notice. Mobilization of private sector funding implies often longer-term dialogue processes, where not only the funding but also the added value of a partnership for both parties and related roles are discussed. Having a strategic programme framework guiding the mobilization of these resources and related planning, as well as allocating adequate human resources and expertise to lead and do this work is essential, since the competition for resources in the development cooperation sector is tightening.

Annexes

ANNEX 1: TERMS OF REFERENCE

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Date: 3rd July 2024

For a Mid-Term Evaluation of Fida's Development Cooperation Programme 2022 – 2025

Summary

Purpose: The purpose of the Mid-Term Evaluation is to assess the achievement of the planned results, the lessons learned and the strengths and weaknesses of Fida's Development Cooperation Programme 2022 - 2025 and to provide recommendations for the planning of Fida's future development work.

Maximum duration of evaluation: The duration of the evaluation is a maximum 25 days.

Time frame: August - October 2024

Location: Helsinki

Background to the Evaluation

Fida International (henceforth "Fida") is a Christian Non-Governmental Organization working in the field of Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance. Fida's Development Cooperation Programme 2022 - 2025, "Towards the Future - A Safe Educational Path and Living Environment for Children and Youth", is funded from various sources, of which the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (henceforth Finnish MFA) is the largest. Fida has received funding from the Finnish MFA since 1974 and received a partnership status in 2003. Fida's Development Cooperation Programme 2022 - 2025 (henceforth "the Programme") is guided by and contributes to the achievement of Finland's Development Policy Priorities and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action have also been guiding documents.

Description of the programme to be evaluated

The Programme is based on Fida's Development Cooperation Strategy 2030, which contains the strategic vision that by 2030 "Fida has contributed to strengthened human dignity, justice and peace". The main objective of the Programme is: "improved access to quality education and safer living environments for children and youth in Programme countries". The Theory of Change and development objectives are based on a Human Rights-Based Approach to development. The Programme contains the following four outcome areas:

1. Strengthened realisation of the Right to Education for children and youth, especially for girls and children with disabilities
2. Strengthened realisation of rights related to Safe Living Environment for children and youth, especially for girls and children with disabilities
3. Improved administrative and financial practices of partner organisations and strengthened commitment to act innovatively to strengthen the realisation of the rights of children and youth, especially girls and children with disabilities
4. IN FINLAND: Increased commitment of target groups to promote children's rights to quality education and safe living environments globally

The Programme contains 10 Country Programmes located in Eastern Africa, the Middle East and South and South-East Asia. All Country Programmes share outcome areas 1-3 with the Global Programme. Within the outcome areas, Country Programmes work on one or more sub-themes (see global results matrix). In addition, all Country Programmes work to achieve the Cross-Cutting Objectives of Gender Equity, Environment and Climate Resilience and Strengthened Rights of

Persons with Disabilities. In Finland the Programme contains Global Education, Development Communication and Advocacy.

Programme Expenditure

Year	Reported Expenses	% Self-financed
2022	€ 6 361 094	15.7%
2023	€ 6 230 400	15.25%

Year	Planned Budget	% Self-financed
2024	6 634 000	17.09%
2025	6 375 000	24.71%

Rationale, Purpose, and Objectives of the Evaluation

The Development Cooperation Programme 2022 - 2025 is currently in its third year and Fida is in the early stages of planning its next programme which will be implemented during 2026 - 2029. It is intended that the upcoming programme will build upon the results of the current programme but have more clearly defined thematic areas and a stronger incorporation of triple nexus thinking. The upcoming programme's four outcome areas (currently under review) relate to: right to education; economic security; strengthening civil society and; communication, advocacy and global education in Finland.

A Mid-Term Evaluation of the Programme is being undertaken at this time to gain insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the Programme and to provide direction to future development cooperation work. It is expected that the evaluation will address all of the Programme's outcome areas and consider all DAC evaluation criteria. Nevertheless, special attention should be given to the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the Programme. In particular, Fida is interesting in learning more about the thematic areas in which it has had most impact and also which working methods have been most effective. The evaluation should also generate information regarding the efficiency of the Programme. Findings should cover, among others, how efficiently resources have been used and whether management and quality assurance processes have functioned effectively. A further area to be addressed is the strengths and weaknesses of the Programme's measures aimed at strengthening thematic expertise and learning within the Programme, such as the Programme's thematic Global Teams and Thematic Advisors.

