



# **Right to Education, Right to Learn Evaluation of Finland's Development Cooperation in the Education Sector**

**Public presentation and discussion**

**09 November 2023**

**The event will be recorded**

# Programme

08:45 Registration and Coffee

**09:15 Opening words**–Under-Secretary of State, Development Policy, **Pasi Hellman**; Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.

**09:20 Video on Quality Education**

**09:25 Video greeting**–*Executive Director Yasmine Sherif; Education Cannot Wait (ECW)*

**09:30 Presentation of Overall Evaluation Results**–Evaluation team

**10:00 Questions** from the audience in the room to evaluation team

**10:30 Perspectives from practitioners**

Special Adviser, Education and Human Rights, **Indra Gurung**, and Senior Specialist, Education, **Tuovi Leppänen**; Embassy of Finland, Kathmandu, Nepal.

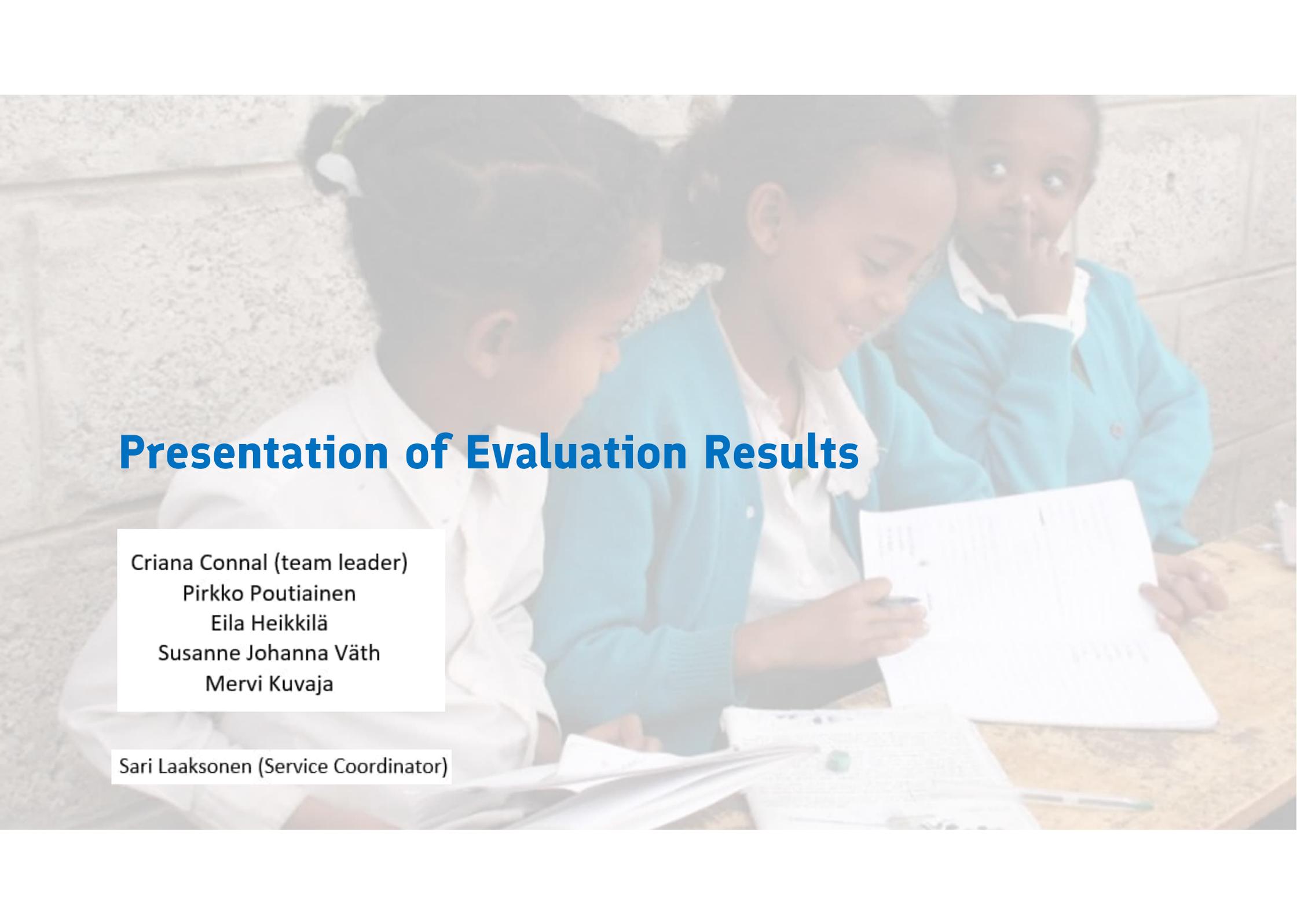
Education Technical Lead, **Filbert Idha**; Finn Church Aid Uganda Country Office.

