

EVALUATION



Ministry for Foreign
Affairs of Finland

Evaluation on Development Cooperation carried out
by the Department for Russia, Eastern Europe and
Central Asia, including the Wider Europe Initiative (WEI)

Volume 2 • Country Reviews



Evaluation on Finland's Development Policy and Cooperation

2021/4B



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Contact: [eva-11\[at\]formin.fi](mailto:eva-11[at]formin.fi)

ISBN 978-952-281-688-7 (pdf)

ISSN 2342-8341

Layout: Grano Oy

Cover photo: Three ladies ironing, the Namangan Aid for Trade project
in Uzbekistan by Marja Liivala.



**EVALUATION ON DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION CARRIED OUT BY
THE DEPARTMENT FOR RUSSIA, EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA,
INCLUDING THE WIDER EUROPE INITIATIVE (WEI)**

Final Report

Volume 2 –Country Reviews

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2021/4B

This evaluation was commissioned by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland to Particip GmbH and NIRAS. This report is the product of the authors, and responsibility for the accuracy of the data included in this report rests with the authors. The findings, interpretations, and conclusions presented in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.



Evaluation on Development Cooperation carried out by the Department for Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, including the Wider Europe Initiative (WEI)

This evaluation report consists of two volumes. This is volume 2 and includes country reviews.

VOLUME 1 – MAIN REPORT

1. Introduction
2. Approach, methodology and limitations
3. Contexts
4. The evaluand
5. Findings
6. Conclusions
7. Recommendations

VOLUME 1 – ANNEXES

1. Terms of Reference
2. People interviewed
3. Documents consulted
4. Approach and Methodology
5. Portfolio analysis
6. Survey templates
7. ToC reconstruction
8. Evaluation Matrix
9. List of interventions

VOLUME 2 – COUNTRY REVIEWS

1. **Country Review The Kyrgyz Republic**
2. **Country Review Tajikistan**
3. **Country Review Ukraine**



Contents

INTRODUCTION	6
COUNTRY REVIEW KYRGYZSTAN	7
COUNTRY REVIEW TAJIKISTAN	43
COUNTRY REVIEW UKRAINE	79



Acronyms and Abbreviations

ABND	Assessment-Based National Dialogues
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AfT	Aid for Trade Project
CoE	Council of Europe
CPS	Country Partnership Strategy
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
DCC	Donor Coordination Council
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EIB	European Investment Bank
ENVSEC	Environment and Security Initiative
EQ	Evaluation Question
ET	Evaluation Team
EU	European Union
EUR	Euro
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FITUT	Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Tajikistan
FLA	Free Legal Aid
FLAC	Free Legal Aid Centre
FLC	Fund for Local Cooperation
FMI	Finnish Meteorological Institute
FUTF	Finland Ukraine Trust Fund
GTK	Geological Survey of Finland
GUG	Main Department of Geology under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan
HCNM	High Commissioner on National Minorities (OSCE)
HEI ICI	Higher Education Institutions Institutional Cooperation Instrument
HRBA	Human Rights-Based Approach
ICI	Institutional Cooperation Instrument
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
ILO	International Labour Organisation
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IPPA	Investment Promotion and Protection Agency
ITÄ-20	Unit for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (MFA Finland)
KGS	Kyrgyzstani Som (national currency)
KNAU	Kyrgyz National Agrarian University
LCA	Legal Aid Centre
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MFA	Ministry for Foreign Affairs Finland
MOES	Ministry of Education and Science
MSMEs	Micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises



MTE	Mid-Term Evaluation
NDS	National Development Strategy
NEFCO	Nordic Environment Finance Corporation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OSH	Occupational Safety and Health
PwD	Person with Disabilities
RBM	Results-Based Management
SAEE	State Agency on Energy Efficiency and Energy Saving of Ukraine
SALAC	State Agency for Legal Aid Centres
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SI FDE	State Institution on Formation and Development Entrepreneurship of Tajikistan
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SYKE	Finnish Environment Institute
THL	Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare
TJS	Tajikistani Somoni (national currency)
TSI	Trade Support Institution
UAH	Ukrainian Hryvnia (national currency)
UN	United Nations
UN CEDAW	United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
UN CRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USD	United States Dollar
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organisation
WEI	Wider Europe Initiative



Introduction

These country reviews are part of the strategic *Evaluation on Development Cooperation carried out by the Department for Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, including the Wider Europe Initiative (WEI)*. The overall evaluation is expected to help the Ministry build a comprehensive understanding of to what extent Finland has contributed to development impact in the region over the past decade. Similarly, the evaluation is to provide information on how the Ministry could best achieve its policy objectives in the future, as well as how to develop further its management and approaches. Furthermore, the evaluation is expected to draw lessons on how the Ministry could maximize impact and sustainability of its interventions more generally.

More specifically, according to the ToR, the objectives of the evaluation are:

1. To assess the impact(s), if any, of Finland's development cooperation carried out in the region by the Department for Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia;
2. To assess the scope of the impact(s) and their relative significance to development in the area;
3. To assess the levels of sustainability of the achieved results and impact;
4. To assess the results achieved by, and management of, the current country strategies;
5. To analyse the reasons explaining success and/or failure in performance and in reaching a lasting impact, including the operational context, human aspects and resources; and
6. To provide recommendations that will serve the Ministry in developing its strategic planning, management and response in the region as well as drawing the broader lessons on how to increase impact and sustainability, in advancement of Finland's development policy objectives.

Over the period 2009-2021 Finland has supported development cooperation activities in 11 Eastern European and Central Asian countries¹. The geographical focus and extent of activity has evolved over the period, with: a broader range of countries engaged during WEI I; a shift in the emphasis of support during WEI II towards a focus on the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan (as the region's least economically developed countries) and support to Ukraine following the 2014 political crises and the outbreak of conflict in Eastern Ukraine; and the emphasis on the same three countries through country strategies in the current 2018-2021 period. As a consequence, these three countries were assessed in more detail during the evaluation and the reviews in this Volume 2 represent an important part of the underlying evidence base for the main report and complement the information presented there.

¹ Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan



Country Review Kyrgyzstan

**Evaluation on Development Cooperation carried out by the
Department for Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia,
including the Wider Europe Initiative (WEI)**

Raisa Venäläinen with contributions from Rakiia Abdurasulova and Roman Krajcovic



Evaluation on Finland's Development Policy and Cooperation

2021/4B



CONTENTS

1. CONTEXT.....	9
2. PRESENTATION OF THE ANALYSIS PER EVALUATION QUESTION.....	13
2.1. Relevance (during 2009 – 2020).....	13
2.2. Impact (during 2009 – 2020).....	16
2.3 Sustainability (during 2009 – 2020).....	22
2.4. Effectiveness (during 2018-2020).....	26
2.5. Management (during 2018 – 2020).....	32
2.6. Coherence (2009-2020).....	36
3. CONCLUSIONS.....	40

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1

Development cooperation disbursements 2009-2020 benefitting Kyrgyzstan in EUR million.....9

Figure 2

Development cooperation disbursements 2009-2020 benefitting Kyrgyzstan per sector in EUR.....10

Figure 3 Development cooperation disbursements 2009-2020 benefitting Kyrgyzstan per channel in EUR million.....11

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Results of Impact area 1.....27

Table 2 Results of Impact area 2.....29

Table 3 Results of ICI projects per outcome area.....30

Cover photo Country Review Kyrgyzstan: A picture of sheep and a shepherd in Kyrgyzstan by Marjo Ahvenainen.



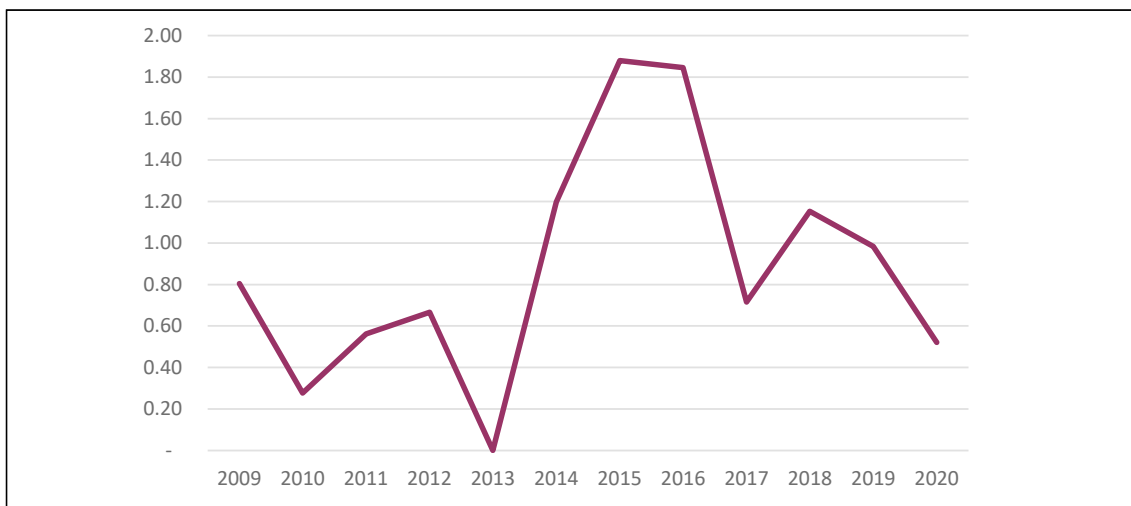
1. Context

Finland's development cooperation with Kyrgyzstan started in 1992. The first interventions were related to health and provision of Technical Assistance to the establishment of the Central Bank of Kyrgyzstan. Cooperation then withered for some years (MFA 2018), but was revitalized with the WEI I, which was the first framework for cooperation during the period 2009 – 2012 and was continued under the framework of WEI II during the period 2014 – 2017. The first Country Strategy for Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan covers the years 2018 – 2020.

Finland's support was consolidated by Finland's 2007 and 2012 development policy programmes and further reaffirmed by Finland's 2016 development policy, which stated that *“Finland will support Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, the poorest countries of Central Asia. Finland's support will be used to strengthen human rights, the rule of law, the business environment, water resource management, and climate change preparedness”*. This policy is coherent with the European Union (EU) Central Asia Strategy adopted by the Council of the EU in 2017.

The portfolio analysis² prepared by the Evaluation Team (ET) has identified a total of nine bilateral projects representing EUR 10.6 million³ during the period of 2009-2020. In addition to these bilateral projects, Kyrgyzstan also benefits from regional or multi-country interventions. However, as it is not possible to identify the shares from which Kyrgyzstan would directly benefit, these interventions are not included in the financial statistics presented below. As shown in Figure 1 Development cooperation disbursements 2009-2020 benefitting Kyrgyzstan in EUR million, during the evaluation period, Finland's commitment increased from EUR 2.3 million during WEI I to EUR 5.6 million during WEI II and in the current phase amounts to EUR 2.7 million.

Figure 1 Development cooperation disbursements 2009-2020 benefitting Kyrgyzstan in EUR million



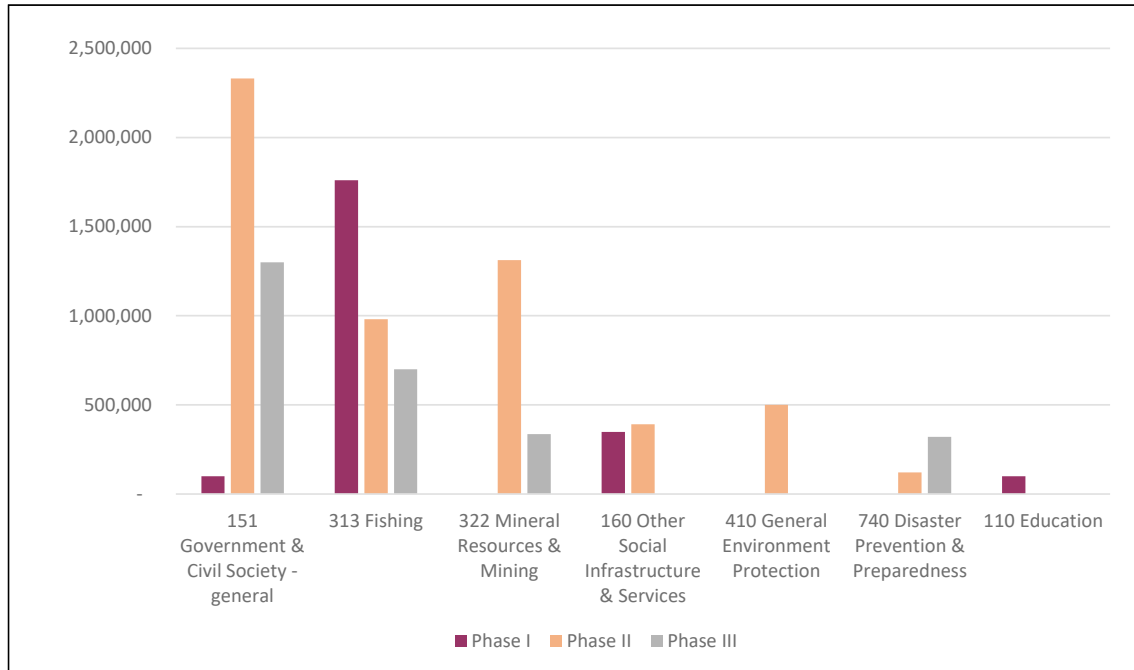
Source: MFA Ratsut data 2009-2020; Data compilation: Evaluation team

2 The ET prepared the portfolio analysis of the programmable development cooperation 2009-2020 based on the data extracted from the MFA's financial reporting system - Ratsut. For further details on the approach and limitations, please see the main report, incl. annex 5.
3 Unless otherwise specified, financial figures of Finnish support mentioned in this report correspond to disbursed ("maksatukset") amounts.



Figure 2 Development cooperation disbursements 2009-2020 benefitting Kyrgyzstan per sector in EUR presents the distribution of the bilateral portfolio by sector and per phase. In the evaluation period, seven sectors (by the DAC sector classification) in total were covered by the Finnish Development Cooperation. During the WEI I four sectors were represented; the number of sectors increased during the WEI II on six and in the current phase the number of sectors supported is four. Across phases, more than 60% of the overall volume was allocated to projects in the Government and Civil Society Sector and in the fishing sector.

Figure 2 Development cooperation disbursements 2009-2020 benefitting Kyrgyzstan per sector in EUR

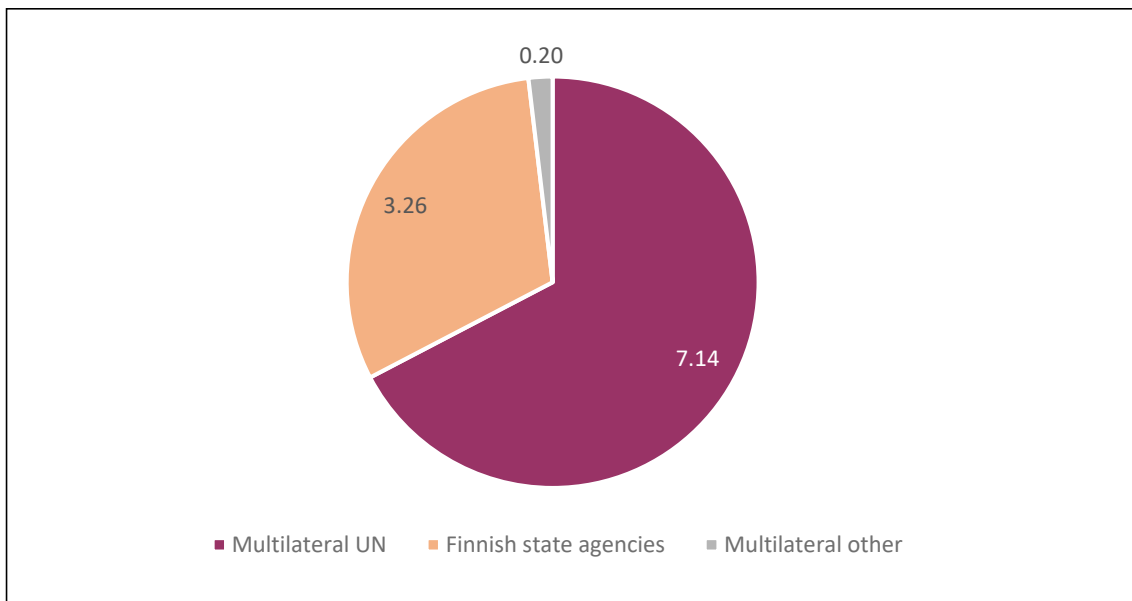


Source: MFA Ratsu data 2009-2020; Data compilation: Evaluation team

As shown in Figure 3 Development cooperation disbursements 2009-2020 benefitting Kyrgyzstan per channel in EUR million, 67% of financial resources (EUR 7.4 million) have been directed to projects implemented by multilateral organisations, namely the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). 31% (EUR 3.2 million) of funds have been directed to Finnish state agencies through Institutional Cooperation Instrument (ICI) projects.



Figure 3 Development cooperation disbursements 2009-2020 benefitting Kyrgyzstan per channel in EUR million



Source: MFA Ratsu data 2009-2020; Data compilation: Evaluation team

According to the portfolio analysis, only 2% of the bilateral portfolio (EUR 0.2 million) have been channelled through Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and during the evaluation period, Finland has continued funding the OSCE's extra-budgetary projects carried out by the field operations, independent institutions and the OSCE Academy. OSCE project cooperation promotes security and stability by supporting civil society, democracy and the status of minorities and women. The evaluation identified the following projects implemented by OSCE in Kyrgyzstan during 2019- 2020: Promotion of Rule of Law in the Kyrgyz Penitentiary System (2009-2011), OSCE Academy training programme in Kyrgyzstan (2009 and 2018-2019), Promoting multilingual education in Kyrgyzstan (2016-2017), Assisting the Kyrgyz republic in conducting democratic elections in (2016-2017). In addition, Kyrgyzstan was the beneficiary and participating country for the regional or multi-country Democratic Governance projects implemented by OSCE – Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) Programme.

According to the information provided by the Embassy of Finland in Kazakhstan, which administers the Fund for Local Cooperation (FLC), a total number of 16 Local Cooperation projects have been financed during 2009-2021 in Kyrgyzstan with the total amount of EUR 0.9 million. These projects are implemented in a broad range of sectors, including media and free flow of information, democratic participation and civil society, legislatures and political parties, basic life skills for youth and adults, social mitigation of HIV/AIDS, human rights, civilian peace-building, conflict prevention and resolution, teacher training, elections, rural development and alternative agricultural development.

The financial data provided by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs Finland (MFA) on multi-country or regional programmes does not provide country-specific financial data. These multi-country or regional projects include the Eastern Energy and Efficiency and Environment Partnership (E5P)



implemented by EBRD, a Decent Work -project implemented by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), and FinWater WEI – water sector support implemented in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and multi-country regional programmes such as Aid for Trade (‘Aft’, 2009-2021/23).

During the evaluation period 2009 – 2020 Kyrgyz Republic faced political instability, which affected the implementation and performance of the projects. For instance, following the revolution in October 2010, some projects were on a halt for almost one year. In October 2020, the country went through major political unrest following the publication of preliminary results of the parliamentary elections. As a result of the early presidential elections and a referendum held on January 10, 2021, the governance system of the country was changed from parliamentary to presidential, which will entail a complete re-structuring of government institutions.

The year 2020 was marked by unprecedented challenges for the Kyrgyz economy. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Kyrgyzstan, like other countries in the region, is experiencing a decline in economic activity and trade, a drop in remittances and household income, and an increase in underemployment and unemployment. The foreign trade turnover of the Kyrgyz Republic decreased by 19.2%. With border closures, including with China, external trade fell by 18.0% (UNDP 2021).

The assumptions of the Theory of Change developed for this evaluation have held to a large extent. Despite of political challenges, the government actors and development partners have remained committed to reforms supported and the role of the civil society was recognized for instance in the process of ratification of United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD). However, some assumptions have been/are only partially met. There has been political turbulence and the recent COVID-19 caused drawbacks on macro-economic. The Government institutions have faced challenges in maintaining human resources and ensuring sustainable and sufficient financial resources to maintain the results achieved.

The analysis and findings presented by the ET in the following section are based on a desk review of project documents available and triangulated with interviews unless otherwise mentioned.



2. Presentation of the analysis per evaluation question

2.1. Relevance (during 2009–2020)

EQ 1: To what extent have Finland's development cooperation been relevant?

- EQ1a. Alignment with partner country needs
- EQ1b. Alignment with the overall priorities of Finland's development policy and development cooperation
- EQ1c. Alignment and complementarity with the foreign and security policy, including economic relations

2.1.1. Alignment with partner country needs

Policy relevance of the Finnish support over the three phases is high. All interventions in the WEI I, WEI II and Country Strategy 2018 - 2020 are well aligned with the national development plans of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan. The project proposals refer for instance to the Country Development Strategy 2007-2010 and Kyrgyz National Sustainable Development Strategy 2013–2017 and other related strategic documents. The document review, however, shows that while a reference to the relevant policies, strategies and reforms is made, the actual analysis of alignment is more detailed in the project plans of multilateral organisations such as UNDP, ILO, FAO compared to ICI projects. The level of analysis varies also by project as WEI II Mid-term Review (Olesen et al. 2016) observed: ‘The degree of explicitness stated in the ICI project documents vary from general statements about national prioritization of the policy area (Finnish Meteorological Institute ‘FMI’, Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare ‘THL’) to specific legislation (Geological Survey of Finland ‘GTK’). It is also noted that the projects are anchored with the national strategies through the strategies and programmes of the implementing multilateral organisation such as priorities set out by the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), which are built on in-depth policy and needs analysis.

While the project documents make an explicit reference to the national policies, the project proposals of neither the WEI I, WEI II nor the Country Strategy 2018 -2020 contain a beneficiary or situation analysis. Overall, there is limited analysis of the situation and needs of the Kyrgyzstan population with regards to the specific sector the projects deal with. Although needs assessment are conducted by the United Nations (UN) agencies in the development of their programmes and the UNDAF, they are not systematically



referred to in the project proposals submitted to the MFA. The document review and interviews with ICI partners show that capacity or needs assessments are not a standard part of project preparation, although the ICI is an instrument specifically targeted to capacity development. Instead of through assessments, institutional capacity improvement or institutional performance strengthening interventions are based on knowledge of the situation in the particular institution or on previous institutional cooperation, or the expertise of the Finnish organisation.

Furthermore, with regard to crosscutting objectives of the Finnish development cooperation, the Project Documents do not include gender analysis, nor analysis of the situation/ needs of ethnic groups or persons with disabilities (PwDs), although PwDs are a specific group of people to be addressed by Finnish development cooperation. The project documents generally do not specify the numbers of direct and final beneficiaries for project activities.

Gender-sensitive indicators are introduced in the Country Strategy 2018-2020, while gender was not explicitly addressed in WEI I and WEI II. The review of the project documentation shows that increasingly, over the evaluation period, individual projects started to report on the number or percentage of female participants in trainings or other project activities. This output-focus is also reflected in the evaluations, as indicated in the Final Independent Evaluation of the multi-county Decent Work project (ILO 2013), which praised the sex-disaggregated collection of data on the total number of the participants per each event. Although gender-sensitive actions were included in the project implementation plans in 2012 and 2013, the results are not reported by country. This relates to the fact that only outputs are monitored as per required but monitoring systems do not capture and assess the project's outcomes and impacts from a gender perspective.

Although specific sector analysis is not in all cases included in the project documentation, the projects supported the ongoing reforms of the particular sector in which they were engaged. It was learned that the MFA was among the first donors supporting firstly, fishery sector in Kyrgyzstan and secondly, statistics development. It was learned that other donors built their projects on the experiences and achievements of the Finnish-funded projects. As indicated by one of the interviewees, *‘Through this collaboration, we were able to see the first time the big picture of how to operate’ and the interviewees continued ‘due to many reasons we were not able to implement all recommendations made by our partner during the project implementation but now they are implemented many years later in another project.’*

The UN agencies reported about inclusive project preparation processes, which includes discussions with stakeholders, consultation workshops and needs assessments. For instance, the AfT Phase IV is based on the needs assessment at the beginning of the overall programme in 2009 and the needs assessments regularly updated yearly in each country where the AfT is implemented.

The projects of neither WEI I, WEI II nor Country Strategy 2018-2020 contain an analysis of the Civil Society sector, although projects implemented by ILO, FAO, UNDP and FLC projects work with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). Similarly, Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) analysis is not included in the documents neither project proposals or reports.

Generally, the projects under neither the WEI I, WEI II nor Country Strategy 2019-2020 define baselines and target values, which makes it difficult to assess and report their performance and achievements of the projects. Also, statistical data are often missing from the project documentation.



2.1.2. Alignment with the overall priorities of Finland's development policy and development cooperation

All programmes and projects implemented during the evaluated period are aligned with the respective Finnish Development Cooperation policies and priorities. The expected project results are also focused on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) before 2015 and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The WEI I emphasised a regional approach, but the 'regionality' in most cases refers to country-specific projects or project components implemented under one programme umbrella, without broader regional objectives. It was also observed that for such projects, reporting was also country-specific without broader regional results analysis. The interviewees noted that probably the political situation in the region was not yet enabling for concrete regional and cross-border cooperation at the time of WEI I. They also noted that constructing a regional project requires high-level participatory planning and in-depth analysis of common issues to be addressed in the participating countries.

All projects in the Finnish development cooperation portfolio in Kyrgyzstan focus on the realisation of human rights although it is not always spelled out in the project documentation. The projects are at least Human Rights sensitive; they support, for instance, the right to social services, the right to social security, the right to an adequate standard of living, right to information and assembly. In addition, there are two projects ('Widening Access to Justice' implemented by UNDP and 'Decent and Safe Jobs' implemented by ILO) that can be categorised as human rights progressive. The development cooperation portfolio contains also specific human rights-targeted interventions such as 'Human Rights, Gender and Security and Promotion of Rule of Law in Kyrgyz Penitentiary system', implemented by OSCE.

Application of a Human-rights Based Approach as defined in the MFA guidance (MFA 2015) has been realised to some extent: Most of the projects focus on duty bearers and rights holders; they are largely designed in participatory manner, but actual human rights analysis in the particular sector are not conducted. Stakeholder analyses are not conducted to define duty bearers and rights holders and used as a basis for setting quantifiable targets.

The extent to which the projects address the crosscutting objectives varies. Gender is mentioned as a cross-cutting objective in all project documents, but the projects include few concrete actions on how they promote the rights, status and equality of women and girls, how this is monitored, and what kind of gendered impacts the projects may produce. Also, gender analyses are not conducted as part of project planning. As indicated earlier in this report, gender monitoring is based mainly on sex-disaggregated data and limited information is available about the outcomes and changes in the life of women. While the MFA has been active in requesting and encouraging projects to integrate gender, some informants considered that mainstreaming of gender in the technical and policy-oriented projects turned out to be challenging, and therefore developed targeted interventions in this regard. This indicates that the project implementers need more capacity building and concrete examples of how gender can be mainstreamed. The portfolio includes also targeted interventions to promote gender equity, e.g., access to legal aid to rural women.

The crosscutting objectives of reduction of inequalities, non-discrimination and climate resilience are not systematically integrated in the projects. The reduction of inequalities, particularly with regard to PwDs is explicitly addressed in the UNDP managed Widening Access to Justice -project but it is not addressed in a crosscutting manner in other projects. The issue of minorities is not



addressed in any of the projects. Climate sustainability was the key factor of FinWaterWEI Programme, and in the FMI and the GTK projects but overall, the evaluation found limited information on how the projects aim to enhance climate change adaptation, reduce vulnerability and strengthen the resilience of respective people, ecosystems and societies to climate risks and the impacts of climate change. Also, an analysis of the ‘do no harm’ -principle was missing from all documents.

2.1.3. Alignment and complementarity with the foreign and security policy, including economic relations

No evidence was found in the documentation of complementarity with Finnish foreign and security policy in any of the three phases, but the OSCE implemented projects have certain security policy aspects.

Similarly, no evidence was found of complementarity with Finnish trade policy in any of the three phases. The UNDP worked on increasing trade linkages between Finland and Central Asia, particularly in preparing for the tourist season in 2021/2022. However, COVID-19 disturbed the plan.

2.2. Impact (during 2009–2020)

EQ2. What has been the impact(s) of Finland’s development cooperation carried out in the region by the Department for Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia?

- EQ2a. What have been the most significant and transformative impact(s) contributed to by Finland and why? This includes analysis of impact by social, environmental and economic as well as human rights perspectives. What have been the levels where the impact(s) have taken place?
- EQ2b. What have been the scope and extent of the impact(s)?
- EQ2c. What has been Finland’s role and added value in contributing to the impact(s)?
- EQ2d. What negative and/or unintended impacts have taken place, if any? Why?

2.2.1. Most significant and transformative impact(s) contributed to by Finland

Positive impacts are found in all spheres supported by Finland. Based on the information obtained through review of project document and evaluation reports and confirmed by the key informant interviews both in Finland and Kyrgyzstan, impacts are made in improved production and export capacities, (aquaculture, fishery and trade sectors), improved institutional capacities and services (ICI meteorology and geology projects), improved access to justice mainly for vulnerable people in rural areas as well as better living quality and health conditions (water infrastructure projects, Decent Work project). An important achievement of the Finnish supported projects was the introduction of the entitlement to free legal aid (FLA) in civil and administrative cases into the new law ‘*On the state guaranteed legal aid*’, while previously, FLA was provided only in criminal cases.



Measurable impact statements and related indicators are missing in the logical frameworks, so explicit evidence of project performance cannot be traced. A particular challenge in assessing the impacts of the projects and Finnish support overall is that the project documentation express the expected or achieved impacts only in descriptive terms and for most projects. The lack of specific impact statements and lack of programme/ initiative level indicators was also noted in the Mid Term Evaluation (Olesen et al. 2016). Also, country specific data is not always disaggregated in regional programmes. Despite this limitation, the ET mapped out the immediate impacts from the project and evaluation reports, and then confirmed the findings in interviews. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ET did not have an opportunity to consult beneficiaries and thus, the following analysis is based on the interviews of project implementers and document review only.

The AfT and Aquaculture and Fishery projects have improved the employment and income possibilities of the rural population. The work on access to finance for export-oriented production leveraged USD 58 million. It was reported that overall, the work around the Centers for Entrepreneurship and Trade Support served over 48 000 clients and the project supported USD 40 million in export contracts in Kyrgyzstan. The project has provided advisory support to the Ministry of Economy of the Kyrgyz Republic for the formulation of trade financing instruments for increasing exports, and as a result, JSC ‘Guarantee Fund’ has created 1 225 new jobs since the start of its operations in 2016. The informants told that, ‘the project interventions contribute directly to the achievement of results related to access to finance and means of production (including women entrepreneurs), export promotion activities (such as B2B meetings, roadshows and fairs) and capacity building for value chain actors, which in turn contribute to strengthened production and export capacity and job creation’. Such interventions are particularly important for Kyrgyzstan where the government is extremely limited in its capacity (both technically and financially) to support our entrepreneurs/exporters and where there is no access to cheap and long finance for businesses. The development of business intermediary organizations and associations positively changed the investment climate in the country. Although some sustainability challenges were reported (UNDP 2018) for instance regarding the intermediate organisations Batken Market Information Centre, it is evident that *“the project is making a significant contribution to the development of a system of advisory support to businesses, promoting the formation and development of free economic zones thus contributing to the improvement of the investment climate and identifying the strengthening of economic and trade activity, both internal and external.”* (Olesen et al. 2016).

