

## Instrument description for programme-based support

**Programme-based support for Finnish civil society organisations (CSOs) contributes to achieving Finland's foreign and security policy objectives. Finland's development cooperation promotes the attainment of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the pledge to leave no one behind (LNOB), a guiding principle of the 2030 Agenda. As part of Finland's development cooperation, programme-based support strengthens the foundations for sustainable societal development, including functioning democracy, the rule of law, human rights and a vibrant civil society. Through programme-based support, Finnish CSOs strengthen active and diverse civil societies in developing countries and their operating conditions over the long term. Programme-based support places emphasis on promoting the rights of women and girls and people in a particularly vulnerable position in a systematic and multifaceted way. For programmes 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. Under certain conditions, programme-based support may also be granted for CSOs' humanitarian work.**

Programme-based support is discretionary government grant under the Act on Discretionary Government Grants for Finnish CSOs' multiannual development cooperation and humanitarian programmes. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs awards programme-based support through open calls for proposals held every four years. All activities must meet the criteria for Official Development Assistance (ODA) as defined by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC). At the Ministry's discretion, programme-based support can be awarded to all countries listed as ODA recipients by the OECD DAC or for other ODA-eligible activities. When using a government grant, the CSO commits to complying with Finnish legislation applicable to the implementation of development cooperation and the conditions governing the use of the awarded discretionary government grant. 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 awarded grant, including its use in the target country.

The methods and special expertise of the CSOs operating under programme-based support enhance the impact and effectiveness of development cooperation and humanitarian assistance. Programme-based support is targeted at civil society actors capable of advancing development policy goals through their own strategies. The activities must have clearly defined results targets and a long-term development impact. Programmes are implemented in broad collaboration with partner networks across multiple countries, emphasising strong local ownership. CSOs whose operations rely on programme-based support must possess solid knowledge of results-based management, monitoring and evaluation of the results and impacts, and risk management. Transparency and accountability are key principles of operation. In development cooperation, programmes must adhere to a human rights-based approach.

CSOs receiving programme-based support are encouraged to engage in partnerships with businesses, multistakeholder cooperation and collaboration with Finnish embassies. At the country level, CSOs should consider other activities supported by Finland's development cooperation funding. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs encourages CSOs to implement programmes financed by the Ministry particularly in the least developed countries (LDCs) and fragile contexts to the extent that the programmes can provide specific added value.

## Humanitarian aid

From 2026 onwards, programme-based support can also be awarded for response activities to humanitarian emergencies by Finnish CSOs that have a partnership status with the European Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO). Humanitarian emergencies include crises caused by armed conflict, natural disasters, other disasters or climate change, defined as such by the UN system, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, or the government of the recipient country. The purpose of humanitarian assistance is to save human lives and relieve suffering in an emergency. Whenever possible, humanitarian assistance also supports the early recovery of communities, including protecting the environment and livelihoods and promoting their early recovery. In humanitarian assistance, Finland emphasises helping the most vulnerable and pays special attention to disability inclusion. Humanitarian assistance follows a needs-based approach.

The four-year programme-based support allows CSOs involved in humanitarian work to respond more flexibly to the most urgent humanitarian needs in a specific country within their area of expertise. CSOs can better use their expertise to seek more sustainable solutions, even in prolonged crises.

## Nexus activities

In protracted crises, Finland promotes cooperation, consistency and complementarity between peace mediation, development cooperation and humanitarian assistance. CSOs' programmes may also support various nexus activities, which interlink the prevention of crises, development cooperation, peace process and humanitarian assistance to ensure effectiveness. The nexus approach recognises that development does not always follow a linear trajectory, and humanitarian needs, development cooperation conditions and the necessity of peace mediation may coexist in the same situation simultaneously. Organisations without the ECHO status and thus ineligible for funding for humanitarian assistance may also include nexus activities in their programmes.

Programme-based support can also be used to promote climate change mitigation, adaptation and the prevention of biodiversity loss. The damage caused by conflicts and natural disasters significantly slows down development. Programme-based support can be used for risk anticipation and prevention, mitigation, and the strengthening of resilience.