

# ASSESSMENT

FROM REACTIVITY TO RESILIENCE



Ministry for Foreign  
Affairs of Finland

## Response of Finnish Development Policy and Cooperation to the COVID-19 Pandemic



Evaluation on Finland's Development Policy and Cooperation

2022/2



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# **FROM REACTIVITY TO RESILIENCE**

## **Assessment of the Response of Finnish Development Policy and Cooperation to the COVID-19 Pandemic**

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**2022/2**

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# Acronyms and Abbreviations

<b>ADB</b>	Asian Development Bank
<b>ADF</b>	Asian Development Fund
<b>AfDB</b>	African Development Bank
<b>ALI</b>	Department for Africa and the Middle East
<b>AQ</b>	Assessment Question
<b>ASA</b>	Department for the Americas and Asia
<b>AT</b>	Assessment Team
<b>CCO</b>	Cross-cutting objective
<b>CERF</b>	UN's Central Emergency Response Fund
<b>COVAX</b>	COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access
<b>COWASHH</b>	Community-based rural water services and sanitation project
<b>CPAP</b>	Country Programme Action Plan
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organisations
<b>DAC</b>	Development Assistance Committee
<b>DSA</b>	Daily subsistence allowance
<b>ECDC</b>	European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EUR</b>	Euro
<b>EUR-20</b>	Unit for General EU Affairs and Coordination
<b>EVA-11</b>	Development Evaluation Unit
<b>FELM</b>	Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission
<b>GAVI</b>	The Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunizations
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-based violence
<b>GHRP</b>	Global Humanitarian Response Plan
<b>GPE</b>	Global Programme for Education
<b>HRBA</b>	Human Rights-Based Approach
<b>IASC</b>	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
<b>ICRC</b>	International Committee of the Red Cross
<b>IDB</b>	Inter-American Development Bank
<b>IFRC</b>	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organisation
<b>INGO</b>	International non-governmental organisation
<b>IOM</b>	International Organisation for Migration
<b>ITÄ</b>	Department for Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia
<b>KEO</b>	Department for Development Policy
<b>KEO-01</b>	Management of Department for Development Policy
<b>KEO-10</b>	Unit for General Development Policy
<b>KEO-30</b>	Unit for Civil Society
<b>KEO-50</b>	Unit for Development Finance and Private Sector Cooperation
<b>KEO-70</b>	Unit for Humanitarian Assistance and Policy
<b>KEO-80</b>	Unit for Administrative and Legal Development Cooperation Matters
<b>KEO-90</b>	Unit for Sustainable Development and Climate Policy
<b>KPO-30</b>	Sustainable Trade Unit
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>MEL</b>	Monitoring, evaluation and learning



<b>MFA</b>	Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland
<b>MPTF</b>	Multi-Partner Trust Fund
<b>OCHA</b>	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>ODA</b>	Official Development Assistance
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>OECD-DAC</b>	OECD Development Assistance Committee
<b>POL-50</b>	Unit for UN and General Global Affairs
<b>QAG</b>	Quality Assurance Group
<b>REILA</b>	Responsible and Innovative Land Administration programme
<b>RVWRMP</b>	Rural Village Water Resources Management Project
<b>SDC</b>	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SESP</b>	School Education Sector Plan
<b>SIDA</b>	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
<b>SSDP</b>	Sector-wide Nepal's School Sector Development Plan
<b>SRHR</b>	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
<b>SWOT</b>	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
<b>THL</b>	Finnish Institute of Health and Wellbeing
<b>ToR</b>	Terms of Reference
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNDS</b>	United Nations Development System
<b>UNDRR</b>	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
<b>UNECA</b>	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
<b>UNITAR</b>	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
<b>UNOPS</b>	The United Nations Office for Project Services
<b>UNRWA</b>	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
<b>UNSG</b>	United Nations Secretary-General
<b>UNTIL</b>	United Nations Technology Innovation Labs
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development United States Agency for International Development
<b>USD</b>	United States dollar
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organisation
<b>WTO</b>	World Trade Organisation





# Yhteenveto

## 1. Tarkastelun tarkoitus, tavoitteet ja metodologia

Tarkastelu käsitteli Suomen kehityspolitiikan ja kehitysyhteistyön kriisivastetta COVID-19-pandemiaan. Sen tarkoituksena oli oppia ulkoministeriön pandemiavasteesta ja siten parantaa kykyä vastata ja sopeuttaa kehityspolitiikan, kehitysyhteistyön ja humanitaarisen avun johtamista ja –hallintoa tulevien kriisien aikana.

Tarkastelu pyrki tunnistamaan ja kirjaamaan Suomen kehityspolitiikan, kehitysyhteistyön ja humanitaarisen avun pandemiavasteen vahvuudet, heikkoudet, mahdollisuudet ja uhat. Tarkastelu muodosti löydöksiin perustuen johtopäätöksiä ja suosituksia, joiden avulla kehityspolitiikan, kehitysyhteistyön ja humanitaarisen avun kykyä vastata äkillisiin kriiseihin voitaisiin entisestään parantaa.

Tarkastelu kattoi ulkoministeriön johtaman kehityspolitiikan, kehitysyhteistyön ja humanitaarisen avun pandemiavasteen. Se keskittyi vasteen johtamiseen ja kattoi vasteen toimeenpanoon liittyviä kysymyksiä niiltä osin, kun ne olivat ulkoministeriön ja Suomen edustustojen käsissä. Tarkastelu kokosi tiedon koskien mitä ja missä aikataulussa pandemiavasteessa tehtiin ja analysoi tämän pohjalta vasteen tarkoituksenmukaisuutta, tehokkuutta ja johdonmukaisuutta.

Tarkastelu oli kaksiosainen. Ensimmäinen osa oli kuvaileva ja keskittyi selvittämään millainen Suomen COVID-19 pandemiavaste oli. Toinen osa oli arvioiva ja tarkasteli vasteen tarkoituksenmukaisuutta, tehokkuutta ja johdonmukaisuutta. Ulkoministeriön pandemiavasteen toimet analysoitiin kuuden muuttujan osalta. Nämä olivat: 1) rahoitus, 2) monenkeskiseen kehitysyhteistyöhön vaikuttaminen, 3) kehityspolitiikka ja menettelytavat 4) riskienhallinta, 5) tiedolla johtaminen, ja 6) henkilöstö.

Tarkastelu perustui pitkälti ulkoministeriön henkilöstön haastatteluihin. Siihen kuului myös pandemiavasteen rahoituspäätösten läpikäynti sekä sen analysoiminen, mitä ja missä aikataulussa pandemiavasteessa tehtiin kunkin kuuden tarkastellun muuttujan osalta. Tästä johdettiin koko pandemiavasteen aikajana. Erikseen tarkasteltiin suppeasti viittä eri yhteistyömuotoa. Lisäksi analysoitiin kunkin kuuden muuttujan vahvuudet, heikkoudet, mahdollisuudet ja uhat ja johdettiin näistä koko pandemiavasteen kattava analyysi.

## 2. Vastaukset tarkastelukysymyksiin

**Kysymys 1. Millainen ulkoministeriön johtama ja hallinnoima kehityspolitiikan ja kehitysyhteistyön COVID-19 pandemiavaste oli?**

Kuvaileva vastaus kysymykseen 1 annetaan raportissa aikajanana, joka kattaa pandemiavasteen helmikuusta 2020 vuoden 2021 loppuun asti.

Aikajana näyttää, että pandemian alkuvaiheessa ulkoministeriö keskittyi yhdenmukaisen tilannekuvan muodostamiseen ja pyrki hahmottamaan, kuinka Suomi voi parhaiten tukea kehitysmaita näiden kriisivasteissa. Samalla ulkoministeriö muodosti pandemiavasteen toimeenpanoa läpi tarkastelukauden ohjanneita periaatteita ja muokkasi joitakin ohjeistuksiaan, rahoitustaan ja hankkeitaan kyetäkseen vastaamaan tehokkaasti kriisiin.



Vuoden 2020 loppua lähestyessä ja vuoden 2021 osalta aikajana näyttää, että ulkoministeriö keskittyi kehityspolitiikan ja -yhteistyön keskusteluissa ja toimissa alkuvaihetta vähemmän pandemiavasteeseen. Tämä johtui siitä, että pandemiavasteesta oli tullut sen hetkinen normaalitila ja sen hoitamiseen luodut ohjeistukset olivat jo käytössä. Pandemian rahoitusvaste kuitenkin jatkui, erityisesti rahoittamalla koronavirusrokotteita kehitysmaihin.

### **Kysymys 2. Kuinka tarkoituksenmukainen pandemiavaste oli?**

Suomen vaste COVID-19-pandemiaan oli tarkoituksenmukainen suhteessa maan kehityspolitiikkaan. Vaikka terveydenhuolto ei ole Suomen kehityspolitiikan prioriteetti, ulkoministeriö pystyi kuitenkin osoittamaan merkittävää rahoitusta koronavirusrokotteiden toimittamiseen kehitysmaihin. Ylipäätään ulkoministeriö mobilisoi huomattavan pandemiavasteen humanitaarista apua ja kehitysyhteistyötä käyttäen ja muokkasi monenkeskistä vaikuttamista sekä kehitysyhteistyön prosesseja, yhteistyömuotoja ja hankkeita pyrkimyksensä vahvistaa vastaamista kehitysmaiden pandemian myötä muuttuneisiin tarpeisiin. Kuten muidenkin avunantajien osalta, ulkoministeriön pandemiavasteen tarkoituksenmukaisuus pystytään kuitenkin lopullisesti arvioimaan vasta myöhemmin, kun vasteen tulokset ovat arvioitavissa.

### **Kysymys 3. Kuinka tehokas pandemiavaste oli?**

Ulkoministeriön pandemiavaste oli nopeaa ja joustavaa ottaen huomioon ministeriön toimintaympäristön.. Samalla ulkoministeriö myös jatkoi ennen pandemiaa suunniteltujen ja aloitettujen kehitysyhteistyöohjelmien toimeenpanoa. Tämä johti henkilökunnan lisääntyneeseen työtaakkaan niin Helsingissä kuin edustustoissakin tilanteessa, jossa henkilöstö oli pandemian takia kuormittunut myös yksityiselämässään. Ponnisteluistaan huolimatta ulkoministeriö ei kyennyt täysin vastaamaan henkilöstön pandemia-ajan terveysturvallisuudesta ja työhyvinvoinnista. Vaikka tehty tarkastelu ei suosittelen ulkoministeriölle kokonaisvaltaista pandemia- tai kriisiajan riskienhallintasuunnitelmaa, ulkoministeriö hyötyisi valmiussuunnitelmasta, jonka turvin henkilöstöä voisi kriisitilanteessa sattuesssa tarpeen mukaan helpommin siirtää yksiköstä ja osastosta toiseen. Ulkoministeriön on myös syytä tarkkaan seurata pandemia-ajan kehitysyhteistyön tuloksia sekä elpymistoimien ilmastoystävällisyyttä ja kestävyyttä (Building Back Better and Greener) ja niiden tuloksia. Pandemia-aika toi mukanaan myös uusia mahdollisuuksia, mukaan lukien joidenkin uudistusten nopeutuminen ja uusien työskentelytapojen omaksuminen. Niistä kannattaa pitää kiinni ja jatkaa kehittämistä pandemian jälkeenkkin.

### **Kysymys 4. Kuinka johdonmukainen pandemiavaste oli?**

Ulkoministeriö rakensi pandemiavastetta nojaten vahvuksiinsa monenkeskiseen kehitysyhteistyöhön vaikuttamisessa, kehitysyhteistyön toimeenpanossa ja saman mielisten maiden kanssa koordinoinnissa. Uusi Team Europe -aloite avasi mahdollisuuksia lisätä EU:n jäsenmaiden ja näiden kumppanien pandemiavasteen johdonmukaisuutta, sekä loi uusia väyliä viestiä pandemiavasteesta. Ulkoministeriön yhteistyö muiden suomalaisten viranomaisten kanssa johti sekä suotuisiin että epäsuotuisiin tuloksiin. Suotuisiin tuloksiin lukeutuu nopea ja tehokas vastaaminen Nepalín hallituksen pyyntöön pandemian hoitoon liittyvän tarvikeavun toimittamisesta, jossa ulkoministeriö toimi yhteistyössä usean suomalaisen ja myös EU-tason viranomaistahon kanssa. Epäsuotuisiin tuloksiin lukeutuu se, että neuvotteluissa terveyden- ja hyvinvoinnin laitoksen (THL) kanssa ulkoministeriö ei saavuttanut haluamaansa ja tämä osaltaan johti kyvyttömyyteen taata täysi terveysturvallisuus edustustojen henkilöstölle. Ulkoministeriössä koettiin, että vaikka koordinaatio sosiaali- ja terveysministeriön kanssa Suomen osallistumisesta maailman terveysjärjestö WHO:n työhön oli osin haasteellista, samaan aikaan ulkoministeriön vaikutusvalta järjestössä kasvoi. Tämä toki on osin seurausta myös siitä, että ulkoministeriö rahoitti WHO:n toimintaa pandemia-aikana.



### 3. Johtopäätökset ja suositukset

Seuraavan sivun taulukko esittelee tarkastelun löydösten ja Suomen kehityspolitiikan, kehitysyhteistyön ja humanitaarisen avun pandemiavasteen vahvuuksien, heikkouksien, mahdollisuuksien ja uhkien analysoinnista vedetyt johtopäätökset ja niihin pohjautuvat suositukset ulkoministeriön kriisivastetyölle.



# Johtopäätökset ja suositukset

JOHTOPÄÄTÖKSET	SUOSITUKSET
<p><b>Muuttuja 1: rahoitus</b></p> <p>J1. Huolimatta rajallisista käytettävissä olleista resursseista ja siitä, että terveydenhuolto ei ole Suomen kehityspolitiikan keskiössä, ulkoministeriön rahoitusvaste oli nopea ja oikea-aikainen ja sisälsi merkittävän panostuksen koronavirusrokotteisiin kehitysmaille. (L1-5, L7)<sup>1</sup></p>	<p><b>Kriisivaste kehityspolitiikassa:</b></p> <p>S1. Ulkoministeriö kirjaa kriisivasteen osaksi Suomen kehityspolitiikkaa. (J1, J3)</p>
<p><b>Muuttuja 2: monenkeskiseen kehitysyhteistyöhön vaikuttaminen</b></p> <p>J2. Ulkoministeriö hyödynsi avautuneet mahdollisuudet vaikuttaa monenkeskisiin järjestöihin Suomen kehityspolitiikan painotusten mukaisesti sekä viedäkseen YK:n uudistuksia ja johdonmukaisuus-agendaa eteenpäin. (L2, L4, L10-12)</p>	<p><b>Riskienhallinta ja kriisiajan kehitysyhteistyö:</b></p> <p>S5. Ulkoministeriö nojaa kriisivasteessa kumppanuuksiin monenkeskisten järjestöjen kanssa ja muiden yhteistyömuotojen osalta siirtää soveltuvien osin vastuuta kehitysmaiden paikallisille toimijoille. (J2, J5)</p>
<p><b>Muuttuja 3: kehityspolitiikka ja kehitysyhteistyön toiminnot</b></p> <p>J3. Ulkoministeriö onnistui sekä vastaamaan pandemian myötä muuttuneisiin kehitysmaiden tarpeisiin erityisesti koronavirusrokotusten osalta että samalla kehitysyhteistyössään pitäytymään Suomen kehityspolitiikan painotuksissa. (L1-5, L7, F9, L10)</p>	
<p>J4. Ulkoministeriön pandemiavaste oli tehokas sen päätöksentekorakenteiden ja -kulttuurin sallimissa rajoissa. Osa kehitysyhteistyöprosessien sopeuttamisesta jäi kuitenkin epäselväksi osalle henkilöstöä. (L1-5, L7-10)</p>	<p><b>Kriisivastejohtamisen ja -hallinnon tehokkuus:</b></p> <p>S2. Ulkoministeriö tekee kehityspolitiisesta ohjausryhmästä päätöksenteko- ja toimeenpanoelimen erityisesti sellaisissa kriisivasteen toimissa, joihin osallistuu useita ministeriön osastoja. (J4)</p> <p>S3. Ulkoministeriö jatkaa hyväksi havaittua linjaa, jossa myös kriisivasteessa hanke- ja ohjelmatason päätökset tehdään niissä yksiköissä, joiden mandaattiin käsillä oleva asia kuuluu. (J4)</p> <p>S4. Ulkoministeriö vahvistaa tiedon jakamista tehdyistä päätöksistä, siitä keitä ne organisaatioissa koskevat ja miten ne toimeenpannaan sekä mistä toimeenpanoon saa tukea. (J4, J7)</p>

<sup>1</sup> Suluissa löydökset, joihin johtopäätös perustuu.



JOHTOPÄÄTÖKSET	SUOSITUKSET
<p><b>Muuttuja 4: riskienhallinta</b></p> <p>J5. COVID-19 pandemia vaikutti epäsuotuisasti kehitysyhteistyön suunnitteluun, toimeenpanoon sekä seurantaan ja arviointiin. Ulkoministeriötä auttoi toimeenpano, jossa käytettiin eri yhteistyömuotoja ja painotettiin yhteistyötä monenkeskisten järjestöjen ja kumppanimaiden paikallisten järjestöjen kanssa. (L4-6, L9-10)</p>	<p><b>Riskienhallinta ja kriisiajan kehitysyhteistyö:</b></p> <p>S6. Ulkoministeriö laatii konkreettisen suunnitelman ilmastoystävällisistä ja kestävästä elpymistoimista (Building Back Better and Greener). (J5)</p> <p>S7. Seuraavan kriisin iskiessä ulkoministeriö kehittää kyseiseen kriisiin räätälöidyn riskiarviotyökalun ja käyttää sitä hyödykseen kaikkien kehitysyhteistyöhankkeiden toimeenpanossa ja suunnittelussa. (J5)</p>
<p><b>Muuttuja 5: tiedolla johtaminen</b></p> <p>J6. Kriisiajan kehitysyhteistyön tuloksellisuudesta ei ole vielä tietoa. Tämä saattaa tarkoittaa huonoja uutisia, kun lähitulevaisuudessa saadaan lisätietoa pandemia-ajan yhteistyön toimeenpanosta ja suunnittelusta. (L2-5, L7-10)</p>	<p><b>Kriisiajan tiedolla johtaminen:</b></p> <p>S8. Ulkoministeriö panostaa tiedon saantiin pandemian vaikutuksista kehitysyhteistyöhön ja sen tuloksiin ja vaikuttaa monenkeskisiin järjestöihin sekä kansalaisyhteiskunnan ja muihin kumppaneihinsa, jotta nämäkin keräisivät osaltaan tietoa. (J5, J6)</p>
<p><b>Muuttuja 6: henkilöstö</b></p> <p>J7. Ulkoministeriön pandemiavaste onnistui motivoituneen, työhönsä antaumuksella suhtautuvan ja paikoin erittäin ylityöllistetyn henkilöstön panostuksen johdosta. Ulkoministeriö ei onnistunut yhtäläisen terveysturvallisuuden sekä kriisiajan työhyvinvoinnin takaamisessa kaikelle henkilöstölle. (L6)</p>	<p><b>Henkilöstön terveys, turvallisuus ja työhyvinvointi kriisivasteessa:</b></p> <p>S9. Ulkoministeriö vaikuttaa niihin viranomaisiin, lakeihin ja säännöksiin sekä budjetointiin, joka estää sitä täyttämästä työnantajavelvollisuuksiaan henkilöstön terveysturvallisuuden osalta. (J7)</p> <p>S10. Ulkoministeriö parantaa henkilöstönsä kriisiresilienssiä lisäämällä joustavuutta työkuorman määrittelyyn ja henkilöstön siirtämiseen organisaation sisällä. (J7)</p>



# Sammanfattning

## 1. Översynens syfte, mål och metod

Syftet med översynen var att **stärka Utrikesministeriets (UM) förmåga att hantera och anpassa utvecklingspolitiken, utvecklingssamarbetet och det humanitära biståndet i krissituationer** genom att dra lärdomar av erfarenheterna från hur man agerade under Covid-19-pandemin.

Den primära målsättningen med översynen var att identifiera och dokumentera styrkor, svagheter, möjligheter och hot i förhållandet till hur Finlands utvecklingspolitik, utvecklingssamarbete och humanitära bistånd har förvaltats under pandemin. Översynen har genererat slutsatser och rekommendationer om hur utvecklingspolitiken, utvecklingssamarbetet och det humanitära biståndet ska förvaltas i framtiden för att på bästa sätt kunna svara mot plötsliga krissituationer.

Översynen fokuserade på UM:s vägledning från central nivå och vilka åtgärder som vidtogs i praktiken av UM, ambassader och andra beskickningar för att hantera Covid-19-pandemin inom ramen för utvecklingspolitiken, utvecklingssamarbetet och det humanitära biståndet. En tidslinje för "vad som hände" togs fram som underlag för att bedöma hur relevant, effektiv och samstämmig UM:s respons var.

Två parallella spår genomsyrade översynen. Det första var ett beskrivande spår (hur har Finland agerat?), och de andra ett utvärderande (hur relevant, effektiv och samstämmig var responsen?). UM:s respons i Covid-19-kontexten bedömdes utifrån sex dimensioner: 1) Ekonomisk respons, 2) policydialog, 3) policies och rutiner, 4) riskhantering, 5) kunskapshantering och 6) personal.

Översynen baserades på intervjuer med UM:s personal, en granskning av bidragsbeslut med koppling till pandemin, tidslinjer för var och en av ovanstående sex dimensioner, en sammanfattande tidslinje för UM:s respons, fem fallstudier, och en sammanfattande bedömning av styrkor, svagheter, möjligheter och hot inom varje dimension.

## 2. Sammanfattande svar på översynens frågeställningar

### Fråga 1. Hur har covid-19-pandemin hanterats av UM inom ramen för Finlands utvecklingspolitik och utvecklingssamarbete?

Det beskrivande svaret på AQ1 mynnar ut i en tidslinje från februari 2020 till slutet av 2021.

Tidslinjen visar att UM i ett tidigt skede av pandemin fokuserade på att få en översikt av situationen i utvecklingsländer och en gemensam förståelse för hur Finland bäst skulle kunna stödja dessa länder. Principer och parametrar togs fram för att vägleda UM:s fortsatta agerande, jämte anpassade riktlinjer, finansiering och insatser för att svara mot brådskande behov. Covid-19-responsen fick en mindre framskjutande plats i UM:s planering mot slutet av 2020 och 2021, vilket kan förklaras av att riktlinjer redan fanns på plats och det fanns en känsla av att situationen inte var lika trängande. Den ekonomiska responsen fortsatte dock, främst genom betydande vaccindonationer.