Fish farming is now recognized as a potential source of household income. The Aquaculture and Fishery project evaluation (Bueno 2013) concluded that the contribution of fish farming-related income to the overall income of farmers has increased significantly and that fish farming is already contributing to creating employment opportunities for the rural population. According to this evaluation by FAO, one out of four associations’ members reported having officially employed workers on their farms. According to FAO (FAO 2021), steady development of aquaculture is evidenced by the growth in the production of commercial fish, which increased from 345 tons in 2010 to 5000 tons in 2020, and the export potential which has increased from 300 tons in 2017 to 3000 tons in 2020. The project produced research to develop scientifically grounded recommendations for the management of fish resources and ecosystems of these lakes and it paid attention to fish health, with potential for impact in long term.

The legal and juridical development sector project (Widening Access to Justice in Central Asia) had a direct impact in terms of making FLA accessible for poorer and vulnerable parts of the population, often in remote areas of the country. Fifteen Free Legal Aid Centres (FLACs) were opened. Based on the information from the interviewees, the



project has served as a model and now the number of FLACs has started to expand with support from other donors. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of citizens applying to the Centres was growing every year and a rough estimate, based on available data and consultation with the stakeholders, suggests that the FLACs and the Bus of Solidarity serve approximately 10,000 persons annually⁴. The project supported the drafting of the new version of the FLA law which provides a framework for the quality of legal aid services. A long-term cost estimate has been also prepared for the Government to continue funding of the centres. The project has also supported the ratification of the UN CRPD, which is an important foundation for equity development in Kyrgyzstan- During the current phase, the project has addressed removing barriers for equal participation by training Sign Language interpreters in juridical concepts. Two local cooperation fund projects have also addressed the inclusion PwDs. The Access to Justice -project has implemented activities aimed to increase the awareness on the rights of women and persons with disability both among the duty bearers and rights holders. However, interlinkages with, e.g., the right to decent work and enhancing the understanding of private sector actors of human rights are not explicitly addressed in the projects and programme. Also, the role of the state as a duty bearer is not clearly highlighted in the documentation.

In Kyrgyzstan, the FinWaterWEI project implemented by UN Women has received wide recognition within UN Women globally. The fact that many challenges of rural women were directly or indirectly linked to water encouraged UN Women to ‘step out of the box’ and initiate a project dealing with natural resources.

Based on the evaluation findings, societal impacts are made at all spheres of Finnish support. The projects have promoted employment opportunities for rural population, strengthened the confidence of women and PwDs, and raised the professional self-esteem of people engaged in aquaculture and fisheries, which was a neglected sector. The projects have also influenced the mind-set of people. For instance, the Government officials interviewed stated that ‘in the framework of the projects, large-scale actions were carried out to humanize society and adapt PwDs under the slogan “*from heart to heart*”. Also, through the trainings and advocacy activities, the attention of state executive authorities, local self-government bodies, CSOs and the population was drawn to the problems of people with disabilities, and their integration and adaptation into life and society as a whole’.

The Widening Access to Justice project has contributed to the increased awareness of disability and women’s rights issues both among the beneficiary population (rights holders) and duty bearers, as well as among the wide public. This, together with the ratification of the UN CRPD, forms not only a framework for further actions but also a solid basis for the recognition and legitimisation of the rights of PwDs. However, the interviewees pointed out that the realisation of the principles of the Convention requires further work and support also from the international community. Some examples of women’s empowerment were reported. For instance, in Issyk Kul province, women initiated their own fishery association in 2014. Gender focus was fully integrated into the FAO’s Fishery project only for the last phase and the key informants indicated that introduction of gender-specific results might have been too late as the infrastructure had already been set in place and there would be insufficient time to produce sustainable results. Limited information was available in the project documentation on how the projects (particularly AFT and fishery project) addressed the conventional views on women’s participation and women’s role in

⁴ In total, it is reported that the centres and mobile services have benefitted more than 49, 000 individuals since 2016 (33,492 citizens during the first phase of 2016-2018 and another 15,606 during 2019-2020). These figures are based on data retrieved via the results framework (compiled from annual reports and email correspondence).



fish farming practices. With regard to the Decent Work implemented by ILO, it was reported that the work with informal sector resulted to an increased number of new trade union members by 3,000 members, most of them from the informal sector.

Evaluation of the impacts of the FLC projects would have required consultation with the beneficiaries which was not possible due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, an example of a positive impact was found in a FLC project on Conflict Mitigation, which was implemented in 20 mono- and multi-ethnic schools in Osh oblast. This project produced promising results in terms of decreased incidence of conflicts and initiated a concept for the School Parliament model. However, the implementing CSO did not scale up the model, but continued to use the School Parliament for enhancing community peace and stability through other initiatives.

Finding explicit evidence of impact at the environmental level is challenging, as particular programmes and initiatives (such as FinWaterWEI) are composed of a number of projects and the contribution of a single project to an environmental impact is difficult to verify. The project portfolio contains projects addressing environmental sustainability and climate resilience, such as projects on water management and weather forecasting, but specific follow-up indicators in the short- and long term are not defined. In the FinWaterWEI, there was a project that directly tackled adaptation to climate change – a project in the transboundary basin of Chu and Talas Rivers between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

According to the results reporting by the AfT project (UNDP 2021), an analysis of Green Products Value Chains and Export Opportunities in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and identification of green niche products/services (adventure tourism; natural honey; mixes of dried fruits, berries, beans, vegetables and nuts etc.) have strong export- and job creation potential underpinned by strong trend. Results of the analysis were integrated into project plan of activities. The impacts are yet to be seen.

The ICI projects enhanced the capacity of Kyrgyzhydromet to deliver weather, climate, and environmental information and early warning services for the benefit of society. A glaciers and snow monitoring and related research work as well as the services of the agriculture portal are important disaster risk reduction measures. The warning portal provides information to the farmers so that they can better plan their activities. Also, in the geological sphere, it was reported that the obtained skills and new equipment have contributed to better quality and accurate services and thus, has improved services promoting environmental sustainability. None of the projects had an environmental impact analysis.

With regards to the sectoral level impacts, the Finnish support has also played a remarkable role in reactivating the aquaculture and fishery industry in the Kyrgyz Republic. According to the interviewees, this FAO managed project is *“an excellent example of a development project where long-term finances and technical support have contributed to the revival of the fishery sector, provided livelihood to rural population and boosted a long-term development of a sector which was neglected.”* This was confirmed by all informants and also in various evaluations (Bueno 2013, FAO 2016, Olesen et al. 2016). It was reported that this sector is now attracting more fish farmers and communities have become more interested in fisheries.



Institutional level impacts are made by supporting the establishment of the Coordination Office for Legal services and establishment of 15 free legal aid centres in the regions. They have been scaled-up by other partners who have opened additional eight similar centers in other provinces of the country in Batken, Jalalabad, Naryn, Issyk-Kul and Talas provinces. Now the number of centers is 29. Through the support from the Decent Jobs project implemented by ILO, the National Statistical Committee of Kyrgyzstan has started to apply a more qualitative approach in Labour Force Surveys, which will allow them to more accurately reflect the actual labour market situation and in such a way to contribute to the development of appropriate employment and labour market policies. In Kyrgyzstan, this has led to the development and application of a new methodology for measuring/calculating labour.

ICI projects have enabled the institutions to modernise and rationalise their work and improve service delivery. It was reported that new equipment, software, advanced, technical advice and the strengthened capabilities have promoted particularly the production of weather forecasts in Kyrgyzstan. Also, as a result of capacity building activities and improved technical equipment replacing paper maps, modern IT depiction of the terrain is available. A concrete example is the agriculture warning portal providing information to farmers so that they can better plan their activities. The interviewees also consider that the programmes have raised awareness of air pollution, particularly at a higher policy level. The ET learned that impacts can also come with a delay. For instance, it was reported that in a short two-year project on statistics, knowledge gained was not applied immediately due to a number of factors, but some of the recommendations made by Statistics Finland were implemented 10 years later with the support of the UN agency.

The projects have contributed to professional development of staff of participating organisations and the livelihood of final beneficiaries as well as confidence building among PwDs, women, people engaged in fishery, as well people engaged in trade union activities and enhanced the awareness of human rights both among duty bearers and rights holders, service providers, and beneficiaries. UNDP reports (UNDP 2021) that, since the opening of the MoJ FLA centers, nearly 10,000 persons, including youth, PwDs, and persons from minority groups have received consultation, for instance, on family law, inheritance issues, and registration of the power of attorney, and documentation issues. The OSCE Academy's regional MA Programme in Politics and Security has provided career prospects for the graduates. According to the 2019 Alumni survey (OSCE 2019), 85% of alumni are employed and 8% continue their education. Out of the employed alumni members, 38% are employed in international organisations, 24% work in the private sector, 1% work in the educational sphere, 13% in the public sector and 7% in Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). Nevertheless, the recent evaluation (Normark 2019), challenged the overall impact of the training programme as, with a total of only 474 graduates in a region with a population of 70 to 80 million, and only half of these reporting that they work on issues relating to security and cooperation, it is difficult to conclude that the project has had a regional impact or impact on the security situation

The FLC projects have improved the lives of many individuals. An example of such a project which has produced impacts at the individual level is the Braille Literacy Project which provided Braille writers and materials and provided 50 students with hands-on instruction in Braille to enable them to participate in the Braille Olympiad. The project also organised orientation and training for parents and teachers.



2.2.2. Scope and extent of the impact(s)

At the policy level, the projects have made sustainable impacts by contributing to the development of legal and strategic national frameworks, regulations and strategies which form the foundation for the future development for instance for the realisation of rights for PwDs.

Geographically, the support to the state agencies through ICI projects has a national level impact in terms of service delivery, in addition to the institutional level impacts. The projects have also made regional impacts in country particularly related to livelihood and entrepreneurship. However, in the absence of clear objectives set for regional cooperation, it is difficult to verify regional level impacts. The evaluation did not find reported impacts related to the cross-country cooperation.

2.2.3. Finland's role and added value in contributing to the impact(s)

All implementing partners of ICI projects considered the technical support, experience exchange and partnerships between the Finnish and Kyrgyz institutions as a significant factor in enabling the institutions to modernise and improve their functions and services. Finnish added value was also recognised in the environmental field, especially on water management. The FAO project proposal Phase IV pointed out the Finnish experience in aquaculture and inland fisheries sector, and Finland's experience in developing a suitable curriculum in disciplines of aquaculture, inland fisheries and aquatic resources management in tertiary and vocational institutions, but the evaluation found limited evidence on the use of Finnish expertise in the project implementation. The Curriculum development and training of trainers is done by the Higher Education Institutions Institutional Cooperation Instrument (HEI ICI) project. The project sent interns to Finnish universities but only one of them completed the course.

The interviewees also pointed out that the MFA is one of the few partners which promotes the rights of PwDs in a systematic manner. Moreover, the implementing organisations pointed out the commitment and true interest of the MFA, not only on the progress of the projects but also on substantive matters. MFA, and particularly sector advisers, have also provided substantive advice for the project proposals thus ensuring that, for instance crosscutting issues are appropriately addressed. The Finnish institutions and experts also provided inputs to policy dialogue, for instance, in the social sector. It is to be noted that cooperation with state institutions in Kyrgyzstan has brought added value and networking opportunities for the Finnish institutions, as well.

2.2.4. Negative and/or unintended impacts

No negative impacts were demonstrated in the analysed documentation nor during the interviews. However, some positive unintended impacts were reported. The budget cuts by the MFA in 2016 resulted in better focus and streamlining of the projects. For instance, due to the budget cuts, the six outcomes of the Decent Work project were transformed into three and the initial outputs were reshuffled and slightly reduced, taking into account the priorities of constituents. According to the interviewees, although the reduction of funds limited the scope of interventions under the thematic area of capacity building regarding disability inclusion, the more focused approach improved the quality and effectiveness of the project. Secondly, the evaluation of FAO's contribution to Kyrgyz Republic (FAO 2016) reported that farmers' fish consumption levels



have increased due to the production growth and awareness-raising campaign held in collaboration with the Ministry of Health. This is a significant achievement, as in some parts of the country, fish is a new dietary component. The ET also learned that a ‘fish day’ has been introduced in schools in the targeted regions. It was also learned that engagement in the ICI projects and experience in the region has served as an important reference for the Finnish institutions in international competitive biddings and networks. In 2019, the money transfers from the MFA to UNDP were hacked, and the MFA has strengthened the security and follow-up systems in this regard.

2.3. Sustainability (during 2009–2020)

EQ3. What has been the level(s) of sustainability of the results and impact achieved over the period of time?

- EQ3a. For which of the results and impact areas is there evidence that the benefits achieved are lasting? Why?
- EQ3b. What has been the extent of sustainability of results and impact in terms of a) financial, b) economic, c) social, d) environmental, and e) institutional capacities of the systems needed to sustain net benefits over time?
- EQ3c. What strategies have the Ministry employed in order to maximize sustainability? Which of them have been the most successful and why? Have projects and programmes adequately planned for sustainability?

2.3.1. Evidence that the benefits achieved are lasting

The analysis of the ET suggests that the main contributing factors for lasting impacts and sustainability are firstly, the high relevance of the interventions, and secondly, the long-term support and commitments by the Government of Finland and implementing partners. Most of the projects are implemented with existing institutions, thus securing institutional sustainability. Also, the selected funding modalities and approaches which address holistically macro-, meso- and micro level (in case of projects implemented by multilateral organisations) are considered as a sustainable approach, as without legal and institutional frameworks micro level results would not sustain. Also, while long-term support is considered as a success factor, relevant phasing out and exit strategies are needed to ensure sustainability of core actions and results.

The ownership of implementing partners varies but generally, it was observed that they have strong ownership of the projects and their results. The interviewees considered that the ownership at macro level is high but also affected by staff changes. At the meso-level, there are some concerns to what extent the institutions established will remain committed to the results after the project comes to its end. The few beneficiaries interviewed showed high level commitment and ownership on the achievements and expressed their need and interest to learn more. In the water sector, in some cases, the ownership of national partners (and beneficiaries of the projects) was reported to remain weak, which may reduce the sustainability of the projects.



It was observed that only a few projects had sustainability or exit strategy developed in partnership with key stakeholders although relevant actions focusing on sustainability were implemented. For instance, the UNDP managed project Widening Access to Justice for Legal Empowerment in the Kyrgyz Republic aimed to ensure sustainability through engaging local experts and specialists of relevant governmental agencies into regular consultations, meetings and implementation of concrete activities, in addition to the monitoring, which allows proper accountability for results to be achieved. The implementing partners are also placing significant focus on capacity building for local partners that will further ensure ownership for results and a further continuation of activities and interventions piloted and tested. Multiplier effects are embedded in many projects as shown below. For the fishery project, the ‘exit strategy’ of the field interventions relies on the strengthening of the Government capacity so that it can become a provider of technical assistance and resource inputs for associated fish farmers, and the establishment of public-private initiatives for activities such as restocking and production of fish fry. It is also planned that a network of extension services will be organized with the participation of government, fish farmers, and entrepreneurs in the industry, offering its services in the rural areas. To this end, farmer field schools will be organized to promote fisheries associations as extensionists and research counterparts.

One of the most important sustainability measures of the Finnish support is the study program in the fisheries sector prepared for the Kyrgyz National Agrarian University, which is implemented in collaboration with the University of Eastern Finland through a HEI ICI project. The teaching materials to support the deployment of these curricula and the training of university teachers are now being developed. The Kyrgyz National Agricultural University has graduated with 30 bachelors, and this program has made an undoubted contribution to the sector.

Projects have developed training materials and training packages to be used after the project. For instance, the projects FinWaterWEI and Social Sphere -project developed materials for further use. The UNDP managed Widening Access to Justice project has developed an online course on disability issues based on the UN CRPD principles and legislation for journalists, journalism faculties’ students, bloggers and other stakeholders. The course aims to eliminate negative stereotypes, change public opinion towards people with disabilities, remove physical, information, social and psychological barriers, and create an inclusive society where all people are equal, and the rights of every human being are respected.

The projects supported by the MFA have served as a foundation for further projects to be supported and implemented by other organisations. For instance, the EU financed Social Protection Systems -project utilised the results and continued some activities initiated by the Social Sphere ICI-project by THL. The evaluation also learned that some of the recommendations of the ICI project on statistics were implemented years after the project was closed in a project funded by another donor.

With regard to the achievements in the cross-cutting objectives, the participation of women has been addressed and is embedded in the projects’ activities. However, the realisation of gender equity depends on many factors, including religious and cultural traditions that can be influenced only over the long term. Similarly, enhancing the full participation of PwDs for instance in the labour market requires significant inputs at all levels.



2.3.2. Sustainability of results and impact in terms of capacities of the systems needed to sustain net benefits over time

Based on the interviews, financial sustainability is observed in the delivery of legal services, an improved entrepreneurial environment, and institutional capacities (geology, meteorology). The National Legal Centre is in place under the Ministry of Justice and it is permanently offering FLA, mostly for women, girls and PwDs. It is included into the national budget, lawyers in state-run Legal Aid Centres (LACs) started to be funded from MoJ and the lawyers in the village-run LACs will be funded from village municipality budgets. Although the system is now in place, it was reported that there is still a need to provide follow-up support, as the capacity of the established centres varies. Sustainability of the functions is supported by the new version of the FLA law which was drafted and went through the public discussions at the Parliament's official website in order to introduce amendments to strengthen the quality of legal aid services, as well as increase coverage and recipients of the state-funded legal aid system. Also, with the assistance of the project, a financial calculation of the implementation cost of the new FLA law was carried out.

There have been sustainability concerns at micro level particularly with regard to financing. For instance, in order to access financing Aquaculture Associations had to be transformed to become Cooperatives, because the cooperative structure enables the farmers to access bank loans as a collective, which is not possible for the Associations. The last phase of the project implementation has supported the farmers to develop business plans which enable them to apply for investments and loans.

With regard to financial sustainability of the ICI projects, it was reported that, although the ICI partner organisations have initiated fund-raising activities, due to the system, the revenue does not benefit this particular partner. Sustainability also highly depends on the availability of financing of the Government and counterpart institutions for maintaining and further improving the service capacities after project termination. This is currently a challenge as it was learned that, for instance, due to financial constraints, the state institute Kyrghydhromet is now operating only for three days a week.

In terms of economic sustainability, UNDP was relatively confident that the jobs created in the fishery project and through AfT will sustain, though the COVID -19 pandemic may have negative impacts. Based on the testimonies from the project implementers and national partners, it is safe to conclude that the aquaculture and fishery industry and many of the enterprises set up through AfT will sustain.

Environmental sustainability. As indicated earlier in this report, it was difficult to identify environmental impacts and consequently, their sustainability.

In terms of social sustainability, the Access to Justice and Equal before Law projects have made significant work in raising awareness among the PwDs and women on their rights. Although this evaluation did not include consultation with final beneficiaries, it is safe to conclude that the changes made on awareness are sustainable. However, efforts are needed to further continue awareness raising and establishment of structures which will enable realisation of the rights for all.



Based on the information received from the beneficiary organisations, the institutional capacities have sustained so far, but staff turnover and limited financial support from the Government is a risk for the continuity of the activities. The projects have strengthened the Republic of Kyrgyzstan in a sustainable manner by supporting the establishment of a legal frameworks which are a fundamental foundation for sustainable service systems for instance in legal advice, entrepreneurship, and occupational health. The evaluation considers that the ratification of the UN CRPD provides a good potential for “*More equal societies and strengthened realisation of human rights*” (Impact area 1). Some positive signals are already seen as after the signing of the UN CRPD, the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic has approved a number of national programs that comply with the UN CRPD. However, resourcing and implementation of the policies and strategies still remains a challenge and further work and resources are needed to bring the principles of the UN CRPD in practice.

The Finnish supported projects have contributed to the improved private sector operational environment and succeeded in the initiation and implementation of a number of macro-level interventions related to public policy reform and institutional enhancement, including export development, thus contributing to “*Sustainable and inclusive economic growth*” (Impact Area 2).

The interviews indicate that the institutional capacities of the ICI institutions both in terms of equipment and, to some extent, human capacity have been sustained over the evaluation period. The institutions have been able to deliver their services, although with limited funding from the government and high staff turn-over. However, the evaluation was not able to validate this from the users of the services. Awareness on decent work has increased and occupational health and safety is being integrated into country systems. With regard to “*Environmentally sustainable societies*” (Impact area 3) some initiatives have been developed in water management and for the country to better prepare for natural disasters. The ICI projects do not position themselves in a broader organisational development framework which could be useful in ensuring sustainability.

2.3.3. Strategies employed in order to maximize sustainability

Sustainability is largely based on continuity of the interventions, and many of the projects which started during WEI I have been implemented in consecutive phases.

The MFA has granted a project extension “*to build on the achievements of the past eight years of work and ensure sustainability*” (internal memo). This long-term support is considered as one of the success factors for the Finnish support. It is, however, quite difficult to analyse, e.g., how the continuity between the different phases of the programme actually will improve sustainability or is it a logical continuation of a holistic development process.

On the other hand, there are also concerns to what extent this long-term support generates dependency on external funding. This, of course, depends on, what is funded.

In projects such as FAO managed fishery project, long term funding is well justified and needed as it is difficult to revitalize a whole fishery sector with related regulatory framework, institutional set-up and capacity building of fisher associations, through a short-term project. The same applies for the AfT project which worked holistically at different levels. However, a critical analysis of the added value of the extension as well as sustainability and exit strategy would have been needed.



2.4. Effectiveness (during 2018–2020)

EQ4. To what extent have the Country Strategies of 2018-2021 achieved their planned results and contributed to the realization of Finland's development policy objectives?

- EQ4a. What results have been produced until now, who and how many have benefitted from them? What groups were not reached, if any?
- EQ4b. To what extent is implementation on track to achieve the set objectives by the end of 2021? Note any major deviations or risks to achieving objectives and the reasons behind them. Includes analysis by funding instrument.
- EQ4c. Are there any lost opportunities or potential for future engagement in the region?

2.4.1. Results and beneficiaries

It has to be noted that projects (especially ICI projects) do not report the number of beneficiaries or set quantifiable targets against which the performance could be assessed. For the following analysis the ET used the Annual Reports and available evaluation reports.

In regard to Impact Area 1: More equal societies and strengthened realisation of human rights and rule of Law, the annual reports of the Widening Access to Justice indicate that, the project has managed to achieve the planned results to a large extent. The results per outcome are presented in Table 1 Results of Impact area 1. With the introduction of the state of emergency in 2020, MoJ and the FLA Centres moved to on-line work or closed the FLACs completely, resulting in the reduced number of people referring to the FLA Centres; however, the need was met through consultations provided through the 112 hotline.



Table 1 Results of Impact area 1

IMPACT 1: MORE EQUAL SOCIETIES AND STRENGTHENED REALIZATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND RULE OF LAW	
<p><i>Outcome 1.1. Effective Institutions are able to respond to the needs and rights of citizens, especially Women and vulnerable groups</i></p>	<p>Output 1.1.1. Increased access to justice and legal aid services, in particular for women and PwDs ACHIEVED</p> <p>During 2014-2018 (Phase I of the Widening Access to Justice project):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 33,492 citizens received consultation of legal aid, (40% men, 60% women), 1,058 PwDs, 5,164 youth. • 1,896 duty bearers, representatives of formal and informal justice institutions (55% women, 45% men and 8 PwDs) were trained on the rights of vulnerable groups, access to justice, and other related issues. • 946 persons (57% women, 43% men), including 1,409 PwDs (35%) were trained on their rights.) <p>During 2019-2020 (Phase II of the project):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A total number of 15,606 persons received legal consultations. During period March – December 2020, on-line consultation was provided to 1,255 persons (31% men and 69% women), including 27 PwDs • The project continued to support the MoJ's centralized database of legal acts. By the end of 2020 it contained 131,456 legal documents. The database had 1,285,107 users and 3,821,612 visitors. More than 50,000 users have installed the mobile application 'Laws of the KR'.
	<p>Output 1.1.2. Strengthened institutions to uphold rule of law, and promote and protect Human Rights ACHIEVED</p> <p>FLA quality standards adopted and integrated into the work of MoJ/ FLA center. At present, quality standards have been fully integrated into the activities of the FLA CC.</p>
	<p>Output 1.1.3. Ratification and implementation of human rights related UN conventions ACHIEVED</p> <p>The UN CRPD was signed and ratified on 14 March 2019.</p>
<p><i>Outcome 1.2. Strengthened civil society engagement in national dialogues</i></p>	<p>Output 1.2.1. Women's and vulnerable groups' improved awareness of their human rights PARTIALLY ACHIEVED</p> <p>During 2014-2018:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6,604 citizens (56% women and 44% men) received 7,042 consultations by the 'Bus of Solidarity' • The project brought together CSOs representing PwDs to sign a memorandum of understanding on the promotion of the Convention. Later, 300 representatives from more than 100 NGOs, government agencies and local self-governance bodies participated in public discussions on UN CRPD. As a result, an appeal to the Parliament was signed with the request to ratify UN CRPD. <p>During 2019-2020: 12 out of 22 planned trainings were conducted for rural women and for the local government officials, LSG bodies and NGOs in 8 out of 15 districts of the Chui and Osh provinces. 320 out of planned 600 people were covered by the trainings.</p>
	<p>Output 1.2.2. Policy dialogues become a key platform for advocating policy change and CSOs have the capacity to contribute IN PROCESS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project has supported elaboration of several executive documents such as the new Law 'On social and legal protection from domestic violence', National Action Plan on Gender Equality 2015-2017 and provided assistance in analysis of all developed bills in the framework of judicial reform to ensure the rights of vulnerable groups, including women, PwDs, children and youth at risk. • The online course on disability issues based on the UN CRPD principles was designed for journalists, journalism students, bloggers and other stakeholders at the request of the MoLSD.

Source: 'Widening Access to Justice' Final Report (for period 2014-2018) and Annual Report 2020, interviews and e-mail consultations



The project has also succeeded in strengthening the institutions in service provision:

Since its inception the project has contributed to the establishment of 15 FLACs, covering almost all districts of the Osh and Chui provinces. In addition, several activities have been implemented in line with the UN CRPD, such as accessibility analysis, training of sign language interpreters, and developing regulation on the provision of sign-language interpretation services. In connection to the Parliamentary elections in October 2020, the project provided training for journalists on the implementation of the voting rights of people with disabilities. With regard to Outcome 1.2. of strengthening civil society in the engagement in policy dialogue, the project has succeeded in bringing CSOs together to promote the ratification of the UN CRPD but, according to the interviewees, now needs to focus on keeping the platform united.

The Finnish-financed projects implemented by FAO, ILO and UNDP contribute Impact Area 2: Sustainable and inclusive growth’, which has two outcomes, namely ‘Diversified and expanding private sector that provides decent working conditions’ (Outcome 2.1.) and ‘Better access to economic opportunities’ (Outcome 2.2.).

The achieved results per outcome are presented in Table 2 Results of Impact area 2. Based on the available information collected through document review and interviews and email correspondence, it can be concluded that significant outputs have been delivered and the projects are well on track in achieving their outcomes. The reports also indicate that particularly attention is paid on promoting participation of women. For instance, in 2020, it is reported that 75% of online training participants were women and among the participating companies 56% of were women-led companies (UNDP 2021). According to the annual report 2020 the FAO project has reached 64 members of three cooperatives (16 women), benefitting 234 households. In 2020, the project started a Mentorship program on women’s economic empowerment and to maintain the sustainability of business activities in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The beneficiaries interviewed confirm that, through the support and activities of the project, the entrepreneurs have realized the importance of enterprise development and business planning. and that the business development work carried out with the projects’ support will inspire other entrepreneurs. This will also help to move to another level of entrepreneurial activity and this transition allows them to improve their entrepreneurial opportunities to a higher level.



Table 2 Results of Impact area 2

IMPACT 2 SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH	
Outcome 2.1. Diversified and expanding private sector that provides decent working conditions	<p>Output 2.1.1. Promotion of green economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The projects have conducted studies such as 'Analysis of green products value chains and export opportunities in Kyrgyzstan' (UNDP), based on which green value chains were selected for the project's support: Natural honey, Mixes of nuts and dried fruits and vegetables and Adventure tourism. A similar report was prepared for Tajikistan. • The FAO project provided studies on the impacts of climate change on aquaculture and fisheries development in the Kyrgyz Republic and Fish Value Chain Study. • The ILO project contributed to the production of the Enabling Environment for Sustainable Enterprises which was used in Kyrgyzstan to develop five proposals on enabling business environment.
	<p>Output 2.1.2. Improved private sector operating environment</p> <p>The project started to collaborate with Kyrgyz Tourism LTD on adventure tourism, Public Fund TES Centre for honey products, and ErkinConsult LTD Dried fruits, berries, dried vegetables and nuts.</p>
	<p>Output 2.2.1. Increased income creation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall, the project provided 28 trainings for 531 individuals out of which 243 were female. Of the people that were trained 60% increased income on average by 11.8%. • Subproject improving access of SMEs, especially women-led companies, to innovative and inclusive financing and investment tools has generated 48 jobs 2018 -2020 (31 are for women) (email dated 8.4.) Some sub-projects' results are expected to be achieved/ shown some time in fall (during/after the agricultural season). (UNDP 2021) • By the end of Phase III, the project activities led to the creation of well over 4000 new jobs, including 2 264 new jobs in Tajikistan and 1 492 new jobs in Kyrgyzstan. • Walkers KG LLC, which has achieved access to finance and received loan for USD 130,1770 (KGS 11 million) and as a result created 5 new jobs.
Outcome 2.2. Better access to economic opportunities	<p>Output 2.2.2. Strengthened SMEs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The AfT -project has supported 232 companies, out of which 84 (36 %) are women-led • Four women groups for fishery were established, three are currently active. • There are two women at senior levels. • The Investment Promotion and Protection Agency (IPPA) with the export caravan informational campaign and improving the Export portal managed to attract 311 representatives of the private sector. The project supported IPPA in process of launching new online services based on the trade portal (export.gov.kg). During 2020, a total number of 15,166 clients visited the platform, the majority of the clients of IPPA are local exporters.

Source: Project document review, interviews and email correspondence

The projects contributing to 'Impact Area 3: Environmentally sustainable society' are ICI projects implemented by the Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE), GTK and FMI. The results achieved per outcome area are presented in Table 3 Results of ICI projects per outcome area. These projects have proceeded as planned and delivered most of the planned outputs, although some delays and narrowing of activities were caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Cooperation and training have continued online to the extent possible, although hands-on support was not possible. The data on the performance is collected "from Annual reports and complemented with interviews.



Table 3 Results of ICI projects per outcome area

IMPACT 3: ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY	
Outcome 3.1. Water resources are equally shared and used in a sustainable way	<p>Output 3.1.1. Authorities are able to effectively manage water PARTIALLY ACHIEVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The FinWater WEI project has contributed to strengthening the dialogue between Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic on the issues of the Chu-Talas basin, and this dialogue can serve as an example for other countries in Central Asia. The project also developed documents for the improvement of joint development and decision-making which will contribute to the achievement of strategic development goals.
	<p>Output 3.1.2. Civil society participates in the planning of water resources use ACHIEVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Civil society has been engaged in the project implementation.
Outcome 3.2. Enhanced understanding of natural resources including groundwater and improved geo-hazard management	<p>Output 3.2.1. Authorities are able to produce geo-information in digital form and forecast geo-hazards ACHIEVED</p> <p>The GIS Groups at the Geoinformation Centers in Bishkek and Osh are digitizing map materials independently. The digitizing of the scale 1:200 000 geological maps is currently 100% completed. The workflow for transforming information from paper to digital format is running in Osh.</p>
	<p>Output 3.2.2. Improved access to geo-information for decision makers and stakeholders ACHIEVED</p> <p>The digitized geological map is available in the web-based Geoportal.</p>
Outcome 3.3. Availability of high-quality information and accurate early warnings increase productivity and reduce health risks and the risks of loss of life and property caused by severe weather, climate and environment.	<p>Output 3.3.1. Improved capacity of government authorities to produce weather, climate and environmental information and early warning services ACHIEVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An agriculture portal has been set up by Hyrdometer as a warning portal providing information for the farmers so that they can plan better for the activities. Overall weather forecasting has improved.
	<p>Output 3.3.2. Improved planning by government authorities and other groups that have special needs for early warnings and weather and environmental information SEE ABOVE</p>
Outcome 3.4. Increased preparedness to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change.	<p>Output 3.4.1. Authorities have the ability to produce and disseminate climate change related information and early warnings NO SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENTS REPORTED</p>

Source: Projects annual reports, stakeholder interviews.

