

EVALUATION

VOLUME 2 • CASE STUDIES

Does the message get through?
Development communications amidst
global challenges and polarized discussion



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EVALUATION

DOES THE MESSAGE GET THROUGH? DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATIONS AMIDST GLOBAL CHALLENGES AND POLARIZED DISCUSSION

EVALUATION ON DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF MFA

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2023/4

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CSO CASE STUDY

VEERA PENSALA



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Acronyms and abbreviations

CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EQ	Evaluation Question
EUR	Euro
JC	Judgement Criterion
KEO-30	Unit for Civil Society
MFA	Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland
ToC	Theory of Change
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VIE-30	MFA Unit for Communications on Sustainable Development and Trade
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature



1 Summary of findings

EQ 1. To what extent has the ministry been able to contribute to the openness of government by increasing the public awareness and understanding about development policy and co-operation?

EQ 1.1. To what extent has MFA used development communications efforts strategically to promote Finland's objectives and inform the public about global development issues and related challenges and successes?

JC: Relevant target groups and appropriate communication channels for each of them have been defined.

- Finding 1. Many CSOs don't know who MFA's target groups of development communication are.
- Finding 2. Those CSOs who find MFA's target groups relevant, identify 'the professionals and converted ones' as the main target group of MFA's development communication.
- Finding 3. Majority of CSOs find the MFA's communication channels relevant, although CSOs doubted whether they reach other than 'the professionals and converted ones'.
- Finding 4. According to CSOs, MFA development communication is not very visible, and it reaches the audiences only if intentionally followed.

EQ 1.2. To what extent have the MFA's development communication efforts managed to reach the public?

JC: Development communication materials are fact-based, easy to understand and show the complexity of development co-operation.

- Finding 5. CSOs find MFA's development communication fact-based, easily understandable and focusing on important themes.
- Finding 6. CSOs call for more communication on results, Finland's role in the global world, challenges of development co-operation and global education.
- Finding 7. According to the majority of CSOs, MFA opens up the complexity of development co-operation in its communications enough, especially in the Kehitys-Utveckling magazine where articles dig deeper.
- Finding 8. The majority of CSOs find the contents of MFA development communication interesting, but argue that MFA could be bolder in its communication.



EQ 2. Is the development communication organised in an efficient way?

EQ 2.4. What can MFA learn from CSOs and peer countries in terms of organisation of development communications?

JC: CSOs and peer countries provide best practices on organising the development communications.

- Finding 9. Best Practice: Strategic communication needs a clear structure and plans that guide the work.
- Finding 10. Best Practice: Prioritising is crucial in strategic and effective communication. Prioritisation needs to come from the top of the organisation.
- Finding 11. Best Practice: Communication strategy needs to be discussed in the organisation so that everybody understands why and what is communicated. Communication needs to be included in all the plans and be part of everybody's work.
- Finding 12. More co-operation between MFA and CSOs could benefit all and have more effectiveness and impact.

EQ 3. What is the external coherence of MFA development communications?

EQ 3.1. To what extent has MFA utilised the materials of relevant CSOs, and other partners involved in the production of the contents and vice versa?

JC: Materials by CSOs and other actors have been used in MFA communication (result report, website) and vice versa.

- Finding 13. The majority of the CSOs use and share development communication materials produced by the MFA sometimes or seldom. They mostly share the materials in the social media or read and use materials in the MFA webpage.
- Finding 14. Half of the CSOs have been asked to provide materials for MFA, usually once or twice a year. Most commonly the materials have been examples of results, pictures, or articles.

EQ 3.2. To what extent do the development communications of MFA and other stakeholders such as CSOs complement each other?

JC: MFA development communication is co-ordinated and complementary with that of other actors funded by MFA.

JC: There are strategies / structures / networks used for partnering with external actors.

- Finding 15. Half of the CSOs co-operate with VIE-30. All CSOs who receive support for CSOs with UN background co-operate actively with VIE-30. They for example organise joint events and seminars and produce materials with and for VIE-30.



- Finding 16. Those CSOs who co-operate to a lesser extent for example participate in the bi-annual meeting organised by VIE-30, and send and share materials when asked.
- Finding 17. VIE-30 co-ordinates its development communications with CSOs through bi-annual meetings. With a few CSOs, MFA has made joint planning on communication.
- Finding 18. CSOs' main target groups of development communication are professionals, specified target groups among citizens, members and supporters, and decision-makers and authorities.
- Finding 19. CSOs' main communication channels are social media, organisations' own webpages, membership magazines and newsletters, events and mass media.
- Finding 20. Instagram, Facebook and Twitter are the social media channels most used by CSOs.
- Finding 21. Main themes and topics of CSOs' development communication cover the main goals of Finland's development co-operation, cross-cutting objectives and priority areas.
- Finding 22. Finnish CSOs used approximately EUR 7.5 million of MFA funding (including self-financing minimum of 15%) for development communication, global education and advocacy in Finland in 2021.



2 Introduction

2.1 Purpose of the CSO Case Study

The present case study of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) is one of two case studies conducted as part of the Evaluation on development communications in the context of Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA). The aim of the evaluation is to assess how effective the work of the MFA's development communication unit (VIE-30) is, and how efficiently the work is organised both internally in the ministry and externally with different partners. The two case studies inform the main evaluation questions and, hence, the main evaluation report.

In addition to MFA's development communications, Finnish CSOs actively communicate about development policy and development co-operation in Finland. The aim of the CSO case study is to look at more detail into the scope of CSO communications and get a comprehensive picture of the variety of CSOs' development communications in terms of target groups, channels, themes and main messages, and to show to what extent the development communications of MFA and CSOs complement each other. The case study also examines the co-operation and co-ordination of activities between CSOs and MFA to answer the question of the external coherence of MFA development communications. In addition, the case study gathers views on how CSOs see and consider the development communications of the MFA, being themselves an important target group who follows MFA's communication. Last, but not least, the case study collects best practices and lessons learnt in development communications from CSOs, to be shared with the MFA.

2.2 Main funding instruments for CSOs

The MFA has four main funding instruments managed by KEO-30 (unit for civil society), with the funding that the organisations can use to carry out communication and global education work in Finland:

Programme support. The MFA grants Finnish CSOs funding for development co-operation programmes every four years. The programmes must include communications in Finland. The implementation of global education is voluntary. CSOs need to communicate on the results and challenges of programme work, as well as on the operating environments and development challenges they try to address with their work. In the communications, organisations must take into account multi-channelling and also set themselves the goal of reaching new target groups. In the last funding round, a total of EUR 276 million was granted to 23 organisations for the years 2022-2025 (MFA, 2021a). Of this money, organisations spend an estimated maximum of 15% on communications and global education in Finland (approximately EUR 41 million).

Project support. The MFA grants Finnish CSOs funding for development co-operation projects every two years. The communication objective of the project support is to promote development awareness and volunteering in Finland. Organisations must communicate about their projects on



their own websites and in other possible communication channels. Communication costs may not exceed 5% of the total annual cost of the project. In the last application round, 21 organisations received a total of EUR 21 million in project support for 32 projects for 2023-2026 (MFA, 2021c).

Support for communication and global education. Communication and global education support is for funding projects that aim to increase Finns' awareness of development issues and to engage citizens in development co-operation. The aim is to promote the implementation of the Agenda 2030 and the promotion of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.7, which aims to ensure that everyone has the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development. The application round is organised every two years. In the application round for the two-year period 2021-2022, EUR 2.1 million was granted to 19 organisations (MFA, 2021b).

Support to Finnish CSOs with a UN background. The purpose of the funding is to support the core activities of UN related organisations¹ operating in Finland, as well as their communication and global education work. The aim is to communicate to Finns about the UN, its various organisations, and the rules-based international system. The application round is organised every two years. In the application round for 2021-2022, EUR 2 million was granted to six Finnish organisations (MFA, 2021d).

¹ The Finnish National Committee for UNICEF, The UN Association of Finland, UN Youth of Finland, UN Women Finland, the Family Federation of Finland, The Finnish Refugee Council.



3 Methodology

The CSO case study contributes to all three evaluation questions (EQs) (see Table 1):

1. *EQ 1. To what extent has the ministry been able to contribute to the openness of government by increasing the public awareness and understanding about development policy and co-operation?*
2. *EQ2. Is the development communication organised in an efficient way?*
3. *EQ3. What is the external coherence of MFA development communications?*

The data for the CSO case study was collected through an online survey, a workshop, key informant interviews and a desk study during October 2022 – February 2023.

Online survey (36 responses). An online survey was conducted by using the Webropol tool. The survey consisted of 10 questions, and it collected both quantitative and qualitative data, focusing on CSOs' complementarity of development communication to MFA's (see questions in Annex 2).

The CSO online survey was sent to 99 CSOs. 36 CSOs responded which makes the response rate 36%. The survey was sent to all organisations receiving support from 2015 onwards, but many of them are no longer running projects. If we look at the response rate of those who are currently receiving support from the MFA, the rates look quite different:

- CSOs who currently receive programme support and responded the survey: 61%²;
- CSOs who currently receive project support and responded the survey: 42%³;
- CSOs who receive support for communication and global education projects: 26%⁴.
On the other hand, those who responded are among the biggest actors of this support;
- CSOs that receive support for CSOs with UN background and responded the survey: 83%⁵.

Workshop (8 CSOs). A half-day workshop was organised for eight selected CSOs⁶. The workshop focused on the communication strategies, the organisation of communications, lessons learnt and best practices of development communications.

Key Informant interviews (8 CSOs). 10 persons from 8 CSOs were interviewed focusing on the relevance of MFA's development communication and external coherence (see the key informant interview template in Annex 3).

2 Of all CSOs who currently receive programme support

3 Of all CSOs who currently receive project support

4 Of all CSOs who currently receive support for communication and global education projects

5 Of all CSOs who currently receive support for CSOs with UN background

6 The selection was made on the basis of CSOs' visibility and quality of their communications and/or global education, target groups they reach, themes they cover and variety of channels they use.



Desk Study. Additional information was obtained from the CSO annual reports and from other relevant material (see the list of references in Annex 1).

Limitations. The CSOs' answers to the first evaluation question are the views and opinions of those working with development communications and communication professionals in the organisations. CSOs are an important actors for asking the relevance of target groups, channels and of contents of development communication, as they follow development communication as part of their work and are one of the target groups that the MFA wants to achieve with its development communication.

When analysing the responses, it is important to understand that the organisations' responses are the respondents' personal views on the matter and are not based on, for example, web analytics' knowledge of which themes have been communicated or who the communication has reached. At their best, these responses support and complement the information gathered from other sources and, on the other hand, provide valuable information on what the MFA development communication outwardly look like and how it is perceived among the CSOs.



Table 1 CSO Case Study Summary of Methodology

EVALUATION QUESTIONS ⁷	METHOD AND SAMPLE SIZE	SCHEDULE AND LOCATION	INTERVIEWEES / PARTICIPANTS	INFORMATION NEEDS
<p>EQ 1.1. To what extent has MFA used development communications efforts strategically to promote Finland's objectives and inform the public about global development issues and related challenges and successes?</p> <p>EQ 1.2. To what extent have the MFA's development communication efforts managed to reach the public?</p> <p>EQ 3.1. To what extent has MFA utilised the materials of relevant CSO and other partners involved in the production of the contents and vice versa?</p> <p>EQ 3.2. To what extent do the development communications of MFA and other stakeholders such as CSOs complement each other?</p>	<p>Online Survey (36 respondents)</p>	<p>2 last weeks of January: 16.-29.1.2023</p>	<p>The survey was sent to all CSOs and other organisations that have received support from the following applications rounds:</p> <p>Programme Support (2014-2017, 2018-2021, 2022-2025)</p> <p>Project Support (2015-2018, 2017-2020, 2019-2022, 2021-2024)</p> <p>Support for communication and global education (2016, 2017-2018, 2019-2020, 2021-2022)</p> <p>Support for CSOs with UN background (2015-2016, 2017-2018, 2019-2020, 2021-2022)</p>	<p>Relevance of MFA development communication in terms of relevant target groups, channels and themes, public discussion and reaching the public</p> <p>Use of MFA produced materials and vice versa</p> <p>Cooperation with MFA</p> <p>Main target groups, themes or topics, communication channels, main messages and objectives in development communication</p> <p>Changes in development communication at own organisation (e.g. in resources, contents, organisation, target groups, channels, objectives, themes and topics). Reasons for changes, effects and impact of changes</p>
<p>EQ 2.4. What can MFA learn from CSOs and peer countries in terms of organisation of development communications?</p>	<p>Workshop (8 CSOs)</p>	<p>10th of February 2023, 9-12 am at Fingo</p>	<p>Fingo Pro Ethical Trade Finland Plan International Finland Taksvärkki The Trade Union Solidarity Centre of Finland (SASK) The UN Association of Finland WWF Finland Maailma.net</p>	<p>Best practices of development communication in terms of planning (strategy, Theory of Change (ToC), objectives, work plans), organisation (including in-house vs. outsourcing), resources, know-how and skills, message and themes, channels, target groups, partnerships and co-operation, monitoring and evaluation, learning.</p>

⁷ Justification criteria is presented for each evaluation question in chapter three where evaluation questions are answered.



EVALUATION QUESTIONS ⁷	METHOD AND SAMPLE SIZE	SCHEDULE AND LOCATION	INTERVIEWEES / PARTICIPANTS	INFORMATION NEEDS
<p>EQ 1.1. To what extent has MFA used development communications efforts strategically to promote Finland's objectives and inform the public about global development issues and related challenges and successes?</p> <p>EQ 1.2. To what extent have the MFA's development communication efforts managed to reach the public?</p> <p>EQ 3.1. To what extent has MFA utilised the materials of relevant CSO and other partners involved in the production of the contents and vice versa?</p> <p>EQ 3.2. To what extent do the development communications of MFA and other stakeholders such as CSOs complement each other?</p>	<p>Key Informant Interviews (8 interviews, 10 persons)</p>	<p>October 2022-February 2023</p>	<p>The Finnish Foundation for Media and Development (VIKES) Plan International Finland Fingo The UN Association of Finland The Finnish National Committee for UNICEF WWF Finland UN Women Mailma.net</p>	<p>Relevance of MFA development communication in terms of relevant target groups, channels and themes, public discussion and reaching the public Use of MFA produced materials and vice versa Cooperation with MFA</p>
<p>EQ 3.2. To what extent do the development communications of MFA and other stakeholders such as CSOs complement each other?</p>	<p>Desk Study</p>	<p>January-February 2023</p>	<p>Programme Support (2018-2021)</p>	<p>Annual expenditures of development communication and global education in CSOs in 2021 Percentages of development communication and global education out of total expenditures of CSOs in 2021</p>

responses support and complement the information gathered from other sources and, on the other hand, provide valuable information on what the MFA development communication outwardly look like and how it is perceived among the CSOs.



4 Key findings

4.1 Effectiveness

EQ 1. To what extent has the ministry been able to contribute to the openness of government by increasing the public awareness and understanding about development policy and co-operation?

This first evaluation question EQ1 was not originally planned to be asked from CSOs in the online survey. However, it was added as CSOs are stakeholders who follow MFA's development communication and are familiar with the subject: development co-operation and policy. CSOs follow the communications as part of their work, but also from the valuable aspect of being professionals⁸ in communication themselves. Apart from CSOs, it is not easy to find a group of stakeholders who follow MFA channels to the extent of being able to form opinions for example of the relevance of the target groups or used channels.

Interviews with the key informants and discussions in CSO workshop complement the findings of the online survey and are also used as part of findings below.

***EQ 1.1.** To what extent has MFA used development communications efforts strategically to promote Finland's objectives and inform the public about global development issues and related challenges and successes?*

Judgement Criterion (JC): Relevant target groups and appropriate communication channels for each of them have been defined

***EQ 1.2.** To what extent have the MFA's development communication efforts managed to reach the public?*

JC: Development communication materials are fact-based, easy to understand and show the complexity of development co-operation

The findings for these evaluation sub-questions EQ 1.1 and EQ 1.2 are presented below in three sub-chapters: 1) Relevance of target groups, 2) Appropriateness of communication channels, and 3) Quality of communication materials in terms of whether they are fact-based, easy to understand and whether they show the complexity of development co-operation.

⁸ The online survey was sent to heads of communications and communication directors in the CSOs.



4.1.1 Relevance of target groups

Finding 1. Many CSOs don't know who MFA's target groups of development communication are.

One third of the respondents (36%) to the online survey agree or strongly agree on the relevance of the selected target groups (see Figure 1), although many were just guessing what the target groups might be. What is remarkable, however, is that more than half (56%) are not able to answer the question. This may indicate that MFA has not transparently presented the objectives and target groups of its development communication, or that MFA's communication does not clearly indicate the target groups.

Finding 2. Those CSOs who find MFA's target groups relevant, identify 'the professionals and converted ones' as the main target group of MFA's development communication.

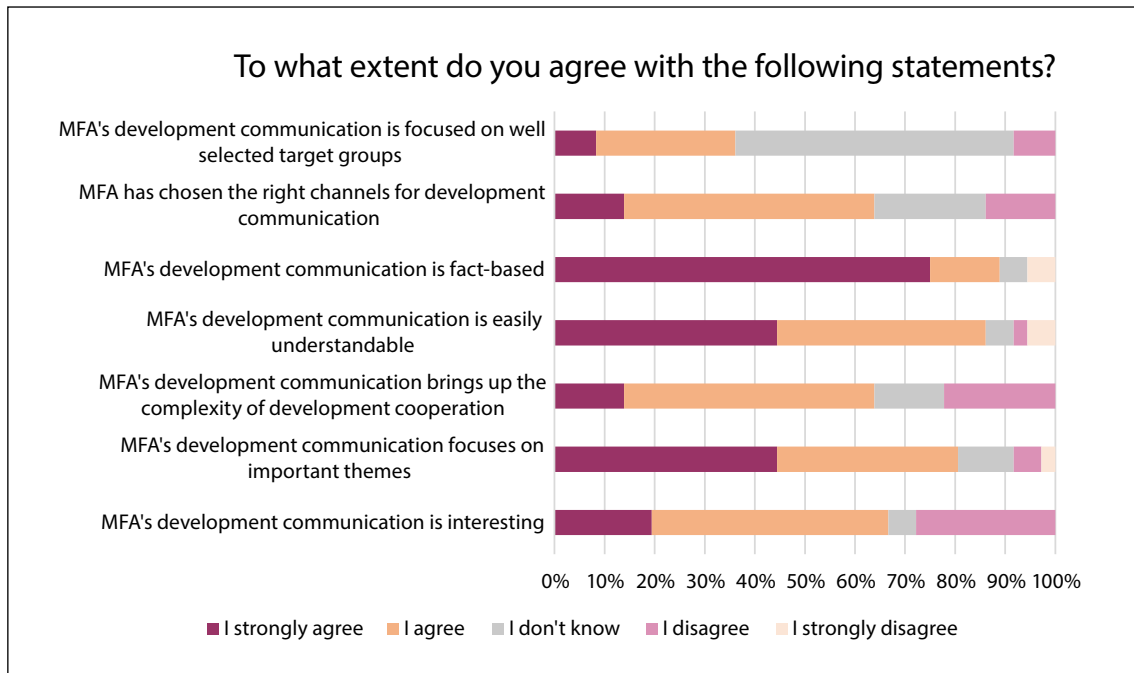
In the key informant interviews the question on target groups was also asked. Those CSOs who agree with the statement, identify the persons that are already interested⁹ in development issues as a main target group of MFA. They also assume that MFA reaches this group, being themselves in that same group. The respondents find this target group relevant and have identified the same group for their own development communications. At the same time, CSOs recognise the need to reach new target groups and other persons than 'the converted ones' but find it challenging. However, many added that it is not worth trying to reach out to critical groups.

Those CSOs that are not aware of the MFA's target groups assume that MFA probably targets the wide public but added that it is a target group difficult to reach. They also assumed that MFA is not reaching this group as MFA is not very visible in the Finnish media.

⁹ Persons who are already interested in development co-operation, global and international affairs. Also those who are neutral or have slightly positive interest in the issues.



Figure 1 CSOs' opinions on MFA's development communication



Source: CSO survey

4.1.2 Appropriateness of communication channels

Finding 3. Majority of CSOs find the MFA's communication channels relevant, although CSOs doubted whether they reach other than 'the professionals and converted ones'.

Two thirds of the respondents (64%) agree or strongly agree on the statement that MFA has chosen the right channels for its development communication while 14% disagreed with the statement (see Figure 1).

Kehitys-Utveckling magazine is praised of being professional, of high quality and a channel where it is possible to bring up the complexity of development co-operation. However, several respondents questioned whether the magazine reaches people well and suggested that it should be better marketed. MFA's webpages were also found a relevant channel where CSOs, for the most part, find the contents they look for. Some follow MFA in the social media but claim that MFA is not very visible there.

Finding 4. According to CSOs, MFA development communication is not very visible, and it reaches only if intentionally followed.

Even though the majority of respondents find MFA's channels appropriate, many brought up the opinion that these channels might not reach many people, mainly 'the converted ones', finding themselves in that group too. Common opinion seemed to be that MFA development communication is not very visible and it reaches you only if you intentionally follow it. To improve the communications between MFA and CSOs, several CSOs suggested a newsletter that would be targeted to them.



*“MFA’s development communication gets its message through well among professionals in co-operation and those interested in international issues. But they have the same challenge with us, CSOs; how to get the general public interested and even excited?”
(respondent in the online survey)*

4.1.3 Quality of communication materials

The question of quality is studied here through the statements on whether CSOs see MFA’s development communication fact-based, easily understandable, interesting, bringing up the complexity of development co-operation and focusing on important themes (see Figure 1).

Finding 5. CSOs find MFA’s development communication fact-based, easily understandable and focusing on important themes.

Almost all respondents (89%) find the MFA’s development communication fact-based and majority (86%) are of the opinion that the contents are easily understandable (agree or strongly agree). Four out of five (81%) find the communication focusing on important themes.

The respondents were also asked to specify what are the important themes or topics that the MFA should communicate. Answers are divided below into 5 categories; results and development paradigm, Finland’s role in the global world, topical themes, global challenges and global education (see Table 2).

Finding 6. CSOs call for more communication on results, Finland’s role in the global world, challenges of development co-operation and global education.

Those themes listed in the first three categories: results and development paradigm, Finland’s role in the global world and also many of the topical themes are same as what MFA has identified in their objectives to communicate about. Some respondents called for more critical communications where failures and challenges would also be discussed. These respondents felt that communication focuses too much on the positive results. Also, more communication on global education and knowledge and skills of active citizenship was wished.



Table 2 Themes and topics that CSOs find important for MFA to communicate about

RESULTS AND DEVELOPMENT PARADIGM	FINLAND'S ROLE IN THE GLOBAL WORLD	TOPICAL THEMES	GLOBAL CHALLENGES	GLOBAL EDUCATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What has been done and achieved with funding, concrete examples • What has been achieved with programme support • Effectiveness of development co-operation • Finland's development policy's priority areas and achievements in these • How the development co-operation supports and strengthens the local actors, activists, organisations and authorities in target countries • How the modern development co-operation does not maintain old hierarchical and colonial structures • Voices from the Global South 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What Finland does for peace and stability in the global world and how it benefits Finland • Linking development co-operation to topical phenomena, e.g. war in Ukraine • Linkages to security policy, trade and taxes • Development co-operation's meaning to global security, sustainable development and realisation of human rights • Meaning of UN and multilateral co-operation • Global inter-dependencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate change and biodiversity • Human rights and human rights-based management • Children • Persons with disabilities • Poverty • Equality • Discrimination • Migration • Sustainable economy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colonialism and post-colonialism • Deconstructing stereotypes, updating images • White saviour thinking • Critics and alternatives to development co-operation • Corruption • Power relations • Aid dependence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of education and life-long learning in development co-operation • Sustainable development goals • Antiracism

Source: CSO Survey

Finding 7. According to majority of CSOs, MFA opens up the complexity of development co-operation in its communications enough, especially in Kehitys-Utveckling magazine where articles dig deeper.

Two thirds of the respondents (64%) agree or strongly agree that MFA opens up the complexity of development co-operation in its communications. Several pointed out that in the social media it is more difficult, but the Kehitys-Utveckling magazine was brought up as a channel where articles dig deeper, and stories are told in their contexts.



Finding 8. Majority of CSOs find the contents of MFA development communication interesting, but argue that MFA could be bolder in its communication.

Two thirds of the respondents (67%) find the contents of MFA development communication interesting. However, many respondents commented on the style and way in which the MFA communicates and pointed out that with bolder communication, MFA could reach new target groups and gain more visibility, i.e., reach people better in general:

“The MFA’s communication is toothless, subdued, kind, cautious, not opinionated. So boring. It is understandable on the other hand, as it is a Ministry” (respondent in the on-line survey)

“In my opinion, official communication does not have to be boring! It does not conflict with credible communication. The thing is, it is not worth communicating if it does not reach its target groups.” (interviewee in a key informant interview)

“If the goal is that the contents also find new audiences and, above all, make the general public interested in these themes, then utilising new channels and taking a bolder stand on content can be one of the ways to reach different target audiences. “Good news for a change”- campaign was, in my opinion, very fresh and successful - more of that!”

Several respondents also suggested that MFA could use more personal stories to evoke emotions, pictures and concrete examples in their development communications.

4.2 Efficiency and internal coherence

EQ 2. Is the development communication organised in an efficient way?

EQ 2.4. *What can MFA learn from CSOs and peer countries in terms of organisation of development communications?*

JC: CSOs and peer countries provide best practices on organising the development communications

Addressed in this case study are the best practices from the CSOs; see the peer reviews and main evaluation report for the best practices from the peer countries.

Findings for this evaluation sub-question for the large part was gathered in CSO workshop where it was discussed what works in CSOs’ development communication. Some additional information was also gained through the online survey and in the key informant interviews. The findings for the evaluation sub-question EQ 2.4 are presented below under ten points. The assessment of their suitability to the MFA is discussed in the main evaluation report.



4.2.1 Best practices from CSOs on organising the development communication

Finding 9. Strategic communication needs a clear structure and plans that guide the work.

Everything starts in the strategy. All CSOs in the workshop pointed out the importance of the good communication strategy where objectives, target groups, channels, key messages and themes are defined. A good communication strategy guides and directs the work and prevents from 'communicating of everything all the time'. In the strategy, the resources are also defined as the amount of work must be balanced with the number of employees. This also means defining what is done and what is not done.

Strategic communication needs a clear structure. In the workshop, Plan International Finland presented their communication structure that consists of several layers of strategies and plans. To begin with, the communication strategy is derived from the organisation's strategy and theory of change. Communication strategy defines the main themes, key goals and functions for the period of the strategy, as well as the role of communications in achieving the strategic goals of the organisation. The practical tool of implementing the communications strategy is the content strategy, which is made jointly with other staff, and it is the communication unit that leads the work. The content strategy consists of the target groups analyses, key messages and an action plan which is updated regularly. In addition, the tone of voice and a regularly updated channel strategy are needed. In the annual planning cycle, prioritisation and resources are defined and described. There are several regular meetings to implement the annual plan: a joint annual planning session, thematic quartal plans, monthly check-ups, as well as weekly checks and daily reactive communications. The results and impact are monitored and evaluated continuously. The plans and actions are updated according to the data. The advantage of the strategic communications is that the impact of all actions is consistent and therefore stronger, the communication staff is able to plan ahead and prioritise their own workplan, and the content remains relevant to the audience and stakeholders. Since the planning is done jointly, it engages the whole organisation, and the understanding of strategic communication is increased among the staff.

Finding 10. Prioritising is crucial in strategic and effective communication. Prioritisation needs to come from the top of the organisation.

Prioritisation is crucial in communication. The common challenge in organisations is that everybody finds their own work important to communicate. Communication officials work in constant pressure to fulfil the expectations of all units and staffs of the organisation. According to CSOs in the workshop, 'communicate about everything' is not effective nor wise. Prioritisation has to be done and it means something has to be left out. It is hard and painful, but necessary. Those organisations, for example Plan International Finland and Fingo who have prioritised their communication, have found their communication to become more effective. Less is more, they say.

Prioritisation needs to come from the top of the organisation and leadership is needed to direct communication. There has to be clear authority, mandate and vision in the communication unit to decide what to communicate and what to be left out. It is the head of communications who should have and use this responsibility.



Finding 11. Communication strategy needs to be discussed in the organisation so that everybody understands why and what is communicated. Communication needs to be included in all the plans and be part of everybody's work.

Common understanding on strategy is needed. The strategy and decisions on what is communicated needs to be discussed among the staff in the organisation. When everybody understands why and what is communicated, it creates the trust that communication unit is doing the right things. 'I wait now, my turn in communication will come'. Otherwise, the expectations and the work will not meet.

Communication is included in all plans. When there is a clear structure for communication and it is included in the plans of all units, the communication will not be 'forgotten'. The staff remembers to tell and contact communication officials in time. The annual plan makes it also visible how the different activities need and feed to communication.

Everybody needs to have communication skills. Communication is nowadays not only the work or responsibility of the communication unit and officials, but everybody needs to take part in it. The co-operation and co-ordination of work between substance experts and communication officials is important, and everybody needs training and skills in communication. It is important that the staff is able to communicate also themselves about the work they do.

Finding 12. More co-operation between MFA and CSOs could benefit all, and have more effectiveness and impact.