The results of the evaluation will be used by decision-makers at Fida and will be shared with other Programme stakeholders. The Evaluation should provide clear, actionable recommendations that can be used to both sharpen the focus and effectiveness of the current Development Cooperation Programme 2022 - 2025 and help guide the direction of the upcoming Development Cooperation Programme 2026 - 2029.

The main objectives of the evaluation are:

- 1) **Analysis of the 2022 - 2025 Programme and its results:** The analysis should make an informed judgment about the performance of the Programme (relevance, coherence efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability). The evaluation should analyse the progress that has been made towards achieving the planned results as well as the adequacy of resources and whether they were used effectively. The evaluation is also expected to examine the implementation and relevance of the Programme's Cross-Cutting Objectives. Finally, the evaluation should critically examine the Programme's management system and quality assurance procedures.
- 2) **Assess the strengths and weaknesses of the 2022 - 2025 Programme:** The analysis should provide an assessment of the strengths of Fida's development cooperation programme and areas of weakness. Are there "niche areas" in

which the Programme has had a significant impact and provided added value? Conversely, in what areas has Fida's impact been weaker than planned? What action could be taken in future that would enable Fida to build on its areas of strength while addressing weaknesses?

- 3) **Assess the lessons learnt during the 2022 - 2025 Programme:** What lessons have been learned in the Programme and through the evaluation that can be used to strengthen the ongoing Development Cooperation Programme 2022 - 2025? How are the lessons learned applicable to the planning and management of the upcoming 2026 - 2029 programme?

Scope of the Mid-Term Evaluation

Fida is committed to meeting its own and its back-donors' quality criteria in all development cooperation operations. Evaluations support Fida's quality assurance processes and uphold the organisation's commitment to accountability and organisational learning. The results of all evaluations are shared widely within the organisation and with local partner organisations. Recommendations are used as a key tool for sharpening the focus of the organisation's development cooperation objectives and strengthening the structures that support their achievement.

The focus of this evaluation is on Fida's Global Development Cooperation Programme 2022 - 2025 and the ten Country Programmes and the Domestic Programme it contains. The time span to be covered by the analysis is 2022 - August 2024. The assignment is conducted as a desk review and also through interviews with key Fida staff in the organisation's headquarters and abroad, partner organisations and other relevant stakeholders.

The Programme's main donor, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, records all Programme evaluations and has the right to publish and share them.

Evaluation Questions

The main objective of the Mid-Term Evaluation is to produce an assessment of the Development Cooperation Programme 2022 - 2025. The Evaluation should focus on the following questions; however, the evaluator is encouraged to address all issues that are relevant to the success of the Programme.

RELEVANCE

The extent to which the intervention objectives and design respond to beneficiaries', global, country, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change.

- To what extent is the Programme relevant to the development situation in the countries of operation? Does the Programme address genuine development challenges? Is the Programme consistent with the priorities of beneficiaries (rights holders and duty bearers), local implementing partners and other significant stakeholders?
- What steps could be taken to strengthen the relevance of the Programme and future development cooperation programmes? Is there a need to modify the thematic focus, working methods or other aspects of the Programme?

COHERENCE

The compatibility of the intervention with other interventions (especially policies) in a country, sector or institution.

- Assess the coherence of the Programme. Is the Programme internally coherent? To what extent is the Programme aligned with the development priorities of Finland, the Sustainable Development Goals and relevant international frameworks and conventions, such as CRPD, CRC and CEDAW?
- To what extent has the Programme cooperated with other development actors and complemented their activities? Is there potential for strengthened collaboration in future? If so, how could collaboration be improved?

EFFECTIVENESS

The extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives and its results, including any differential results across groups.

