

INSTRUMENT DESCRIPTION: PROGRAMME-BASED SUPPORT

A strong, diverse and independent civil society lays a foundation for sustainable development, democracy and human rights. Programme-based support for Finnish civil society organisations promotes the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the pledge to leave no one behind, grounded in the 2030 Agenda. The activities are also guided by the objectives of the Paris Agreement on climate change. Programme-based support plays a valuable role in the implementation of Finland's development policy and the Guidelines for Civil Society in Development Policy.

Programme-based support granted for Finnish civil society organisations (CSOs) is one of the ways through which Finland implements development policy in order to eradicate extreme poverty, reduce poverty and inequality, and promote human rights. Strengthening civil societies is both a development policy objective and a way to advance other goals of Finland's development policy. Finnish CSOs and their global networks use programme-based support to strengthen civic space and operational environment for civil societies and to improve civil society actors' capacity. This supports Finland's foreign and security policy, which is based on human rights, the rule of law, democracy, peace, freedom, tolerance and equality. Programme-based support is allocated to civil society actors which are capable of pursuing common goals through their own visions and strategies.

The working methods and special expertise of the CSOs that receive programme-based support enhance the impact and effectiveness of development cooperation. Organisations must have the capacity to monitor and assess their own activities and to report on the results reached through their development cooperation. Other elements on which emphasis is placed in programme-based support include strengthening societies' resilience, implementing human rights and, in particular, promoting the rights of women and girls in various ways. CSOs' programmes can also support various nexus activities, where development cooperation, peace work, and humanitarian assistance are seamlessly and often simultaneously interlinked to ensure effectiveness. At the same time, organisations have through their programme work and also through their advocacy, communications and global education work an opportunity to contribute to the promotion of burden-sharing, openness and justice in Finland and globally.

Programme-based support is discretionary government funding laid down in the Act on Discretionary Government Transfers and allocated to Finnish CSOs' multiannual comprehensive programmes, which have clearly defined performance targets and a long-term development impact. The activities are carried out with partner networks on a broad basis in several countries and a strong local ownership is emphasised. Operating with programme-based support requires solid knowledge of results-based management, monitoring and evaluation of results and impact, and risk management. Transparency and accountability are important principles in the work.

The supported programmes must promote at least one of the priorities of Finland's development policy. The programmes must comply with the human rights-based approach and reach at least the target level of being human rights sensitive. All activities must promote the Foreign Ministry's cross-cutting objectives, which are gender equality, non-discrimination – with particular attention to the inclusion of persons with disabilities – and climate resilience and development of low-carbon solutions. CSOs with programme-based support are encouraged to engage in cooperation with Finnish Embassies and to pay attention to other activities that are funded by Finland's development cooperation appropriations. In Finland's long-term partner countries, CSOs must take into account the relation between their programme and Finland's Country Strategies.

As a rule, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs opens a call for proposals for programme-based support every four years. CSOs that receive programme-based support are obligated to observe the provisions of valid Finnish legislation relevant in the implementation of development cooperation and the terms 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. The recipient is fully responsible for the use of the allocated grant also in respect of its use in the partner countries.

Programme-based support can be allocated at discretion to activities in all the countries receiving public development assistance that are listed by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) but, in accordance with the general objectives of development policy, 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 contexts. Furthermore, all activities must meet the Official Development Assistance criteria (ODA criteria), set by the OECD DAC.