### **Fråga 2. Hur relevant var responsen?**

Finlands agerande under covid-19-pandemien var relevant i fråga om de prioriteringar som gjordes inom utvecklingspolitiken, men även på andra områden. Trots att hälsa inte är ett särskilt prioriterat område inom utvecklingspolitiken avsatte Finland betydande resurser för finansiering av vacciner. På en övergripande nivå, i linje med befintliga prioriteringar, var gensvaret betydande och återspeglades i humanitärt bistånd, utvecklingssamarbete, samt anpassad policydialog, processer, kanaler och insatser för att säkerställa ett relevant stöd som svarade upp mot utvecklingsländernas behov. En mer fullständig bedömning av hur relevant UM:s pandemirespons har varit kan göras först då vi vet vilka resultat som har uppnåtts. Det samma gäller även för övriga givares pandemirespons.

### **Fråga 3 (AQ3). Hur effektiv var responsen?**

Inom de parametrar som definierades var Finlands respons snabb och flexibel, samtidigt som UM upprätthöll ordinarie verksamhet. Det resulterade i en ökad arbetsbelastning under pandemin bland chefer och personal på ambassader och i Helsingfors. Trots ansträngningar har UM inte fullt ut lyckats säkerställa personalens säkerhet och välbefinnande. Även om UM kanske inte behöver en (pandemispecifik) krishanteringsplan finns det ett behov av en beredskapsplan och mer flexibilitet för att kunna omfördela personalresurser i krissituationer. UM bör även noggrant följa upp de resultat som uppnåtts inom utvecklingssamarbetet under pandemin som underlag för "Building Back Better and Greener" i framtiden. Pandemin genererade också flera möjligheter: den påskyndade reformprocesser och gav upphov till nya arbetsmetoder som bör bibehållas och vidareutvecklas.

### **Fråga 4 (AQ4). Hur samstämmig var responsen?**

UM:s respons baserades på många års erfarenheter från policydialog och multilateralt påverkansarbete, samt partnerskapet med multilaterala organisationer i genomförandet av utvecklingssamarbetet och samordningen med likasinnade länder. En ny element, Team Europe, gjorde det möjligt att förbättra samordningen och kommunikationen. Samordning och samarbetet inom den finska regeringen gav blandade resultat. Å ena sidan agerade UM snabbt på Nepals regerings begäran om materiellt bistånd. Å andra sidan kunde UM inte fullt ut tillförsäkra hälsosäkerhet bland utstationerad personal på grund av misslyckade förhandlingar med Institutet för hälsa och välfärd i Finland. Enligt UM-personal hade UM vissa samarbetssvårigheter med Social- och hälsovårdsministeriet, samtidigt som stödet till och inflytandet på WHO ökade.

## **3. Slutsatser och rekommendationer**

Tabellen på nästa sida redogör för översynens sju slutsatser om UM:s pandemirespons i fråga om styrkor, svagheter, möjligheter och hot, samt de 10 rekommendationer som följer av dessa slutsatser.





# Centrala slutsatser och rekommendationer

SLUTSATSER	REKOMMENDATIONER
<p><b>Dimension 1: ekonomisk respons</b></p> <p>S1. UM gav en snabb och tidig ekonomiska respons. Responsen på hälso- och vaccinområdet var anmärkningsvärd. Detta trots begränsade resurser för utvecklingssamarbete som till stor del fördelas i början på året, och omfattningen av utvecklingspolitiken. (F 1–5, F7)<sup>2</sup></p>	<p><b>Krishantering inom utvecklingspolitiken:</b></p> <p>R1. Gör krishantering till en särskild del av Finlands utvecklingspolitik. (C1, C3)</p>
<p><b>Dimension 2: policydialog och multilateral påverkan</b></p> <p>S2. UM utnyttjade möjligheterna som gavs för att öka inflytandet inom prioriterade policyområden, FN-reformen och samordningssagendan. (F2, F4, F10-12)</p>	<p><b>Riskhantering och stödjande verksamhet och planering i krissituationer:</b></p> <p>R5. Använd multi-bi som finansieringsmekanism vid krishantering. När andra kanaler används är det viktigt att omsorgsfullt delegera befogenheter och ansvar till lokala intressenter. (C2, C5)</p>
<p><b>Dimension 3: policyer och rutiner</b></p> <p>S3. UM uppnådde en pragmatisk och relevant balans mellan den direkt, hälso-relaterade responsen på de behov som uppstod till följd av pandemin och upprätthållandet av befintliga prioriteringar för utvecklingssamarbetet. (F1-5, F7, F9, F10)</p>	
<p>S4. UM:s pandemirespons var kostnadseffektiv med hänsyn taget till vad som var möjligt att göra inom UM:s beslutsstruktur och kultur. Vissa anpassningar i rutiner var dock inte alltid tydliga för UM:s personal. (F1-5, F7-10)</p>	<p><b>Effektiv krishantering:</b></p> <p>R2. Formalisera beslutsprocessen och befogenheter att genomföra beslut inom utvecklingspolitiska styrgruppen – särskilt under krishantering och för åtgärder som måste genomföras av flera avdelningar. (C4)</p> <p>R3. Upprätthåll nuvarande besluts- och genomföranderutiner på portföljnivå inom de berörda enheterna – inom ramen för deras respektive uppdrag – även vad gäller krishantering. (C4)</p> <p>R4. Förbättra informationsutbytet inom beslutsprocessen, särskilt när det gäller beslutsstatus, vem som är ansvarig för genomförandet, och hur beslut ska genomföras/var man ska vända sig för vägledning. (C4, C7)</p>

<sup>2</sup> Parentesen anger de resultat (findings) som slutsatsen baseras på



SLUTSATSER	REKOMMENDATIONER
<p><b>Dimension 4: riskhantering</b></p> <p>S5. Pandemin har – förutom att påverka genomförandet – hindrat planeringen av nya insatser samt uppföljning och utvärdering av befintliga insatser. UM har hanterat denna risk på ett bra sätt genom att använda flera kanaler för genomförande men med tonvikt på multilaterala organisationer och lokala partners. (F4-6, F9-10)</p>	<p><b>Riskhantering och stödande verksamhet och planering i krissituationer:</b></p> <p>R6. Formulera konkreta planer för "Building Back Better and Greener". (C5)</p> <p>R7. Under nästa kris, när den väl slår till och de första parametrarna är kända, snabbt ta fram en specifik mall för krisriskbedömning och tillämpa den på alla pågående och planerade projekt. (C5)</p>
<p><b>Dimension 5: kunskapshantering</b></p> <p>S6. Det finns ett kunskapsgap, inte bara inom UM, om vilka resultat som utvecklingssamarbetet under pandemin har uppnått, som bara kan fyllas senare. Det betyder att det kan komma en flodvåg av dåliga nyheter framöver angående hur effektiva de projekt som planerades och genomfördes under pandemin har varit. (F2-5, F7-10)</p>	<p><b>Kunskapshantering i krissituationer:</b></p> <p>R8. Fokusera på att få information om pandemins inverkan på genomförande och resultat av pågående arbete (i alla kanaler) och påverka multilaterala organisationer, civilsamhällesorganisationer och andra partners att göra detsamma. (C5, C6)</p>
<p><b>Dimension 6: personal</b></p> <p>S7. UM:s pandemirespons kan till stor del hänföras till den motivation och hängivenhet som, den ibland överbelastade, personalen har uppvisat. UM har dock inte garanterat personalens säkerhet på lika villkor under hela pandemin, och inte heller fördelat arbetsbördan på ett tillfredställande sätt. (F6)</p>	<p><b>Stöd till personal under krishantering:</b></p> <p>R9. Påverka berörda myndigheter och lagstiftning, regler och förordningar samt budgetprocesser som hindrar UM att fullgöra sitt arbetsgivaransvar inom områdena för personalhälsa och säkerhet. (C7)</p> <p>R10. Stärka UM:s krishanteringskapacitet på personalområdet genom att på ett mer flexibelt sätt anpassa arbetsbelastningen och omfördela arbetsuppgifter. (C7)</p>



# Summary

## 1. Purpose, objectives and methodology of the assessment

The purpose of the Assessment of the Response of Finnish Development Policy and Cooperation to the COVID-19 Pandemic was to **enhance the Ministry for Foreign Affairs' (MFA) ability to respond and adapt development policy and cooperation and humanitarian assistance in crisis situations** by learning from its response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The main objective of the assessment was to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the management of Finnish development policy and cooperation and humanitarian assistance in view of the COVID-19 response and to document them. Based on the related findings, the assessment drew conclusions and made recommendations for future management of development policy and cooperation and humanitarian assistance with a view of maximizing the ability to respond to sudden crises.

The focus of the assessment was on the **MFA central level as led from the headquarters**, covering the MFA's response to the COVID-19 pandemic with regards to **development policy and cooperation and humanitarian assistance** as operationalised from the headquarters, embassies and missions. A timeline of "what happened" as the response was generated as a basis for assessing the relevance, efficiency and coherence of the MFA's pandemic response.

The assessment followed two tracks of inquiry. The first was **descriptive** (how has Finland responded?), and the second was **evaluative** (how relevant, efficient and coherent was the response?). The MFA's activities related to the COVID-19 pandemic were analysed along six dimensions: 1) Financial response, 2) Policy dialogue response, 3) Policies and procedures, 4) Risk management, 5) Knowledge management, and 6) Staff.

The assessment was based on interviews with MFA staff, analysis of pandemic-related financial decisions, timelines for each of the above six dimensions, a summary MFA response timeline, five focused case examples, and a dimension-by-dimension and summary Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis.

## 2. Summary answers to the assessment questions

**AQ1. How has the MFA responded to the COVID-19 pandemic in managing Finland's development policy and cooperation?**

The descriptive answer to AQ1 provides a timeline from February 2020 to the end of 2021.

The timeline shows that at the early stage of the pandemic, the MFA focused on generating a common situational picture and understanding of how Finland could support the situation in developing countries. It also laid out principles and parameters which guided its pandemic response since then and adjusted guidelines, funding and interventions to provide an urgent response.



Towards the end of 2020 and in 2021, reflecting a somewhat diminished sense of urgency within the MFA and because the guidelines to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic had already been established, the COVID-19 response played less of a role in the overall interactions and work programmes of the MFA. Yet, funding the response continued in 2021, notably in the form of significant vaccine donations.

#### **AQ2. How relevant was the response?**

Finland's COVID-19 pandemic response was relevant both with respect to – and beyond – Finland's explicit development policy priorities. While health is not an explicit development policy priority, Finland nevertheless mobilized significant health funding for vaccines. Maintaining Finland's development policy priorities, the MFA mobilized a significant overall response through humanitarian assistance and development cooperation and adjusted policy dialogue, processes, channels, and interventions to strengthen their relevance in contributing to meeting developing country needs. This said, a full assessment of relevance in terms of the results associated with the pandemic response can only be conducted once those results have materialised, the same being also true for the pandemic responses of other donors.

#### **AQ3. How efficient was the response?**

Within its parameters, Finland's COVID-19 pandemic response was quick and flexible, while the MFA also maintained ongoing work. The resulting increased workload and the pandemic strained managers and staff in embassies and in Helsinki. Despite efforts made, the MFA did not fully succeed in securing staff safety and well-being. Thus, while the MFA may not need a (pandemic-specific) crisis response plan, it requires a headquarters preparedness plan and more flexibility for reallocating human resources during crises. The MFA also needs to closely monitor for results emerging from the pandemic-era development cooperation and the (future) building back better and greener efforts. The pandemic also offered several opportunities: it sped up reform processes and introduced new working modalities worth preserving and developing further.

#### **AQ4. How coherent was the response?**

The MFA built its response on its long-term strengths in policy dialogue and multilateral influencing, and in partnering with multilateral organisations in the development cooperation implementation, as well as in coordinating with like-minded countries. A new element, Team Europe, offered means for increased coherence and communication. Coordination and collaboration within the Finnish government resulted in mixed results. It, on the one hand, resulted in an excellent outcome in responding to the Government of Nepal's request for material assistance. On the other hand, the MFA was unable to provide full health safety to staff posted abroad because of unsuccessful negotiations with the Finnish Institute of Health and Wellbeing. While the MFA experienced some coordination challenges with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, its support and influence at the WHO increased, according to the MFA staff.

### **3. Conclusions and recommendations**

The seven conclusions based on the findings and the key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats evidenced as attributes of the MFA's pandemic response and the 10 recommendations are presented in the table below.



# Key Conclusions and Recommendations

CONCLUSIONS	RECOMMENDATIONS
<p><b>Dimension 1: financial response</b></p> <p>C1. The MFA provided a quick and early financial response and a notable health and vaccine response, despite moderate development cooperation resources, which are largely committed at the beginning of each year, and the scope of development policy set. (F1-5, F7)<sup>3</sup></p>	<p><b>Crisis response in the development policy:</b></p> <p>R1. Make crisis response an explicit element of Finland's development policies. (C1, C3)</p>
<p><b>Dimension 2: policy dialogue &amp; multilateral influencing</b></p> <p>C2. The MFA made use of the opportunities for amplifying influence on its policy priorities, the UN reform and the coherence agenda. (F2, F4, F10-12)</p>	<p><b>Risk management and supporting operations and planning during crises:</b></p> <p>R5. For crises response, rely on multi-bi as a means of delivery, and in other channels of delivery, carefully transfer authority and responsibility towards local stakeholders. (C2, C5)</p>
<p><b>Dimension 3: policies and procedures</b></p> <p>C3. The MFA found a pragmatic and relevant balance between responding to immediate health-related needs created by the pandemic and serving its established development cooperation priorities. (F1-5, F7, F9, F10)</p>	
<p>C4. The MFA's pandemic response was efficient within what was possible considering the MFA's decision-making structure and culture. However, some adaptations in procedures were not always clear to all staff. (F1-5, F7-10)</p>	<p><b>Efficient management of crisis response:</b></p> <p>R2. Formalise the decision-making and enforcing powers of the Development Policy Steering Committee – especially during crisis response and for matters requiring inter-departmental execution. (C4)</p> <p>R3. Maintain the current approach of taking and operationalising portfolio-level decisions by the relevant units – within their respective mandates – also in providing crisis response. (C4)</p> <p>R4. Strengthen information sharing on decisions made, particularly with regards to what is the status of a decision, who needs to apply it and how to do it/ where to get advice. (C4, C7)</p>

<sup>3</sup> In brackets the findings that the conclusion is based on.



<b>CONCLUSIONS</b>	<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>
<p><b>Dimension 4: risk management</b></p> <p>C5. The pandemic has – in addition to affecting implementation – hindered the planning of new interventions as well as monitoring and evaluation of existing interventions. Managing the risk by using multiple channels of delivery but with an emphasis on multilateral organisations and working with local partners has worked well for the MFA. (F4-6, F9-10)</p>	<p><b>Risk management and supporting operations and planning during crises:</b></p> <p>R6. Make tangible plans for building back better and greener. (C5)</p> <p>R7. In the next crisis, once it hits and the first parameters are known, quickly develop a specific crisis risk assessment template and apply it to all ongoing and planned projects. (C5)</p>
<p><b>Dimension 5: knowledge management</b></p> <p>C6. There is a knowledge gap, not only at the MFA, on the results of the development cooperation conducted at the time of the pandemic, which can only be bridged later. This means that there could be a big wave of bad news ahead regarding the effectiveness of projects planned and implemented during the pandemic. (F2-5, F7-10)</p>	<p><b>Knowledge management in crises:</b></p> <p>R8. Focus on obtaining information on the impact of the pandemic on implementation and results of ongoing work (in all channels) and on influencing the multilateral, CSO and other partners to do their part. (C5, C6)</p>
<p><b>Dimension 6: staff</b></p> <p>C7. The MFA's pandemic response owes a large debt to the motivated, devoted and at times overburdened staff, but the organisation could not secure the safety of all staff at equal footing throughout the pandemic nor provide sufficient easing of workload. (F6)</p>	<p><b>Supporting the staff during a crisis response:</b></p> <p>R9. Influence the relevant authorities and legislation, rules and regulations, as well as budget processes which restrict the MFA from discharging its full duties as an employer in the areas of staff health and safety. (C7)</p> <p>R10. Strengthen crisis resilience of MFA human resources by more flexibly adapting staff workloads and shifting capacities. (C7)</p>







# 1. Introduction

The first human COVID-19 virus infection was diagnosed in Wuhan, China, in December 2019, and the first COVID-19 death was reported there in January 2020. By then, the virus had spread globally, and the first infection was diagnosed in Finland. Also, in January, the WHO declared a “Public Health Emergency of International Concern” and, in March 2020, a “Pandemic”. In the same month, Finland declared a state of emergency, and the first COVID-19 death was reported in the country.

It soon became clear that in addition to a health crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic was a global socio-economic, humanitarian, security, and human rights crisis. It would hit many developing countries hard in all these domains. The UN started to mobilize resources for global crisis response. Donors, including Finland, joined in the provision of funding, humanitarian assistance and development cooperation interventions to support the crisis response in developing countries.

**The COVID-19 pandemic was a global socio-economic, humanitarian, security, and human rights crisis.**

This report describes **how the MFA has responded to the COVID-19 pandemic in managing Finland’s development policy and cooperation**. It presents the findings of the assessment of **relevance, efficiency and coherence** of the MFA’s response and draws conclusions and provides recommendations for enhancing the MFA’s crisis response in the domains of development policy, development cooperation and humanitarian assistance.

## 1.1. Rationale, purpose, and objectives of the assessment

Learning from experiences and insights is critical to effective crisis response and recovery efforts and helps to identify solutions and good practices that lead to sustainable development results. This assessment will enable the MFA to learn from its response to the COVID-19 pandemic in order to better respond to future crises. The assessment allows the MFA to capitalise on lessons learnt, both positive and negative, in the management of such a crisis both on the organisational and strategic levels of the response.

The main **objective** of the assessment was to identify the **strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats** of the management of Finnish development policy and cooperation and humanitarian assistance in view of the COVID-19 response and to document them. Based on the related findings, the assessment draws conclusions and makes recommendations for future management of development policy and cooperation and humanitarian assistance with a view of maximizing the ability to respond to sudden crises. While not foreseen in the preparation of the assessment ToR and inception report, the COVID-19 pandemic was prolonged and some of the recommendations made in this report may still be useful to improve the management of the ongoing pandemic response.

The assessment’s ultimate **purpose** is to enhance further the **MFA’s ability to respond and adapt development policy and cooperation and humanitarian assistance in crisis situations** by learning from its response to the COVID-19 pandemic.



## 1.2. Scope of the assessment

The assessment covered both **the acute and early phase of the COVID-19 pandemic** and elements of the longer-term response to build forward. It focused on the period from March 2020 up till the end of 2021. With the pandemic prolonging, emphasis by the MFA and the assessment remained more on the response than on the long-term building back.

The focus of the assessment was on the **MFA central level as led from the headquarters and covering** the MFA's response to the COVID-19 pandemic with regards to **development policy and cooperation and humanitarian assistance** as operationalised from the headquarters, embassies and missions. A timeline of "what happened" as the response was generated as a basis for assessing the relevance, efficiency and coherence of the MFA's pandemic response. In line with the ToR and because too early to assess, the results and impact of the response were not reviewed.

## 1.3. Users of the assessment

The main intended users of the assessment are the MFA's leadership, managers and staff responsible for development policy and cooperation and humanitarian assistance in the policy and regional departments and their respective units and in the embassies and missions of Finland. Other intended users include those working on personnel issues, human resources development, occupational wellbeing, and the MFA's technical and digital infrastructure. Further users are more broadly the Finnish public institutions, civil society organisations, and private sector actors active in development cooperation, humanitarian assistance, or any related fields.

## 1.4. Approach and methodology

**The assessment asked what was the MFA's COVID-19 pandemic response...**

**... and how relevant, efficient and coherent the response was.**

The assessment aimed at answering the following four principal Assessment Questions (AQs):

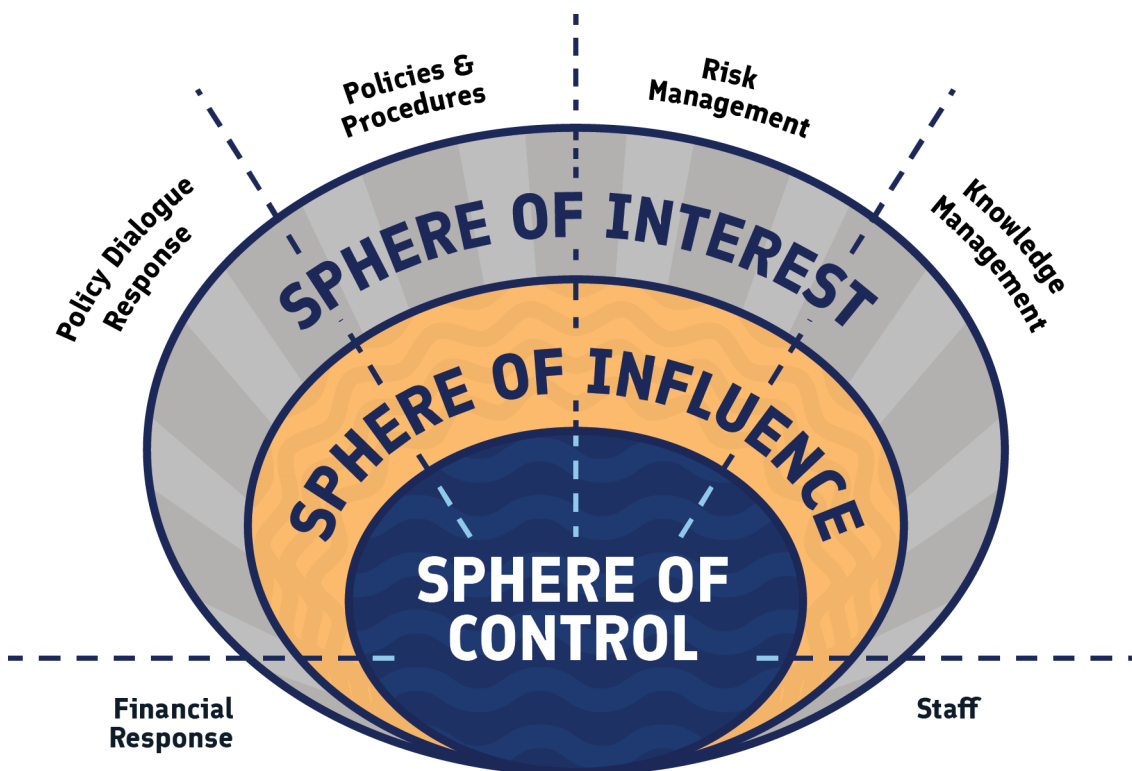
1. How has the MFA responded to the COVID-19 pandemic in managing Finland's development policy and cooperation?
2. How relevant was the MFA's response?
3. How efficient was the MFA's response?
4. How coherent was the MFA's response?