Joint planning and aligning plans could benefit all. MFA organises regular meetings with CSOs where the MFA present its development communication plans. CSOs find the meetings important, but call for more participative approach in the meetings; maybe some kind of joint planning could take place in the sessions. CSOs also suggest to have few (1-2) set themes that all CSOs could communicate about during the year, from their own work and perspectives.

Enough time is needed for co-operation between the MFA and CSOs. CSOs are willing to co-operate more with the MFA and to share the MFA's communication contents – if they are contacted in time and have enough time to adjust the messages for their own audiences. In the past in the campaigns, MFA has contacted CSOs so late that there has not been enough time to align the messages with their organisations' communications. CSOs have their own communication strategies, plans, target groups and channels, and are not willing to suddenly post contents that does not fit in their plans.

CSOs have expertise and material that the MFA could benefit from. CSOs would be willing to co-operate more with the MFA, for example in campaigns. CSOs have both substance and communication expertise that MFA could benefit from. In the past, the co-operation has been such where the MFA asks CSOs to share their contents in the social media. CSOs wish that they could take part in the planning phase already. This could be realised for example through Fingo. CSOs also produce lot of material on development policy and co-operation that MFA could better benefit from. To sum up, joint communications could be more effective and have bigger impact than all separate communication activities that usually take place.



4.3 Coherence (external)

EQ 3. What is the external coherence of MFA development communications?

EQ 3.1. *To what extent has MFA utilised the materials of relevant CSO and other partners involved in the production of the contents and vice versa?*

JC: Materials by CSOs and other actors have been used in MFA communication (result report, website) and vice versa.

EQ 3.2. *To what extent do the development communications of MFA and other stakeholders such as CSOs complement each other?*

JC: MFA development communication is coordinated and complementary with that of other actors funded by MFA.

JC: There are strategies / structures / networks used for partnering with external actors.

Addressed in this case study is coherence and complementarity with the CSOs; see the main evaluation report for coherence and complementarity with other partners. Also, the utilization of the CSOs' and other stakeholders' materials by the MFA is addressed in the main evaluation report.

Findings for these evaluation sub-questions 3.1 and 3.2 are discussed below in four sub-chapters from the point of the CSOs: 1) whether CSOs have used or shared MFA's materials and whether they have been asked materials for MFA's use, 2) Cooperation between VIE-30 and CSOs, 3) Coordination of the activities from the aspect of existing structures, strategies or networks for co-operation, and 4) Complementarity of CSO development communication to that of MFA in terms of target groups, themes and topics and communication channels of development communication. Annual expenditure in 2021 of development communication, global education and advocacy was studied from CSOs who receive programme support, to show the complementarity of communication in euros to that of MFA's.

4.3.1 Use of materials

Finding 13. Majority of the CSOs use and share development communication materials produced by the MFA sometimes or seldom. They mostly share the materials in the social media or read and use materials in the MFA webpage.

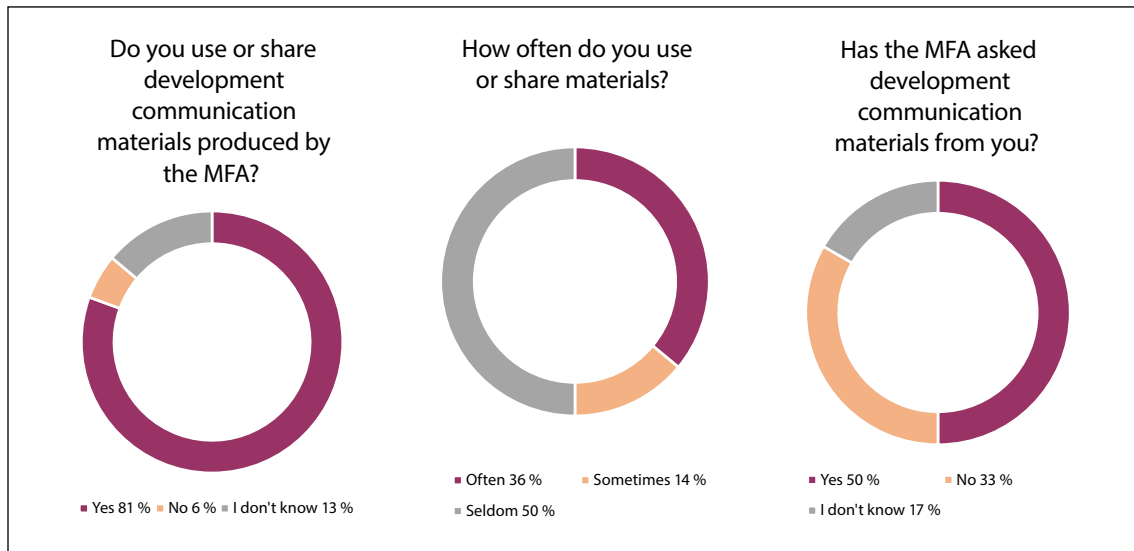
Four out of five respondents use or share development communication materials produced by the MFA. Third of those who use and share, do it actively. Two thirds use and share materials only sometimes or seldom, meaning few times a year (see Figure 2).

Most common ways of using and sharing materials were the following:

- Sharing result reports and other campaigns' materials in social media;
- Reading Kehitys-Utveckling magazine and sharing its articles in social media;
- Reading news, articles and press releases in MFA webpages;
- Using result and other reports in web pages as information sources.



Figure 2 Asking, using and sharing materials from CSOs (prevalence and activity)



Source: CSO survey

Finding 14. Half of the CSOs have been asked to provide materials for MFA, usually once or twice a year. Most commonly the materials have been examples of results, pictures or articles.

CSOs were also asked whether they are invited by the MFA to provide development communication materials (see Figure 2). Half of the respondents have been asked the following kinds of materials, usually once or twice a year:

- Examples of results;
- Videos and pictures;
- Articles or stories, blogs.

4.3.2 Cooperation between VIE-30 and CSOs

Finding 15. Half of the CSOs cooperate with VIE-30. All CSOs who receive support for CSOs with UN background cooperate actively with VIE-30. They for example organise joint events and seminars and produce materials with and for VIE-30.

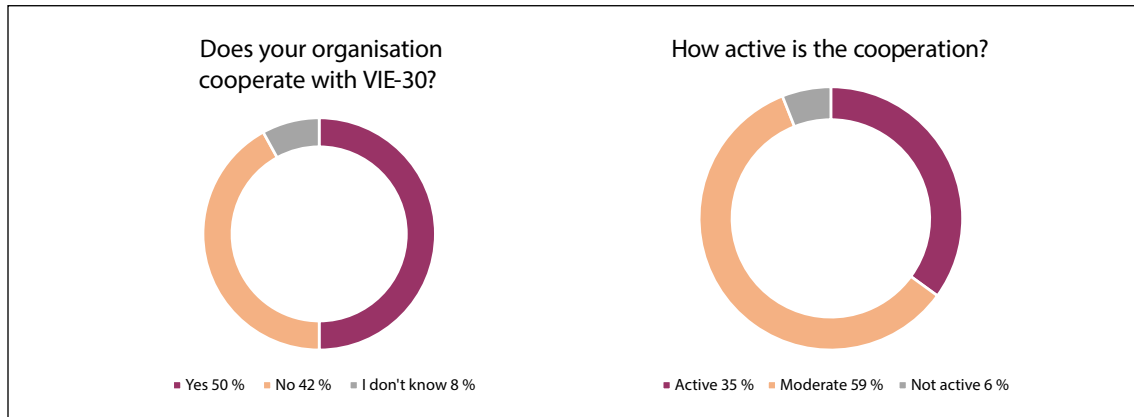
The online survey enquired whether CSOs cooperate with VIE-30. Half of the respondents cooperate. Those CSOs who receive programme support (and responded online survey), 86% them cooperate with VIE-30 (see Figure 3). Third of the respondents cooperate actively with VIE-30, more than half moderately, and small amount not actively. 25% of CSOs who receive programme support cooperate actively with VIE-30, 67% moderately. 100% of CSOs who receive support for CSOs with UN background cooperate actively with VIE-30.

Those who cooperate actively, do it by:

- Having joint plans with VIE-30 for development communication
- Organizing joint events and seminars

- Producing materials and contents with and for VIE-30
- Communicating actively communication through emails and phone calls

Figure 3 Prevalence and activity of cooperation with VIE-30



Source: CSO survey

Finding 16. Those CSOs who cooperate to lesser extent for example participate in the bi-annual meeting organised by VIE-30 and send and share materials when asked.

For those who cooperate moderately, the cooperation consisted of:

- Participation in annual meetings and morning coffee events organised by VIE-30;
- Sending information when asked, including contents for results reports;
- Sharing materials of the campaigns that VIE-30 has organised.

4.3.5 Coordination of development communication

Coordination of development communication activities, i.e. whether VIE-30 coordinates its development communications with the actors that are funded by MFA, was studied by enquiring CSOs (in addition to MFA) whether there are existing structures, strategies or networks for cooperation with them.

Finding 17. VIE-30 coordinates its development communications with CSOs through bi-annual meetings. With a few CSOs, MFA has made joint planning on communication.

VIE-30 organises regular bi-annual meetings with CSOs where the staff present the VIE-30 communication plans. Vice versa, in theory also CSOs have their chance to present theirs in the meeting. In addition, few organisations¹⁰ have made joint development communication plans with VIE-30 and, with some more organisations VIE-30 cooperates actively on development communication. These activities indicate coordination of development communication between VIE-30 and CSOs to little extent. However, apart from the annual meetings with CSOs, there are no other structures where all CSOs could be involved.

¹⁰ For example, The Finnish National Committee for UNICEF and The Finnish Foundation for Media and Development (VIKES).



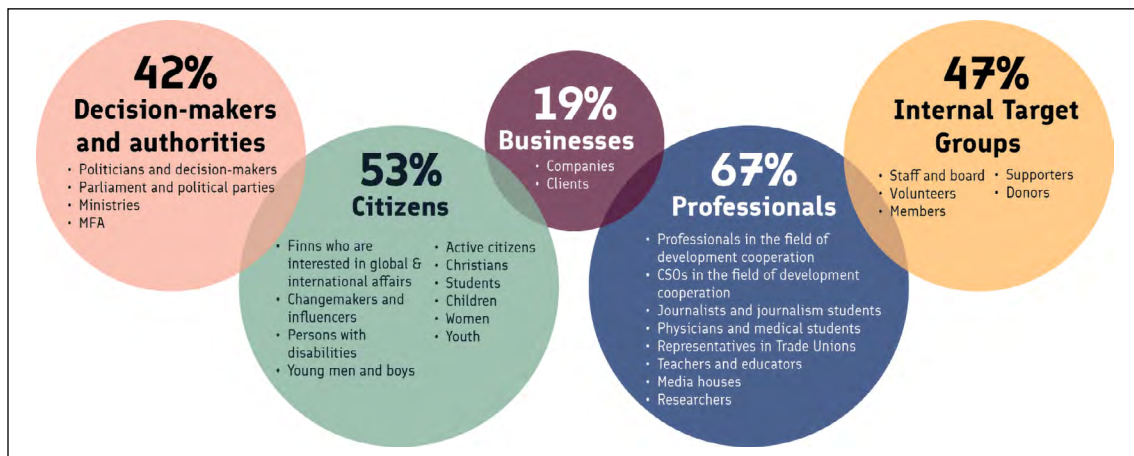
4.3.4 Complementarity of CSOs' development communication

In the online survey, CSOs were asked to list up to five of the main target groups, channels, themes and topics of their development communication.

Finding 18. CSOs' main target groups of development communication are professionals, specified target groups among citizens, members and supporters, and decision-makers and authorities.

Target groups. Majority of the respondents listed several target groups for their development communication. Responses were divided into five categories (see Figure 4). Two thirds of the CSOs target their communication to professionals close to their own fields of expertise and e.g. CSOs working in the field of development cooperation. Half of the respondents target their communication to own internal groups, to specified target groups among the citizens, and almost half to decision-makers and authorities. Every fifth target their communication to businesses. In addition to above mentioned target groups, half of the respondents (53%) listed 'wide public' as one of their main target groups. However, it wasn't anyone's only target group, but often the last to be listed.

Figure 4 Target groups of CSOs' development cooperation



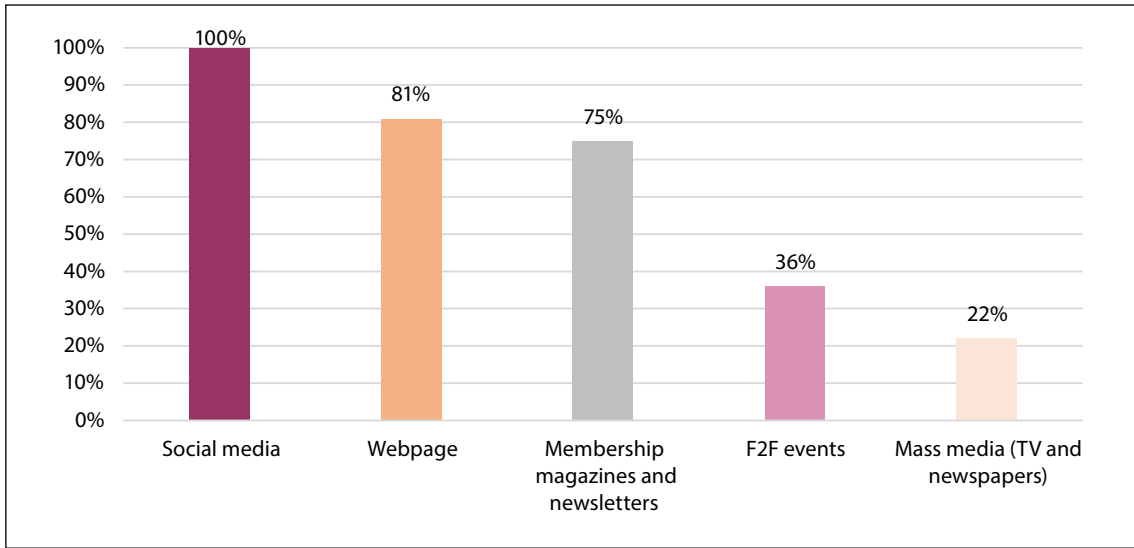
Source: CSO survey

Finding 19. CSOs' main communication channels are social media, organisation's own webpage, memberships magazines and newsletters, events and mass media.

Communication channels. Majority of the respondents listed several communication channels for development communication (see Figure 5). All use social media, four out of five organization's own webpage and three out of four membership magazines and newsletters. Third of the respondents identified events such as seminars, webinars, trainings, school visits and meetings as a communication channel. Fifth of the respondents communicate also through mass media: newspapers, magazines and television (TV). The most important communication channel is social media (for 56% of the respondents) and the second most important is the organization's own webpage (for 31%).



Figure 5 Communication channels of CSOs

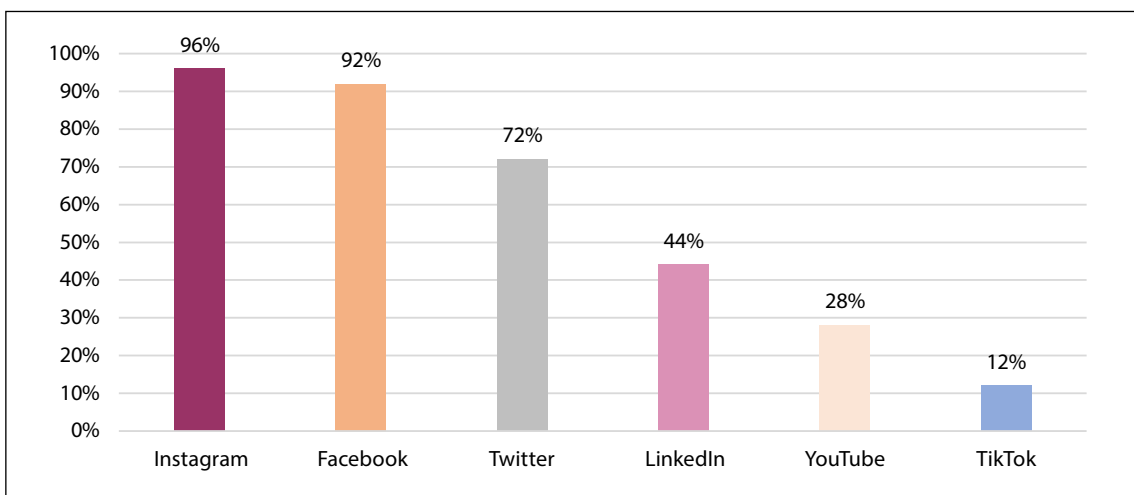


Source: CSO survey

Finding 20. Instagram, Facebook and Twitter are the social media channels most used by CSOs.

A great part of the CSOs (70%) specified the social media channels they use (see Figure 6). Almost all are in Instagram, and nine out of ten in Facebook. More than two thirds use Twitter, almost half are in LinkedIn, and more than one out of four in YouTube. The use of TikTok as communication channel is rarer, as only 12% of CSOs use it. In discussions in CSO workshop, several CSOs are planning to go to TikTok in the near future.

Figure 6 Channels in social media



Source: CSO survey



Finding 21. Main themes and topics of CSOs’ development communication cover the main goals of Finland’s development cooperation, cross-cutting objectives and priority areas.

Themes and topics. Similar to target groups and communication channels, online survey asked CSOs to list up five most important themes or topics of their development communication (see Figure 7). The themes cover a wide range of topics from CSOs’ own programme and project work to variety of global issues. What is worth noticing, the topics cover the main goals of Finland’s development cooperation (poverty, human rights, Agenda 2030), cross-cutting objectives (gender equality, non-discrimination, climate and biodiversity) and priority areas (education, sustainable economy and decent work including innovations and entrepreneurship, peace and democracy including taxation and rule of law, climate change including food security and water).

Figure 7 Themes and topics of development communication of CSOs

Active citizenship	Fair global trade	Poverty
Agenda 2030	Food Security	Programme work
Antiracism	Freedom of press	Project work
Biodiversity	Freedom of speech	Responsible consumption
Climate change	Funding	Results
Conflict resolution skills	Global justice	Rule of law
Corporate responsibility	Health	Security
Critical thinking	Human rights (Women, children, persons with disabilities)	Sexual and reproductive health and rights
Decent livelihood	Inclusive education	Sexual education
Deconstructing stereotypes	Innovations	Sustainable development
Democracy	Media education	Sustainable economy
Education	Media skills	Sustainable production and value chains
Employability	Nature	United Nations
Entrepreneurship	Non-discrimination	UN-CRPD
Equality	Peace building	Water and sanitation
Equity		Youth agency

Source: CSO survey

Finding 22. Finnish CSOs used approximately EUR 7,5 million of MFA funding (including self-financing minimum of 15%) to development communication, global education and advocacy in Finland in 2021.

Annual expenditures on development communication. Annual expenditures of development communication, global education and advocacy in 2021 were calculated from CSOs who receive programme support¹¹. These CSOs used EUR 3,4 million for development communication, including both communication on their programme work and communication on more general development issues. The percentages of communication costs of total expenditures varied from 0,5% (Finnish Red Cross) to 23% (Fingo). For global education and advocacy CSOs used EUR 2,1 million. Total expenditure of development communication, global education and advocacy of CSOs was EUR 5,5 million. The percentages varied from 2% (Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (FELM) and Finnish Red Cross) to 43% (Fingo), although more than half used less than 5% of their total funds for these activities.

¹¹ Expenditure of KIOS Foundation is not included as the report was not available for the evaluation.



The CSOs receiving programme support represent the largest group of organisations that receive funding from the MFA. If the annual support of the organisations who receive the support for communication and global education and support to Finnish CSOs with a UN background (average EUR 1 million / instrument), is added to the EUR 5.5 million of the CSOs receiving programme support, it can be calculated that the total amount that the CSOs spent MFA funding for development communication, global education and advocacy work in 2021 was approximately EUR 7,5 million¹² for Finnish CSOs.

Table 3 Annual expenditures of development communication, global education and advocacy of selected CSOs (2021)

#	NAME OF CSO	ANNUAL EXPENDITURE IN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATIONS IN 2021 IN EUR (% OF TOTAL COSTS)	ANNUAL EXPENDITURE IN GLOBAL EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY IN 2021 IN EUR (% OF TOTAL COSTS)	TOTAL ANNUAL EXPENDITURE IN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATIONS, GLOBAL EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY IN EUR (% OF TOTAL COSTS)
1	Abilis Foundation	86,542 (4%)	84,897 (4%)	171,439 (7%)
2	CMI – Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation	174,846 (5%)	–	174,846 (5%)
3	Disability Partnership Finland	59,016 (3%)	(Included in communications)	59,016 (3%)
4	Fairtrade Finland	38,885 (2%)	63,211 (3%)	102,096 (4%)
5	Fida International ry	124,309 (2%)	134,433 (2%)	252,742 (4%)
6	Fingo	921,810 (23%)	775,761 (20%)	1,697,571 (43%)
7	Finn Church Aid	445,285 (4%)	(Included in communications)	445,285 (4%)
8	Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission FELM	101,970 (2%)	4,368 (–)	108,338 (2%)
9	Finnish Red Cross	38,062 (0,5%)	137,668 (2%)	175,730 (2%)
10	The Finnish Refugee Council	60,720 (2%)	6,219 (0,2%)	65,557 (2%)
11	International Solidarity Foundation	279,151* (11%)	–	279,151 (11%)

¹² This sum includes the self-financing of the organisations (minimum of 7.5%)



#	NAME OF CSO	ANNUAL EXPENDITURE IN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATIONS IN 2021 IN EUR (% OF TOTAL COSTS)	ANNUAL EXPENDITURE IN GLOBAL EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY IN 2021 IN EUR (% OF TOTAL COSTS)	TOTAL ANNUAL EXPENDITURE IN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATIONS, GLOBAL EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY IN EUR (% OF TOTAL COSTS)
12	Plan International Finland	312,693 (4%)	450,128 (6%)	762,821 (10%)
13	Save the Children	82,657 (2%)	69,572 (1%)	160,455 (3%)
14	Siemenpuu Foundation	36,863 (4%)	–	36,863 (4%)
15	Taksvärkki	126,392 (14%)	105,206 (12%)	231,598 (27%)
16	The Trade Union Solidarity Centre of Finland SASK	131,851 (3%)	264,465 (5%)	396,316 (8%)
17	World Vision Finland	285,604 (7%)	(Included in communications)	285,604 (7%)
18	WWF Finland	79,205 (3%)	(Included in communications)	79,205 (3%)
	TOTAL	3,385,861	2,095,928	5,481,789

Source: Organisations' Annual Financial Reports 2021



5 Implications for the main report

EQ 1. To what extent has the ministry been able to contribute to the openness of government by increasing the public awareness and understanding about development policy and cooperation?

EQ 1.1. To what extent has MFA used development communications efforts strategically to promote Finland's objectives and inform the public about global development issues and related challenges and successes?

EQ 1.2. To what extent have the MFA's development communication efforts managed to reach the public?

Implications of the findings of the case study for EQ1 are limited. The findings base mostly on CSOs' perceptions and assumptions and cannot be treated as facts. At their best, they can support and complement the data gathered from the primary sources in the evaluation.

Finding for the main report:

Even if the MFA has made information available through a variety of channels, they usually reach people who are already interested in the topics. Majority of CSOs find the MFA's communication channels relevant, although they doubt whether MFA reaches any other people than 'the professionals and converted ones'. CSOs find MFA's development communication fact-based, easily understandable and focusing on important themes. According to majority of CSOs, MFA opens up the complexity of development cooperation in its communications enough, especially in Kehitys-Utveckling Magazine where articles dig deeper. However, most CSOs find that the MFA development communication is not very visible in Finnish media.

EQ 2. Is the development communication organised in an efficient way?

EQ 2.4 What can MFA learn from CSOs and peer countries in terms of organisation of development communications?

CSOs shared their best practices on the organisation of development communication. Professional CSOs pointed out that they are facing the same challenges as the MFA in the communication where the communication officials feel constant pressure to fulfil the expectations of all staff in the organisation. CSOs described their solutions and how they have planned the communication jointly in their organisations so that it makes the communication more effective and strategic. The evaluation found these practices useful and something that the MFA could learn from:

**Finding for the main report:**

Professional CSOs have robust strategic planning including communications strategy, annual and action plans, and comprehensive training of all staff. Strategies are discussed with the whole staff, communication planning is participatory, and communication is embedded in all plans. There is clear division of responsibilities in the organisations.

In the professional CSOs, strategic communication has a clear structure and plans that guide the work. Also, the communication strategy needs to be discussed in the organisation so that everybody understands why and what is communicated. CSOs pointed out how prioritizing is crucial in strategic and effective communication and how it needs to be conveyed from the top of the organisation. Those organisations who have prioritised their communication, have found their communication to become more effective. Communication needs to be included in all the plans and be part of everybody's work. When there is a clear structure for communication and it is included in the plans of all units, the communication will not be 'forgotten' in daily work.

EQ 3. What is the external coherence of MFA development communications?

EQ 3.1. *To what extent has MFA utilised the materials of relevant CSO and other partners involved in the production of the contents and vice versa?*

The extent of the utilization of the materials by the MFA is discussed in the main evaluation report. This case study answers for the EQ 3.1 from the part of the CSOs: to what extent and how they have utilised the materials of the MFA:

Finding for the main report:

Majority of the CSOs use and share MFA's development communication materials sometimes or seldom.

Majority of the CSOs use and share development communication materials produced by the MFA sometimes or seldom, meaning few times a year. They mostly share the materials in the social media, and read and use materials in the MFA webpage. Half of the CSOs have been asked to provide materials for MFA, usually once or twice a year. Most commonly the materials have been examples of results, pictures or articles.

EQ 3.2. *To what extent do the development communications of MFA and other stakeholders such as CSOs complement each other?*

Addressed in this case study is complementarity with the CSOs; see the main evaluation report for complementarity with other partners. The cooperation and coordination of activities was studied, and the complementarity from the aspects of target groups, themes, topics and communication channels of development communication:

**Finding for the main report:**

The MFA coordinates the development communication with CSOs through bi-annual informative meetings and occasionally with other stakeholders. The more profound cooperation takes place with a few organisations, otherwise the cooperation is limited and sporadic. Nevertheless, there is interest both in the MFA and among external stakeholders for strengthening cooperation.

CSOs and other external stakeholders significantly complement MFA's development communication in terms of reaching out for diverse target groups in Finland, using wide range of communication channels, including versatile use of social media, and communicating on various themes. The CSOs' expenditure of MFA funding for development communication, global education and advocacy was approximately EUR 7.5 million in 2021.

The MFA coordinates the development communication with CSOs and with some CSOs there is active cooperation: those organisations organise joint events and seminars, and produce materials with and for VIE-30. Those CSOs who cooperate to lesser extent, they participate in the bi-annual meetings, and send and share materials when asked. CSOs' development communication complement MFA's communication in various ways. The CSOs reach a wide range of target groups in Finland, they use multiple communication channels, and communicate diversely on different themes. The amount that organizations spend annually on development communication is significant.



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Annex 2. CSO Online Survey questionnaire

The online survey was carried out for Finnish CSOs (see Table 1) in Finnish language. The questions dealt with:

- CSOs' main target groups, themes or topics, communication channels, main messages and objectives in development communication;
- Changes in development communication at own organisation (e.g. in resources, contents, organisation, target groups, channels, objectives, themes and topics). Reasons for changes, effects and impact of changes;
- Use of MFA produced materials and vice versa;
- Cooperation with the MFA;
- Relevance of MFA development communication in terms of relevant target groups, channels and themes, public discussion and reaching the public.

1a. Järjestönne nimi

1b. Mistä ulkoministeriön rahoitusinstrumentista/instrumenteista järjestönne saa tukea tällä hetkellä:

- Ohjelmatuki kansalaisjärjestöille
- Hanketuki kansalaisjärjestöille
- Tuki kansalaisjärjestöjen viestintä- ja globaalikasvatushankkeisiin
- Toiminta-avustus YK-taustaisille kansalaisjärjestöille
- Muu, mikä:

1c. Kuinka monta henkilöä työskentelee kehitysviestinnässä järjestössänne?

2. Mitkä ovat kehitysviestintänne kohderyhmät? Kirjoita tärkeysjärjestyksessä enintään viisi kohderyhmää. Voit tuoda esiin kohderyhmiä ajalta 2015-2022.



3. Mitkä ovat kehitysviestintänne kanavat? Kirjoita tärkeysjärjestyksessä enintään viisi viestintäkanavaa. Voit tuoda esiin kanavia ajalta 2015-2022.

4. Mitkä ovat kehitysviestintänne teemat tai aiheet? Kirjoita tärkeysjärjestyksessä enintään viisi teemaa tai aihetta. Voit tuoda esiin teemoja tai aiheita ajalta 2015-2022.

5. Mikä on kehitysviestintänne pääviesti?

6. Mitkä ovat kehitysviestintänne tavoitteet? Mitä muutoksia toivotte saavuttavanne kohderyhmissänne?

7a. Kuinka kehitysviestintä on muuttunut järjestössänne vuosien 2015-2022 aikana (esimerkiksi resurssien, sisältöjen, organisaation, kohderyhmien, kanavien, tavoitteiden, viestinnän teemojen tai aiheiden osalta)?