- Assess the level of success of the Programme in achieving its objectives over the 2022 - 2024 period. Has the Programme been able to strengthen the knowledge of key stakeholders regarding children's rights to education and to a safe living environment? What evidence is there of changes in attitudes and behaviour of rights holders and duty bearers?
- Assess the Programme's theory of change and implementation strategies. Have they been effective? Are there stronger results in some sub-themes than others? Have Global Teams and Thematic Advisors been an effective means of providing thematic support to Country Programmes and strengthening Programme expertise? If not, what alternative ways of achieving the same goals would be worth exploring?
- Assess the level of success in mainstreaming the Cross-Cutting Objectives of Gender Equality, Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Environmental Sustainability and Climate Resilience across the Programme.

EFFICIENCY

The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way.

- Assess the resourcing of the Programme. Have sufficient resources (funding, time, personnel) been allocated to the design, implementation, monitoring and managing of the Programme? Were any areas under/over-resourced? What changes could be made to improve resourcing now and in future programmes?
- How well has the Programme been able to transform the available resources into the intended results? How effective was Programme management, including monitoring and quality assurance, reporting, personnel management, financial management and cooperation and communication between stakeholders? Were risks managed effectively?

IMPACT

The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects.

- Is the Programme on track to achieve/make a significant contribution to its planned impact during the 2022 - 2025 programme period? Are changes already visible in terms of improved access to quality education and safer living environments for children and youth? If so, what changes? If not, what changes are needed in order to rectify the situation?

SUSTAINABILITY

The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue.

- Has the Programme brought about sustainable changes in terms of reducing poverty and inequality and strengthening human rights? Concerning power dynamics, has the situation of the most marginalized groups particularly women, girls and persons with disabilities been strengthened in a manner that is sustainable?
- Assess the level of success of the Programme's measures to broaden its financial base (both in Finland and in Programme countries) and strengthen the capacity of its local implementing partners. Is there evidence of the Programme's financial base being strengthened? To what extent has the capacity of local partners to promote sustainable development and operate sustainably in the future been strengthened?

Based on the evaluation, the consultant is expected to make clear and actionable recommendations. The recommendations should cover both the 2022 - 2025 Development Cooperation Programme and future development cooperation programmes.

Methodology

The proposed methodology for the assignment is:

- Desk review and analysis of Programme documentation (plans, annual reports, evaluations, Finnish MFA guidelines and policies, relevant UN and other international guidelines, targets and conventions).
- Interviews, discussions and meetings with relevant stakeholders, including key Fida staff at Fida HQ and abroad and the Finnish MFA Desk Officer with responsibility for the Programme.
- The evaluator is given an opportunity to propose a methodology that he/she finds most relevant for the purpose of the evaluation.

Reporting Requirements and Evaluation Timeline

The draft report should be submitted to the Fida Evaluation Manager (rowan.clusker@fida.fi) by 20th October 2024. The draft report should be submitted in an electronic format, preferably as a single data file. In all cases, the number of data files should not exceed two. Word documents should be shared as .docx files.

The final report should be submitted to the Fida Evaluation Manager by 31st October 2024. The reporting format can be found in Annex 3. Use of illustrations in the form of photographs, schematic representations, diagrams, tables, etc., is encouraged.

The evaluator is to present the key findings at a debriefing meeting at which the reference group and other interested Fida staff will be invited. The debriefing meeting will be held on 29th October 2024 (TBC). The purpose of the meeting is to present the key findings to persons involved in the project management, supervision, and implementation, to check the factual basis of the evaluation, and to discuss the draft findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

The report should address all of the evaluation questions and should, in particular, elaborate on those that are most significant to the successful achievement of the Country Programme goals for 2022 -2025. Clear and concrete recommendations for how to improve the Country Programmes' performance in the future should be a central component of the report.