The fact that this was an assessment and not a full-fledged evaluation was also reflected in the approach. Information gathering and analysis focused on how the MFA has managed Finland's development policy and cooperation in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, the Assessment Team followed two tracks of inquiry, reflecting Assessment Questions 1 and 2-4, respectively. The first inquiry track was descriptive (how has Finland responded?), and the second was evaluative (how relevant, efficient and coherent was the response?). The assessment focused on the MFA itself, as the agency of Finland's development policy and cooperation and humanitarian assistance, and also as the source of leadership, management and administration of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The primary information source was interviews with MFA management and staff, including selected embassies and one mission. Interviews were complemented by a desk review of relevant documents and other secondary data. The assessment's triangulation strategy focused on cross-checking findings discovered in in-depth interviews with findings drawn from other interviews and from other analyses. For example, several interviewees telling the same story indicated, in this almost real-time assessment, the strong relevance and robustness of that finding. (List of main documents consulted in Annex 3.)

Based on the data gathered, the Assessment Team analysed **activities that were fully or partly related to the COVID-19 pandemic** along six dimensions: 1) Financial response, 2) Policy dialogue response, 3) Policies and procedures, 4) Risk management, 5) Knowledge management, and 6) Staff. Figure 1 presents these dimensions and illustrates that they also apply to the MFA's partners (in the sphere of influence) and to the developing countries (sphere of interest). However, the assessment scope focused on the MFA's sphere of control, i.e., the MFA departments and units, the MFA staff, and Finland's embassies and missions.

**Figure 1 Pandemic response dimensions**



Source: Assessment Team

The assessment included the analysis of pandemic-related financial decisions (Annex 4); detailed timelines for each of the above six dimensions (available separately from the MFA); a summary MFA response time-line analysis (Chapter 2); five focused case examples (Annexes 5-9); a dimension-by-dimension SWOT analysis (Annex 10) and summary SWOT analysis (Figure 7). The five focused case examples covered (1) Finland's policy dialogue at the Asian Development Bank (ADB), (2) Finland's policy dialogue in the UN/New York context; (3) the MFA's CSO response focusing on FELM, and the MFA's support to the pandemic response of (4) Ethiopia and (5) Nepal. The Assessment Team also reviewed selected studies and evaluations of the COVID-19 response of other organisations (Annex 11). The approach and methodology are presented in more detail in Annex 2.



## 1.5. Risks, limitations and challenges and how they were managed

The assessment's analysis was strongly focused on how the MFA reacted to the pandemic. This posed three challenges:

1. The analysis of relevance relative to the needs created by the pandemic in developing countries and for development partners was limited by the extent to which these needs were known to the MFA in the unfolding of the pandemic. To the degree feasible, the Assessment Team inferred these needs from interviews with MFA staff and from desk review. There was no cross-checking with developing country partners if these needs identified by MFA staff were actually relevant.
2. In relying first and foremost on information gained by interviewing MFA staff and supported by the MFA's data and documents, both the risk of biased findings and gaps in evidence are present. To mitigate the risk, the Assessment Team conducted a relatively large number of interviews (55) to cover as many voices within the organisation as possible. The AT also reviewed assessments on the same topic by other organisations to compare the findings.
3. The Assessment Team did not attempt to assess or predict any development results of the MFA's pandemic response, both because this exceeded the assessment scope and since such results had not materialised yet.

Another challenge was identifying all of the MFA's responses to the pandemic along the six dimensions presented above. While some response actions could be straightforwardly linked to the pandemic, others were only somewhat or marginally motivated by it. This posed the challenge that the response could only be clearly defined for the former but not for the latter. In evaluation language, the evaluand could not be clearly defined. To address this issue, in conducting the financial response analysis, the Assessment Team employed a qualitative categorization for response decisions and differentiated between those entirely, significantly or somewhat motivated by the COVID-19 pandemic. This implies that the financial figures of the MFA's pandemic response should be considered with great care within these qualitative categories.

Because knowledge and understanding of the pandemic – and its consequences for development cooperation and humanitarian assistance – grew incrementally over time, the Assessment Team needed to assure the fairness of judgment. Therefore, in assessing the MFA's response, the team kept in mind the level of knowledge available on the pandemic at that point in time.



## 2. Findings

This section presents the assessment findings and answers the assessment questions starting from how the MFA responded to the COVID-19 pandemic in managing Finland's development policy and cooperation (AQ1). Next, the following three Aqs are covered, relating to how relevant (AQ2), efficient (AQ3), and coherent (AQ4) that response was.

### 2.1. How has the MFA responded to the COVID-19 pandemic in managing Finland's development policy and cooperation?

The **descriptive answer to AQ1 provides a timeline from February 2020 to the end of 2021, covering the six dimensions included in this assessment's analysis:**

1. Financial response: budget allocation decisions taken fully or partly because of COVID-19 pandemic;
2. Policy dialogue response: changes to multilateral influencing activities and coordination with partners because of COVID-19 pandemic;
3. Policies and procedures: changes made to policies, guidelines as well as to the MFA's operating and decision-making procedures because of the COVID-19 pandemic;
4. Risk management: changes made to existing or development of new risk management approaches because of COVID-19 pandemic;
5. Knowledge management: changes made to MFA knowledge generation and management because of COVID-19 pandemic; and
6. Staff: changes to working modalities and capacities of MFA staff because of COVID-19 pandemic.

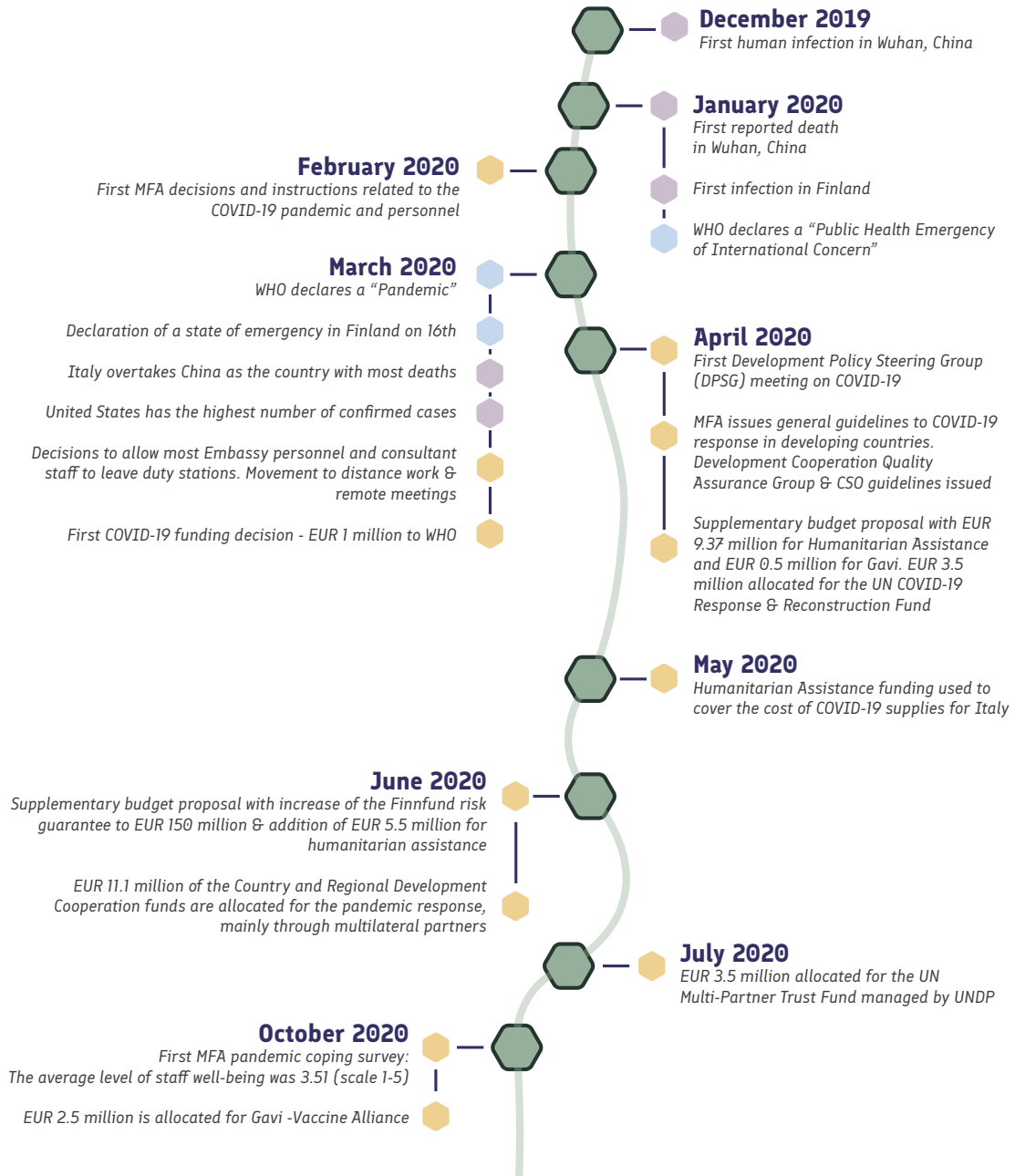
The main items of the timeline are also depicted in Figure 2 summarizing the MFA's COVID-19 pandemic response.

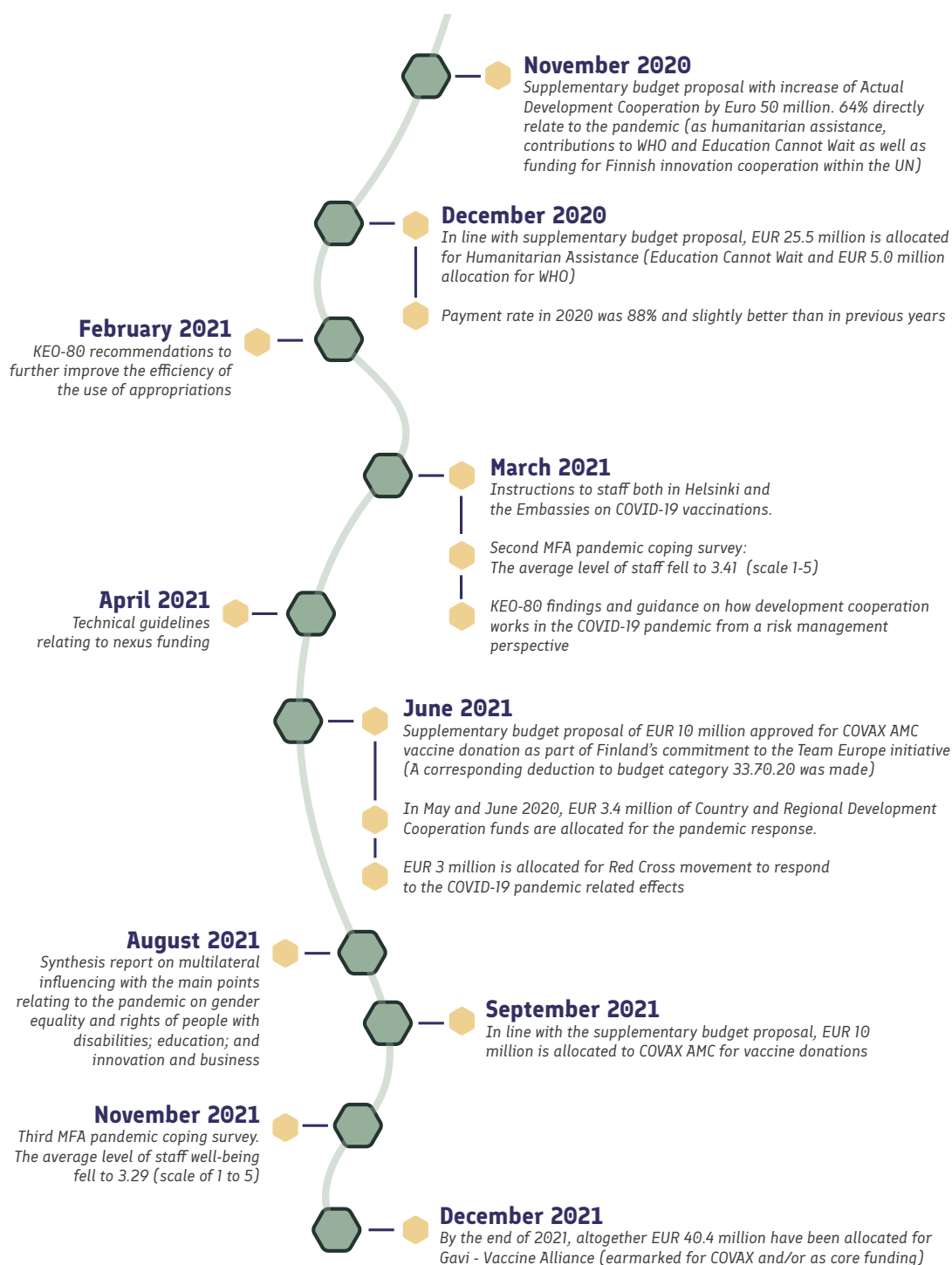


Figure 2 Timeline: the MFA's COVID-19 pandemic response

# Timeline: COVID-19 Response

COVID-19 Spread   International Response   MFA Response





Source: Assessment Team

**In the first months of 2020, at the early stage of the pandemic,** while the MFA focused on generating a common situational picture and understanding of how Finland could support the situation in developing countries, it also established principles and parameters that have guided its pandemic response since then. The fluidity of the situation was acknowledged throughout, and a notion that the depth of the COVID-19 pandemic was not fully known in Africa was expressed several times.





In terms of the staff, according to the Employment Satisfaction Barometer 2020 annual survey conducted in spring 2020, the MFA's job satisfaction had remained unchanged compared to the previous year's survey. The total index of the Job Satisfaction Barometer was 3.74. (on a scale of 1 to 5) and the best scores were given on the operating culture and the content of the work.

**February 2020.** The MFA started the issuance of decisions and instructions related to the COVID-19 pandemic and personnel. The first decision was issued on February 4 and pertained to health care reimbursements in the foreign missions. The decision noted that the coronavirus was still new, and everything was not known. It also stated that if a member of the posted staff of the mission suspected that he had contracted or contracted the coronavirus in the country of duty station, it would be treated as an acute and serious case, with provisions in place for such cases applied.

**The MFA's first COVID-19 pandemic response financial decision was EUR 1 million to WHO on March 9th 2020.**

**March 2020. MFA's first COVID-19 pandemic response financial decision** took place on March 9th (EUR 1 million to WHO) and was followed by, i.e., responses to the COVID-19 related humanitarian appeals by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Red Cross. Also issued already in March was a decision on increased flexibilities allowed to complete Finnpartnership's ongoing business partnership support projects.

Following general government-level guidance, the MFA issued guidelines recommending moving as widely as possible to distance work and meetings to be held remotely. On March 19, the MFA issued a decision stating that, due to the pandemic, family members of posted officials, posted officials belonging to a risk group, and locally hired Finnish personnel, if they did not work in tasks necessary to the functioning of the mission, could travel voluntarily to Finland. On March 23, a decision was issued preventing the return to mission for those not at their duty station. The decision was valid until 13.4.2020. The MFA also issued decisions allowing for the immediate repatriation of consultants' staff on a force majeure-basis.

In knowledge management, the Department for Development Policy (KEO) shared an **assessment of the short-and long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Finland's development policy and development cooperation**. KEO's review of the impact of COVID-19 in developing countries and summary of the international and Finland's response provided information on the impact of the pandemic in developing countries at a general level, including related to economic development, food security, education, health (with special focus on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights) and gender equality. KEO continued compiling such reviews on a regular basis until the end of the assessment period. Meanwhile, the Regional Departments issued country-specific briefs on the impact of the pandemic and Finland's response in key partner countries.

In policy dialogue, the Nordic Development Ministers started meetings on development policy aspects of the pandemic in March and met five times by June 2020. In addition, there were numerous bilateral information and coordination meetings at the ministerial level.

**April 2020.** The **MFA's general guidelines to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in developing countries** were issued. The guidelines stress the need to balance acute response to COVID-19 with long-term development policy and cooperation and state that Finland's development policy's basic principles and emphasis would continue to play a significant role. They note that Finland operates at the international level, strengthening multilateralism, at the EU level, together with the Nordic countries, and bilaterally.



Noted in the general guidelines, part of Finland's immediate support for alleviating the pandemic was implemented in the first phase through general support already granted to the humanitarian organisations, the UN, and international development finance institutions. Such support was not granted as a pandemic response, but the MFA considered the untied and core funding provided to the multilateral partners for 2020 supportive of their early, quick response. For the latter part of 2020 and onward, the guidelines state that efforts would be made to influence the work in the EU, international organisations and financial institutions to ensure that their pandemic-related activities are sufficient in both the short and longer-term. This would be done through board work and necessary initiatives.

In operational terms, guidance given across the organisation was to

1. Continue the part of the current activity which still proves relevant and, if stopped, would cause undue harm to the country or sector concerned;
2. Examine whether and how the current activities should be adjusted to better support recovery from the pandemic; and
3. Re-target support towards recovery based on requests for assistance, analysis of the changing needs and the value-added by Finland.

**Guidelines for preparing adjustment** plans were developed to keep activities going, and all projects were required to prepare an adjustment plan based on which decisions would be taken in the project's immediate and longer-term future.

The Unit for Civil Society (KEO-30) issued **CSO guidelines** to manage the effects of the pandemic on the MFA-funded CSO interventions. The CSO guidelines administered significant flexibilities, including the removal of self-financing requirements.

The Development Policy Steering Group agreed that an accelerated procedure for deciding on new interventions related to the crisis, particularly regarding the role of the Quality Assurance Group, would be developed. The new **Development Cooperation Quality Assurance Group (QAG) Guidelines** were issued by KEO in the same month (April). The guidelines aimed to simplify QAG practices for COVID-19 interventions to be processed in a timely manner while ensuring that the tasks assigned to the quality group in the Rules of Procedure remained fulfilled. The new guidelines were revised in June 2020 and made effective until further notice. Still, in April, instructions for requesting assessments from the Unit for Administrative and Legal Development Cooperation Matters (KEO-80) on the legality of the procurement procedures in the pandemic context were issued.

**The MFA's general guidelines to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in developing countries were issued in April 2020.**

**May 2020.** In terms of financial decisions, a proposal for **EUR 3.5 million support to the UN COVID-19 Response and Reconstruction Fund** was brought to the QAG. While financially a small decision, worth mentioning because reportedly a decision with strong political guidance, **a decision was also made to use humanitarian assistance funding to cover the cost of COVID-19 supplies provided to support Italy.**

In spring 2020 (April-May), the MFA made a decision to core fund Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, annually with EUR 2 million from 2021 onwards. In 2021 this core funding was allocated to COVAX (as a part of the EUR 15,27 million contribution).



**June 2020.** Finland's development finance institution and impact investor Finnfund issued comprehensive internal guidelines to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic first related to the organisation's Environmental and Social (E&S) workstream and soon after related to the investment workstream. The guidelines have remained valid and in use since.

Supplementary budget proposal IV with an increase of the Finnfund risk guarantee to EUR 150 million and the addition of EUR 5.5 million for humanitarian assistance was made. EUR 11.1 million of the Country and Regional Development Cooperation funds were allocated for the pandemic response, mainly through multilateral partners.

**In July 2020,** in a lessons-learned exercise about the pandemic response of the Ministry, in answer to questions on what had gone well in dealing with the coronavirus crisis and what policies/practices would they continue to maintain, KEO stated that the MFA had acted quickly in adopting the "new normal" working modalities evolving around distance work and digitalization. Concerns were raised regarding investing in leadership (including self-leadership) and in maintaining mental well-being at every level. The response stated that human resources' support towards the unit manager level had been very limited. Similarly, and corroborated by the interviews, while the staff's coping with the pandemic situation had been surveyed, in particular, support to the managerial level had been forgotten.

**October 2020.** EUR 2.5 million was allocated for Gavi - Vaccine Alliance.

In terms of staff, a pandemic coping survey of the MFA staff was conducted. On a scale of 1 to 5, the average level of experienced well-being was 3.51. (The next coping survey was conducted in March 2021 is presented down the timeline, and the average level of experienced well-being had in those 5-6 months decreased to 3.41.)

**In November 2020,** Supplementary budget proposal VII approved an additional EUR 50.0 million to exclusive ODA budget (24.30.66) and a range of COVID-19 related commitments were made, including additional core funding to WHO (EUR 5 million), Education Cannot Wait funding and COVID-19 related allocations for humanitarian and multilateral partners. These varied in the level of the COVID-19 motivation. In funding the WHO, it was stated that the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health was responsible for preparing and implementing Finland's WHO policy in cooperation with the MFA.

The Development Policy Steering Group agreed to enable more flexibility in the COVID-19 response, including in the building back-support. It was noted that under the current health sector work, the focus must be on responding to the coronavirus situation. In other domains, the response should be in the form of investing in resilience and the ability to respond to crises within the Finnish development policy's four priority areas.

**The year 2020:** EUR 5.5 million of previously allocated funds for the Finnish partner CSOs were repurposed during 2020 to respond to the effects of the pandemic in the programme countries.

**Towards the end of 2020 and in 2021,** reflecting an overall decreasing sense of pandemic-related urgency within the MFA as an organisation and because the guidelines to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic had already been established, compared to the start of the pandemic, the COVID-19 response played a less prominent relative role in the overall interactions and work programmes of the MFA. Yet, in monetary terms, the MFA continued to make significant COVID-19 motivated financial allocations.



**January 2021.** Regarding policy dialogue, the MFA reconfirmed in an internal note on influencing targets for the shared United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)/UNOPS board the importance of recognizing the pandemic's impact on SRHR. The note praises the socio-economic analysis of the UN pandemic response by UNDP and states that the pandemic should be reflected in the new, to-be-decided strategic plans of all three agencies.

**February 2021.** In a memorandum on results and plans regarding UN Women, the MFA notes that the role of UN Women has been strengthened, as showcased by the agency's participation in the UN COVID-19 Response and Reconstruction Fund. The memorandum also describes the Finnish UN Women's presidency as a great success (see also the case example in Annex 6). For 2021, the priority was to influence the 2022-2025 strategic plan of the agency to fully integrate the effects of the pandemic and, as noted in the System-Wide Evaluation of the United Nations Development System (UNDS) Response to COVID-19 (Interim Report, March 2022), COVID-19 and Joint Equitable/Greener Recovery are in the strategic plan.

Also, in February 2021, **KEO-80 issued recommendations to further improve the efficiency of the use of appropriations.** While it is not explicitly mentioned that their development was motivated or expedited by the experiences from the COVID-19 pandemic response, the interviews conducted suggest that these experiences played a role.

**March 2021.** On March 1, the MFA issued instructions noting that the COVID-19 vaccinations of those at risk were about to start in Finland. Vaccinations at the MFA's occupational health care provider (Terveystalo) were expected to start in the second half of April. Personnel in the embassies and missions could make use of the occupational health care provider's or the public vaccinations programme, depending on their choice of priority. The instructions stated that 'vaccination trips' from the duty station to Finland would be reimbursed as health care trips but that, primarily, at least one vaccination of the two foreseen at the time should be in connection with a home leave or other official travel. Interviews have indicated issues in securing timely vaccinations for all embassies' staff, though.