**10:50 Discussion:** Building on Finland's strengths

**11:10 Discussion:** The future of Finland's education sector development cooperation

**11:55 Closing words**–Lead Evaluation Specialist, Nea-Mari Heinonen. Development Evaluation Unit.

**12:00 Event closed**

A photograph of three young girls in school uniforms sitting at a desk. They are looking at a document together. The girl in the middle is holding a pen and pointing at the document. The girl on the right is looking at the document with a thoughtful expression. The girl on the left is looking at the document with a focused expression. The background is a plain wall.

# Presentation of Evaluation Results

Criana Connal (team leader)  
Pirkko Poutiainen  
Eila Heikkilä  
Susanne Johanna Väth  
Mervi Kuvaja

Sari Laaksonen (Service Coordinator)

# Evaluation assignment

## Summative (2019-2022):

- To what extent has **the response** to recommendations of the 2018 report, **and the follow-up measures** agreed, been appropriate in stepping up Finland's global role in addressing the learning crisis and improving the quality of education?
- What has been **the relative and overall effectiveness** of the various measures taken by the different actors in development cooperation?

## Formative (2023-2030):

- **What kind of multi-actor approach(es) and set-ups** would yield **the best results** in order to a) maintain and strengthen Finland's role in the specific areas of expertise and added value unique to Finland, b) allow the response to the global learning crisis and quality education to stay relevant in different contextual settings, c) establish size and set-up that is realistic for sustained level of development cooperation funding yet securing Finland as a credible actor in resolving the global learning crisis?

# Evaluation methodology and limitations

A **mix of data collection and analysis methods**: desk review, key informant interviews (52 global level; 49 country level), Country Case Studies (Ethiopia, Nepal, and Palestine), desk-based thematic studies (on basic education teacher training in Mozambique, and Vocational Education and Training (VET) and life skills training in Ukraine) and the Delphi method (on-line survey and interviews).

## Main limitations:

- Focus of the evaluation is at policy and strategic level, not at project or programme level
- Absence of a clear sector portfolio
- Limitations caused by the selection of the intervention sample and the Delphi panelists
- Limitations in monitoring and reporting data available and their consistency