Evaluation schedule:

Activity	Date
Contracting	August 2024
Kick-off	13 th Aug (TBC)
Desk work	August
Inception report	1 st Sep
Inception report meeting	5 th Sep (TBC)
Report writing	Sep – Oct
Draft report	By 20 th Oct
Fida's comments on the draft report	By 25 th Oct
Debriefing meeting	29 th Oct (TBC)
Final report	By 31 st Oct 2024

Contents of the Offer

The evaluator should include in his/her offer the proposed methodology, tools, resources (including possible human resources), planned quality assurance method, preliminary work plan and schedule and CV (if not previously shared)

Expertise required

- Previous experience of conducting Programme Reviews or Mid-Term Evaluations in the development cooperation field
- Expertise in Results-Based Management (RBM), Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) and children's rights
- Familiarity with Finnish and international development cooperation principles and with the work of development NGOs and Faith-based Organisations
- Knowledge of the Finnish MFA partnership agreement modality
- Analytical skills and ability to summarize and focus on the bigger picture
- Knowledge of the Programme's Cross-Cutting Objectives (gender equality, environment and climate resilience, rights of persons with disabilities)
- Quality assurance skills
- Good communication and interpersonal skills
- Fluency in English

Annexes

1. Key documents for the Evaluation
2. Link to the MFA Evaluation Manual
3. Outline of the Evaluation Report

ANNEX 2: EVALUATION METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE

The Evaluation mainly applied qualitative data collection and analysis methods. Quantitative data analysis was done primarily based on secondary data from Fida's monitoring (e.g. programme indicator monitoring, budgets and financial reports). Some quantitative data was generated from online surveys conducted with Fida programme staff and partner organization's staff. The data collection and analysis were guided by an evaluation matrix prepared during the inception phase. The matrix included sub-questions concretizing and refining the focus of the evaluation questions, as well as information on data collection methods and sources of data per evaluation criteria. Use of several data collection methods and sources of data enabled triangulation of evaluation data.

The data collection methods included:

A) A desk review of following types of key documents related to the Programme:

- Fida's strategy documents
- Programme Plan 2022-2025 and Results Matrix Versions
- Programme Annual Reports 2022-2023 including narrative and financial reports, and Results Matrix
- Plans and Annual/T-reports of all Country Programmes including narrative and financial reports and Results Matrices (more indepth review of the documents related to Country Programmes of Burundi, Iraq and Nepal)
- Previous evaluations conducted during 2022-2024:
 - o Seppo, M. (2022), Evaluation of Fida's work to strengthen local civil society in the Country Programmes in Bangladesh, Nepal, Burundi, Kenya and Uganda
 - o Otieno, S. (2022), Evaluation Report for Kenya Country Programme (5040)
 - o Tran-Nguyen, E. (2022) Fidan kotimaan ohjelmaa evaluatio (Evaluation of Fida's domestic programme)
 - o Pitkänen, O. (2023), Evaluation of the Fida's Tanzania Country Programme: Tunandoto "We have a dream"
 - o Mesiäislehto, V. (2024), Addressing Gender Inequality: Key Learnings from Fida's 2022-2025 Development Cooperation Programme
 - o Pitkänen, O. (2024), Evaluation of the Fida International's Country Programmes in Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, and Myanmar
- Indicator Bank 2022-2025
- Fida's Mainstreaming Guidelines
- Fida's Policies on Disability Inclusion, Environment, Psychosocial Support, and Child Protection.
- Ethical Guidelines, Anti-Corruption Guidelines, Guidelines for the Prevention of Sexual Harassment, Violence and Exploitation, Anti-Corruption Handbook, and Child Protection related guidelines.
- Fida's other frameworks and plans including: Localization Framework and Roadmap, Fida's Nexus Framework and Manual
- Global Teams' Workshop documents
- KPMG Review Report (2023)
- Finland's Development Policy, the MFA guidelines for the Cross-Cutting Objectives, the MFA Guidance note on the Human Rights-Based Approach, and relevant UN and other international guidelines, targets, and conventions.