Another MFA pandemic coping survey was conducted with decreased participation, but results indicated that the experienced well-being of the personnel had been on a slight downward trend, and the decline appeared to be continuing. On a scale of 1 to 5, the average level of well-being was 3.41 (3.51 in the previous survey). In Helsinki, the average level was 3.50, and in the foreign missions, 3.31 (in previous surveys, there was practically no difference). Most survey respondents believed that there had been no significant change in their coping recently, but boredom, monotony and lack of vision out of the pandemic were affecting them. Yet many reported that they were persistently pushing forward. Distance working continued to split opinions among the personnel, and some were concerned about the erosion of collegiality. In Helsinki, the foreseeable move of personnel to the new premises of Merikasarmi both inspired and worried staff. Those concerned feared that large open spaces would increase the risk of infection.

**Throughout the pandemic, the experienced well-being of the MFA personnel was on a slight downward trend.**

While the coping survey of March 2021 indicated a downward trend in the well-being of the personnel, the Employment Satisfaction Barometer 2021 annual survey conducted around the same time (March-April 2021) showed that the MFA's results rose from the level of 2020 in all response categories. The MFA communicated that it was particularly positive that management and managerial work were perceived to have been more successful than in the previous year, despite the difficult and exceptional circumstances. The combined result of the Foreign Affairs Administration was 3.81, compared to 3.74 in the previous year.



In March, KEO-80 issued **findings and guidance on how development cooperation works in the COVID-19 pandemic from a risk management perspective**. The document notes that the pandemic has made development cooperation's adaptive results-based management and risk management even more important than before. KEO-80 notes that there have been both delays in actual operations and limitations in or even complete absence of monitoring on several occasions. On the other hand, the situation has also provided space for new innovative approaches in operations and communication. The document states that the risk management plan of an intervention should include the COVID-19 pandemic and its implications on both the project results and the realisation of human rights, equality and the rights of persons with disabilities. The plan should take into account pandemic-related risks both in implementation and monitoring.

**April 2021.** Acknowledged already a year earlier – in the April 2020 general guidelines to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in developing countries – the pandemic situation puts the link between humanitarian assistance, development cooperation and peacebuilding, and a flexible capacity for reaction to an even more important role, thus promoting triple nexus thinking. In April 2021, the MFA issued **technical guidelines for making humanitarian aid and development funding more flexible in terms of responding to or recovering from long-term or sudden crises in the country, regional and CSO cooperation**.

**August 2021.** In the MFA's synthesis report on multilateral influencing, the main points relating to the COVID-19 pandemic were on gender equality and rights of people with disabilities; education; innovation, and business.

**September 2021.** Government approval of Finland's EUR 10 million COVAX vaccine donation through Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, was made as Finland's first vaccine donation.

**November 2021.** The last MFA pandemic coping survey falling into the assessment period showed that the experiences of own well-being, health and coping had continued to weaken. The experienced stress had increased. The biggest worrying topics were the COVID19-pandemic, lack of resources and the amount of work. On a scale of 1 to 5, the average level of well-being was 3.29, down from 3.41 at the time of the previous survey.

**By the end of 2021, a total of EUR 40.4 million had been allocated to Gavi – the Vaccine Alliance, either earmarked for COVAX or as core funding.**



## 2.2. How relevant was the response?

For the evaluative answer to AQ2 and the findings therein, the Assessment Team reviewed the relevance of the MFA's COVID-19 pandemic response jointly for all six dimensions (Financial, Policy dialogue, Policies and procedures, Risk management, Knowledge management, and Staff).

Finland's COVID-19 pandemic response was relevant both with respect to – and beyond – Finland's explicit development policy priorities. While health is not an explicit development policy priority, Finland nevertheless mobilized significant health funding for vaccines. Maintaining Finland's development policy priorities, the MFA mobilized a significant overall response and adjusted policy dialogue, processes, channels and interventions in order to strengthen their relevance in continuing to contribute towards meeting developing country needs. This said a full assessment of relevance in terms of the results associated with the pandemic response could only be conducted once those results have materialised, the same being true for the pandemic responses of other donors as well.

### F1. Finland mobilized significant resources to respond to the needs created by the pandemic.

The MFA's financial response to the COVID-19 pandemic through an exclusive ODA budget (budget title 24.30.66) was EUR 88.5 million (up until the end of 2021). This covers the new funds or repurposing decisions that are considered as 'entirely' COVID-19 motivated. In addition, decisions considered as 'significantly' motivated by the COVID-19 situation cover EUR 22.4 million. Together, these are EUR 110.8 million and cover 64 decision items.

This amount represents 7.4% of the total approved budgetary allocation for the exclusive ODA budget in 2020 and 2021. This percentage is significant because usually, more than half of a year's payments are for programs decided one or more years before (see, for example, Finland's Development Policy Results Report 2018). In addition to that, most funds are typically earmarked for certain projects and organisations before the year starts. Finland also needs to maintain certain "threshold amounts" with specific multilateral organisations to retain a seat at the table. These thresholds are often only reached later in the year when additional funding becomes available (which is already designated for this activity).

**By the end of 2021, MFA's financial response to the COVID-19 pandemic was EUR 110.8 million.**

Finland's relevant focus on the pandemic response is also exemplified by the approval of additional funding since the pandemic broke out. On November 27th, 2020, a EUR 50 million budget increase was approved by parliament, most of which (64%) was directly related to the pandemic. In 2021, the overall increase was EUR 9.2 million over the originally planned allocation. The approval for the increase took place on December 1st, 2021, and at the same time, vaccine donations and humanitarian assistance for EUR 24.1 million were approved.

Yet, to contextualize, it must be noted that overall pandemic-related needs have exceeded what the international community – of which Finland is a part – has been able to mobilise. For example, the total funding appeal of the UN's Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP) for COVID-19 in 2020 was USD 9.5 billion. With 40% (USD 3.8 billion) of the appeal funded, Finland's contribution to the GHRP of USD 23,782,831, equalling 0.6% of its funding, was the 29th largest out of the



total 163 donors that had pledged to support the plan<sup>4</sup>. To put this ranking in relation to Finland's ranking as a donor: in 2019, Finland was the 19th largest provider of net ODA among the OECD-DAC members.

Moreover, as reported by the UN over the past two years, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a negative impact and reversed progress toward reaching the SDGs. For instance, the decline in income in developing countries has translated into a sharp increase in global poverty. According to the World Bank, towards the end of 2021, about 97 million more people were living on less than USD 1.90 a day because of the pandemic, increasing the global poverty rate from 7.8 to 9.1%. Similarly, 163 million more were living on less than USD 5.50 a day<sup>5</sup>. This means that three to four years of progress toward ending extreme poverty may have been lost.

## **F2. Finland's core funding to multilateral organisations was of critical importance for their pandemic response and provided important influencing opportunities.**

**Finnish influence likely contributed to more coherent and gender-sensitive multilateral pandemic response.**

Since it was not decided because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the MFA's core funding to multilateral organisations is not included in the above analysis and total funding allocated to the pandemic. Yet, the case examples of Finland's policy dialogue at the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and in the UN/New York context (Annexes 11 and 12) and the interviews and desk review, including the System-Wide Evaluation of the UNDS Response to COVID-19 (Interim Report, March 2022), clearly state that core funding was crucial for allowing these institutions a quick and relevant response to the pandemic. Notably, ADB was able to mobilize a +30% budget increase without extra core funding and demonstrated a significant financial response to the pandemic, with total commitments increasing from USD 24.0 billion in 2019 to USD 31.6 billion in 2020, USD 16.0 billion of which were part of ADB's COVID-19 response, as defined by the bank itself.

Core funding also gave Finland a seat at the table in the multilateral organisations' governance and generated good opportunities for influencing multilateral pandemic responses in line with Finnish development policy priorities. These opportunities were taken advantage of, and for instance, Finland was able to relevantly, effectively and efficiently make use of the double opportunity of chairing both the UN Women Executive Board and the joint Board meetings of six UN agencies. While no attribution can be made to Finland alone, Finnish influence likely contributed to a more coherent and gender-sensitive pandemic response.

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## **F3. The MFA decided against making changes to Finland's development policy or overhauling the development cooperation because of the pandemic and instead made use of relevant adjustments to provide its response.**

**The MFA's pandemic response was pragmatic and based on adjustments.**

Described in the timeline of the MFA's COVID-19 pandemic response in AQ1, the MFA's general guidelines to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in developing countries were made available in April 2020. The MFA expressed in the guidelines that Finland's development policy's basic principles and emphasis would continue to play a significant role. Subsequently, no changes in the development policy priorities were made. While health is not a Finnish development policy priority, and while crisis response outside the priorities was not explicitly covered when the pandemic started, Finland nevertheless mobilized significant health funding, reflecting strong

4 [https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/952/donors?order=total\\_funding&sort=desc](https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/952/donors?order=total_funding&sort=desc)

5 <https://blogs.worldbank.org/developmenttalk/covid-19-leaves-legacy-rising-poverty-and-widening-inequality>





political will to contribute and pragmatic adjustments of the approach to make it happen. Because of the obvious necessity to also mount a direct health-related response – including in terms of supplying and enabling access to vaccines – the AT finds the health-related aspects of the MFA's response justified and relevant, even if not entirely covered by development policy priorities.

Overall, the AT finds the pragmatic response useful but also welcomes any statement in Finland's development policy to explicitly allow such reactions as a part of its development cooperation. While preparations for it had started earlier, the Government approved the Report on Development Policy Extending Across Parliamentary Terms<sup>6</sup> in May 2021. The Report addresses both resilience and, albeit briefly, preparedness and response to pandemics. The Report rightly states that the general resilience of societies plays a key role in overcoming crisis situations.

The pragmatic approach of no policy changes but accommodating response actions outside the policy enabled some controversial decisions that were made as a part of the MFA's COVID-19 pandemic response. The most notable was the decision in April 2020 to use humanitarian assistance funding to cover the cost of COVID-19 supplies provided to support Italy. The decision was made, as described by several interviewees, in haste and with strong political pressure. Because this humanitarian assistance, even if relatively minor in size, bypassed existing principles (by supporting another EU member state, be they in a however distressing situation), interviewees expressed worry that incidents like this might damage Finland's otherwise excellent reputation as reliably principle-driven humanitarian assistance donor.

With no changes to the development policy, the MFA adapted management of certain processes to accommodate the changing needs of its development cooperation partners. One notable example is the revised CSO guidelines which administered significant flexibilities to CSO funding. Another example is the new Development Cooperation Quality Assurance Group (QAG) guidelines that provide for an accelerated procedure for deciding on new interventions related to the pandemic.

#### **F4. The MFA adjusted its allocations across aid channels in a relevant manner.**

While Finland's development cooperation budget had been steadily increasing since 2018, additional changes within the budget category for the exclusive ODA budget (24.30.66) in 2020-2021 were significant and reflected relevant additions and shifts. These shifts also enabled the COVID-19 response.

As shown in Figure 3, relevant for immediate crisis response, but with the caveat that most of the addition was decided rather late in the year 2020, humanitarian assistance increased significantly by EUR 42.6 million (+59%) in 2020. Following that, increased funding to the multilateral organisations (an additional EUR 16.7 million) was also relevant because the multilateral organisations were able to react quickly in terms of first development cooperation response to the pandemic. Decreased funding through country-specific and regional development cooperation reflected delays caused by the pandemic and avoided unspent funding. For its part, this supported the prioritisation of funding of humanitarian assistance and through the multilateral and non-country specific channels and merits the Quarterly review meetings led by the Under-Secretary of State Development to track and re-circulate unspent funds.

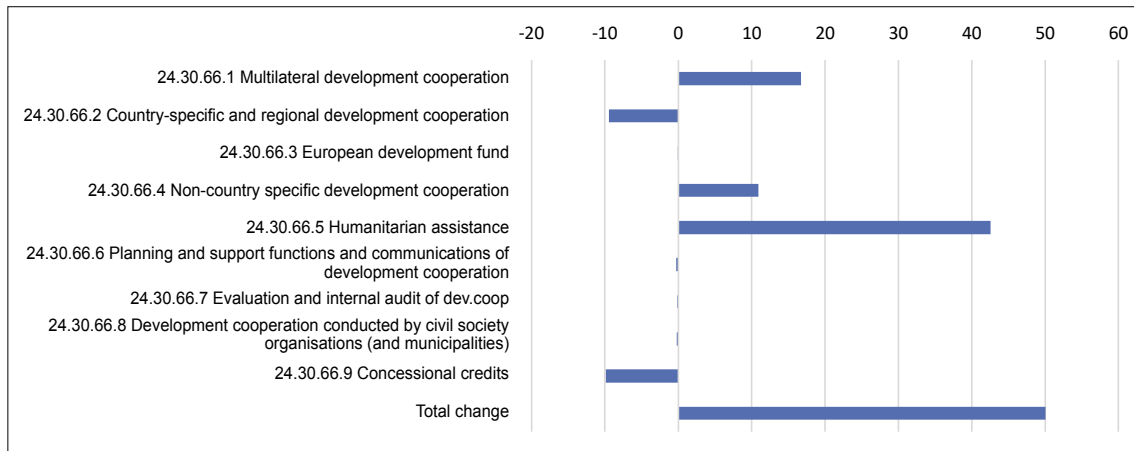
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6 Publications of the Finnish Government 2021:29





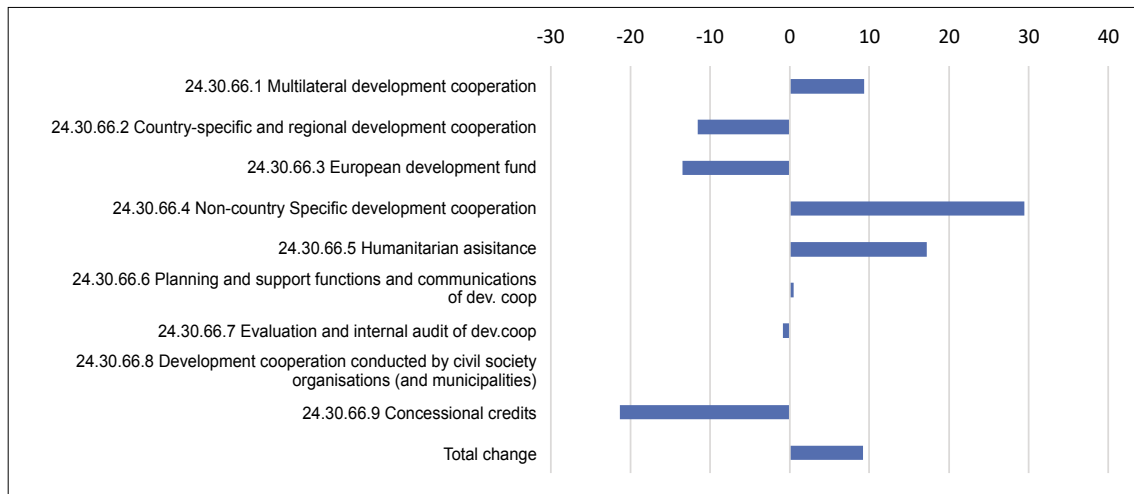
**Figure 3 Overall changes to the budgetary categories in 2020 (million EUR)**



Source: Assessment Team data compilation

In 2021, as shown in Figure 4, the principal increases concerned the same budget categories as in 2020. However, the main change was seen in the non-country specific development cooperation budget line with EUR 29.5 million. This was entirely related to Finland’s Team Europe commitment in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic and was utilised for vaccine donations and other funding for the Gavi – the Vaccine Alliance and the COVAX mechanism.

**Figure 4 Overall changes to the budgetary categories in 2021 (million EUR)**



Source: Assessment Team data compilation

Without significant net budget effects, allowing the CSOs to adapt their proposals and programmes to respond to the pandemic was also benefiting the relevance of Finland’s overall response.

**F5. The MFA adjusted ongoing interventions as a response to the pandemic, but the relevance of the adjustments can only be fully evaluated when results can be assessed.**

As described in the timeline of the MFA’s COVID-19 pandemic response (see AQ1), the MFA’s general guidelines to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in developing countries assigned the MFA to (1) continue the part of the current activity, which still proves relevant and, if stopped, would cause undue harm to the country or sector concerned; (2) examine whether and how the current



activities should be adjusted to better support recovery from the pandemic; (3) re-target support towards recovery based on requests for assistance, analysis of the changing needs and the value-added by Finland. To support adjusting interventions, the MFA developed guidelines and templates for preparing adjustment plans, and all projects were required to prepare an adjustment plan. Based on these plans, decisions were taken on the project's immediate and longer-term future.

**Interventions funded by Finland were adjusted but results cannot yet be assessed.**

While the scope of this assessment did not allow examining intervention adjustments made across all of the MFA's development cooperation, the two case examples of Ethiopia and Nepal suggest that most projects in these countries were adjusted to include activities of particular relevance in the pandemic context. The adjustments were in line with Finland's development policy priorities, including the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) and Cross-cutting Objectives (CCOs). Relevant adjustments in Ethiopia included support for distance learning and the operation of water supply systems and sanitation and hygiene functions in areas critical to the pandemic. In Nepal, the relevant adjustments included support for distance learning, support for women affected by the pandemic, and support for procuring protective and hygiene equipment. A case in point with regards to high relevance to HRBA and the CCO of gender equality was the re-targeting of the UN Women Nepal country strategy to respond to the pandemic needs in the areas of gender-based violence (GBV); food-, hygiene product- and cash-aid; and community kitchens.

In assessing the relevance of its response through the interventions, Finland has relied for the most part on monitoring, information and analysis by its partners, most notably the multilateral partners. While this may be the case at other times, the pandemic era travel restrictions (international and inside the countries such as Nepal) and the ensuing reliance on online consultations and secondary information has increased this dependence on analysis.

With all the above said about adjusting for relevance; across all interviews, case examples, and desk review: nobody really knows how effective the pandemic response has been, and this applies to Finland but also to all other development partners. The Assessment Team did not find a single report clearly stating delays, failure and lost opportunities – only general notions by the UN about how the SDGs were moving backwards but nothing agency-specific concerning their missed goals and unattained outcomes. Hence, applicable to Finland and all others, the relevance of the adjustments – along with the effects of the delays and limitations inevitably there because of the pandemic – can only be reviewed once the results and lessons learned from the field are captured.



## 2.3. How efficient was the response?

For the evaluative answer to AQ3 and the findings therein, the Assessment Team has evaluated the efficiency of the MFA's COVID-19 pandemic response jointly for all the dimensions (Financial, Policy dialogue, Policies and procedures, Risk management, Knowledge management, and Staff).

Within its parameters, Finland's COVID-19 pandemic response was quick and flexible, while the MFA also maintained ongoing work. The resulting increased workload and the pandemic strained managers and staff in embassies and in Helsinki. Despite efforts made, the MFA did not fully succeed in securing staff safety and well-being. Thus, while the MFA may not need a (pandemic-specific) crisis response plan, it requires a headquarters preparedness plan and more flexibility for reallocating human resources during crises. The MFA also needs to closely monitor for results emerging from the pandemic-era development cooperation and the (future) building back better and greener efforts. The pandemic also offered several opportunities: it sped up reform processes and introduced new working modalities worth preserving and developing further.

**The MFA's pandemic response was relevant and efficient thanks to its staff.**

**F6. While the MFA's human resources response to the pandemic initially rightly focused on safety and maintaining operational capacity, it did neither deliver fully satisfactory outcomes on safety nor sufficiently support staff wellbeing in the prolonged pandemic situation.**

With swift decisions at the start of the pandemic to repatriate many of the staff from embassies and also extend to consultants' project staff, the MFA rightly put health and safety first. Whether in all cases, the best balance between safety and lost project opportunities was found can be questioned but is impossible to judge, and the Assessment Team maintains that prioritising health and safety was the right thing to do.

Yet, the MFA has not been able to prioritise the health and safety of all staff throughout the pandemic. While not even primarily the fault of the MFA and despite the MFA's efforts, coronavirus vaccinations could not be offered to all staff at the embassies in a timely manner. According to MFA management, this relates to the interpretation of relevant laws and regulations by the Finnish Institute of Health and Wellbeing (THL), and with no solution in sight, the embassy staff had

**The MFA could not provide full and equal health-safety to all staff.**

to resort to, for instance, at the end of their home-vacation being called up with just 30 minutes warning to go and get their shots from the day's leftover vaccines, or to being vaccinated at the duty station by other Nordic embassies than that of Finland's. Negotiations with the THL failing, with sufficient allocation of financial resources, the MFA could have – flights, various quarantine schemes and other pandemic-era practical challenges allowing – flown its people to be vaccinated in the schedule to Finland, but this seems not have taken place.

In terms of facilitating working from home, the MFA's IT infrastructure was initially overwhelmed by serving all staff, but it quickly became better. The IT department also worked on offering more meeting tools, but this was slow and not all desired options could be offered because of the understandably strict security requirements. Some staff had to organise some of the IT at home all by themselves.

The MFA coping surveys and, more so, the interviews conducted for this assessment identify staff mental health issues inclusive of fatigue, burnout, and social isolation. The MFA has offered some general information to improve coping and well-being and speak to an expert or a psychologist.



This, however, just treats the symptoms, not the root causes. The root causes identified in this assessment relate to the much-increased workload and work times in some cases, the double challenge of parental and work responsibilities, and mental issues caused by social isolation. Especially some unit directors were largely left to their own devices, and in many cases, a somewhat “do your work and deal with everything yourself”-attitude seems to have been prominent. Against social isolation, virtual coffee chats were useful to some MFA staff as they had to learn to replace corridor talk with online means.

While the workload and working times have significantly increased in many MFA positions in the domains of development cooperation and humanitarian assistance, noted by the organisation itself too, the pandemic also led to less work in some other units.

The root causes of increased workload/times, the double challenge of parental and work responsibilities, and mental issues because of social isolation hit the MFA staff in different ways, arguably both across the organisation and even across just the development cooperation and humanitarian assistance posts.

As it is, while the MFA is able to relocate staff to units in need in the case of some crises that affect a limited number of its units – such as the war in Ukraine in 2022 – it has rather limited means in use to systematically and all across the organisation assess the workload of the staff. In a global crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic, which hit the MFA both at the embassies and headquarters and affected all of its operating context, systematic assessing of both staff workload and personal situation might have facilitated identifying solutions to increase staff coping and well-being. Currently, any easing of the workload is typically both based on only arranging the work a bit more flexibly instead of reducing it and at the discretion of the unit or department head.

