

Call for project support applications 2026

Description of project support

Project support for Finnish civil society organisations (CSOs) is an important form of civil society's development cooperation and part of the implementation of Finland's development policy. It contributes to achieving Finland's foreign and security policy objectives. CSOs engaged in development cooperation projects enhance the diversity and impact of Finland's development cooperation in developing countries around the world through their own fields of expertise and practices. The support strengthens the foundations for sustainable societal development, including functioning democracy, the rule of law, human rights and a vibrant civil society.

Key objectives of project support

Project support is used to support diversity and democracy in civil societies and promote Finland's development policy objectives and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (Agenda 2030). Through supported projects, Finnish CSOs and their partners strengthen the capacity of civil society actors in developing countries and support the civic space and an enabling environment for civil societies. For projects to be eligible for support, they must be in line with Finland's foreign and security policy and the Report on International Economic Relations and Development Cooperation. It is considered an advantage if the project increases trade and business opportunities for Finnish companies in developing markets.

Finnish CSOs, including small and medium-sized organisations, use project support to carry out projects in cooperation with local partners. The projects must promote especially the realisation of people's fundamental economic, political and social rights.¹ In addition, project support aims to promote cooperation between different actors, enabling also the utilisation of Finnish expertise. Additionally, project support can be used for various nexus activities, where development cooperation, peace work, and/or humanitarian assistance are seamlessly and often simultaneously implemented.

Projects eligible for support:

- strengthen civil society and its actors;
- exercise a positive impact on the civic space, build a democratic society and promote the peaceful participation of citizens in society;
- promote poverty eradication, reduction of inequality and other objectives of Finland's development policy;
- promote gender equality either as a principal objective or as a partial objective or by means of mainstreaming;
- promote the rights of minorities and other vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, in accordance with the prohibited grounds for discrimination covered in the UN human rights treaties, paying particular attention to multiple discrimination;

¹ Read more about the fundamental rights on the website of the [Human Rights Centre](#).

- emphasise strong local ownership and support the objectives of the local partners as well as their opportunities and ability to act as an effective part of the development of their societies;
- utilise and strengthen local resources and expertise while promoting their long-term use and development;
- aim to reach sustainable results in line with Finland's development policy priorities;
- draw on the CSOs' special expertise and ability to implement projects effectively and to manage risks associated with implementing the projects;
- bring about a wide range of positive changes, especially at community level;
- engage in multi-actor cooperation with different sectors, especially with private companies;
- promote development awareness and voluntary activities in Finland and in the partner countries;
- create natural connections and increase interaction and cooperation between countries and various actors.

Conditions and criteria for projects

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs grants project support through an open call for applications, which is normally organised every two years. The projects must observe the human rights-based approach and be at minimum human rights sensitive. The projects must also promote the cross-cutting objectives of Finland's development policy in appropriate ways. The objectives are gender equality, non-discrimination, climate-resilient and low-emission development, and environmental protection, with an emphasis on safeguarding biodiversity. Where appropriate, the projects should also promote accessible digital solutions in developing countries.

CSOs that receive project support undertake to observe the provisions of existing Finnish legislation applicable to the implementation of development cooperation and the conditions and restrictions applying to the use of government grants. The relationship between recipients of discretionary government grants and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs is governed by public law, and the recipient is also fully responsible for the use of the awarded grant, also to any extent that it is used in the country of operation. The Ministry may set thematic, regional or other priorities for the application rounds in accordance with the objectives of development policy.

Project support refers to discretionary fixed-term special grants awarded for the implementation of development cooperation projects. A project refers to a geographically and temporally limited entity for which clear objectives have been defined. The objectives describe the positive and sustainable change that the project aims to achieve and that is monitored and assessed in the framework of the project. Applications for multi-actor cooperation must have one lead applicant who is responsible as a whole for the use of the discretionary government grant, also to any extent that the grant has been redistributed to other partners.

All Finnish recipients of support must have at least one local partner, and they must jointly agree on their working methods, division of responsibilities and objectives. A key principle of the cooperation is to support the partner's goals, capacity and advocacy work. Recommended partners include especially organisations of women and vulnerable persons and groups. The role of the partner(s) must be visible at all stages of the project from planning and

implementation to the cost structure and decision-making. For justified reasons, projects may also include basic services. In such cases, the activities must aim at both strengthening the role of duty bearers and creating a wider impact.

Project support can be allocated at discretion to projects carried out in all ODA-eligible countries, listed by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), for example in the least developed countries (LDCs), fragile states and Ukraine. According to the Report on International Economic Relations and Development Cooperation, Finland's development cooperation is conditional on cooperation in the readmission of a country's own citizens and support for the international rules-based system. Finland does not engage in development cooperation with governments or actors that support Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

The Ministry encourages CSOs to seek and promote relevant forms of business cooperation. In addition, CSOs are encouraged to take other activities supported by Finland's development cooperation funds into account in their activities and to interact with Finnish diplomatic missions abroad. Any other funding awarded to the CSO by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs will be taken into account in the consideration of grants. CSOs are encouraged to communicate extensively in both partner countries and in Finland about their development cooperation activities and development challenges that they wish to address through their work.