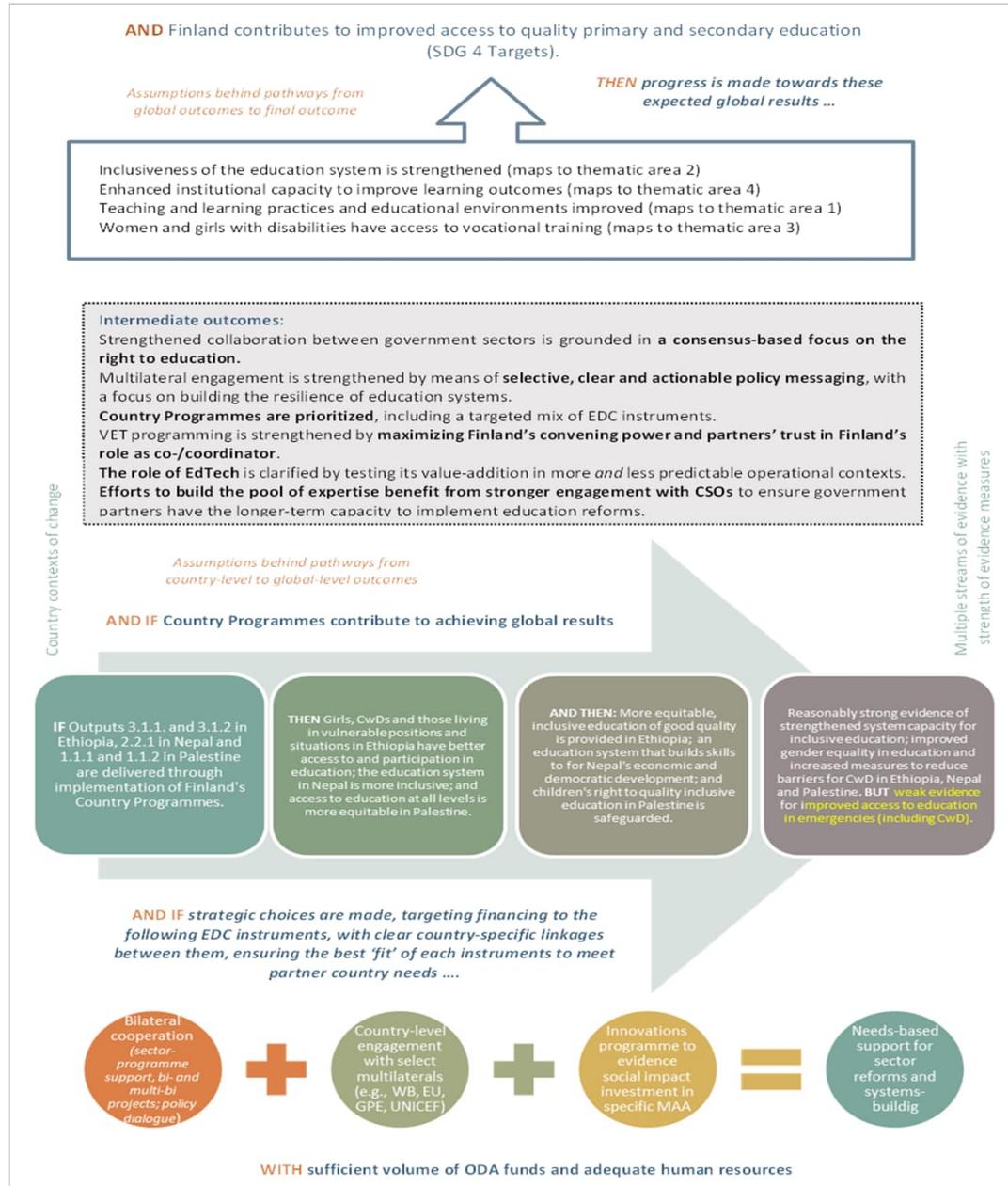
# Evaluation Approach and Theory of Change

**Analytical Framework:** Theory-based Contribution Analysis.

A nested theory of change (ToC) for the evaluation.

- **macro-level:** results frameworks (previous+current) for education sector/global ToC
- **micro-level:** country-level ed sector plans/programmes

A 'nested' ToC helps to show how different parts of a complex intervention fit together, highlighting the pathways from inputs and activities on the ground all the way to impact level change.



## Evaluation results - The **RESPONSE**

**EQ1:** To what extent has **the response** to recommendations of the 2018 report and follow-up **measures** agreed thereof been appropriate for stepping up Finland's global role in addressing the learning crisis and improving the quality of education?

# The response (EQ1)

1/2

**Progress in implementing the 7 'Stepping Up Measures'** (consolidated recommendations and follow up)

- 1. Collaboration between ministries** and their operational arms (MFA, MEC, EDUFI) **improved**. The MFA has taken a strategic leadership in the implementation of the recommendations.
- 2. Multilateral engagement strengthened**, through funding for selected UN partners, GPE and ECW, with the Development Banks, and with the EU-Africa Global Gateway.
- 3. Bilateral support intensified**, expanding support to additional partner countries.
4. Concerted efforts made to **build Finland's pool of expertise in EDC** since the launch of FinCEED.
- 5. Research capacities in partner countries improved.**
6. The least progress has been made in **strengthening Finland's Vocational Education and Training (VET) profile** and in **strategic investment in new partnerships.**