7b. Mitkä syyt ovat olleet muutosten taustalla?

7c. Mitä seurauksia tai vaikutuksia muutoksilla on ollut?

8a. Ulkoministeriö viestii kehityspolitiikasta, kehitysyhteistyöstä ja globaaleista asioista eri kanavilla, kuten ulkoministeriön verkkosivuilla, Twitterissä, Facebookissa, LinkedInissä, Youtubessa ja Instagramissa, Kehitys-Utveckling -lehdessä (digi- ja paperilehti), lehdistötiedotteiden kautta suomalaisessa mediassa, Maailma 2030-verkkosivulla sekä tulosraporteissa 2018 ja 2022.

Onko järjestönne käyttänyt tai jakanut ulkoministeriön tuottamia kehitysviestinnän materiaaleja?

8b. Mikäli vastasit kyllä, ole hyvä ja kuvaile kuinka usein ja mitä materiaaleja.



8c. Onko ulkoministeriö pyytänyt järjestöltänne kehitysviestinnän materiaaleja?

8d. Mikäli vastasit kyllä, ole hyvä ja kuvaile kuinka usein ja mitä materiaaleja.

9a. Tekeekö järjestönne yhteistyötä ulkoministeriön kehitysviestinnän yksikön (VIE-30) kanssa?

9b. Mikäli vastasit kyllä, ole hyvä ja kuvaile yhteistyötänne (missä asioissa teette yhteistyötä, millä tavoin ja kuinka usein). Mikäli olette sopineet yhteistyöstä ulkoministeriön kehitysviestinnän yksikön (VIE-30) kanssa, kertokaa myös siitä.

10a. Missä määrin olet samaa mieltä seuraavien väitteiden kanssa:

- Ulkoministeriön kehitysviestintä on faktapohjaista
- Ulkoministeriön kehitysviestintä on helposti ymmärrettävää
- Ulkoministeriön kehitysviestintä tuo esiin kehitysyhteistyön kompleksisuuden
- Ulkoministeriön kehitysviestintä on kiinnostusta herättävää
- Ulkoministeriön kehitysviestintä keskittyy tärkeisiin teemoihin
- Ulkoministeriön kehitysviestintä kohdistuu hyvin valituille kohderyhmille
- Ulkoministeriö on valinnut oikeat kanavat kehitysviestinnälle

10b. Tarkenna, mitkä ovat ensisijaiset kehitysviestinnän teemat tai aiheet, joista ulkoministeriön tulisi mielestäsi viestiä.

10c. Halutessasi voit perustella yllä antamiasi arvioita ja antaa lisätietoja.

10d. Yllä olevan arviosi perusteella, minkä yleisarvosanan antaisit ulkoministeriön kehitysviestinnälle?

10e. Halutessasi voit perustella yllä antamaasi arviota ja antaa lisätietoja.



Annex 3. Key Informant Interview template

Name:

Organisation:

Background information (why interviewed, connection to development communications):

JUDGEMENT CRITERIA	QUESTIONS	ANSWERS
EQ 1.1. To what extent has MFA used development communications efforts strategically to promote Finland's objectives and inform the public about global development issues and related challenges and successes?		
Relevant target groups and appropriate communication channels for each of them have been defined	<p>Who do you think are the target groups of development communications from the MFA?</p> <p>How would you rate the MFA in terms of informing the public about development policy and co-operation? Why?</p> <p>Do you think that the communications are targeted to you and your peer group (which one)?</p> <p>Do you encounter MFA development communication in the channels that you follow (which)?</p> <p>From your perspective: How could MFA improve with target groups and channels / informing the public in general?</p>	
EQ 1.2. To what extent have the MFA's development communication efforts managed to reach the public?		
MFA communication on development co-operation and development policy is widely visible in Finnish media Monitoring data of Kehitys-lehti and social media campaigns show increasing trends	<p>Do you think that communication on development co-operation and development policy is visible in Finnish media? Who communicates?</p> <p>Do you follow Kehitys-lehti? What do you think about it?</p> <p>Have you encountered any MFA campaigns? Did you notice the results report campaign?</p> <p>What should be improved to reach the public better?</p>	
MFA web sites on development issues show increasing visits	Do you use MFA web sites for getting information? For what purpose? Are they useful? What kind of problems / good features?	



JUDGEMENT CRITERIA	QUESTIONS	ANSWERS
EQ 1.3. Whether and to what extent have the development communications efforts influenced public discussion on development policy and co-operation? To what extent has the discussion been interactive?		
MFA has regularly organised opportunities for dialogue on development policy	What opportunities for dialogue on development communication have you encountered? Have you participated? What was your experience?	
MFA participates in the public discussion and dialogue on development issues	Is MFA participating in the public discussion about development co-operation? How is it?	
The 2018 and 2022 results reports are visible in media and there is public discussion about the results.	Have you noticed the results report campaign? Have heard any discussions about it? What about in 2018, do you remember any discussions?	
EQ 3.2. To what extent do the development communications of MFA and other stakeholders such as CSOs complement each other?		
MFA development communication is co-ordinated and complimentary with that of other actors funded by MFA There are strategies / structures / networks used for partnering with external actors	How do you interact with MFA development communications (VIE-30)? Have you provided them any material? Have you used or shared their materials? Give examples. Have you partnered with them? Is there an institutionalised way to communicate, plan, discuss with them? Do you meet them in any networks? Is there need for an institutionalised form of networking? Why / why not? If yes, who should participate? How could partners find more synergies, improve the quality and visibility of communications?	
Global education is adequately supported and monitored by MFA	Do you know anything about global education? Do you think it is important? Is the global education sufficiently supported by MFA? Why? To what extent does global education of MFA and other stakeholders such as CSOs co-operate / complement each other? How could this be improved?	



CASE STUDY ON THE DEVELOPMENT ACADEMY

EXTERNAL FACTORS INFLUENCING MEDIA
COVERAGE OF GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

SONJA HUHTA



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Acronyms and abbreviations

CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DA	Development Academy
EQ	Evaluation Question
EU	European Union
EUR	Euro
JC	Judgement criteria
KII	Key Informant Interview
MFA	Ministry for Foreign Affairs
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
VIE-30	MFA Unit for Communications on Sustainable Development and Trade
Vikes	Finnish Foundation for Media and Development
YLE	Finnish broadcasting company



1 Summary of findings

EQ 1. To what extent has the ministry been able to contribute to the openness of government by increasing the public awareness and understanding about development policy and co-operation?

EQ 1.2. To what extent have the MFA's development communication efforts managed to reach the public?

JC 1.2.5. Development communication materials are fact-based, easy to understand and show the complexity of development co-operation.

Findings:

- Most interviewed journalists think that the information on development co-operation that is available on the MFA's website is easy to find and accessible.
- Interviewed journalists found the language of the MFA's messages and press releases to be jargon-heavy and too general to attract the media's attention.
- Other communications materials and products, including the Kehitys Utveckling-magazine, are considered to be of good quality but hard to find.
- The MFA's development communication is understood by interviewed journalists to involve an inevitable need to emphasise the positive.

EQ 1.3. Whether and to what extent have the development communications efforts influenced public discussion on development policy and co-operation? To what extent has the discussion been interactive?

JC 1.3.3. Journalists use MFA and other relevant stakeholders as a source for articles about development co-operation.

Findings:

- Interviewed journalists approach the MFA for interviews and information mostly when a news story directly relates to the MFA, not so much as an expert organisation.
- The Development Academy has succeeded in lowering the threshold for participating journalists to reach out to the MFA whenever they need information.
- The current Minister of Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade seems to be better known among interviewed representatives of the media for his work on trade compared to development co-operation.



JC 1.3.4. The 2018 and 2022 results reports are visible in media and there is public discussion about the results.

Findings:

- The 2022 results report received less visibility in the media than its predecessor in 2018, mainly because so much attention and resources were dedicated to other issues on the news agenda.

EQ 2. Is the development communication organised in an efficient way?

EQ 2.3. To what extent has the MFA been able to maintain and proactively develop media relations?

JC 2.3.1. Development academy participants are satisfied with the courses, and they think that they have been able to use the information in their work.

Findings:

- Feedback from Development Academy participants is overwhelmingly positive. The main benefits cited by journalists match the MFA's objectives.
- The MFA's attempt to combine the educational purpose of the course and journalists' need to produce contents during the field trips while simultaneously covering a wide variety of topics has resulted in an overly packed agenda.
- Journalists have been happy about the open discussions with MFA representatives during the Development Academy but would have liked the MFA to address the critique surrounding development co-operation more directly as part of the course.
- The extent to which participating journalists have been able to use the knowledge in their work after the course depends on their job description.

JC 2.3.2. VIE-30 organises regular events and communicates proactively with journalists.

Findings:

- Interviewed journalists get regular messages from the MFA and think that email-lists are an appropriate means of communication. The distribution lists are, however, not regularly updated at VIE-30 to ensure that relevant journalists are included.
- Even if they do not result in immediate news, journalists do use the knowledge, networks and information that they gain through the MFA's different communication efforts to enrich content that they produce later.
- Both journalists and editors would welcome more targeted and tailored communication from the MFA as opposed to general tips and information.
- VIE-30's ability to act on the media's suggestions for more tailored communication is currently limited by several factors related to resources and the Ministry's way of working.



JC 2.3.3. The journalists in the network have produced independent media content on development issues

Findings:

- Although it is not an explicit objective, the course has ensured media coverage of Finnish development co-operation in participating media outlets each year. The wide variety of media outlets and journalists represented in the Development Academy has ensured visibility for development policy and co-operation in media outlets that would not otherwise have covered these topics.
- Although many participating journalists expressed that they find global development issues important and would like to cover them more in their work, they are not considered newsworthy in their own right and tend to get buried by other work.
- Interviewed journalists find it challenging to turn global development issues into short, click-friendly stories that attract readers in digital media without over-popularising.



2 Introduction

2.1 Purpose of the case study

The present case study of the Development Academy (DA) is one of two case studies conducted as part of the evaluation on development communications in the context of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA). The aim of the evaluation is to assess how effective the work of the MFA's development communication unit (VIE-30) is, and how efficiently the work is organised both internally in the ministry and externally with different partners. The two case studies inform the main evaluation questions (EQs) and, hence, the main evaluation report.

Specifically, this case study of the Development Academy aims to understand to what extent the MFA has been able to inform and influence the knowledge of journalists and what the overall outcome of their participation in the academy has been. Simultaneously, the study assesses the external factors influencing how global development issues¹³ are covered in the media.

2.2 Background of the Development Academy

The Development Academy is an orientation course organised annually by VIE-30. The purpose of the DA, as expressed in the MFA's internal report on the 2018 course, is to “*expand journalists’ knowledge and interest in global development issues as well as Finland’s development policy and development co-operation, and to improve their possibilities to follow the topic in their work*” (Einola-Head, 2018).

The DA targets Finnish journalists who apply to participate in the five to eight day-long event. Three days are usually dedicated to seminars in Helsinki, where MFA civil servants and subject matter specialists lecture and discuss with participants about specific themes related to development co-operation. Journalists also have the chance to take part in a week-long trip to one of Finland's partner countries in Africa or Asia¹⁴. The MFA offers the option of covering the travel costs for participating journalists. Table 1 shows basic information about the courses organised in 2015-2021.

13 By “*global development issues*” we refer in this evaluation to the scope of Agenda 2030. Agenda 2030 and its 17 sustainable development goals go beyond development co-operation and developing countries by relating to global efforts by all countries and all stakeholders to end poverty and hunger everywhere; to combat inequalities within and among countries; to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies; to protect human rights and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; and to ensure the lasting protection of the planet and its natural resources (<https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>).

14 In 2021 the destination of the trip was exceptionally Geneva, Switzerland, with the purpose of getting better acquainted with the multilateral organisations involved in development co-operation.



Table 1 Development Academy courses organised 2015-2021

YEAR	APPLI-CANTS	PARTICI-PANTS	FIELD TRIP	THEMES
2015	67	6 men, 10 women	Ethiopia	Themes: Education, health, Boko Haram influence over democracy development in Africa, trade and sustainable growth, importance of coffee for Ethiopia.
2016	77	6 men, 10 women	Tanzania	Based on the Development co-operation report. Themes: Private sector development, economy, job creation.
2017	36	6 men, 10 women	Kenya / Myanmar	A follow-up course for journalists specialised in development policy and co-operation who had participated in the Development Academy at least once before. Themes: Fragile states, peace mediation, Agenda 2030, private sector.
2018	42	5 men, 6 women	Zambia	Themes: Development of private sector and private sector instruments; welfare creation through economy and jobs; investments in developing countries; tax justice; corporate responsibility. Significance of climate change for developing countries and the mining sector in northern Zambia.
2019	42	3 men, 8 women	Ethiopia	Theme: Results of development co-operation.
2020/21 ¹⁵	20	2 men, 6 women	Geneve	Theme: multilateral co-operation and its importance in the response to COVID pandemic.
Total	284	78 (28 men and 50 women)		

Source: MFA reports on development academy 2015-21

The media with most participants in 2015-2020 were the Finnish broadcasting company (YLE) (11), Helsingin Sanomat (6), Kauppalehti (4), Karjalainen (3), Maaseudun tulevaisuus (2), and A-lehdet / Iltasanomat (2). Fourteen participants identified themselves as freelance journalists or photographers¹⁶.

The Development Academy is a labour-intensive and resource-demanding project for the MFA. For instance, in 2016 the planning and practical arrangements required an estimated four to five work-months of the unit's resources. With three VIE-30 staff members involved in organising the course, this translates to one to two full personal work-months per employee. The field trip also requires additional, significant input from the embassy staff who support the logistical arrangements and participate in the field visits. According to MFA reports, the annual cost of the course ranges between EUR 50,000 – 60,000 (Einola-Head, 2016).

¹⁵ Because of the pandemic, the field trip of the 2020 course took place only in 2021. No separate course was organised in 2021.

¹⁶ The journalists represented the following media: Freelancer, YLE, Helsingin Sanomat, Karjalainen, Kauppalehti, Maaseudun tulevaisuus, A-lehdet, Iltasanomat, Me Naiset, MTV3, Salon Seudun Sanomat, Ulkopoliittika, Etelä-Suomen Media, Hufvudstads-bladet (HBL), Kymen Sanomat, Kaakon viestintä, Kuvajournalisti, Länsiväylä / Helsingin Uutiset / Vantaan Sanomat, Lapin Kansa / Kaleva / Satakunnan Kansa / Lännen Media, Ny Tid, Pohjalainen, Radio Helsinki, SPT, news agency Startel, Taloussanomat, STT-Lehtikuva, Suomen Kuvalehti, Talouselämä, Tekniikka&Talous-lehti, Uutissuomalainen, and Vihreä Lanka.

3 Methodology

The case study applies the relevant evaluation questions of the evaluation. The sub-evaluation questions and corresponding judgement criteria (JC) to which it contributes evidence are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Evaluation questions and judgement criteria covered by the case study

SUB-EVALUATION QUESTION	JUDGEMENT CRITERIA
Effectiveness:	
EQ 1. To what extent has the ministry been able to contribute to the openness of government by increasing the public awareness and understanding about development policy and co-operation?	
EQ 1.2. To what extent have the MFA's development communication efforts managed to reach the public?	Development communication materials are fact-based, easy to understand and show the complexity of development co-operation.
EQ 1.3. Whether and to what extent have the development communications efforts influenced public discussion on development policy and co-operation? To what extent has the discussion been interactive?	Journalists use MFA and other relevant stakeholders as a source of articles about development co-operation.
	The 2018 and 2022 results reports are visible in media and there is public discussion about the results.
Efficiency and coherence (internal):	
EQ 2. Is the development communication organised in an efficient way?	
EQ 2.3. To what extent has MFA been able to maintain and proactively develop media relations?	Development academy participants are satisfied with the courses, and they think that they have been able to use the information in their work.
	The journalists in the network have produced independent media content on development issues.
	VIE-30 organises regular events and communicates proactively with journalists.

The temporal scope of the case study is 2015-2021. A Development Academy course was also organised in December 2022-January 2023, but this is not covered by this case study as it was still underway when conducting the case study.

The main **data collection methods and sources** applied to the case study are described below.

Secondary data: The case study makes use of:

- Survey data collected by the MFA from participating journalists after attending the Development Academy;



- The MFA's internal 'ASKI'-reports on the Development Academy courses organised each year;
- Articles written by journalists after attending the Development Academy.

Primary data: Primary data has mainly been collected through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with relevant individuals in Finland, mostly remotely by telephone/over the Internet by the Evaluation team members. KIIs cover:

- VIE-30 staff involved in organising the Development Academy;
- A sample of journalists who participated in the Development Academy, both from large national and smaller local / regional media (9 journalists);
- Editors in chief and heads of foreign news of media outlets that have been represented in the Development Academy (3 editors);
- Other journalists who have covered global development issues in the media during the evaluation period (3 journalists).

To avoid selection bias, the interviewed Development Academy participants were selected based on purposeful, proportional sampling. The sampling was based on the MFA's database of journalists who participated in the Development Academy during 2015-2020 and the media outlets that they represented at the time of participating. Eight interviewees were selected from the six media outlets with most representation during the evaluation period (YLE, Helsingin Sanomat, Karjalainen, Kauppalehti, Maaseudun Tulevaisuus, and Iltasanomat). The number of interviewees per outlet was proportionate to the number of participants from each. In addition, interview requests were sent to a journalist from a Swedish speaking media outlet (Hufvudstadsbladet) and to freelance journalists to ensure coverage of all types of journalists that have been represented in the Development Academy during the evaluation period. The interview with the participant from Hufvudstadsbladet was conducted but none of the approached freelance journalists responded.

To gain a longer-term perspective of the outcomes of the academy, interviewees were selected primarily from the 2015 cohort. If a journalist was not available for interview, he / she was replaced with another journalist from the same media outlet, following the same sampling logic. As a result, interviews were done also with some journalists who participated in the Development Academy in 2016, 2017 and 2018.

The editors in chief or heads of foreign news from the same media outlets were also approached for interviews. Their responsiveness and availability varied, resulting in interviews with three editors.

Three additional interviews were conducted with other journalists who have not participated in the Development Academy during the evaluation period, but who have covered global development issues or Finnish development policy and co-operation in the media during the evaluation period. Some of these journalists were identified based on the findings of the media analysis conducted as part of this evaluation.

The collected data has been systematically triangulated and analysed against the relevant judgement criteria using an analysis matrix developed for this purpose. Furthermore, findings and implications for the main report will be discussed with members of a reference group in a dedicated workshop, in which the wider evaluation's other findings, conclusions and recommendations will be discussed.



Limitations

The present report is a case study with a limited scope, not an evaluation of the Development Academy. As such, it does not provide a definitive performance assessment of the Development Academy during the period 2015-2022 nor recommendations for its improvement. Rather, it offers limited insights, generated through a systematic approach, to inform the wider evaluative process of the MFA's development communications as a whole.

Since the case study focuses on the Development Academy, interviewed journalists are mostly former participants and their editors. Interviews showed that journalists who participate in the Development Academy apply on their own initiative and have a personal interest towards development co-operation. While many were careful to underline that they inspect all topics that they cover with critical journalistic lenses and strive to objectivity, most had in principle a relatively positive attitude towards development co-operation. The evaluation team also approached journalists who have written more critical articles about development co-operation and policy in recent years for interviews, but only one agreed to an interview. As a result, the findings of this case study should by no means be understood to represent the sentiments of the Finnish media as a whole. It is a limited case study that primarily covers Development Academy participants and gives limited but complementary insights on the media landscape and on barriers or conducive factors that influence the extent to which development co-operation is covered in the Finnish media.



4 Key findings

4.1 The role of the DA in maintaining and proactively developing the MFA's media relations

This sub-section provides information related to EQ2: Is the development communication organised in an efficient way? Specifically, it examines to what extent the MFA has been able to maintain and proactively develop media relations. The specific sub-evaluation question and judgement criteria to which it answers are detailed below.

EQ 2.3. To what extent has MFA been able to maintain and proactively develop media relations?

The purpose of the Development Academy is formulated in different ways depending on the source. According to the MFA's website¹⁷, the Development Academy aims to improve journalists' knowledge on global development issues and Finland's development policy and development co-operation. Interviews with VIE-30 staff involved in organising the course confirm that an additional objective is to create contacts between VIE-30 and journalists that serve both ways: VIE-30 gains a network of informed journalists who are interested in covering global development issues, and journalists get to know the MFA, lowering the threshold for contacting the Ministry and its staff for interviews or information. Increased coverage of global development issues or Finnish development policy and co-operation in the media are *not* explicit objectives of the academy.

4.1.1 Who is participating in the Development Academy?

Finding 1. All interviewed DA participants had applied based on their own initiative and interest.

All interviewed Development Academy participants had applied to the course on their own initiative based on their personal interest in development co-operation and global development issues, not e.g. at the suggestion of their employers. Few were covering the topics as part of their normal job description but had asked special permission from their employers to participate in the course. Some even took leave for the duration of the course.

¹⁷ <https://um.fi/kehitysakatemia-perehdytysohjelma-toimittajille>



Finding 2. Journalists' values and preconceived notions related to development co-operation have had a bearing on the impression that the courses have made on them.

The annual opinion polls that the MFA commissions to Taloustutkimus to assess public opinion on issues related to development co-operation and development policy show that people's attitudes towards development co-operation is strongly value-based. While the media analysis conducted as part of this evaluation show that media coverage is predominantly neutral, the interviews conducted for this case study indicate that journalists also hold underlying value-based opinions about development co-operation. Interviews indicate that the direct exposure to the reality of development co-operation gained through the courses and trip organised by the MFA can serve to strengthen preconceived notions in either direction. Most interviewed DA participants believed development co-operation to be important despite the difficult contexts and the failures that it inevitably involves. Many also felt that they have an obligation to inform the Finnish public on these topics even if such articles rarely attract great numbers of readers/viewers. At least in one case, however, the trips organised by the MFA also had the opposite effect: the visit to one of Finland's partner countries and witnessing how development co-operation projects function in practice only strengthened the journalists' perception of how limited the Finnish contribution is in relation to the magnitude of the development challenges and how e.g. corruption can limit the achieved results. As a result, the experience only strengthened the person's opinion that Finland might as well stop development funding altogether.

4.1.2 Have participating journalists been satisfied with the course?

JC 2.3.1 Development academy participants are satisfied with the courses and they think that they have been able to use the information in their work.

Finding 3. Feedback from Development Academy participants is overwhelmingly positive. The main benefits cited by journalists match the MFA's objectives.

Both the feedback that the MFA collects from journalists after each course and the semi-structured interviews conducted for this case study confirm that participating journalists have been overwhelmingly satisfied with the course. Participating journalists – ranging from experienced foreign correspondents working at large media houses to journalists from smaller regional newspapers who rarely cover foreign news – felt that the experience was valuable in many ways.

The main benefits cited by participants reflect the MFA's expectations quite well. Interviewed journalists thought that the course gave them a deeper understanding of broader development issues and of their interconnectedness (geopolitical issues, climate change, migration and food security were mentioned by several). The course also provided clarity on the bigger picture of development co-operation – the global structures and Finland's role in relation to other actors. Furthermore, participants gained a better understanding of both the Ministry for Foreign Affairs as an organisation and of its development policy and co-operation. For media outlets that regularly cover global development issues, the broader understanding that their journalists gain of development policy and co-operation, of the actors involved in it globally and of Finland's role in this context was mentioned as particularly valuable for their daily work as it e.g. helps them identify interesting topics and angles for the contents that they produce.



“The Development Academy is good basic education on the bigger picture. It doesn’t only deal with individual cases, but also with big global challenges that are of interest to foreign news (women/gender equality, energy sufficiency, education, climate change). Such knowledge is always welcome. When a person familiarises themselves [with global development issues or a specific country that they visit], they become more sensitive to identifying topics that are interesting to the public as well.” (Interviewed editor)

The week-long field trip was considered to be the highpoint of the course by practically all interviewed participants. For many, the trip was one of the factors that motivated them to apply in the first place. It made development co-operation and daily life in developing countries more concrete and real. For many participants, the trip was their first ever exposure to the reality in a developing country¹⁸. Many interviewed journalists were particularly happy with the fact that the programme ranged quite literally from dumpsites to the salons of power. All field trips have included both meetings with embassy staff and government representatives as well as visits outside the capital to development co-operation projects funded by the MFA. Interviewed reporters mentioned that they would rarely have access to such high-level representatives of multilateral organisations and public authorities if traveling on their own.

“Sure, during the trips the MFA presents development co-operation to journalists the way that they would like it to be seen, but participating journalists still get closer to these topics and the people involved than they would on an independent trip.” (Interviewed journalist)

The course also improved many participants’ image of the MFA. Participating journalists were happy with how well the whole course was organised. Several interviewed journalists also specifically mentioned that the MFA staff who accompanied them on the trip (both VIE-30 and embassy staff) left a lasting, positive impression. Journalists mentioned details such as their ability to create a relaxed atmosphere, a good-humoured attitude and smooth handling of logistical challenges, their ability and willingness to respond to journalists’ questions and to discuss global development issues more widely, as well as their efforts to accommodate journalists’ specific requests (e.g. finding a suitable person to interview or a space for shooting footage for TV).

The opportunity to share ideas and discuss global development issues outside the planned programme was also considered precious. Interviews with both journalists and editors confirmed that with digitalisation, journalism has become increasingly fast-paced. Many participants appreciated the opportunity to dedicate a whole week to the course and to have the time to “*just talk to colleagues*” (as expressed by one interviewee).

Finding 4. The MFA’s attempt to combine the educational purpose of the course and journalists’ need to produce contents during the field trips while simultaneously covering a wide variety of topics has resulted in an overly packed agenda.

When asked whether there was anything about the course that did not work well from a journalist’s perspective, most interviewed participants mentioned that the agenda of the trip was too tight with limited free time. This caused practical challenges to the point of lacking bathroom breaks and meals, but also left little room for journalists to dive deeper into issues that sparked particular interest or to collect unique material for stories. Many also mentioned that the saturated agenda

¹⁸ Most trips during the evaluation period have been to one of Finland’s partner countries in Africa, with the exception of the advanced course in 2017, where part of the group visited Myanmar and the 2020/21 course which visited Geneva.



limited their ability to absorb new information at the end of a long day, not to mention at the end of the week.

“There could have been fewer meetings, and more time for interviews. Local people were involved a bit as if on display. If you want better contents in the Finnish media, there must be some more air in the field visits, more time to talk to people and time to digest what we’ve seen and experienced.” (Feedback collected by the MFA from a participating journalist right after the course)

Based on both MFA reports and interviews with journalists, the issue of the packed agenda has been a recurring problem. Follow-up interviews with VIE-30 indicate that the reason for this is twofold. On one hand, the MFA has aimed to ensure a varied programme that attracts the interest of as many journalists as possible. Limiting the programme to only one theme (e.g. gender equality) risks alienating journalists who would be interested in other issues (e.g. private sector development). On the other hand, splitting the group in two during the field trips based on their interests would involve a lot of additional work for the embassy staff in charge of the logistical arrangements. It would also require more advance planning than what current timelines allow¹⁹. The visits outside the capital are considered valuable by all, but the transitions (domestic flights, etc.) take time – often involving very early departures from and late arrivals at the places of lodging.

The crammed agenda also relates to different understandings of the purpose of the trip. The MFA has not planned the trips as story-trips for reporters. For the MFA, the main purpose of the trip is an introduction to global development issues and Finnish development policy and co-operation. In reality, however, very few journalists can take a week off from work without using the trip to also produce contents. According to interviewed journalists, there is not enough room in the schedule for “proper journalistic work”. TV-reporters also have specific challenges to find the space and time to collect appropriate material for TV. A basic objective of any media outlet is also to produce unique contents. The fact that the whole group of journalists visits the same places and people presents a challenge. According to interviewed journalists, the MFA has acknowledged this by making special arrangements during the field visits to meet the journalists’ emerging wishes and needs.

The advanced course organised in 2017 specifically sought to ensure opportunities for journalistic work by dividing the participants in two groups, each group visiting a different country, and by reserving more time for individual work during the trips. The introductory courses organised after that year have, however, received the same feedback of an overly packed agenda. At the time of writing this report, VIE-30 was in the process of developing the course further and had recently reached out to representatives of the media in order to exchange ideas.

Finding 5. Journalists have been happy about the open discussions with MFA representatives during the Development Academy but would have liked the MFA to address the critique surrounding development co-operation more directly as part of the course.

Several interviewed journalists had also hoped for more auto-criticism by the MFA and open discussion around the critique surrounding development co-operation during the course. The topic came up in interviews with participants from several different years (2015, 2016, 2018), but especially with those who participated in 2015 and 2016. By that time, there had been major cuts

¹⁹ For example, the application round for the 2023 Development Academy was launched in November 2022, the participants were selected in December 2022 and the seminar and field trip took place in January 2023.



to Finnish development funding and ex-ambassador Matti Kääriäinen's book *Kehitysavun Kirous* (free translation: *The Curse of Development Aid*) was published. The book was extremely critical about Finnish development spending and claimed that the Finnish government does not sufficiently evaluate and oversee the projects. In interviews many participating journalists expressed that they understand that development co-operation is being done in difficult contexts and that there are a lot of challenges and failures involved. They felt that the MFA staff involved in the course had been very open to difficult questions, but they had hoped that the MFA would have taken the opportunity to address "the elephant in the room" more directly. The course presents an opportunity for the MFA to present their point of view to members of the press.