The Results Framework of the current country programme contains mainly output indicators and the proposed sources of verification (such as World Bank ‘WB’ Doing Business Report, EIU Country report, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe ‘UNECE’ Environmental Performance Reviews, EPR) are too high-level to capture results of Finnish support. The global pandemic postponed the launch of the project ‘Strengthening the mastering of natural resources for national



welfare in the Kyrgyz Republic, Phase II' and it was reported that, due to travel restrictions, the main activities have focused on the updating of the project document and communication between GTK and the State Committee on Industry, Energy and Subsoil Use.

The interviews both in Finland and in Kyrgyzstan show that gender mainstreaming has remained weaker than hoped for. This is partly due to the fact that it was not fully integrated at the beginning of the projects. The projects also tend to set up a specific gender component or sub-project rather than mainstream gender in the project activities. Similarly, efforts to mainstream disability issues at the project level have been minimal or inexistent. This is due to the limited capacity and experience of the implementing institutions regarding disability issues. The interviewees also pointed out that, while the MFA emphasised the importance of integrating the crosscutting objective of gender equity in the project, the importance of integration of disability issues in the project was not clearly communicated by the MFA.

During the period 2018 – 2020 there was only one Local Cooperation project implemented in Kyrgyzstan. This project conducted trainings for rural youth on green skills and energy-efficient heating with the support of the State Agency for Vocational and Technical Education and the Aga Khan Foundation. Upon completion of the training, they received a specialty: A Master of warming houses with natural materials or a Master of Building stoves (energy-saving and energy-efficient stoves). In addition, twenty women's groups were established and trained in business planning, fruit and herbal drying technologies and drying machines. As a result, energy-efficient stoves were introduced, currently the implemented construction system is becoming widespread in the territory of the Issyk-Kul region.

2.4.2. Extent to which the implementation is on track to achieve the set objectives by the end of 2021

There is sufficient evidence on the progress towards expected outcomes per each impact area. However, from the evaluation perspective, in the future, there is a need to better define the expected outcomes and outputs and select indicators to be used for accurate reporting also including the targeted number of beneficiaries, which is now absent from the plans and reports.

The impact of COVID-19 is seen in all projects, probably higher for ICI projects which do not have a presence in the country. However, all projects have developed measures to overcome the challenges: online contacts and trainings were held. Also, the UN projects responded to the COVID-19 related restrictions through online services and focusing on desk work to produce, e.g., the guidelines for newcomers. The COVID-19 pandemic and response measures taken by the Government have also had an unprecedented impact on the justice system. Courts and FLACs were closed. This has negatively affected access to justice and legal aid, especially for vulnerable groups: women and children at risk of violence, people with disabilities, undocumented migrants, homeless people, refugees. As a response, the project opened a hotline accessible to all. The projects also reported delays in implementation and challenges were faced in the selection of the beneficiaries and communities.



2.4.3. Lost opportunities or potential for future engagement in the region

No lost opportunities for future engagement in Kyrgyzstan were spotted in the reports available or recognised during the interviews.

2.5. Management (during 2018–2020)

EQ5. How has the development policy and cooperation been managed?

- EQ5a. How effective has the policy formulation, strategic planning, selection of interventions, partners and instruments been?
- EQ5b. To what extent is programmatic, regional or sector coordination points of view, Results-based management (RBM) as well as synergies guiding the decisions made?
- EQ5c. To what extent has the Ministry's guidelines on Human Rights Based Approach been applied in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation?
- EQ5d. What were the strengths and weaknesses of planning and implementation? What could the Ministry do to improve its management for impact, sustainability, effectiveness and relevance? How?

The Department for Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia manages the project portfolio in Kyrgyzstan. During implementation, the MFA participates in the Steering Committee and Project Board meetings. The MFA has also commissioned evaluations such as Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) of RoL and MTE of WEI II. Evaluation is also an integral part of both ICI and multilateral projects. The project officer (development cooperation) at the MFA Department for Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia's Unit for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (ITÄ-20) was the focal point for projects in Central Asia and was responsible for project preparations and follow-up.

The Local Cooperation Funds are managed by the Embassy of Finland in Kazakhstan, which also defines the priority areas for these projects implemented by local CSOs. There has been staff turnover in the Embassy in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan and the current staff of the mission has had limited direct contacts with FLC projects. There used to be a development specialist based in the embassy, but the position was terminated in 2016.

2.5.1. Effectiveness of policy formulation, strategic planning, selection of interventions, partners and instruments

The interviewees told that the Department has been active in communicating with the implementing organisations and provided comments and asked for clarifications for proposals and reports, although during the past years this interaction has been reduced. Sector advisers of the Unit for Sectoral Policy (KEO-20) provide their comments on the project proposals and in some cases, participate in the monitoring missions. Based on the documentation available, it remains unclear whether all project proposals are taken to the MFA Quality Board.



The Evaluation learned that the WEI I and WEI II were developed mainly by the MFA with limited consultation with the stakeholders in Finland and Kyrgyzstan. The MFA informed that some consultations with the stakeholders have been held in the preparation of the forthcoming strategy.

The multi-bi projects, a key modality of Finland's development strategy, are implemented following the Direct Implementation Modality, in which the implementing partner is responsible for the overall management, backstopping, and monitoring of the project in line with its programme and operational procedures. Since Finland has no permanent representation in Kyrgyzstan, activities in agriculture/business development and employment creation sectors are implemented by UN agencies (UNDP, FAO and ILO respectively) in the form of multi-bi cooperation. The MFA is participating in project Board meetings and conducts monitoring missions.

ICI projects in turn, are implemented in partnership between a Finnish government agency or public body and an agency representing the public sector in Kyrgyzstan. Both institutions are present in the project Steering Committee. ICI projects are guided by administrative internal instruction issued by the MFA, which includes detailed guidelines and information concerning the project planning and preparation. As indicated on the MFA website, the *“Ministry for Foreign Affairs (KEO-20) has contracted a Consultancy Company (Facilitation Consultant) to provide support services for the preparation and monitoring of ICI projects. The Facilitation Consultant supports the Finnish government agencies and public bodies that have received a decision from a regional unit in the Foreign Ministry concerning approval of their project proposal for continued planning. When the project cycle has advanced to implementation, the Facilitation Consultant also controls that the Finnish agencies' reporting meets the legal, administrative and contractual requirements. The Facilitation Consultant's function is to support the Finnish government agency bring an effective development impact. However, responsibility for the project is born by the parties to the contract.”* (MFA n/d) The ICI implementers considered the inputs of the ICI consultant valuable, particularly at the project development phase, to ensure that the project proposal meets the requirements of the MFA, but the role and input in technical project reporting are limited.

The OSCE support is managed by the Permanent Delegation to OSCE in Vienna. After the annual framework has been agreed between the Delegation and ITÄ-20, the MFA transfers funds to the OSCE to be used in designed interventions. The implementing organisations report back to the Delegation, which in turn, submits the reports to ITÄ-20. It was reported that the monitoring practises are improving.

Channelling fund through multilateral organisations which have the presence in the country and needed technical knowledge is a justified strategy. Similarly, ICI is a relevant modality for partnering and capacity building between state institutions and actors. It is also an appropriate measure to bring in Finnish added value as indicated in the 2007 Development Cooperation policy. It was learned that the WEI was criticised for Finland's poor visibility in the region because of working through the UN, which does not emphasise Finland's role or involve Finnish expertise.

The results of the FLC projects in the past have been monitored by requiring mid-term and final reporting from the partner organizations. The embassy has also inspected the projects and interviewed some of the beneficiaries of the projects, when possible. For a small



embassy, where the monitoring of the projects is the responsibility of the Deputy (the FLC forming only a small portion of his/her duties), undertaking multiple site visits or extensive monitoring, especially of the projects that are largely taking place in remote areas, can be challenging. Therefore, it has been crucial to find reliable partners. For instance, the FLC project that was funded in 2018 was carried out by an organization that the mission had worked with before. The feedback from the NGOs who received FLC funding shows that the procedures for submitting the application and the selection criteria were very clear. Also, the communication with the Embassy during the implementation was very easy. The staff was very supportive by allowing to revise planned activities due to changes in the local context.

The current thematic areas are ‘inherited’ from the previous phases and no new themes have been introduced since WEI II, apart from specific projects implemented by OSCE and FLC projects. The priority areas are rights of women and girls, reinforcing developing countries’ economies, and democratic and effective societies. FLC projects support these Finnish development objectives in the local context.

2.5.2. Guidance of decision making

RBM has been applied in the Country Strategy 2018 – 2020, which has a Results Framework. However, this Evaluation considers that the selected indicators reflect only some outputs, and expected impacts consist of broad vision statements. Also, it would be difficult to verify the Finnish contribution using the defined sources of verification, which refer to high level global impacts such as WB GDP per capita Index, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) Transition Indicators, NASA Socioeconomic Data and Applications Centre (SEDAC) Environmental Sustainability Index and Gender Inequality Index.

The evaluation learned that, so far, the Department for Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia has not been obliged to report on the development results on the aggregate level. In case this is required, there is a need to ensure that appropriate and measurable indicators are used and that the projects provide accurate data on defined aggregate indicators.

2.5.3. Application of the Human Rights Based Approach in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation

The extent of application of the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) varies by implementation modality. The projects implemented by multilateral organisations (UNDP, ILO, FAO) targeted both duty bearers and rights holders. However, the project documentation had limited information about the human rights situation in Kyrgyzstan and its relationship with the specific sector or theme. The document review indicates that during WEI II, the ICI projects started to become more human rights-sensitive. For the preparation of the current phase 2018-2021 the MFA Guidance note on HRBA (MFA 2015) was available and is referred to in the ICI project proposals but evidence on practical application is limited. For instance, a Human Rights assessment is not included in any of the project documents.



2.5.4. Strengths and weaknesses of planning and implementation

The interviewees pointed out that the strength of Finnish support to Kyrgyzstan is that it was available for a long period and the approach was more supporting development process rather than a standalone project. Secondly, an advantage was that the programmes sustained the same focus throughout the evaluation period. The selected modes of cooperation (Inter-Institutional Cooperation and projects implemented by the well-established UN-organisations) were appropriate. Multilateral organisations are present in the country and they have the needed technical knowledge. ICI projects, in turn, are built on long-term partnerships between the institutions. The MFA commitment over the years has also contributed to good partnerships with implementing organisations. The partners considered the MFA as a flexible partner with sufficient risk appetite and pointed out that the MFA does not consider non-achievement of results as failures but rather as points of learning.

The projects are implemented at different levels, including policy level, institutional level and micro level, which has appeared to be a successful strategy for sustainable results. The projects also apply multiple means for capacity building, including theoretical training, practical work and upgrading of technical facilities, an effective strategy.

Weaknesses and challenges include severe cuts in aid funding. However, on the other hand, this had a positive impact on some projects, which, due to the reduced resources, become more focused. The informants pointed out that the administrative resources in the MFA were too thin and there was insufficient staff compared to the number of projects and workload. A development policy adviser was deployed to the Embassy in Kazakhstan to cover also the Kyrgyz Republic, but the post was been cancelled. The political situation in the Kyrgyz Republic and continuously changing decision-makers made it difficult to do long-term planning.

At the intervention level, the weaknesses or areas for development are related to the lack of proper monitoring systems. The Country Strategy defines expected impacts as broad vision statements and lack of indicators is a limiting factor to assess the impact. The same applies to the WEI I, WEI II which do not have a monitoring framework and individual projects, which express the impacts only in a descriptive manner. This limitation has been observed by the projects themselves but only few measures to improve were made. For instance, the final report of FinWaterWEI II states that the progress towards the overall objective is not possible to assess and concluded that the indicators for programme purpose turned out to be too generic to be used for assessing achievement properly. Having an inception phase or appraisal focusing on monitoring systems would be useful to ensure that the monitoring function meets its purpose, not only for accountability and reporting but also as a management and learning tool.

In order to improve its management for impact, sustainability, effectiveness and relevance, the MFA needs to ensure that the programme and projects have adequate monitoring systems. The MFA should continue focusing on the quality of project proposals and ensure that they include appropriate monitoring systems which will enable tracking performance, results, and contribution to the overall goals of the Country Strategy. More focus should be put on defining concrete impacts and related impact indicators, which would guide the implementation of various phases of the projects. The MFA should also ensure that there are sufficient capacities in the MFA to support the projects to meet the requirements and quality standards.



Programmatic approach could be strengthened by ensuring synergies and setting up programme-level goals and monitoring systems. In addition, one area for further development is to define what the regional approach means and what added value it would bring. At present, the projects in regional or multi-country programmes are implemented as stand-alone interventions and regional benefits are not defined. If synergy and coherence of interventions is expected, this should be planned at the outset and resourced accordingly.

The projects should include proper background and situation analysis to justify the support and targeted thematic areas. The proposals should also include a stakeholder analysis which would help to identify synergies. In addition, the programme would benefit from gender and human rights analyses, which would also guide the projects' focus and help the projects also to address human rights and gender considerations.

The partners both in Finland and in Kyrgyzstan are well aware of the Finnish development work and guiding documents WEI I, WEI II and Country Strategy 2018 -2020. However, a suggestion was made by the multilateral partners for the MFA to more effectively communicate about its development cooperation priorities to the implementing partners particularly if a broad team is engaged in the implementation of multicomponent projects so that they could be holistically taken into account.

2.6. Coherence (2009–2020)

EQ6. To what extent have the development cooperation activities of the Department for Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia been coherent with regard to:

- EQ6a. Coherence within the portfolio managed by the Department for Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia.
- EQ6b. Coherence with other Finnish-funded development cooperation activities implemented in the target region.
- EQ6c. Coherence with development cooperation in the target region supported by the broader donor community, including the EU and its Member States.

2.6.1. Coherence within the portfolio of country-level actions

The funded interventions have been coherent with the WEI I, WEI II and Country Strategy and the overriding Finnish policy framework. Thematic coherence is sought for by clustering the interventions under thematic programmes or result areas in WEI I and II and three impact areas of the Country Strategy.

Coherence between the individual interventions has not, however, taken place, as also noted in the WEI-II Mid-Term Review (2016), which concluded that some of the assumed synergies between components and projects, as well as with the Central Asian regional initiatives have not materialised. The findings of this evaluation concur with this conclusion.

The aid programme is almost identical in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (with the exception of the FAO- implemented project Towards Sustainable Aquaculture and Fisheries Development in



the Kyrgyz Republic, which has no counterpart in Tajikistan) as – according to the Country Strategy - the problems and efforts needed to rectify them are very similar in the two countries. **However, the interviews indicate that there are significant differences between the countries in terms of needs and implementation environments as well as phase of implementation.** Further, while particularly the WEI I promoted regional programmes, it remains unclear to what extent the regional approach has produced added value, as projects have appeared to be a set on individual projects under one implementation umbrella. Although joint elements have been identified and cooperation, as well as joint activities, have taken place, it remains unclear to what extent the programmes have contributed to the region-level targets.

At the intervention level, internal coherence exists between the ICI projects and – to a smaller extent – also among the projects implemented by UN Agencies. The Department for Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia made attempts to enhance internal coherence of interventions by establishing linkages between the Decent Work and Fishery projects as well as between the ‘Support to social sphere’ and Decent Work projects, but these attempts were not successful. The informants consider that this might have been because of the already complex structure of the ILO project, which had several components and a vast number of technical experts engaged. One hindering factor was also that the collaboration was not embedded in the project design at the outset, and thus not resourced. This is a missed opportunity, as it is reported that work safety in fish production is now a great concern. The evaluation of the Decent Work Phase II project (Stolyarenko 2017) also pointed out that there is a lack of coherence and inter-connection/synergy between the project components within the Decent Work -project itself.

Some synergy is present with FinWaterWEI, GTK and FMI projects. The ICI projects FINKMET II and FINTAJ II also have cooperation and joint activities. Regional networking has been strengthened during the Geoportal meeting between Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. A special focus is to promote regional co-operation with Glaciological studies. There is also an agreement with FMI, SYKE and GTK to cooperate and coordinate the ICI projects as part of the WEI initiative.

The FLC projects are implemented in various sectors aligned with the Finnish development cooperation priorities but the coherence and complementarity of those projects with the overall framework remain unclear. OSCE projects, however show a high degree of coherence with the framework.

2.6.2. Coherence with other Finnish-funded development cooperation activities

There have been only a few development activities supported by Finland beyond interventions financed by Department for Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Since 2010, the Abilis foundation has financed annually small-scale grassroots-level projects of organisations of PwDs. Thematically, these projects, which support NGO development, awareness raising, and livelihoods of PwDs and reduction of violence towards women with disabilities, are aligned with the activities and targets of the Widening Justice and Equal before Law projects implemented by UNDP, but no information exchange or coordination has taken place between these projects. The Finnish Lung Health Association (Filha) has implemented community-based tobacco work in four regions of Kyrgyzstan (Chyi, Naryn, Talas, Issyk-Kul) during 2011–2020. The project is not linked with other interventions in the country.



The HEI ICI ‘FishEDU’ project is an example of successful complementarity. FishEDU is run in partnership between the University of Eastern Finland and the Kyrgyz National Agrarian University (KNAU) 2017-2020, aiming at building capacity in fisheries and aquaculture education in the Kyrgyz Republic at both vocational and bachelor level, by training of trainers, developing teaching and study material and developing the teaching infrastructure at KNAU. The teachers from KNAU have participated in some of the trainings arranged by FAO as well as trainings organised by SYKE and some of the FishEDU activities have been open to FAO project beneficiaries. This project has collaborated with FAO and World Food Programme by organising a ‘fish day’ at a school and in a local community. HEI ICI funding comes from the MFA but is channelled through the National Agency of Education (EDUFI) in Finland.

2.6.3. Coherence with development cooperation of other donors

The FAO reports cooperation with regional fishery structures (CACFish), which were established as part of the Central Asia Regional Programme for Fisheries and Aquaculture Development (FISHDEV) supported by Turkey. The FISHDEV programme benefited from the manuals and guidelines on Environment Impact Assessment, the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries as well as the poster of fish species in Central Asia developed by the project. In turn, the Finnish-supported project benefitted from FISHDEV and CACFish trainings and study tours in Turkey. Local partnership in the research area was also set up with the UNDP Global Environmental Finance project, which led to the lifting of the fishing moratorium in Issyk-Kul lake. (FAO 2016). The ILO reported that the review of the national policies on youth employment developed by the Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment of Population of Tajikistan, in consultations with social partners, and peer-reviewed by Azerbaijan (in close cooperation with the Lukoil YE project). Joint activities and coherence are also observed in the Widening Access to Justice -project implemented by UNDP. The other donors are now expanding the Free Legal Service Centre network and joint training activities are conducted.

The GTK reported that it has established cooperation with the WB ‘Central Asia Hydrometeorology Modernization Program’ and that dialogue has taken place with the British Geological Survey in the field of GIS/data management related to landslides to avoid potential overlap between projects supported by various agencies.

Sector-wise and thematic coordination is present mostly in the projects implemented by OSCE. For instance, the ‘Promotion of Rule of Law in the Kyrgyz Penitentiary System’ project was implemented as a part of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime’s three-year EU-funded project, which was co-ordinated with the International Committee of the Red Cross and Doctors without Borders. Similarly, the project ‘Promoting free, fair and transparent parliamentary election in Kyrgyz republic 2015’ was implemented in cooperation with national partners and international agencies including the EU. Domestic election observation was done in close cooperation with USAID.

Complementarity and coherence of the regional or cross-border activities were problematic. The AfT operates in three countries and has a regional component that adds another level of complexity to the overall operational and technical structure of the project. Furthermore, the OSH project implemented by the ILO 2010 – 2013 was intended to be implemented in eight countries but it ended up being operational in only five because the readiness of the countries varied. The informants noted that although the regional approach was promoted, the period of



WEI I (2009-2014) might have been too early for regional and even transnational cooperation because of the political situation. It was also pointed out that developing a regional programme requires careful situation analysis in each participating country and identification of joint objectives in a participatory manner. On the other hand, the projects implemented by OSCE have applied a regional approach (e.g., the ODIHR project Strengthening Democratic Processes and Institutions in Eastern Europe, South Caucasus and Central Asia, OSCE Academy) and many of them include both national and regional activities.



3. Conclusions

Overall, the Finnish support to the Kyrgyz Republic has been successful and, despite political turbulence in the country, the projects have succeeded to produce intended results to a large extent. Some significant changes in legal frameworks and institutional operations can be linked to Finnish supported interventions, thus providing and enabling an environment for making impacts also at lower levels. Undoubtedly, Finland has also revitalised the aquaculture and fishery industry in Kyrgyzstan, which is a major achievement. Similarly, job creation has been successful to some extent. The ICI projects have enhanced the human capacities of the partnering organisations and provided equipment that has improved the quality of service delivery. However, these impacts are vulnerable to the risk of poor maintenance of infrastructure and staff turnover. In the absence of relevant impact statements and indicators, the aggregate assessment at the programmatic level is not possible.

The interventions are relevant to the partner country's and Finland's development policy objectives. Most of the projects were implemented in two to four consecutive phases, thus providing long-term support. However, the rationale for the continuity was not always explicitly justified. Extending the implementation to ensure sustainability is questionable particularly if sustainability and exit strategies are not defined during project implementation. From the impact perspective, it would be advisable to construct all phases towards one impact.

Some informants questioned readiness of Kyrgyzstan to respond and adopt a holistic approach to democracy, rule of law and human rights. The government shows more willingness and room to move forward with technical issues (such as legal aid, seen more as a 'service' than as a real chance to improve accountability) than to take a broader look at existing power structures, governance issues, human rights concerns, etc.

The purpose of the Country Strategy as an instrument to introduce RBM in country programming and to enhance Finnish aid effectiveness and accountability is not fully realised. The Department for Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia has been exempted from results reporting so far and, although the current and forthcoming Country Strategies have results frameworks, the evaluation considers that the monitoring systems and related indicators need to be refined. In their current form, they are not appropriate to measure the contribution of Finland, as they are too abstract or high level. To assess the change, baselines are needed.

The cross-cutting objectives of the Finnish development policy are recognised, but the extent to which they are incorporated in the programme varies. The projects would benefit from articulating a more detailed strategy for gender mainstreaming and developing a strategy for strengthening the gender orientation of the intervention from the beginning of the project implementation. More efforts are needed to analyse the needs of vulnerable people and it is evident that the cross-cutting objectives of non-discrimination and disability inclusion require more guidance. It is also important that the implementing partners are well informed about these cross-cutting objectives and related requirements.



Finally, the monitoring challenges prevail. In the absence of clear impact and outcome indicators and related baselines, it is difficult to assess the performance of the Country Programme as a whole, let alone individual projects. Also, with regard to the multilateral organisations such as UNDP, the outcome-level targets and indicators of projects measure the extent to which the initiative is in line with the UNDP targets and the extent to which UNDP support is relevant to the achievement of the country's SDGs.

Finland is appreciated as a trustful flexible and committed partner. The MFA's commitment and interest in the projects were confirmed by all informants and they pointed out that there has been open and transparent communication. The interviewees praised the high-level commitment of the MFA Unit for Eastern Europe and Central Asia not only in terms of providing long-term funding but also in terms of interest in substance issues. The respondents also appreciated the engagement of sector advisers in the Project Board meetings as an additional quality input.



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Country Review Tajikistan

**Evaluation on Development Cooperation carried out by the
Department for Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia,
including the Wider Europe Initiative (WEI)**

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Evaluation on Finland's Development Policy and Cooperation

2021/4B



CONTENTS

1 CONTEXT	45
2. PRESENTATION OF THE ANALYSIS PER EVALUATION QUESTION	49
2.1. Relevance (during 2009-2021).....	49
2.2 Impact (during 2009-2021).....	53
2.3 Sustainability (during 2009-2021).....	59
2.4 Effectiveness (during 2018 – 2021).....	62
2.5 Management (during 2018-2021).....	70
2.6 Coherence (during 2009 – 2021).....	73
3 CONCLUSIONS	76

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1

Development cooperation disbursements 2009-2020 benefitting Tajikistan in EUR million.....46

Figure 2

Development cooperation disbursements 2009-2020 benefitting Tajikistan per sector in EUR.....46

Figure 3

Development cooperation disbursements 2009-2020 benefitting Tajikistan per channel in EUR million.....47

LIST OF BOXES

Box 1 Results achieved in Policy Priority Area 1 under Outcome 1.1.....63

Box 2 Results achieved in Policy Priority Area 2 under Outcome 2.1.....64

Box 3 Results achieved in Policy Priority Area 2 under Outcome 2.2.....66

Cover photo Country Review Tajikistan: Pamir River in Tajikistan by Marja Liivala.



1. Context

Finland's development cooperation with Tajikistan started with the WEI initiative in 2009. It was consolidated by Finland's 2012 development policy programme and further reaffirmed by Finland's 2016 development policy, which stated that *"Finland will support Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, the poorest countries of Central Asia. Finland's support will be used to strengthen human rights, the rule of law, the business environment, water resource management, and climate change preparedness"*. This policy is coherent with the European Union (EU) Central Asia Strategy, the renewed version of which was adopted by the Council of the EU in 2017. The Council emphasised that Central Asian countries were significant partners of the EU.

The impact areas for Finland's development cooperation programme are derived from the National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan for the period 2007 to 2015. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of Agenda 2030 are well covered by the Tajikistan development strategy. The other country policy documents employed were sector programmes, e.g., Concept on Free Legal Aid (FLA) in Tajikistan; Judicial-Legal Reform Programme in Tajikistan (2019-2021); and State Human Rights Education Programme (2013-2020). Under the WEI I, the Finnish Development Cooperation programme in Tajikistan relates to Trade, Energy and Environment, and Social Sustainability. Under WEI II, it fell under the Green Economy and Democracy support themes of WEI II as well as under the thematic priorities of the current Country Strategy namely: More equal societies and strengthened realization of human rights and rule of law; Sustainable and inclusive economic growth, and Environmentally sustainable society.

Finland is represented in Tajikistan by a roving ambassador based in Helsinki who administers the Funds for Local Cooperation (FLCs). FLC are used in financing the operation of the local civil society. Civil society organisations' (CSOs) projects are chosen based on annually identified priorities and are mostly aimed at strengthening gender equality and empowering the most vulnerable groups of society.

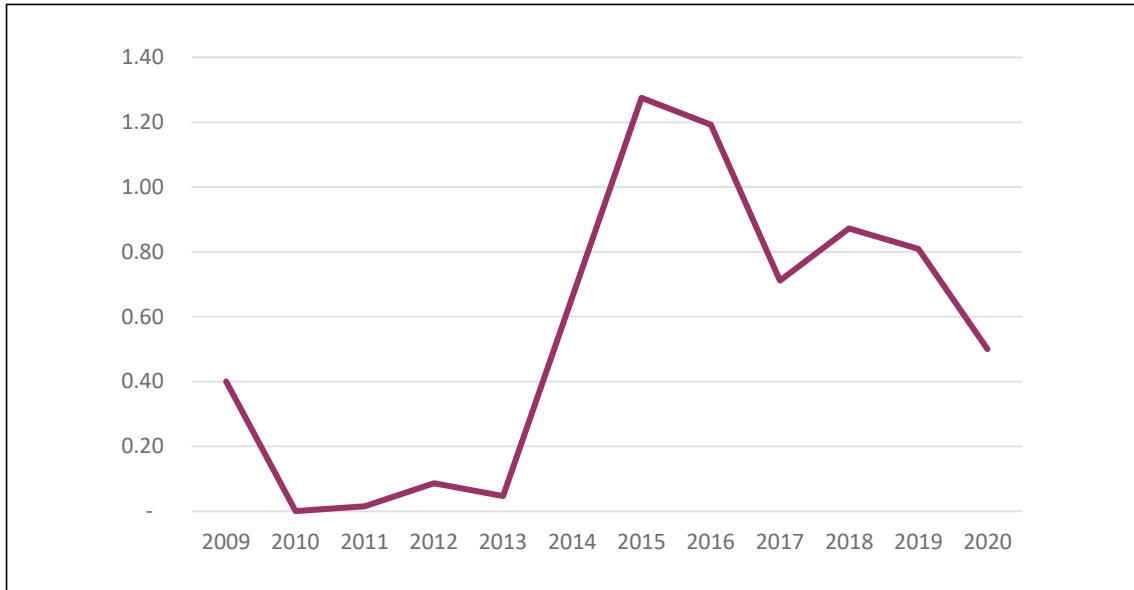
The portfolio analysis⁵ prepared by the Evaluation Team (ET) has identified a total of 19 bilateral projects representing EUR 6.6 million⁶ during the period of 2009-2020. As shown in Figure 1 Development cooperation disbursements 2009-2020 benefitting Kyrgyzstan in EUR million, during the evaluation period, Finland's commitment increased from EUR 0.5 million during WEI I to EUR 3.8 million during WEI II and in the current phase amounts to EUR 2.2 million. In addition to these bilateral projects, Tajikistan also benefits from regional or multi-country interventions. However, as it is not possible to identify the shares from which Tajikistan would directly benefit, these interventions are not included in the financial statistics presented below.

5 The ET prepared the portfolio analysis of the programmable development cooperation 2009-2020 based on the data extracted from the MFA's financial reporting system - Ratsa. For further details on the approach and limitations, please see Volume 1, Annex 5 of this report.

6 Unless otherwise specified, financial figures of Finnish support mentioned in this report correspond to disbursed ("maksatukset") amounts.



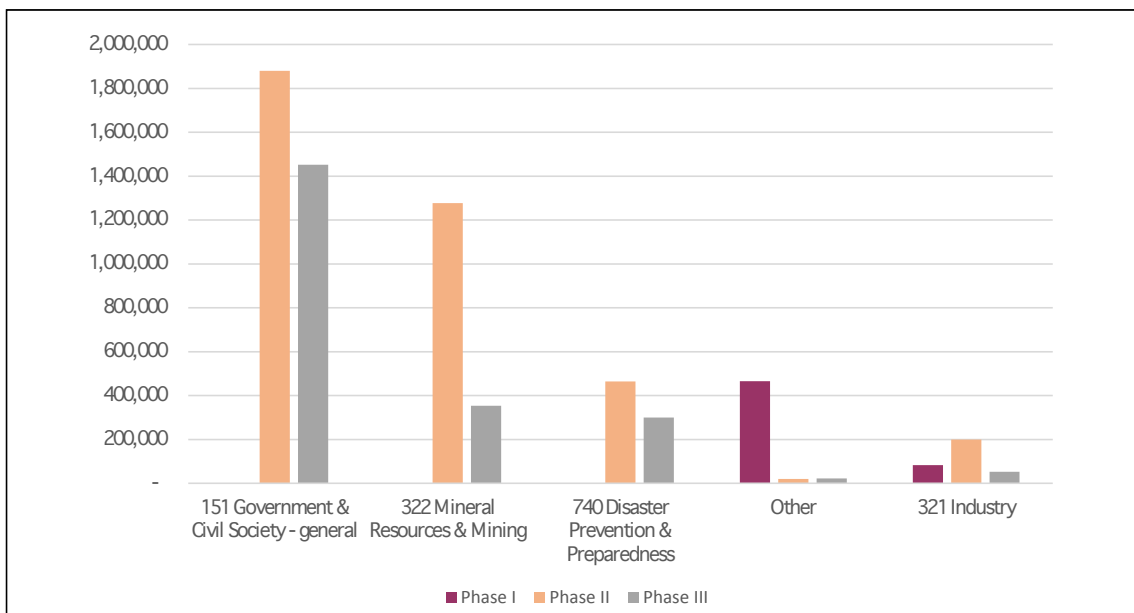
Figure 1 Development cooperation disbursements 2009-2020 benefitting Tajikistan in EUR million



Source: MFA Ratsu data 2009-2020; Data compilation: Evaluation team

Figure 2 Development cooperation disbursements 2009-2020 benefitting Kyrgyzstan per sector in EUR presents the distribution of the bilateral portfolio by sector and per phase. In the evaluation period, eleven sectors (by the DAC sector classification) in total were covered by the Finnish development cooperation. During Phase I, funding was allocated only through very small-scale projects to a variety of sectors, namely Industry, Conflict, Peace and Security, Communications, and Other Social Infrastructure (presented as ‘others’ in Figure 2 Development cooperation disbursements 2009-2020 benefitting Kyrgyzstan per sector in EUR). From Phase II onwards, Finnish cooperation focused on a smaller number of sectors, with slightly more than 50% of the overall funding allocated to projects in the Government and Civil Society Sector, and 27% allocated to Mineral Resources and Mining projects.