# The response (EQ1)

2/2

<b>Relevance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• progress in implementing policy-level measures;</li><li>• bilateral cooperation and CSO support;</li><li>• cross-cutting objectives</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• emphasis on triple nexus (HDP) approaches is limited;</li><li>• international awareness of Finland's expertise in VET is weak;</li><li>• digitalisation may not be well-suited in fragile settings</li></ul>
<b>Resourcing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• EDC commitments have shown an upward trajectory</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Finland only reached its goal of disbursing EUR 100 million p.a. for EDC in 2021; and</li><li>• flexible financing tools are limited</li></ul>
<b>Efficiency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• education is a well-established priority</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ongoing consensus building (a 'work-in-progress');</li><li>• lack of conceptual clarity on addressing education export in fragile contexts remains;</li><li>• operational challenges</li></ul>
<b>Coherence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• improved coordination via the Coordination Group and FinCEED;</li><li>• jointly designed EDC programmes and responsive CSO support;</li><li>• EU-TEIs' potential</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• no evolving collaborative vision;</li><li>• conceptual ambiguity in the MAA and state-private sector collaboration;</li><li>• unclear alignment of priorities for multilateral support</li></ul>

## Evaluation results – The RESULTS

**EQ2:** What has been **the relative and overall effectiveness** of the various measures taken by the different actors in development cooperation?

## The Results: Overall results (EQ2)

1/5

Overall, Finland's EDC has contributed to:

- **Improved access to primary and secondary education;**
- More attention to **inclusion in basic education;**
- **Influencing policies at national and global levels and enhancing teaching practices.**

However, poor learning outcomes persist, highlighting a continuing learning crisis in case-study countries (see *Table 11*).

**Examples** of interventions assessed successful or potentially successful in this evaluation include:

- West Bank Protection Consortium, Palestine.
- EU4Skills, a multi-donor project supporting the reform and modernisation of VET in Ukraine.
- Finnfund and Team Finland Knowledge (TFK) network.
- HEI ICI projects, with a positive impact on national reform processes.

# The Results: Thematic results (EQ2)

2/5

- The thematic area of **rights-based inclusive basic and secondary education** contributed most results.
- The cross-cutting objectives of **gender equality and non-discrimination**, particularly **disability inclusion**, are a strong commitment.

**Examples** of interventions assessed successful:

- Long-term support to UNESCO's **CapED programme** in Mozambique, Myanmar and Nepal.
- Contribution to **GPE**, a notable proponent of a multi-actor approach.
- The **School Meal Coalition (SMC)**, led jointly by Finland and France.
- **CSOs**: Girls' attendance in high school (Felm); In-service training for teachers (Fida International); Vocational skills (Finnish Refugee Council); Employment of vulnerable youth through TVET (World Vision Finland).

# The Results: Multi-actor approaches (EQ2)

3/5

## 1. Coordinated domestic partnerships:

- the Inter-sectoral Coordination Group was established but without executive authority; its Roadmap lacks resources and operational plans;
- PPPs in VET are regarded as crucial;
- Finnish CSOs also recognise the need for closer collaboration, but this is not fully realised.

Ultimately, it is not clear where the responsibility for coordination lies, or the extent to which coordination is even feasible, given current coordination setups.

**2. State and non-state actor partnerships at country level:** effective partnerships between CSOs, HEIs and private companies, or engagement of private companies in Country Programmes, are limited and mostly in the domain of digital solutions.

**3. 'Global multi-actor approaches:** the **UNICEF Global Learning Innovation Hub** is the most notable example of a global MAA but it is too early to tell if the Hub has delivered major results.