Finding 6. The extent to which participating journalists have been able to use the knowledge in their work after the course depends on their job description.

Most interviewed journalists applied to the Development Academy based on their own initiative and personal interest in global development issues. Many work in media outlets or positions that rarely touch the topic of development co-operation. Interviews indicate that it has been harder for these journalists to use the knowledge and contacts that they gained during the Development Academy for professional purposes after the course compared to e.g. foreign news reporters. The latter regularly monitor other countries and development issues and more commonly mentioned that they had used the knowledge and networks that they gained through the course in their work.

In addition to foreign news reporters in large media outlets, *Maaseudun Tulevaisuus* also stood out among the media interviewed for this case study as a newspaper that regularly publishes stories about global development issues. The newspaper is owned by The Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners and its journalists often cover topics such as climate change and food security from the perspective of agriculture and forestry. Indeed, the media analysis conducted for this evaluation shows that the only DA participant that appears among the individual journalists who have written the most articles about development co-operation and policy in the Finnish media during the evaluation period is a journalist from *Maaseudun Tulevaisuus*. None of the other DA participants had produced enough contents about these topics to appear on this list.

"A deeper understanding has been useful. This has been really important. Understanding the structures of the MFA. If something happens, you know whom to approach – the Embassy or the desk officer in Helsinki." (Interviewed journalist)

Particularly journalists whose job description did not normally involve covering global development issues or development co-operation found the course to be greatly rewarding on a personal level, but they rarely had the opportunity to directly use the knowledge or contacts that they had gained in their work. Some had, however, indirectly made use of the knowledge in subsequent jobs (e.g. in working with immigrants from developing countries or in the communications teams at CSOs working in development co-operation).

4.1.3 Have participants produced contents on development issues after the course?

JC 2.3.3. The journalists in the network have produced independent media content on development issues



Finding 7. Although it is not an explicit objective, the course has ensured media coverage of Finnish development co-operation in participating media outlets each year. The wide variety of media outlets and journalists represented in the Development Academy has ensured visibility for development policy and co-operation in media outlets that would not otherwise have covered these topics.

Media visibility is not an explicit objective of the Development Academy. Nevertheless, the majority of participating journalists produced independent media content on development issues as a result of the trip. For example, by the time the MFA wrote its report on the 2015 Development Academy, 15 stories had already appeared in almost all participating media, and many more were to come.

Interviews with both individual journalists as well as editors at participating media outlets show that pin-pointing a specific section of a media outlet in which contents relating to global development issues or development co-operation categorically belong is not straight forward. Interviewed journalists and editors underlined that the key for covering global development issues or specifically development co-operation in any media in a way that awakens the readers' interest requires finding the right angle or topic. Interviewees mentioned criteria such as a clear link to the news agenda, a relatable angle, a link to Finland and an element of surprise.

The application rounds for the Development Academy are publicly announced and the MFA does not target the course to any particular kind of journalists. On the contrary, the approach has been to include a wide variety of media outlets. As a result, contents produced as a result of the Development Academy have indeed been published in all sorts of sections and media outlets during the evaluation period – ranging from women's magazines to financial news – reaching a wider audience that might otherwise not come across such content. For example, the same topic of coffee production in Ethiopia was covered with different angles by participating journalists from both a regional newspaper and a financial newspaper.

According to interviewed financial reporters, development co-operation is considered a 'soft issue' and not a natural fit for business news. As expressed by one financial reporter: "*the Development Academy focused on a lot on humane factors, which don't necessarily match the financial angle of the newspaper. This made it a bit hard to come up with ideas for contents*". Nevertheless, three articles produced by this journalist were published in the newspaper as a result of the course.

While no-one felt pressured by the MFA to do so, all interviewed journalists expressed that the production of stories for their media outlets was an implicit expectation from not only the MFA but also from their employers and themselves. In practice, most employers expect participating journalists to produce contents in return for the week-long trip.

Journalists employed at Helsingin Sanomat presented the exception during the evaluation period because of the newspaper's stricter rules for safeguarding its independence. The newspaper's rules have not allowed its journalists to produce direct contents from trips organised by e.g. a Ministry. Both Helsingin Sanomat and YLE have also started covering the expenses of their journalists during the evaluation period themselves as part of their anti-corruption policies. Even journalists who did not produce contents as an immediate result of the trip had, however, indirectly used the knowledge that they gained during the trips for articles or stories that they produced later.

Based on the media analysis conducted as part of this evaluation, most of the media coverage relating to development policy and co-operation during the evaluation period was part of domestic news in connection to budget discussions or elections. In this coverage, there are seldom in-depth



discussions or explanations about what development co-operation is, how it works, but rather development co-operation is mentioned as part of a broader discussion about funding or a political election campaign. In this context it is noteworthy that the articles produced either directly as a result of the DA or later, using the information gained during the course, usually focus on development co-operation and global development issues and, thus, contribute to informing the wider public about these topics.

For smaller or specialised media outlets, such as regional or financial newspapers, the articles produced as a direct result of the Development Academy represent an important proportion of all contents that the outlets published in relation to development co-operation during the evaluation period. Several interviewed journalists of these media expressed that the Development Academy enabled them to cover a topic that they otherwise would not cover at all either due to the focus of the newspaper or due to limited budgets to fund story trips abroad. Because of the same limitations, interviewed participants working at these media rarely produced contents on global development issues beyond the Development Academy.

“Realistically we would not cover these issues if it weren’t for the Development Academy. We wouldn’t be able to pay for everything by ourselves. In this way, the Development Academy gives us a unique chance to do something on this.” (Interviewed editor)

Based on interviews with participating journalists and their editors at media outlets that regularly cover global development issues, the Development Academy does not have a major impact on the volume of contents that they publish on these topics. Especially large media outlets (such as Helsingin Sanomat and YLE) source much of their material from their foreign correspondents. Their anti-corruption rules also limit to what extent their journalists are able to directly use the information that they gain in the course.

Finding 8. Although many participating journalists expressed that they find global development issues important and would like to cover them more in their work, they are not considered newsworthy in their own right and tend to get buried by other work.

According to interviews, the increased pace in the media as well as the dominating news items, such as the war in Ukraine, also contribute to global development issues getting buried by other more burning topics on the news agenda. Interviewed journalists expressed that two to four topics take up most of the attention in the newsroom at a time and development co-operation is hardly ever at the top of the list. Interviewed journalists and editors did think that it can be brought in as an angle in relation to one of the major topics. For instance, the media has covered global development issues in relation to the war in Ukraine and the Taleban takeover in Afghanistan during the evaluation period.

“Development aid is such a ‘soft issue’ that it gets buried under other topics. People see it as important and something that we should cover, but it’s living a life of its own somewhere. If we don’t touch it, it doesn’t break or disappear.” (Interviewed journalist)

Furthermore, few journalists have the opportunity to specialise in a specific topic. As the resources of traditional media have dwindled, the number of journalists per media outlet has in many cases declined while the demand for contents has increased with digitalisation. As a result, each individual journalist produces more contents and in many cases on a wider variety of topics than before. This was also reflected in interviews, in which many journalists described themselves as ‘generalists’ and extremely busy.



Finding 9. Interviewed journalists find it challenging to turn global development issues into short, click-friendly stories that attract readers in digital media without over-popularising.

Interviewed journalists and editors also highlighted the digitalisation of the media as a challenge for covering development co-operation and policy. Transformation of the media landscape has resulted in most of the public communication and news consumption taking place online, in various digital channels. This has significantly changed the conditions for journalism. Digitalisation favours content that is short, 'click-friendly', opinion-oriented, emotional, and easy to share. Interviewed journalists lamented the fact that the long processes and complicated contexts involved in development co-operation are hard to turn into short, click-friendly stories in a way that still gives a varied and informative account of the topic.

Based on interviews with both Development Academy participants and other journalists who cover global development issues, stories on global development issues are often read by a relatively small, interested and informed group of people and rarely become massive hits among readers/viewers or generate major public debate. Some articles that relate to 'trigger topics', such as corruption or migration tend to result in heated reactions in the online commenting sections of the news outlets, but even the most popular articles can very rarely compete in clicks with more popular topics. As expressed by an interviewed editor *"the further away you go [from their lives], the less our readers are interested."*

"These topics do not attract a quantitatively large audience. It's not hot stuff. [In the newspaper where I used to work] they want to popularise the topics for the masses. It is difficult to fit these topics into that mould. Unless you write something really populist along the lines of 'did you know where your money is going?'" (Participating journalist)

During the evaluation period, the largest media outlets in Finland, YLE and Helsingin Sanomat, invested in their first ever Africa-correspondents, who made it their purpose to report from African countries as normal and relatable rather than exotic societies and to strengthen the understanding among Finns that Africa is not merely a *target* of western development co-operation²⁰. The reporting done by these journalists became relatively visible in Finland and based on interviews, the correspondents received quite a lot of feedback from readers, who were happy to *"hear from places we do not usually hear from"* or who felt that the reporting opened their eyes to what is going on in Africa. But although it was easier for a correspondent to identify interesting topics or angles and their articles attracted visibility and feedback, they were never the most read/viewed stories.

4.1.4 Is the MFA making use of the networks created as a result of the Development Academy?

JC 2.3.2. VIE-30 organises regular events and communicates proactively with journalists

²⁰ Helsingin Sanomat's reporter Sami Sillanpää was based in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2015. Liselott Lindström was based in Nairobi, Kenya, between 2018-2022 and reported as stringer for YLE in both Swedish and Finnish. As of April 2022, YLE's Africa correspondent has been Pasi Toivonen. None of them have participated in the Development Academy during the evaluation period.



Finding 10. Interviewed journalists get regular messages from the MFA and think that email-lists are an appropriate means of communication. The distribution lists are, however, not regularly updated at VIE-30 to ensure that relevant journalists are included.

During the evaluation period alone, 78 journalists had participated in the Development Academy, generating a significant network of journalists knowledgeable about development issues. Based on their own accounts, VIE-30 mainly keeps in contact with this network of journalists through e-mail. This involves invitations to various events, press conferences, and suggestions for international guests to interview. The main e-mail list includes selected journalists who have participated in the Development Academy in previous years or who are perceived to be actively writing about development issues. The e-mail lists are not, however, regularly maintained and the selection criteria for the list of ‘active journalists’ are not quite clear – even to the unit itself.

“Although it’s been seven years since I participated, I do welcome the communication via an email list, even though I rarely react on the tips. It is really useful for journalists to see what’s going on, even if you don’t act on it yourself”. (Interviewed journalist)

VIE-30 also used to maintain Facebook groups for Development Academy participants. The general Facebook group for all Development Academy alumni is, however, no longer maintained since the MFA staff member who created the group retired in 2019 and remaining staff no longer had administrative access to maintain it. It has been replaced by the new ‘Gloaalit Journalistit’ Facebook group, created in March 2022 by the Finnish Foundation for Media and Development (Vikes) and VIE-30. The new group targets any journalist who is interested in global development issues. VIE-30 has been planning to market the group to all Development Academy alumni in connection to updating their e-mail lists. This had not yet been done at the time of writing this report.

Interviewed journalists felt that the e-mails have been a good way of receiving updates from the MFA. Very few have, however, been able to pick up on the tips or invitations that they receive. Common reasons given were that they were either not relevant to their current job descriptions or tips for interviews often came with very short notice when the journalists’ agendas were already booked. For regional newspapers, most tips for foreign visitors and events are also difficult to follow up on because they are usually organised in the capital.

Finding 11. Even if they do not result in immediate news, journalists do use the knowledge, networks and information that they gain through the MFA’s different communication efforts to enrich content that they produce later.

Several journalists mentioned that they had used the knowledge and information that they gained through the Development Academy or reports published by the MFA in contents that they had produced later. One interviewed foreign news editor also emphasised that the value of reports, informal meetings, press-events or even the Development Academy should not be measured in the immediate news that they produce. Journalists accumulate information and understanding through such interaction and may lift the covered topics to the news agenda on their own terms or use the leads and sources to enrich contents later.

Finding 12. Both journalists and editors would welcome more targeted and tailored communication from the MFA as opposed to general tips and information.

An interviewed editor expressed that direct and proactive contacts with editors are needed to maintain good media relations – emails and campaigns are not sufficient. The Ministry of Economic



Affairs and Employment, the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Environment were mentioned as being more proactive in directly approaching the media.

This is supported by the finding that several interviewed journalists and editors would welcome more targeted or tailored communication from the MFA as opposed to very general tips and information. One journalist expressed that messages from the MFA to the press often seem as if they were meant for internal use: they include a lot of MFA jargon and miss to highlight an interesting angle that would awaken a reporter's attention. The messages that journalists receive are often quite formal and state the facts (who is visiting, when and where), lacking information on why an outsider should be interested in picking up on them. One journalist felt that because of their busy schedule, invitations to general get-togethers are easy to skip unless they have a very specific focus that relates to the news-agenda.

A successful example of an event that managed to link to both global development issues and the news agenda was a media event organised by the MFA in connection to the Cairo COP27 meeting on the topic of causes and effects of the food crisis in the Horn of Africa. According to an interviewed journalist, the event linked directly to both climate change and the war in Ukraine and discussed how peacebuilding, development co-operation and humanitarian aid can be combined to address the crisis. It also included regional experts from the United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Several suggestions for the kind of communication that could awaken their interest were mentioned in interviews with journalists and editors (see Box 1). The most recurring suggestion is to tailor MFA development communication to the news agenda by providing relevant background briefs, suggestions for knowledgeable people within the MFA for interviews, and information on what Finland is doing in connection to the topic. Media-appropriate tips were also mentioned by many, meaning that instead of sending out the same information to all recipients, messages and tips could differ depending on the type of media that they target.



Box 1 Journalists' suggestions for useful communication

- More locally tied tips would make it much easier for regional newspapers to pick up on suggested stories. If they would e.g. know of experts originating from their region being posted abroad or in multilateral institutions, they could cover the topic of development co-operation through that person. For regional newspapers it is difficult to find stories and people without connections.
- The MFA could tailor their emails to different types of media (e.g. large national or regional or by thematic focus) as opposed to sending the same generic content to all. The report that the MFA wishes to disseminate could be the same, but the MFA could highlight different issues that could be of interest, depending on the type of media.
- Communication could target selected UN-days (women, girl child, water). This could make development issues concrete and topical enough to be picked up also by smaller news media focusing on the 'here and now'.
- 'Bulk' background information and random tips are also valuable to journalists. Overly tailored communication or ready-made stories may awaken suspicions.
- Organised events should be tied to the news agenda. A successful example that was mentioned was the media event organised by the MFA in connection to the Cairo COP27 meeting.
- Sum-ups every once in a while (every six months or annually) about what Finland is doing with its whole development aid: where does it go and for what. There are reports here and there but a sum-up brief would be helpful.
- Success and failure stories. It would not even need to be a very short version. Long enough to include proper contents but brief enough to easily pick up something.
- A newsletter would be a useful format for collecting the most important information. Now it is either small pieces of information everyday (e.g. press releases) or very seldom (e.g. Kehitys Utveckling-magazine).
- The information that journalists receive from the MFA should be more as a reaction to current events. That is how journalists have the possibility to write about development co-operation. Furthermore, it would be useful if the MFA were to provide information about someone in their organisation who knows a lot about that specific topic. Other organisations (not only public) are doing this.
- Background briefs are interesting, especially if they relate to what is topical and on the news agenda. Is there anything that the MFA could add to the news agenda, or do they have good experts or information about that? But issues that evolve slowly and big, world-moving forces that don't materialise every day are also interesting. For example, how is a flood and the resulting human suffering in a certain country linked to climate change and the politics practiced in the country?
- It would be useful to have a webpage with a straight-forward and simple overview of appropriations by country. It could include links to the specific projects in each country.

Source: Interviews with journalists and editors



Finding 10. VIE-30's ability to act on the media's suggestions for more tailored communication is currently limited by several factors related to resources and the Ministry's way of working.

According to interviewed VIE-30 staff, the unit's ability to act on suggestions for more tailored communication is currently limited by several factors. Firstly, tailored information packages require time and resources, which at present are limited in the unit. Secondly, VIE-30 staff would need to know the MFA and its staff very well to quickly identify the knowledgeable people for different topics on the news agenda. For the relatively new staff it takes time to get to know the expertise that the MFA has in-house. The fact that there is a regular rotation of diplomatic MFA staff and, sometimes consequently, frequent change of position of specialist staff makes this challenging even for more seasoned professionals. Third, not all the relevant people within the MFA are willing to meet with the media and give interviews.

Based on the unit's experience, MFA staff working on issues related to humanitarian aid are used to interview requests emerging at short notice. In other teams it is oftentimes more difficult to find a person who would be willing or who feels prepared to give an interview to the media. The hierarchic nature of the ministry plays a role: many advisors and desk officers are worried that they will say the wrong thing or are not sure what they are allowed to say. So even for persons who in principle would be willing to use their face for an interview, it can take some time before they are 'ready' to do so. This makes it difficult for VIE-30 to respond to the requests and proactively promote interviewees to the media.

4.2 The quality and reach of the MFA's development communications

This sub-section provides information related to evaluation question 1: To what extent has the ministry been able to contribute to the openness of government by increasing the public awareness and understanding about development policy and co-operation? Specifically, it examines to what extent the Development Academy and the MFA's other media efforts have contributed to information on development policy and co-operation reaching the public, and whether and to what extent the MFA's development communication efforts have influenced public discussion on development policy and co-operation. The specific sub-evaluation questions and judgement criteria to which it answers are detailed below.

EQ 1.2. To what extent have the MFA's development communication efforts managed to reach the public?

EQ 1.3. Whether and to what extent have the development communications efforts influenced public discussion on development policy and co-operation? To what extent has the discussion been interactive?

The role of mass media is of key importance in shaping public understanding and opinion. For those people who are not themselves actively searching for information or engaging in co-operation work, media reporting about development co-operation might be the only source of information



available. The annual opinion polls that the MFA commissions to Taloustutkimus to assess public opinion on issues related to development co-operation and development policy show that, right after public authorities and civil society, the media, particularly print media and TV, are the most trusted sources for reliable information on development co-operation (Rahkonen, 2022).

4.2.1 Do journalists turn to the MFA as a source of information?

JC 1.3.3. Journalists use MFA and other relevant stakeholders as a source for articles about development co-operation

One of the objectives of the MFA's efforts to engage with the media, including the Development Academy, is to influence public discussion on development policy and co-operation. One road to achieving this is that journalists turn to the MFA as a source of information for the contents that they produce, either through interviews with MFA staff, information published on websites and reports or other means, such as informal meetings and participation in events organised by the MFA.

Finding 14. Interviewed journalists approach the MFA for interviews and information mostly when a news story directly relates to the MFA, not so much as an expert organisation.

Based on interviews with both journalists and editors from the news media that have been represented in the Development Academy, the MFA is approached for interviews and information mostly when a news story directly relates to the MFA. In geopolitical crises or other global development issues, the MFA is not necessarily the first source on journalists' minds when looking for an expert to interview. Several interviewed journalists who regularly write about global development issues and their editors mentioned that they do sometimes interview MFA staff, especially if they have a relevant personal contact in the Ministry, but their priority is to interview the best possible expert on each subject – often preferring to use global think tanks or other international organisations or a country's own experts as sources. Some TV programmes, such as morning shows, are unique in that they only conduct interviews in Finnish. This favours Finnish sources, and they sometimes approach higher level officials of the MFA or even ministers for interviews.

Finding 15. The Development Academy has succeeded in lowering the threshold for participating journalists to reach out to the MFA whenever they need information.

Many interviewed journalists mentioned that the Development Academy improved their understanding of the MFA and made it easier for them to identify which part of the organisation to contact on different topics. The friendly interaction with the MFA staff at a personal level lowered the threshold for reaching out to the MFA after the course whenever they needed information.

Foreign news reporters often directly approach their contacts within the different departments of the MFA when looking for information, but others who deal with these topics less frequently tend to go through the communications department (usually the people in VIE-30 who accompanied them on the Development Academy trip) to find out who the right person is for any given topic.

Both participants of the Development Academy and other journalists who write about development issues were satisfied with the service that they have received when contacting the MFA. One interviewed journalist described the MFA as having a *“positive attitude towards journalists”*.



Finding 16. The current Minister of Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade seems to be better known among interviewed representatives of the media for his work on trade compared to development co-operation.

Based on the interviews with journalists and news editors, the visibility of a ministry towards journalists also depends to some extent on the political leadership. Many made reference to the current Minister for Foreign Affairs in interviews, but some were not aware of who the current Minister of Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade is. According to one interviewed editor who regularly covers and follows global development issues, the Minister seems to have focused more on promoting foreign trade while “*development policy has not been at the top of his political rhetoric*”.

4.2.2 What do journalists think of the MFA’s development communications?

JC 1.2.5. Development communication materials are fact-based, easy to understand and show the complexity of development co-operation

The quality of the MFA’s communication got mixed reviews from interviewed journalists and editors.

Finding 17. Most interviewed journalists think that the information on development co-operation that is available on the MFA’s website is easy to find and accessible.

Journalists who regularly cover foreign news or global development issues thought that the MFA’s information on development policy and co-operation is easy to find and accessible. Many mentioned that they sometimes visit the MFA website in search for information for a story, including online reports. Those journalists who cover development issues more rarely (and usually from the perspective of budget discussions or domestic political debate) were missing a webpage that would provide easily accessible, regularly updated and clear information on development co-operation appropriations by country²¹.

Finding 18. Interviewed journalists found the language of the MFA’s messages and press releases to be jargon-heavy and too general to attract the media’s attention.

Many interviewed journalists and editors thought that the language of messages and press releases is too bureaucratic or riddled with jargon and oftentimes too general to attract the attention of the media. Interviewed journalists thought that press releases are sometimes written as if they are meant for internal use, without highlighting an interesting angle that would hook an external reader. This criticism concerned the whole Ministry’s communication towards the media, not only development communication. Based on interviews with VIE-30 staff, a contributing factor is that the Ministry’s policy priorities and preferred terminology for development co-operation tend to be prioritised in the MFA’s press releases over clear language and good communication that would interest the media.

²¹ The evaluation team notes that the MFA aims to make information on where, how, and when Finland’s development co-operation funds have been used available on openaid.fi. This website was, however, launched only in 2022. Visitor data shows that it is not yet widely used (7 800 visits in 2022 compared to e.g. 66 300 visits to the Kehitys-Utveckling magazine’s website).



“It’s sometimes really hard to understand what the message is. Same with other ministries. It’s like you have to read between the lines to guess the message or call your contact {at the Ministry} to have them explain what the MFA is really trying to say.” (Interviewed journalist)

Finding 19. Other communications materials and products, including the Kehitys Utveckling-magazine, are considered to be of good quality but hard to find.

On the other hand, communications materials and products produced by the MFA were considered to be of good quality, but not very visible. Most interviewed journalists were familiar with the Kehitys Utveckling-magazine, but no-one subscribed to it personally. Some mentioned that they browse through it for ideas every once in a while at the office. The hard-copy version of the magazine was mentioned as useful for journalists since it allows them to flip through it when they have time. The online version requires a proactive effort of going to the webpage to look for information, which they did not think they would do in the same way. Adjectives used to describe the contents of the magazine included ‘good quality’ and “*real journalistic work that covers true stories based on facts*”. Interviewed journalists understood that Kehitys Utveckling-magazine is there to highlight development co-operation and the MFA’s work in this context, but without giving the reader a feeling of propaganda. According to interviewed journalists, the visibility of the magazine is, however, poor.

“The MFA makes very high-quality materials that are hard to find. The paradox of Kehitys magazine is that it is of high quality, but only if you happen to come across it.” (Interviewed journalist)

Finding 20. The MFA’s development communication is understood by interviewed journalists to involve an inevitable need to emphasise the positive.

Many interviewed journalists also understand the limitations that relate to communications by a public authority. They recognise that the MFA has an innate need to emphasise the positive in their development communication. This understanding was expressed both by journalists who participated in the Development Academy as well as those who did not, but who often cover development policy and co-operation in connection to e.g. the domestic political debate and budget discussions. The communication from CSOs working with development co-operation was thought to involve a similar interest to highlight the positive and downplay the negative.

Interviewed journalists assumed that the results that the MFA communicates and the regular budget discussions in parliament are inseparable: poor results might result in budget cuts. As expressed by one interviewed journalist: “*Who would want to soil their own nest?*”. Many journalists also mentioned that communication related to development policy and co-operation around the time of the major cuts to Finnish development funding in 2015-2016 was very polarised and value based. Those working with development co-operation were very careful not to “*throw more gasoline on the flame*” or to “*give the Finns Party any more ammunition*”. Interviewed journalists thought that the MFA’s development communication is appropriate for a Ministry but should be understood as an organisation communicating about itself. The role of journalists is to inspect the provided information with critical lenses before reporting on it.



4.2.3 Why was the 2022 results report not as visible in the media as last time?

JC 1.3.4. The 2018 and 2022 results reports are visible in media and there is public discussion about the results

Finding 21. The 2022 results report received less visibility in the media than its predecessor in 2018, mainly because so much attention and resources were dedicated to other issues on the news agenda.

Interviewed journalists and editors were asked whether they had noticed the release of the Development Policy Results Report in November 2022. As part of the media-campaign, VIE-30 organised a few breakfast events for the media around the main topics of the report and offered meeting with the Director General of the Department for Development Policy (Titta Maja) to targeted news outlets (Helsingin Sanomat, YLE, Talouselämä, MTV3 and Iltalehti). Helsingin Sanomat and YLE accepted the invitation and covered the report in editorials or other ways. While one story in any of the major media outlets (such as YLE and Helsingin Sanomat) may have a larger reach than many shorter articles in media outlets with less reach, the Media Analysis conducted as part of this evaluation shows that the overall visibility of the 2022 results report was still much lower than that of its predecessor in 2018.

According to interviewed journalists and editors from all types of media, it was particularly difficult to gain visibility for anything other than the main news topics in 2022. Major news, such as the war in Ukraine and electricity prices, have been occupying an important part of the space and resources in the media in the past year. The media analysis conducted as part of this evaluation also showed that on the publication day, Finnish news were dominated by US elections and Finland's government crisis stemming from the European Union's (EU) biodiversity restoration directive. In 2018, the main news topic of the report publication day was the so called 'tax day', when everyone's income and tax data becomes public. Even though the tax data is a popular news topic, more serious debate around the survival of the government and US election turnout dominated the media space in 2022.

“When there is a lot of statistics and big things – it easily stays on a theoretical level. It is easier to cover single projects, one person's work – in order to tell the big picture you always need the little picture as well. It's hard to find the focus point in the results of a longer period.” (Interviewed editor)

In addition to the dominating news, interviewed journalists also mentioned that a report in itself is rarely newsworthy, unless it is somehow ground-breaking. Some of the interviewed media outlets that had not had not been able to attend the organised events and did not have a meeting with the Director General felt that it was hard to pick out something newsworthy from this kind of report that focuses on higher-level statistics.



5 Implications for the main report

This section summarises the findings of the case study against the relevant sub-evaluation questions.

EQ 1. To what extent has the ministry been able to contribute to the openness of government by increasing the public awareness and understanding about development policy and co-operation?

EQ 1.2. To what extent have the MFA's development communication efforts managed to reach the public?

Finding for the main report:

Although development policy and co-operation are not considered newsworthy in their own right, the MFA has contributed to making the topic visible to the public in a variety of media through the Development Academy and other specific efforts targeting the media.

Interviews with both journalists and editors indicate that development policy and co-operation rarely cross the news threshold on their own, unless they relate to trigger topics, such as the misuse of funds. The MFA's approach to the Development Academy has been to include journalists from both large, national media outlets as well as a wide variety of other media. Since most participants produce articles as a result of the course, this has led to in-depth articles on development policy and co-operation being published in media outlets that rarely (if ever) cover development co-operation, reaching hence a wider audience that might otherwise not come across such contents. Some participating journalists have also made later use of the deepened understanding of global development issues and Finnish development co-operation that they gained in the course e.g. when choosing topics or identifying interesting angles, in better reflecting the interconnectedness of global phenomena, and as pieces of information or useful contacts for specific articles/content. The evaluation team also found evidence of other media work, such as lunch meetings around the 2022 results report, directly resulting in visibility for development policy and co-operation in the media.

Finding for the main report:

The MFA's development communication is considered fact-based by journalists, but the abstract level of messages and the professional jargon limit its reach.

Interviewed journalists and editors do receive regular information from the MFA, mostly through email. The MFA's messages are, however, considered rather general and oftentimes jargon-heavy by many, making it hard for journalists to identify interesting details or angles. While background information is also valued, many mentioned that the MFA's communications would be more interesting to the media if it were better linked to current affairs and the news agenda. Larger media outlets



have relatively well-resourced foreign news departments that regularly cover global development issues. Development co-operation can be covered in this context if it involves an interesting angle or other newsworthy aspects, such as clear links to the news agenda. Specialised and regional media need a clear link to their area of specialisation. Other suggestions made by journalists and editors included targeting selected UN-days or other key events with news value and sending sum-ups every once in a while about what Finland is doing with its whole development aid (instead of too many and scattered emails/press releases).