Figure 2 Development cooperation disbursements 2009-2020 benefitting Tajikistan per sector in EUR

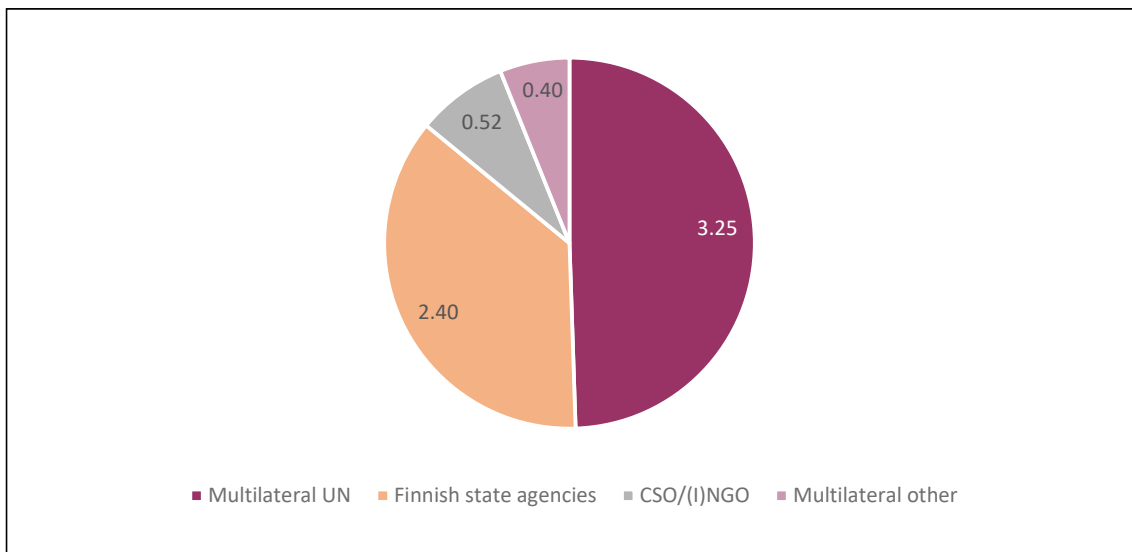


Source: MFA Ratsu data 2009-2020; Data compilation: Evaluation team



As shown in Figure 3 Development cooperation disbursements 2009-2020 benefitting Kyrgyzstan per channel in EUR million, nearly 50% of financial resources (EUR 3.3 million) have been directed to projects implemented by multilateral organisations (United Nations Development Programme ‘UNDP’). 36% (EUR 2.4 million) of funds have been directed to Finnish state agencies through Institutional Cooperation Instrument (ICI) projects. While only 8% of the bilateral portfolio (EUR 0.5 million) have been channelled through CSOs / (International) Non-Governmental Organisation (INGOs and NGOs) (through FLC projects), this channel includes by far the largest number of projects (14).

Figure 3 Development cooperation disbursements 2009-2020 benefitting Tajikistan per channel in EUR million



Source: MFA Ratsu data 2009-2020; Data compilation: Evaluation team

According to the portfolio analysis 6% of the bilateral portfolio (EUR 0.4 million) have been channelled through the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). However, the ET has identified additional funding channelled through a total of 5 OSCE regional projects implemented in Tajikistan in the evaluated period. Finland has continued funding the OSCE’s extra-budgetary projects carried out by the field operations, independent institutions and the OSCE Secretariat in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. OSCE project cooperation promotes security and stability by supporting civil society, democracy and the status of minorities and women. OSCE projects implemented in Tajikistan tackled the themes of Women, Water Management and Conflict Prevention; Human Rights, Gender and Security; Support for the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) Early Warning and Conflict Prevention Activities or Women’s Resource Centres.

The financial analysis does not capture country-specific financial data for regional and multi-country programmes. These projects include Eastern Energy and Efficiency and Environment Partnership (E5P) implemented by EBRD, Decent Work implemented by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and FinWater WEI – water sector support implemented in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and multi-country regional programmes such as Aid for Trade (‘Aft’, 2009-2021/23) and the Environment and Security Initiative by the Finnish Environment Institute (‘SYKE’, 2009 – 2013).

Most of the programme-level assumptions remained valid during each phase - e.g., peace continued in Tajikistan; the priorities and approach to development cooperation coincided with Tajikistan



interests and needs; the continuous political support and enabling legal framework for reforms and cooperation were in place; the role of the civil society was recognized and the civil society actors were/are willing and enabled to stand up for democratic principles for an inclusive society and organisations remained committed to achieving gender equality as part of inclusive development outcomes and women's and girls' rights were/are supported broadly by other development actors. However, some assumptions have been/are only partially met; e.g., maintaining the human resources, ensuring sufficient financial resources to maintain the results achieved, which means that local partners will have to make greater efforts to meet them.

Following significant cuts to the development cooperation appropriations in Finland in 2016, several projects, such as the 'Strengthening the Mastering of Natural Resources in the Republic of Tajikistan' (2018-2022) and 'The Programme for Finland's Water Sector Support to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan' (FinWater Phase III) were discontinued or put on hold. Moreover, the commencement of the 'Strengthening the Mastering of Natural Resources' project is pending due to the lengthy approval procedure in Tajikistan.

Interventions since 2020 face the difficulties associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, which have a significant impact on the implementation of projects requiring face-to-face meetings and travel.

The programmes and projects in this country review are systematically evaluated by their modality of implementation; i.e., multi-bi, bilateral or inter-institutional cooperation and when relevant by development sectors. FLC and OSCE projects implemented in Tajikistan are also evaluated. Programmes and projects cover three phases – 2009-2013, 2014-2017 and 2018-2021 of the Finnish development cooperation. This phasing is kept in the text wherever possible, as several programmes/projects have been extended and thus exceeded a given programming period.

The analysis and findings presented by the ET in the following section are based on a desk review of project documents available and triangulated with interviews unless otherwise mentioned.



2. Presentation of the analysis per evaluation question

2.1. Relevance (during 2009–2021)

EQ 1: To what extent have Finland's development cooperation been relevant?

- EQ1a. Alignment with partner country needs
- EQ1b. Alignment with the overall priorities of Finland's development policy and development cooperation
- EQ1c. Alignment and complementarity with the foreign and security policy, including economic relations

2.1.1. Alignment with partner country needs

In line with the findings from previous evaluations, the evaluation found that all interventions in the project portfolio during the period 2009 – 2021 are well aligned with the national development plans and needs of Tajikistan. Several of the Project Documents refer to the Tajikistan National Development Strategy (NDS) 2007-2015 and later to the Tajikistan National Development Strategy 2016 – 2030. The national goals and priorities 2007-2015 have been set based on the vision statement for the country's long-term development: *“to strengthen social and political stability and to achieve the economic prosperity and social well-being of the people of Tajikistan in an environment shaped by the supremacy of the principles of a market economy, freedom, human dignity and equal opportunities for each person to realise his or her potential.” (NDS 2007).* Among the main objectives of NDS 2016-2030 are: *“Complete eradication of poverty, replacement of unsustainable and promotion of sustainable consumption and production patterns, as well as protection and sustainable use of natural resources to ensure further economic and social development; Harmonization of goals and objectives of adopted socio-economic and gender policies and programs for the promotion of gender equality; Promotion of social inclusion by improving an access to quality services, including education, health, social welfare, water supply, and sanitation.”* The ICI projects were aligned with the Country Partnership Strategy (CPS) for Tajikistan, which defined the country's medium-term development strategy and operational program for 2010-2014. Moreover, the CPS was aligned with Tajikistan's Poverty Reduction Strategy goals.

Projects implemented by multilateral organisations were also aligned with the strategies of the respective implementing organisation. For instance, the projects implemented under the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) Early Transition Countries Fund, EBRD Technical Fund and EBRD Water Fund were aligned to the EBRD's Country Strategy for Tajikistan 2009 and the EBRD's Municipal and Environmental Infrastructure Strategy 2012. Among the strategy's goals were the improvement in the provision of essential municipal services and fostering transition to a market-oriented economy in order to create sustainable



organisations, infrastructure and services through investment projects. The aim was to alleviate poverty within the Early Transition Countries, among them Tajikistan. The information gathered from the desk review documents and interviews with the project's counterparts confirms that the projects implemented by the United Nations (UN) organisations (UNDP, ILO) are effectively aligned with the UN National Development Framework (UNDAF) in Tajikistan. The priorities set out by UNDAF for Tajikistan 2010-2015 and UNDAF for Tajikistan 2016-2020 are intended to support national development plans and complement Government development activities.

Alignment with the needs of Tajikistan's population: During **WEI I (2009-2013)**, several projects (e.g., Equal before the Law; Supporting Constitutional Justice; Occupational Safety and Health 'OSH') were directly devoted to the improvement of Tajikistan's population needs. These needs are represented by the enhancement of citizens' ability to access national law to defend their rights and interests, or as indicated in the Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) of the WEI I (MFA 2012): *"the protection of rights of vulnerable people (including women, children and persons with disabilities (PwDs), by facilitating their access to the justice system; building the capacity of the justice system itself, and its treatment of rights-based cases, and the occupational safety and health"*. Green Economy Projects implemented within the **WEI II period (2014-2017)** were based on the needs assessment reflecting the population's expectations regarding improved employment, work conditions, and income, access to financial resources or equipment, and development of policies to support the vulnerable groups. Water management-oriented projects enhanced Tajikistan's water security and promoted the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) to clean water and sanitation, while the natural resources management project developed geo-information systems and environmental monitoring for better protection of living conditions for the population. The project focused on meteorology addressed the urgent need to enhance the Tajikhydromet's staff technical capacity in modern observation and weather service technology. Projects implemented in **Phase III** seem to be aligned to the needs of the Tajikistan population but needs assessment were only conducted for AfT Phase IV. UNDP conducts yearly an updated needs assessment in each country where AfT is implemented (confirmed during the interview).

While gender-sensitive indicators are used in the majority of individual projects' monitoring in all three phases, in many cases they only monitor the number of female attendees to trainings or other project activities. This relates to the fact that in, general, indicators used are mostly performance-related but do not assess the projects' impacts.

Generally, the projects in all three phases provide performance indicators. However, outcome and impact indicators are missing, which makes effectiveness and impact difficult to assess. The programmes' indicators (e.g., the Environment and Security Initiative 'ENVSEC', EBRD Funds, WEI II) did not provide consistent indicators as they mostly consist of disconnected individual activities and project-level indicators. Several projects identified poverty conditions and aimed at its reduction. However, this did not result in any specifically related parameters being tracked as indicators in project monitoring processes.

Alignment with the needs of sectors covered by Finland's development cooperation: Several project documents (e.g., meteorology, natural resources, water management) have only mentioned the needs of the particular sector. The specific needs of Central Asian countries were being explicitly assessed and taken into consideration when developing the Geo-sector information management systems.



Alignment with the needs of institutions and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs):

The intention of the institutional capacity improvement or strengthening the performance of institutions (e.g., Ministry of Justice, Tajikhydromet) is based on knowledge of the situation in the particular institution or on previous institutional cooperation. AfT Phase IV is based on the need's assessment elaborated by the UNDP at the beginning of the overall AfT programme in 2009 and need assessments are regularly conducted and actualised yearly in each country where the AfT is implemented, i.e., in the period 2018-2021 needs assessments were conducted in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. The democracy development project addressed a population demand-driven activity in the sector of FLA for those in disadvantaged positions.

In the project documents, there is no evidence of alignment with the needs of CSOs.

However, some projects (Equal before the Law, Rule of Law) worked closely with several NGOs and actively participated in the establishment of the network of new NGOs.

Use of baselines and statistical data: The use of baselines is in most projects only sporadic. This makes it difficult to assess the overall achievement of the projects. Statistical data are often missing in the relevant project documents.

The only reference for stakeholders' assessment of alignment of Finnish development cooperation with their needs was found in the documentary trace in Phases I and II and concerns the Equal before the Law project, namely the access to legal assistance in certain rural areas in Tajikistan where the project is the only juridical service available.

2.1.2. Alignment with the overall priorities of Finland's development policy and development cooperation

All programmes and projects implemented during the evaluated period are aligned with the particular Finland Development Policies; i.e., 2007, 2012 and 2016. The expected project results are also focused on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) before 2015 and SDGs thereafter. The overarching cross-cutting objectives are also addressed in all interventions.

Programmes and projects from the period 2009-2013 (FinWaterWEI, EBRD funded projects, Geo-sector Information system, ENVSEC) fit well with the Finland development policy 2007, namely to promote sustainable development by the MDGs, with particular emphasis on climate and environment. Moreover, ENVSEC tackled the wider security concept, as well as the cross-cutting priority of good governance. The multi-bi projects were aligned and made strong reference to UN policies following the WEI I document, *"in its development cooperation, Finland pursues goals and approaches jointly approved in the United Nations and the EU."*

Programmes and projects implemented under WEI II (2014-2017), i.e., Green Economy Projects as well as Democracy Development Projects were well in line with all four goals of Finnish Development Policies 2012. The 2012 policies were based on the promotion of human rights, green economy, sustainable management of natural resources and environmental protection, and human development. Legal and juridical development projects addressed Finnish cross-cutting objectives, namely promoting access to justice for women and groups that are particularly vulnerable and easily marginalised. Currently implemented are the Rule of Law project that fits Finland's development policy related to the rights of women and girls;



FINTAJ (meteorology) responding to the sustainable management of natural resources and environmental protection and AfT addressing an inclusive green economy that promotes employment.

Projects in the current phase (2018-2021) are in line with three priority areas of Finland's development policy 2016: 1. The rights of women and girls (Rule of Law); 2. Reinforcing developing countries' economies to generate more jobs, livelihoods and well-being (AfT Phase IV and Decent Work II) and 4. Food security, access to water and energy, and the sustainable use of natural resources (FINTAJ).

The overarching cross-cutting objectives of Finnish Development Cooperation, i.e., gender equality, reduction of inequality, empowerment of women and PwDs, and climate sustainability were addressed when relevant. Also, the HRBA, focusing on both the duty bearers and rights holders, is well documented and reflected in the objectives in several projects in Phases II and III (Rule of Law, FINTAJ, AfT, FinWaterWEI II, Decent Work). Human Rights are also evident in terms of public access to information (Geo-sector and meteorology projects). The document review shows that the human rights principles are more prominent in projects that deal directly with end beneficiaries (such as Rule of Law) than in projects that focus on institutional strengthening. Water management-oriented projects (ENVSEC; FinWaterWEI; EBRD projects; Women, Water Management and Conflict Prevention) enhanced Tajikistan's water security and promoted the human right to clean water and sanitation, while the natural resources management projects (ICI projects) developed geo-information systems and environmental monitoring for better protection of the living conditions for the population.

The reduction of inequalities, including issues related to PwDs and ethnic minorities are explicitly addressed in the Rule of Law project. The RoL Phase II Project document stated: *"The vision of the Project is to create a justice system whereby all people in Tajikistan can access justice, by having an affordable, high-quality, state-run system of FLA, in a country where people, in particular the vulnerable and marginalised, know their rights and duties in respect of FLA and accessing justice"*. Rule of Law project addressed PwDs' problems, specifically the alignment of Tajikistan law with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) and generally the adoption of a more human-rights-based approach to PwDs. Among the anticipated benefits of Rule of Law is listed also *"improved access to justice generally, especially for women and PwDs and particularly in rural areas."* The OSCE project Support for the HCNM early warning and conflict prevention activities in Central Asia is tackling the minorities issues in Central Asia.

Climate sustainability was the key factor of Phases I and II of FinWaterWEI Programme, ENVSEC programme, Phase II of the Finnish Meteorology Institute (FMI) and the Geological Survey of Finland (GTK) projects. Some other examples are described in section 2.3.

Ministry for Foreign Affairs Finland (MFA) staff actively participated in policy dialogue with the partners from the Tajikistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, especially in the period of the preparation of the new Country Strategy. The expectations of Tajikistan, but mostly the Finnish interests were discussed. During the dialogues, the EU policy in Central Asia, namely the EU Central Asia Strategy and Tajikistan Multi-annual Indicative Plan were supported. Attention was paid to China's connectivity and Russia's interests in the Central Asia region. Finland-Afghanistan relations were also considered. The opening of Uzbekistan borders in 2016 brought a new approach between the Central Asia countries, as they are now able to discuss among themselves and would like to co-operate. This new situation opens up wider opportunities for regional co-operation in Central Asia (interview with MFA staff).



2.1.3. Alignment and complementarity with the foreign and security policy, including economic relations

No evidence was found of complementarity with Finnish foreign and security policy in any of the three phases. However, ENVSEC activities have targeted environmental hot-spots that included potential threats to security, as stated by the WEI MTE Report: “*Considerable tensions already exist in Central Asia, with upstream countries Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan prioritising hydro-electricity production, and downstream Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan demanding water for irrigation*” (MFA 2012). Also, OSCE-implemented projects; e.g., Women, Water Management and Conflict Prevention project; the Human Rights, Gender and Security Programme, or Support for the HCNM’s Early Warning and Conflict Prevention Activities in Central Asia have strong security policy aspects.

No evidence was found of complementarity with Finnish trade policy in any of the three phases.

2.2. Impact (during 2009–2021)

EQ2. What has been the impact(s) of Finland’s development cooperation carried out in the region by the Department for Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia?

- EQ2a. What have been the most significant and transformative impact(s) contributed to by Finland and why? This includes analysis of impact by social, environmental and economic as well as human rights perspectives. What have been the levels where the impact(s) have taken place?
- EQ2b. What have been the scope and extent of the impact(s)?
- EQ2c. What has been Finland’s role and added value in contributing to the impact(s)?

2.2.1. Most significant and transformative impact(s) contributed to by Finland

Based on the information provided in the progress and evaluation reports and further confirmed in the Key Informant Interviews, it can be stated that significant and transformative impacts contributed by Finland can be found in the sphere of building capacities and enhanced technologies (ICI projects in meteorology and geology); improved awareness of human rights and access to justice, mainly of women, girls, and PwDs (Rule of Law, Access to Justice); better living quality and health conditions in the water infrastructure projects (EBRD projects, some FLC projects); improved business environment and SME development including trade skills in the AfT project, and finally, the occupational health and safety (Decent Work project).

Similar impacts were found in the WEI I evaluation (2012) particularly in terms of access to legal assistance of vulnerable groups and capacities in the trade,



entrepreneurship and technical skills, capacities of key authorities, private sector and non-governmental actors. The evaluation also found some regional-level impact through cross-border collaboration and recommended WEI II to pay particular attention to the cross-border aspects and further promotion of synergies. Lack of indicators was a limiting factor to assess the impact. The WEI II evaluation, in turn, did not provide conclusive remarks regarding the programme's impact in Tajikistan.

Representatives of multilateral organizations, implementing partners, Tajik institutions, CSOs implementing FLC projects, as well as some beneficiaries (State Agency for Legal Aid Centres 'SALAC', Ombudsman Office) during the series of interviews unanimously expressed absolute satisfaction with Finnish development cooperation and appreciated the professional, efficient and flexible approach of the MFA in managing these projects. Thanks to the support, the Tajik institutions have moved professionally, methodically and materially significantly forward. CSOs implementing FLC projects also highly appreciated the MFA's active approach to joint communication. During the individual interviews, the MFA was repeatedly thanked for the support and assistance provided and at the same time it was acknowledged that these projects helped to solve, even partially, local problems in various areas of life (SME, access to drinking water, human rights) mostly in rural and remote regions and areas of Tajikistan.

However, it is to be noted that the project documentation, including logical frameworks or progress/final reports, expresses the expected or achieved impacts only in a descriptive manner. For most projects, measurable impact statements and related indicators are missing in the logical frameworks, so explicit evidence cannot be traced for all projects.

The overall impact of Finland's contribution to impact at the social level is seen in promoting occupational health and safety at work, social security, and the employment of young people in particular. The visible impact was achieved in the changes in societal attitudes towards gender stereotypes. Changes in societal attitudes towards gender stereotypes are shown by the access to FLA for women and girls in domestic violence, lack of marriage certificate, divorce, alimony, or child support issues. Confidence in the area of access to FLA has significantly increased, especially for women and those in disadvantaged positions. There has been a significant shift in the awareness and enforcement of the rights of people with disabilities; e.g., the construction of barrier-free access to public buildings. Last but not least, the social impact also includes improved access to drinking water and sanitation, which has significantly increased the quality of life in several rural and remote areas of Tajikistan.

Tangible positive impacts on the final beneficiaries, are demonstrated in the environmental infrastructure development projects; e.g., water management projects (e.g., Tajikistan water projects within the EBRD Early Transition Countries Initiative; Khujand Water under the EBRD Technical Cooperation Fund or North Tajik Water and Central Tajik Water of the EBRD Water Fund), municipal waste management projects (implemented within the EBRD Funds; e.g., Dushanbe Solid Waste Management, Khujand Solid Waste project) as well as urban transport projects. The improved water infrastructure, access to safe drinking water and improved sanitation have evidently positive impacts, particularly on women.

A sustainable state-run system of primary FLA was developed and provides reasonable FLA through Legal Aid Centers across the country, particularly to women and PwDs. Secondary FLA is provided via SALAC and the Union of Lawyers. According to



project stakeholders interviewed, the overall perception and understanding of the population towards human rights is markedly enhanced. People became aware of the access to FLA - both civil and criminal cases. This fact improved their confidence in equality before the law. According to project stakeholder interviews, the attitude of the population to gender-based issues becomes more sensitive. Several campaigns against domestic violence also changed society's behaviour, which was proved by the small experiment conducted within three years on the social attitude towards the men shouting at their wives. General society became more sensitive to this type of domestic violence. The representative from SALAC during the interview stated that: *"the attitude of the population to gender-based issues becomes more sensitive. Several campaigns against domestic violence also changed society's behaviour, which was proved by the small experiment conducted within three years on the social attitude towards the men shouting at their wives. General society became more sensitive to this type of domestic violence"* (interview feedback).

According to project stakeholders interviewed, the public awareness of disability and women's rights issues continues to be a significant outcome of the Rule of Law project. The establishment of the SALAC is the biggest success and up to 10,000 people already have utilised the FLA (interview with UNDP).

Impact at environmental level is visible in the improved cooperation with neighbouring countries (Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan) in understanding of the necessity of joint environmental management of river basins, exchange of environmental information on the quality of surface water, raised confidence in the meteorological services, and improved understanding how modern technologies can enhance the quality of results in the geological, meteorological and hydrological sectors.

Particular programmes and initiatives (ENVSEC, FinWaterWEI, EBRD-funded projects) are composed of a variety of projects with relatively broad (positive) environmental impacts. For example, the drinking and sewage water projects (EBRD) includes environmental impact assessment studies, whose conclusions and mitigation measures will be a matter of record to be taken into account in planning further construction of water infrastructure. This fact has a twofold impact – the first is the protection of the environment and water resources along the new drinking water pipelines and the second is increased expertise of local experts in the sphere of environmental management. Another project supports transboundary water convention activities and trains the partners on Integrated Water Resources Management, including the management of river basins. Early flood forecasting protects not only the environment but also property and lives. It can be concluded that environmentally focused projects made a significant contribution to disaster risk reduction and environmental protection.

Based on the document review and interviews, the impact of the ICI project 'Strengthening the Mastering of Natural Resources in the Republic of Tajikistan' is assessed as high due to new equipment, which enables the Main Department of Geology under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan (GUG) to offer accurate services and in that way, obtain new clients and more contracts for fieldwork. The quality of work and effectiveness of the services provided to society and clients were significantly improved by using the new Geographic Information System software. The project gives more possibilities to provide new impacts for geological work. A new unit - InfoCentre - was established and new staff has been employed. The interview with the GUG confirmed that work with one big electronic database (related to geological map 1:200 000) is a more productive and less time-consuming way than using paper maps. Geoportal attracts investors also from the private sector.



The meteorology sector's impact is twofold, profiting from using new equipment delivered as a part of the 'Capacity Building in the Field of Meteorology in Tajikistan' (FINTAJ) project, which directly impacts the quality of the Tajikhydromet services provided, and from trained staff capable of properly using this new equipment. FINTAJ focused on the training of modern observation technology and the weather forecasting process. The project enhanced the capacity of Tajikhydromet to deliver weather, climate, and environmental information and early warning services for the benefit of Tajikistan society. A glaciers and snow monitoring and related research work were included in Phase II. As indicated during an interview with Tajikhydromet: *"the strengthened capabilities of the Tajikhydromet's staff in modern observation and weather service technology have an impact on improved weather forecasting in Tajikistan, which brings higher confidence to the meteorological service and is highly appreciated by the overall population."*

The evidence of impact at the economic level, namely the development of foreign trade in the agricultural sector, can be traced in the AfT project, Phases I-IV. Positive impacts of the development projects can be seen in the trade sector where legislative and regulatory acts have been prepared and adopted. The project has particularly improved the possibilities of the rural population to obtain income from trade and multiple activities associated with farming. The development of business intermediary organizations and associations of agri-producers and processors positively changed the investment climate in the country. The results and impacts of the AfT project were recognised in the MTE WEI II Report (2016) which stated: *"The development of business intermediary organizations, associations of producers and processors and extension service as well as support to business development promotes a positive investment climate in Tajikistan, including a culture of consultation and understanding of the value of trade facilitation."* Further, an evident impact of Phase III of the AfT project is seen on the macro-level through effective support to Tajik accession to the Eurasian Economic Union and World Trade Organization; while at the meso-level in the support of the private sector on how to conduct competitive export-oriented business. These achievements on both macro- and meso-levels improved the entrepreneurial atmosphere in Tajikistan. Finally, the Phase IV of the AfT triggered production and adoption by the government of several national-level policy documents (e.g., Export Development Programme 2021-2025), which now play a role in enabling the environment for private sector development.

According to the Final Progress Report of the 'From the Crisis towards Decent and Safe Jobs, Phase II' project (ILO 2020), which was implemented in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in the period 2014-2019, the project has contributed to improving the legal framework for labour inspection and increasing institutional capacity in both countries. The project has supported the development of the State OSH Programme for the Republic of Tajikistan 2020-2023 and the diagnostics and policy advice on informality in Tajikistan has led to the development and adoption of the new State Programme on Reducing the Level of Informal Employment for 2019-2023 and its Implementation Plan for 2019-2023. In both countries, Assessment-Based National Dialogues (ABND) on Social Protection Floors have been initiated and completed, and the State Programme on Social Protection Development in Tajikistan 2020-2024 was developed using recommendations of ABND reports.



Impact relating to human rights: The project ‘Equal before the Law: Supporting Constitutional Justice’, implemented during WEI I, had a direct impact in terms of strengthening the primary and secondary FLA and made them accessible for poorer and vulnerable parts of the population, often in remote areas of the country. Moreover, the project strengthened participating human rights CSOs. The programme operated in a difficult environment where governments did not prioritise the needs of vulnerable groups and therefore pursuing any advocacy was an uphill task. This has been achieved through the gradual building of the Legal Aid Centre (LAC) and the preparation and adoption of the relevant FLA legislation. Training and increasing the professional and practical skills of contracted lawyers, especially in the field of civil law, helped to build a functioning FLA system.

The Rule of Law project (2014-2018) has contributed to the improvement of access to justice, especially for women, girls, PwDs and minorities by the FLA, mostly in remote rural areas. A special institution under the Ministry of Justice in Tajikistan –SALAC – was established to coordinate the government-operated and government-funded system of FLA. The establishment of SALAC and keeping it operational is the biggest success. According to the interviewees, SALAC coordinates and cooperates with 50 lawyers from the whole country and the lawyers working with SALAC or organised in the Union of Lawyers in Tajikistan are visiting remote regions several times per month and dealing with civil as well as criminal cases among local inhabitants. SALAC is now an institution employing 14 people at the headquarter in Dushanbe and providing also 24/7 functional call centre legal services. *“In Phase I, based on CMS (Case Management System) data, approximately 68% of the Legal Aid Centres (LAC) clients were women, about 8% were PwDs, and at least 75% were poor. Other vulnerable groups served by the LACs included refugees, stateless persons, and retired/elderly persons whose sole or major income was a pension. It is estimated that less than 10% of the LAC clients did not fall into one of these vulnerable group”* (Rule of Law Phase II Project Document 2017). Up to 13,000 people already have utilised the FLA (interview with UNDP).

Impact at individual level: Provision of safe drinking water, access to sanitation facilities, improved occupational health and safety conditions at the workplace, alleviating some risks of floods and getting better information about the natural disaster improved the livelihood of people in targeted regions in Tajikistan. Access to primary and secondary FLA positively changed the lives of women, girls and people with disabilities, especially in rural areas of Tajikistan.

The OSCE projects have twofold impacts – one in the improvement of the human rights issues, women equality and environmental sustainability and the second in the ensuring of stability and security in the Central Asia region.

FLC projects, although relatively small from the perspective of the budget, have had a significant impact on remote rural communities by the improvement of human rights; women equality and support to SME development.



2.2.2. Scope and extent of the impact(s)

Multi-bi projects have mostly national impact by the development of laws and regulations (e.g., Law on Legal Aid; amendment to the Law on Ombudsman), programmes (e.g., State OSH Programme for the Republic of Tajikistan, 2020-2023; State Export Development Programme for the period of 2021-2025; Medium-Term Programme on Promoting the Employment of PwDs and the Self-Help Group for 2019-2021) and strategies (Roadmap on Tajikistan joining the UN CRPD). The support of the national agencies in the field of meteorology, geology and water management through the ICI projects has also the national impact level although these projects tackled mostly the capacity building, technical and methodological aspects and not the policy level.

While most FLC projects only have a local scope, some FLC projects have a national impact, e.g., ‘Fight against Torture in Tajikistan and Support for the Victim of Torture and their Families’. Some other FLC projects have a regional impact (e.g., ‘Enhancement of Rural Women Livelihoods through Cashgora Goat Breeding in Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBO)’).

