

# Adapting for Change: Evaluation of Finland's Country Strategy Approach in Fragile Contexts

**Launch Seminar**

**7<sup>th</sup> May 2020**



# Three main questions

1. To what extent did the Country Strategy approach **promote Finnish and partner country policy objectives** and **guide Finland's cooperation** in fragile contexts?

2. To what extent did the approach support **policy coherence**?

3. How can it be **further developed** for use in fragile situations?

# What is the Country Strategy approach?

## Purpose

To bring Regional Department- managed country-level policy and programmatic engagement into a broader framework of Results-Based Management

## Scope

- Applies to long-term partner countries
- Encompasses bilateral & earmarked multi-bilateral development assistance under control of MFA's Regional Departments

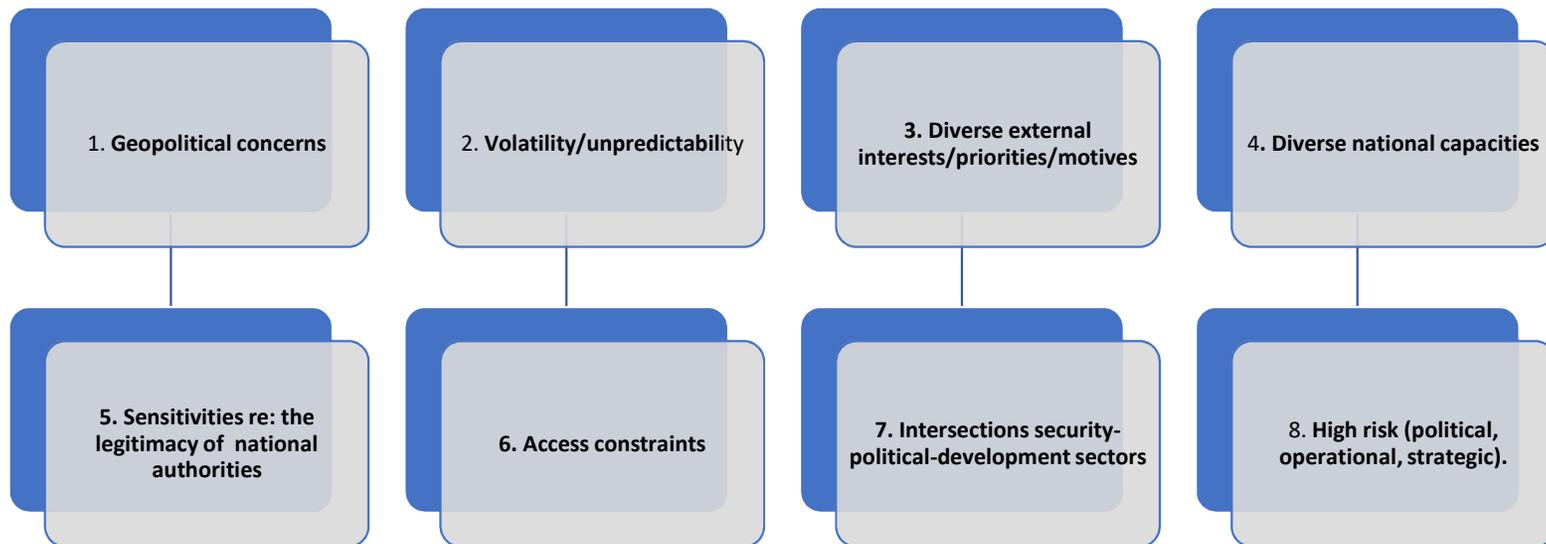
## Does not include

- Core contributions to multilateral system
- Humanitarian support
- CSO programme-based support (PBS)
- Private sector engagement/trade support
- Project support for civil society organisations
- Foreign policy, security, peacebuilding and mediation support
- Higher Education Institutions Institutional Cooperation Instrument (HEICI)

## Diverse 'first generation' Country Strategies

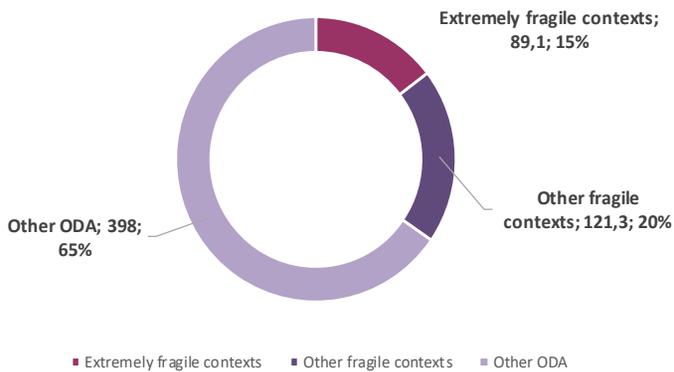
- Afghanistan - White Paper encompasses foreign/security/trade policy
- Regional strategy Syria/Iraq Strategy focuses on the effects of the Syria regional conflict