Interviews with VIE-30 staff indicate that they are in principle aware of what might work better, but several factors limit their ability to act on the media's suggestions. For example, tailored information packages require time and resources that the unit currently lacks. Many in the unit are also relatively new to the MFA and find it challenging to quickly identify suitable experts or spokespersons for a specific topic. Knowledgeable MFA staff are also not necessarily prepared or willing to give interviews to the media on short notice.

EQ 1.3. *Whether and to what extent have the development communications efforts influenced public discussion on development policy and co-operation? To what extent has the discussion been interactive?*

Finding for the main report:

The MFA is approached for interviews mostly when a story directly relates to the Ministry. Interviewed journalists usually use other sources for expert interviews related to developing countries or wider global development issues.

The Development Academy has succeeded in lowering the threshold for participating journalists to reach out to the MFA whenever they need information. However, few participating journalists have made use of this after the Development Academy since their job descriptions do not involve covering development co-operation. Interviewed journalists who regularly cover global development issues said that they usually approach the MFA for interviews and information when a news story directly relates to the Ministry. Media outlets that regularly cover these issues aim to interview the best possible sources. On global development issues or when related to a specific developing country, this is oftentimes international organisations specialising in the topic or local experts, which are increasingly accessible regardless of where they are thanks to digital communication platforms.

EQ 2. *Is the development communication organised in an efficient way? (Efficiency and Internal coherence)*

EQ 2.3. *To what extent has MFA been able to maintain and proactively develop media relations?*

Finding for the main report:

Through the Development Academy, the MFA has built an important network of interested and informed journalists. This gives the MFA a stable foundation for developing media relationships, but responsiveness to the agenda and needs of the media could be improved.



The Development Academy has been widely appreciated by participating journalists. The course has succeeded in not only educating participants on global development issues and Finnish development policy and co-operation, but it has also made the MFA more approachable from the journalists' perspective and generated a relatively large network of journalists who are interested in development issues. The MFA keeps in contact with the former participants, who appreciate the regular flow of information even though few regularly use it in their work. The distribution lists are, however, not regularly maintained by VIE-30 to make sure that all relevant journalists and representatives of the media are included.

In order to make the most of the MFA's media efforts, both journalists and editors emphasise that general tips and information through emails are seldom sufficient. Direct and proactive contacts are also needed, as well as more targeted and tailored communication.



Annex 1. Documents consulted

Einola-Head (2015). Vuoden 2015 Kehitysakatemia; loppuraportti.

Einola-Head (2016). Vuoden 2016 kehitysakatemia – kehityspolitiikan perehdytysohjelma toimittajille.

Einola-Head (2017). Vuoden 2017 kehitysakatemia – kehityspolitiikan jatkokurssi toimittajille.

Einola-Head (2018). Vuoden 2018 kehitysakatemia – kehityspolitiikan perehdytysohjelma toimittajille.

Einola-Head (2019). Vuoden 2018 kehitysakatemia – kehityspolitiikan perehdytysohjelma toimittajille.

Kettunen (2022). Vuoden 2020-2021 kehitysakatemia – kehityspolitiikan perehdytysohjelma toimittajille.

Rahkonen (2022). Suomalaisen mielipiteet kehitysyhteistyöstä. Kyselytutkimuksen raportti.



Annex 2. Key Informant Interview templates

The interview guides for the semi-structured interviews conducted as part of this case study are included below. The questions were in some cases adapted to the interviewee and to relevant issues that came up in the discussion.

DEVELOPMENT ACADEMY PARTICIPANTS

Name:		
Organisation:		
Date of interview:		
Interviewed by:		
Reason for interview:		
JUDGEMENT CRITERIA	QUESTIONS	ANSWERS
Background		
N/A	What is your educational background, current position, employer and job description?	
	What year did you participate in the Development Academy? What country did you visit? Was there a specific theme for the course that year?	
	Why did you participate? / What motivated you to participate?	
	Have you been on any other field trips for journalists related to development co-operation (organised by for example CSOs)?	
	Have you received MFA travel grants?	
EQ 1.2. To what extent have the MFA's development communication efforts managed to reach the public?		
Development communication materials are fact-based, easy to understand and show the complexity of development co-operation	What do you think of the quality of the materials produced by MFA, such as the results report, Kehitys-lehti, website, etc.?	



JUDGEMENT CRITERIA	QUESTIONS	ANSWERS
EQ 1.3. Whether and to what extent have the development communications efforts influenced public discussion on development policy and co-operation? To what extent has the discussion been interactive?		
Journalists use MFA and other relevant stakeholders as a source of articles about development co-operation	<p>How often and for what purpose do you contact the MFA about development co-operation/-policy (if ever)? Who do you usually contact?</p> <p>Have you ever made use of other development communication services or materials produced by the MFA in your work? (incl. interview tips, press releases, websites, Kehitys magazine).</p> <p>Would you like more contact / material? What kind?</p> <p>Could the links between the MFA's development communications and journalists be improved somehow from the journalist's perspective?</p>	
The 2018 and 2022 results reports are visible in media and there is public discussion about the results.	The release of the development co-operation results report was not very visible in the media this year compared to 2018. Did you notice the release of the report? Did [name of news media] cover the report? If not, why not? Changes compared to 2018	
No suitable JC	<p>How have your stories related to development co-operation/policy been received by the public?</p> <p>Have they generated any feedback or discussion?</p>	
EQ 2.3. To what extent has the MFA been able to maintain and proactively develop media relations?		
Development academy participants are satisfied with the courses and they think that they have been able to use the information in their work	<p>Have you used what you learned at the DA in your work somehow? Please specify? Are you still using it?</p> <p>If you would be in charge of organising the DA for journalists, what would you keep in the programme and what would you do differently? Why?</p> <p>If possible, would you participate again in the DA? Why?</p> <p>Does [name of news media] regularly send journalists to the DA? Why?/Why not?</p>	
The journalists in the network have produced independent media content on development issues	<p>Did you write any articles / make any programmes as a result of the DA? About what?</p> <p>Where did you get your articles/stories published? Was it easy to get the stories published? If there were difficulties, what are the main barriers?</p> <p>Were there any explicit or implicit expectations from the MFA's side regarding the type of articles that participants wrote afterwards?</p> <p>Did you get any guidelines from your employer for writing the articles? Did you have to modify the articles after the first draft to get them published?</p>	
VIE-30 organises regular events and communicates proactively with journalists	How often and for what purpose does the MFA contact you on these topics (if ever)? Who usually contacts you? Ask specifically for VIE-30 if they don't mention them.	



EDITORS IN CHIEF / HEADS OF FOREIGN NEWS

Name:		
Organisation:		
Date of interview:		
Interviewed by:		
Reason for interview:		
JUDGEMENT CRITERIA	QUESTIONS	ANSWERS
Background		
N/A	What is your educational background, current position, employer and job description?	
	Have you personally ever participated in the Development Academy?	
	If yes When? Where? What motivated you?	
	Have you been on any other field trips for journalists to developing countries organised by the MFA or other organisations?	
Media landscape		
N/A	<p>At [name of news media], who decides which journalists participate in the Development Academy? Based on what?</p> <p>Does [name of news media] regularly send journalists to the Development Academy? When was the last time?</p> <p>Why has [name of news media] sent journalists to the Development Academy? (Expectations)</p> <p>Does [name of news media] cover development co-operation / policy also when not related to the DA?</p> <p>If not: Why not?</p> <p>If yes: Could you describe the kind of stories that [name of news media] likes to cover?</p> <p>Has this changed in any way since 2015?</p>	



JUDGEMENT CRITERIA	QUESTIONS	ANSWERS
EQ 1.2. To what extent have the MFA's development communication efforts managed to reach the public?		
Development communication materials are fact-based, easy to understand and show the complexity of development co-operation	What do you think of the quality of the materials produced by MFA, such as the results report, Kehitys-lehti, website, etc.?	
EQ 1.3. Whether and to what extent have the development communications efforts influenced public discussion on development policy and co-operation? To what extent has the discussion been interactive?		
Journalists use MFA and other relevant stakeholders as a source of articles about development co-operation	How often and for what purpose do you contact the MFA about development co-operation/-policy (if ever)? Who do you usually contact? Has [name of news media] ever made use of the development communication services or materials produced by the MFA in your work? (e.g. interview tips, press releases, websites, Kehitys magazine).	
The 2018 and 2022 results reports are visible in media and there is public discussion about the results.	The release of the development co-operation results report was not very visible in the media this year compared to 2018. Did you notice the release of the report? Did [name of news media] cover the report?	
EQ 2.3. To what extent has MFA been able to maintain and proactively develop media relations?		
VIE-30 organises regular events and communicates proactively with journalists	How often and for what purpose does the MFA contact you on these topics (if ever)? Who usually contacts you? Would you like more contact / material? What kind?	
Additional		
N/A	Public opinion polls commissioned by the MFA show that Finns' opinions about development co-operation are strongly based on values as opposed to whether or not they think development co-operation is effective. At [name of news media], do you take this into consideration when covering these topics in any way?	



OTHER JOURNALISTS COVERING GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT TOPICS

Name:		
Organisation:		
Date of interview:		
Interviewed by:		
Reason for interview:		
JUDGEMENT CRITERIA	QUESTIONS	ANSWERS
Background		
N/A	What is your educational background, current position, employer and job description?	
	Have you ever participated in the Development Academy? >>> <i>If yes, same Qs as for DA participants.</i> >>> <i>If no, the Qs below.</i>	
	Have you been on any other field trips for journalists to developing countries organised by the MFA or other organisations?	
	Have you received MFA travel grants?	
	You've covered development co-operation/policy or developing countries in your work. What main factors have contributed to that (own interest, global trends, media outlet priorities, other)?	
Media landscape		
N/A	Is it currently easy to get stories related to these topics published in [name of news media]? If there are difficulties, what are the main barriers? Has this changed in any way since 2015? What is the attitude at [name of news media] towards covering development co-operation / policy in general? What kind of stories are usually published? <i>(Unless it overlaps with the previous question) Has this changed in any way since 2015?</i>	
EQ 1.2. To what extent have the MFA's development communication efforts managed to reach the public?		
Development communication materials are fact-based, easy to understand and show the complexity of development co-operation	What do you think of the quality of the materials produced by MFA, such as the results report, Kehitys-lehti, website, etc.?	



JUDGEMENT CRITERIA	QUESTIONS	ANSWERS
EQ 1.3. Whether and to what extent have the development communications efforts influenced public discussion on development policy and co-operation? To what extent has the discussion been interactive?		
Journalists use MFA and other relevant stakeholders as a source of articles about development co-operation	<p>When looking for information about development co-operation/policy, what sources do you turn to (people, organisations, online platforms, other)?</p> <p>How often and for what purpose do you contact the MFA about development co-operation/-policy (if ever)?</p> <p>Who do you usually contact?</p> <p>Have you made use of the development communication services or materials produced by the MFA in your work? (e.g. interview tips, press releases, websites, Kehitys magazine)</p>	
No suitable JC	<p>How have your stories related to development co-operation/policy been received by the public?</p> <p>Have they generated any feedback or discussion?</p>	
EQ 2.3. To what extent has MFA been able to maintain and proactively develop media relations?		
VIE-30 organises regular events and communicates proactively with journalists	<p>How often and for what purpose does the MFA contact you on these topics (if ever)? Who usually contacts you?</p> <p>Would you like more contact / material? What kind?</p> <p><i>Could the links between the MFA's development communications and journalists be improved somehow from the journalists perspective?</i></p>	



MEDIA ANALYSIS

Based on Meltwater's report *Development co-operation and the Finnish media – Assessing the public view and visibility of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs on digital media and Twitter 2015-2022*.

MARIA GRAFSTRÖM



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Acronyms and abbreviations

EQ	Evaluation Question
EU	European Union
EUR	Euro
KPT	Kehityspoliittinen toimikunta (Development Policy Committee)
MFA	Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland
MP	Member of Parliament
MTV	MTV Oy, commercial media channel
PS	Perussuomalaiset (Finns Party)
SDP	Suomen Sosialidemokraattinen Puolue (Social Democrats of Finland)
STT	Suomen Tietotoimisto (Finnish News Agency)
US	United States
VIE-30	MFA's development communication unit
YLE	Yleisradio (Finnish Broadcasting Company)



1 Background

The present media analysis-report is part of the Evaluation on development communications in the context of Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) of Finland. The aim of the evaluation is to assess how effective the work of the MFA's development communication unit (VIE-30) is, and how efficiently the work is organised both internally in the ministry and externally with different partners.

To provide an understanding for the public image of development policy and development co-operation in Finland as well as for how visible the MFA is in the media coverage concerning development co-operation, the evaluation team conducted a media analysis to inform the evaluation. The media analysis was largely based on the report commissioned by the Unit for Development Evaluation and produced by Meltwater in late 2022, entitled *Development co-operation and the Finnish media – Assessing the public view and visibility of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs on digital media and Twitter 2015-2022*²². The report findings have been analysed by the evaluation team and implications for the main report are elaborated on in Chapter 6 of this case study report.

The media landscape and the political agenda set the stage for public communication and are thereby a key contextual factor than can have profound impact on development communication. When it comes to development co-operation, the position of media as a meaning maker for the public has been suggested to be particularly important. Since the actual development work is undertaken in other parts of the world and the donors are not the same as the receivers, few people have direct experiences of development co-operation. This “*broken feedback-loop*” (Martens, 2005) suggests media to be particularly salient in forming people’s understanding about global issues, people’s living conditions in other countries as well as the role and possibilities for development co-operation.

The purpose of the media analysis was two-folded: first, the analysis was used to develop an overall understanding of the media landscape and news coverage and public discussions concerning development co-operation, and possible changes that have occurred from 2015 until today. This overall analysis of the media coverage allowed for identifying peaks in the reporting, specific characteristics in terms of topics and the format of the articles, the amount of debate and commentaries in relation to development co-operation, and what channels and areas are most frequent. Second, **the analysis was used in assessing the effectiveness of MFA development communication activities focusing on journalists and reaching out to other target groups and the broader public through media channels**. More specifically, the findings from the media analysis were used to develop answers to the first evaluation question (EQ) and its following sub-questions:

22 The Meltwater report is available upon request from MFA Unit for Development Evaluation, eva-11@gov.fi



EQ 1.1. To what extent has MFA used development communications efforts strategically to promote Finland's objectives and inform the public about global development issues and related challenges and successes?

EQ 1.2. To what extent have the MFA's development communication efforts managed to reach the public?

EQ 1.3. Whether and to what extent have the development communications efforts influenced public discussion on development policy and co-operation? To what extent has the discussion been interactive?



2 Methodology

The work conducted by Meltwater – a media analysis company with previous experience in the field of monitoring the presence of development co-operation issues in media - covered a broad range of Finnish digital media outlets and includes content from October 2015 until September 2022. The analysis of social media included content on Twitter during the last 15 months (from August 2021 to October 2022).

The media material was searched for and collected through three stages, as presented in Box 1 (for a full list of keywords, see Meltwater report). The social media analysis (Twitter) covered the same search words but was also focused on ‘the digital ambassadors’ of the MFA²³.

Box 1 Three stages of the media analysis conducted by the evaluation team

1. Broad image of development cooperation in Finnish media.
2. Eight themes that are reflecting the overall goals and principles of Finland’s development policy. All the keywords will be searched for in combination with ‘development cooperation’ and/or ‘development aid’ and/or ‘development policy’.
 - Naiset ja tytöt (women and girls);
 - Koulutus (education);
 - Talous ja työ (economy and work);
 - Demokratia ja oikeusvaltio (peaceful democratic societies);
 - Ilmastomuutos ja luonnonvarat (climate change and natural resources);
 - Humanitaarinen apu (humanitarian aid);
 - Agenda 2030;
 - Afrikka (Africa).
3. Specific events and issues that allow for more in-depth analyses of how development cooperation is covered in the media and the role of MFA:
 - Budget discussions;
 - The development assistance results report (a comparison between 2018 and 2022);
 - The #Munvaikutus campaign in October 2021;
 - Evaluation.

²³ Digital ambassadors are MFA professionals, both diplomats and specialist advisors, trained to use social media for communication on MFA-related news in Twitter.



The Meltwater's analysis of the media material focused on specific questions and when relevant these were also longitudinally analysed. The questions include for example an overall timeline for the period, number of different types of media material, distribution among media channels, the most frequently covered topics, tonality, and the main actor groups visible in the media. The searches and analysis work by Meltwater were conducted during October and November 2022. The questions included in Meltwater's analysis and respective results are presented in complete form in a separate report by Meltwater: *Development co-operation and the Finnish media – Assessing the public view and visibility of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs on digital media and Twitter 2015-2022*. The report is available upon request from the ministry's Unit for Development Evaluation, e-mail: eva-11@gov.fi .

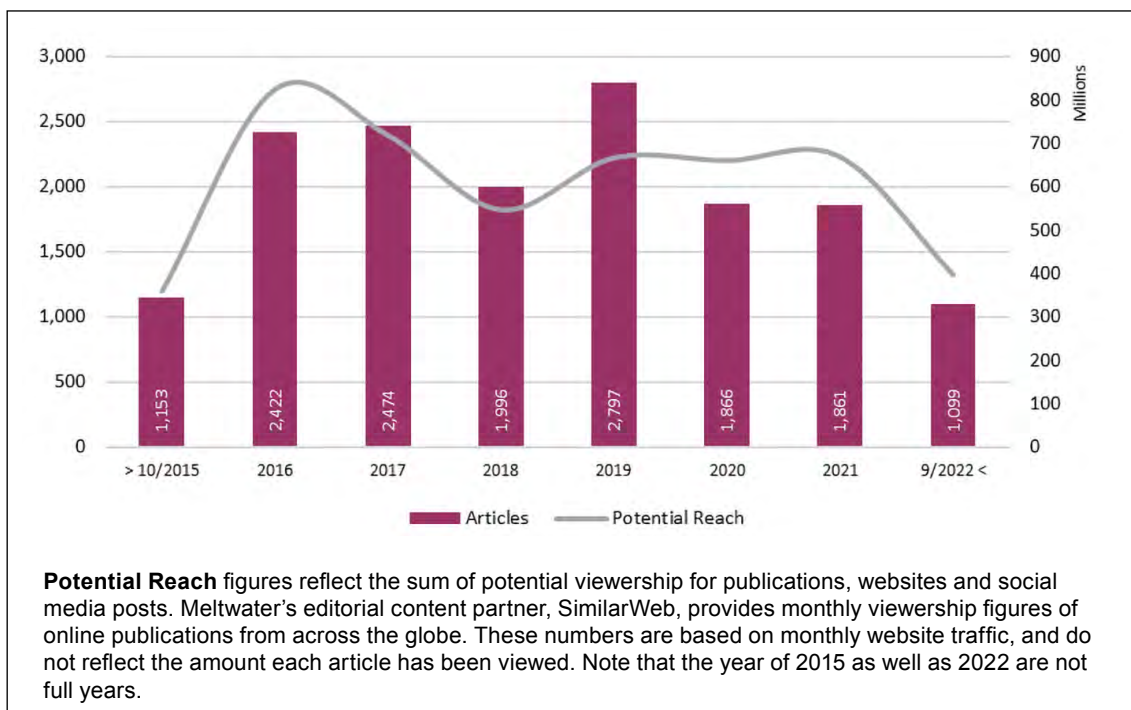


3 The image of development co-operation in digital media

During the seven years (from October 2015 to September 2022) of data observed from Finnish digital media sources, development co-operation/aid/policy²⁴ gained over 15,000 mentions. The absolute majority of these mentions (85%) were in news articles, 13% were in opinion pieces and 2% in editorials. Most of them were also in the actual text and only 13% of the mentions were in lead of the articles and 11% in the headline.

The overall visibility of development co-operation is relatively stable during the period (see Figure 1, note that 2015 and 2022 are not full years). In general, development co-operation is treated in the media coverage as a part of domestic politics and the highest peaks in attention during the period were about the national budget and funding for development co-operation, elections and ministerial positions. In this coverage, there are seldom in-depth discussions or descriptions about development co-operation or how it works, but rather development co-operation is mentioned as part of a broader discussion about budgeting and funding for development co-operation or a political election campaign. Worth noting is also that development co-operation was often mentioned as a sidenote, not being the actual focus of the article.

Figure 1 Yearly exposure of development co-operation/aid/policy in digital media



Source: Media analysis conducted by Meltwater

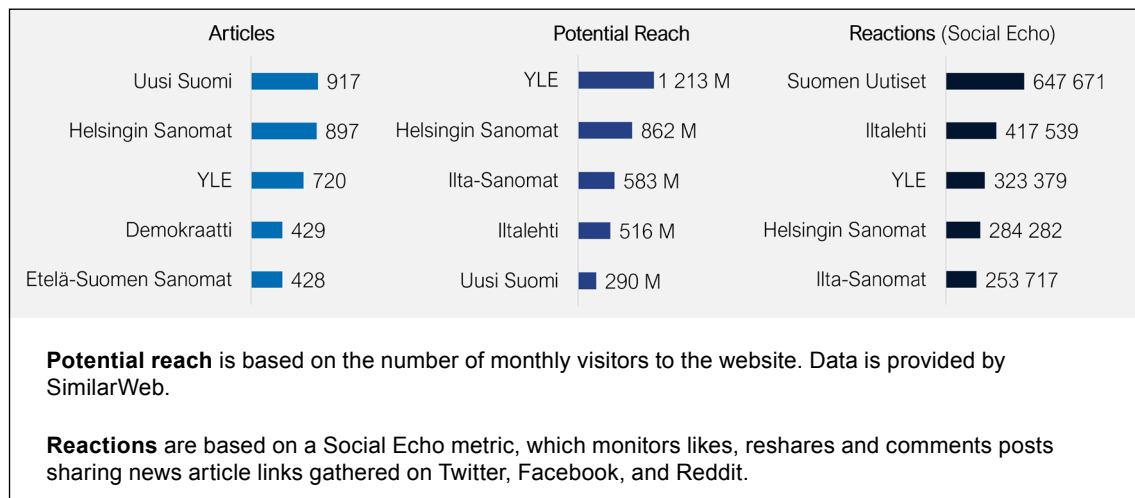
24 Hereafter we use development co-operation as this is the most commonly used term in the articles.



Uusi Suomi was the digital outlet with the highest number of items in which development co-operation was mentioned. Mainly during the first years of the period, 2015-2017, this was a platform at which many prominent actors in Finland published their opinions (see Figure 2). Over the last few years, Uusi Suomi has become a less significant outlet for public debate. Second and third on the list over the outlets that have published the highest number of articles during the period were Helsingin Sanomat and Yleisradio (YLE) (Finnish Broadcasting Company). Note also that YLE is only included to the extent that it is an article text published on YLE.fi and/or YLE Areena. This probably means that if also broadcast media – radio and TV – would have been included in the analysis, YLE would be the outlet with the highest number of programs in which development co-operation was mentioned.

Among the political party related media Social Democrats of Finland’s (Suomen Sosialidemokraattinen Puolue) (SDP) Demokraatti published the highest number of articles about development co-operation, while Finns party’s (Perussuomalaiset) Suomen Uutiset published fewer articles (no. 356) but gained most reactions on social media (the equivalent score for Demokraatti was 10,814 reactions). Reactions in social media are to a large extent created through emotive and negatively opinionated coverage (see further below). The share of neutral coverage was the largest in all analysed media outlets – indicating that the Finnish media generally treats development co-operation in an informative manner – except for Suomen Uutiset that focused on negative aspects in their coverage.

Figure 2 Top five digital news media, total for the period 2015-2022



Source: Media analysis conducted by Meltwater

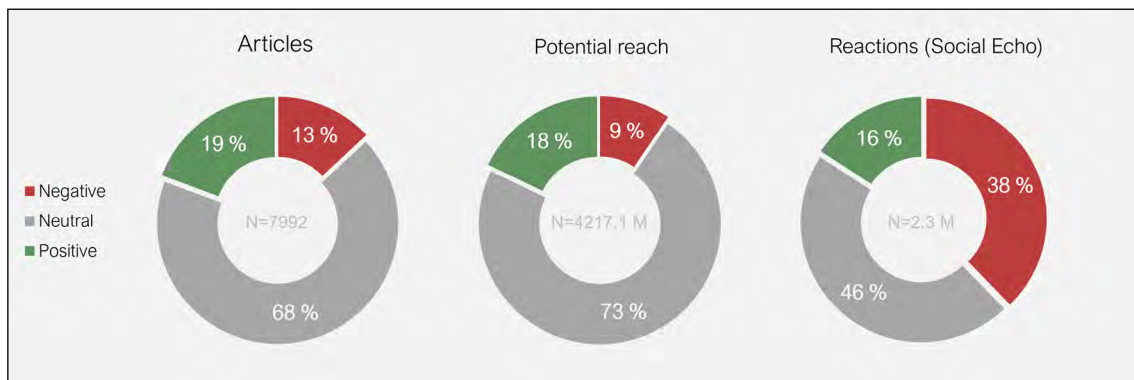
3.1 Neutral and informative content dominates

The overall sentiment or tone of communication in digital media between October 2015 and September 2022 consisted mostly of neutral mentions with positively toned articles gaining more mentions in bigger medias (potential reach) than negative (see Figure 3). Even though the number of articles with a negative tone were of the smallest number, negative coverage sparked more reactions and conversation across social media platforms (Social Echo – a measure based on monitoring likes, reshares and comments posts sharing news article links gathered on Twitter, Facebook and Reddit).



The sentiment analysis shows that development co-operation in general is treated in an informative manner in Finnish media and that this content was rather stable during the entire period. For example, both Helsingin Sanomat and YLE have mainly covered development co-operation in a neutral and informative manner. The neutral and informative character of the news of development co-operation goes hand in hand also with the part of the content that is produced by Suomen Tietotoimisto (STT) news agency (Finnish News Agency). Meltwater estimates in their analysis that STT was mentioned as the producer of the article in about 12% of all articles. Most likely the number of articles stemming from STT would be higher if it would be possible to include all articles that are drawn from STT's news feed. Meltwater could only track those articles in which it was explicitly stated that the material came from a news agency, and the media outlets do not always include statements on what material they have used from a news agency. Also, the relatively high number of articles in which development co-operation is a sidenote further explains the large amount of neutral content.

Figure 3 Tone of communication, digital news media (October 2015 – September 2022)



Source: Media analysis conducted by Meltwater

The number of articles with positive tone is higher than those with negative tone. Important to note is also that the articles with positive tone appear in bigger media (e.g. YLE, Helsingin Sanomat, Iltta-Sanomat, Iltalehti and MTV) with potentially broader reach in comparison to articles with negative tone (see Figure 3).

Even though the tone of the articles has been rather stable throughout the period, it is possible to discern some differences (Figure 4). Most positive content appeared during 2017 and 2018. This was mainly related to the presidential election during 2017 that made development co-operation visible as the candidates – mostly Haatainen and Haavisto – often emphasized the importance of development co-operation. In 2018, the upcoming parliamentary elections increased positive coverage, with many parties calling for increased development funding, especially SDP.

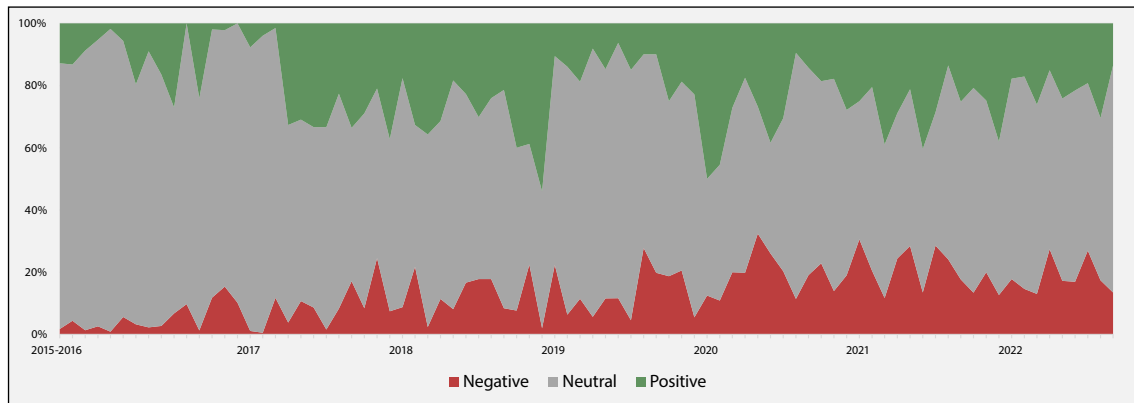
Another driver for positive coverage were reports and statements emphasising positive results of development co-operation. One example is the coverage about Afghanistan when the Taliban retook control over the country in August 2021. This was a time when many MFA representatives and other development co-operation actors defended Finland's development efforts in Afghanistan especially in improving the rights of women and girls.

During the years 2019 to 2021, the number of articles with a negative tone increased which was mainly driven by the Finns Party and in particular the publication of their shadow budgets. In 2019,



there were news about misuse of development funding in Afghanistan and scamming funds from the MFA which further highlighted the negative aspects in the coverage.

Figure 4 Share of Voice of Monthly sentiment and number of mentions, digital news media (September 2015 – October 2022)



Source: Media analysis conducted by Meltwater

Local media and Helsingin Sanomat were outlets for opinion pieces and editorials. Editorials were more often positive than negative (17% in comparison to 8%), while opinion pieces were more evenly divided between positive (27%) and negative (24%). In local media, the share of opinion pieces not written by development policy specialists was higher and the writers had stronger stance against development co-operation in general.