**The MFA has limited means to systematically assess workloads and re-assign staff accordingly.**

**F7. The MFA reacted quickly and flexibly. It decided to protect ongoing development cooperation, and no massive ceasing of activities was done despite resources needed and targeted to the pandemic response.**

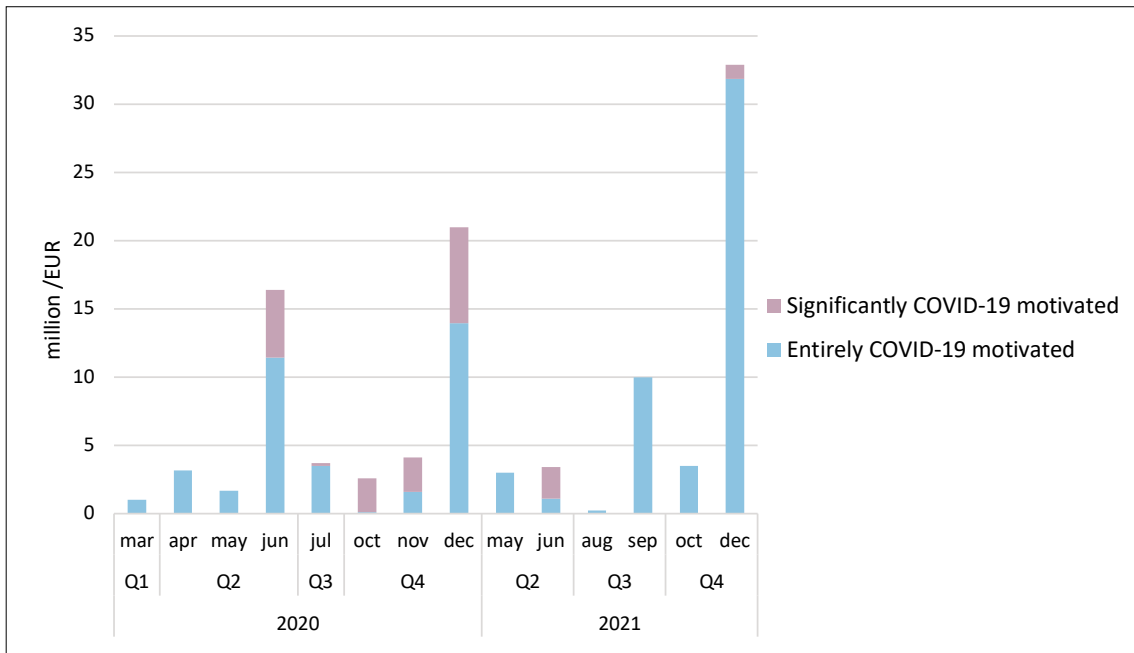
Reacting quickly, two days before the pandemic was declared on March 11, 2020, the MFA committed one million euros to WHO’s Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan. This was followed by a series of pandemic-related funding decisions mostly covering multilateral partners engaged in humanitarian assistance and development cooperation (e.g. UNHCR, UNFPA, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), UNDP, WFP and United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF)) but inclusive also of, for instance, the Finnish Red Cross and additional funding for the Community-Led Accelerated Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Ethiopia –project.

**The MFA’s initial response was quick and through the multilateral organisations.**

Figure 5 shows entirely and significantly COVID-19 related financial decisions on a timeline since when the COVID-19 pandemic was declared in March 2020. The peaks in 2020 relate mostly to reallocations and changes made by the MFA regional departments, as well as the humanitarian pandemic response. In 2021, peaks related mainly to the MFA’s allocations to Gavi - the Vaccine Alliance and COVAX.



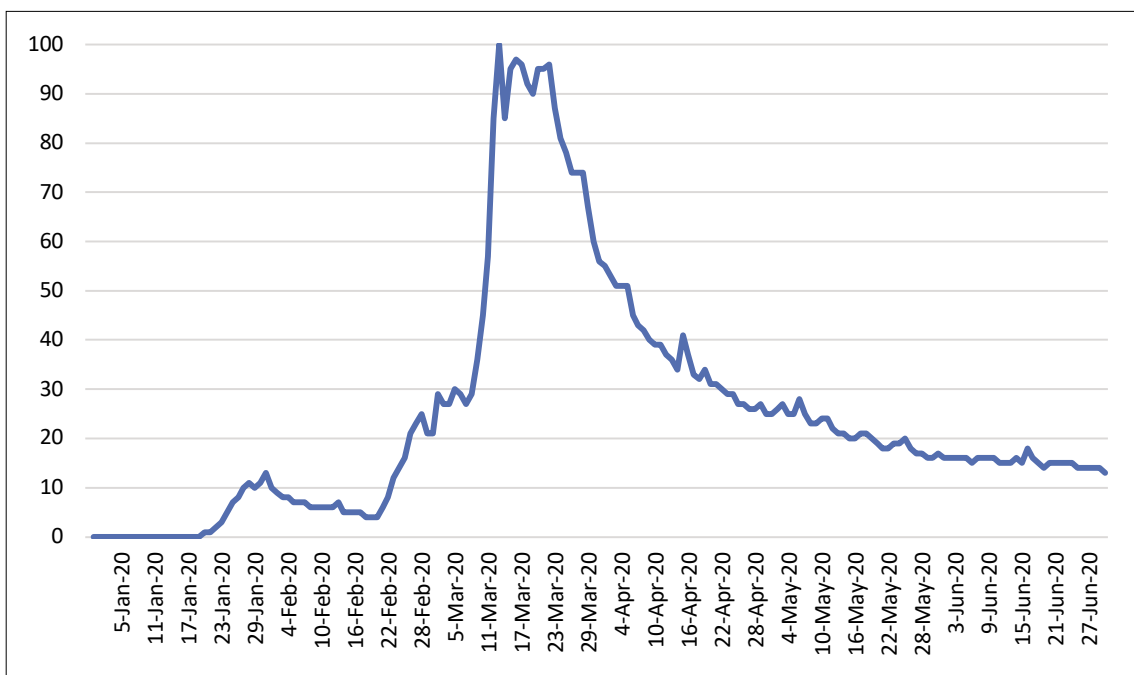
**Figure 5 Timeline of ‘entirely’ and ‘significantly’ COVID-19 related allocations in 2020 and 2021**



Source: Evaluation Team/finance data compilation

Overall, this onset of the MFA’s financial response to the pandemic coincides with that of other donors and development partners. It also matches worldwide public interest in the subject (See Figure 6), which peaks on March 13, 2020, when the world “woke up” to COVID-19.

**Figure 6 Google trends analysis of the number of worldwide searches for “corona” and related search terms in the first six months of 2020**



Source: <https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?date=2020-01-01%202020-06-30&q=corona>, visited on February 28, 2022.



While the MFA's reaction began quickly, as seen in Figure 5, a significant portion of the pandemic response funding was paid out only at the end of each year (December 2020 and December 2021, respectively). For 2020, this can be viewed as a bit problematic; the funding was not available to benefit those affected at the early stages of the pandemic in the first half of 2020. For 2020, this was mainly because the seventh supplementary budget proposal 2020 was agreed only on November 27th, 2020, increasing the exclusive ODA budget by EUR 50.0 million. Similarly, in 2021, the fourth supplementary budget proposal was approved only on December 1st, 2021. It provided EUR 12.6 million for the non-country specific budget category to be further allocated for the COVAX AMC as Finland's vaccine donation. In addition, EUR 11.5 million was added to the humanitarian assistance budget category to be distributed, among other things, for the COVID-19 response. Contributing both in 2020 and 2021 was also the uncertainty about expected additionally available funds not used elsewhere.

Support to – and through – CSOs was also efficient. EUR 5.5 million were recorded as repurposed funds for the COVID-19 response, and the changes were approved and cleared by KEO-30 through their streamlined process within a few days. The repurposing of CSO funds because of the COVID-19 situation appears to have focused on the first few months of the pandemic. A facilitating factor, KEO-30 has the flexibility built into its guidelines to respond efficiently to the recipient's needs and repurpose the previously allocated funds. The unit's approach also emphasizes frequent communications with the partner CSOs and encourages them to provide information on any issues to tackle. However, for CSOs engaged in humanitarian assistance, opening the second humanitarian assistance call in 2020 was debatable because of the extra staff workload created and since it's unclear if the CSOs had the capacity to translate the extra funding into results.

**The MFA's response through the CSOs was efficient.**

Protecting ongoing work and yet reacting flexibly, the MFA decided early into the pandemic (in March and April 2020) to uphold Finland's development policy priorities and, instead of ceasing development cooperation activities, rather adjust them to remain relevant under pandemic conditions (see also F3 and F4). Process management adaptations were also agreed upon swiftly, with new Development Cooperation Quality Assurance Group (QAG) guidelines issued in April 2020. Regarding policy dialogue and influencing activities vis-à-vis its multilateral partners, Finland largely supported them in planning and executing their own responses and focused on ensuring that Finnish values and development policy priorities were properly reflected.

Decisions to continue project implementation and adjust them in Ethiopia and Nepal were timely and took place in the first couple of months of the pandemic despite the additional burden it put on the management and staff. Many interventions supported by Finland in Nepal are either multi-donor funded or implemented through multilateral organisations. According to interviews, this seems to have been beneficial to those adjustments in particular, which required a good network of CSOs, notably the distribution of the COVID relief support packages.

**F8. There is mixed evidence regarding the soundness of the new option of flexibly using country/regional and CSO funds for humanitarian purposes. There are also issues regarding the MFA's organigram and decision-making that limit the scope of what was possible for the MFA in terms of the pandemic response.**

Desk review and interviews provide mixed evidence on the soundness of the relatively new option of flexibly using country/regional for humanitarian purposes, thus supporting the approach of Development-Humanitarian-Peace nexus. While the MFA had decided to use funds initially designated for country/regional cooperation for humanitarian assistance before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the pandemic

**The triple-nexus approach is relevant but challenging to implement.**



induced crisis made the operationalisation of the decision actual. In the case of the CSOs, utilisation of development cooperation funds for emergency response activities in the programme countries had been possible since 2013, and this flexibility was extensively utilised during the COVID-19 pandemic response. In applying this flexibility, the regional department in question can manage the humanitarian assistance allocation directly, not through the normal route, i.e. the Unit for Humanitarian Assistance's financial allocation procedures. The same applies to the Unit for Civil Society.

The lead evaluator of Finland's mid-term OECD DAC peer review (March 2021) stated: "I was impressed by the ability of the Finnish system to respond quickly and decisively to the COVID-19 pandemic in developing countries – allocating more resources and shifting funding between development and humanitarian budget lines." While many within the MFA assessed this flexibility as both important and working well, there were also diverse voices proposing that there were issues in upholding the principles of humanitarian assistance, that the consultations within the MFA were suboptimal and that there was no actual joint decision-making. To strengthen the process, the MFA issued, in April 2021, technical guidelines which say that humanitarian assistance is provided from the domains of the country- and regional cooperation only exceptionally, when it is not possible through the Unit for Humanitarian Assistance's financial allocation procedures.

The Assessment Team finds the objectives of adding flexibility, efficiency and effectiveness of crises response by means of such nexus-funding worth supporting, but notes that it is of key importance to respect the principles of humanitarian assistance and to coordinate and aim at joint decision-making between all relevant internal parties (regional department/unit, embassy, Unit for Humanitarian Assistance and possibly others) and external stakeholders (which vary from case-to-case). The AT also views the challenges reported in this domain as part of a wider issue pertaining to some limitations the MFA's organigram and decision-making may create, overall and specifically in crisis response.

**One of the MFA's strengths is portfolio-level decision-making at the unit level...**

**... and one of its challenges is joint decision-making across departments.**

Desk review and interviews suggest that optimizing joint decision-making can be a challenge in the MFA's development policy, development cooperation and humanitarian assistance domains. Taking and operationalising portfolio-level decisions in the relevant units works well and increases flexibility and efficiency also in the case of crisis response. In nexus-funding, this seems to be so for the flexibility enabling utilisation of the programme-based funding for the crisis response in case of an emergency in the implementing countries where KEO-30 manages the CSO portfolio on its own. Yet, in decisions requiring participation by more units and/or departments than one, more should be done in terms of coordination, joint decision-making and authorizing the decisions to be taken and/or enforced timely and by the most appropriate group of managers. The mandate of the Development Policy Steering Committee is limited to providing recommendations and guidance, and there is no development policy and cooperation decision-making and enforcing body extending over and across departments. This has led to issues such as a unit/department deciding to fund a humanitarian assistance organisation that had been declined funding very recently by the Unit for Humanitarian Assistance. In addition, there was also some reported confusion over what the latest valid guidelines to steer certain operations were, including related to the various pandemic induced reviews of guidance given.

It should be noted, though, that in the context of this assessment, it was not feasible to conduct a major review across all MFA decision-making and enforcement, nor to compare its "normal" status to that during the pandemic, and such review, including for the identification and location





of leadership, might be useful to undertake. The Assessment Team can, however, say that when it comes to any confusion over the status of decisions taken or, for that matter, the location of the leadership for each action or workstream, the pandemic-era working style likely has increased confusion because management and staff have had fewer opportunities to together discuss for example the reviews of certain guidelines, and the corridor talk about how a new guideline is to be operationalised in practice has not been there.

**F9. The MFA managed rather well without pre-existing crisis response plans and pandemic-specific risk analysis. It would have benefited from a headquarters preparedness plan to support moving human resources at crises and better preparedness to monitor the effectiveness of the COVID-19-time development cooperation.**

While some larger organisations have simplified operating procedures or other precautions in place that can be activated in time of crisis, the MFA's response without a preconceived pandemic plan was nevertheless quick and flexible. Financial decisions were fast, there was a quick turnaround by the parliament, and the simplified QAG procedures and prioritisation of pandemic-related proposals enabled money to move swiftly. Hence, the Assessment Team does not recognize a need by the small and agile MFA to elaborate a holistic (pandemic) response plan for the future.

In the pandemic response, also the fact that the MFA and its staff are used to managing crises helped, and some interviewees said that the MFA is always in crisis modus, also referring to country-specific crises in Afghanistan, Ethiopia and Myanmar that unfolded parallel to the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, the pandemic was a different crisis from most because of the double effect at home and overseas. As discussed in the context of F6, the MFA's pandemic response was not optimal from the perspective of staff well-being, and that poses a risk both at the individual staff level but also at the level of the MFA's operating capacity. While there is no need to draw up a holistic (pandemic) response plan, a headquarters preparedness plan inclusive of authorization and guidance to move people around in the MFA to place resources where they are most needed in crisis would make sense.

**The MFA and its staff are used to managing crises...**

**.. but over-stretching the staff poses risks.**

As discussed in F5, in terms of the overall picture of development cooperation, missing is an understanding concerning delayed and/or failed/obsolete development cooperation projects at the time of the pandemic and the effects this has on development and the conduct of development cooperation. This represents a significant results-based risk (i.e. lack of result despite funds spent) that has to be managed by Finland and other donors and development partners. Managing this risk would have to include the element of looking back to the pandemic-era development cooperation and looking forward and being prepared, for the next crisis, once it hits and first parameters are known, to quickly develop a specific crisis risk assessment template (risk identification and concrete suggestions for reaction/mitigation) and apply it to all ongoing and planned projects.

**F10. The pandemic slowed down many actions, and since it has prolonged, building back better and greener has not fully begun. Yet, the pandemic also created opportunities for both enhancing the quality of development cooperation and advancing some development cooperation priorities faster.**

Desk review, interviews and country case examples indicate some – albeit limited – delays in Finland's development cooperation projects. Similarly, planning some activities have had to be pushed back, and monitoring has been difficult. Some evaluations have been conducted desk-based only. While indications of adapted interventions succeeding in meeting some of the changing needs are there, in line with the discussion above (F9), the results of Finland's development cooperation at the time of the pandemic are still largely unknown.





**The pandemic dragged on and the building back better and greener has delayed.**

The Assessment Team was not able to identify evidence on the post-pandemic building back better and greener<sup>7</sup> because the pandemic dragged on, and the focus was still on the immediate adaptation and response. This said, Finland, just like any other donor and development partner, has to stay alert: in bouncing back from the pandemic, there is also the risk of resuming as much of the “old normality” as possible and reducing the building back better and greener to lip service. While very human to react to an end of a crisis by normalizing and thus being able to relieve

the pressure experienced, the building back better and greener would have to be on the drawing board now so that regular development cooperation would really “come back better”.

**Finland made use of new opportunities in policy influencing.**

In policy dialogue with multilateral partners, MFA’s focus shifted to the more immediate concerns related to the pandemic response. This stalled somewhat the results of the implementation of MFA-internal recommended improvements for planning and reporting on influencing activities. Yet, the pandemic rallied and united the development community around a straightforward common goal. This created opportunities to strengthen the multilateral system and influence its pandemic response towards reflecting Finland’s priorities, as witnessed, for instance, in mainstreaming/focusing on gender in UN pandemic response and strengthening parts of the UN system. For example, the establishment of the UN COVID Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund was geared to help, among other things, to strengthen the Resident Coordinator System of the UN, which Finland, for some time now, has considered a cornerstone of the reform towards a more effective and efficient UN system.

The pandemic also changed working modalities. For instance, it forced faster digitalization in some areas, created opportunities to bring experts together without meeting physically (e.g., virtual briefings and board meetings), and provided local partners, staff and consultants with increased opportunities to assume greater roles and responsibilities. In these domains, be it for driving innovation and technological competitiveness, reducing the carbon footprint of development cooperation, or creating a more equal level playing field in development cooperation, there are certainly elements worth preserving and developing further after the pandemic.

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7 Finland and the Nordics, maintaining from the beginning of the pandemic that its indirect socioeconomic impact will be enormous and have more impact than direct effect of the pandemic itself, took forward a Nordic approach of Building back better and greener, with the “greener” their particular addition and emphasis.



## 2.4. How coherent was the response?

For the evaluative answer to the AQ4 and the findings therein, the Assessment Team has evaluated the coherence of the MFA's COVID-19 pandemic response jointly for all the dimensions (Financial, Policy dialogue, Policies and procedures, Risk management, Knowledge management, and Staff).

The MFA built its response on its long-term strengths in policy dialogue and multilateral influencing, and in partnering with multilateral organisations in the development cooperation implementation, as well as in coordinating with like-minded countries. A new element, Team Europe, offered means for increased coherence and communication. Coordination and collaboration within the Finnish government resulted in mixed results. It, on the one hand, resulted in an excellent outcome in responding to the Government of Nepal's request for material assistance. On the other hand, the MFA was unable to provide full health safety to staff posted abroad because of unsuccessful negotiations with the Finnish Institute of Health and Wellbeing. While the MFA experienced some coordination challenges with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, according to the MFA staff, its support and influence at the WHO increased.

**F11. Internationally, Finland made good use of existing coordination and cooperation channels and took part in new mechanisms.**

Noted in the MFA's general guidelines to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in developing countries (April 2020), part of Finland's immediate support for alleviating the pandemic would be implemented in the first phase through general support already granted to the humanitarian organisations, the UN, and international development finance institutions. Such support was not granted as a pandemic response, but the MFA considered the untied and core funding provided to the multilateral partners for 2020 supportive to their early, quick response. As shown in discussing Findings 2 and 4, the general support indeed was of importance to the multilateral organisations in their pandemic response, and the multilateral channel formed a key channel for the MFA's response throughout the pandemic.

For the latter part of 2020 and onward, the guidelines state that efforts would be made to influence the work in the EU, international organisations, and financial institutions to ensure that their pandemic-related activities are sufficient in both the short and longer-term. This would be done through the normal route of the board work and any necessary initiatives. Based on the case examples and interviews, following established tradition (see, for example, the 2020 evaluation of Finnish influencing activities in multilateral organisations), the Finnish position regarding the COVID-19 pandemic was closely coordinated and mutually reinforced within the MFA as well as with like-minded countries, such as the Nordic group with which the Nordic approach to Building Back Better and Greener was developed. As per the country case examples, donor coordination in Ethiopia and Nepal has worked well in the pandemic. Also, Finland participated in COVAX (i.e. the global mechanism aiming at pooled procurement and equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines) in Nepal, and while the financial support is limited, according to the Embassy, Finland's visibility in the COVAX context is rather high.

**Finland coordinated closely with the Nordic and other like-minded countries.**



**Team Europe increased the EU Member States' coherence and communication.**

The launching of Team Europe may have, at the outset, resulted in the creation of expectations that could not be met. According to some interviews, in the beginning, Team Europe in Ethiopia was mostly about coherence and communication, less about concretely adding to the response provided by the Member States. The EU Delegation started in May/June 2020 to map support provided by the Member States, and the ensuing Team Europe response mostly laid out what the Member States were already doing. Additional EU inputs were, according to the Embassy and MFA staff in Helsinki, rather limited at the start. Yet, both providing and displaying a united European response, and telling its story, are important actions – particularly because of so much communication in place by many other development partners concerning their response. Moreover, from the second half of 2020, the EU reportedly stepped up assistance. The scope of this assessment did not allow to explore it further, and the Team Europe is a relatively new concept, and Ethiopia is perhaps one of the “test cases” for the Team Europe approach during the pandemic. Any lessons learned from Ethiopia could be of interest to Finland and the other Member States.

**F12: At the national level, coordination and collaboration within the Finnish government resulted in mixed results for the MFA.**

**The MFA's influence in the WHO may have increased.**

The MFA's general guidelines to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in developing countries (April 2020) noted that in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the MFA should examine how Finland's WHO policy and Finland's support for strengthening the WHO should be developed. Interviews indicate that the shared and, at times, unclear responsibilities between the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the MFA complicated coordination. Yet, Finland's financial support to the WHO increased significantly during the pandemic with funding both from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the MFA, and interviews also indicate a strengthened influence by the MFA in the WHO.

As discussed in the context of the Finding 6, coordination and collaboration between the MFA and the Finnish Institute of Health and Wellbeing (THL) has been challenged by the latter's strict adherence to and interpretation of rules and regulations relating to the administration of coronavirus vaccinations to the foreign service staff posted abroad. This unfortunate situation has contributed to the MFA not being able to fully discharge its obligations in protecting the health and safety of its staff.