# The Results: Cooperation instruments & modalities (EQ2) 4/5

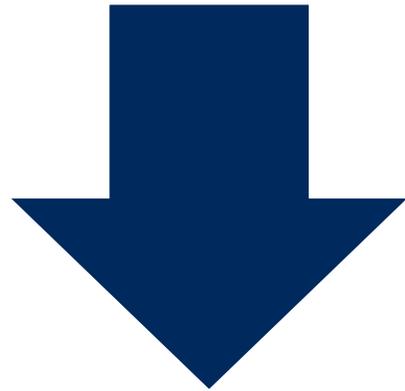
The **three most effective** EDC instruments are

1. Bilateral cooperation (Country programmes/Joint Sector Support + bilateral projects + multi-bi support);
  2. Multilateral cooperation; and
  3. Potentially, FinCEED, though its present role could be fine-tuned.
- Education in emergencies is becoming increasingly important, but rethinking of this modality is ongoing globally: building education system resilience.
- CSOs' and higher education institutions' interventions are often effective and they are critically important partners in EDC, yet their potential has not been exploited to the full, and their relationship with private companies lacks enablers and remains uncertain.
  - Private sector instruments appear to add little value in the education sector, and stakeholders suggest MFA and its partners reflect on the pros and cons of private sector involvement in EDC.

# The Results: Focus at enablers and constraints (EQ2)

5/5

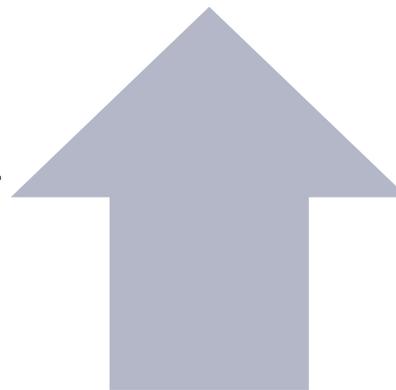
## Global level enablers and challenges for Finland's ODA



1. An urgent need for (a) clear and long-overdue guidance on private sector partnerships and (b) reinforced human resources to manage new partnerships.
2. The ongoing challenges of securing and retaining development expertise within MFA.
3. Limited opportunities for pooled funding despite a strong reliance on multi-actor partnerships to fill human resource gaps.



1. Comprehensive Country Strategies, with a strong focus on climate resilience.
2. Strong results culture in development cooperation.
3. Comprehensive and clear risk management processes.
4. A reversal of a four-year decline of Finland's ODA since 2019, with 'hopeful signs' for an estimated future increase to 0.52% of GNI.



(OECD-DAC, 2021)

## Country level enablers and Constraints

- **Enablers:** strategic financing mix, combining bilateral and multilateral cooperation; engagement in policy dialogue; technical/sectoral expertise and assistance; partner country ownership, and adaptive management.
- **Constraints:** high dropout and repetition rates; limited vocational opportunities; and volatile country contexts (unique political economy factors; security and climate-related crises)

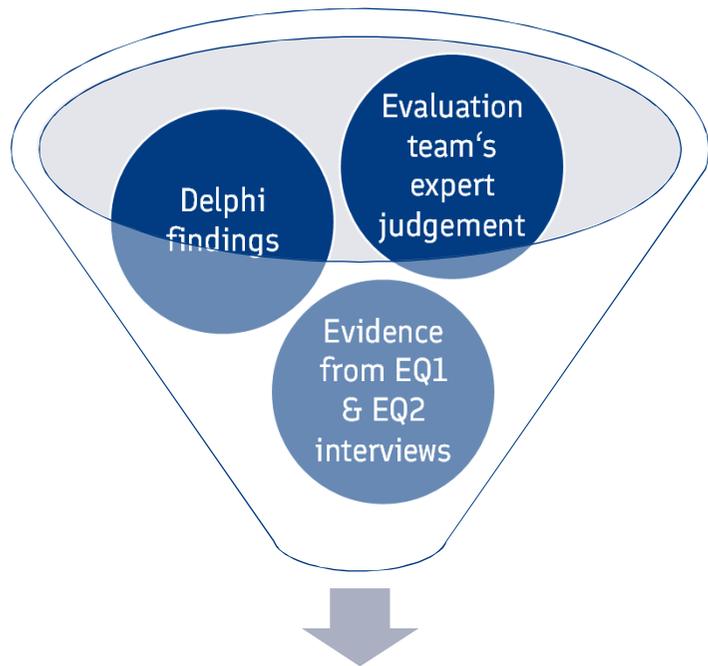
## Evaluation results – The FUTURE

**EQ3:** In the next eight years, what kind **of multi-actor approach(es) and set-ups** would **yield the best results** in order to