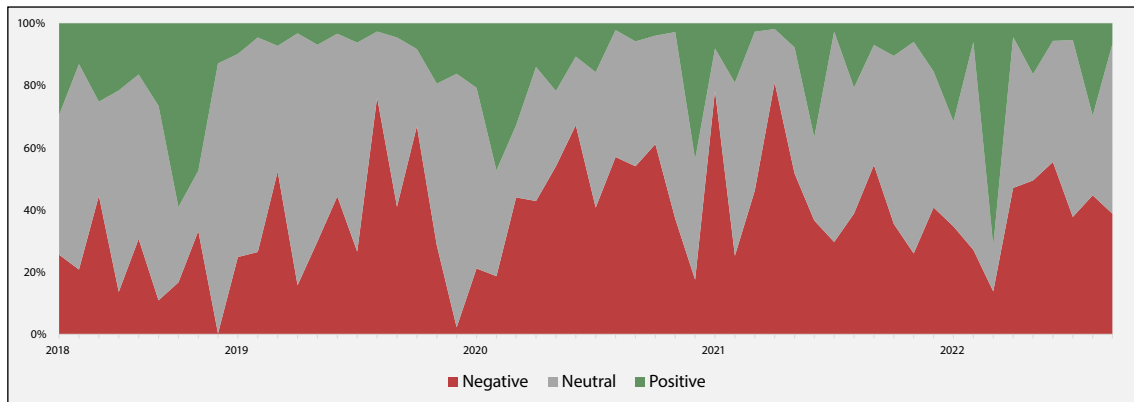
The amount of both negative as well as positive content has increased slightly over the period which could indicate that the polarized debate (that is for example found on Twitter, see further below) is somewhat more present also in digital media. Positive news often focused on highlighting the achievements of development co-operation, while the negative coverage strongly revolved around scandals, misuse of development aid funds or debates around funding.

From 2018 and onwards, Meltwater's analysis also includes the measure of 'Social Echo' that is showing the number of reactions (likes, comments, share) in social media stemming from the news articles (see Figure 5). News articles with a negative tone gain more reactions in social media. Even though the total share of articles with negative tone was only 13%, the share of all reactions was 38%. Negative articles that received the most reactions included statements by members of the Finns Party or someone associated with the party. Most reacted to was an article about Pauli Vahtera's calculations on how much immigration costs to the society. Suomen Uutiset, the Finns party media outlet, had the most reactions of all news outlets, as well as the most negative articles published of all the media outlets included in the analysis.

Articles with a neutral or positive tone gain less reactions. Those articles with positive tone that still gained some reactions were also most often about funding – increased funding of development co-operation and why it is needed. In such news stories, the government officials were often quoted with positive statements emphasising the importance of development co-operation. Positive content that gained reactions also included editorials in Helsingin Sanomat that called for increased efforts to improve global equality as well as to tackle climate change through development co-operation. The most reacted article discussed the Marin government's decision to increase development and climate funding.



Figure 5 Share of Voice of Monthly sentiment and reactions (Social Echo) (September 2015 – October 2022)



Source: Media analysis conducted by Meltwater

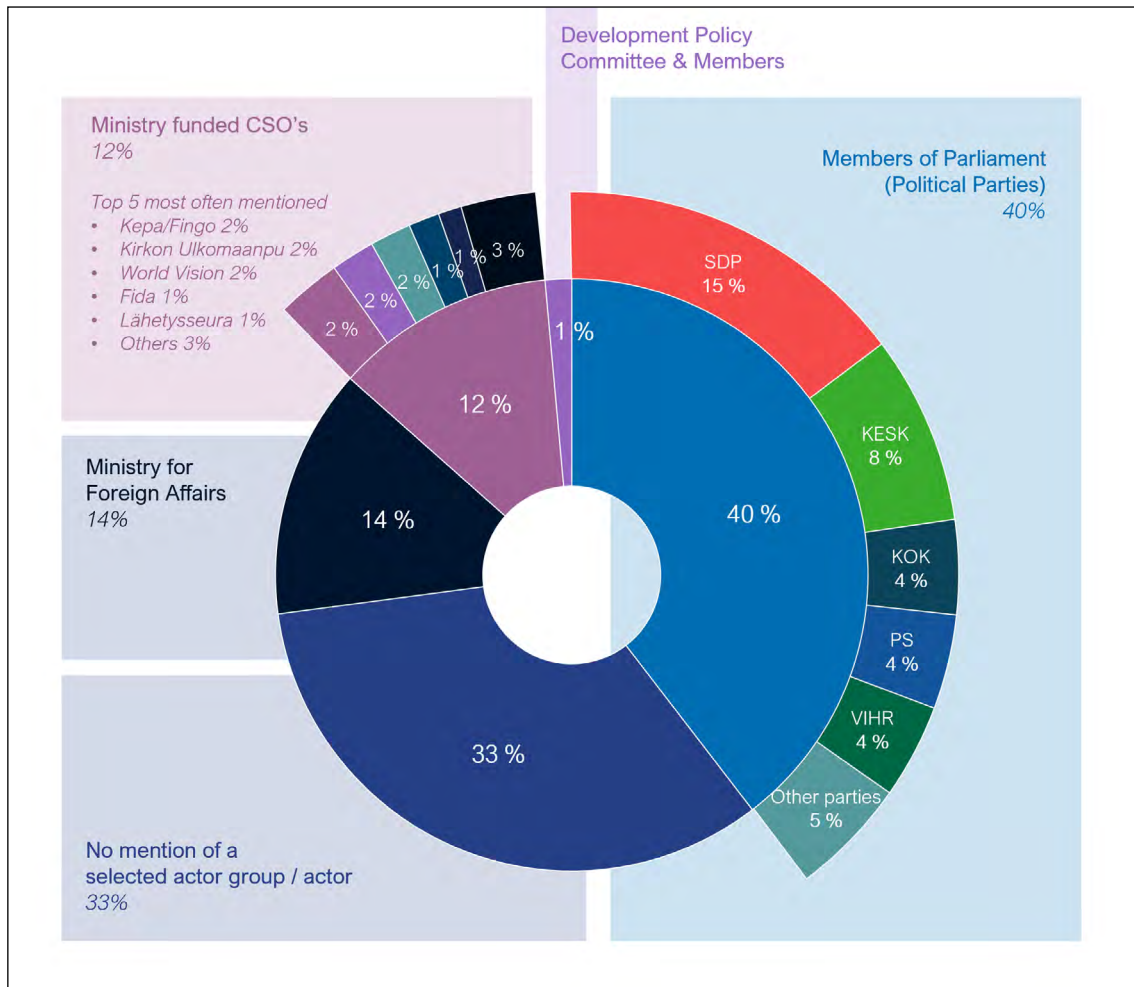
3.2 Actor groups in coverage about development co-operation

A little less than 70% of the total articles about development co-operation include mentioning of an organisation or an individual (Figure 6). Politicians are the most visible group of actors in the coverage and make up 40% of the total number of articles. As has been shown previously, particularly during election campaigns questions about development co-operation are mentioned. Yearly budget discussions and occasional additions or redirections of funding were other prominent themes when development co-operation and members of parliament were mentioned together in the articles.

The four biggest parties were dominating the coverage. Smaller parties, like the Greens, did not show very often. The Finns Party members did not gain as much media attention in digital media as on Twitter. Still, the Finns clearly stand out as more critical toward the development agenda compared to all the other parties. When it comes to positive articles and share of voice, Kristillisdemokraati (Christian Democrats) was the top party, even though both SDP and Keskusta (Centre Party) had a higher number of articles with a positive tone.

MFA was mentioned in 14% of the articles and had particular three peaks in number of articles during the period (see Figure 7). The first was in early 2017 when the ministry allocated additional development funds for sexual and reproductive health. During the same period Finnwatch was also criticising Finnfund for using money in tax. The second period was in May 2021 when it was announced that development co-operation funding was cut. The highest peak was in August 2021 when MFA was visible in the crisis coverage as a provider of development aid and funds to Afghanistan and as an expert to inform about the situation on the ground (see further below about MFA in the media coverage).

Figure 6 Actor groups visible in articles about development co-operation, digital media (number of mentions in percentage)



Source: Media analysis conducted by Meltwater

Civil Society Organisations (CSO) funded by MFA were mentioned in a little more than every tenth article (12%), out of which Kepa/Fingo (Finnish non-governmental organisation coalition), Kirkon Ulkomaanapu and World Vision were the three most visible organisations. The most visible media events relating to these actor groups are presented in Figure 7. In April 2016, CSOs claim that “development funding cuts affect the lives of hundreds of thousands”. A couple of months later, Kepa stated a similar message in the news: “development funding cuts deprive help from millions of people”. Also, in October 2017, Kepa was in the news arguing that “Finland’s climate action and equality support have collapsed after development funding cuts”. One last peak was in June 2019 with two different media stories showing at the same time: Fida ended its projects in North Korea and Finland’s first waste food store, operated by KUA, proved to be more popular than expected. The last-mentioned media story was not about development co-operation, but since the actor was a CSO working with development co-operation it was picked up and included in the Meltwater analysis.



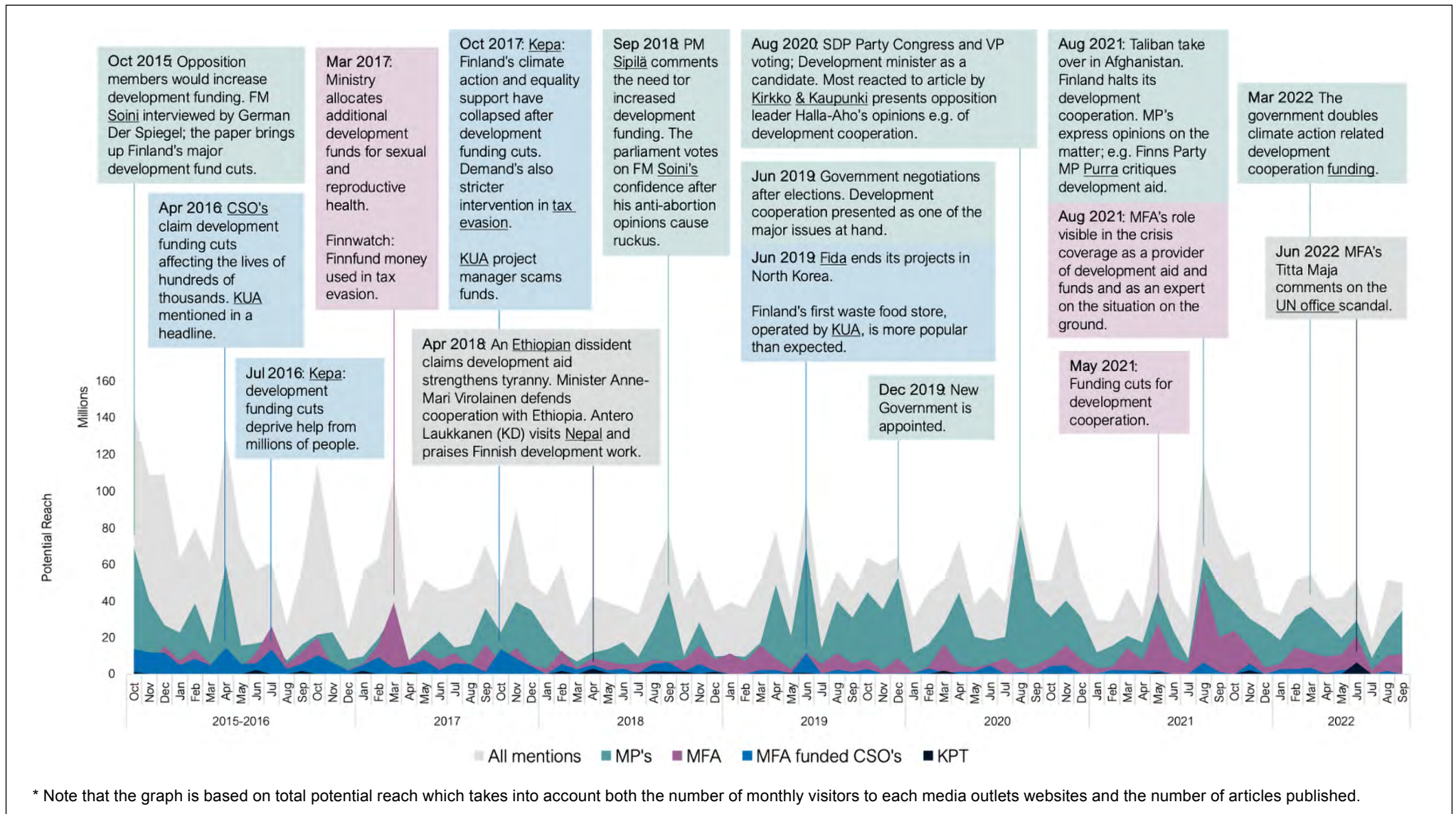
The Meltwater analysis shows that traditional images of development co-operation tend to be rather common in the coverage. For example, church employees were presented in the media in articles that covered ongoing projects, often with a positive tone. These projects represent often a more traditional form of aid and are not as often criticised. Regularly media, both large, small and for example women's magazines also shared stories and portraits of other individuals participating in development aid work (and/or travel). For example, a longer article in the magazine *Anna* about a person who has been working in peace and conflict context in Sudan²⁵. Most often these articles were positive in tone and represented the (Western) individual as the main character. Local agency was more seldom visible in this context, but another example²⁶, also in *Anna*, shows that there are also examples of such type of coverage.

25 *Anna*, December 2018, <https://tinyurl.com/5mtjz95w>

26 *Anna*, January 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/vmy8pwxh>



Figure 7 Actor groups in digital media (September 2015 – October 2022)



Source: Media analysis conducted by Meltwater



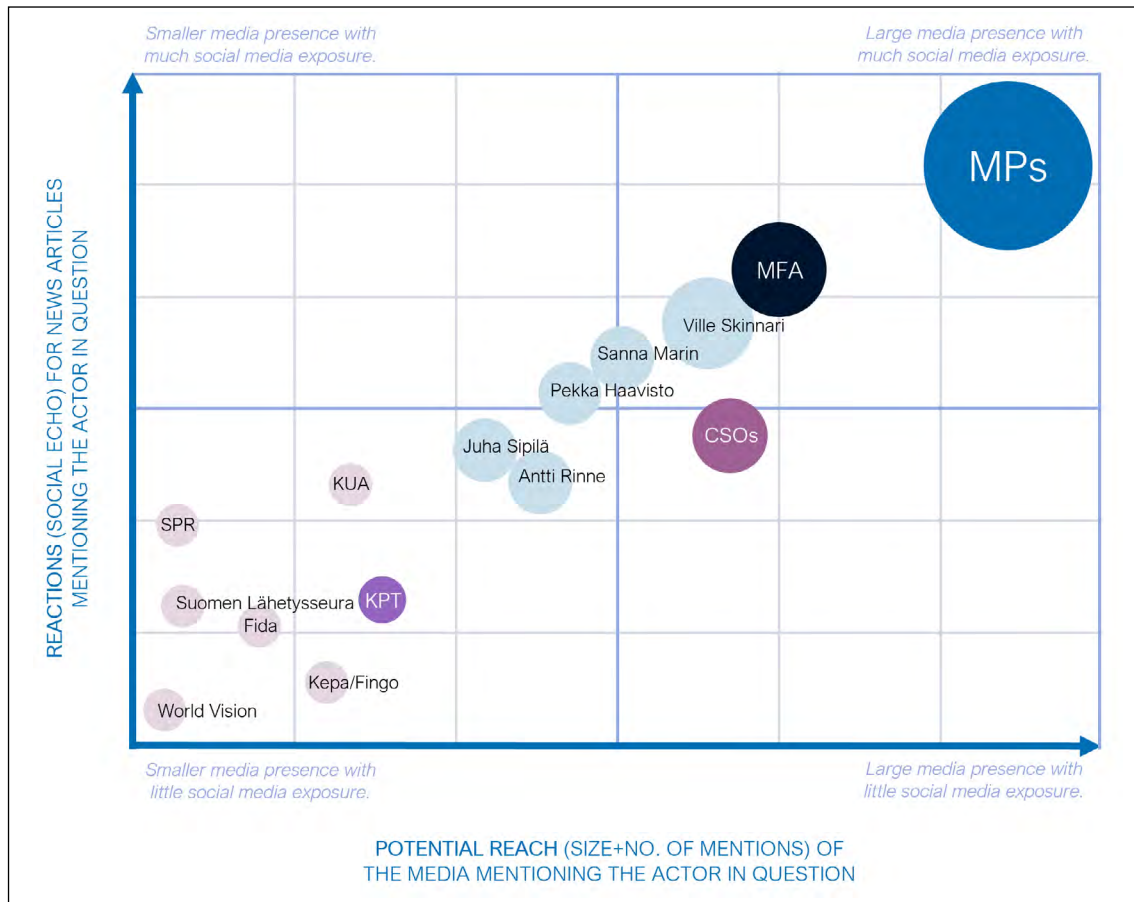
Companies were not highly visible in the media in regard to development work in partner countries, but the sector was not altogether missing. The articles varied from being about businesses participating in campaigns, having business relations in developing countries or encouraging investment in developing countries. One example of this coverage is an article in YLE about a Finnish company working in Kenya as an employment platform²⁷. Another example is about the role of private sector support in corporate development, not focusing on any specific company²⁸. Most articles in which companies were mentioned were positive or neutral in tone, and these types of news also often emphasized the need to expand traditional development co-operation models to more equal opportunities through business. Many politicians raised the importance of private sector participation in development co-operation, highlighting the co-operation part over more traditionally perceived aid – financial or otherwise. Voices from research are almost entirely absent from the coverage. Selected researchers that have been funded by MFA and focus on development co-operation appeared only 14 times in total during the entire analysis period from 2015 to 2022.

The dominant role of the members of parliament (MP) as the most visible actor group can further be illustrated when taking both the potential reach of the media outlets as well as the reactions/social echo into account (see Figure 8). Large media outlets frequently cover news about politicians and these articles also tend to gain reactions in social media. The visibility in Figure 8 can be seen as the highest possible regarding development co-operation related news coverage among the analysed actor groups. For comparison, individual top MPs – who have been or are current ministries – have been positioned on the graph (light blue) to emphasize how individual players in key actor groups can also gain major visibility.

27 YLE, June 2018, <https://yle.fi/a/3-10222293>

28 Helsingin Sanomat, September, 2020, <https://www.hs.fi/paakirjoitukset/art-2000005837053.html>

Figure 8 Actor groups divided by potential reach and reactions/social echo



Source: Media analysis conducted by Meltwater

3.3 Criteria that make development co-operation newsworthy in digital media

News do not mirror reality, and news-making processes are structured according to certain criteria for what is considered newsworthy (Harcup and O'Neill, 2017). Events are not out there ready for journalists – or others, such as communications professionals – to pick up and forward as news. News-making processes are shaped by multiple factors that include everything from journalists' normative ideas on the news' value of potential stories to practical, economic, and format considerations (Strömbäck and Karlsson; Hopmann, 2012). There is no shortage of lists of criteria for newsworthiness (in the form of event properties) in journalism studies, including aspects such as closeness to the audience in time and space, references to elite persons, something negative, conflict-related, extraordinary, or entertaining (Harcup and O'Neill, 2017). Newsworthiness may also be created through the use of different storytelling techniques, such as simplification, polarisation, dramatization, and stereotyping (Strömbäck, 2019). News stories therefore tend to be short and episodic, focus on a single event, favour unambiguity, and include human faces.

The Meltwater media analysis, and also evaluation team's interviews with journalists (see more in the Case Study on the Development Academy above), indicate that issues about development co-operation are not considered newsworthy in their own right. Newsworthiness needs to be



actively created. This can, for example, be done if clear links between everyday life of Finns and development co-operation are established or if something happening in the world makes the issues of development co-operation part of a domestic political context. At the moment, foreign policy is for example very much on the news agenda because of the war in Ukraine and the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) process for Finland's membership.

The Meltwater analysis gives some indications about when development co-operation issues have been considered worthy to turn into news. Peaks of coverage during the analysed period centres around domestic political matters such as the budget discussion and elections, but there are also examples of a few MFA reports that have made it into the news (for examples of news peaks for one year of the evaluation period, see Figure 9, and for the rest of the years, see the Meltwater report):

- When the government presents **the annual budget**, and also sometimes when the opposition presents the **shadow budget**: In this coverage, development co-operation is not necessarily in focus of the discussion, but rather mentioned as part of the budget.
- The time of **election campaign and formation of the new government**: During 2019 when the new government was appointed, they – among other things – announced that development funding would be increased. In 2020 when Sanna Marin was appointed as the new SDP leader and the Minister for Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade, Ville Skinnari, was a candidate for vice-chairperson as well as in December the same year when ministerial positions were changed and it was announced that Ville Skinnari would continue as Minister for Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade.
- **Reports** that concern development co-operation are launched (e.g. MFA result reports, CSO reports) and picked up through for example a specific statement or something else that is of particular interest for the media: One example is an article in YLE from February 2016 in which the minister comments an MFA report that shows a shift in development policy after major cuts in funding combined with the ongoing refugee crisis in Europe. The shift in focus has made more private companies operatives and less funds for CSOs working with the most vulnerable populations²⁹. Another example is found in *Turun Sanomat* publishing a short article by STT in August 2018 about an MFA report that calls for stronger participation and more funds for development co-operation, particularly in education³⁰.
- Certain **events**, e.g. in August 2021 when Finland interrupted development funding to Afghanistan, but provided EUR 3 million for UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) to aid refugees in the country: One example of an article, in which the MFA was given the role as an expert and could give accounts on the situation in the country was published in October 2021 in *Helsingin Sanomat*³¹. Another example of a longer article with development co-operation in focus was about terrorism benefitting from climate change and the role of development co-operation in Somalia³². Yet one more example of an article that discusses the role of development co-operation in relation to a specific event or situation was about Brexit and its consequences for development co-operation funding in the European Union (EU). A representative from the MFA was commenting the situation³³.

29 YLE, February 2016, <https://yle.fi/a/3-8649042>

30 Turun Sanomat, August 2018, <https://www.ts.fi/uutiset/4054170>

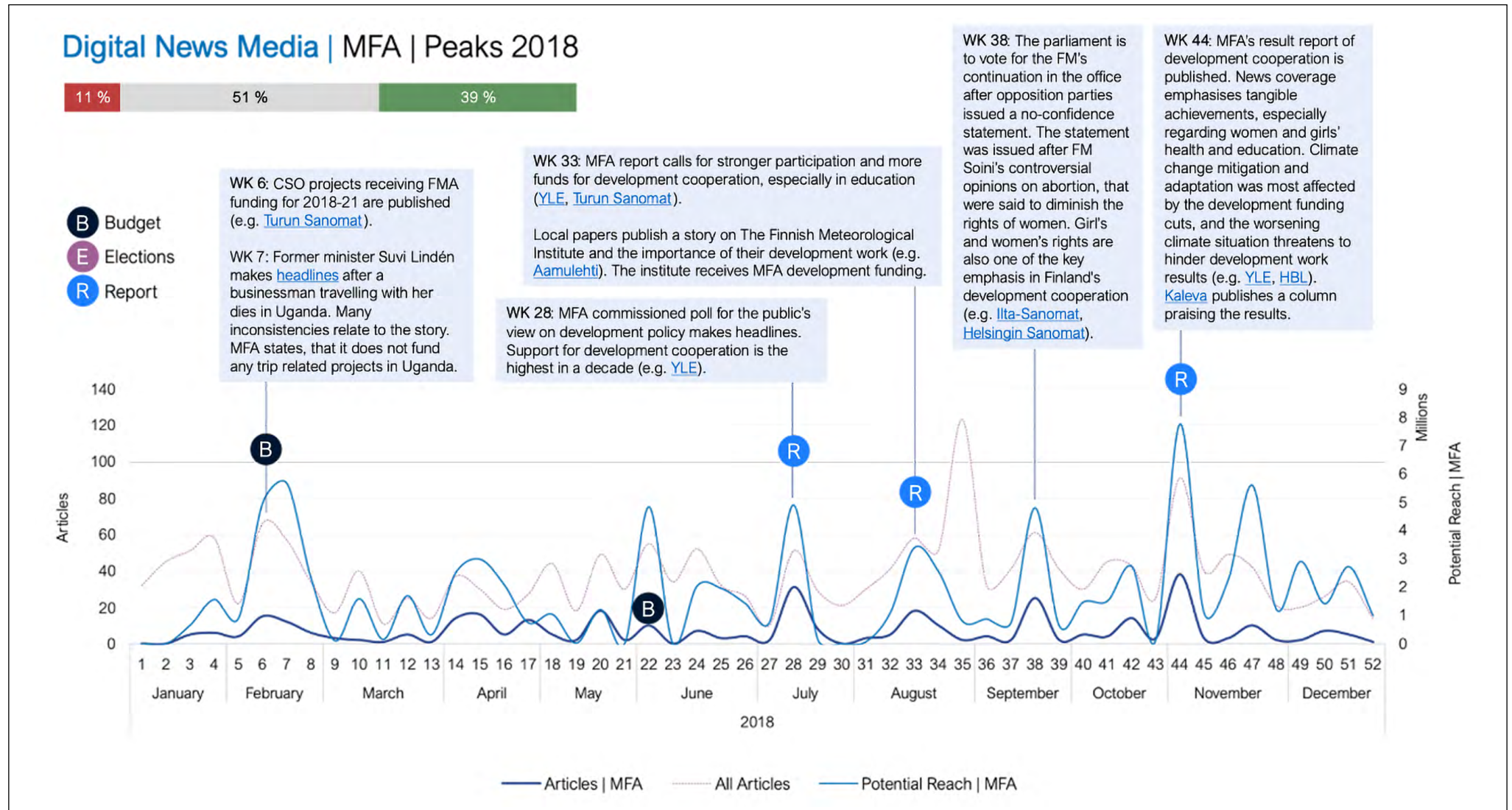
31 Helsingin Sanomat, October 2021, <https://www.hs.fi/ulkomaat/art-2000008307616.html>

32 YLE, March 2020, <https://yle.fi/a/3-11255222>

33 YLE, July 2017, <https://yle.fi/a/3-9718249>



Figure 9 Peaks in news coverage mentioning the MFA in digital media (2018)



Source: Media analysis conducted by Meltwater



It is important to keep in mind that the number of mentionings does not say anything about the quality of the news coverage or how and to what extent development co-operation was developed about in the news story. The highest peaks in the coverage about development co-operation – about the budget, elections, and ministerial positions – are not necessarily specifically about the questions as such, but rather part of broader stories about the political landscape. In this landscape the issues about development co-operation become part of a domestic political debate.



4 The image of development co-operation on Twitter

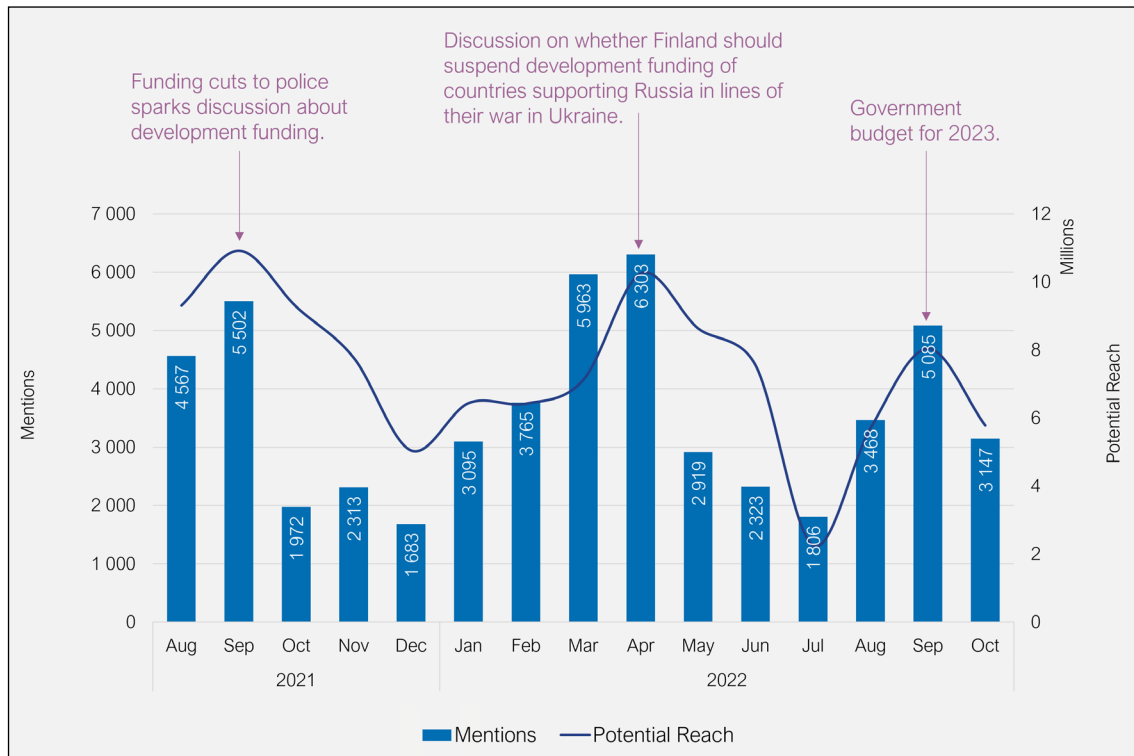
Twitter is not to be seen as a representative of neither social media nor Finnish people in general. In 2021, according to Innewise (2021), only 25% of Finns used Twitter on a weekly basis. Meltwater's analysis also shows an overrepresentation of Twitter accounts linked to the Finns Party. 43% of the tweets were negative in sentiment toward development co-operation. This can be compared with for example the MFA survey from 2021 that showed that 68% of Finns stated that they think that development co-operation is important.

