

## DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT SUPPORT INSTRUMENT

Project support for Finnish NGOs is an important form of civil society development cooperation and part of Finland's development policy implementation. The development cooperation projects of NGOs increase the diversity and impact of Finnish development cooperation in their own fields of expertise and with their own operating practices in developing countries around the world. According to the Guidelines for Civil Society in Development Policy (2017), strengthening civil society is both a development policy objective and a means to promote Finland's other development policy objectives and the goals of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Project support also promotes Finland's foreign policy objectives, such as the implementation of human rights policy objectives.

### Key objectives of the project support instrument

A strong civil society creates a foundation for sustainable development, the promotion of democracy and the realisation of human rights. The project support instrument supports the diversity and the multiple voices of civil society. Project support allows small and medium-sized Finnish NGOs to implement projects in cooperation with local partners. These projects must promote, in particular, the realisation of people's political, social and economic rights. In addition, project support aims at facilitating cooperation between different actors, which also makes it possible to put Finnish expertise to use. The project support instrument can also be utilised in various nexus functions in which development cooperation, peace-building and humanitarian aid are implemented seamlessly and often at the same time (humanitarian-development-peace nexus)<sup>1</sup>.

### Conditions and criteria for project activities

As a rule, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs grants project support through open application rounds organised every two years. The supported projects must follow [a human rights-based approach](#) and at least its human rights sensitive level. When receiving project support, the organisation undertakes to comply with legislation in force in Finland, which applies to the implementation of development cooperation as well as the conditions and restrictions for the use of discretionary government transfers (including ethical rules) in its development cooperation. The recipient of discretionary government support is in a relationship governed by public law with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and assumes full responsibility for the use of the support, including the extent that it is used in the target countries. There must be one primary applicant for multi-actor cooperation. The Ministry may set thematic, regional or other priorities for different application rounds in accordance with development policy objectives.

### Objectives of projects

Supported projects aim, in particular, to:

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<sup>1</sup> More on this topic: DAC Recommendation on the OECD Legal Instruments Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus: <https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/public/doc/643/643.en.pdf>

- Promote the eradication of poverty, the reduction of inequality and other objectives of Finland's development policy.
- Promote the rights of minorities and other vulnerable persons, including persons with disabilities, in accordance with the prohibited grounds for discrimination contained in UN human rights treaties, taking into account in particular multiple discrimination.<sup>2</sup>
- Demonstrate strong local ownership and support the local partner's strategy and capacity to act as an effective part of societal development.
- Aim for sustainable results in line with Finland's development policy priorities.
- Have a positive impact on the space of civil society.
- Are based on the organisations' special expertise and their ability to manage projects effectively.
- Attain positive changes, in particular, at the community level.
- Utilise cooperation to draw on the strengths of different actors, such as the private sector.
- Promote development awareness and facilitate voluntary activities by Finns.
- Create international contacts between different actors and support multi-actor cooperation.

In addition to the Finnish support recipient, the projects must have a local partner with jointly agreed working methods, division of responsibilities and targets. The cooperation's focus must be on the partner's operational and target group strategy as well as supporting the partner's capacity and advocacy. Recommended partners include, in particular, vulnerable group's own organisations. The role of the partner(s) must be visible at all stages of the projects, from planning and implementation to cost structure and decision-making. For justified reasons, projects may also include basic services. In this case, the activities should aim for a broader impact as well as to strengthen the role of duty bearers.

Project support is a discretionary, fixed-term special grant for the implementation of a development cooperation project. A project refers to an entity that is limited in time and place, and for which clear objectives have been defined. Objectives describe the change that the project aims to achieve. The change may be related to improving a partner's capacity or to societal change. Indicators must be defined for monitoring and assessing the attainment of these targets.

Project support can be granted on a case-by-case basis to all countries eligible for Overseas Development Assistance defined by the OECD Development Assistance Committee, but the Ministry for Foreign Affairs encourages organisations to carry out projects funded by the Ministry especially in the least developed countries (LDC) and fragile states. Organisations are encouraged to take into consideration other activities supported by Finnish development cooperation funds and to work in cooperation with Finnish embassies. The premise of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs is to ensure that in the future, the development cooperation activities of NGOs in partner countries will have a more distinct relationship with Finland's other development cooperation work (including country programmes and private sector support). Organisations are also encouraged to communicate more extensively in partner countries as well as in Finland about their development cooperation work and the development challenges to which they wish to respond through their work.

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<sup>2</sup> More on this topic: OHCHR: A special focus on discrimination:  
<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Discrimination/Pages/discrimination.aspx>.