2.2.3. Finland’s role and added value in contributing to the impact(s)

The ET identified as most important Finnish added value the sharing of the Finnish experience in the water sector (ENVSEC and FinWaterWEI); Finland’s approach to juvenile justice and its ombudsman institutions (Equal before the Law); climate change and air quality expertise (FMI); geo-information and geo-hazards assessment and prediction (GTK). The MTE of WEI (2012) noted that: *“Finland was the primary donor in the community of donor nations – funding 62% of ENVSEC on-going and pipeline projects in 2012, and contributing 92% of the funding of the ENVSEC secretariat.”*

2.2.4. Negative and/or unintended impacts

No unintended or negative impacts were demonstrated in all three phases either in the analysed documentation in all programmes and projects or during the interviews conducted in most of the projects.

One exception of unintended positive impact was found in the Rule of Law project, where *“a rough estimation suggests that by the end of the project, it can reach about 140-150% the initial target (the number of FLA services provided throughout the country) if the actual dynamic will be kept”.* (RoL MTE 2020).



2.3. Sustainability (during 2009–2021)

EQ3. What has been the level(s) of sustainability of the results and impact achieved over the period of time?

- EQ3a. For which of the results and impact areas is there evidence that the benefits achieved are lasting? Why?
- EQ3b. What has been the extent of sustainability of results and impact in terms of a) financial, b) economic, c) social, d) environmental, and e) institutional capacities of the systems needed to sustain net benefits over time?
- EQ3c. What strategies have the Ministry employed in order to maximize sustainability? Which of them have been the most successful and why? Have projects and programmes adequately planned for sustainability?

The high level of sustainability and remaining strong impacts are notable in the legal and juridical development, including human rights and women’s equality; improvement of trade policy and entrepreneurial environment; institutional capacity (geology, meteorology), and water management.

All projects/programmes implemented in the period 2018-2021 (Rule of Law, AfT, FINTAJ Phase II), covered by the Country Strategy, are a continuation of their predecessors during 2014-2017. These follow-up projects were recommended, in most cases, in the final reports of previous projects. In some cases (e.g., ICI projects), current projects also represent a form of sustainability of results achieved in the previous period. The implementation of the ICI project FINTAJ, Phase II continues after getting the MFA’s approval for a no-cost extension - the planned implementation period 2018-2020 is now extended until 2021. The project is the follow-up of an earlier project which was implemented from 2014 to 2017. The main task is the strengthening of Tajikhydromet’s staff capacity.

2.3.1. Evidence that the benefits achieved are lasting

In the field of access to justice, the SALAC is in place (under the Ministry of Justice) and is permanently offering FLA, mostly for women, girls and PwDs.

The strengthened institutional capacities (meteorology and geology sectors) are sustained, to judge from the continual consultancy between the Finnish and Tajik institutions involved in both ICI projects’ implementation. Although skilled employees are leaving the institutions for better-paid positions, the risk of employee turnover is diminished by the training of a sufficient number of trainees. Besides, graduates regularly complete their professional studies at the geology and meteorology departments at the Tajikistan University, providing a hiring pool when job positions arise. In the case of graduates, some necessary professional trainings are still needed what cost particular Tajik institutions time, energy and financial resources.

The Decent Work project innovated a campaign where street theatre was engaged to promote occupational health. This initiative was selected as one of the ILO success stories in 2018. There are now 10-12 theatre plays/video clips which can still be used.



2.3.2. Sustainability of results and impact in terms of capacities of the systems needed to sustain net benefits over time

The interventions have achieved a high level of ownership as the results serve the following entities: i) central government (in particular, line ministries and state commissions in case of legal and juridical development projects; as well as trade development); ii) national institutions with long-lasting traditions (meteorology and geology); iii) municipalities (drinking water supply and sewage management projects); iv) employers/operators (OSH); and v) international organisations and regional institutions involved in security and river basins management. These facts bring not only a significant aspect of ownership but also reflect significant signs of sustainability. At the level of project interventions conducted under the ENVSEC initiative, according to the MTE WEI Final Report: *“The Aarhus Centres have been very successful as they represent an excellent example of developing local community involvement in environmental issues. However, its sustainability in Tajikistan depends on a range of factors, e.g., availability of on-going support from implementing organisations, the level of commitment, and ownership of Tajikistan civil society and governmental organisations.”* As stated in the Final Report of the ‘Occupational Safety and Health in Central Asia’ project (ILO, 2011) *“Building sustainability and a stable national resource base in OSH is a long-term process. The capacity-building needs to be continued in Tajikistan, where encouraging signs of political will and capacity can be seen”*.

Financial sustainability of results: SALAC (through the Rule of Law project) started to operate in 2016 and at that time was fully subsidised by the international donors (Finland and Switzerland). From the beginning of 2020, 20% of the SALAC budget was provided by the Government of Tajikistan (GoT). This portion was increased by 40% at the beginning of 2021 and it is agreed that from 2023 the full operational costs of SALAC will be covered by the GoT (interview with UNDP and SALAC representatives).

Economic sustainability of results: No evidence was found, but it could be expected that new working positions created within the geology ICI project (‘Strengthening the Mastering of Natural Resources’) need skilled professionals due to the advanced technologies provided. To replace such a skilled expert is not an easy task, therefore, a better way is to offer them slightly higher remuneration (see also section 2.3.1).

Social sustainability of results: No evidence was found, only several indications in the reports, confirmed during the interview, showed examples in social sustainability of results in changed attitudes in the business sector where women as owners of businesses are more acceptable.

Environmental sustainability of results: All projects addressed Sustainable Development Goals and the corresponding priority areas as much as possible in practical work. Climate change affects most severely people that are already vulnerable, for example by gender, youth, age, or disability. The poor are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change in Tajikistan, and there is a potential risk for the increasing amount of the population ending up in poverty due to climate change. Climate change is directly connected to food production and thus to the economy of the poorest part of the population that strongly depends upon the agricultural productivity of the country. Thus, environmental sustainability is the core objective of the projects in the meteorology and water management fields and partly in geology-oriented projects, as well as in the other projects when relevant. Also, by promoting better water governance as one of the main project objectives, FinWaterWEI contributes directly to environmental sustainability in the region.



Concerning the utilisation of the skills acquired as a result of Finland’s development cooperation, the documents analysed shown a high level of integration of newly acquired knowledge into the system of work of Tajik institutions. This statement also applies to some selected sectors (meteorology, geology, partly legislation, trade, and surface water management) where cooperation crosses the borders of Tajikistan and becomes regional, especially with neighbouring Kyrgyzstan. GUG has liberalised its information policy, especially through the geoportal development. The Completion Report of the Geo-Sector Information Management System project noted that: *“During the project, GUG entered into the ‘electronic era’ as previously all material was stored only in paper format with big risks of losing it due to some accidents”* (GTK 2015). The sustainability of introduced methods by ICI projects (geology and meteorology) is ensured by having a large pool of experts trained, to address the potential turnover of staff. Maintaining the established geoportal and equipment delivered is a continuous task of beneficiaries and they are aware of this. The close cooperation of experts continues on the regional level mostly between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, as well as through remote support by utilising modern communication means.

AfT collaborated effectively with the main macro-level counterpart, the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade. However, to strengthen further the sustainability of project interventions at the micro-level, the project team should utilize a more unified and disciplined approach to selecting partner enterprises. According to project stakeholder interview: *“the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade in Tajikistan, the State Committee on Investment and State Property Management and the Consultative Councils on the improvement of investment climate under the President of Tajikistan are actively participating in all relevant activities of the AfT project. To secure intended macro-level outputs, in the long run, the project is keeping effective channels of communication established.”* (interview feedback).

2.3.3. Strategies employed in order to maximize sustainability

The MFA’s sustainability strategy is to focus on certain selected themes, regions/countries and long-term financing. However, the number of supported countries narrowed significantly during the three phases of development cooperation. The enlargement and continued long-lasting cooperation between several Finnish and counterpart institutions under the ICI modality have a positive effect on ensuring sustainability.

The ICI, but also some UNDP projects, use the exit strategy, which recommends further sectorial development covering organisation, know-how and financing after the project end, as an integral part of the project implementation. No evidence of elaborated explicit sustainability strategy was found in the other programmes/projects.

In the frame of the ‘Equal before the Law’ project (2011-2014) several textbooks were drafted regarding the family law and protection of children in Tajikistan. The Final Narrative Report noted that *“the authors designed also curricula for a new course entitled Family Law: Protection of Rights of Women and Children in Tajikistan. The books were independently reviewed and endorsed by three other professors. These are the first textbooks to come out in Tajikistan since its independence that focus on family law and protection of rights of women and children in the country, and they are written in Tajik. The textbooks look in-depth at laws in the family code that ensure the protection of women’s and children’s rights”* (Eurasia Foundation, 2014)



2.4. Effectiveness (during 2018–2021)

EQ4. To what extent have the Country Strategies of 2018-2021 achieved their planned results and contributed to the realization of Finland's development policy objectives?

- EQ4a. What results have been produced until now, who and how many have benefitted from them? What groups were not reached, if any?
- EQ4b. To what extent is implementation on track to achieve the set objectives by the end of 2021? Note any major deviations or risks to achieving objectives and the reasons behind them. Includes analysis by funding instrument.
- EQ4c. Are there any lost opportunities or potential for future engagement in the region?

Projects implemented in Phase III contribute to two priority areas of Country Strategy for Tajikistan 2018-2021: The establishment of more equal societies and strengthened realization of human rights and rule of law; and Sustainable and inclusive economic growth. When pending ICI projects commence implementation, the third priority area - environmentally sustainable society – will also be addressed. The most important results are seen in Finland's contribution to the further FLA development, trade policies improvement and promotion of more and better jobs, and enhancement of employment opportunities for young people including improvement of national social protection systems.

2.4.1. Results and beneficiaries

The review of the results achieved in the first priority area of the Country Strategy 2018-2021 - the establishment of more equal societies and strengthened realization of human rights and rule of law shows that the projects have achieved the planned results to a large extent despite the challenges caused by COVID-19. Since the reporting of the individual projects does not follow the indicators of the Strategy, therefore in some cases, it was difficult to determine which project results matched the Strategy outputs. At the policy level, Recommendations were provided by CSOs, most of them related to the rights of PwDs. It is reported that so far, a total of 17,851 people, including 10,658 (or 60%) women and 593 (or 3%) PwDs received free primary legal aid (FPLA) provided by the state LACs supported by the project. The Ombudsman's office increased its expertise on human rights and gender equality. The GoT agreed to join the UN CRPD in 2017 and signed it in May 2018 (Output 1.1.3.). The Roadmap on Tajikistan joining the UN CRPD was drafted and approved (27.02.2020) after feedback from the thematic working group established by the Human Rights Guarantee Department of the Executive Office of the President. The project has also conducted a series of awareness-raising campaigns on the Human Rights of PwDs. It was reported that, as a result of these activities, 750 persons are ready and/or willing to approach state institutions to defend their rights (Output 1.1.1.). The Law 'On Legal Aid' along with amendments to five other laws and Codes has been adopted on 22 of April 2020 by the Lower Chamber of the Parliament (Output 1.1.2.). Box 1 Results achieved in Policy Priority Area 1 under Outcome 1.1 presents the results achieved under Outcome 1.1.



Box 1 Results achieved in Policy Priority Area 1 under Outcome 1.1

Impact 1. More equal societies and strengthened realization of human rights and rule of law

Outcome 1.1. Effective Institutions are able to respond to the needs and rights of citizens, especially Women and vulnerable groups

- A total of 17,851 people, including 10,658 (or 60%) women and 593 (or 3%) PwDs received free primary legal aid provided by the state LACs supported by the project.
- SALAC registered 2,086 calls/requests for free secondary legal aid (1,816 men, 270 women, 1,104 minors, and 13 PwD). It completed 567 cases for 221,230 TJS.
- Five (5) Disabled Person Organisations and three (3) gender-focused CSOs conducted regional awareness-raising informational campaigns on the rights of women and PwD. About 1,500 persons from the targeted regions of the country covered by the information campaign conducted by the National Union of Persons with Disabilities.
- The Law 'On Legal Aid' along with amendments to five other laws and Codes has been adopted on 22 of April 2020 by the Lower Chamber of the Parliament.
- The GoT signed the UN CRPD in May 2018. The Roadmap on Tajikistan was drafted and approved (27.02.2020) after the feedback from the thematic working group established by the Human Rights Guarantee Department of the Executive Office of the President.
- The Union of Lawyers trained 80 defence lawyers and lead in developing a quality standard and a monitoring mechanism.
- The Ombudsman's office increased its expertise on human rights as the results of thematic trainings and workshop on human rights monitoring focused on gender equality.

Source: RoL Midterm Evaluation Report 2020.

Results achieved in the second priority area - sustainable and inclusive economic growth: The AfT project implemented by UNDP contributes to the second priority area. The information in the following sections is taken from the AfT for Central Asia (Phase IV) Annual Report (UNDP 2021). The Report on Analysis of Green Products Value Chains and Export Opportunities in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan conducted by the AfT project in 2019 identified the green niche products/services (adventure tourism; natural honey; mixes of dried fruits, berries, beans, vegetables and nuts etc.) which have strong export and job creation potential, underpinned by strong trends. Results of the trends analysis were integrated into the project activity plan. Five products were identified that are green, employment-rich and have high productivity and market potential (Output 1.2.1.). Concerning improved private-sector operating environment (Output 1.2.2.) AfT IV supported the Government of Tajikistan with the elaboration of the State Export Development Programme for the period of 2021-2025 (EDP-2025) and in the elaboration of the mechanism for functioning the law 'On State Services'. To contribute towards its objective of enabling policies and regulations for inclusive and trade-oriented private sector development, the project jointly with the Ministry of Justice and its Working Group developed and passed to the Government six by-laws of the current law. These by-laws are fundamental for the improvement of public services and optimization and simplification of providing state services both to citizens and to the private sector. Box 2 Results achieved in Policy Priority Area 2 under Outcome 2.1 presents the results achieved under Outcome 2.1.



The project facilitated the establishment of state institutions like the Agency on Export under the Government of Tajikistan (dealing with all aspects of export promotion and provision of services to the private sector) and the State Institution on Formation and Development Entrepreneurship of Tajikistan (SI FDE) (dealing with providing services to and capacity building of youth, women and private sector representatives). Both created entities are fully operational, fully funded by the governmental budget, and programmatically sustainable. SI FDE has conducted more than 20 seminars and trainings for more than 800 young entrepreneurs to date. The UNDP in Tajikistan has conducted in June-September 2020 a study on the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on lives, livelihoods and micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in Tajikistan.

With regards to ‘Strengthened SMEs’ (Output 2.2.2) the Trade Support Institutions (TSIs) reported that in 2020 they supported 41 (15 headed by women) MSMEs, with more than 200 of staff (79% are women). At the regional level, the project supported UNDP’s global response for the private sector to COVID-19. The UNDP global guidance note for MSMEs on COVID-19 includes the experiences and lessons learned from the AfT project.

Box 2 Results achieved in Policy Priority Area 2 under Outcome 2.1

Impact 2. Sustainable and inclusive economic growth

Outcome 2.1. Diversified and expanding private sector that provides decent working conditions

- Report on Analysis of Green Products Value Chains and Export Opportunities in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan conducted by project in 2019 identified the green niche products/services (adventure tourism; natural honey; mixes of dried fruits, berries, beans, vegetables and nuts etc.) which are having a strong export and job creation potential, underpinned with a strong trends’ analysis.
- Two (2) targeted government finance products (loans) for sustainable technologies and new green economic sectors reaching at least 40% of target population, disaggregated by sex where possible;
- Five (5) products/Value Chain identified that are green, employment rich and have high productivity and market potential.
- AfT IV supported the Government of Tajikistan with the elaboration of the State Export Development Programme for the period of 2021-2025 (EDP-2025). The project jointly with the Ministry of Justice and its Working Group developed 6 by-laws of the current law which are fundamental for the improvement of public services and optimization and simplification of providing state services both to citizens and the private sector.
- The project facilitated the establishment of state institutions like Agency on Export under the Government of Tajikistan (dealing with all aspects of export promotion and provision the services to the private sector) and SI FDE (dealing with providing services to and capacity building of youth, women and private sector representatives). Both created entities are fully operational (are fully funded by governmental budget) and programmatically sustainable. SI FDE has conducted more than 20 seminars and trainings for more than 800 young entrepreneurs to date.
- Elaboration of Trade Development programme of Khatlon region for the period 2019-2021.

Source: AfT for Central Asia (Phase IV) Annual Report (UNDP 2021)



The other project contributing to the second priority area is the Decent Work project implemented by ILO. The project assisted the Agency of Statistics under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan to strengthen its technical capacity in applying a qualitative approach when planning and carrying out the Labour Force Survey (Output 2.2.2.). Box 3 Results achieved in Policy Priority Area 2 under Outcome 2.2 presents the results achieved under Outcome 2.2. The results presented are taken from the Final Progress Report (ILO 2020). In Tajikistan, the project has supported the updating of national OSH profiles which served as a basis for the development of policy responses - the State OSH Programme for the Republic of Tajikistan, 2020-2023. From 2014 to 2019, 17 awareness-raising and training activities on the relevant ILO instruments and policies, OSH management, methods of investigations of workplace accidents and reporting, assessment and management of professional risks at workplaces were conducted for Labour Inspection in Tajikistan. The Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Tajikistan (FITUT) has been capacitated to address various informality issues, including gender aspects, to protect the rights of informal workers and promote the benefits of formalization.

The GoT and social partners have been capacitated on the guiding principles for conducting diagnostics of informal (unregistered) employment in Tajikistan. An important policy achievement was the development of a new State Programme on Reducing the Level of Unregistered (Informal) Employment in Tajikistan for 2019-2023 and its Implementation Plan (adopted in September 2019). Both documents have been developed based on active tripartite consultations and social dialogue.

A study of the situation of work-standard setting and remuneration at enterprises and institutions was developed by the National Research Institute of Labour, Migration and Employment. The findings and conclusions of the study were taken into account for developing a Concept of improving the system of wage policy and work standard-setting in Tajikistan for 2016-2026, which was approved by 26 ministries and other institutions. Based on the Concept, the State Programme on improving work standard-setting and wages in Tajikistan for 2020-2027 was developed and submitted to the Government. The Programme on Improving the System of Labour Rationing in Tajikistan for 2019-2026 was developed. Technical support was provided on assessing social protection services to support the employment of PwDs and to review the national draft Programme for employment of PwDs. As a result, the Medium-Term Programme on Promoting the Employment of PwDs and the Self-Help Group for 2019-2021 was developed and submitted to the Government.



Box 3 Results achieved in Policy Priority Area 2 under Outcome 2.2

Impact 2. Sustainable and inclusive economic growth

Outcome 2.2. Better access to economic opportunities

- TSIs reported that in 2020 they supported 41 (15 headed by women) MSMEs, more than 200 of staff (79% are women) on aspects of Trade Map.
- Decent Work project assisted the Agency of Statistics under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan to strengthen its technical capacity in applying a qualitative approach when planning and carrying out Labour Force Survey. The project has supported the updating of national OSH profiles which served as a basis for the development of policy responses - the State OSH Programme for the Republic of Tajikistan, 2020-2023.
- At the regional level, the project supported UNDP's global response for the private sector to COVID-19. The UNDP global guidance note for MSMEs on COVID-19 includes the experiences and lessons learned from the AfT project.
- From 2014 to 2019 17 awareness-raising and training activities on the relevant ILO instruments and policies, OSH management, methods of investigations of workplace accidents and reporting, assessment and management of professional risks at workplaces were conducted for Labour Inspection in Tajikistan.
- FITUT has been capacitated to address various informality issues, including gender aspects, to protect the rights of informal workers and promote the benefits of formalization.
- The Government of Tajikistan and social partners have been capacitated on the guiding principles for conducting diagnostics of informal (unregistered) employment in Tajikistan. On that basis, two diagnostic reports were developed by constituents, with the project support: 'Assessment of nature, conditions or some of the factors of informal employment in the Republic of Tajikistan: Views from workers, employers and trade unions' (qualitative diagnosis) and 'Statistical picture of informal employment in the RT' (quantitative diagnosis).
- The important policy achievement was the development of a new State Programme on Reducing the Level of Unregistered (Informal) Employment in Tajikistan for 2019-2023 and its Implementation Plan (adopted in September 2019). Both documents have been developed based on active tripartite consultations and social dialogue.
- The project has provided technical support to improve wage policies, through intense capacity-building and familiarization with international experience on min wage-setting mechanisms in other countries. The study of the situation of work-standard setting and remuneration at enterprises and institutions was developed by the National Research Institute of Labour, Migration and Employment. The findings and conclusions of the study were taken into account for developing a Concept of improving the system of wage policy and work standard-setting in Tajikistan for 2016-2026, which was approved by 26 ministries and other institutions. Based on the Concept, the State Programme on improving work standard-setting and wages in Tajikistan for 2020-2027 was developed and submitted to the Government.
- Programme on Improving the system of labour rationing in Tajikistan for 2019-2026 was developed.



- The Tajikistan national stakeholders have validated and adopted the Assessment-Based National Dialogue final report ‘Social Protection Assessment-Based National Dialogue – towards a nationally defined Social Protection Floor’.
- State Programme on Social Protection Development in Tajikistan for 2020-2024 (not yet adopted).
- The project has conducted intensive work on enhancing the knowledge and capacity of constituents on maternity protection.

As a result, the Medium-Term Programme on Promoting the Employment of PwDs and the Self-Help Group for 2019-2021 developed and submitted to the Government.

Source: AFT for Central Asia (Phase IV) Annual Report (UNDP 2021) and ‘Decent Work’ Final Progress Report (ILO 2020)

The third impact area for Finland’s cooperation in the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan is an environmentally sustainable society. The projects planned to be implemented in this area in the third phase are momentarily on hold.

The Rule of Law project engages the civil society of Tajikistan, particularly the women’s CSOs and the NGOs working with PwDs, but further involvement of civil society representatives is necessary to ensure a fully functional systemic watchdog and advocacy mechanism. The RoL MTE Report further stated that: *“There is considerable evidence of achievements and progress primarily at the output level. The implementation dynamic is mostly as anticipated in the project documents and there are high chances that the quantitative and the majority of the qualitative indicators will be achieved by the end of the project in the way they are formulated. A few quantitative indicators are already achieved (e.g., number of awareness-raising campaigns and initiatives launched by PwDs’ Organizations and gender-focused CSOs) or overachieved (e.g., number of people gaining awareness of their rights, disaggregated by gender and disability status; number of persons receiving quality FLA on civil cases provided by state-operated LACs, disaggregated by gender and disability status).”*

In terms of qualitative aspects, such as thematic capacity development of state and non-state actors (SALAC, Ombudsman office, and Public Consultation Offices, as well as thematic CSOs) the mid-term achievements are not significant, and more efforts is needed. For instance, the Ombudsman office still has weak human rights monitoring capacity and expertise; CSOs have a weak advocacy and policy influencing capacity, while SALAC needs more consistent support in increasing the management capacity of the FLA system in Tajikistan. (RoL MTE Report 2020). The current evaluation found improved managerial capacity and operational skills of SALAC and better organised and provided FLA in Tajikistan. Both aspects are described in more detail in the EQ2a. Also, the Government of Tajikistan constantly increases the budget of SALAC.

In regard to the AFT project, there is remarkable evidence of achievements and progress, primarily at the output level. The implementation progress is mostly as planned in the project documents and there is a high expectation that the output indicators and targets will be achieved by the end of the project. The AFT project focuses on



supporting Central Asian countries (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and later also Uzbekistan) in promoting inclusive and sustainable growth patterns in rural areas and within green productive sectors. The target is to provide support to building productive and export capacities for niche products, identified in the agricultural, agro-industrial, but also potentially green sectors, to contribute to more economically, socially and environmentally sustainable growth. The majority of annual targets (output indicators) are already achieved or overachieved. Several significant results were achieved within Output 3, where the productivity of the supported target Value Chains' members increased on average by 56% to 2019 and the total number of training and capacity building events reached 583 persons (470 or 83% of them women) trained and the number of newly created jobs at targeted SMEs reached 90 (55 or 61% women) without double counting (AfT Phase IV Progress report 2020). Among other key achievements of the project are establishing the inter-ministerial working group for the elaboration of the export development programmes; facilitating the creation of the Agency on Export under the Government of Tajikistan and SI FDE (dealing with providing services to and capacity building of youth, women and private sector representatives); facilitating the creation of several platforms devoted to the promotion of women's entrepreneurship (like Mentorship programme, Gender Tasks Force Group, etc.).

The AfT project has ensured the scalability of its results; for example, it has supported the establishment of three centres for servicing entrepreneurs. However, more effort and strong leadership from the central level are required to make the newly established institutions operational.

On the contrary, several under-achievements were recognised at activities/output indicator level. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted a lot of planned project activities and risk mitigation measures taken by the project did not allow to achieve all established targets and indicators planned for 2020. Some data provided by the project Annual Progress Report are not disaggregated by the country so it is not possible to extract accurate data for Tajikistan. Despite these facts, the results achieved so far and the overall effective management of the project give a realistic assumption that the planned result will be achieved by its completion. Data utilised in this section are compiled from the AfT for Central Asia (Phase IV) Annual Report (UNDP 2021).

2.4.2. Extent to which the implementation is on track to achieve the set objectives by the end of 2021

All projects currently being implemented in Tajikistan, are on the right track to achieve their targets. The only deviations in the course of implementation are related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Evidence relating to implementation of cross-cutting objectives: Rule of Law, the UNDP-led initiative, is linked to access to justice and human rights protection. RoL II has integrated the Leaving No One Behind Principle by targeting mostly vulnerable persons such as those from remote rural areas, women and PwDs, and victims of domestic violence. The project also reveals the political will of the country to advance gradually on the human rights agenda. The cross-cutting themes of the AfT are gender equality and environmental sustainability. **AfT gender mainstreaming efforts focused on job creation for women and the promotion of women entrepreneurs.** The project specifically targets the right to work, the right to an adequate standard of living, and the elimination of discrimination against women (UN CEDAW - Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women). The



project focus ensures that participating businesses implement safe labour standards as per ILO recommendations. To support gender issues, the project focuses on both the macro- and micro levels to integrate gender concerns. Where the project works on policies, a gender perspective is used to ensure that specific gender concerns are integrated. At the micro-level, the project ensures more active women's participation throughout the activities. AfT has further continued a dedicated women entrepreneurs programme jointly with lead support organizations. **The ILO-implemented Decent Work project effectively tackled the right to work.** Decent Work project in the frame of the rights on work focused on the safety and health at work and workplace compliance, promotion of formalization and enabling environment for enterprises and enhancing social protection. The Project addressed various needs of men and women at activity and output levels and integrated gender equality, maternity protection and work and family balance issues in the implementation of Outcomes 2 and 3.

Evidence relating to integration of HRBA in implementation: The MTE Report acknowledges that the Rule of Law Phase II has been developed employing HRBA, which helps to understand how laws, social norms, traditional customs in a country with a strong influence of Islam affect access to justice for the people in Tajikistan. By applying an HRBA, the RoL is people-centered and links demand by rights holders for better justice outcomes. Through capacity development of duty-bearers (SALAC, the Ministry of Justice, Ombudsman's Office) the project increases the ability to access justice for rights holders, in particular women, marginalised groups and individuals that leads to better rights protection for all (MTE Report 2020). HRBA is not presented in the AfT project document, nor is it explicitly mentioned in the accompanying project progress reports.

Regarding the Rule of Law, the project is mostly on track and, generally is being delivered according to the initial and annual work plans without significant delays. The MTE Report noted that: *"The key driving forces: UNDP team, who is pushing the project delivery and the Ministry of Justice as key mostly proactive implementing partner. The SALAC and Ombudsman office functional capacities are slowly improving as this process needs a longer period."*

In the AfT project, the tools for measuring the progress of achievements of each project indicator were developed at the beginning of project implementation, but the coronavirus is disrupting planned activities in Central Asia and Europe. The limitation is already in place in terms of fewer possibilities to organize B2B meetings, participation in various exhibitions, forums, networking, etc. The project has planned an engagement of international consultants, but due to the situation, some funds allocated for 2020 were moved to 2021. The findings helped in decision-making and revision of some actions in terms of suspending and moving to the next project period the implementation of some activities, focusing on needs of target clients (interview with UNDP).

Evidence of bottlenecks, challenges and mediating measures: The **Rule of Law** MTE Report, March 2020 signalled that the Legal Aid Centers were overloaded, with about 40-45 consultations per month versus 25 planned. Primary Free Legal Aid services were highly demanded by the population from the targeted areas of Tajikistan regardless of client vulnerability. The most demanded legal aid is for solving the family-related disputes (e.g., divorces, paternity issues, alimonies, child protection, adoption) followed by land disputes and social protection/assistance issues. Moreover, the communication between the SALAC and contracted lawyers has not been smooth, as the roster of lawyers from the Union of Lawyers have encountered long payment delays. The interview with the SALAC director conducted within this evaluation confirmed an improved situation in the payment's situation and further willingness of lawyers to cooperate.



Several treatment activities are reported in the AfT Phase IV related to the improved coordination between different agencies or development partners, for example, the Center of Entrepreneurs and State Institution on Formation and Development of Entrepreneurship of Tajikistan (established by the AfT IV project) require the corresponding budget allocation to ensure their functioning and sustainability. The Project already facilitated improved coordination between development partners in Tajikistan and further institutional capacity building for both centers. In 2020, several conflicts occurred in Isfara (Tajikistan)-Batken (Kyrgyzstan) border zone. The AfT IV project managed its activities in bordering Tajikistan-Kyrgyzstan areas by conducting planned actions in close coordination with United Nations Department for Safety and Security, local authorities, and communities. The capacity-building activities for traders were conducted outside of this conflict zone. (UNDP 2021).

2.4.3. Lost opportunities or potential for future engagement in the region

No lost opportunities for future engagement in Tajikistan were spotted in the reports available or recognised during the interviews.

2.5. Management (during 2018–2021)

EQ5. How has the development policy and cooperation been managed?

- EQ5a. How effective has the policy formulation, strategic planning, selection of interventions, partners and instruments been?
- EQ5b. To what extent is programmatic, regional or sector coordination points of view, Results-based management (RBM) as well as synergies guiding the decisions made?
- EQ5c. To what extent has the Ministry's guidelines on Human Rights Based Approach been applied in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation?
- EQ5d. What were the strengths and weaknesses of planning and implementation? What could the Ministry do to improve its management for impact, sustainability, effectiveness and relevance? How?

The Department for Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia manages the project portfolio in Tajikistan. During implementation, the MFA participates in the Steering Committee and Project Board meetings. The MFA has also commissioned evaluations such as MTE of RoL and MTE of WEI II. Evaluation is also an integral part of both ICI and multilateral projects.

2.5.1. Effectiveness of policy formulation, strategic planning, selection of interventions, partners and instruments

The multi-bi projects, a key modality of Finland's development strategy, are implemented following the Direct Implementation Modality, in which the implementing partner is responsible for the overall management, backstopping, and monitoring of the project in line with its programme and operational procedures. Since Finland



has no permanent representation in Tajikistan, activities in agriculture/business development and employment creation are implemented by UN agencies (UNDP and ILO, respectively) in the form of multi-bi cooperation. The MFA is participating in project Board meetings and conducts monitoring missions.