Twitter is however still treated as an important platform for information sharing and interaction by many professional groups in the Finnish society and it is a social media channel that has been prioritized by MFA in their communication. In this regard it is a relevant channel to include in our analysis. The monitoring and analysis by Meltwater cover 15 months, from August 2021 until October 2022, when in total almost 54,000 tweets had mentions about development co-operation (see Figure 10).

Although there were mentions throughout the period, some months stood out in the number of tweets and reactions to them. The content concerned mainly development co-operation from the perspective of funding, and how much Finland is spending on development co-operation as well as how this money could be used domestically. More in-depth discussions how development works or could work better were almost non-existent.



Figure 10 Tweets and mentions about development co-operation/aid/policy and potential reach (15 months, August 2021 – October 2022)



Source: Media analysis conducted by Meltwater

Potential reach for Twitter coverage is based on the poster's following. Higher reach figures indicate wider exposure. To keep the data comparable, only desktop reach is accounted for, since mobile traffic has only been collected from 2019 onwards. Traffic from mobile devices usually surpasses desktop viewership, so it is good to keep in mind these users are not included in the reach for this report.

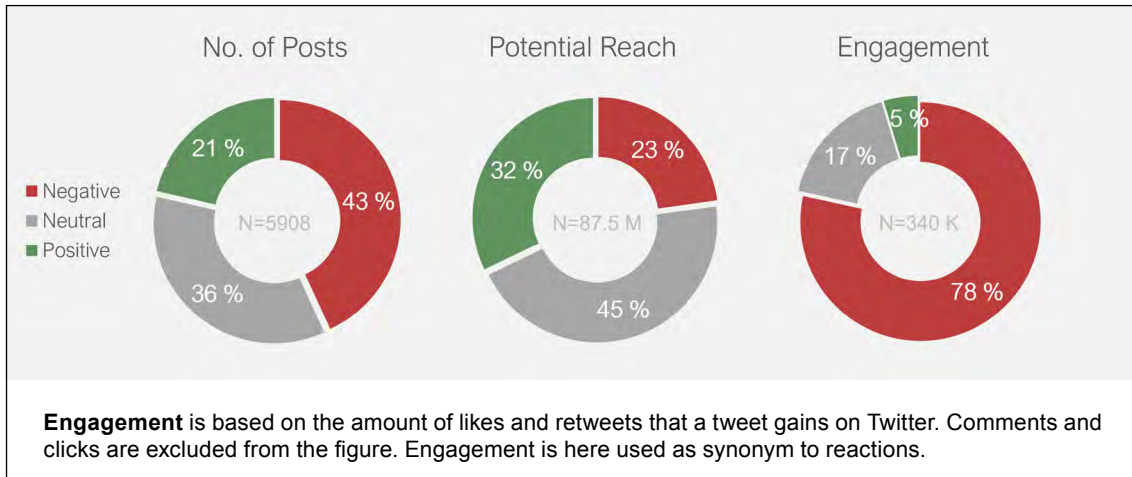
In general, Meltwater's analysis shows that the discussions on Twitter were most often one-sided and focused on budgetary concerns. Actors that were trying to bring up positive elements of development co-operation faced – despite often high follower base – difficulties to engage other users. On the other hand, actors that expressed a strong stance against development co-operation were gaining significant engagement even though they had smaller follower bases.

4.1 Negative tweets dominate and spur engagement

The sentiment analysis of the content on Twitter is based on a selection of users and tweets. Accounts with the highest number of followers and all tweets with minimum 100 reactions are included. The overall sentiment or tone of communication on Twitter between August 2021 and October 2022 was quite evenly distributed between neutral, positive, and negative posts (see Figure 11). Twitter is a polarized platform and especially right-wing politics, almost always with negative views on development co-operation, have a loyal follower base. Even though the tweets with a negative tone on development co-operation were posted and reposted by accounts with rather

few followers (if compared to accounts posting neutral as well as positive tweets), they were the tweets that by far gained the most reactions resulting in almost 80% of the total engagement share during the period. The amount of engagement also highly affects the visibility of a publication to other users, since Twitter algorithms favour posts that spur conversation. The peaks on Twitter both in March/April 2022 and September 2022 were mainly created due to negative comments about development co-operation (see Figure 10).

Figure 11 Tone of communication on Twitter (August 2021 – October 2022)



Source: Media analysis conducted by Meltwater

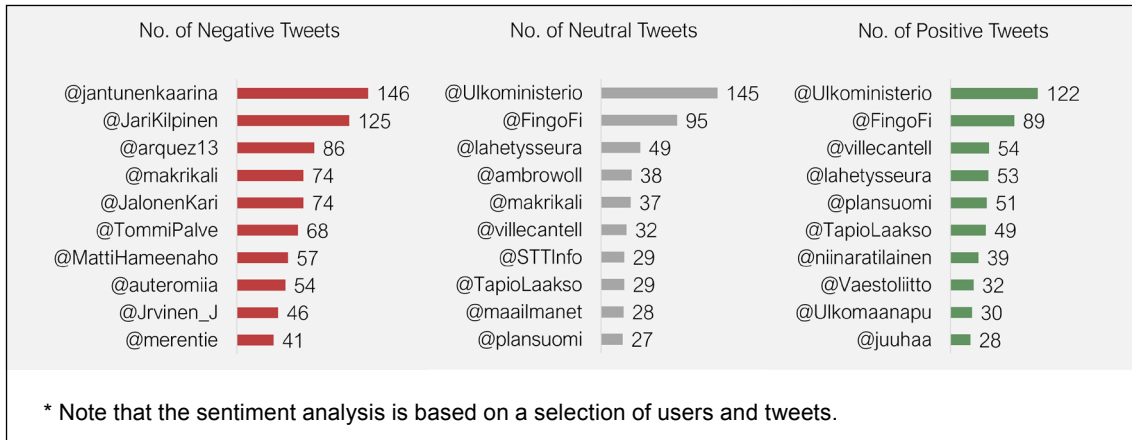
The sentiment analysis clearly shows that most tweets about development co-operation are posted by two very separate groups. The two groups can be categorized into *nationalists*, emphasising the needs of Finnish people and Finland’s domestic issues and being critical towards development co-operation funding; and *internationalists* emphasising the need for global solidarity and the benefits of international co-operation to the Finnish society. These two broad groups seldom meet in the online landscape and they largely lack links to each other.

The most active Twitter accounts during the analysed period have been critical towards development co-operation funding. Those accounts are often owned by domestic political actors and most of them are members of, or somehow linked to, the Finns Party.

Looking at the lists of the actors with most reactions on Twitter, political figures with links to the Finns Party were highly dominating. They were driving critical discussion arguing that development co-operation does not offer much value for the Finnish society other than maybe a possibility to control migration flows (see Figure 12).



Figure 12 Top-10 users divided by sentiment, Twitter (August 2021 – October 2022)



Source: Media analysis conducted by Meltwater

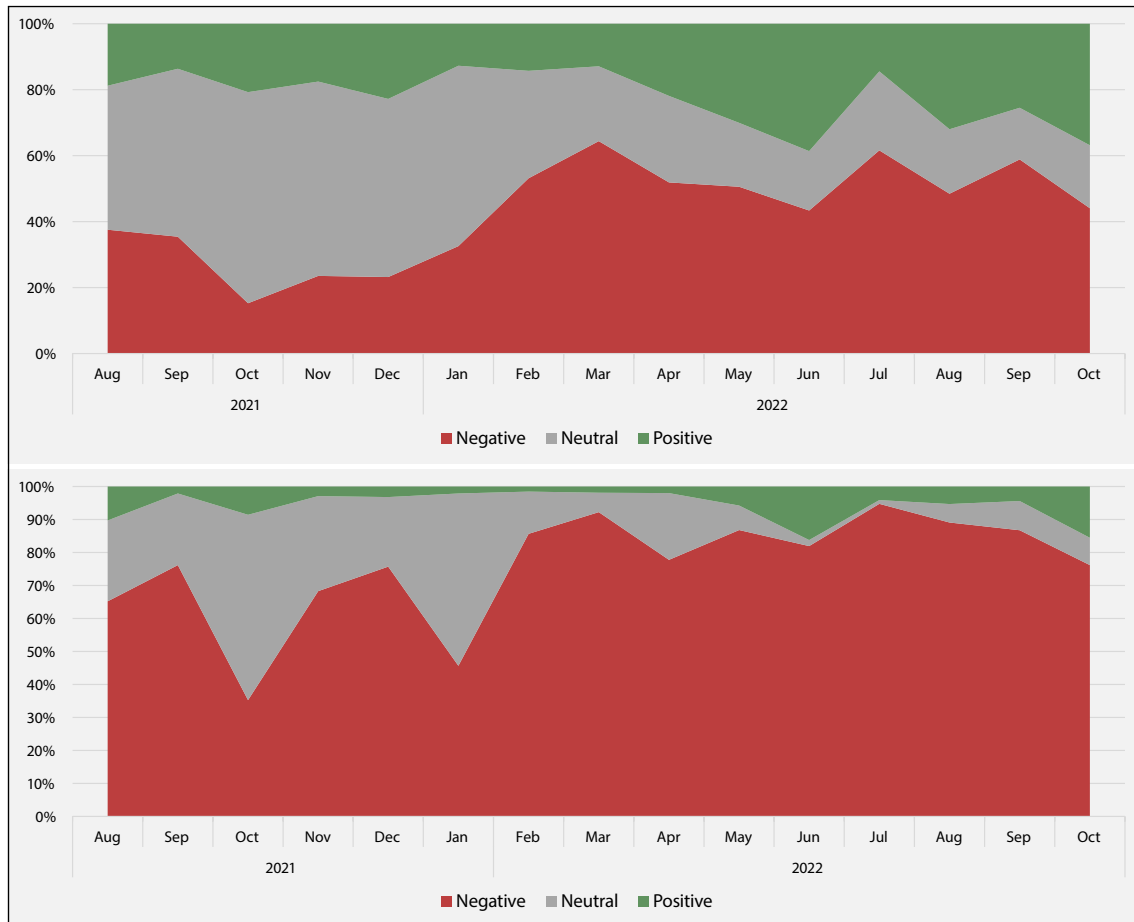
Actors that tried to bring up positive aspects of development co-operation tended to have a high follower base, but were unable to engage other users in retweeting or into conversations, thus resulting in limited engagement. The official account of the MFA was the account with the highest number of both neutral and positive tweets during the period. Positive tweets about development co-operation concerned for example issues of international solidarity and the benefits that tackling climate change as well as improving education globally have for Finland.

In addition to people representing the MFA, the accounts posting positive tweets included stakeholders involved in implementing development co-operation, such as Fingo, Plan and UNICEF (United Nations Children’s Fund). MFA – together with the Prime Minister’s Office and Fingo – have posted almost solely positive and neutral tweets and their presence on Twitter explained the high share of neutral and positive reach (see Figure 11). The most followed Twitter accounts included also prominent figures of politics and society acting as opinion leaders, such as Sanna Marin, Tuomas Enbuske, Jari Sarasvuo and Pekka Haavisto.

From early 2022 onwards the polarized tone of communication on Twitter about development co-operation was strengthened. The increase in comments viewing the topic as negative is more visible, but the positive mentions seem to grow in response to these comments, which makes the neutral visibility decrease over time (see Figure 13).



Figure 13 Share of Voice of Monthly sentiment and number of mentions vs engagement, Twitter (August 2021 – October 2022)



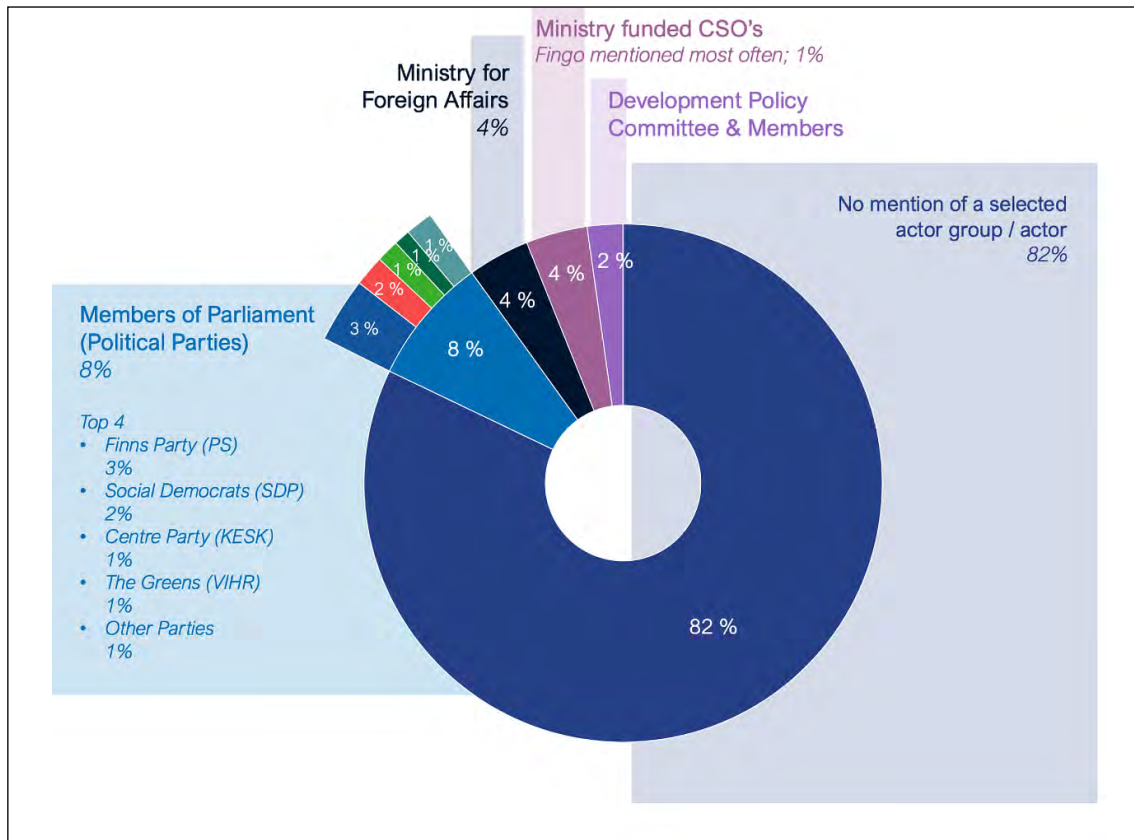
Source: Media analysis conducted by Meltwater

4.2 Actor groups in tweets about development co-operation

The selected actor groups possess a much smaller media space on Twitter compared to more traditional media. More than four out of five (82%) of the Twitter posts, retweets or answers were not written by or mentioning any of the selected actor groups or actors (versus 33% in digital media). Members of parliament had the largest share of all the actor groups on Twitter, with the Finns Party publishing or being mentioned by far the most often (3% of all mentions). From other politicians, e.g. left Alliance MP's gained a noticeable amount of likes for reacting to the Finns Party's calls for funding cuts, but these posts did not relate to development co-operation per se (see Figure 14).



Figure 14 Actor groups on Twitter, number of tweets, retweets and comments in percentage



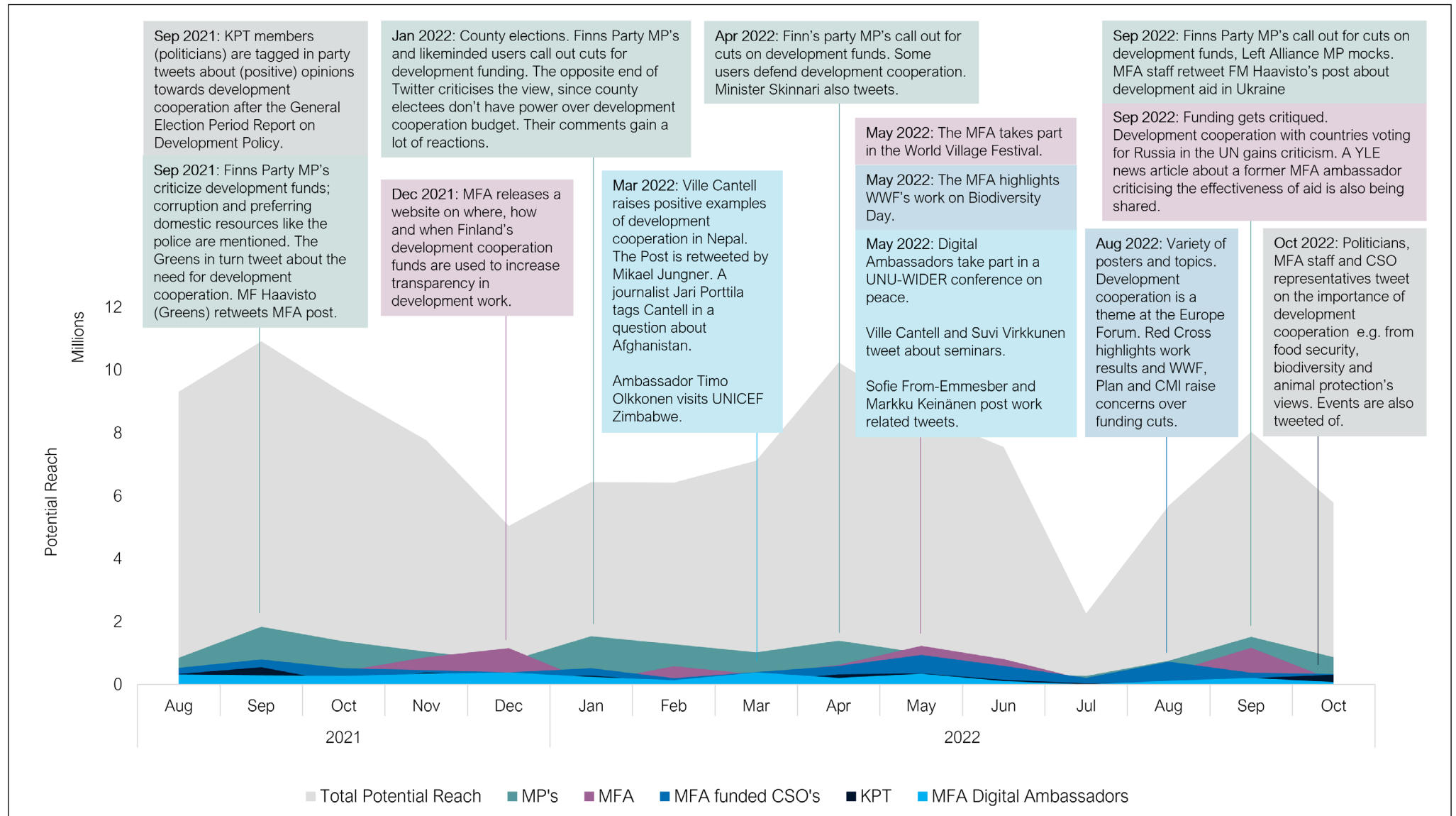
Source: Media analysis conducted by Meltwater

MFA had a share of 4% of visibility, including all mentions of the ministry and its digital ambassadors (see more about MFA visibility on Twitter below). The three events from August 2021 to October 2022 that the MFA was mentioned in the most on Twitter were: when the MFA website was released to strengthen transparency in development work (Dec 2021); MFA taking part in the World Village Festival (May 2022); and when Finland's development funding to countries voting for Russia in the United Nations was criticised (Aug 2022) (see Figure 15).

Ministry funded CSOs were more varied in terms of organisations mentioned on Twitter (mostly by their own accounts), even though share of visibility was overall smaller than in digital media. Fingo (former Kepa) was the most visible, with Felm, Plan, Abilis, Fida and Finn Church Aid following. Still, Fingo had only a share of about 1% of the visibility surrounding development co-operation, and the others a much smaller share. The Development Policy Committee (KPT) members had a similar visibility to that of organisations, with some overlapping posts between them. Since KPT has MPs as members, these were the ones driving the visibility for this actor group with Sanna Antikainen (Finns Party) and Anne-Mari Virolainen (Kokoomus (National Coalition Party)) in the lead. WWF's (World Wide Fund for Nature) Anne Tarvainen was the third most visible person, with MFA's Titta Maja as fourth. All four of them had a less than 0.5% of total Twitter visibility for development co-operation related discussion.



Figure 15 Share of Voice of potential reach by actor groups



Source: Media analysis conducted by Meltwater



4.3 Topics and types of questions suitable for Twitter

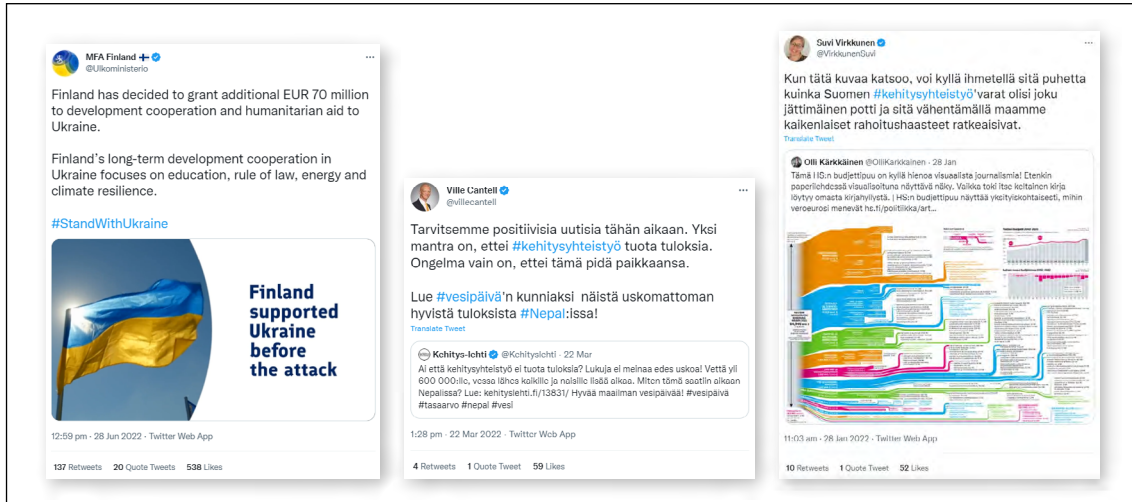
The nature of content attractive in social media is significantly different from a traditional media logic. The character of content is also heavily dependent on the type of platform (for example Twitter is very different from Instagram or LinkedIn). Hermida and Mellado (2020) offer a framework for how to understand the dynamics of content on Twitter. According to their analysis, there are five dimensions that are decisive for what type of material is suitable on Twitter:

- *Structure and design* – chronological manner, posts are evanescent and ephemeral as they are quickly overtaken by more recent tweets. The platform is designed to be very much in the now, event-based and event-driven, immediate and instant exchanges of fragment of information.
- *Aesthetics* (verbal and visual styles) – simplicity, brief textual messages that are concise and to-the-point. Even though other media elements such as images, GIFs (graphics interchange formats), short video clips can be included in the posts, short bursts of text still dominate.
- *Genre conventions* – Twitter represents a form of content that privileges the rapid production and dissemination of fragments of information. Speedy and pithy textual exchanges. Over time developed increasingly to reward news and information, rather than personal/private conversations. Tweets are expected to be related to current events.
- *Rhetorical strategies* – texts are seen as a work-in-progress, and almost as a replication of an oral, conversational form of rhetoric: “*The intent and purpose of a tweet is to present a sliver of information, which by its very nature is incomplete*” (Hermida and Mellado, 2020). This also means that the rhetoric on Twitter does not go very well hand-in-hand with formal professional communication (such as the MFA or traditional journalism), but are favoring more personal and emotional tones, and often also include grammatical or punctuation errors.
- *Interaction and intentionality* – interaction is favored and the hashtag functions as a mechanism that organize posts around issues or topics. It serves as an “*updated and interactive index of public discourse*” (Hermida and Mellado, 2020). Interaction is treated as a ‘social currency’ and mentions can be seen as a way to “*tapping someone on the shoulder*” (ibid.).

The five dimensions show that information and knowledge are expected to be translated very differently than when in digital media. As social media today are key part of the everyday information and news flow in society, the presence of these channels is influencing traditional values of newsworthiness. As a consequence, to make people react on posts, share content and engage in conversations have become increasingly important regardless of media.

The five aspects clearly also show the difficulties for civil servants at the MFA to participate actively and create suitable, short content produced as events are happening, as well as personal and emotional in character. See Figure 16 for three examples of tweets from the MFA.

Figure 16 Three examples of tweets posted by MFA/representatives of the MFA



Source: Twitter



5 Visibility of MFA and key themes of development co-operation

In this section, two aspects of MFA visibility in digital media and on Twitter are analysed more in detail:

- The number of mentionings of MFA;
- The visibility of key themes that reflect basic principles of the Finnish development co-operation and thus topics that are prioritized by the MFA in their communication.

Together these two aspects give a more in depth understanding of the output of MFA media work. It is important to remember that the visibility in the media and on Twitter is of course not reflecting the total amount of media work done by the MFA and VIE-30, but rather gives an idea about the extent and ways that the MFA is able to reach out to target groups through media. There may be plenty of work done that never makes it into the everyday news flow. Also, the MFA provides other actors, not least journalists, with information and are not necessarily given credit for it in the actual news content. This is not possible to conclude based on the media analysis conducted by Meltwater, but our interviews with journalists witness that they do sometimes use information that they receive from MFA in their work, such as tips of international guests to interview and specific questions that they need to answer in their stories (most often background info).

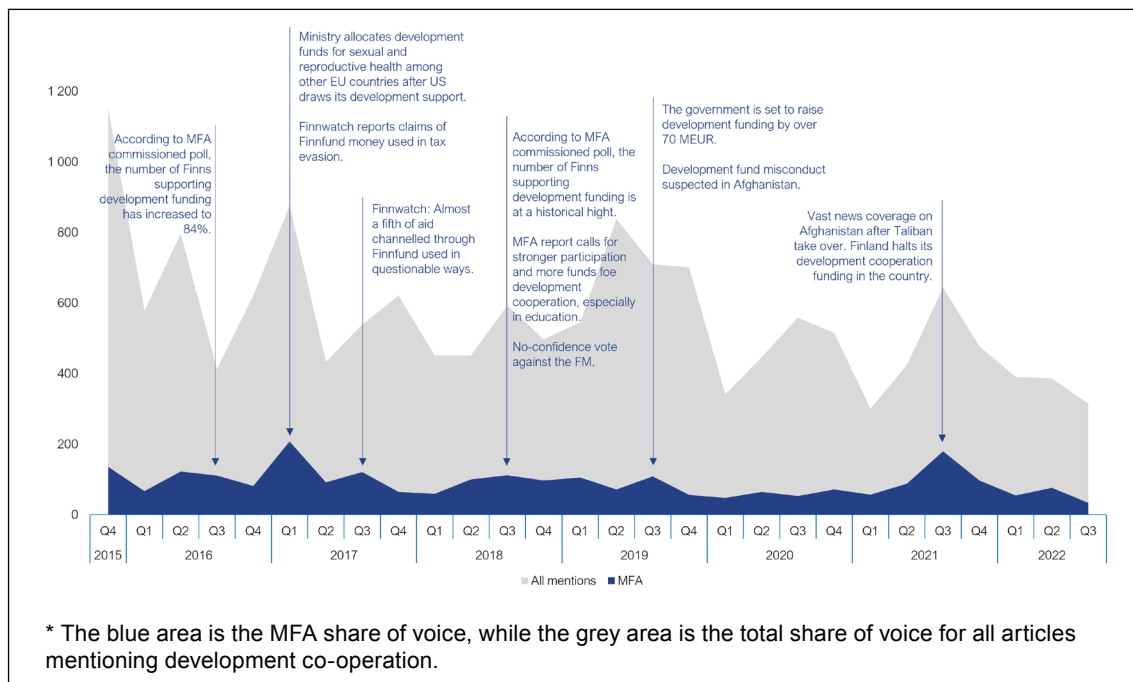
5.1 MFA share of voice in digital media

The MFA has been able to reach the public through digital media to a certain extent. As shown above, it is generally rather difficult to reach out with information about development co-operation in the everyday news coverage in Finnish media. According to the Meltwater media analysis, the number of articles that mention the MFA in 2015-22 is 2,541 in digital media which makes up 16% of the total amount of articles mentioning development co-operation. Measured in potential to reach this is 864 million (18% of the total reach during the period).³⁴ These articles are relatively evenly spread over the years during the period with the highest number of articles in 2017 (the year with most positive articles about development co-operation during the period) and the least in 2020 (see Figure 17).

³⁴ Potential reach figures reflect the sum of potential viewership for publications, websites and social media posts. SimilarWeb (Meltwater's editorial content partner) provides monthly viewership figures of online publications from across the globe. The numbers are based on monthly website traffic, and do not reflect the amount each article has been viewed.