- a) maintain and strengthen Finland's role in the specific areas of expertise and added value unique to Finland,
- b) allow the response to the global learning crisis and quality education to stay relevant in different contextual settings,
- c) establish size and set-up that is realistic for sustained level of development cooperation funding yet securing Finland as a credible actor in resolving the global learning crisis?

# The Future (EQ3)

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Multiple streams of evidence

## Delphi process

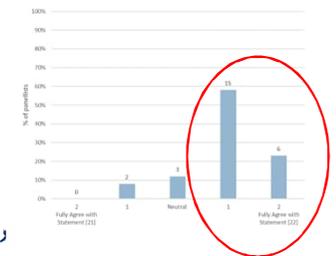
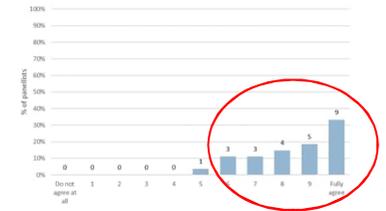
- Identification of hot topics by evaluation team
- 1st round semi-structured expert interviews collecting expert opinions
- Qualitative content analysis and synthesis (680 codings → 30 statements)
- 2nd round survey assessing or ranking (contradictory) statements and capture additional clarifications

Composition of the panel	1st round	%	2nd round	%
National Government Body	9	26%	5	19%
Multilateral Agencies	8	24%	8	30%
Academia	7	21%	6	22%
Practitioners	10	29%	8	30%
Total	34		27 (79%)	

# Evaluation Results: Key Delphi Findings (EQ3)

2/4

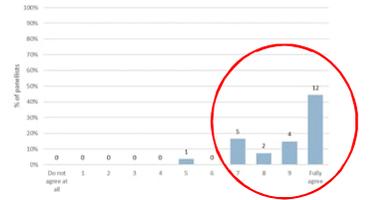
- Finland's key value addition: **support own institutional reform process in partner countries** - *'don't copy our system, understand how we developed our system to become effective'*.
- Intensified focus to strengthen Finland's role: **teacher education and professional development** (20 times mentioned, 13 times ranked 1<sup>st</sup>), **inclusive education** (15 times mentioned), followed by early childhood development, well-being services in school, classroom-based assessment
- **Expand Finland's expert pool** to maintain its role.
- **EdTech potentially contributes to Finland's response to the education crisis** but with a focus on teachers' own digital literacy rather than engaging EdTech companies in developing e-learning apps - *'MFA should not miss that chance'*



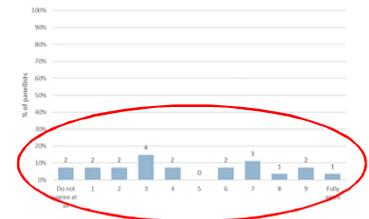
# Evaluation Results: Key Delphi Findings (EQ3)

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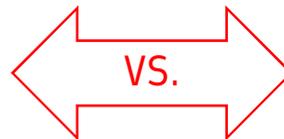
- Experts call for **new and transformative strategies for education development in the context of triple nexus programming.**
- No insights on size for Finland's EDC by Delphi Panelists.
- Regarding set-up:
  - Observation: **Currently no MFA funding instruments/ programmes even allow multi-actor partnership.**
  - Suggestion: offer funding and integrate it as requirement into tendering processes.