**Finland provided 30 thousand tonnes of material assistance to Nepal.**

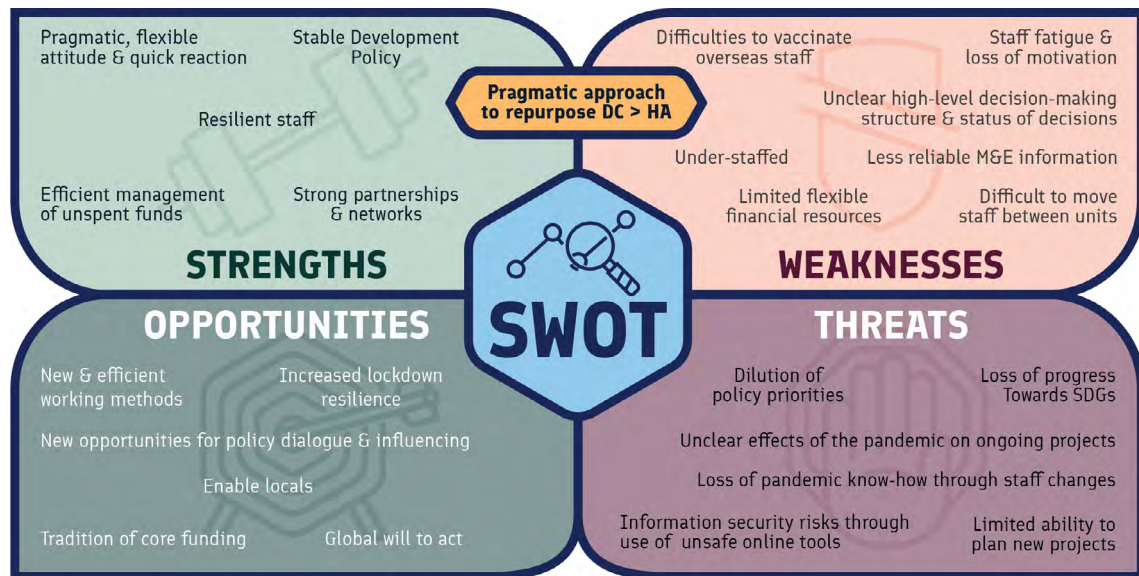
As an example of a joint action between the MFA and other Finnish authorities working well, Finland's response to the Government of Nepal's request for material assistance through the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism was relevant, timely and direct. It was well coordinated by the actors in Finland and with the EU. At the request of the Nepalese Government, Finland sent material assistance to Nepal through the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism in May 2021. The material assistance of 30 thousand tonnes included face masks, protective visors, protective gloves, and medical gowns. In Finland, the Ministry of the Interior collaborated with the MFA, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, and the National Emergency Supply Agency, and the decision to provide the support was taken within a week from the request made by the Nepalese Government. The European Commission coordinated the pooling of assistance and supported the Member States in the arrangement of logistics and in transport costs of such consignments.

### 3. Conclusions

This section presents the assessment conclusions. The conclusions are based on the findings answering the evaluation questions and supported by the dimension-by-dimension and summary SWOT analysis (in annex 10 and Figure 7, respectively). As stated in Chapter 1 and illustrated in Figure 1, this assessment focused on the MFA itself and therefore, the findings of the assessment predominantly evidence the strengths and weaknesses of the MFA’s COVID-19 pandemic response since these are attributes within the MFA’s sphere of control. Yet, the findings also address some of the identified opportunities and threats of external origin which are attributes of the MFA’s operating environment and mostly only within its sphere of influence or interest. Figure 7 presents the key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats evidenced as attributes of the MFA’s pandemic response.

Conclusions are presented separately for each dimension (Financial, Policy dialogue, Policies and procedures, Risk management, Knowledge management, and Staff).

**Figure 7 Summary SWOT analysis**



Source: Assessment team



## Dimension 1: financial response



**Conclusion 1. The MFA provided a quick and early financial response and a notable health and vaccine response, despite of moderate development cooperation resources, which are largely committed at the beginning of each year, and the scope of development policy set.**

This conclusion is based on Findings F1-5, F7 and contributes to Recommendation R1.

The MFA channelled Finland's relevant and efficient financial pandemic response making use of multiple channels, with the multilateral a key channel throughout the pandemic. Contributing to Finland's pandemic response was also the Finnish core funding support, which allowed multilateral partners to respond efficiently, quick adjustment of interventions, and providing the CSOs with additional flexibilities.

While the response to the COVID-19 pandemic was quick and early, crisis response is not an explicit priority in Finland's development policy. At the start of the pandemic, Finland's development policy did not explicitly mention crisis response, nor resilience or preparedness for the crisis. These elements were added in the recent Report on Development Policy Extending Across Parliamentary Terms (2021). This report – albeit briefly – addresses resilience and preparedness, and response to pandemics. Thus, there is now a policy reference in mandating any crisis response in the future.

## Dimension 2: policy dialogue & multilateral influencing



**Conclusion 2. The MFA made use of the opportunities for amplifying influencing on its policy priorities, the UN reform and the coherence agenda.**

This conclusion is based on Findings F2, F4, F10-12 and contributes to Recommendation R5.

The MFA has been able to make good use of multilateral policy dialogue during the pandemic. In New York, Finland took advantage of the double opportunity of presiding both over the UN Women Executive Board and the joint board meetings between UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS, UNICEF, UN Women and WFP. In this way, Finland's influence extended beyond UN Women to the other five agencies. Because Finland held the Deputy Executive Director position in the Asian Development Bank until the summer of 2021, it was able to influence ADB's pandemic response which was, in relative financial terms, the most significant among all development banks of which Finland is a shareholder.

Partnering with the multilateral organisations in the overall COVID-19 pandemic response and supporting multilateral and multi-donor interventions in Ethiopia and Nepal positively affected the relevance and efficiency of Finland's pandemic response. The Team Europe collaboration opened opportunities in coherence and communication.

Despite some issues, inter-ministerial and MFA's inter-departmental coordination and collaboration presented new possibilities, resulting in some rather positive outcomes.



### Dimension 3: policies and procedures



**Conclusion 3. The MFA found a pragmatic and relevant balance between responding to immediate health-related needs created by the pandemic and serving its established development cooperation priorities.**

This conclusion is based on Findings F1-5, F7, F9, F10 and contributes to Recommendation R1.

Within its parameters (see C4), the MFA both validated Finland's development policy priorities at the time of the pandemic and responded with flexibility, as pragmatism prevailed in adjusting policies and procedures. Specifically, while health is not Finland's development policy priority, the MFA mobilized significant health funding and assumed a stronger role at the WHO. Simultaneously, the MFA continued to serve Finland's established development cooperation priorities, notably by adjusting policy dialogues, processes, channels and interventions and preserving development cooperation efforts. The Assessment Team concludes that this represented a pragmatic and relevant mixed response to immediate health concerns and the needs created by the pandemic in Finland's established policy priority areas.



**Conclusion 4. The MFA's pandemic response was efficient within what was possible considering the MFA's decision-making structure and culture. However, some adaptations in procedures were not always clear to all staff.**

This conclusion is based on Findings F1-5, F7-10 and contributes to Recommendations R2, R3 and R4.

The MFA's pandemic response was managed most efficiently at the unit level, where the portfolio-level decisions are made and enforced. For instance, in the hectic early days of the pandemic, the Unit for Civil Society managed to respond (and approve) the modification inquiries very promptly, with some early requests for repurposing the funds approved within only one day.

However, the same is true only to a limited extent for higher-level decisions. When several units and/or departments are involved, joint decision-making can be a challenge. One reason is that there simply is no authoritative decision-making body across all departments and units involved in development policy and cooperation. The mandate of the Development Policy Steering Committee – the closest proxy the MFA has for such a body – is limited to providing recommendations and guidance. In the pandemic response, issues were present in some cases of the operationalisation of the new option of flexibly using country/regional funds for humanitarian purposes. In addition, limitations in internal coordination, joint decision-making, and communicating adaptations decided occasionally resulted in confusion about whether to fund an organisation, and in appreciating the status of decisions made, identification of the latest, valid set of certain guidelines, and with regards to guidance to enforce. It should be noted, though, that the distance work during the pandemic likely increased such confusion because management and staff could not always discuss, for example, the reviews of certain guidelines, and colleagues could not pop in each other's desks to seek advice on their operationalisation.





## Dimension 4: risk management



**Conclusion 5. The pandemic has – in addition to affecting implementation – hindered the planning of new interventions as well as monitoring and evaluation of existing interventions. Managing the risk by using multiple channels of delivery but emphasizing the multilateral organisations and working with local partners has worked well for the MFA.**

This conclusion is based on Findings F4-6, F9-10 and contributes to Recommendations R5-R8.

Because the results of the MFA's COVID-19 pandemic response are mostly yet not known, a significant results-based risk persists, which must be monitored and managed (see also C6). Managing the risk would have to include looking back to the pandemic-era development cooperation to discover the results and missing results and the related lessons to learn. Similarly, with the prolonged pandemic, it is ever more important to build back better, and preparations to do so need to get in full swing now.

Yet, the MFA has spread the implementation risk by using different channels of delivery and adapting interventions. The multilateral organisations remained largely capable of continuing activities and/or providing efficient response measures, and Finland's strategy to work with the multilateral organisations was sound. Equally, partners and local staff in the partner countries rose to the challenge and contributed to the response on many occasions.

## Dimension 5: knowledge management



**Conclusion 6. There is a knowledge gap on the results of the development cooperation conducted at the time of the pandemic, which can only be bridged later. This means that there could be a big wave of bad news ahead regarding the effectiveness of projects planned and implemented during the pandemic.**

This conclusion is based on Findings F2-5, F7-10 and contributes to Recommendation R8.

While the Assessment Team found the MFA's pandemic response relevant and efficient, the results of that response remain mostly unknown. Across interviews and also reflected in reviewed reports by other organisations, it was clear that not much is reported – or even known – about potentially lost development results at the level of projects and programmes. The big picture concerning delayed and failed development cooperation projects resulting from the pandemic is not yet visible and estimations of development “lost” or reversed are at the level of SDGs and the incidence of poverty. This is so for all development cooperation during the pandemic by any donor and development partner, not only Finland. Yet, the MFA – like other relatively small donors – mostly relied



on the pandemic information in external sources and may thus have less first-hand information from the field than the multilateral development partners.

## Dimension 6: staff



**Conclusion 7. The MFA's pandemic response owes a large debt to the motivated, devoted and at times overburdened staff, but the organisation could not secure the safety of all staff at equal footing throughout the pandemic nor provide sufficient easing of workload.**

This conclusion is based directly on Finding F6 and indirectly on all findings and contributes to Recommendations R9 and R10.

Not in its own hands because under the mandate of other Government entities and resource scarcity present, the MFA could not secure timely universal access to vaccinations and overall health safety for its personnel in embassies and missions. In terms of staff coping with the increased workload and effects of the pandemic in their personal lives, while some more attention was placed on working conditions and well-being as the pandemic prolonged, not enough was done to support staff in the foreign postings, nor in Helsinki.

The MFA makes limited use of in particular systematic mechanisms to assess each staff member's particular situation and extend support measures, as well mechanisms to swiftly move staff from units with lesser workload as a result of the pandemic-type situations to those where the workload has increased, or in any other ways to balance and ease heavy workloads.





## 4. Recommendations

This section presents the assessment recommendations based on the conclusions and findings. Recommendations are provided in five areas: 1) Crisis response in the development policy; 2) Efficient management of crisis response, 3) Risk management and supporting operations and planning to carry on in crises; 4) Knowledge management in crises; and 5) Supporting the staff conducting a crisis response.

### Crisis response in the development policy



**Recommendation 1. Make crisis response an explicit element of Finland's development policies.**

This recommendation is based on Conclusions C1 and C3.

The AT assesses Finland's development policy priorities as appropriate, valid and sufficient and does not propose to add new priorities. Nevertheless, the MFA had to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, and it has to respond to crises in the future too. A clear mandate to use development policy and cooperation as a means to such a response and sufficient guidelines regarding what, when and how this should be done would facilitate mounting a relevant and efficient crisis response while helping to limit its use for the purposes clearly within the domains of development policy and cooperation.

While the Report on Development Policy Extending Across Parliamentary Terms (2021) mentions crisis response, it does not provide much guidance for discharging that mandate. The top three of the following four actions have been successfully used in the COVID-19 pandemic response and should be acknowledged in the development policy to operationalise the mandate if and when required:

1. Explicitly allow for time-limited crisis response outside of Finland's development cooperation priorities;
2. Allow for adapting ongoing work (within development policy priorities) to ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness during crises;
3. Allow for ending ongoing and cancelling planned work if rendered obsolete beyond repair by a crisis; and
4. Consider providing guidance along the following lines for increasing crisis resilience as a fixed element of development cooperation:
  1. Resilience of interventions under (foreseeable) risk scenarios to be covered by assessing resilience as a component in the intervention planning context analysis; and
  2. Contributing to building resilience in the partner countries by adding resilience as an explicit part of the sustainability criteria in Finland's development policy and cooperation.

The fourth action would be new, but with resilience addressed in the Report on Development Policy Extending Across Parliamentary Terms, some guidance would have to be given on how to build resilience in interventions and partner countries. In this context, it is also noted that the seventh



meta-evaluation of the MFA's decentralised evaluations (2022) concludes on the overall quality of Finnish development cooperation that of all evaluation criteria, sustainability leaves the greatest room for improvement. Exploring how to address resilience as a part of sustainability could hence also contribute to strengthening the sustainability of Finland's development cooperation interventions.

*The recommendation is addressed to the Under-Secretary of State for Development Policy and the Management of the Department for Development Policy.*

*Timing: Without urgency, but since the Report on Development Policy Extending Across Parliamentary Terms (2021) already suggests a similar (but more limited) addition, there is no need to delay.*

## Efficient management of crisis response



**Recommendation 2. Formalise the decision-making and enforcing powers of the Development Policy Steering Committee – especially during crisis response and for matters requiring inter-departmental execution.**

This recommendation is based on Conclusion C4.

Addressing the absence of a dedicated development policy and development cooperation decision-making and enforcing body extending over all relevant departments, the Assessment Team recommends providing the Development Policy Steering Committee with stronger decision-making and enforcing powers – either generally or specifically during a crisis response period. The Development Policy Steering Committee could then decide about and execute decisions that represent trade-offs between different units in different departments. For instance, some issues pertaining to coordination, consultation and joint decision-making were identified when country/regional funds were used for humanitarian purposes. The Development Policy Steering Committee could address these issues in operations that relate to the triple-nexus approach.

*The recommendation is addressed to the Minister for Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade, the Permanent Secretary of State, the Under-Secretary of State for Development Policy, and the Management of the Department for Development Policy.*

*Timing: Without urgency but there is no need to delay.*



**Recommendation 3. Maintain the current approach of taking and operationalising portfolio-level decisions by the relevant units – within their respective mandates – also in providing crisis response.**

This recommendation is based on Conclusion C4.

With some issues identified in the decision-making across different units and departments, the MFA's pandemic response was usually efficient regarding issues that could be handled with individual units. Benefits of maintaining this principle of organisational subsidiarity acknowledged the Assessment Team recommends continuing to allow MFA units to make and enforce portfolio-level decisions within their respective mandates.

*The recommendation is addressed to all MFA departments and units engaged in development policy, development cooperation and humanitarian assistance.*

*Timing: this is already ongoing.*



**Recommendation 4. Strengthen information sharing on decisions made, particularly with regards to the status of decisions, to who needs to apply it and how to do it/where to get advice.**

This recommendation is based on Conclusions C4 and C6.

Acknowledging that distance work challenged information and knowledge sharing and peer learning between colleagues, the Assessment Team recommends exploring new ways to strengthen MFA internal communication on adjustments made to policies and guidelines during crises and focus on supporting management and staff in operationalising them. This could be done through different means, such as (online or offline) tutorials, fireside chats, or expert/peer clinics focusing on a specific topic.

*This recommendation is addressed to the Development Policy Steering Committee (which should take the lead), but all departments and units engaged in development policy, development cooperation and humanitarian assistance, as well as in communications, should contribute.*

*Timing: Immediate start.*

## **Risk management and supporting operations and planning during crises**



**Recommendation 5. For crises response, rely on multi-bi as a means of delivery, and in other channels of delivery, carefully transfer authority and responsibility towards local stakeholders.**

This recommendation is based on Conclusions C2 and C5.

Acknowledging that relying on both funding multilateral donor initiatives and the work of relevant multilateral organisations was successful, we recommend the MFA continues making use of these channels and partnerships in any crisis response.

While the local partners, staff and consultants assuming greater roles and responsibilities also contributed greatly to Finland's pandemic response, they could in the future provide yet more participation and input. Thus, we recommend:

1. Continue developing the capacities of the partners of the Finnish CSOs in the field and focus on supporting building their resilience and capacity in crisis response;
2. Invest in the capacity of locally hired embassy staff, as well as local consultants and local project staff. In this context, consider working with partners in project identification and planning, implementation and evaluation of the bilateral projects. This will help to build the capacity of local development cooperation consultants' savvy of the Finnish cooperation and to rely increasingly on; and
3. Consider factoring in the design of new interventions elements of developmental evaluation that would allow for revising the implementation strategy. This would be beneficial, particularly when it has not been possible to undertake the planning process with usual rigour. This could mean having an "implementation critical friend" who could be local or based in Finland, depending on the case-specific needs.



*This recommendation is addressed to all departments and units engaged in development policy, development cooperation and humanitarian assistance; with specific tasks assigned to KEO-30 (point 1), embassies in partner countries (point 2), and KEO-80 and the implementers of the Framework Agreement for Programme Planning with departments and units implementing development cooperation programmes and projects.*

*Timing: partially ongoing and immediate start and/or intensification.*



**Recommendation 6. Make tangible plans for building back better and greener.**

This recommendation is based on Conclusion C5.

The building back better and greener needs to kick in full blast soon, and the MFA units and departments should accelerate planning for its implementation. For the MFA to contribute to building back better and greener, we recommend considering identifying existing (or developing) parameters, including key performance indicators within the development policy aggregate indicators, to guide planning and revising development cooperation interventions to indeed become better and greener.

*The recommendation is addressed to the Development Policy Steering Committee (which should take the lead). KEO-01 or KEO-10 should facilitate. But all departments and units engaged in development policy, development cooperation, and humanitarian assistance should contribute.*

*Timing: Immediate start.*



**Recommendation 7. In the next crisis, once it hits and the first parameters are known, quickly develop a specific crisis risk assessment template and apply it to all ongoing and planned projects.**

This recommendation is based on Conclusion C5.

For any future crisis, we recommend the MFA – once the first parameters of the new crisis are known – quickly develops a crisis-specific risk assessment template and applies it to all ongoing and planned projects. Such a template should include risk identification and concrete suggestions for reaction/mitigation. For example, for the COVID-19 pandemic, it could be based on assessing capacity and gaps at the MFA central level, in the Embassies and at the implementation of the interventions, as well as assessing the new and changing needs in the domains of development policy and cooperation and humanitarian assistance, and identifying the possible impact pathways therein. Such template-based risk assessment can either be done centrally by, e.g. hiring consultants for a quick risk assessment or in a self-assessment modus by the respective MFA units themselves.

*The recommendation is addressed to the Development Policy Steering Committee (which should take the lead). KEO-80 should facilitate. But all departments and units engaged in development policy, development cooperation, and humanitarian assistance should contribute.*

*Timing: When becomes acute, i.e. when the first parameters of a crisis are known (usually weeks or maximally a few months into the crisis).*



## Knowledge management in crises



**Recommendation 8. Focus on obtaining information on the impact of the pandemic on implementation and results of ongoing work (in all channels) and on influencing the multilateral, CSO and other partners to do for their part.**

This recommendation is based on Conclusions C5 and C6.

With results from development cooperation at the time of the pandemic not yet known, assessing its successes and failings cannot be done, nor can lessons be fully identified or learned. For this and to remain better informed of also effectiveness and coherence during the next crises, we recommend:

1. Commissioning an impact evaluation of selected bilateral and CSO development cooperation projects with a baseline assessment conducted as soon as possible and the evaluation of impact in two to three years. These exercises should not be summative evaluations but rather focus on deriving lessons learned on what worked and what didn't;
2. Deepening the use of digital tools such as those based on mobile technology and AI in monitoring, evaluation and learning; and
3. Experimenting with/adding self- and remote monitoring of projects by local implementers (desk review, expert-supported pilots, general guidance & rollout & local capacity building, punctual verification missions).

*This recommendation is addressed to EVA-11 and KEO-80 with departments, units and partners to the Framework Agreement for Decentralised Evaluations and Reviews (points 1, 2, 3), and all departments and units engaged in development cooperation (particularly point 3).*

*Timing: Immediate start for the baseline assessment for the evaluation of impact in two to three years; immediate start for activities in points 2 and 3.*

## Supporting the staff during a crisis response



**Recommendation 9. Influence the relevant authorities and legislation, rules and regulations, as well as budget processes that restrict the MFA from discharging its full duties as an employer in the areas of staff health and safety.**

This recommendation is based on Conclusion C7.

Going beyond the mandates of the MFA and this assessment tasked to make recommendations that the MFA can operationalise, the Assessment Team could not make a direct recommendation to address the part of the conclusion C7 that states that the MFA could not secure the safety of all staff at equal footing throughout the pandemic. Instead, a recommendation can only be made for the MFA management to continue influencing the competent authorities to either secure delivery of (in this case coronavirus) vaccinations to be timely administered to the MFA staff in embassies and missions, or the budget planning to allow flying in people from the embassies and missions for taking the vaccinations in Finland.

*The recommendation is addressed to the Minister for Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade, the Permanent Secretary of State, with contributions from the relevant authorities concerned.*



*Timing: this is already ongoing but should be further intensified based on the findings of this assessment and the experiences made during the pandemic.*



**Recommendation 10. Strengthen crisis resilience of MFA human resources by more flexibly adapting staff workloads and shifting capacities.**

This recommendation is based on Conclusion C7.

The MFA should develop and implement a headquarters crisis preparedness plan (which would cover all MFA staff, including in embassies, missions and Helsinki) and enable relocating human resources where they are most needed. While going beyond the mandate of this assessment confined in the domain of development policy, we would recommend the MFA during crises to aim at a ministry-wide review of the units' workloads and circulate staff from the units with lessened workload to those with the most additional workload.

As a part of such a plan or separately, we recommend for the current extended pandemic:

1. As a first step, unit directors and then department directors should review pandemic-related extra/less workload and adjust responsibilities and annual targets accordingly;
2. When headquarters ends, the MFA should invest in bringing units/staff together, especially rotated/new staff to events and coaching; and
3. The MFA should develop and adopt a human resources crisis response plan to be activated if MFA staff needs to revert to distance work again in the future. The main elements of such a plan would be:
  1. Ongoing standby IT equipment and connectivity readiness, enabling all key staff to work effectively from home); and
  2. Adaptation of the MFA human resource policies to reduce work burden (in terms of responsibilities and work hours) on staff in untenable headquarters situations. For example, this could be based on an assessment of the number of sqm living space per person the degree to which staff is required to take care of children or other dependants at home. In addition, the MFA should establish a contingency budget for hiring external support to compensate for the loss of staff capacity during crises.