B) Semi-structured key informant interviews (in total 30) were conducted in/from Finland with the following Fida programme staff, representatives of partner organizations in Burundi, Iraq, and Nepal, and an MFA representative:

Fida's programme staff (18)

- Director of Development Cooperation and Regional Director of EAME

- Regional Programme Manager of Asia
- Regional Programme Manager of nexus countries
- Regional Programme Manager of Eastern Africa
- Development Cooperation Manager, HQ
- Development Cooperation Specialist, MEAL
- Development Cooperation Specialist, Planning
- Programme Finance Manager
- CP Manager, Burundi
- CP Manager, Iraq
- CP Manager, Nepal
- Global Advisor on Child Protection and Safeguarding
- Global Advisor on PSS
- Global Advisor on Capacity Strengthening of Partners
- Global Advisor on SRHR
- Technical Advisor
- Global Advisor on Peacebuilding
- Advocacy Coordinator, HQ

Representatives of partner organizations (11)

- Project Coordinator, CEPBU, Burundi
- Director of HDO, Iraq
- Project Coordinator, HDO, Iraq
- Director of Together, Iraq
- Project Coordinator, Together, Iraq
- Director of Sheyaw (Yes we can Network), Iraq
- Project Coordinator, Sheyaw (Yes we can Network), Iraq
- Project Coordinator, Rescue Nepal
- Project Coordinator, Relative Nepal
- Project Coordinator, Transformation Nepal
- Project Coordinator, New Life Service Association, Nepal

Other stakeholders (1)

- MFA Desk Officer, Finland

C) Two separate online surveys were conducted with a) Fida's programme staff and b) partner organizations (one response per organization) to collect data on their perceptions on the relevance, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of the evaluated programme, including related strengths and weaknesses. The surveys were conducted with the Survey Monkey online tool. The surveys were conducted during the period 16-30 September²⁵. The surveys were conducted with the Survey Monkey online tool. The participation rate for Fida's partner organizations was 100 % (16 responses, including one partial), and for Fida's programme staff 64 % (eight from CPs, three from the regional and nine from the global level).

The survey questionnaire consisted of multiple-choice, Likert scale and open-ended questions. The draft survey questionnaires were shared with and commented by Fida HQ staff.

²⁵ The survey for partner organizations was reopened 3 October to enable participation of one partner organization that had missed the survey invitations due to a technical problem.

D) A Learning Workshop was conducted with Fida Programme staff (20 participants) 8 October 2024 in Teams. In this two-hour workshop the evaluator presented her preliminary findings, that were then discussed in groups and a plenary discussion. A web-based facilitation tool *Miro* was used to facilitate active involvement of all participants. Issues brought up in the discussions contributed to the finalization of data analysis as well as report writing.

ANNEX 3: LIMITATIONS OF THE EVALUATION

The main limitation of the Evaluation is lack of participation by Programme beneficiaries including rights-holders and duty-bearers or other key stakeholders involved in the implementation of Country Programmes (CPs). The Evaluation was conducted by one evaluator from Finland, and the evaluation process didn't include travel to Fida's Programme countries, or data collection by local evaluators based in these countries. For this reason, the analysis on beneficiaries' perspectives was based on secondary data sources including Fida's progress reports, and the results of Fida's previous evaluations where field level data collection had been conducted. This limitation was also taken into consideration in the survey and interview questions, where the Programme relevance to beneficiaries was approached from the perspective of the level of their participation in the planning and monitoring of the Programme.

The other main limitation is related to the assessment of the Programme outcome 4 covering Fida's Domestic Programme, including development communication, global education, and advocacy work. Due to the wide scope of the Evaluation and since a separate evaluation of the Domestic Programme had been conducted in 2022, it was agreed during the inception phase that the Evaluation would cover this Programme component only lightly.²⁶

²⁶ Tran-Nguyen, E. (2022) Fidan kotimaan ohjelmaa arvioitiin

ANNEX 4: THEORY OF CHANGE OF FIDA'S DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2022-2025