- **No consensus on a future pathway for private sector engagement.**



*'Global ODA will decrease in the future as donor partner countries alike are impacted by various crises. We need the private sector to engage in EDC, stepping in to help fill financing gaps.'*



*'Exporting services in private primary and/or secondary schooling is against Finnish principles and can fail as commercial pressures compromises the quality of education.'*

## Evaluation Results: Overall future-oriented results (EQ3)

4/4

Taken evidence streams together, the following pathway is expected promising for Finland:

- Continue long-term EDC, with strategic focus on building education system resilience.
- Stick to strengths: teacher education and professional development, and inclusive education.
- Inquire potential for synergies between higher education and VET institutions (despite diverged views on the potential role of VET)
- Sustain education funding and establish flexible financing tools.
- Expanding Finland's expert pool.
- Testing of innovations in partner countries by local experts before broader implementation of EdTech solutions.
- Spotlighting education as integral part across multiple sectors of sustainable development ( 'multi-sector nexus thinking').
- Instead of dispersing scarce ODA funds across all EDC modalities/ interventions, adopt a strategic approach: prioritise three crucial partnerships (a) bilateral partner governments in target countries, (b) selected multilateral organisations, and (c) FinCEED).

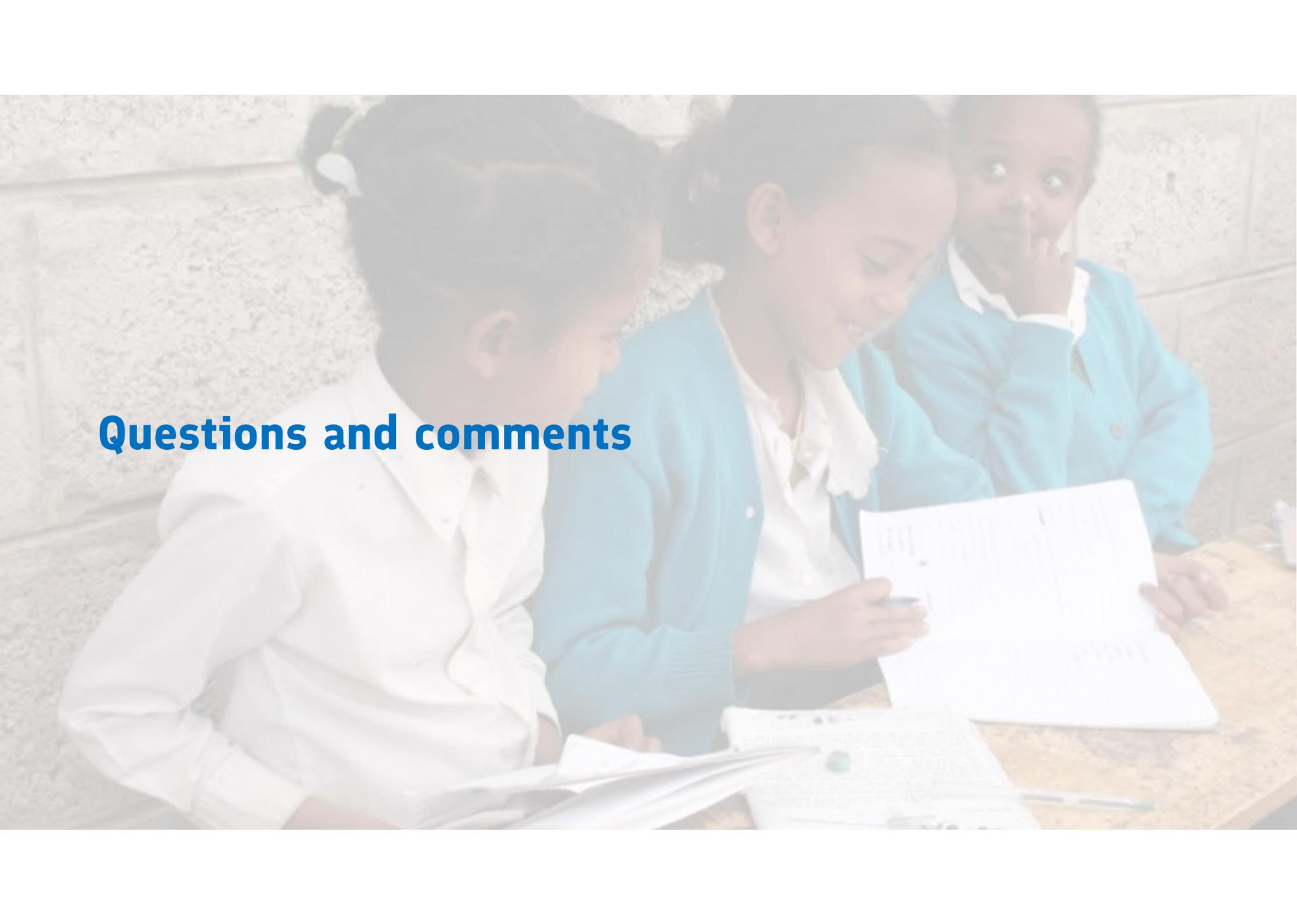
# **Evaluation recommendations**

# Recommendations

1. Deliver a **brief policy statement** reiterating the commitment to a renewed joint vision for Finland's education development cooperation, maintaining a **balanced focus on both trade interests and country-led approaches**.
2. Issue a **Guidance Note on the Multi-actor Approach** to clarify the concept and guide its operationalisation.
3. Establish **FinCEED as an executive body** to facilitate and coordinate Finland's Multi-actor Approach in EDC.
4. Strengthen MFA's strategic planning in the education sector by developing an **education sector-specific implementation plan**.
5. Strengthen the response to the global and country-level learning crisis by emphasising **education in emergencies**, including by (i) adhering to the MFA's Guidance Note "The Triple Nexus and Cooperation with Fragile States and Regions" as relevant for education; and (ii) emphasising climate resilience (green education).
6. In the *short-/medium term*, **ensure at least the current funding level** for the education sector and **test innovative funding mechanisms** (e.g., social impact outcome investment). *In the longer term*, **aim at systematically increasing education sector funding**.