# What makes fragile/conflict affected contexts special?

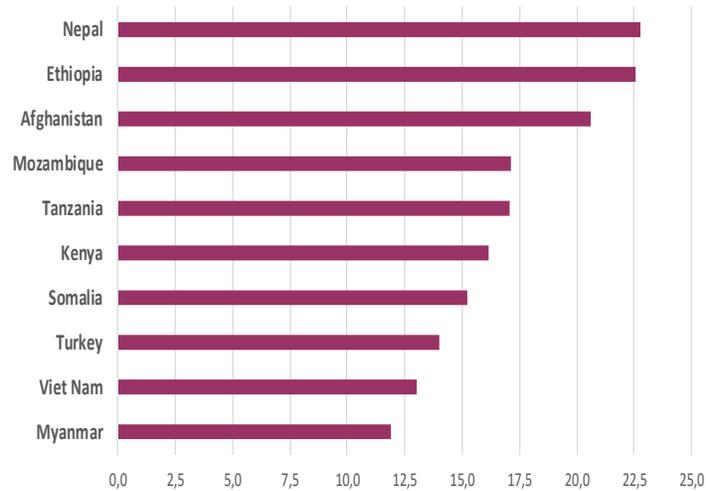


# What does Finland's assistance to fragile contexts look like?

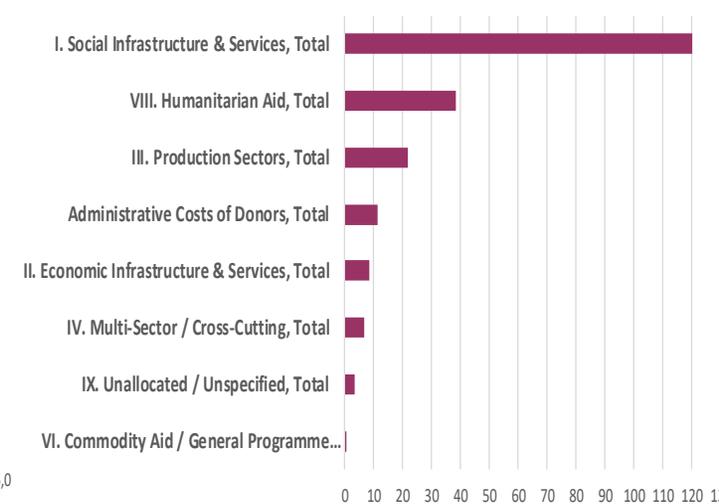
gross disbursements, percent of total ODA, 2017