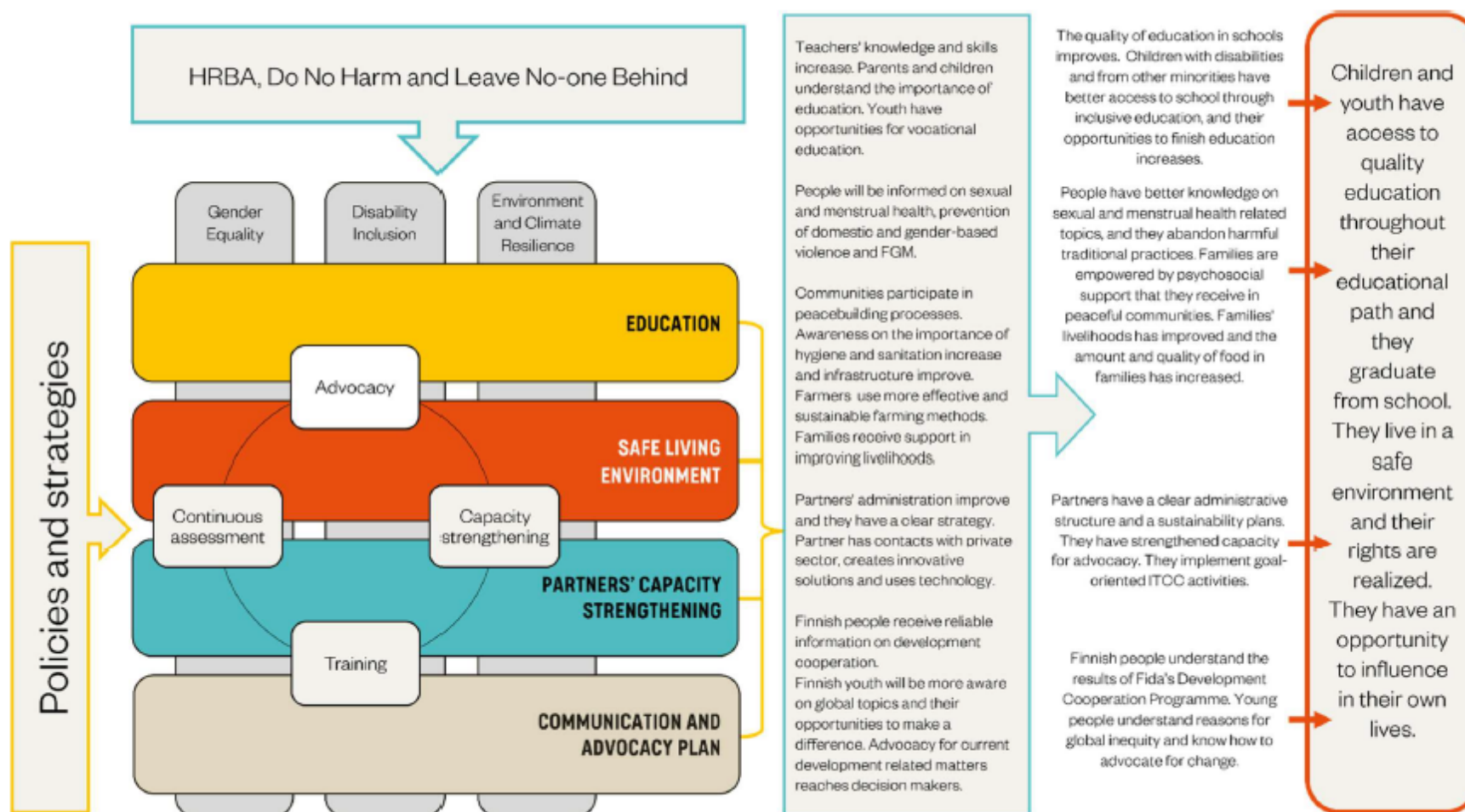


Figure 5. Theory of Change of Development Cooperation Programme 2022 – 2025

ANNEX 5: EXAMPLES OF CHANGES IN THE LEVELS OF AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE AS WELL AS BEHAVIORS AND PRACTICES ACHIEVED IN CPS