# Recommendations

7. **Prioritise bilateral cooperation** with partner countries, namely, joint financing of sector reform programmes, multi-bilateral assistance, technical assistance and policy dialogue at the country level.
8. In addition to bilateral cooperation, **prioritise cooperation with multilateral organisations** in the education sector, including with the EU, World Bank, UNICEF, GPE and ECW, and create linkages between the bilateral and multilateral programming.
9. **Prioritise supporting basic and primary education**, with an immediate focus on rights-based inclusive access, including in multi-crisis settings. Limit the **short-term engagement in the VET sub-sector to already-initiated interventions** while planning for substantive development of Finland's VET sub-sector in the longer term.
10. In the *medium to long term*, devise **innovative strategies** for the **transformation of teaching methods, schools, and education systems in partner countries**, including related to EdTech to enhance education quality.
11. **Address staff shortages** by building skills and capacities through continuous learning, buying or borrowing additional skills from other ministries, and outsourcing to free up staff for other tasks. The embassy-based education advisers should be retained and more should be invested in locally recruited staff.

A photograph of three young girls in school uniforms sitting at a desk. The girl on the left is wearing a white shirt and has her hair in a bun. The girl in the middle is wearing a blue cardigan over a white shirt and is smiling while looking at a book. The girl on the right is also wearing a blue cardigan and is looking towards the camera with her hand near her chin. They are all looking at a book on the desk. The background is a light-colored wall.

## Questions and comments

## Discussion – Reflections from country level

1. What are the most pertinent issues in the education sector that Finland has been supporting and a brief example of results?
2. What do you think Finland should consider when it engages in education sector development cooperation in the future?

Special Adviser, Education and Human Rights, **Indra Gurung**, and Senior Specialist, Education, **Tuovi Leppänen**;  
Embassy of Finland, Kathmandu, Nepal

Education Technical Lead, **Filbert Idha**; Finn Church Aid Uganda Country Office

## Discussion - Future

**“Finland will focus on its strengths where it has good opportunities to support sustainable development”**

(Government Programme 2023)

**➔ In terms of education sector development cooperation, what does that entail?**

1. Discuss with your neighbour (those on-site)
2. Add your response to Flinga (all) ---->



**OR:**

**<https://flinga.fi/s/F793SBM>**

# Discussion





## **Closing words**

**Thank you for joining!**

The slides and recording will be posted on our website.