*The recommendation is addressed to the Minister for Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade, the Permanent Secretary of State, the Under-Secretary of State for Development Policy, and the Under-Secretary of State for Internal and External Services. The formation of a task team reporting directly to the Minister or the Permanent Secretary of State may be useful to facilitate coordination across departments. All departments and units engaged in development policy, development cooperation and humanitarian assistance should contribute.*

*Timing: Immediate start.*



# The Assessment Team

## **Sari Laaksonen, Team leader**

Sari works as a consultant focusing on sustainable development and covers development policy and strategy, as well as all phases of the programme and project life-cycle management, most notably evaluation. Sari has worked in-country for the UN, from the headquarters' positions of UN agencies and the WTO, at the MFA Finland, as a start-up entrepreneur and as an International Consultant, typically serving as a Team Leader. Her focus areas within sustainable development include economic development and expertise on the EU and in Finland's development policy, incl. human rights-based approach; and cross-cutting elements such as inclusiveness, gender and climate sustainability. Recent strategic evaluations Sari has led include Evaluation of Finland's support to Economic Development, Job Creation and Livelihoods; Evaluation of United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) contribution to the African Continental Free Trade Agreement and the Mid-Term Evaluation of the African Union's African Minerals Development Centre.

## **Markus Palenberg, Deputy Team Leader**

Markus Palenberg is the Managing Director of the Institute for Development Strategy.

Markus works as a researcher, evaluator and consultant. His research focuses on evaluation methodologies such as tools for efficiency analysis, the concept of results chains, Results-Based Management (RBM), and causal attribution and contribution. As an evaluator, he conducts theory-based evaluations of institutions and their work in the development arena. Markus also consults programmes and networks on impact strategies, internal governance arrangements and M&E systems. Over the last fifteen years, Markus conducted more than thirty research and consulting assignments in the public and private sector and led more than 10 comprehensive program and institutional evaluations.

## **Saila Toikka, Emerging Evaluator**

Saila Toikka has 11 years of experience as a project and programme professional, mainly for UN agencies. Saila has gained insight into a wide range of topics relating to sustainable development, climate change, environment and security, and inclusive local governance in fragile contexts. Her main area of expertise is developing monitoring and evaluation systems and methods for effective development programming. She has managed and coordinated 15+ project evaluations in the Evaluation Office of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and participated in strategic evaluations for the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland and UNEP as the evaluation team member. In addition, Saila has worked in Monitoring and Evaluation for the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in Uzbekistan and Afghanistan, and most recently for Finland's largest development cooperation CSO. Holding a Master's Degree in Public Administration, she has also studied International Development and completed numerous professional training courses evaluation practice and methods.



### **Petra Mikkolainen, Service Coordinator**

Petra Mikkolainen is a senior expert in international cooperation, specialising in large-scale complex development policy and programme evaluations. She has worked for seven years in long-term field positions in both implementation and programme management positions dealing with multiple sectors. Her areas of expertise include mainstreaming cross-cutting objectives, such as gender equality, non-discrimination, and environmental and social sustainability. Currently, she acts as the Deputy Service Coordinator of the MFA of Finland Evaluation Management Services Framework Contract.

### **Roosa Tuomaala, Project Manager**

Ms Roosa Tuomaala has 7 years of experience in development consulting, project management and research, and a particular interest in monitoring and evaluation. Currently, she is working as an Emerging Evaluator, Project Manager, and Consortium Focal Point in the Evaluation Management Services Framework contract with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. In 2018-2020, she worked in the regional Southern Africa Innovation Support Programme (MFA Finland) in Namibia, and in 2015-2016, she supported the evaluation of Finland's development collaboration in Eastern Europe and Central Asia (Wider Europe Initiative, 2014-2017).





# Annex 1: Terms of Reference: Assessment of the Response of Finnish Development Policy and Cooperation to COVID-19

## 1. Introduction and Rationale

The COVID-19 pandemic is a global threat that has required urgent actions and international co-operation and continues to do so. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (MFA) has adapted its development policy and cooperation to better meet the needs of people affected by the pandemic. The MFA has adapted and intensified its interventions to respond directly to the health crisis and mitigate the pandemic's secondary impacts.

Learning from experiences, lessons, and insights is critical to effective crisis response and recovery efforts and in identifying solutions and good practices that lead to sustainable development results. This assessment enables the MFA to learn from the response to COVID-19 for responding to future crises. Thus, the assessment allows the MFA to capitalize on the lessons learnt, both positive and negative, in the management of such a crisis and beyond (on an organisational and strategic level).

Therefore, the purpose of the assessment is to further enhance the MFA's ability to respond and adapt development policy and cooperation and related actions in crises by learning from the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. By understanding the different approaches in which MFA responded to the COVID-19, relevant insights and lessons can be generated to inform future responses in other crises.

To that extent, this forward-looking assessment is expected to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the management of development policy and cooperation in view of the COVID-19 response and to document them. Based on the related findings, the assessment will draw justified conclusions and make recommendations for future management of development policy and cooperation to maximise the ability to respond to sudden crises. Moreover, the results are expected to benefit the MFA's work on strengthening the humanitarian-development nexus in implementing the development policy and cooperation.



## 2. Context

### 2.1. International policy context

The COVID-19 pandemic is more than a health crisis; it is a socio-economic, humanitarian, security, and human rights crisis. The devastating impacts of the COVID-19 on developing countries have tested the limits, ingenuity, and flexibility of development cooperation while also uncovering the best practices. Like much of the world, the pandemic took development cooperation providers by surprise. They have had to be fast and flexible to adjust their operations to respond to the crisis in partner countries. No sector remained unscathed by the pandemic.

The Development Assistance Committee (DAC)'s humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach has been useful, reminding us not to forget longer-term development while meeting the immediate needs created by the crisis, doing joint planning and programming, and integrating the basis for recovery into the emergency response. In Finland's response, the nexus approach has been intended to be included.

The Sustainable Development Goals are not just off the track; they are in reverse in a number of developing countries. Poverty is increasing for the first time significantly. There are also parallel crisis situations in many countries, e.g. the political and natural disasters in Haiti, an armed coup in Myanmar and Taliban taking over in Afghanistan, which deepens the COVID-19 through difficulties to the governments to react to the pandemic.

Calls to "build back better"/"build forward better" are getting louder. The pandemic will be more protracted if populations in developing countries don't access the vaccines, and the global economic and development consequences will be even more severe and long-lasting in poorer countries in which public debt and revenue limit "building back better" and not only in the short run. Nordic countries have been working on a blueprint for better and greener recovery under the header "Building Back Better and Greener". Finland has emphasized the word "Greener" to highlight the importance of climate sustainability and low-carbon development.

The emerging data highlight that the COVID-19 pandemic has intensified violence against women on a global level. Before the pandemic, one in three women experienced physical or sexual violence, but international organisations have experienced an increase in contacts to helplines in many countries since the outbreak. **At the same time, the focus on responding directly to the pandemic has in some countries diverted attention away from violence against women and provision of, e.g., sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR).**<sup>8</sup> These tendencies have also been confirmed by recent evaluations, including the "**Process evaluation of three donor agencies' response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Bolivia**" (Sida, 2021). **This calls for a specific focus on gender equality, ensuring women's rights, and social inclusion in the process of "Building Back Better"**. There is also serious human rights issues in fragile countries and pressure by authoritarian regimes towards civil society actors and oppositions.

From the outset of the pandemic, the United Nations (UN) system started to mobilize funds in a comprehensive manner. It led to the global health response, provided life-saving humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable, established instruments for rapid responses to the socio-economic

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/in-focus-gender-equality-in-covid-19-response/violence-against-women-during-covid-19>



impact, and laid out a broad policy agenda for action on all fronts. It also provided logistics, common services, and operational support to governments and other partners around the world on the front lines of the pandemic as they mounted national responses to this new virus and unprecedented global challenge. In Finland's response, the multilateral system and multilateral support have been dominant. Especially in the immediate response, Finland allocated significant funding to humanitarian assistance and the WHO. Additionally, the immediate support to alleviate the pandemic was channelled through multilateral organisations. In fall 2020, humanitarian funding was also channelled through Finnish CSOs.

According to the UN, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted severe fragilities and inequalities within and among nations. Coming out of this crisis will require a whole-of-society, whole-of-government, and whole-of-the-world approach driven by compassion and solidarity, which is more complicated in fragile countries and authoritarian and/or conflict countries. The UN Secretary-General has launched the UN Comprehensive Response to COVID-19 to save lives, protect societies, recover better. The UN has been seeking funding through three main plans: 1) Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan to address immediate health needs; 2) Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP) to ease the impacts in the 50 most vulnerable countries, and 3) UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to deliver rapid recovery.

The global humanitarian COVID-19 response was USD 6.6 billion in 2020. Out of this amount, USD 3.7 billion was channelled through the UN's Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP) for COVID-19. The funding rate constituted 40% out of the total funding appeal of USD 9.5 billion. The European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (EU/ECHO) was the third-largest donor. In addition, USD 2.9 billion was directed outside the GHRP (including for the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, WHO, and CSOs). The GHRP was concluded on 31 December 2020, and COVID-19-related humanitarian needs and responses were integrated to the Global Humanitarian Overview and regular Humanitarian Program Cycle. In 2021, the overall humanitarian funding requirements for UN-coordinated response were USD 36.5 billion.<sup>9</sup>

Moreover, the Team Europe approach is part of Finland's response. Finland closely follows the COVID-19 response of EU institutions, member countries, and European financial institutions (the European Investment Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and national financial institutions). Total funding has been about EUR 40.5 billion.

## **2.2. Earlier and ongoing evaluations referring to the response to COVID-19**

There have been and are many ongoing or planned evaluations and assessments on the response to COVID-19. These can provide useful lessons and insights. Some examples of key finalized evaluations or assessments are presented below:

- COVID-19 Global Evaluation Coalition: Early Synthesis Report;
- OECD: Development Cooperation Report 2020 – Learning from Crises, Building Resilience;
- Enabel: Evaluation of Enabel's Response to the COVID-19 pandemic;

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<sup>9</sup> <https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/952/summary>



- IEO, UNDP: Reflections. Lessons from Evaluations: Learning from past Crises for Recovering from COVID-19;
- UNSG/SWE: Early Lessons and Evaluability of the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery MPTF;
- Joint Evaluation of the Protection of the Rights of Refugees during the COVID-19 Pandemic;
- ALNAP: Rapid Review of responding to COVID-19;
- UNICEF: Real-time Assessment of UNICEF's Ongoing Response to COVID-19 in Eastern and Southern Africa; and
- Sida/SDC/GAC: Process evaluation of three donor agencies' response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Bolivia (Sida, 2021).

The COVID-19 Global Evaluation Coalition<sup>10</sup> has prepared a shared evaluation framework that elaborates six key questions around which participants are generating evidence.

The Coalition also has a modular and phased collaborative evaluation process to inform real-time COVID-19 response recovery efforts and drive evidence-informed decisions. The second phase includes an early synthesis focusing on the first year and is to be updated during the fourth quarter of 2021. The third phase aims to evaluate the overall response and consolidate learning to inform the future.

The early synthesis report was published in June 2021. According to the report, the speed of initial responses, both for new support specific to COVID-19 and for adjusting programming and allowing flexibility in working and partner requirements, worked well. Additionally, there has been embracement of innovations and a higher relative risk appetite to leverage ideas supporting response efforts. The response has also been built on trusted partnerships and leveraging existing coordination mechanisms to quickly deploy resources at scale quickly.

The report acknowledges that there are operational and implementation challenges. These include the movement restrictions caused by COVID-19 that affected the operational capacity and reduced the opportunities of implementing agencies, government counterparts, and beneficiaries to participate fully and engage in project activities. In addition, there are gaps in financial and results data, challenges in consistent communication and, (in some cases) reduced participation in monitoring, reporting, and evaluation.

The report also highlights unsustainable pressures on staff and insufficient focus on systems strengthening. The systems strengthening includes health systems and preparing for a large-scale vaccine rollout, as well as organisations' insufficient reactivity and slowness to revisit decisions or update strategies as the crisis continued, new information became available, and the scale and duration of the pandemic became evident. On these issues, corrective actions are needed.

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<sup>10</sup> The COVID-19 Global Evaluation Coalition is a network of the independent evaluation units of countries, United Nations organisations, international INGOs, and multilateral institutions. Participants work together to provide credible evidence to inform international co-operation responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and helping to ensure lessons are learnt and that the global development community delivers on its promises.



The OECD Development Cooperation 2020 Report reveals that the pandemic tested development cooperation in unique ways. It has shaken up working practices, partnerships, and business models and put unprecedented strain on public finances. Against this backdrop, development cooperation agencies showed impressive agility in responding to the health and humanitarian aspects of the pandemic while also ensuring program continuity. They also displayed creativity in reallocating budgeted funds and obtained new resources. Initial estimates in the report suggest that Development Assistance Committee (DAC) mobilized USD 12 billion for COVID-19 support to developing countries. However, there are signs that a funding crisis may be on the horizon. Though many actors indicated, they would protect official development assistance (ODA) budgets and some have even increased development cooperation budgets in this period, the global economic impacts of the crisis make it uncertain whether ODA volumes can rise or hold steady to meet growing needs.

There were also missed opportunities as the COVID-19 crisis unfolded, with implications that will become clear with time. Many of the appeals for funding throughout 2020 did not meet their targets. Limited sharing of evidence and data meant that decisions had to be taken in the face of extreme uncertainty. While international coordination has been successful, to a degree, the international community struggled to broker coordinated responses and action when they were needed most.

### **2.3. MFA's response to development policy and cooperation**

The MFA's response during the pandemic has had the same overriding objective as all Finland's development cooperation – creating better living conditions for people who live in poverty and oppression. In April 2020, the MFA prepared general guidelines to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in developing countries (Aski, PCORMY1H-15). In the response, the MFA stressed the importance of balancing acute response to COVID-19 and long-term development policy and cooperation.

Moreover, MFA's response took into account immediate humanitarian needs and the need to strengthen stability, well-being, and resilience in society in the longer term. Preparedness was also emphasized, including the ability to recognize early signs of pandemics, inform others on risk situations, ability to prevent and limit epidemics, and ability to respond and act in the wake of the pandemic. The nexus of humanitarian assistance, development cooperation, and peacebuilding were important in the response.

The guidelines emphasize acting on many levels: internationally through strengthening multilateralism, at the EU level, jointly with the EU and Nordic countries, and domestically.

The general guidelines included lessons learned. The guidelines mentioned the need to analyze and utilise the experiences gained from this pandemic for crisis resistance and risk management and possible future pandemics. Considering many requests for material and other types of support from different countries, to most of which Finland could not respond, it became essential to jointly assess Finland's ability to show support and EU solidarity in similar situations in the future.

At a later stage, the MFA has emphasized vaccine solidarity with the EU Member States and Commission to ensure equitable access to therapeutics and medicines, vaccines and diagnostics needed to respond to the pandemic. Finland considers COVID-19 vaccines a global public good and a prerequisite for ending the pandemic. Therefore, Finland has joined the COVAX cooperation mechanism that aims to accelerate the development, procurement, and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines globally. COVAX is the primary channel for multilateral cooperation to ensure equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines.



The MFA's response brought changes to the planning and management of development policy and cooperation. For example, the guidance for the Quality Assurance Board was revised in June 2020 to speed up the processing of interventions related to the COVID-19 response. The idea was to enhance the prompt response and secure that development policy and strategic planning steer the responses and the quality of COVID-19 interventions. Moreover, in CSO cooperation, the major adjustments were to abandon the requirement for the Finnish recipient organisation's self-financing in 2020 and reallocate funding among the already approved programs, projects, and humanitarian assistance of Finnish CSOs. Reallocations of funding have also been made within country programs.

In terms of funding, Finland's response to COVID-19 has been altogether EUR 107 million (May 2021). Of this amount, nearly EUR 95 million are new or planned funding decisions, and approximately EUR 12 million are reallocations. Emphasis has been on multilateral cooperation for global preparedness and response, and most of the new funding has been through multilateral organisations. The most significant shares have been to World Health Organisation (WHO) EUR 11.5 million; GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance (COVAX Facility, Advanced Market Commitment AMC) EUR 10 million; Education Cannot Wait EUR 6 million; Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) EUR 5.4 million; Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) EUR 5 million; and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFCR) EUR 8.5 million.

Support through humanitarian organisations has been approximately EUR 35 million, and for bilateral cooperation, approximately EUR 22 million. Furthermore, Finnish civil society organisations (CSOs) have redirected EUR 5 million of their funding to COVID-19 response.

Additionally, support to the private sector development in developing countries is supported through Finnfund. Special risk financing is provided based on a *loss compensation* commitment, whereby Finland *undertakes* to compensate *Finnfund* for a maximum of EUR 75 million. The new commitment was justified due to the growth of Finnfund's funding portfolio and the declining world economic outlook due to the COVID-19 crisis.

### 3. Purpose and objectives of the assessment

The main **objective** of the assessment is to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the management of Finnish development policy and cooperation and humanitarian assistance in view of the COVID-19 response, and to document them. Based on the related findings, the assessment will draw justified conclusions and make recommendations for future management of development policy and cooperation and humanitarian assistance with a view of maximizing the ability to respond to sudden crises. Moreover, the results are expected to benefit the MFA's work on strengthening the humanitarian-development nexus in implementing the development policy.

The ultimate **purpose** of the assessment is to further enhance the MFA's ability to respond and adapt development policy and cooperation and humanitarian assistance in crisis situations by learning from the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.



## 4. Scope of the assessment

The assessment will cover both the acute and early phase of the COVID-19 pandemic and the longer-term response to build forward. Thus, it will focus on the period from March 2020 up till the end of 2021.

The focus of the assessment will be on the MFA level and no country case studies will be included. Instead, country examples can be included. The assessment will not cover the MFA's overall response to COVID-19 but only with regards to development policy and cooperation and humanitarian assistance.

Two related evaluations will be running in parallel to this assessment, namely, Evaluation on the Finnish Humanitarian Assistance (2021/2022) and Evaluation of the Finnish Development Policy Influencing in the European Union (2021/2022). This assessment will not go in depth with issues related to Finland's humanitarian assistance. It will focus on how flexibly the MFA can act e.g., in allocating funding between different funding channels. It will establish synergies with the upcoming evaluation. It is acknowledged, that the support provided through Team Europe is one way to respond to the crisis, as part of multilateral funding. Issues more generally related to Team Europe will, however, be included in the evaluation on EU policy influencing.

The final scope will be agreed upon during the inception phase based on a desk study of the existing documentation.

## 5. Assessment questions

The following questions will be assessed:

### **Relevance:**

- How relevant have the response actions been considering Finland's development policy priorities and vis-à-vis the new needs and the new situation created globally by COVID-19?
- To what extent have the Finnish cross-cutting objectives, especially gender equality and non-discrimination, been taken into account in the response?
- Has the response process been inclusive and supportive to local needs and demands?

### **Efficiency/management:**

- To what extent has the MFA been able to react, and how flexible has the MFA been in its actions and resources (financial and human, humanitarian assistance and development cooperation)?
- What was the response ability at the MFA level? What were the level of preparedness and the possibilities to adjust?
- How has Finland's funding response been divided between direct funding and funding through multilateral partners and between humanitarian assistance and development cooperation? What have been the advantages and disadvantages of this?





- To what extent were the previous working methods and decision-making processes efficient and adapted to support the COVID-19 responses? Which concrete changes have been introduced during the COVID-19 period? Have these actions supported longer-term recovery? Have these been adequate? What have been the strengths and weaknesses? Is there room for improvement?
- To what extent have funding decisions been informed by evidence, needs assessment, risk analysis, and dialogue with partner countries? Did this result to changes in the risk management framework and mitigation measures at the country and MFA level? Where risks and their related mitigation and response strategies identified and budgeted for?

#### **Coherence:**

- How has Finland cooperated with other actors globally / country level? To what extent have Finnish responses been aligned to ensure coherent approaches at the global / country level, specifically within fragile states and countries in conflict, taking into account the capacity / willingness of the governments to respond?
- In the inception phase, an assessment matrix will be developed. The assessment matrix will include a further categorization and operationalisation of the assessment questions/issues presented above in view of the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria. That will include a further division of the questions into main questions and sub-questions. Given the potential synergies developed between multiple partners and funding instruments/modalities involved in the COVID-19 response process, the coherence criteria will be of particular importance to explore, together with relevance and efficiency.

## **6. General approach and methodology**

The following generic assessment approach will be applied and further refined during the inception phase of this assessment:

**A mixed-methods approach** will be applied, combining a blend of quantitative and qualitative assessment methods, adapted to the specific context and circumstances, and allowing for effective triangulation and verification of the evidence.

**Focus on the Development-Humanitarian-Peace nexus.** Implementing Agenda 2030 requires there to be coherence between humanitarian assistance and development cooperation while building a link to conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts. This triple nexus approach calls for strengthened cooperation between humanitarian, development, and peace. COVID-19 seems to have further sharpened the focus on the nexus and Finland has emphasized multilateral cooperation for global preparedness and response, and most of the new funding has been through multilateral organisations. For this reason, it is important to understand how Finland, together with other countries, has been able to ensure a coherent response, with multiple intervention types.

**Strong attention to all Finnish policy priorities, including a human rights based approach (HRBA) to development and cross-cutting objectives of non-discrimination, gender equality, climate resilience, and low emission development, will be included.** Finnish policies emphasize a twin-track approach which means combining mainstreaming (first track) with targeted actions (second track). A minimum principle of “do no harm” is to be ensured, with a conscious



strive towards a positive contribution within these areas. Therefore, the assessment will conduct a policy analysis of how Finnish development cooperation ensured adherence to these priorities during the COVID-19 period and to what extent such priorities informed decision making.

At the same time, the assessment will adopt a HRBA and develop a gender-sensitive framework to ensure that the analytical design, the process of data collection and analysis, and the synthesis of findings are effective in capturing and understanding patterns of human rights and gender equality.

**A learning and utilisation-focused assessment approach.** In line with the paradigm for utilisation-focused evaluations, the assessment will liaise with the OECD/DAC COVID-19 Global Evaluation Coalition during the entire process. The process will also include frequent interaction and dialogue with the MFA and the Reference Group. There are currently several ongoing and planned evaluations and assessments on the response to COVID-19. These could add useful lessons and insights to this assessment and vice-versa. If possible, an exchange of information will be considered during the implementation process. The early synthesis report Coalition published in early June 2021 will be used as a key reference for learning in the process. In addition, links will be established with the evaluation of Finnish humanitarian assistance, which deals with many similar issues. Although there will be the same emerging evaluator in both assignments, working days should be in-built to participate in each other's workshops (e.g., kick-off meetings and inception meetings) as an observer. Since the ToR of the evaluation of Finnish humanitarian assistance is expected by mid-October 2021, possible synergies could be looked at.

**A flexible and adaptive study design and data collection protocols.** COVID-19 response evaluations and assessments require an adaptive approach to overall implementation but also to interviewing, following the lead of the interviewees about what was on their minds and what they wanted to share. That requires adaptive, flexible, agile, and emergent interview protocols and interviewers.

## 6.1 Key methods and tools for data collection

The range of methods to be deployed and data sources to be used in this assessment should reflect the complex nature of the subject matter. The key methods anticipated for the assessment include:

**A desk study of existing documentation and communication/correspondences** (including MFA COVID-19 specific guidelines, instructions, cross-cutting objectives, internal administrative and financial documentation, internal and external correspondences and communications) as well as an assessment of relevant on-going evaluations and assessments.