CP	Examples of changes in the levels of awareness and knowledge	Examples of changes in behaviors and practices
Outcome 1: Strengthened realization of the Right to Education for children and youth, especially for girls and children with disabilities		
Quality education		
Burundi	Increased awareness of central level government on the importance of pre-primary education. Pre-primary schoolteachers feel increased confidence in their ability to teach and sense of professional pride. Parents and community leaders better aware on the importance of pre-primary education.	Government committed to strengthen access and quality of pre-primary education Improvements in the quality of teaching in the target areas. Increased commitment on pre-primary education and registration of children to school in target communities.
Nepal	400 teachers have been trained on child-friendly teaching methods, and School Management Committees and Parent-Teacher Associations trained on school management, how to make school improvements and advocate support from government. Improvements have been made in classrooms and latrines constructed and renovated (including menstrual pad disposal facilities)	Children value child-friendly teaching methods employed by their teachers. Improvements in the learning environment reported also by parents. Some School Management Committees taking a pro-active role in preparing school improvement plans and advocating for government resources.
Inclusive education		
Iraq	Teachers, school administrators, and students have learned about the importance of education for children with special needs. Education Supervisors have been trained on inclusive education and gained skills for helping schools to reintegrate children with disabilities. Awareness of the ministry level duty-bearers on inclusive education strengthened.	Trained teachers found ways to convince principles who had previously refused to accept inclusive education training in their schools. Supervisors' role has been significant in solving problems and reintegrating students with disabilities to regular classes and reducing the need for external support. Ministry of Education in Kurdistan instructed schools to implement the Inclusive Education Guidelines developed by Fida's partner organization HDO.
DRC	Teachers' skills for creating positive and inclusive classroom environments strengthened through training. Access paths, ramps and toilets have been constructed in schools and inclusive teaching materials have been provided to teachers. Awareness on the rights and needs of persons with disabilities has strengthened in communities.	Teachers create school activities that involve participation and teamwork from children with disabilities and those without disabilities, and this has changed attitudes that improve classroom environment. Access for children with disabilities to schools has improved. Increased sense of being treated with dignity and equality by children with disabilities and their families. Schools and kid's clubs advocate for reducing stigma towards persons with disabilities.
Informal education		
Iraq	Online and in-person kids' clubs on environment, mental arithmetic, and art, have improved the knowledge and skills of children. Also handwriting, English language, creativity, and cultural awareness has improved.	Parents have observed significant behavior changes in children, fostering friendliness, acceptance of others, and improved interpersonal skills.
Tanzania	Children have conducted advocacy towards duty bearers on the needs for provision of textbooks, inclusive infrastructure in schools and enhanced toilet facilities.	The government made improvements to the accessibility in nine schools

CP	Examples of changes in the levels of awareness and knowledge	Examples of changes in behaviors and practices
Lifelong learning		
Burundi	Young people have been trained in entrepreneurship and use of information technology (ICT).	Out of 510 youths trained in 2023, an average of 40% had initiated small businesses to support their lives.
Ethiopia	Knowledge on marketable vocational skills strengthened through research.	209 students enrolled in technical and vocational education and training and 153 students completed their training.
Outcome 2: Strengthened realization of rights related Safe Living Environment for children and youth, especially for girls and children with disabilities		
Personal security		
Iraq	Peer support groups have been established and equipped with PSS related knowledge and skills. They have provided PSS to children and youth (~50% persons with disabilities).	Social phobia, anxiety, depression and stuttering were reduced leading to improved mental health of pupils with disabilities. Exam anxiety has reduced among school pupils.
Nepal	The awareness and knowledge on SRHR has strengthened in Nepal. There are menstrual pad disposal facilities in schools.	People are more willing to talk about sensitive topics, such as child marriage. Girls' school attendance has improved during periods. The number of women attending SRHR related appointments in health posts has increased. Government has asked Fida's partner's support in promoting awareness on early marriage in communities of high prevalence.
Community security		
Myanmar	Dialogue and discussion processes have been initiated to bring together representatives of different religions and discuss ways for living together peacefully.	Religious leaders have shown increased cooperation and collaboration in the peace-building process because they realized how crucial their role is and how it can influence the current situation in the country.
Burundi	Over 100 peace groups have been established in the communities to enhance peace and stability.	The peace groups have in some cases acting as development teams. In one village, people from two villages could not visit each other because of a big river. The peace group mobilized resources and constructed a foot bridge across the river which became an act of bringing people together.
Health security		
Uganda	There has been improved knowledge of preventive health care and 180 volunteers are disseminating preventive health information to others.	People have improved sanitation and hygiene practices in target communities. Drying racks, tip taps and pit latrines have been constructed.
Burundi	Batwa families had been sensitized on hygiene and sanitation in five villages.	6 families decided to dig pits latrines for their families
Food security		
Kenya	Households in target communities have strengthened skills in conservation agriculture.	Average yields have increased compared to the past, and improved access to sufficient food throughout the year is reported by households.
Tanzania	Small-scale cashew farmers have received agricultural training.	The cashew production has increased from 354 tons in 2022 to 472 tons in 2023.
Economic security		
Bangladesh	Marginalized women have been trained on business development.	Various small businesses and cooperatives related to agriculture and animal husbandry, and small shops were established. 72/94 women have increased their income.
Tanzania	Self-Help Groups were supported to access government soft loans.	Self-Help Group members are able to get their products standardized and certified.