gross disbursements, million USD, current prices

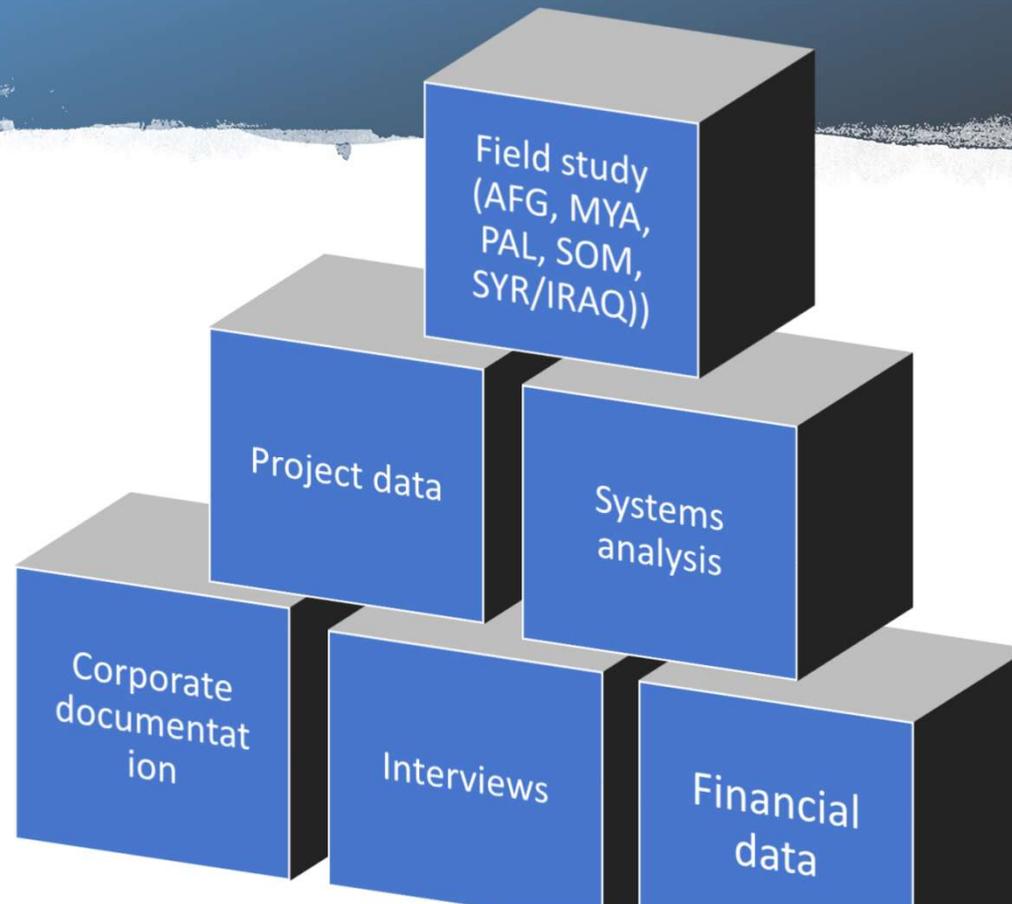


gross disbursements, USD Million, 2017

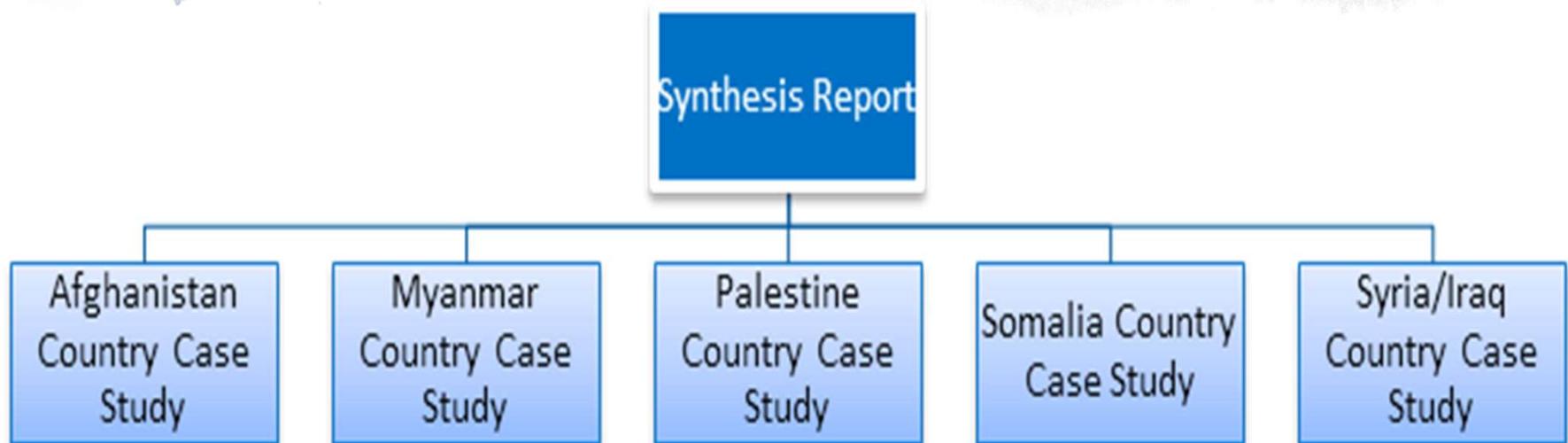


Source: OECD data 2018

# The study: How were findings built?



# Structure of report



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# Limitations

## **1. Results data**

Limited - project reports/evaluations & MFA annual reporting

## **2. Timing**

Findings up to December 2019 – Revised Country Strategy guidance issued January 2020

## **3. Component case studies**

Not full evaluations of Finnish assistance

# 1. How did the Country Strategy approach help ensure relevant Finnish assistance?

**Overall – Assistance relevant to needs but not shaped by the Country Strategy instrument**

## **‘Country strategies’**

- Diverse e.g. Syria/Iraq
- Strategic priorities aligned with – but not determined by – conflict and fragility
- Weak conflict and fragility analytical base

## **Finnish assistance relevant in itself**

- Projects - Well-aligned with (inter)national strategies /national needs
- Policy dialogue - appropriate to context with focus on statebuilding
- Some adaptive capacity over time

## **But few intersections between the assistance and the Country Strategy**

- CS provided limited guidance on targeting/programmatic choices
- Did not impede (but also did not support) adaptation
- Little awareness/use of the CS outside MFA

## 2. How did the Country Strategy approach help ensure effective Finnish assistance?

### Results Based Management

- Applied; added value; & maturing over time
- But 'linear' approaches to RBM questioned