Excellent work was performed by SYKE in the management of the FinWater WEI II programme consisting of 13 different projects. While policy elaboration/improvement projects implemented by multilateral organisations (OECD, UNECE) deal mostly with high-level government bodies, ICI projects were focused more on technical and methodological aspects and capacity building at lower-level public agencies. Inter-institutional cooperation is implemented in partnership between a Finnish government agency or public body and a Tajik agency representing the public sector. ICI projects are guided by administrative internal instruction, which includes detailed guidelines and information concerning project planning and preparation. As indicated on the MFA website, the *“Ministry for Foreign Affairs (KEO-20) has contracted a Consultancy Company (so-called Facilitation Consultant) to provide support services for the preparation and monitoring of ICI projects. The Facilitation Consultant supports the Finnish government agencies and public bodies that have received a decision from a regional unit in the Foreign Ministry concerning approval of their project proposal for continued planning. When the project cycle has advanced to implementation, the Facilitation Consultant also controls that the Finnish agencies’ reporting meets the legal, administrative and contractual requirements. The Facilitation Consultant’s function is to support the Finnish government agency bring an effective development impact. However, responsibility for the project is borne by the parties to the contract.”*⁷

Stakeholders involved in policy formulation and strategic planning: The Evaluation learned that the WEI I and WEI II were developed mainly by the MFA with limited consultation with the stakeholders in Tajikistan. The MFA informed that some consultations with the stakeholders have been held in the preparation of the forthcoming strategy.

Rationale for selection of thematic areas, interventions, partners and instruments: All interventions evaluated in the third phase are the continuation of existing actions, judged to be working reasonably well. This means there was no search for the new thematic areas, emerging needs or potential new implementing partners. The multi-bi and ICI modalities are proved to be efficient in achieving the expected results. The development cooperation continues with the previous, already verified partners (UNDP, SYKE, GTK, FMI). FLC instrument has a relatively long tradition and is well-known and appreciated by Tajik as well as regional CSOs.

Decision-making process regarding the use of FLC: The Local Cooperation Funds are managed by the Office of the Roving Ambassador (the Office) which also defines the priority areas for these projects implemented by local CSOs. FLC projects support these Finnish development objectives in the local context. The projects raise Finland’s country image and visibility as a donor and an EU country. FLC is a valuable instrument of both development but also of foreign policy. Projects implemented to date have been successful.

The FLC projects focus on three priority areas of the Finland Development Policies 2016, i.e., 1. Rights of women and girls; 2. Reinforcing developing countries’ economies; 3. Democratic and effective societies. The concrete themes for projects are assessed and chosen by the Roving Ambassador for Central Asia with the assistance of the project officer based on

7 <https://um.fi/support-for-government-agencies>



recommendations and proposals of the implementing organizations that are based in the region. The Office of the Roving Ambassador (the Office) seeks technical and substantial advice as needed from the MFA's development policy specialists. FLC projects support these Finnish development objectives in the local context.

Regarding the intervention partners in Tajikistan, Finland cooperates with UN agencies as well CSOs who can cooperate with foreign donors. An exception is Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (located in the Pamir Mountains and inhabited by ethnic minorities), it is only possible to work through Aga Khan Foundation. The Office is visiting and monitoring the projects. The projects raise Finland's country image and visibility as a donor and an EU country. FLC is a valuable instrument of both development but also of foreign policy. Projects implemented to date have been successful.

2.5.2. Guidance of decision making

Projects meet the official development assistance programming criteria, i.e., are in line with the approved the MFA Country Strategy for Development Cooperation 2018–2021 for the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan. Further, the projects are in line with the Finland Development Policies 2016, namely: 1. The rights of women and girls (Strengthening Rule of Law project, Decent Work project); 2. Reinforcing developing countries' economy (Aft, Phase IV), and 3) Access to water and the sustainable use of natural resources (ICI meteorological and geological project as well as FinWaterWEI Phase III). The projects currently implemented are relevant and consistent with the development priorities of Tajikistan, reflected in several policy documents. In terms of RBM, the projects contain a defined results chain consisting of outputs, sometimes also outcomes, with indicators and targets.

2.5.3. Application of the Human Rights Based Approach in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation

The MFA's guidelines on the HRBA are strictly followed in the projects implemented in the third phase. The tasks of rights holders, as well as duty-bearers, are specified. UNDP's Aft, Phase IV targets the right to work as per UN Human Rights International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and UN CEDAW. The principles of HRBA are further followed during the evaluation of individual projects.

2.5.4. Strengths and weaknesses of planning and implementation

The Results Framework accompanying the Project Document does not show the impact indicators. This fact will frustrate any future attempt to assess impact. The MFA should insist that each implementing partner propose and monitor impact indicators during the project implementation and at the project end.

The evaluation learned that the Unit for Eastern Europe and Central Asia has not been obliged to report on development results at the aggregate level. The current and forthcoming Country programmes include a results framework with indicators but the ET considers that indicators are still very general and, in the absence of baselines and target values, it will be difficult to verify progress and achievements. Some of the indicators and data sources are also at the general level and therefore it is not possible to verify the contribution of Finnish support.



2.6. Coherence (during 2009–2021)

EQ6. To what extent have the development cooperation activities of the Department for Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia been coherent with regard to:

- EQ6a. Coherence within the portfolio managed by the Department for Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia.
- EQ6b. Coherence with other Finnish-funded development cooperation activities implemented in the target region.
- EQ6c. Coherence with development cooperation in the target region supported by the broader donor community, including the EU and its Member States.

2.6.1. Coherence within the portfolio of country-level actions

Within Tajikistan, coherence was found between the geo-sector and ENVSEC projects in the field of climate risk (namely glacial melting) during Phase I. Some synergy is present also with FinWaterWEI where GTK and FMI participated in the FinWaterWEI Advisory Board meetings. Particular coherence was seen in the projects implemented by UNECE where ENVSEC and FinWaterWEI worked together on transboundary water management of the river basin. The overarching synergetic effect is evident in legal and juridical interventions. Legal and juridical actions implemented in Tajikistan, namely the Equal Before the Law Project and the Rule of Law project, were coherent since both of them were intended to increase citizens' ability to access national law to defend their rights and interests. More generally, projects in Tajikistan aimed at increased alignment of national law and practices with international law and best practices; protection of the rights of vulnerable people (including women, children and PwDs) by facilitating their access to the justice system; and capacity building within the justice system, particularly in the area of human right. A similar project (as the Rule of Law) is implemented in parallel by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. Gender-oriented OSCE projects (Human Rights, Gender and Security programme, 2012-2014; Supporting and Strengthening the Women's Resource Centres in Tajikistan, both phases) are highly coherent with gender aspects of other projects financed. Similarly, both phases of the OSCE Women, Water Management and Conflict Prevention were coherent with other water management sector projects implemented.

2.6.2. Coherence with other Finnish-funded development cooperation activities

The activities of FINTAJ, implemented by the FMI, in Tajikistan and the neighbouring Kyrgyz Republic as well as the activities of FINTAJ and FINKMET (Capacity Building in the field of meteorology in Kyrgyzstan) projects are closely linked. It is expected that effective cooperation the meteorological sector continues also during this third phase.

There is also an agreement with FMI, SYKE and GTK to cooperate and coordinate the ICI projects as part of the WEI initiative and to find common solutions to the potential challenges in implementation. This includes for example organising at the regional level and participating together high-level workshops, dedicated technical trainings, and/or feasibility studies.



It is worth mentioning that there are few active Finnish NGOs in Tajikistan. Fida International has been working in Tajikistan since 2006 through Empowering Medical Association for Social Responsibility Project, followed by the Tajik Health Centre Development Project and the Community Development Project in Khatlon. Since 2018, it has implemented a project 'Promoting the Rights of the Children through livelihood and mother and child health' in Khatlon Region. The Abilis Foundation is supporting small-scale projects of organisations of PwDs. These projects are financed by the Civil Society Unit of the MFA and they are not included in the Country Strategies and Programme. Finnish Lung Health Association (Filha) is implementing the Community-based Action to Promote Lung Health in Central Asia project. Filha's project assists the countries in implementing World Health Organisation (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control on the practical level.

2.6.3. Coherence with development cooperation of other donors

There are several examples of coherence with development cooperation in Tajikistan. The broader donor community is active in several sectors, among them in legal and juridical development, climate resilience, water management and trade, and business environment development. This coherence is seen over all three phases in Equal before the Law and Rule of Law projects; AfT as well as all ICI projects.

The EBRD Water Fund Status Report stated that: *“During WEI I, an Assembly of Contributors to the EBRD Water Fund, which included representation from the donor community as well as from the UNECE and the WHO, was held annually until late 2014 to discuss the progress of approved projects, consider new projects for approval, and review the strategic priorities of the Fund”*. The WEI II framework emphasises coherence and complementarity of Finland's development cooperation with the European Neighbourhood Policy and its Eastern Partnership as well as the EU Strategy for Central Asia (WEI II Programme documents). The ET did not find any reference to the EU documents or strategies in the project documentation evaluated. However, the WEI II Programme acknowledges that: *“Finland's development cooperation complements the European Neighbourhood Policy and its Eastern Partnership as well as the EU Strategy for Central Asia”* (MFA 2012).

Geo-sector Information Management System has been actively cooperating with the UNDP-managed Central Asia Climate Risk Management project and the ENVSEC initiative dealing with climate change and geohazards. The UNDP in Tajikistan, an implementing partner of the AfT project, is a member of the Donor Coordination Council (DCC). Through this channel is possible to coordinate the donors' supported initiatives.

Coherence of Finnish development cooperation with Tajikistan in the meteorology sector (FINTAJ project) was evident in the close cooperation between that project and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) Building Capacity for Climate Resilience and with World Bank (WB) Central Asia Hydrometeorology Modernization Program projects. FCG is currently the implementing partner of the ADB-funded project Water Resource Management in the Panj River Basin and, thanks to the FINTAJ project, Tajikhydromet is involved in the implementation via the SmartMet system developed by the FMI.



Coordination among justice sector stakeholders continues in Rule of Law through several platforms, e.g., Policy Dialogue platforms and the annual Rule of Law Forum; DCC Rule of Law Working Group meetings is chaired by UNDP; Regular meetings with NGO and CSO counterparts through the CSO Network. This was confirmed during the interview with the UNDP representative: *“UNDP Tajikistan is very active in the coordination of trade and business-related activities.”*



3. Conclusions

The charting of Finnish Development Cooperation policies, and prioritization within them, is based on a broad expert and political discussion at the MFA. While during the WEI I and WEI II the Tajik partners were involved in the programming in a limited manner, the preparation of the forthcoming Country Strategy is supported by a participatory approach to the partner country. The utilised intervention modalities are highly sufficient to deliver expected development results. The implementing partners, i.e., multinational organisations, Finnish institutions and their local counterparts, as well as local CSOs have proven to be effective professional partners. Repeated long-term cooperation with these organizations is testimony to their reliability to deliver results. The projects currently implemented are relevant and consistent with the development priorities of Tajikistan, reflected in several policy documents. In terms of RBM, the quality of project documents is in most cases sufficient to fully meet the set objectives. The same can be said about the quality of the interim and final reports. The weaknesses of project documentation are the missing impact indicators and absence of baseline measures. This reduces the possibility of effective monitoring and evaluation of the overall impact of projects. Despite this fact, the overall management of development cooperation by the MFA as well as the project management of individual implementing partners is assessed as highly professional.

The WEI 2009-2013 has consisted of development cooperation initiatives that covered the entire Central Asia region (as one of three sub-regions where the Finnish cooperation was directed). The themes of WEI implemented in Tajikistan as a part of Central Asia regional projects during 2009-2013 were trade and development, environment, social sustainability and security. The selected sectors were relevant to the principles of Finnish development policies for 2007 as well as with Millennium Development Goals and Tajikistan's National Development Strategy 2007-2015. Cooperation instruments included bilateral and multilateral cooperation, institutional cooperation and support for business partnerships, as well as cooperation with NGOs, and proved as effective to sufficiently fulfil the Finnish development cooperation activities in Tajikistan. The use of Finnish expertise has strengthened Finland's relations with partners in Tajikistan and ensured Finnish added value in promoting the Central Asia region's development.

The MFA's guidelines on the HRBA are strictly followed in the projects implemented in the third phase. The tasks of rights holders, as well as duty bearers, are specified. UNDP's AfT, Phase IV targets the right to work as per UN Human Rights International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and UN CEDAW. The principles of HRBA are further followed during the evaluation of individual projects.



All projects/programmes implemented in the period 2018-2021 are a continuation of their predecessors during 2014-2017. These follow-up projects were recommended, in most cases, in the final reports of previous projects. In some cases (e.g., ICI projects), current projects also represent a form of sustainability of results achieved in the previous period. This statement does not mean necessarily that such a perception of sustainability should continue along the same line.

The substantial cuts made in official development assistance funding in 2016 have reduced the results of Finland's development policy, on the other side arguably improved sectoral focus of Finnish Development Cooperation. The reductions, which were put into effect within a short period, mainly affected multilateral development cooperation, civil society partnerships, and the human resources allocated to development cooperation. These cuts have affected Finland's development cooperation with Tajikistan, causing some disruption, but with the possible beneficial effect of concentrating resources on a smaller set of focal actions.



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Country Review Ukraine

Evaluation on Development Cooperation carried out by the Department for Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, including the Wider Europe Initiative (WEI)

Stephen Webber with contributions from Saila Toikka and Nataliia Baldych



Evaluation on Finland's Development Policy and Cooperation

2020/4B



CONTENTS

1 CONTEXT.....	81
2. PRESENTATION OF THE ANALYSIS PER EVALUATION QUESTION.....	85
2.1. Relevance (during 2009-2021).....	85
2.2. Impact (during 2009-2021).....	90
2.3. Sustainability (during 2009-2021).....	96
2.4. Effectiveness (during 2018-2021).....	100
2.5. Management (during 2018-2021).....	105
2.6. Coherence (during 2009-2021).....	109
3. CONCLUSION.....	111

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1

Development cooperation disbursements 2009-2020 benefitting Ukraine in EUR million.....83

Figure 2

Development cooperation disbursements 2009-2020 benefitting Ukraine per sector in EUR.....83

Figure 3

Development cooperation disbursements 2009-2020 benefitting Ukraine per channel in EUR million..... 84

Cover Photo Country Review Ukraine: Stock photo by Lehtikuva



1. Context

The following review presents an analysis of the results achieved under the portfolio of development cooperation interventions supported by the Unit for Eastern Europe and Central Asia over the period 2009-2021. The review begins with an overview of the context in which support have been implemented, followed by a review per Evaluation Question (EQ).

The period under evaluation has been one of considerable turbulence in Ukraine, in the political, economic, and social spheres. In particular, since late 2013 the country has been affected by internal division, illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 and an armed conflict in certain parts of eastern Ukraine politically, economically and militarily supported by Russia. The conflict is continuing into 2021. The following are developments in the political, economic, social, and environmental contexts in which Finnish support has operated.

Political context: Since Ukrainian independence from the USSR in 1991, there has been constant tension in the country between those advocating for orientation either towards Europe and the European Union (EU) and those looking rather to the Russian Federation. This division escalated in the period under evaluation, with a political crisis that led to a regime change (the exit of the former President Yanukovich, who had pursued an alignment with Russia) after the 2013-2014 Euromaidan protests. The illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 which violated the territorial integrity of Ukraine, deepened the crisis and was followed by the outbreak of armed conflict, in which pro-Russian separatists in the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts in the East of the country were supported overtly and covertly by Russian armed forces and paramilitaries in confronting the Ukrainian armed forces that responded to the attempted breakaway. The conflict has taken a heavy toll, with up to 13,500 casualties and a major flow of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), estimated at 1.5 million persons by the Government of Ukraine (UNHCR n/d). Illegal annexation of Crimea as well as the conflict in eastern Ukraine have severely violated the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine.

The Poroshenko (2014-2019) and Zelensky (2019-present) administrations have pursued alignment with the EU and with the United States of America in the political, security and economic spheres. The deepening of ties with Europe is governed through the Ukraine–EU Association Agreement and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area agreement. Ukraine receives considerable financial and other support from the EU, via a range of instruments, for a total of more than EUR 200 million annually since 2014. In total, EU support for Ukraine has amounted to more than EUR 16 billion in loans and grants since 2014.

The post-2014 administrations have been pursuing ambitious – if at times, controversial – reform agendas, in close cooperation with European and international partners. This has included a decentralisation policy aimed at devolving responsibilities to regional and local levels.

Economic context: Although rich in terms of certain natural resources, and having inherited in 1991 a well-established industrial infrastructure, Ukraine has struggled since independence to adapt its economy to free market conditions and to convert its industrial base from the military-industrial



complex dominated model to one capable of producing modern consumer goods and other products that can better support economic growth. The industrial base received insufficient investment in the 1990s, and many factories and companies have been forced to close or reduce operations significantly, and new industries (including information technology-based) have only developed to a limited extent. The global economic crisis, the conflict situation, and the COVID-19 pandemic have all added to the economic pressures experienced in the country, with certain regions (including the conflict area of Donbass) affected most of all because of the concentration of outdated industrial plants. The country remains held back by its outdated education system, which has also (as with many sectors) suffered from widespread corruption.

Social context: Although Ukraine is classified a lower-middle income country, in Europe it is among the lowest ranked countries, and there are significant disparities in the distribution of wealth. Similarly, in terms of international rankings, Ukraine scores relatively high in the Global Gender Gap Index (e.g., the 2018 ranking was 59th, higher than some EU Member States) – but in reality, there are severe challenges in, *inter alia*, gender-based violence and the trafficking of women. Social problems facing the Ukrainian population are significant – with alcohol and drug abuse levels high, HIV infection rates also high, criminality and corruption widespread. There have also been constant challenges in the sphere of inter-ethnic relations, in Crimea, and border regions with Hungary and Romania in particular. The protection of Roma population rights has also been a long-standing problem, not prioritised by the authorities.

Environmental context: Ukraine has a complex mix of environmental challenges to contend with. The aftermath of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster of 1986 continues to take a heavy toll on the country, which has struggled to address the myriad technical-, social- and health-related problems it has caused. This situation is now exacerbated by climate change, in which the increased frequency of forest fires in the affected zone is a real threat. Ukraine is ranked as Europe's least energy efficient country, which has led to a range of reform efforts over the past decades.

Finnish development cooperation with Ukraine 2009-2020 – portfolio overview: The development cooperation portfolio managed by the Department for Eastern Europe and Central Asia has mapped against the broad range of priorities listed above. The portfolio analysis⁸ prepared by the Evaluation Team (ET) has identified a total of 15 bilateral projects representing EUR 16.6 million⁹ during the period of 2009-2020. In addition to these bilateral projects, Ukraine also benefits from regional or multi-country interventions. However, as it is not possible to identify the shares from which Ukraine would directly benefit, these interventions are not included in the financial statistics presented below.

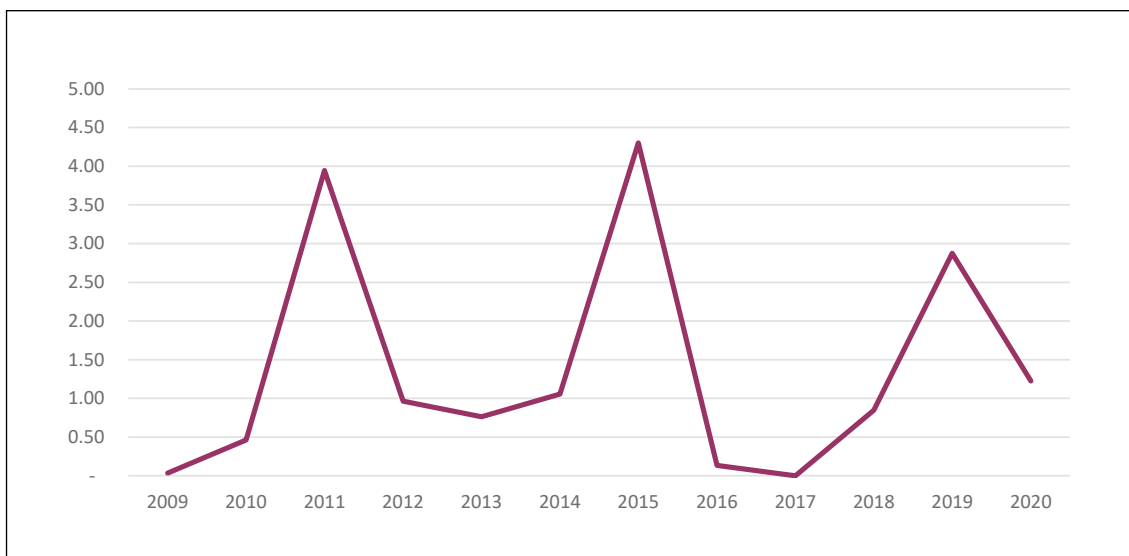
The calculation of expenditure conducted by the ET and presented in Evaluation on Development Cooperation carried out by the Department for Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, including the Wider Europe Initiative (WEI) shows that during Phase I (WEI I), 6.2 million Euro were spent, 5.5 million Euro were spent in Phase II (WEI II), and in Phase III an allocation of EUR 15.4 million was made – a significant increase, although the data received by the ET shows that actual expenditure had been only 4.9 million of the overall allocation, indicating low budget absorption.

8 The ET prepared the portfolio analysis of the programmable development cooperation 2009-2020 based on the data extracted from the MFA's financial reporting system - Ratsuu. For further details on the approach and limitations, please see the main report, incl. annex 5.

9 Unless otherwise specified, financial figures of Finnish support mentioned in this report correspond to disbursed ("maksatukset") amounts.



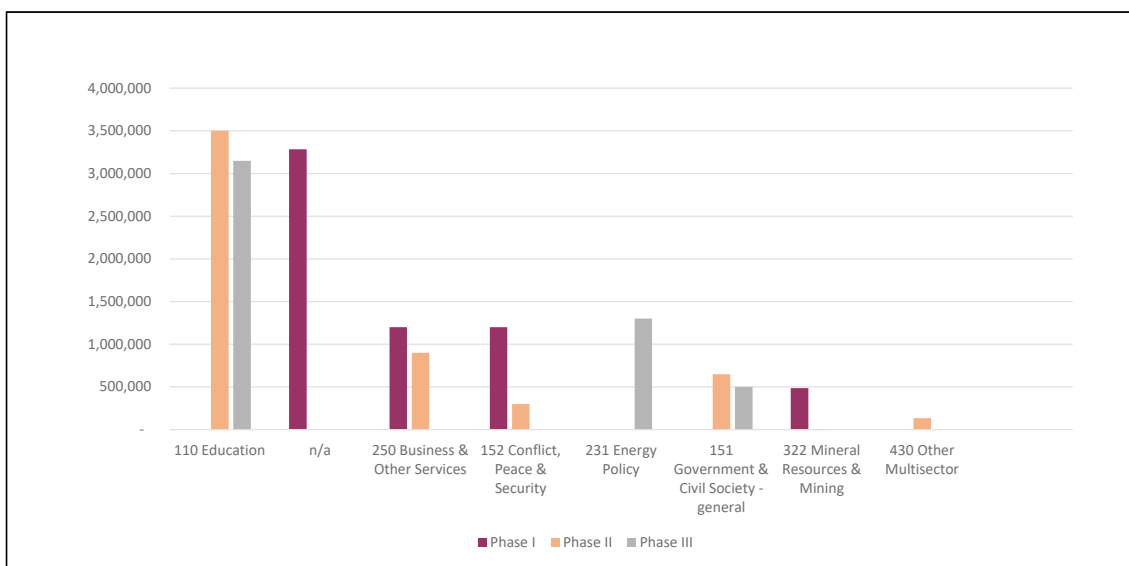
Figure 1 Development cooperation disbursements 2009-2020 benefitting Ukraine in EUR million



Source: MFA Ratsut data 2009-2020; Data compilation: Evaluation team

Figure 2 Development cooperation disbursements 2009-2020 benefitting Ukraine per sector in EUR presents the distribution of the bilateral portfolio by sector and per phase. In the evaluation period, eight sectors (by the DAC sector classification) in total were covered by the Finnish Development Cooperation. Education (covered during Phase II and III) received 40% of the overall funding and constitutes by far the largest sector of Finnish bilateral support to Ukraine.

Figure 2 Development cooperation disbursements 2009-2020 benefitting Ukraine per sector in EUR

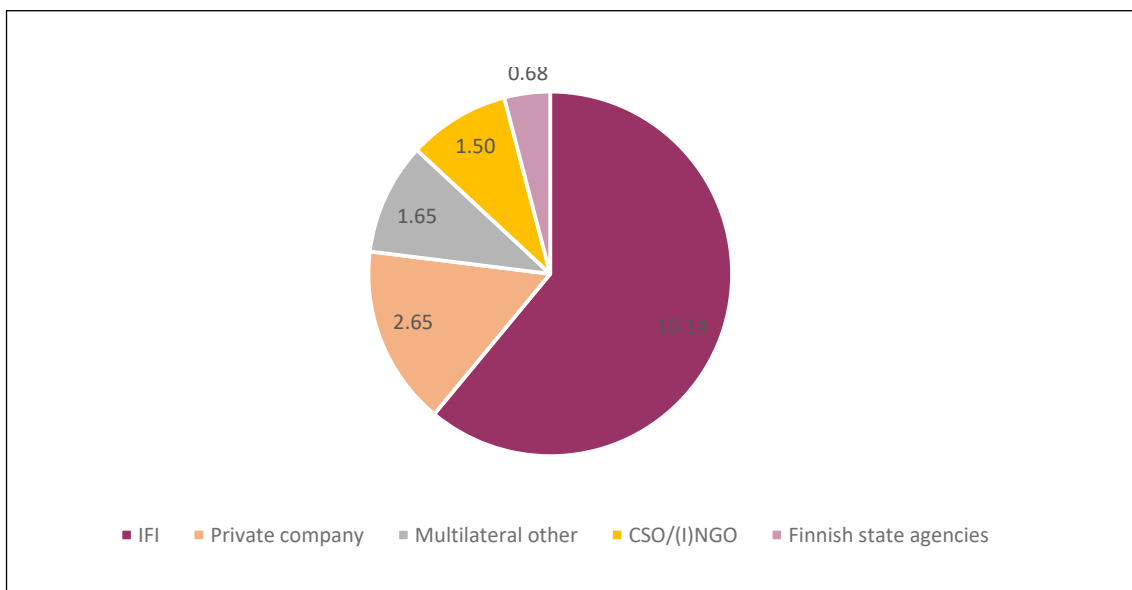


Source: MFA Ratsut data 2009-2020; Data compilation: Evaluation team



As shown in Figure 3 Development cooperation disbursements 2009-2020 benefitting Ukraine per channel in EUR million, 61% of financial resources (EUR 10.1 million) have been directed to projects implemented by International Financial Institutions, namely the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the World Bank (WB), and the Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO). 16% (EUR 2.6 million) of funds have been directed to private companies, around 9% apiece to other multilateral organisations such as the Council of Europe (CoE) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) / (International) Non-Governmental Organisation (INGOs and NGOs), and 4% to Finnish state agencies through Institutional Cooperation Instrument (ICI) projects.

Figure 3 Development cooperation disbursements 2009-2020 benefitting Ukraine per channel in EUR million



Source: MFA Ratsu data 2009-2020; Data compilation: Evaluation team



2. Presentation of the analysis per evaluation question

2.1. Relevance (during 2009–2021)

EQ 1: To what extent have Finland's development cooperation been relevant?

- EQ1a. Alignment with partner country needs
- EQ1b. Alignment with the overall priorities of Finland's development policy and development cooperation
- EQ1c. Alignment and complementarity with the foreign and security policy, including economic relations

2.1.1. Alignment with partner country needs

Finland's development cooperation has been relevant for the needs of Ukraine over the period under the evaluation through its support to Ukraine in addressing complex challenges in the spheres of energy and environment, crisis mitigation, structural reforms. It has been relevant for the needs of governmental stakeholders as well as the needs of Ukrainian population, commercial sector and civil society.

Finland's support has adapted in line with the changing needs of the country over this period, as reflected in the evolution of the portfolio of development cooperation activities over the three phases. In the first phase (2009-2013), the relatively stable political context did not necessitate a country-specific approach from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs Finland (MFA). Rather, support to Ukraine was provided in the framework of WEI I (2009-2013), which identified 5 thematic priority areas of support for the region as a whole (security; trade and development; information society development; energy and environment, and social sustainability). Stakeholders consulted during the Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) of WEI I confirmed the relevance of portfolio implemented in Ukraine, with some reservations relating to regional projects. In the case of bilateral projects, such as the Crimea Policy Dialogue and the Ukraine Cleaner Production, the projects were considered very relevant for the country needs. The Crimean Policy Dialogue was aimed at addressing inter-ethnic tensions in Crimea (among Ukrainian, Russian, Tatar and other ethnic groups). The needs of Ukraine in achieving increased energy efficiency were addressed by the Ukraine Cleaner Production project. The salience of these issues has remained high throughout the period under the evaluation, with Finnish support continuing into later phases.

In Phase II Finland stepped up its support to Ukraine as a response to the emergency and humanitarian needs of the country. It was not originally planned that Ukraine would be included in the WEI II, as the decision had been taken, in line with the 2012 Finnish development



policy, to concentrate resources on supporting the two least economically developed countries of the WEI region (the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan). However, the Ukrainian crisis that broke out in late 2013 caused a fundamental shift in MFA development cooperation activity, to include Ukraine as part of the European and international community response to the fall out of the political crisis and the conflict situation. The package of support aligned with the **emergency needs** of the country, as identified by the Ukrainian authorities in line with the international donor community. From the side of Finland, this involved a significant financial, institutional and human resource contribution to support efforts in the sphere of security and conflict resolution, humanitarian assistance, and inputs into the immediate measures package that was developed by the donors. This included support for the CoE's Action Plan for Ukraine, the EBRD Ukraine Stabilisation and Sustainable Growth Multi-donor Account and the activities of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe's (OSCE) various bodies. Finland also continued to support the Crimea Policy Dialogue project (displaced after Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea), and the needs of displaced persons were addressed by the newly introduced 'Energy efficiency and humanitarian project' of NEFCO.

Phase III has consolidated and strengthened the relevance of Finland's support to Ukraine through the focus on reform agendas in education, energy efficiency and structural reforms. In Phase III, the development cooperation activities of Finland conducted in Ukraine are guided by the Country Strategy for Ukraine (2018-2022), which presents the rationale for Finnish support and outlines the structure and nature of funded activities, including their expected results and impact areas. Notwithstanding the unresolved nature of the conflict situation in the Eastern part of the country, the Phase III programme reflects the attempts underway in Ukraine to engage in large-scale reform efforts across a range of sectors (the education, environmental, economic development, constitutional and legislative, etc. sectors).

The Country Strategy is explicitly aligned with economic, political, social and environmental needs of Ukraine through reference to Ukraine's Medium Term Action Plan and the Priority Action Plan of Ukraine. It is aimed to support Ukraine in the spheres of education reform (basic, secondary and Vocational Education and Training 'VET'), energy reform, as well as structural reform efforts, inter alia, in the sphere of judiciary, governance, and country's alignment with European standards in line with Ukraine's obligations as a member state of the CoE.

Phase III has seen a strong demand-driven nature of Finnish support to Ukraine. In the case of the Learning Together project, it was initiated at the request of the Ukrainian Minister for Education and Science, in office at that time. In an interview with the ET, the now former Minister (having left office in 2020) confirmed the importance attached in securing Finnish support for the reform process, across the education sector interventions in which Finland participates. As the former Minister noted, this includes the response of Finland to the specific request from the Ukrainian side for Finland to take the lead in the language component integrated into the school reform project, in recognition of Finnish expertise in this sphere. With regard to the Finland Ukraine Trust Fund of NEFCO (FUTF), the suggestion to establish cooperation in the sphere of energy efficiency emerged in a meeting between representatives of Finnish and Ukrainian governments in 2016.