ANNEX 6: EVALUATION BRIEF

Fida's Development Cooperation Programme 2022-2025 *Towards the Future – A Safe Educational Path and Living Environment for Children and Youth* aims at contributing to improved access to quality education and safer living environments for children and youth in 10 Programme countries in Eastern Africa, the Middle East, and South and South-East Asia. The Programme is funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA).

The Mid-Term Evaluation assessed the achievement of the planned results, lessons learned, and strengths and weaknesses of this Programme, and provided recommendations to support its further development and planning of the next programme (2026-2029). It was conducted in August – October 2024 by an external evaluator contracted by Fida Headquarters (HQ).

The assessment shows that Fida and its partner organizations have overall made good progress in ensuring the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the Programme. Fida's strong commitment to continuously develop its programme work forms a good basis for further developing the strengths and addressing weaknesses and challenges identified in this Evaluation.

The Programme has effectively strengthened the awareness, knowledge and skills of key local level stakeholders especially in the areas of formal education, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), psycho-social support (PSS), food security and economic security. Increased school enrolment at the pre-primary, primary and secondary levels is an important early sign of longer-term impacts on improved access to education. The Programme has also contributed to children's right to rest, play, culture and arts through kids' and youth clubs. The SRHR and PSS have contributed to improved wellbeing of children and women in vulnerable situations. Economic security related activities have contributed to women's empowerment in target communities.

The Programme has systematically strengthened Fida's partner organizations' capacities in finance and administration with good results. This support is appreciated and considered by partners as a clear added value of Fida compared to other funding partners. Also, partners' advocacy capacities have strengthened, while in the Innovations, Technology and Corporate Cooperation (ITCC) component the progress has been modest.

The Programme has strong relevance in all Programme countries and in Finland. It promotes the rights of people from marginalized groups including children, youth, women and persons with disabilities through holistic approaches in collaboration with various relevant stakeholders including government duty-bearers, parents and caregivers, other community stakeholders and CSOs. Barriers affecting the lives and rights of these people living in vulnerable situations are multiple, and addressing their root-causes through participatory processes takes time and resources.

The current Programme covers a wide range of sub-themes and within Programme Countries wide geographical areas. To strengthen the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the Programme, this issue should be addressed by clearly strengthening and sharpening the thematic and geographic focus in future programming. This would also support concretizing the quite generic Programme Theory of Change of the current Programme. In the further development of the Programme, it is also recommended to strengthen the participation of rights-holders, especially children, youth, women and persons with disabilities not only as beneficiaries in activities, but in the planning and monitoring of interventions as active stakeholders and agents of change.

Fida is also recommended to take a more comprehensive programmatic approach to its programming. Instead of focusing solely on the MFA funded Programme, it should create space within its Programme for

strategic integration of new interventions funded from other sources. This would support diversification of Fida's financial base. Promoting this kind of a programmatic approach also in partner organizations would strengthen partner organizations' programming capacities and support their own resource mobilization work.