### Aid modalities

- Choice and balance appropriate
- For volatile contexts, helped enable risk management
- Multilateral system use validated (incl. multi-bi)
- But not strategically managed

### Policy dialogue

- Some strong effects
- Finland reputation as a principled donor (gender/HRBAs)

### Results achieved

**Patchy** against CS impact areas Densest areas of results:

- Gender
- Education
- PSG 5: Capacity for accountable and fair service delivery built
- Some limited contributions to reduced fragility
- Emerging work on disability but little on climate

### But:

- Individualized not aggregate
- Little CS influence on results

- **Somalia** – Finland built significant foundations in gender and 'statebuilding' – but results 'per project'
- **Palestine** – Finland contributed to tangible results especially in education sector - but difficult to verify 'Finnish' contributions

### 3. How did the Country Strategy approach help ensure coherent Finnish assistance?

#### Strong external coherence

- Finland a committed & conscientious partner
  - 'Principled'
  - 'Measured'
  - 'Balanced'
- Clear areas of Finnish leadership/strength:
  - Gender
  - Human rights

**But - the Country Strategy approach did not play a role in fostering external coherence**

#### Limited internal coherence

- *(Exception: Afghanistan)*
- Assistance mostly dispersed across departments and units; systemic constraints
- Gaps in strategic oversight
- Poor internal communication & few attempts to 'join up' assistance

- **Afghanistan** – White Paper an attempt to join up assistance across Government departments
- **Syria/Iraq** - Assistance well-aligned with international agreements on humanitarian financing – but run effectively as three independent programmes (regional Syria crisis, Iraq & Turkey)

## 4. How did the Country Strategy approach help connect Finnish assistance to wider priorities?

### Inconsistent attention to human rights

- Human rights language = sensitivities in some contexts
- Country Strategies strongly articulate human rights commitments
- Follow through in policy dialogue forums
- Programmatic attention to human rights and other international concerns (IHPs/AAP/DNH) inconsistent/partner-dependent
- No clear monitoring on human rights based approach usage

### Emerging connections to longer term concerns ('nexus')

- Country Strategies = strong attention to statebuilding and peacebuilding – but no clear conceptual approach
- Inconsistent medium to long-term view in programmes
- 'Nexus' mostly humanitarian-development (plus resilience in Syria/Iraq & Palestine)
- Some emergent peacebuilding / reconciliation work

### Financing systems

- A constraint
- Split into 'humanitarian' and 'development',
- No 'bridging' finance available.
- Local Co-operation Funds valued but mostly discontinued

In Myanmar, Finland seems to encourage dialogue between conflict parties through participation in the Joint Peace Fund

# Eight key conclusions

1. **Purpose of the Country Strategy** in fragile contexts requires clarification

2. Country Strategy can further support **internal and external coherence**

3. Assistance **relevant to needs** – but Country Strategy a **'benign but largely passive'** role

4. Finland can enhance **peacebuilding & statebuilding** role

5. **Results Based Management** processes high value – scope to further mature

6. **Valuable results** delivered – but **largely independent** of the Country Strategy

7. Scope for enhanced **linkage to medium term**

8. Country Strategy can further enhance use of **human rights based approaches**

# Recommendations 1: Structural

**1: Conceptualise the Country Strategy approach as a **tool for adaptive management** in fragile contexts - links between humanitarian and development assistance**

- i.- Define intent in fragile situation
- ii.- Gear Finnish contributions to peacebuilding & statebuilding
- iii.- Explicit statement on humanitarian-development links

**2: Ensure adequate human resources to enhance the **technical rigour** of Country Strategies in fragile situations, geared to **peacebuilding and statebuilding** and with strong attention to risk**

- Improve analytical basis
- Embed principles of conflict and fragility sensitivity
- Ensure that all financed activities conflict and fragility-sensitive

**3: Increase **financial flexibility** for work in fragile contexts and develop appropriate **financing modalities****

- Approve the Country Programme for a four-year duration
- Consider thematic windows for assistance

## Recommendations 2: Procedural

**4:** Enhance **the RBM systems** allied to the Country Strategy to maximise their value with a specific emphasis on risk

- Gear results to conflict/fragility reduction & peacebuilding/statebuilding
- Formalise Self Assessments into Mid Year Reviews
- Ensure risk management directives fully implemented

**5:** Refresh or revise the **key policy frameworks** for working in fragile contexts.

- Update the 2014 Fragile States Policy
- Develop an MFA-wide Risk Policy

**6:** Ensure more rigorous treatment of the **Human Rights Based Approach** in fragile contexts.

- Add human rights analysis into Political Economy Analysis
- Include specific statement on human rights in Country Strategies
- All financed initiatives include approach to human rights