Within the Finnish-funded portfolio of development cooperation activities, the alignment with the national priorities and reform needs of Ukraine is explicitly affirmed programmatically at the level of all individual projects. This alignment has been subsequently confirmed by independent evaluation reports as well as by the feedback of stakeholders consulted by the evaluation. Specifically: In the sphere of education, the Learning Together project



is designed to support the Ministry of Education and Science (MOES) in conducting Ukrainian school reform on the basis of the recently adopted Education Law. The 'EU4Skills: Better Skills for Modern Ukraine' project is designed to address the needs of Ukrainian VET sector reform. Stakeholders and beneficiaries consulted have stressed the relevance of Finnish experience in teacher training, developing of teacher-training materials, etc. Moreover, the respondents have emphasised the timeliness and urgency of support provided. In the words of one beneficiary: *"The Project clearly meets the needs of Ukraine. If it had not been launched, Ukrainian education would have collapsed. Children cannot learn as they used to. This is a chance to save at least the school"* (interview feedback). **In the sphere of green energy and energy efficiency, the FUTF** is explicitly aligned with Ukraine's energy policy and the needs of Ukraine to meet its energy efficiency targets. Stakeholders interviewed confirmed the high relevance of the initiative in unlocking investment into green energy and energy efficient infrastructure projects. The project supports the financing and conduct of technical feasibility studies that are a crucial prerequisite for securing investment in energy efficiency projects. **In the sphere of human rights, democracy, and the rule of Law, the CoE Action Plan for Ukraine 2018-2022** is aligned with a range of Ukraine's priority areas, including, inter alia, the Strategy for Sustainable Development 'Ukraine2020', the National Human Rights Strategy, Justice Sector Reform Strategy, etc.

Finland's development cooperation activities have been relevant for the needs of the commercial sector, civil society, general population. The alignment of Finland's development cooperation activities with the needs of the commercial sector (improving the business climate, supporting anti-corruption measures, raising investor confidence) is achieved through Finland's support to structural reforms (EBRD Ukraine Stabilisation and Sustainable Growth Multi-Donor Account). The needs of civil society are most directly addressed via the Fund for Local Cooperation (FLC) as it provides funding that facilitates the work of beneficiary CSOs in their response to the needs of Ukrainian people. Ukrainian FLC grantees interviewed by the ET confirmed the strong relevance of FLC for the needs of CSOs as well as their respective communities and beneficiaries. For instance, one grantee interviewed by ET has stated that, *"Thanks to the Foundation, several basic needs have been met. First, it is the needs of the target group, namely journalists who write on 'forest' topics. The project has established a link between them and forest conservation experts. As a result, many journalists have succeeded or will succeed (the project continues) in gaining a basic knowledge of forest protection and avoiding the common mistakes made in the drafting the materials. In turn, this affects the key decision-making agents, and thus - contributes to qualitative change, the introduction of sustainable forestry practices. Secondly, the organisation needed resource support to achieve its own goals - to promote forest protection in Ukraine, which is also achieved during the project"* (interview feedback).

The ET has examined the ways in which relevance has been established at the identification stage of development activities (the nature of consultations conducted, use of needs analysis, baseline data, etc). **With regard to the conduct of consultations with Ukrainian and other international stakeholders, varying patterns have been seen over the three phases. The bilateral projects conducted under all phases have included consultations with relevant national stakeholders, while regional projects under WEI I did not involve national stakeholders in the process of project identification.** Feedback received for the WEI I MTE indicated that this led to insufficient alignment with the needs of Ukrainian beneficiaries of regional projects at the identification stage, although projects were subsequently able to respond to the specific needs of national stakeholders during the process of implementation. One regional project (PADOS, training of officials in good governance) was redesigned for its second phase in response to stakeholder requests about their specific needs.



Consultations with national stakeholders were managed by the MFA as an integral part of the identification process. The involvement of Ukrainian senior representatives of MOES in the Learning Together project identification and design was high, though it is not evident whether consultations with Ukrainian educationalists were conducted during the identification. FUTF was set up as an agreement between the two governments in recognition of challenges that Ukrainian energy reform was facing and the existing gaps in other donor-supported activities in the energy sector. Part of the rationale for support was to provide technical assistance and capacity development for the State Agency on Energy Efficiency and Energy Saving of Ukraine (SAEE), the main agency mandated with the energy efficiency agenda. The rationale for support was defined as providing support in the areas of Finnish specialist expertise where other donors do not operate (e.g., waste logistics, biomass logistics, heat tariffs) or where Finnish funding could act as a catalyst towards larger projects.

Where project identification has been conducted by organisations such as GIZ, CoE, OSCE, consultations with relevant stakeholders are managed by these partner organisations. For instance, according to the CoE Action Plan for Ukraine (2018-2022), consultations were conducted with Ukrainian authorities as well as international partners (Description of Action Plan). The CoE systematically consults a broad range of Ukrainian stakeholders, using the office's close working relations with government and state institutions.

Consultations with Ukrainian civil society are conducted by the Embassy of Finland, primarily during the FLC instrument's processes of application, review, presentation of results.

Sectoral/thematic, institutional needs in project documentation are elaborated with a varying degree of detail across the phases. As with other aspects of identification of relevance of Finland's development cooperation activities, projects demonstrate varying approaches to contextualisation of relevance in terms of sectoral/thematic, institutional needs. For instance, in the case of FUTF, while statistical data referring to the National Renewable Energy Action Plan for **2020 baselines and targets for energy efficiency** are presented in the project documentation, specific needs in the form of changes in legislation, specific capacity development needs of SAEE, mapping of Finnish expertise against Ukrainian needs, i.e. in waste logistics, heat tariffs, etc. were somewhat underspecified in the project's problem analysis. The Learning Together project presents a detailed **sectoral analysis** of the current needs of the education sector in teacher training, legal framework, etc. The project documentation does not, however, discuss lessons learned from previous attempts to reform education in Ukraine. In the case of the CoE Action Plan for Ukraine, the Plan is underpinned by relevant Opinions, Court Judgements, resolutions, recommendations issued by the CoE monitoring and advisory bodies such as the Venice Commission, as well as the results of previous CoE Action Plans.

Varying approaches have been identified with regard to the conduct of needs assessments of project participants/target groups. The Learning Together project, for instance, regularly conducts needs assessments of target beneficiary groups throughout the project implementation. The evidence relating to FLC projects (feedback from the Embassy, interviews with FLC recipients) shows that needs assessments of the proposed target beneficiaries are conducted (and feedback received subsequently on the results), a sign of the close contacts that the beneficiary CSOs have with their target communities. FUTF supports the conduct of feasibility studies that are aimed at unlocking large-scale investment projects in green energy and energy efficiency infrastructure projects.



2.1.2. Alignment with the overall priorities of Finland's development policy and development cooperation

Finland's development cooperation activities conducted in Ukraine are well aligned with Finland's development policy and cooperation. Where Finland is the main donor, the alignment is explicitly referenced in the programmatic documentation in terms of aims, priorities and cross-cutting objectives. This is the case, for instance, where development cooperation was delivered via the ICI (Capacity Building for Development of European-type Geo-Information Management Infrastructure in the Geological Sector of Ukraine Project, Phase I). Within the energy and environment portfolio, references to Finnish development policies can be found in MFA memos (prepared for the MFA quality board). The Ukraine cleaner production programme was explicitly aligned with Finland's development policy of 2007 and crosscutting themes, particularly aspects of equality through women's access to productive assets, decision-making and participation.

In the crisis response situation from 2014, the overriding aspect of alignment was that of Finland's political stance of solidarity with Ukraine, alongside the EU and the international community.

The Country Strategy for Ukraine (2018-2022) is aligned with Finland's development policy and the following priority areas 1) The rights and status of women and girls have been enhanced; 3) Societies have become more democratic and better functioning; and 4) Food security and access to water and energy have improved, and natural resources are used Sustainably. These priorities, as well as the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA), are very prominent reference points for the portfolio of projects, especially in the cases where Finland is directly involved in identification and management of interventions. For instance, both FUTF and Learning Together projects are classified as human rights sensitive according to MFA internal documentation, although the same documentation is silent with regard to cross-cutting objectives or gender equality aspects of projects.

Where Finland is not directly involved in the process of project identification, a dedicated process of assessments of project proposals with regard to their alignment with Finland's development policy and its priority areas is applied by the MFA, under the auspices of the Quality Board. This is particularly evident with regard to HRBA.

The review has identified examples of **integration of HRBA** in the process of project identification and/ or during the inception phase, e.g., through the conduct of a dedicated HRBA assessment in the case of both FUTF and the Learning Together project.

With regard to **gender equality and inclusivity**, the project description of the Learning Together project contains very detailed coverage of issues of inclusivity (rural areas, minority groups, IDPs), human rights and, to a lesser extent, coverage of gender in education. The project description of FUTF, on the other hand, appears to be gender-blind and missing coverage of inclusivity. In the case of the CoE Action Plan for Ukraine, promoting gender equality, inclusivity and human rights is at the core of the initiative (project documentation), stemming from the mandated nature of the organisation's work.

FLC projects are aligned with Finnish development cooperation priorities.



2.1.3. Alignment and complementarity with the foreign and security policy, including economic relations

Finland's development cooperation in Ukraine is aligned with Finland's foreign and security policy as it provides support to Ukraine in response to the crisis caused by the illegal annexation of Crimea and violation of the Ukrainian territorial integrity by the Russian Federation. The documentary trace does not show explicit referencing to the linkage between Finnish foreign and security policy or trade policy and development cooperation activities (Phase I) – although de facto the Crimea Policy Dialogue project was aligned with foreign and security policy, as was the work of the Research Cluster. Finland's foreign policy priority area of the environment was also reflected in the support to EBRD and other environment-focused programmes. The response to the political and conflict-related crisis situation in Ukraine from 2014, and its social and economic impacts, served as the rationale for support in the development cooperation sphere – with the alignment with foreign and security policy clearly established. Less emphasis was placed on the linkage with trade policy in this phase (it can be noted that from 2013-2016 there was a substantial drop of exports from Finland to Ukraine).

Finland's Country Strategy for Ukraine (2018-2022) references a long history of bilateral relations which are based on cooperation, including trade. As a Member of the EU, Finland has joined with the EU and Member States' response efforts after the 2014 illegal annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation. The intensified nature of bilateral engagement with Ukraine is based on the recognition of Ukrainian territorial integrity and sovereignty.

Alignment and complementarity with foreign policy is understandably more visible in projects where Finland is the main funder or where Finland is directly involved in project identification and management. For such projects (Learning Together, FUTF), project-level documentation details further the nature of cooperation between Finland and Ukraine that specific projects are intended to contribute. In the case of energy efficiency, FUTF is aimed at promoting cooperation between two countries in "energy efficiency, renewable energy, waste-to-energy and smart energy systems". In the case of Finland's support in the sphere of education reform, Finnish-funded projects allow for strengthened cooperation between Finnish and Ukrainian educationalists.

2.2. Impact (during 2009–2021)

EQ2. What has been the impact(s) of Finland's development cooperation carried out in the region by the Department for Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia?

- EQ2a. What have been the most significant and transformative impact(s) contributed to by Finland and why? This includes analysis of impact by social, environmental and economic as well as human rights perspectives. What have been the levels where the impact(s) have taken place?
- EQ2b. What have been the scope and extent of the impact(s)?
- EQ2c. What has been Finland's role and added value in contributing to the impact(s)?
- EQ2d. What negative and/or unintended impacts have taken place, if any? Why?



For the analysis of impact the evaluation triangulated evidence found in the documentary review, feedback from MFA respondents, evidence elicited from stakeholder consultations (mostly relating to the current phase), and evidence found in publicly-available documents (such as reports of international organisations, websites of beneficiary organisations, media coverage).

2.2.1. Most significant and transformative impact(s) contributed to by Finland

Finland’s development cooperation activities have contributed to tangible changes in Ukraine in the socio-economic, environmental spheres, as well as good governance, human rights and the rule of law.

Social/societal impacts: Public health risks of radioactive exposure have been reduced as the ‘New Safe Confinement,’ constructed under the Chernobyl Shelter Fund, blocks the release of radioactive material and provides a 100-year long storage solution for the highly radioactive fuel left in the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Station after the 1986 catastrophe. Public safety and confidence have also improved through the use of mobile radiation detection laboratory equipped supplied by Finland (application of Finnish technology - see also under environmental impacts). FLC grantees attest that participants of their project activities adopt **changes in attitudes and practices towards key environmental challenges**, as seen in the ‘Zero Waste Academy’ project on recycling, according to the feedback provided to the ET. Signs of **cultural change in the teaching profession**, an essential element of the reform process, are beginning to show among the participants of the Learning Together project, as beneficiaries of the project testify. Another expected impact that the project is working towards relates to the **improvement of public opinion towards the school** reform process. The early results here are showing positive signs, according to the project reporting and feedback from beneficiaries to the evaluation – a momentum is building in raising confidence among parents, students, and the public at large.

Social impacts are also seen in the sphere of protection of human rights and strengthening the system of legal aid, supported by the CoE Action Plan for Ukraine as well as by other organisations. The achievements are reported as reduction of inhuman treatment of detainees by law enforcement officers due to the provision of legal aid within two hours of detention (Council of Europe 2016). Social inclusion of IDPs was strengthened through the adoption of legislative amendments and new legislation focused on protecting property rights, voting rights. This work at the policy level has been complemented by grass-roots work by FLC project activities aimed at supporting female IDPs. In general, across the 2009-2021 period a range of FLC projects have addressed pressing, often sensitive challenges in the social sphere, aimed at tackling stereotypes, prejudice, maltreatment of persons in vulnerable situations. These projects often have included an element of capacity-strengthening and empowerment of citizens (including youth) to exert a positive influence on developments in their organisation, local community, broader sphere such as the environment.

Environmental impacts have occurred in the sphere of energy efficiency and environment across the period under evaluation, with results in this sphere traceable because of the tangible effects observed, as illustrated by the following key examples.

The Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC) project on ‘Sustainable, transparent and equitable management of water’ in Ukraine contributed to the country’s



ratification of the Treaty on Co-operation on the Conservation and Sustainable Development of the Dniester River Basin in 2017, which was signed in 2012, following the contribution of the ENVSEC project (Kalashnyk 2015). According to the information, published by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), this ratification “represents an important step for the implementation of the obligations of both countries under UNECE’s Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention)... The Dniester River is expected to be significantly affected by climate change leading to warmer and wetter winters and hot, dry summers, including floods and droughts.... The Treaty significantly broadens the existing cooperation arrangements to cover the entire river basin and all sectors relevant to the management and protection of the shared waters.” (UNECE 2017)

The energy efficient school building in Kherson, built with the support of NEFCO’s Nordic Energy Efficiency and Humanitarian Support Initiative, has hosted hundreds of pupils and teaching staff and showcased the benefits of energy efficiency. The school has a capacity of over 410 pupils. The school is also used as a centre where internally displaced people receive psychological support (NEFCO 2017). The FUTF launched in Phase III has already made its contribution to Ukraine’s energy efficiency agenda by unlocking a EUR 400 million investment from the European Investment Bank into an energy efficiency project (according to feedback received from the Ukrainian State Agency for Energy Efficiency).

Decontamination of the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Station has been supported by the Finnish contribution to the Chernobyl Shelter Fund. As a result, the New Safe Confinement was constructed that blocks the release of radioactive material and protects the shelter from hazardous conditions caused by extreme weather. The New Safe Confinement provides a 100- year long storage solution for the highly radioactive fuel left in the Chernobyl station (EBRD n/d).

Finnish mobile radiation detection laboratory supplied by the Nuclear Safety and Security Capacity Building in Ukraine project (Phase I) is still being actively used by the Ukrainian State Scientific and Technical Centre for Nuclear and Radiational Safety. The equipment is used to detect lost or stolen radioactive material from hospitals and nuclear power plants in order to protect the public from radioactive contamination. It is also used to check food, public buildings safety, etc. (Environics 2017)

FLC projects contribute to the awareness raising on environmental issues among the general public, children and professional groups in the issues of environment protection (recycling, environmental journalism, education). As related to the ET by one of the FLC grantees, “Thanks to the support of Finland, we have developed an electronic educational toolkit, published it on the website on safe environmental education. We have not started an information campaign yet, because we are waiting for the approval of the Ministry of Education and Science a methodological toolkit on ‘Climate and Environmental Education’ for 1st – 4th grades.”

In the sphere of economic impacts, the most significant contribution has been made under Finnish support to the EBRD Ukraine Stabilisation and Sustainable growth multi-donor account. According to the 2019 evaluation of the initiative, Ukraine improved its internal and external deficit situation thanks to structural reforms supported by the Fund. Ukraine also improved its ranking in key global indices such as the WB ‘Doing Business,’ in which it rose by 48 positions between 2013-2019. Transparency International’s Corruption index for Ukraine



improved slightly from 25 to 32 points out of 100 (2013-2018) (EBRD 2019). The report also notes that challenges remain in the anti-corruption sphere.

Economic impacts are also seen in the work of the Geo-information portal, established under the Capacity Building for Development of European-type Geo-Information Management Infrastructure in the Geological Sector project (Phase I). *The portal supports a range of initiatives: “Creating the preconditions for the transparent functioning of the agricultural land market, improving land use efficiency and creating a foundation for investment and jobs in rural areas, creating the access to unified cartographical basis for territory planning, land and infrastructure facilities management within a single consolidated territorial community”, etc.*¹⁰

In the sphere of Rule of Law and Human Rights/Security, impacts are most visible through the work of the CoE’s Action Plan, supported by Finland in Phases II and III.

The aim of the Action Plan is defined as *“Ukrainian legislation, institutions and practice are better in line with European standards in the areas of human rights, the rule of law and democracy”*. According to the Progress Review Report (1 January 2018 – 31 December 2019) of the CoE, tangible progress was made in a number of areas covered by the Action Plan. For instance, the protection and promotion of the rights of IDPs, minority groups, and women have been strengthened through the establishment of legislative and institutional mechanisms, such as the establishment of the State Service of Ukraine on Ethnic Policy and Freedom of Conscience, introduction of a compensation mechanism for property loss and/or damage caused by armed conflict and forced displacement, the adoption by the Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian parliament) of a revised version of the Law on Misdemeanours, etc. In the sphere of judiciary reform, a range of measures introduced, such as revision of policies and practices, has strengthened a rehabilitative approach in Ukrainian prisons. In the sphere of the Rule of Law, the rights of IDPs to vote have been legally ensured through the adoption of the Electoral Code by the Parliament.

The Crimea Policy Dialogue project contributed to the international scrutiny of the aftermath of Russia’s illegal annexation of Crimea and human rights violations, through submission of evidence to international legal processes.

2.2.2. Scope and extent of the impact(s)

Impacts have taken place from at all levels, from policy down to individual levels.

Impacts have been identified at the policy/regulatory level through the work of the CoE Action Plan and the EBRD. The examples of impact include strengthening the **justice sector** through the adoption of constitutional amendments in the sphere of the judiciary and the new Law on the Public Prosecution Service. Humanisation of the conditions of prison inmates have been strengthened through the adoption of legal amendments, introduction of the new Law on the Public Prosecution Service. The adoption of a new Electoral Code has included provisions that ensure the voting rights of IDPs. The FUTF was initially intended to contribute to policy-level impact in the energy sector, but this has been withdrawn from the initiative’s remit, as it was felt that other donor-funded initiatives were better placed for this role.

¹⁰ <https://geoportua.com/en>



The package of activities aimed at supporting education sector reform, launched under Phase III, have the potential to achieve a major contribution to this key aspect of Ukraine’s reform agenda.

The perspectives of stakeholders as shown in interview feedback regarding the prospects for impact are mixed, however – a reflection of the complex nature of the reforms, the high stakes they hold for Ukrainian citizens, and the negative legacy of the experience of previous reform efforts that have not produced the results expected. On the one hand, there are already some signs of emerging impact in the Learning Together project, including on a system-wide level. The project has contributed, for instance, to the modernisation agenda through the development of resource materials for use in teacher-training, support provided to the development of professional standards of general secondary education teachers, and made inputs into the strategy for teacher professional development. These developments were approved respectively by the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Agriculture of Ukraine and the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, according to the 2020 project report. There are, however, risks associated with the pace of the reform process – some stakeholders (of the school reform project) responded in interviews that they are concerned that change is being introduced too quickly, as certain structures have been removed before their planned replacements are in place. At the same time, it is important that momentum is maintained, and that factors that slow down reform efforts are addressed. This highlights the challenges faced in the education sector reform efforts supported by Finland. As one respondent noted with regard to the EU4Skills project, for example: *“The concept is being implemented, but slowly. From a formal point of view, the action plan has not been approved. Of course, the Ministry of Education and Science is moving forward, but without a formally fixed plan. The concept is correct, the EU4Skills Project helps in its implementation. But this movement is not purposeful (without an action plan)”* (interview feedback).

These examples highlight the need for effective monitoring of the reform process overall, and of the inputs made by the projects supported by Finland.

The evidence reviewed shows that indeed systems are in place to achieve monitoring, and a feedback loop involving policy level, education sector representatives, and the general public are in place.

Impacts seen at the institutional level include Finland’s contribution to the strengthening of the capacities of a line ministry (MOES), teacher training institutions, and schools and colleges by extension, in the case of education sector projects. In the environmental sector, the support has strengthened the institutional profile of the State Agency for Energy Efficiency, through work on the development of the concept of the Green Energy Fund, along with other benefits for the organisation.

The EBRD Ukraine Stabilisation and Sustainable growth multi donor account has supported the establishment of the office of the Business Ombudsman of Ukraine, which has facilitated the work of the institution in tackling the key priority areas in its remit of responsibility (including anti-corruption measures). The impact associated with the work of the Ombudsman institution includes the direct financial impact of the BOI’s case investigation and resolution process, in which an estimated UAH 11.3 billion was returned to Ukrainian businesses that had unfairly been charged by various authorities (EBRD 2019).

An interesting case of institutional impact is provided by the results of the work of the MFA’s gender adviser seconded to the CoE country office in Ukraine.

While not originally planned as part of the adviser’s work, a significant contribution was made not only to the work of the CoE in Ukraine, but to the organisation as a whole, through the co-authoring of a



toolkit for CoE to use in applying its gender mainstreaming guidelines in its operational activities. The toolkit is now used across the organisation (CoE 2018).

On the individual level, the project has contributed to professional development of project participants (teacher trainers, teachers). The project reports a high degree of satisfaction of participants with the nature of capacity development offered to them. The project has contributed to confidence building among minority language students who took part in project-organised Ukrainian language summer schools. However, as noted in feedback from the Embassy, of Finland, coverage of the intended target groups for this activity was not fully achieved. As the project actively **integrates HRBA** into its work, and also focuses on the needs of language minority groups, there is a good prospect for the project to make a significant contribution towards better inclusivity in Ukrainian education. With regard to Finnish contribution to positive change in the **lives of women and girls** (in line with the Priorities of Finnish development policy), the CoE is making a tangible contribution towards this aim as reflected in the Action Plan objectives and results. As the teaching profession is predominantly female, improving professional conditions for women occupied in education is *de facto* linked to improving lives of women. It is, however, important for projects to elaborate explicitly the gender equality aspect of Impact.

The position of female IDPs was improved thanks to an FLC project which provided mentoring on setting up small businesses. In general, reporting from FLC projects and feedback from CSOs indicates that there have been individual level impacts across a wide range of projects, which serves to endorse the value of these low-budget activities.

2.2.3. Finland's role and added value in contributing to the impact(s)

Finland's development cooperation activities across the entire period 2009-2021 have maintained a consistent focus on key priorities for the Ukrainian people, institutions and government. In particular, since 2014, Finland's renewed commitment to development cooperation in response to the crisis situation has facilitated deepening of impacts, whether through bilateral interventions or contributions to multi-bi actions that address core structural reforms and pressing social needs.

Finnish expertise has been deployed across a range of interventions in all three phases. The Crimea Policy Dialogue was set up and implemented utilizing Finnish expertise. The initiative benefitted particularly from Finland mediation expertise, perceived neutrality and practical exchange between the countries (e.g., lessons from Finnish multilingual education arrangements). The NEFCO energy efficiency and humanitarian project benefitted from the Finnish prefabricated energy efficient school structure.

The final evaluation of the Action Plan for Ukraine acknowledges the value of the Finland-funded gender advisor in mainstreaming gender aspects in projects implemented by the Country Office. As noted above, interviews with the former gender advisor and the CoE staff confirmed the significant contribution made; for instance, in the adviser's co-authoring of a toolkit for implementation of gender mainstreaming for use across the CoE organisation.

Finnish expertise is at the core of both educational projects in Phase III. The participants of the Learning Together project express their high degree of satisfaction with the quality of capacity development activities.



Finnish technical support in energy efficiency and other related spheres is considered valuable by Ukrainian stakeholders, as indicated in 2020 evaluation. However, the review of project implementation shows that a requirement for a compulsory inclusion of 30% of Finnish component as one of the criteria for selection of projects has served as a barrier in the process of selection of grants. In addition, as demonstrated by the 2020 evaluation report, there was insufficient uptake from the Finnish commercial sector in order to ensure smooth implementation of the FUTF project (at least as of 2018, 2019) (project documentation, 2020 evaluation report), thus contributing to the backlogs seen within the project.

Finnish technology, such as the radiation monitoring equipment, and energy efficiency technologies, have been used effectively.

2.2.4. Negative and/or unintended impacts

The evidence reviewed does not point to negative or unintended impacts, although there is a gap in the monitoring and reporting of risks that can lead to unintended impact if not addressed.

2.3. Sustainability (during 2009–2021)

EQ3. What has been the level(s) of sustainability of the results and impact achieved over the period of time?

- EQ3a. For which of the results and impact areas is there evidence that the benefits achieved are lasting? Why?
- EQ3b. What has been the extent of sustainability of results and impact in terms of a) financial, b) economic, c) social, d) environmental, and e) institutional capacities of the systems needed to sustain net benefits over time?
- EQ3c. What strategies have the Ministry employed in order to maximize sustainability? Which of them have been the most successful and why? Have projects and programmes adequately planned for sustainability?

The issue of sustainability of the effects of development cooperation in Ukraine since late 2013 needs to be set against the broader context of political instability, the fragile security situation and the potential for re-escalation of the conflict, and the severe socio-economic and environmental challenges faced by the country. Sustaining the results achieved can be regarded as being contingent on the maintenance of stability in the country – in which the contribution of the international community remains a key factor.

2.3.1. Evidence that the benefits achieved are lasting

The case of Ukraine shows variation with regard to the sustainability of results achieved. The factors that have influenced sustainability relate to the length of



support, and the scale of the support. It is also necessary to take into account the cumulative effects seen in particular sectors/thematic priority areas, on the basis of the results achieved under different interventions.

In the sphere of the **environment**, as noted under Impact above, the effects achieved in nuclear safety and river basin protection have continued to be seen, even if the interventions ended some time ago – e.g., through the use of acquired technologies, or the lasting effect of an international treaty. See further below.

In the **governance area**, results from Phase I (WEI I) interventions are not traceable and it is not possible to ascertain the level of sustainability (e.g., with regard to training of officials through the PADOS programme). In contrast, it is possible to confirm that the results of the work supported from 2014 onwards (WEI II and Country Strategy), through Finland’s contribution to the CoE Action Plan for Ukraine is sustainable, to varying degrees. While some issues have been identified by CoE as inhibitors in achieving sustainability (such as turnover in the staff of key institutions), the fact that the Action Plan addresses structural reforms and legislative change does mean that once the foundations are laid, such efforts tend to lead to lasting results. As part of the process, the promotion of ownership development among national stakeholders is a key focus: *“A proactive approach to informing and involving the Verkhovna Rada has been perceived by national and international partners as a unique and very positive feature of Council of Europe technical assistance, as it has ensured early ownership of the legal changes to be proposed and introduced.”*

A similar pattern is observed in the sphere of **economic sustainability**: while the results of Phase I interventions (e.g., Aid for Trade ‘AfT’) are not traceable, the support provided to the EBRD has made a contribution to sustainability of results in the form of key structural reforms relating to economic development and business climate priorities. As discussed under Impact above, the country has managed to improve macro-economic indicators and maintain this situation.

The new impact area of support to **education reform** (current phase) has yet to produce results that can be considered sustainable, therefore the focus here is on the prospects held by the intervention. There is a need to address key factors that can be considered essential to achieving sustained results – such as the pressing issue of putting legislation in place to underpin the VET reform process. The school reform project does embed important activities that support sustainability, such as the focus of multiplication of results (cascading through the system, using the key actors of the teacher training institutes, for instance).

2.3.2. Sustainability of results and impact in terms of capacities of the systems needed to sustain net benefits over time

There has been a significant degree of variation in sustainability in terms of financial aspects across the phases with regard to both projects/initiatives as well as their associated results. For initiatives such as the support to the Chernobyl Shelter, the continued funding by the donors was the key to the sustained effect of results. The New Safe Confinement was handed over to the Ukrainian authorities upon its completion and the closure of the Chernobyl Shelter Fund 2020. Similarly, support to structural reforms via the work of EBRD and the CoE, require the sustained effort of the donor community, given the challenges faced by Ukraine in the context of political and security crises and the nature of socio-economic and environmental contexts.



Sustainability of some projects whose funding was discontinued by Finland was ensured through the financial support by other donors, e.g., the hosting of Geoportal is funded by the WB, the PADOS project initiative continued with some support from the EU. However, the ENVSEC initiative, which supported several trans-border projects in Ukraine, was discontinued shortly after Finnish funding ended. Although the MFA recognised the tangible benefits of the ENVSEC initiative in addressing the challenges of transnational environmental and security issues at the project level, the decision to end funding related to MFA's negative appraisal (as stated to the WEI I MTE ET) of the work of the ENVSEC Secretariat which had been fully funded by Finland during WEI I.

The set of impacts listed above, achieved through the support to the EBRD, can be considered to have become sustainable in terms of economic aspects (contingent on political and socio-economic stability being maintained in the country) given the scale of the results and the tangible effects seen in improvement of the business climate.

Within the energy and environment sphere, the results of the Nordic Energy Efficiency and Humanitarian Support Initiative can be regarded as sustainable, in the shape of the Kherson school building. The impact to the community (including children, youth and their families) by providing direct access to educational infrastructure, remains in place – and the project also serves as an example for environmentally sustainable construction. FUTF of NEFCO has strong prospects for sustainability, according to the feedback provided, as the project has gained momentum in the development of the Green Energy Fund and, as well, managed to unlock the EUR 400 million investment from the European Investment Bank (EIB).

The flux seen in Ukraine since 2014 in connection with the conflict and political upheaval has had major effects on society. Finnish projects have, in various sectors, aimed to address **social cohesion and societal priorities**, but the fragile situation means that **sustaining results is a tough challenge**.

The **Crimea Policy Dialogue** project stands as an example of how, against the odds, the **effects** of its contribution **have been sustained in the communities in Ukraine** where it worked following the illegal annexation of Crimea – but also within Crimea itself, where despite the fact that the region is now under Russian occupation, the achievements made by the project in fostering inter-ethnic trust can still be felt (according to beneficiary responses to the evaluation).

The main projects in the portfolio supported by Finland in Ukraine during the Phase III, i.e. the Learning Together and the FUTF project are new and ongoing. These projects had delays with the implementation of their planned activities in 2018, 2019 and 2020 and, as a result, it is too early to discuss the extent to which the achieved results are lasting.

The CoE Action Plan (2018-2022) is a continuation of previous Plan 2014-2017; however, neither the Action Plan itself, nor its reporting, covers the issue of sustainability in detail. The issue of sustainability is, rather, subsumed under the analysis of risks that involves challenges associated with the ongoing conflict in the East and changes in the government.

Development of ownership among beneficiaries is a prerequisite to achieving sustainability of the achievements of projects, including internalisation of new approaches and techniques. The examples of sustained effects above include strong signs that ownership has been taken on by the Ukrainian partners. In the case of new projects, the evaluation has assessed the dynamics seen to date in promoting ownership. Both



main projects of the portfolio in Phase III, the Learning Together and FUTF projects, involve representatives of respective national bodies, MOES (Learning Together) and SAEE (FUTF). The Learning Together project had to adapt to changes in the MOES, but as documentary review shows, has managed to retain a demand-driven nature of its activities, thus sustaining ownership of the project at the level of the national ministry as well as among Ukrainian educators involved in the project activities.

