

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. 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. According to [the Guidelines for Civil Society in Development Policy \(2017\)](#), strengthening civil societies is both a development policy objective and a means of promoting Finland's other development policy objectives and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (2030 Agenda). Project support also promotes Finland's foreign policy objectives, such as those relating to human rights.

Key objectives of project support

A strong civil society lays a foundation for sustainable development, the promotion of democracy and the realisation of human rights. Project support is used to support diversity and plurality in civil societies. Through supported projects, Finnish organisations 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.

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 economic, political and social rights. 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.

Supported projects focus on:

- strengthening civil society and its actors and exercising a positive impact on the civic space
- promoting poverty eradication, reduction of inequality and other objectives of Finland's development policy
- in accordance with the prohibited grounds for discrimination covered in the UN human rights treaties, promoting the rights of minorities and other people in vulnerable positions, including persons with disabilities, paying particular attention to multiple discrimination
- emphasising strong local ownership and supporting 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
- reaching sustainable results in line with Finland's development policy priorities
- relying on the organisations' special expertise and ability to carry out projects effectively
- bringing about a wide range of positive changes, especially at community level
- engaging in multi-actor cooperation with different sectors, such as the private sector
- promoting development awareness and voluntary activities in Finland and in the partner countries

- creating natural connections and increasing interaction and cooperation between countries and various actors.

Conditions and criteria of project activities

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs grants project support through an open application round. The round is normally organised every two years. The projects must observe the [human rights-based approach](#) and be at minimum human rights sensitive. 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 (including Ethical Code of Conduct). The relationship between recipients of discretionary government grants and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs is governed by public law, and the recipient is fully responsible for the use of the allocated grant also to the extent that it is used in the partner country. There must be one primary applicant for multi-actor cooperation. The Ministry may set thematic, regional or other priorities for the application rounds in accordance with the objectives of development policy.

All Finnish recipients of support must have a local partner, and they must jointly agree about 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 organisations of groups in a vulnerable position. 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 this case, the activities should aim both at strengthening the role of duty-bearers and at creating a wider impact.

Project support refers to discretionary fixed-term special grants allocated 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.

Project support can be allocated at discretion to projects carried out in all ODA-eligible countries, listed by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC). However, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs encourages CSOs to carry out programmes funded by the Ministry especially in the least developed countries (LDCs) and in fragile states. Organisations 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. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs expects that the CSOs' development cooperation in partner countries has a clear relationship to Finland's other development cooperation (including with country programmes and private sector support). CSOs are also encouraged to communicate extensively in both partner countries and Finland about their development cooperation and development challenges to which they wish to respond through their work.