Figure 17 Timeline – MFA Share of Voice in digital media



Source: Media analysis conducted by Meltwater

Of all the mentioning of MFA, 7% were in the headlines and 16% in the leads of the articles. This means that the majority of mentions are made in the articles' body text. According to Meltwater, these mentions include everything from expert interviews with strong share of voice to side-line mentions that are not really about the work of the MFA and are not affecting the overall media visibility of the MFA to any certain extent.

The media analysis by Meltwater shows that when a topic or event is on the agenda – such as the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan in August 2021 – representatives from the MFA are most likely asked to comment and explain about the situation. The MFA cannot choose what is the focus of the media coverage, and in this particular situation they were given a lot of attention as an expert voice in the media. However, at the same time the discussion also involved questions about the long-term usefulness of Finnish development co-operation.

The share of voice of the MFA also includes coverage about e.g. cases involving misuse of development funds, such as reports about problems with funded projects in Zambia in October 2016 and one year later, when the Finnwatch report questioned the ways that aid channelled through Finnfund was used (and MFA quoted defending Finnfund and its project work, see e.g. YLE 2017).

Events that put global issues on the agenda make the knowledge and expertise of MFA attractive and newsworthy. Even though the questions do not necessarily focus on development co-operation, such periods may give MFA and VIE-30 opportunities to speak more broadly about development co-operation in general and about for example ongoing development projects. This is of course easier in situations where MFA is not facing critic, but the events are neutral in character. Even in situations of more critical events there might be opportunities for the MFA to explain about the need for and the content of development co-operation.

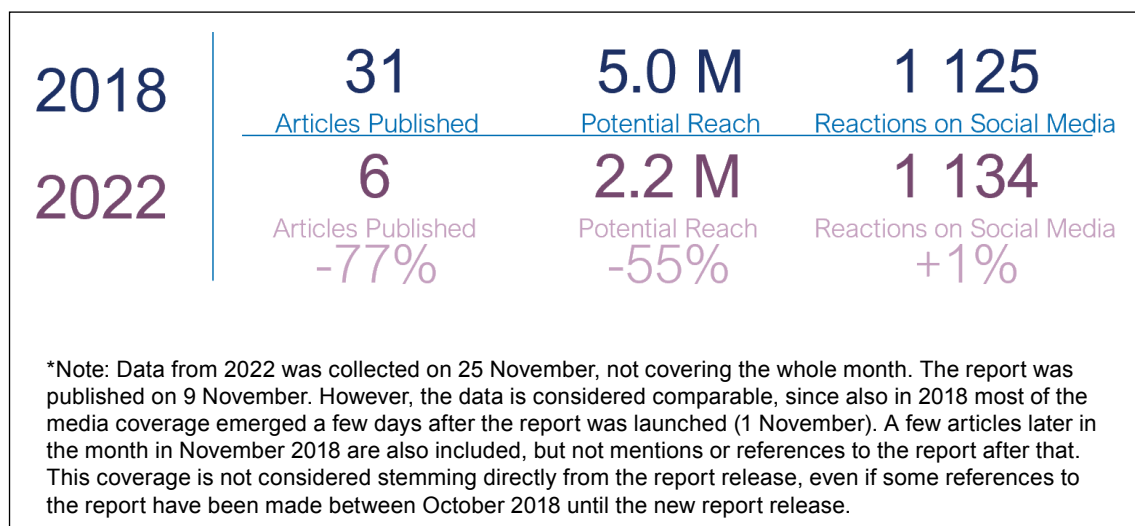


During the period, the MFA has released two **reports on the results of development co-operation** and policy – the first one in November 2018 and the second in November 2022 (see Figure 18). In 2018, the report launch was noted widely in national media as well as in local media outlets. Most articles were positive in sentiment towards the report, raising examples of tangible results achieved with the support of Finnish development co-operation, especially regarding women and girls’ health and education. Also, the news in 2018 covered the issue of climate change mitigation and adaptation being most affected by the development funding cuts, and that the worsening climate situation threatens to hinder development work results. The report was picked up by both STT and Uutisuomalainen, which were the biggest drivers for visibility (in terms of number of articles) which made the news about the report to spread widely also in local news outlets.

The 2022 results report gained only six mentions. The major reason for the lack of visibility was because neither of the big news agencies, STT nor Uutisuomalainen, covered the report. During the publication day, Finnish news were dominated by United States (US) elections and Finland’s government crisis stemming from EU’s biodiversity restoration directive. In 2018, the main news topic of the report publication day (1st Nov) was the so called ‘tax day’, when everyone’s income and tax data becomes public. Even though the tax data is a popular news topic, in 2022 there was more debate around the survival of Marin’s government and US election turnout that dominated the media space.

In 2022, *Suomen Uutiset* covered the report in a negative light. In the article, a member of the Finns Party raised concerns in the parliament for government spending and development co-operation with countries siding with Russia. Development funds were also said to disappear in corruption. More positive views towards the report were published in for example *Helsingin Sanomat* – one editorial was published before the MFA report was made public and one opinion article by several CSOs commented on the results after.

Figure 18 Development Co-op Report 2018 and 2022



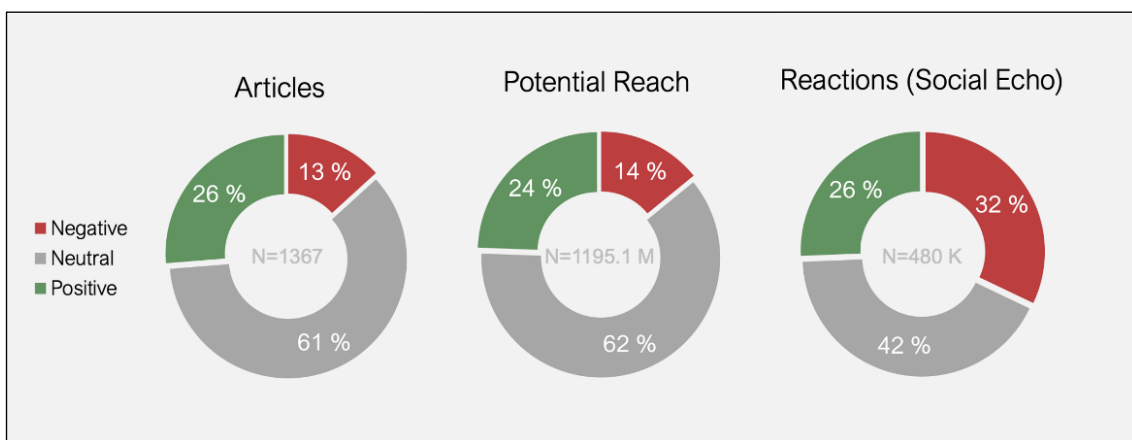
Source: Media analysis conducted by Meltwater

Coverage about development co-operation in digital media in which MFA was mentioned was more often positive in tone in comparison to the total amount of articles during the period (see Figure 19). The positive articles were more often published during year 2018 and the year 2021. In 2018 a lot of the positive coverage stemmed from the development policy results report (mentioned above). In

2021 the coverage was more fragmented, but for example Finland participating in the global effort to help countries suffering badly from the COVID-19 through development aid and the MFA's role and expertise during the crisis in Afghanistan after Taliban takeover cumulated positive coverage.

The most negative articles surfaced during 2019, when the MFA was reported being scammed of EUR 400,000 worth of development funds. Also, a fund misuse case suspicion in Afghanistan created headlines especially in local news. In the same year, YLE released a couple of articles highlighting development co-operation fund misuse cases in general during the past years, and in Zambia particular.

Figure 19 Tone of communication, digital news media, articles including mentioning of the MFA (October 2015 – September 2022)



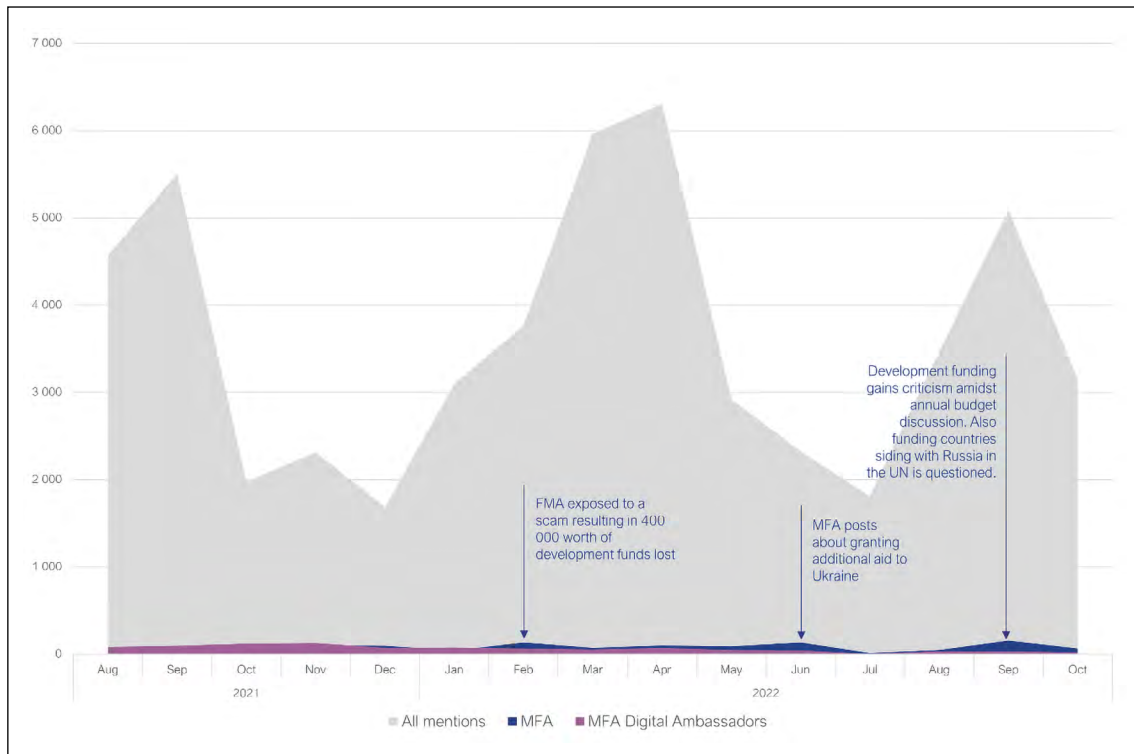
Source: Media analysis conducted by Meltwater

5.2 MFA share of voice on Twitter and the role of digital ambassadors

As shown previously, the content on Twitter favours posts and comments with negative tone. This also means that even though accounts by for example the MFA often tend to have quite high number of followers, as long as their tweets are neutral or positive in tone, they are seldom reacted on. Reactions on Twitter spur visibility as the algorithms prioritize them. This is self-reinforcing and makes less visible posts even less visible over time and vice versa. Figure 20 shows – on the bottom in the graph – the number of all tweets including or mentioning the MFA or its digital ambassadors (MFA personnel) during the period from August 2021 to October 2022 (2% of the tweets are mentioning the MFA). When comparing this share of voice to the total visibility of development co-operation on Twitter, which is shown in grey on the background, the impact of MFA tweets is rather low. Comparing this share to the similar figure from digital media sources (above), the overall impact in the conversation driven by the MFA is less prominent than in traditional media. It is probably fair to conclude that the type of information that the MFA produces and the tonality of its content are not very suitable for what is valued at Twitter (*cf.* section 4.3, above).



Figure 20 MFA Share of Voice on Twitter (August 2021 to October 2022)

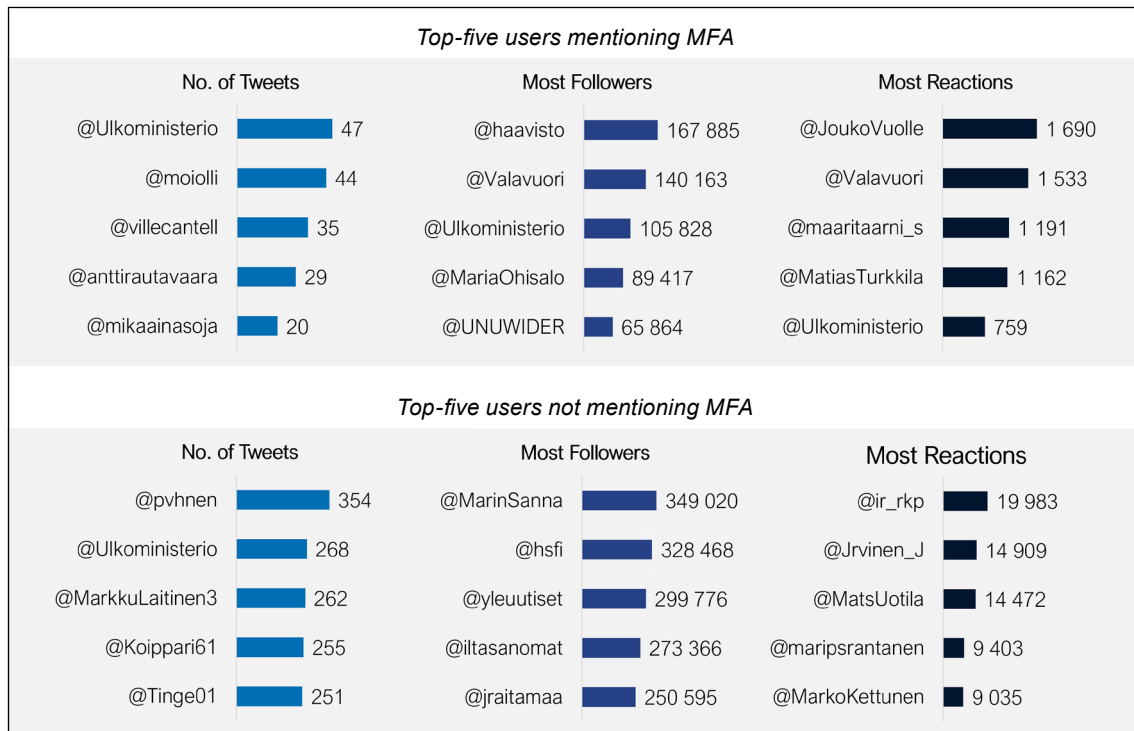


Source: Media analysis conducted by Meltwater

The Twitter accounts that were posting most actively about development co-operation and also mentioning the MFA were, other than the ministry itself and its officials of course, represented by CSOs. In comparison to the accounts that are engaging in the overall conversation on development co-operation, the accounts mentioning MFA are significantly different (compare top-5 users mentioning MFA and development co-operation vs top-5 users only mentioning development co-operation on Twitter, Figure 21). These differences reflect existing silos on Twitter conversations between users from different actor groups (as was discussed previously in terms of internationalists and nationalists).



Figure 21 Top-five users mentioning vs not mentioning MFA in their tweets, retweets, comments on Twitter



Source: Media analysis conducted by Meltwater

Top posts from the MFA account or the digital ambassadors gained between 50 to 75 reactions on Twitter. The post about additional aid to Ukraine in 2022 received by far the most (almost 700) reactions. Top posts in terms of engagement with a positive to neutral tone were from the minister for development co-operation, Ville Skinnari, with hundred to two hundred reactions.

The #MunVaikutus-campaign is one example of MFA social media influencing. The campaign was launched on 11 October 2021 and the goal was to spread a message that showed how development co-operation produces tangible results and how every person could participate in this work. The campaign was mostly visible on social media, mostly on Instagram, and radio (no hits were detected for the campaign in digital media), and it included some prominent domestic figures and celebrities (see Figure 22).

#MunVaikutus related Twitter posts accounted for almost 10% of development co-operation mentions during October 2021. Looking at the potential reach of the posts, the share is much higher mostly due to following of the MFA and other prominent users' accounts. However, the tweets did not gather much reactions – approximately 2.7 likes/retweets per post. Top tweets by engagement included posts from the MFA about Tim Sparv's participation and the MFA senior advisor Antti Rautavaara.



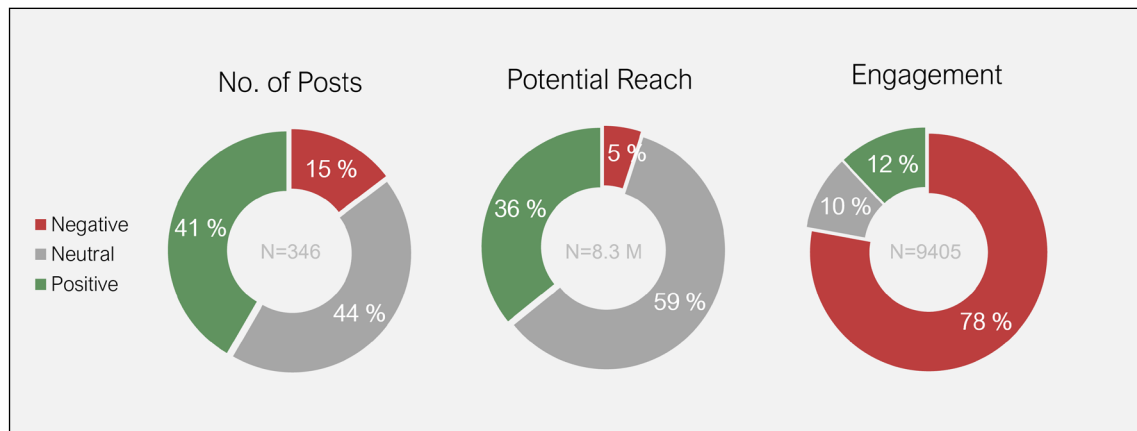
Figure 22 #MunVaikutus campaign on Twitter (October 2021)



Source: Media analysis conducted by Meltwater

The majority of the tweets mentioning and/or posted by the MFA were positive/neutral and only 5% of the visibility was made up of posts with a negative tone (see Figure 23). Still, it was the few negative posts (when MFA commented on critics about funding and related scams) that were still highlighted in terms of engagement and reactions.

Figure 23 Tone of communication on Twitter, articles including mentioning of the MFA (August 2021 – October 2022)



Source: Media analysis conducted by Meltwater

The months with the most sentimented posts published were December 2021 and June 2022, with mostly positive and neutral comments published. In December, the MFA launched Open Aid, a site showcasing development co-operation projects and results in an easily accessible manner. In June Finland granted additional funds to Ukraine. Negative comments in June were mainly Finns Party members criticising the MFA-funded Plan Suomi’s campaign on how language affects equality.

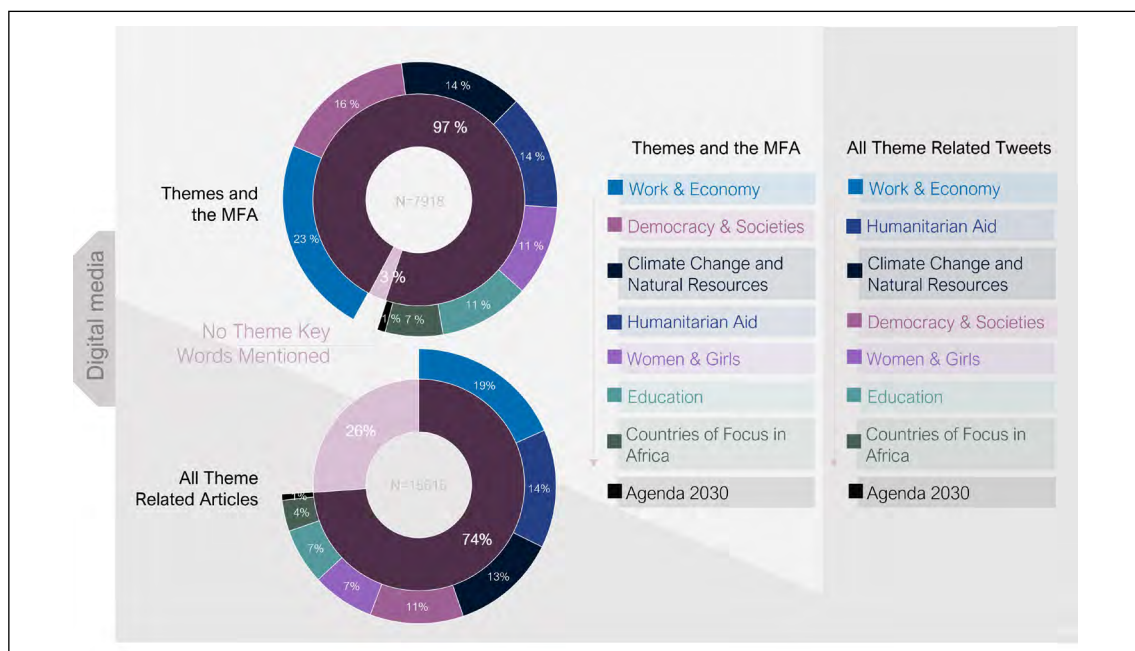


5.3 Themes of Finland’s development co-operation priorities (digital media & Twitter)

The visibility of several topics that represent key priorities and principles of Finland’s development co-operation were identified and analysed more in detail: Work & Economy; Humanitarian Aid; Climate Change and Natural Resources; Democracy & Societies; Women & Girls; Education; Countries of Focus in Africa; and Agenda 2030. Topics based on themes identified as key interests for the MFA regarding development co-operation – like strengthening the status and rights of women and girls or education – were more visible on traditional media and digital publications than Twitter.

Figure 24 compares theme visibility in all development co-operation related articles (lower) and with added mention of the MFA (upper) in digital media articles. When the MFA was mentioned, it was more likely that one of the selected themes was also mentioned. Only 3% of MFA mentions did not contain any theme search words. Even though not all articles revolved around MFA priorities – especially Work & Economy, which included a lot of mentions of Finnish government budget related news, MFA’s media position in traditional sources mostly consisted of messages important to MFA. The high representation of the themes in coverage also mentioning MFA indicate that these themes are more often put forward by MFA representatives and/or referenced in relation to the MFA by other actor groups and by journalists.

Figure 24 Articles mentioning themes and the MFA vs articles only mentioning themes, Finnish digital media

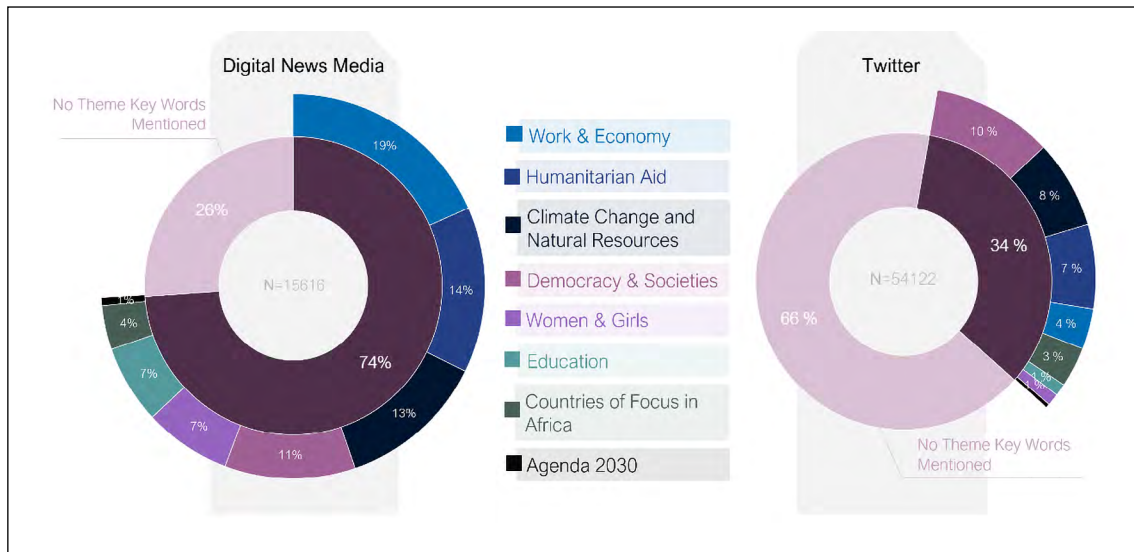


Source: Media analysis conducted by Meltwater

When comparing theme visibility in digital media and on Twitter, the differences between the two types of channels are striking (see Figure 25). In digital media, three fourth of the total number of articles included at least one theme mention, while the equivalent number on Twitter was only one third of the total tweets/retweets. The difference illustrates that the discussions on Twitter about development co-operation centre around topics different from the prioritized themes of the government. Also, it indicates the less central position of the MFA on Twitter in comparison to digital media.



Figure 25 Comparison between digital media and Twitter



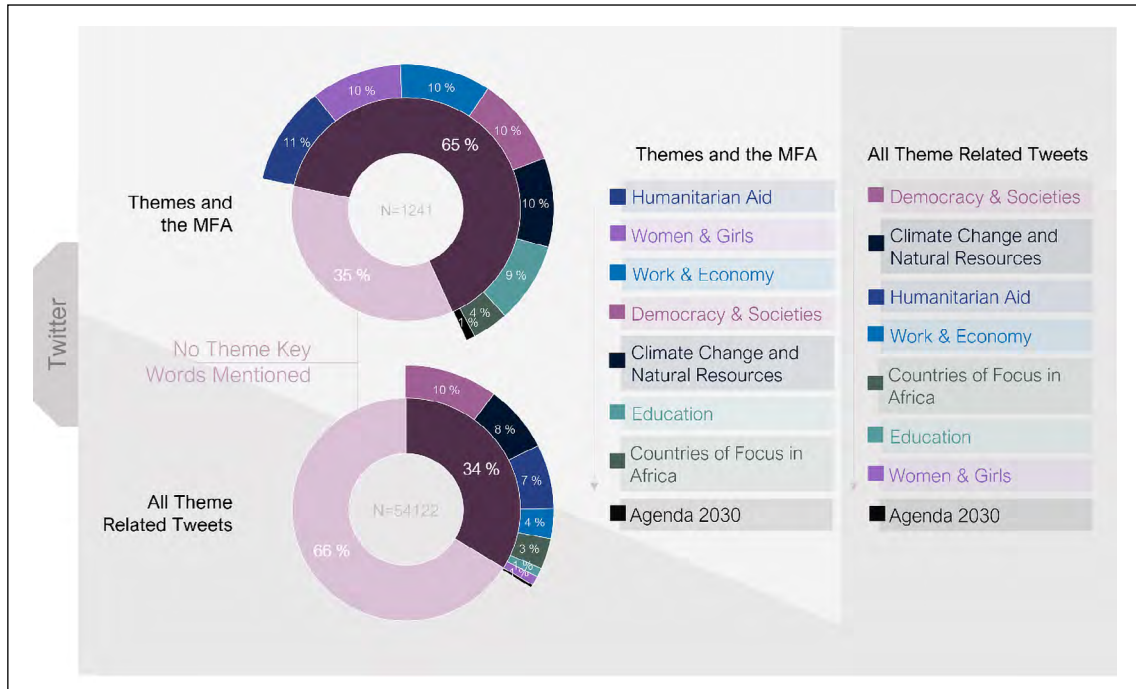
Source: Media analysis conducted by Meltwater

Work & Economy gained the most visibility among the key themes. This theme gained significant visibility because development co-operation was often linked with domestic budgetary discussions. On Twitter, peaceful and democratic societies was the most prominent theme, which was due to the fact that development co-operation was strongly linked to corruption: the most engaging tweets argued that development co-operation is increasing corruption in the developing countries.

Even though the total visibility for the themes on Twitter is much lower than in digital media, the division between theme visibility in all tweets mentioning development co-operation (see Figure 26, lower part) and with added mention of the MFA (upper part) is similar: when the MFA was mentioned on Twitter, it was more likely that one of the selected themes was also mentioned, than in tweets that did not mention MFA. The largest share with 35% of MFA visibility on Twitter came from mentions with no theme. These included comments on topics such as critique of funding countries siding with Russia after their invasion of Ukraine, MFA being scammed of development funds or the launching of the Open Aid site.



Figure 26 Tweets mentioning themes and the MFA vs tweets only mentioning themes, Twitter



Source: Media analysis conducted by Meltwater



6 Implications for the main report

This section summarises the findings of the media analysis by Meltwater with most implications to the evaluation main report.

- The **overall visibility** of development co-operation in the Finnish digital media was relatively stable during the period from October 2015 to September 2022.
- Most often, **development co-operation is treated in the media coverage as part of domestic politics** and the highest peaks in attention were during national budget discussions and elections. In this coverage, there are seldom in-depth discussions or descriptions about development co-operation or how it works.
- In digital media, a **neutral and informative tone dominated the coverage**. The number of articles with a positive tone are higher in number than those with negative tone, and those articles with a positive tone more often also appear in bigger media, such as YLE and Helsingin Sanomat. Articles with a negative tone sparked however more reactions in social media (according to the measurement Social Echo).
- **Politicians are the most visible actor group in digital media** and are both most frequently mentioned in the coverage and appear in articles that are gaining the most reactions in social media.
- **MFA** are mentioned in the news coverage most often in relation to specific **reports and events**. Also, when the MFA is mentioned in the articles the prioritized broader themes that make up the basis for Finland's development co-operation are also most often mentioned.
- **Twitter is a highly polarized platform**, and the discussions about development co-operation tend to be one-sided and focus on budgetary concerns.
- **Negative tweets dominate on Twitter and spur engagement**. The most active accounts during the period have been critical toward development co-operation funding. These accounts most often have rather few followers, but a loyal and active follower base, but made up the tweets that gained the most reactions resulting in almost 80% of the total engagement share during the period.



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