In the FUTF of NEFCO project, the Ukrainian State Agency for Energy Efficiency plays the key coordinating role in Ukraine, while at the same time it is the main beneficiary, as the project is aimed to support SAEE by addressing “the lack of institutional capacity and incomplete policy framework”. Interview feedback and analysis of project documentation have shown that the decision-making over the project funding rests with NEFCO, not with SAEE – raising possible concerns over the issue of ownership. Some level of disagreement between the two sides is visible with regard to the direction the project is moving, in particular regarding the decision (taken without consultation with the Ukrainian side) to open calls for applications only to Finnish companies in the next round, excluding Ukrainian applications. The issue was discussed during the early phases of the project already, SAEE was against it; as it is aimed at Finnish companies. A Ukrainian Party is also required but it can be chosen past SAEE.

FLC projects have a potential to achieve a very strong degree of ownership, given their focus on the needs of communities and those in disadvantaged positions. Evidence shows that beneficiaries value their experience of projects and continue to use knowledge and skills acquired through their participation in FLC funded activities. For instance, a project that targeted integration of internally displaced women through an entrepreneurial mentorship scheme has seen the continuation of the networking among entrepreneurs post-project, according to the feedback received by the ET.

2.3.3. Strategies employed in order to maximize sustainability

Over the period 2009-2021, the approach of the MFA towards the issue of sustainability has adapted to the significantly changed circumstances of development cooperation activity. In the transition from WEI I to WEI II, decision-making on sustainability was driven by internal factors (reduction in Finland’s funding for development cooperation in the region and in general, and the initial decision not to continue work in Ukraine). Only two interventions were retained across the first two phases (Crimea Policy Dialogue, which continued to function outside of Crimea through work in other regions; and the PADOS project, which continued regional cooperation activities).

As discussed in section 2.12, however, in response to the crisis seen from 2014 onwards, foreign and security policy imperatives have taken precedence in shaping the development cooperation activities in Ukraine – under this approach, sustainability can be regarded as an overarching priority, to contribute to the international community’s efforts to sustain Ukraine’s independence and restore control over its territories, and to support stabilisation efforts in the socio-economic sphere, while also maintaining support in tackling key environmental challenges. This approach is reflected in the Country Strategy documentation, both in the 2018-2022 version, and the new 2021-2024 Strategy, which emphasises the importance of Finland’s contribution to international



efforts in Ukraine, and notes the planned expansion of the development cooperation portfolio moving forward (e.g., in adding work on forestry protection).

This is reflected in the MFA's support to sustainability at the level of individual interventions. The contributions to multi-bi interventions represent a successful strategy, as through sizeable financial allocations (from the side of Finland) that form part of much larger overall funding for such organisations as EBRD, and the CoE, allow Finland to maintain continuous support to important initiatives that require long-term, incremental approaches to achieve profound structural changes.

At the level of bilateral interventions funded by Finland, the major projects introduced in Phase III will be continued in the new Country Strategy programmatic period (2021-2024) – which is essential in order to ensure their prospects for building momentum in these policy spheres. Regarding the projects' own sustainability planning some divergence is seen. The Learning Together Project has integrated sustainability in its implementation and monitoring. The project defines its sustainability in terms of institutional capacities and ownership of online resources. The project is trying to identify the ways to transfer project-generated online resources to the ownership of Ukrainian hosts to ensure their sustainability after the end of the project. The project also has a built-in institutional capacity sustainability through the integration of 'multiplier effects' into project delivery; i.e., it adopts a 'train the trainer' approach to capacity development. The sustainability of this approach rests on the retention of human resources within the education system.

The FUTF project documentation is silent on the issues of sustainability. The HRBA report conducted in 2018 for the FUTF project estimated potential for environmental sustainability as positive. The project organised under the umbrella of the CoE Action Plan for Ukraine has its own sustainability plans (according to the CoE Action Plan). The level of individual projects within the CoE Action Plan is outside of the scope of the current review.

The Embassy of Finland requires sustainability plans to be built into FLC project designs, the results of which can be seen in the fact that a number of projects have passed through several iterations, building on the positive results achieved. Respondents from beneficiary CSOs noted to the evaluation that they would like to see more opportunities provided for networking among CSOs, in order to share best practice.

2.4. Effectiveness (during 2018–2021)

EQ4. To what extent have the Country Strategies of 2018-2021 achieved their planned results and contributed to the realization of Finland's development policy objectives?

- EQ4a. What results have been produced until now, who and how many have benefitted from them? What groups were not reached, if any?
- EQ4b. To what extent is implementation on track to achieve the set objectives by the end of 2021? Note any major deviations or risks to achieving objectives and the reasons behind them. Includes analysis by funding instrument.
- EQ4c. Are there any lost opportunities or potential for future engagement in the region?



2.4.1. Results and beneficiaries

Tangible but limited results are seen in all priority areas covered by the Country Strategy for Ukraine (2018-2022): education, energy efficiency, structural reforms. Delays and other implementation challenges have been encountered in some interventions, which has held up the attainment of some results. In part, this was due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation, but also relating to project design issues, the need to secure agreements on approach among all parties, changes in government, etc..

The Country Strategy for Development Co-operation in Ukraine (2018-22) defines three impact areas: i) Ukrainian basic and vocational education are reformed to meet European standards and the education system is appreciated by citizens; ii) Improved investor confidence in the Ukrainian energy sector; and iii) Ukrainian legislation, institutions and practice are better in line with European standards in the areas of human rights, the rule of law and democracy.

Results achieved under Impact area 1: Ukrainian basic and vocational education are reformed to meet European standards and the education system is appreciated by citizens.

The Learning Together project addresses the needs of basic education reform. Notwithstanding the limitations discussed below, it has contributed to the modernisation agenda through the development of: new curricular for grades 1-3; professional teacher standards that are now approved by the MOES; teacher standards for teaching Ukrainian SL/L2 in primary education; a new teacher professional development system developed based on European experience. Where the project was able to conduct its planned capacity development activities, it has achieved or overachieved its targets in terms of numbers of beneficiaries (project reporting, 2020 evaluation report), although the project does not present cumulative numbers of beneficiaries supported by the project. With regard to reaching out to the intended target groups, the Learning Together project reports that this has been achieved for the most part. **However, the Learning Together project has struggled reaching out to those in most disadvantaged positions within the language component.** The ET has received very positive feedback from beneficiaries of the project- teachers, trainers of teachers with regard to the experience of participating in project activities (confirming the findings of the 2020 external evaluation of the project). As one respondent (Pro-rector of an Institute of Postgraduate Pedagogical Education) noted: *“The experience of Finland is extremely interesting and useful because there are: 1) the possibility of acquaintance and real study of the entire vertical of Finnish education; 2) the possibility of detailed acquaintance with all stages of monitoring, evaluation, content of professional development in Helsinki; 3) the opportunity to get acquainted with the experience of modelling programs, as well as the opportunity to see how it works in reality... Finnish experts who were involved always provide useful and interesting information in a timely manner, sometimes even in advance. There were some difficulties at the first stage, because we saw a radically different system of education from our education. To be honest, the first reaction was surprise. But then we got acquainted and began to implement.”*

The project states in its reporting that it has already contributed to increased awareness about the education reform process among the general public and education community, although stakeholders raised the issue of project visibility and the lack of a dedicated project website. Regarding the results of this aspect of the project’s work, the following remarks made by an educationalist in interview with the ET are illustrative of the challenges faced in raising the status of the teaching



profession and the image of the school: “Yes, everyone says that the New Ukrainian School helps to improve the quality and perception of education in Ukraine. Polls also confirm this, but if you look deeper into this issue - the dissatisfaction among teachers and in society remains... We conducted a monitoring study according to the TALIS methodology (Teaching and Learning International Survey, OECD) before the launch of NUS (February 1 - August 31, 2017), the results showed that everything is fine in Ukraine. But then we did other research, we did in-depth interviews with the school administration and teachers, and here we got other results. Neither teachers nor the school administration are satisfied with the state of affairs, the profession of school teacher is not valued in society.”

VET reform: The project start was delayed until 2020, with the first activity supported by the Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI) implemented in August 2020. The ET did not receive information about implementation other than the project’s draft inception report which was due to be revised following discussions with the EU. The current report does not possess sufficient data to provide an assessment of progress, therefore. Feedback from national stakeholders also notes the limited amount of activity seen and awareness of the project to date.

Results achieved under Impact area 2: Improved investor confidence in the Ukrainian energy sector

The purpose of the FUTF at NEFCO was to fill a gap in the development landscape by providing funding to private companies, including Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), for energy efficiency projects – which needed to be partnership-based initiatives involving Finnish and Ukrainian counterparts. In its first two years of implementation, the project encountered challenges in fulfilling this objective. At the time of the current evaluation, one renovation (demonstration) project, four (pre)feasibility/technical studies, one twinning project and one study commissioned by SAEE had been completed, according to information provided on the NEFCO website.¹¹ The 2020 external evaluation report of FUTF noted that a pipeline of projects had finally been created (NEFCO 2020) and feedback received from project beneficiaries in interviews with the ET of the current evaluation confirmed that the project is catching up with its agenda. One of the feasibility studies funded by the project has secured an investment of EUR 400 million from EIB (as noted earlier). The project has also made substantial progress towards the development of the Green Energy Fund, which is a step towards the establishment of a national funding instrument for renewable energy.

Results achieved under Impact area 3: Ukrainian legislation, institutions and practice are better in line with European standards in the areas of human rights, the rule of law and democracy

Structural Reforms: The Finnish support to the CoE takes the form of a financial contribution (EUR 500,000 from the overall donor contribution of EUR 37 million) that is then deployed by CoE across the projects included in its Action Plan for Ukraine, mapped against the broad remit covered under the mandate of the Country Office’s operations. This has included, *inter alia*, work on constitutional and legal reforms, minority rights, justice sector reform, decentralisation and local government reform, implementation of the Istanbul Convention, etc. Many of the project activities represent continuation projects that the Office has worked on for many years. The achievements under this impact area are: strengthened legislative and institutional frameworks for protecting

11 <https://www.nefco.int/fund-mobilisation/funds-managed-by-nefco/finland-ukraine-trust-fund/>



human rights; the introduction of a rehabilitative approach to offenders in the penitentiary system; increased alignment of internal regulations of the prosecution service with CoE standards, and the increased capacity of in-service training institutions and universities to provide training on the CoE's standards.¹²

The 2019 MFA annual results report for the Ukraine country strategy (MFA 2020a) notes a number of areas where progress has been less than expected: *“Constitutional amendments on decentralization are still pending, the electoral reform is incomplete, the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence has not been ratified, and recommendations on protecting minorities’ linguistic and educational rights have not been fully implemented. The objective aiming to reduce the number of public institutions posed certain challenges.”* However, the current report notes that the mentioned delays can all be related to exogenous factors; i.e., not attributed to shortcomings of project-level activity (ratifications of constitutional amendments being the responsibility of Parliament, for instance, not the CoE's Country Office).

Feedback from CoE elicited for the current evaluation indicated the strong value attached to Finnish support, from both the perspective of the Country Office team and the headquarters staff in Strasbourg. The close liaison between CoE Kyiv and the Embassy of Finland, as well as with MFA staff in Helsinki, was remarked upon – including the proactive stance of the embassy staff in joining in policy dialogue related activities conducted by the CoE on key issues in Ukraine.

Cross-cutting objectives, gender equality, HRBA: The following summary can be made with regard to the portfolio's coverage of these priorities: The CoE Action Plan can be seen as a programme of targeted actions that, in combination, address human rights, non-discrimination, rights of groups in disadvantaged positions (minority groups, IDPs), and gender equality. MFA has increased its contribution to the work of the CoE Ukraine through the secondment of gender advisers, who are posted for a 3-year period to support the Country Office in its work (both with regard to the internal portfolio of projects, to support gender mainstreaming in project activities; and with regard to the CoE's engagement with Ukrainian institutions and communities in this sphere). The evidence shows that the two gender advisers posted to date have made a significant contribution, not only to work conducted in Ukraine, but more broadly to CoE offices in the Eastern Partnership region, and to the CoE as a whole through the co-authoring of a toolkit for gender mainstreaming, used to support the implementation of the CoE's guidelines on gender mainstreaming.

NEFCO is a targeted action with regard to environmental sustainability. The project conducted an HRBA analysis at the start of the project and the call for project proposals includes the requirement for applications to demonstrate gender and human rights sensitivity – although the project itself does not appear to mainstream gender or integrate considerations of HRBA into the selection of projects. The Learning Together project integrates HRBA in the design and conduct of its activities (e.g., development of curricular, standards). It also contains a component that targets the needs of minority language groups. The project does not report on the nature of gender mainstreaming within the project - reporting only contains gender disaggregated numbers of participants of project activities. FLC projects directly address the needs of groups in disadvantage positions and women.

12 Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine 2018-2021, Progress Review Report (1 January 2018 – 31 December 2019)



2.4.2. Extent to which the implementation is on track to achieve the set objectives by the end of 2021

The two new projects (The Learning Together and FUTF) in the portfolio have achieved a varying degree of completion of planned activities. Both projects have encountered delays at the start due to administrative and staffing, issues and slow decision-making. Both projects had to streamline their decision-making structures in order to render them more fit for purpose. The Learning Together project has undergone a merger with the EU-funded component that is now integrated in all components of the main project. The project had also to adapt to changes incurred due to the changes in the MOES and shifts in emphasis of the project- some areas of initially planned activities were transferred to other organisations; e.g., the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and were replaced by new activities at the request of the MOES. Other changes were necessary in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Both the project's own reporting and the 2020 evaluation report note that the project was too slow in its move from face-to-face activities onto tele/online delivery.

The FUTF project seems to have intended to target a particular niche in the market: innovative projects with national significance, with the involvement of Finnish companies, on the one hand, and private Ukrainian SMEs, on the other. This however, required a much more focused approach vis-à-vis administration of a generic call that served to attract a lot of applications that fitted generic, but not specific (implicit), requirements of the project. As a result, the project has encountered a backlog in its first two years of implementation. The review of NEFCO websites shows that completed FUTF-funded projects had encountered delays in the course of their implementation due to the COVID-19 pandemic. There is a risk that the project pipeline can be affected by the pandemic, thus rendering completion of projects within the project lifespan problematic.

Both the Learning Together project and FUTF are implemented by private companies, a new approach to implementation adopted by the MFA in this phase for the Eastern Europe context¹³. Issues have arisen with regard to recruitment and retention of qualified experts (Ukrainian, Finnish and international), management structures and procedures within projects, communication issues. Feedback from MFA staff indicates that these issues are being assessed, with a view to adopting mediating measures for future project phases.

2.4.3. Lost opportunities or potential for future engagement in the region

The evidence of the current phase is that Finland has demonstrated strong commitment to supporting Ukraine and a readiness to take on major projects in key reform areas. These opportunities appear to have been taken well, therefore. For the next phase, it is planned that Finland will introduce a new intervention in the sphere of forestry, which is a timely and important step given the challenges faced by Ukraine, including the increase of forest fires in the Chernobyl zone because of climate change. It might be considered that more work could have been conducted in the sphere of waste management, beyond the limited contribution made by an FLC project. MFA Finland recognises this as an important issue to address, in principle, but the FUTF has not addressed it to date. There is scope to look into this issue in the forthcoming phase.

¹³ Implementation through private companies is more common in Finland's cooperation with Asia and Africa.



2.5. Management (during 2018–2021)

EQ5. How has the development policy and cooperation been managed?

- EQ5a. How effective has the policy formulation, strategic planning, selection of interventions, partners and instruments been?
- EQ5b. To what extent is programmatic, regional or sector coordination points of view, RBM as well as synergies guiding the decisions made?
- EQ5c. To what extent has the Ministry's guidelines on Human Rights Based Approach been applied in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation?
- EQ5d. What were the strengths and weaknesses of planning and implementation? What could the Ministry do to improve its management for impact, sustainability, effectiveness and relevance? How?

In the case of Ukraine, Finland maintains a permanent diplomatic presence through the Embassy of Finland in Kyiv, which serves as the base for the in-country management of development cooperation activities. As noted in feedback provided by a range of MFA respondents, there is close and constant coordination between the Embassy team and relevant units at the MFA in Helsinki over all aspects of Finland's support to Ukraine, which includes humanitarian mine action programmes, civilian crisis management activities, interventions of Finnish CSOs under KEO-30 management, as well as with the foreign and security policy and trade policy activities implemented in Ukraine. The ambassador and other members of the embassy team engage regularly in policy dialogue activities that relate to priority areas addressed under development cooperation.

Since mid-2019, in reflection of Finland's major investment in development cooperation in the education sector, a specialist education counsellor of the MFA has been attached to the Embassy on a permanent basis. The counsellor's contribution goes beyond oversight of activities funded by Finland, as they act as the Co-chair of the Government of Ukraine's Sector Working Group on Education and Science (along with UNICEF). In addition, the Embassy of Finland has been chairing the EU Joint Programming Fiche writing process on Human Capital Development (including Education, Health and Culture) in collaboration with Embassy of Estonia as co-chair.

2.5.1. Effectiveness of policy formulation, strategic planning, selection of interventions, partners and instruments

Finland's development cooperation commitments in Ukraine under this phase have been guided by Finland's policy position on the need to maintain an ongoing response to the crisis situation seen in the country since 2014, in line with Finland's contribution to the overall efforts of the international community. The policy priorities are reflected in the Country Strategy for Development Cooperation for 2018-2022. The priorities identified under the policy have been education and energy efficiency, as well as support to structural reforms.

Guided by this policy stance, the MFA has adopted a well-balanced strategy to supporting a mix of projects in the education sphere (Learning Together, including the EU-funded component on languages for students whose native language is not Ukrainian; EU4Skills), energy efficiency (Finland-Ukraine Trust Fund); and good governance and the rule of Law (CoE), as



reflected in the results framework attached to the development cooperation programme. Given the limited available human resources, this mix achieved a good blend of interventions in which Finland plays the leading role as a donor, through to support in which day-to-day management is covered by the implementing partner organisation.

The management of an EU-funded component in the Learning Together project represents an innovation in the development cooperation portfolio. According to MFA respondents, adapting to EU requirements has been time-consuming, and required quite significant development of RBM procedures in line with EU operating procedures. In the case of the EU4Skills project, for which Finland is one of the contributing donors, and also identified for a specific set of core aspects of the programme's delivery, the process of identifying the role for Finland has also been longer than expected and involved significant negotiations with partners and beneficiaries. However, the net result in both cases is that MFA staff regard this as having been a positive experience, which can be seen as having laid a foundation for further such collaboration in implementing EU-funded actions. Indeed, this intention is referenced in the new Country Strategy for Ukraine for 2021-2024 (MFA 2021).

The ongoing cooperation between the MFA and NEFCO through support to the FUTF demonstrates the confidence that the MFA has in NEFCO's management of large-scale interventions, its track record of achievements in Ukraine, and its ability to leverage resources through its network.

Support to the CoE's Action Plan for Ukraine allows Finland to make a contribution to the process of structural reforms and legislative change in Ukraine, overseen by the CoE's range of project-level activities.

While projects supported under the FLC instruments are mentioned in the strategy they are not part of the results framework (as are covered under a separate strategy for FLC). The management of FLC-funded projects plays an important role in supporting Ukrainian CSOs, targeting cross-cutting objectives, addressing the needs of communities and beneficiaries. The relationship is also beneficial for the Embassy staff in maintaining a key feedback loop from civil society. The scheme is regarded as attractive by beneficiary CSOs and attracts significant numbers of applications each year (usually around 150-200 per year, in 2020 this increased to over 400). This, and the need to engage in regular contact with projects (including site visits) means that the FLC projects are labour-intensive for the embassy team in terms of management.

2.5.2. Guidance of decision making

The MFA has shown flexibility in stepping up its support to Ukraine in response to the ongoing crisis in the country and violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Finland's involvement not only as a donor but as a contributor to projects via sharing of Finnish expertise in basic and VET education, gender equality (CoE Action Plan for Ukraine), energy efficiency and other energy related fields (FUTF of NEFCO project) has been at the core of decision-making relating to the portfolio in Ukraine. Considerations of donor coordination, avoidance of duplications have also played a significant role in both support to education and energy reform.



In programmatic terms, the introduction of the Country Strategy framework has allowed for a focused approach to the formulation of the programme of development cooperation, mapped against country needs. The results framework sets out three clearly defined impact areas, progress towards which is monitored through annual reporting by the MFA. For both the current (2018-2022) and forthcoming (2021-2024) strategies it should be noted that there are gaps in terms of coverage of lessons learned from the previous phase of development cooperation activities.

Sectoral priorities and perspectives are included in the approach to programming through the involvement of sector advisers at the stage of the review of project proposals by the MFA Quality Board. This phase has seen the application of robust procedures at the identification and formulation phases, including appraisal missions in the case of the education sector projects for example. As noted earlier, there have also been significant demand-driven dynamics at play in shaping the thematic areas and specific activities of Finland's contribution, with the Ukrainian side proactively seeking Finnish involvement in the education and energy spheres.

At the level of portfolio management by MFA staff, application of RBM concepts and procedures has continued to be rather limited, in reflection of the fact that the ITÄ-20 has been exempt from following RBM rules for the 2018-21 period. This is a consequence of resourcing issues – as noted by respondents, there is a small team only available for oversight of development cooperation in Ukraine, notwithstanding the increased investment. For instance, the MFA's regional department's team for development cooperation has not had a full-time team leader since summer 2020. This is offset to a degree, at least, by the fact that project teams are following comprehensive RBM procedures (in the case of education sector projects). Moving forward, the new 2021-2024 strategy incorporates a more complex approach to management of the portfolio, including the introduction of a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plan.

The value of the FLC instrument in supporting the work not only in development cooperation but the embassy's operations overall is summed up in the following feedback from the Embassy of Finland (FLC survey): *“In the past few years, more and more attention has been paid to alignment of FLC projects with the Finnish policy objectives. That is, the annual priority themes are identified taken into consideration Finnish development policy goals and priorities (recently especially climate change and natural resources and education as well as gender as a cross-cutting objective in addition of women and girls being one of Finnish development policy priorities), MFA Ukraine country strategy (identifying education as the key Finnish area of support to Ukraine in terms of development cooperation), and the Embassy's strategic plan (considering especially the identified, potential areas of enhancing Finnish businesses in Ukraine, such as waste management and therefore, trying to find synergies between Finnish development and trade policies).”*

2.5.3. Application of the Human Rights Based Approach in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation

At the level of planning, a comprehensive set of procedures is in place for the review of project proposals by the Quality Board, which screens proposals for their alignment with Finnish requirements in HRBA. The minimum requirement is for projects to be at least HRBA-sensitive, which is the case in the Ukrainian portfolio.



Variation is seen with regard to the implementation and monitoring of the application of HRBA in the portfolio. The Learning Together project has achieved good integration of HRBA in its design, and this is evidenced in the implementation of activities. The external evaluation conducted in late 2020 considered the project to be HRBA-progressive. The FUTF requires that projects it supports apply HRBA, but the reporting by FUTF on project-level performance is not detailed on the question of the application of HRBA in practice, making it difficult for the MFA to monitor this issue.

2.5.4. Strengths and weaknesses of planning and implementation

In 2019, the MFA conducted its own review of results at the level of Country Strategy, noting delays in implementation in both the Learning Together and FUTF projects. In the case of the Learning Together project, the delays were attributed to administrative issues, in the case of the FUTF project, insufficient number of grant applications for large-scale projects was considered as a factor behind the delays.

The MFA also reviews progress with the CoE Action Plan, noting the varying degree of achievements seen in the portfolio covered by the Plan. The review document, however, is silent with regard to MFA decisions or actions with regard to addressing the challenges, issues encountered by the projects.

In the case of Ukraine, alongside the continuation of Finland's contribution to the CoE Action Plan for Ukraine (based on the model of supporting a mandated organisation, with a multi-project portfolio of activities embedded in the Action Plan), the portfolio in Phase III has also included several new interventions, including in a new sector for this department (education sector reform), and a new direction in terms of project delivery chosen, through the selection of private consulting companies to lead the implementation of interventions ('Learning Together' school reform project, and the NEFCO FUTF).

According to the evidence reviewed, there is a range of lessons to be learned from the experience of the innovative new interventions brought in during Phase III:

The role of donor coordination has become an important aspect in the formulation and delivery of Finnish support – the case of Ukraine shows that there are considerable efforts involved in ensuring effective coordination, and the appointment of an education sector counsellor to the embassy in Kyiv has allowed the MFA to make a significant contribution to the donor coordination sphere;

The demand-driven dynamics that served as a catalyst for the development of both the NEFCO activities and the school reform project stand as important features of Phase III, and indicate a significant step in the development cooperation support provided by Finland. In both cases, the interventions bring Finland's contribution to the heart of key reform processes underway in the country.

The modality of appointing private consulting companies to oversee implementation follows a pattern used extensively by other donors such as the EU. However, the trade-off is that these companies cannot leverage the same extensive network of resources that multilateral or regional organisations can, and do not have the same



remit to engage in communication with governmental and other stakeholders. Companies do not have in-house expertise and need to hire external experts – this has proved to be a problematic issue in the case of both projects, as Finnish experts are not familiar with the Ukrainian context (which is essential for implementing reform agendas) and have taken time to adapt to the requirements of the tasks. The decision-making models in both projects have required significant adjustments to render them fit-for-purpose.

In order to improve its management for impact, sustainability, effectiveness and relevance, the MFA should review the design of the FUTF project, including the issue of ownership promotion. The decision to make the call open only to Finnish companies can lead to risks, in terms of being able to ensure the project maps effectively onto needs of Ukrainian beneficiaries. The experience gained in managing the EU-funded project and aligning with EU RBM procedures has been valuable, according to MFA respondents, and could be drawn upon in seeking further collaboration with the EU. The positive relations with a range of beneficiary CSOs could be used as a basis to mainstream civil society into the programmatic cycle of activities – see main report recommendation.

2.6. Coherence (during 2009–2021)

EQ6. To what extent have the development cooperation activities of the Department for Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia been coherent with regard to:

- EQ6a. Coherence within the portfolio managed by the Department for Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia.
- EQ6b. Coherence with other Finnish-funded development cooperation activities implemented in the target region.
- EQ6c. Coherence with development cooperation in the target region supported by the broader donor community, including the EU and its Member States.

2.6.1. Coherence within the portfolio of country-level actions

There is strong implicit coherence within the portfolio of the Department across all phases, although the extent to which synergies have been identified and exploited has been relatively limited. In Phase III, the concentration of work in the field of education reforms ensures strong coherence within the portfolio, which is further strengthened by the coordinating role played by the education counsellor attached to the embassy.

The review shows that the Embassy in Ukraine seeks to establish thematic coherence and complementarity between the main portfolio and support to CSOs provided via the FLC. However, there would appear to be scope for strengthening actual synergies and joint work between projects in the portfolio – e.g., there could be stronger synergies through mainstreaming of CSOs into the work of the main programmable portfolio.



2.6.2. Coherence with other Finnish-funded development cooperation activities

Over the period under evaluation there have been various initiatives in Ukraine implemented by Finnish CSOs, drawing on expertise in conflict resolution, addressing the needs of PwD, and addressing the needs of the Roma population. While no explicitly referenced synergies were reviewed, these activities are complementary to the work of the Department's portfolio and serve to further strengthen the ties with civil society in Ukraine.

2.6.3. Coherence with development cooperation of other donors

The dynamics in terms of coordination with other donors have changed and strengthened over the period, with the 2014 crisis serving to act as a catalyst for the development of an extensive infrastructure for donor support to Ukraine, to which Finland has made a key contribution. Finland is regarded as a reliable and active partner of the two mandated organisations (CoE and OSCE), which Finland supports through policy dialogue and other means, in addition to funding. In the case of the OSCE this is governed by a framework agreement.

The review has identified that the MFA seeks to achieve coherence with the broader donor community, in particular with EU and EU member states. This is achieved through coordination efforts in the case of Finnish support to education reforms. In the case of Finnish support to energy reform, the concept of FUTF project originated from the intention to fill in the gap in the donor-funded landscape by drawing on Finnish technical expertise.



3. Conclusion

Over the period under evaluation Finland has provided development cooperation support that has contributed to tackling key priorities and challenges faced by the Ukrainian people. Finland's ability to respond rapidly and effectively to the crisis situation that emerged from late-2013, and therefore address the needs of the Ukrainian authorities, institutions, key sectors, and communities, including vulnerable persons, is impressive. In the case of Ukraine, the main driver for Finland's involvement in development cooperation in the country is provided by foreign and security policy imperatives.

With regard to the assumptions identified in the reconstructed Theory of Change, the evidence reviewed shows that this have been valid for the most part – although the first assumption (that peace and stability will continue in the region) clearly has not applied in the case of Ukraine, in which the conflict and crisis situation seen since 2014 have provided the underpinning rationale for Finland's support. Other assumptions relating to the commitment of the partner country government to reforms have held, since 2014 and the constant stance of the Ukrainian administrations towards alignment with the EU. The priority sectors identified for support have retained this status, both for the Ukrainian government and society and the international donor community. The assumption relating to civil society is confirmed, as Ukrainian CSOs can operate in what is in relative terms (for the broader region) an enabling environment.

Under the current Country Strategy for Development Cooperation with Ukraine, a focused approach on three impact areas has been followed, with demand-driven dynamics an important factor in shaping Finland's contribution in the education and energy efficiency areas. In all three impact areas, long-term commitment is required in order to achieve results. In the case of the education sector reforms, Finland has stepped in to play a leading role – but this brings risks as a development cooperation donor, given the contested nature of the reform process and the level of public scrutiny seen in this domain.

Given the complex nature of the reform efforts to which Finland contributes, impact can take time to become visible. It is most tangible in the sphere of the environment, and economic development, where Finland's support has comprised transfer of technologies, infrastructure development, changes introduced into regulatory systems, and a cross-border treaty on the Dniester river basin. The effects of interventions relating to these thematic areas, funded under WEI I, still can be seen and are traced back to the contribution made by Finland. Results in the education sphere will take longer to become tangible, especially with regard to system-wide effects. The strategies adopted by the interventions in this sphere are well-founded, drawing on Finnish and international experience of successful reform approaches, therefore the prospects are promising – but key exogenous factors at play (such as the ability of Ukraine's regions to maintain reform efforts as they are passed responsibility in the decentralisation process) are outside of the direct influence of the projects.

The Rule of Law and human rights related activities provide a good example of the joined-up nature of Finnish support, with regard to the top-down (policy, legislative, institutional change) and bottom-up initiatives supported by Finland. Implicit synergies can be seen in various aspects of the



portfolio, such as the multi-faceted approach to addressing the needs of IDPs, and the protection of the rights of minority ethnic groups. In such cases, it is important that the process of change is taken into account when assessing results.

Finland has made a consistent contribution to the sphere of community relations, conflict resolution, confidence-building, within the development cooperation portfolio, and in other related activities (such as civilian crisis management) coordinated by the Embassy staff, which allows for a coherent set of responses to be maintained through Finland's substantive overall support to Ukraine.

As noted above, however, there are issues that require attention. There is need to ensure that ownership development among national stakeholders is prioritised (in particular in the case of the Ukrainian State Agency for Energy Efficiency). Monitoring of the implementation of HRBA and gender mainstreaming in interventions is insufficient and the performance of private sector companies in implementing projects supported by Finland has been problematic.



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