**Key stakeholder interviews.** Interviews will constitute the primary source of information. To the extent possible, the interviews will be conducted face-to-face in-person in Finland, particularly those involving management and staff within the MFA. Otherwise, virtual forms will be used (Teams, Zoom etc.). During the inception phase, the assessment team will conduct initial scoping interviews with the reference group members and key resource persons from the MFA to scope the study. In the inception phase, the assessment team will also identify key stakeholders to be interviewed during the implementation phase. Key stakeholder categories are expected to include: i) MFA management and staff in Helsinki; ii) MFA management and staff posted at Finnish representations and embassies abroad; iii) representatives from multilateral partner organisations; iv) representatives from other donor agencies; v) representatives from larger Finnish CSOs and vi) other key stakeholder representatives (e.g., from the private sector). It is expected that a total of 50-60 interviews will be conducted.



**Smaller focus group discussions** may be conducted, either through Teams/Zoom or physically at the MFA in Helsinki (e.g., with stakeholders from the same department or organisation).

**Possible online survey** (through Survey Monkey Platform) to elicit quantitative and qualitative feedback from a diverse and broader range of respondents. In view of the COVID-19 restrictions, and since no field missions will take place, an online survey could be a means to allow for wider participation in the assessment for a larger diversity of views and triangulation of evidence. It will be decided in the inception phase whether a survey should be conducted or not and for whom the survey would then be targeted. However, it is assumed that it could involve staff from the Finnish embassies and representations abroad. To the extent possible, early survey results will be used as input for follow-up interviews.

## 6.2 Key elements in the data analysis

The following main elements will be included in the data analysis:

The analysis will include an assessment of the changes made in the **financial flows and commitments** as a consequence of COVID-19. This will include an assessment of how the adjustments have been executed both administratively and operationally (in dialogue with partners and internally) to learn for future crises.

**Policy analysis** will be included to assess whether decisions made on funding allocations have been in line with, and supportive to, the Finnish development policy priorities. As part of this, it will also be analysed how and to what extent **the cross-cutting objectives** have been considered in the decision-making process.

The assessment will identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) of the management of Finnish development cooperation in view of the COVID-19 response process as well as document them. For that purpose, the assessment will include **a SWOT analysis** as a simple but effective framework. The SWOT will focus on what the MFA has done particularly well in the COVID-19 response process as well as address any critical shortcomings and gaps in view of the new situation that emerged after the COVID-19 outbreak and the external factors at play.

To the extent possible, the assessment will include **comparison and benchmarking** with similar COVID-19 response evaluations/assessments undertaken by other countries (in particular, Sweden).

An analysis will also be included on the influence and effects of cross-cutting objectives (in particular HRBA, gender equality, and non-discrimination) in applying and implementing different aid modalities and instruments during COVID-19. As mentioned above, these issues came up as particular concerns in the recently concluded **“COVID Process evaluation of three donor agencies’ response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Bolivia” (Sida, 2021)**.

Illustration of any **“good practices”** will be used to highlight concrete and practical examples from the Finnish COVID-19 response process. The focus will be on the learning aspect. It is envisaged that the selected practices will represent examples from different areas (e.g., adjustment of procedures, financing, policy-making, communication, MFA HQ-Embassy interactions etc.) to demonstrate examples of coherence both in relation to other actors and internally within the MFA.



## 7. Management of the assessment (MFA)

The assessment is commissioned by the EVA-11. The Evaluation Manager of EVA-11 will be responsible for the overall management of the process. The Evaluation Manager will work closely with other units/departments of the MFA and other stakeholders in Finland and abroad.

This assessment is managed through the EMS, and it will be conducted by an independent assessment team recruited by the EMS service provider (Particip GmbH – Niras Finland Oy).

There will be one Management Team responsible for the overall coordination of the assessment. This consists of the EVA-11 Evaluation Manager, the Team Leader, and the EMS Service Coordinator and/or Deputy Service Coordinator (EMSC&D).

A reference group for the assessment will be established and chaired by the Evaluation Manager. The reference group is constituted to facilitate the participation of relevant stakeholders in the design and scoping of the assessment, informing others about the progress of the assessment, raising awareness of the different information needs, quality assurance throughout the process, and using and disseminating the assessment results.

The mandate of the reference group is to provide quality assurance, advisory support, and inputs to the assessment, e.g., through participating in the planning of the assessment and commenting on deliverables of the Consultant. The reference group is critical in guaranteeing transparency, accountability, and credibility, as well as the use of the assessment and validating the results.

The Team Leader will manage the assessment team. This requires careful planning to ensure that a common, consistent approach is used to achieve comparability of the data gathered and the approach used in the analysis.

The Team Leader will develop a set of clear protocols for the team to use and will convene regular online team meetings to discuss the approach. Particular attention should be paid to strong inter-team coordination and information sharing within the team during the process.

The assessment team is responsible for identifying relevant stakeholders to be interviewed and organising the interviews. The MFA and embassies will not organise these interviews or meetings on behalf of the assessment team but will assist in identifying people and organisations to be included in the assessment.

## 8. The assessment process, timelines, and deliverables

The assessment will take place during 2021/2022. It began in July-August 2021 by nominating the reference group and launching the process for identifying Team Leader candidates. The assessment follows the general phasing of the Evaluation Management Services (EMS) framework used by the Development Evaluation Unit (EVA-11). The timetable below is tentative, except for the final report.



**Phase A: Planning phase: September 2021 (SO1)**

- Preparation of the draft Terms of Reference for discussion with the Reference Group (RG)
- Deadline for the draft ToR: 20 September 2021
- Finalization of the ToR and submission for approval: 29 September 2021

**Phase B: Start-up phase: October 2021 (SO2)**

- Start-up meeting, 8 October 2021 (online)
- Recruitment of the assessment team members

**Phase C: Inception phase: October – November 2021**

- Submission of Draft Inception Report, 5 November 2020
- Inception meeting (incl. interviews), 16 (-18) November 2021 (Helsinki)
- Final Inception Report, 22 November 2021

**Phase D: Implementation phase: November – January 2022**

Desk review and conduct of consultations virtually and in Finland, **December – January 2022**

Preliminary Findings Workshop, **17-21 January 2022 (tbc) (Helsinki)**

**Phase E: Reporting/Dissemination Phase: February - April 2022**

- Analysis and draft reporting, February - March 2022
- Findings, Conclusion, and Recommendations (FCR) Workshop, 7-11 February 2022 (tbc) (Helsinki)
- Draft Final Report submission, 2-3 March 2022
- Meeting on Draft Final Report, 14-15 March 2022
- Final Report, 28-29 March 2022
- Public Presentations (possible catered to specific audiences) in April 2022.

The language of all produced reports and possible other documents is English. The timetables are tentative, except for the final reports.

**A. Planning Phase:** The Team Leader will submit the draft ToR in liaison with the Evaluation Manager and the EMS Service Coordinator.

**B. Start-up Phase:** Presentation of the approach and methodology by the Team Leader.



**C. Inception phase:** The inception phase will include an assessment of the availability and accessibility of strategic COVID-19 related documentation and communication. This will provide the basis for a comprehensive desk review during the implementation phase. The (draft and final) inception report will include the assessment plan and initial desk study. The inception report will include the following sections: background and context; initial desk study findings (strategic level only), further development of the analytical framework; finalization of the methodology and summarised in an assessment matrix including assessment questions/sub-questions, judgment criteria, methods for data collection and analysis (the assessment matrix will reflect the use of a gender-sensitive assessment framework and address relevant cross-cutting perspectives); final work plan and division of work between team members; tentative table of contents of the final report; possible data gaps; tentative implementation plan for stakeholder consultations with a clear division of work (participation, interview questions/guides/checklists, preliminary list of stakeholders and organisations to be contacted); communication and dissemination plan; analysis of risks and limitations and their mitigation; and budget. The structure of the assessment report and annexes or additional volumes will be agreed upon in the Inception meeting.

**D. Implementation phase:** At the end of the implementation phase, a Preliminary Findings Workshop will be conducted in Helsinki with key stakeholders to validate and align with the utilisation-focused approach of the assessment.

**E. Reporting and dissemination phase:** Final report (draft final and final versions) and the methodological note will be reviewed by the quality assurance expert. Production of the first draft of the 4-pager for communication purposes will be the responsibility of the Team Leader/Assessment Team. The first draft will be provided simultaneously with the first draft of the final report.

The final report will include an abstract and summary (including table on main findings, conclusions, and recommendations) in Finnish, Swedish, and English. The final report will be delivered in Word-format (Microsoft Word 2010) with all the tables and pictures also separately in their original formats. The revised reports have to be accompanied by a table of received comments and responses to them. In addition, the MFA requires access to the assessment team's tools, data sets, or interim evidence documents, e.g., completed matrices, although it is not expected that these should be of publishable quality. The MFA treats these documents as confidential if needed.

Each deliverable is subject to specific approval. The assessment team can move to the next phase only after receiving a written statement of acceptance by the MFA.

In addition to written deliverables, the Team Leader and the assessment team are expected to participate in workshops and give oral presentations, often supported by PowerPoint slides (esp. during phases D and E). Should the COVID-19 situation allow, the public presentation of assessment results will be held in Helsinki, with assessment team members present. In addition, the Team Leader and other team members will give a short presentation of the findings in a public Webinar. This presentation can be delivered from distance. In the event of continued travel restrictions, these two presentation events may be combined.

The Consultant is expected to provide agreed visual materials, such as a minimum of 3 alternatives for the cover picture for **EVA-11's** acceptance.



## 9. Expertise required

The assessment team should be composed of 2-3 international senior consultants (of whom one should be nominated as the Team Leader) with considerable evaluation experience and a Finnish-speaking emerging evaluator with proven M&E experience and research capacity. The expertise requirements for the Team Leader/ Team Members are:

- For the Team Leader: Strong team leadership and management track record and commitment to delivering timely and high-quality evaluation reports;
- Strong familiarity with Finnish development policy and cooperation and related decision-making procedures;
- Knowledge of international funding mechanisms and fund management;
- Extensive evaluation experience in centralized, policy level evaluations in development policy and cooperation;
- Readiness to use a variety of evaluation/assessment methods (e.g., participatory methods, survey, in-depth interviews etc.) and hands-on experience in collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data;
- Readiness and availability to disseminate the assessment results and recommendations in the way that it supports managing and learning of the MFA's staff and management;
- Good communication and people skills; ability to communicate with various stakeholders and to express ideas and concepts concisely and clearly in written and oral form;
- Should be flexible, available as well as able to commit and allocate sufficient amount of time to the entire assessment process, including when faced with unexpected changes; and
- Expertise on applying and evaluating human rights-based approach in development policy and cooperation and enhancement of the rights of women and girls as well as persons with disabilities.

Given the atypical nature of COVID-19 response evaluations and assessments, it strongly adds value if Team members have proven experience from similar COVID-19 response evaluations/assessments and expertise with the MFA systems.

The team should be gender-balanced, and the competencies of the team members shall be complementary. Team members' previous collaboration is seen as a strong advantage because of the relatively short and intensive period for data collection and assessment (an efficiency matter).

The need for a research/logistic assistant will be assessed during the inception phase. S/he would assist in e.g., organising the interview schedules, searching for the interviewees' and survey respondents' contacts, conducting the survey and any other such activities. That would allow team to focus effectively on carrying out the assessment. Depending on the need, a lumpsum will be specified as part of the assessment budget during the inception phase.

All team members shall have fluency in English. In addition, at least one of the team members needs to be fluent in Finnish.





## Quality assurance of the Consultant

### Internal quality assurance:

The consortium implementing this assessment will put in place a three-layer system of quality assurance for all products/reports: at the level of the Team Leader, through the EMSC&D, and in-house senior QA advisors.

The Consultant is in charge of the impeccable quality of English, Swedish and Finnish texts of the reports and related proofreading. The EMSC will be responsible for the good quality translations in Finnish. All deliverables shall be of publishable quality.

The assessment team should do their best not to exceed the total length of 80 pages for the main assessment report and prepare an executive summary that is publishable as a stand-alone document and that includes visualizations. A separate volume on annexes may be produced. It will be agreed upon during the inception phase which of the final deliverables are to be published. The inception report should also outline the structure of the main report and the planned contents of the annex(es).

The report should be kept clear, concise, and consistent. The report must follow the writing instructions and template provided by the MFA, and it should contain, among other things, the assessment findings, conclusions, and recommendations. The logic between those should be clear and based on evidence.

The final draft report(s) will be sent for a round of comments by EVA-11. The purpose of the comments is only to correct any misunderstandings or factual errors.

### External quality assurance:

It should be noted that EVA-11 has contracted an internationally recognized expert as a Critical Friend (external peer reviewer) for the whole process. The person interacts directly with EVA-11 and provides expert opinions on the planning and implementation of the evaluations. EVA-11 may or may not integrate any such external advice as part of their overall feedback and management responses to the assessment.

## 10. Budget

The total budget is estimated to be EUR 220,000, including a contingency for any unexpected expenses. The final budget will be decided during the Inception Phase. Due to COVID-19 related limitations, the budget does not include travel costs, but should the situation improve, such expenses may be included later. Contingency will be used for those costs.



## 11. Mandate

The assessment team is entitled and expected to discuss matters relevant to this assessment with pertinent persons and organisations. However, it is not authorized to make any commitments on behalf of the Government of Finland or the Ministry. The assessment team does not represent the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland in any capacity.

All intellectual property rights to the result of the Service referred to in the Contract will be the exclusive property of the Ministry, including the right to make modifications and hand over material to a third party. The Ministry may publish the result under Creative Commons license to promote openness and public use of assessment results.

## 12. Authorisation

Helsinki, 5.10.2021

Anu Saxén  
Director  
Development Evaluation Unit  
Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland

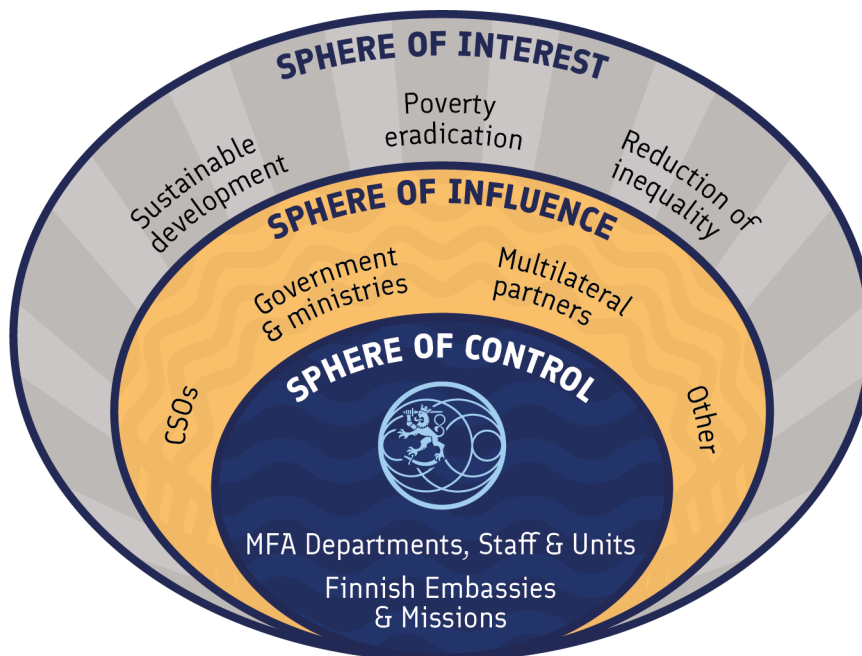


## Annex 2: Approach and Methodology

This section describes how the Assessment Team approached the assessment in close alignment with the ToR and the Inception Report.

The fact that this was an assessment and not a full-fledged evaluation was also reflected in the approach. Information gathering and analysis focused on how the MFA has managed Finland's development policy and cooperation in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In Figure 8, this corresponds to the blue-coloured "sphere of control".

Figure 8 Spheres of MFA control, influence and interest



Source: Assessment team

Accordingly, the assessment covers only three of the six standard evaluation criteria: relevance, efficiency, and (external) coherence. The other criteria – effectiveness, impact and sustainability – depended too strongly on in-depth information from the other spheres (yellow and grey) in Figure 1. The Assessment Team also did not attempt to analyse the development results of the MFA's pandemic response. This would have been beyond the assessment scope, and such results would not have yet materialised.

For conceptual clarity, the Assessment Team referred to the disease caused by the **coronavirus** as **COVID-19**. The worldwide spread of COVID-19 was called the **COVID-19 pandemic** or simply the **pandemic**. Because COVID-19 refers to the disease rather than the pandemic, the Assessment Team added the term "pandemic" to the title of this assessment.



## Assessment questions

The assessment answered the following four principal Assessment Questions (AQs), which were somewhat adjusted from the TOR:

1. How has the MFA responded to the COVID-19 pandemic in managing Finland's development policy and cooperation?
2. How relevant was the MFA's response?
3. How efficient was the MFA's response?
4. How coherent - in terms of international coordination - was the MFA's response?

The first Assessment Question is entirely descriptive and establishes the factual basis for answering AQs 2-4, which are more evaluative in character, meaning that they also involve professional judgement by the Assessment Team. While the set of specific questions from the TOR did not separate descriptive from evaluative questions, the Assessment Team considered it useful to do so in order to better demarcate objective fact-finding (AQ 1) from findings that involve perceptions of MFA staff and judgement by the Assessment Team.

Each principal AQ is backed up by several more specific questions. With some reordering, these cover all of the original TOR questions (Table 1).

**Table 1 Principal and specific Assessment Questions.**

PRINCIPAL AQ (ABBREVIATED)	SPECIFIC ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS	COVERAGE OF SPECIFIC QUESTIONS IN THE TOR <sup>11</sup>
<b>1. How has the MFA responded?</b>	<p>1.1 What decisions have been taken, and what changes have happened at the MFA – with respect to Finland's development policy and cooperation – in reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic? (this covers financial and other decisions taken, changes to policies, rules, regulations and decision-making processes, changes to foresight, risk management, and information flows, and changes to MFA staff working modalities and conditions)</p> <p>1.2. How was COVID-19-related funding allocated across the MFA's different funding channels? (i.e., multilateral, multi-bi and bilateral development cooperation, and humanitarian assistance)</p> <p>1.3 How has Finland cooperated with other actors globally and at the country level?</p>	<p>Draws on E1, E4 and E5, but includes more detail</p> <p>Adapted from the first part of E3</p> <p>The first part of C1</p>

<sup>11</sup> The TOR suggested nine specific questions structured along relevance (three questions), efficiency (five questions), and coherence (one question). The notation in the third table column refers to these questions. For example, "Second part of E5" refers to the second sentence in the fifth efficiency-related question in the TOR.



PRINCIPAL AQ (ABBREVIATED)	SPECIFIC ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS	COVERAGE OF SPECIFIC QUESTIONS IN THE TOR <sup>11</sup>
<b>2. How <i>relevant</i> was the response?</b>	2.1 How relevant was the MFA's response with respect to Finland's development policy priorities, including Human Rights Based Approach and Cross-cutting Objectives?  2.2 How relevant was the MFA's response with respect to the information available on how the pandemic changed the needs in the developing countries?  2.3 How relevant was the allocation of additional funding across funding channels?  2.4 To what extent have funding decisions been informed by evidence, needs assessment, risk analysis, and dialogue with partner countries?	Adapted from the first part of R1  Adapted from the second part of R1  Adapted from E3  The first part of E5
<b>3. How <i>efficient</i> was the response?</b>	3.1 How quick, flexible and internally coordinated was the MFA's response?  3.2 What were the levels of preparedness and the possibilities to adjust development cooperation and humanitarian assistance planned and underway?  3.3 To what extent were the existing working methods and decision-making processes efficient for supporting COVID-19 responses?  3.4 Have response actions enhanced future crisis response-ability? If so, in response to what kind of crisis? Has ability been enhanced for supporting longer-term recovery?	Adapted from E1  E2  Adapted from the middle part of E4  Adapted from the last part of E4, and understood to also cover the second part of E3
<b>4. How <i>coherent</i> was the response?</b>	4.1 To what extent has the MFA's response been aligned with the response of other donors to ensure coherent approaches at the global and country-level, specifically within fragile context, taking into account the capacity and willingness of the governments to respond?	Adapted from the second part of C1

## Stakeholders

- Main stakeholders constituting key interviewees of the assessment are:
- Ministry for Foreign Affairs leadership, managers and staff responsible for development policy and cooperation and humanitarian assistance in
  - MFA policy and regional departments and their respective units, as well as in
  - selected embassies and missions of Finland;
- MFA managers and staff responsible for the operationalisation and administration of development cooperation and humanitarian assistance, including through knowledge management and monitoring, evaluation and learning, risk management, economic planning, financial administration and statistics, as well as those working on personnel issues, human resources development and occupational wellbeing; and



- Selected key partners in the implementation of the MFA managed response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Key groups for interviews are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2 Key groups for interviews**

TARGET GROUP	DESCRIPTION	PURPOSE
<b>Leadership, Senior Management and Department leadership (and coordination)</b>	<p>If appropriate, Minister for Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade/KEUMIK Cabinet; Permanent State Secretary; Under-Secretary of State (Development Policy);</p> <p>Director generals, deputy director generals, and/or selected senior advisors from KEO, ALI, ASA and ITÄ</p> <p>Unit directors, team leaders and selected senior thematic advisors from KEO-10 (Unit for General Development Policy)</p>	<p>MFA and department-level decision-making, guidance for and coordination of overall response</p> <p>Policies, guidelines, and coordination of the Quality Assurance Group</p> <p>EU coordination and Nordic cooperation</p>
<b>Unit leadership</b>	<p>Unit directors and team leaders from the following units.</p> <p>First priority:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ALI and ASA units of selected bilateral case examples</li> <li>• KEO-50 (development banks)</li> <li>• KEO-70</li> <li>• KEO-90 (UN)</li> <li>• KEO-30</li> <li>• EUR-20 (General EU affairs and coordination)</li> <li>• KPO-30 (Sustainable trade)</li> </ul>	<p>Bilateral response</p> <p>Multilateral development cooperation response (development banks)</p> <p>Humanitarian response</p> <p>Multilateral development cooperation response (UN)</p> <p>CSO response</p> <p>Private Sector Instruments response</p> <p>Multilateral development cooperation response (EU)</p> <p>Multilateral response (trade organisations)</p>
<b>Case examples</b>	<p>Selected MFA staff from the above units and from MFA embassies and missions</p> <p>Possibly also:</p> <p>Selected staff from partner governments and partner organisations</p>	<p>Detailed response in selected case examples</p>
<b>Additional interviews</b>	<p>KEO-80 (Administrative and legal development cooperation matters)</p> <p>Possibly also the Secretariat for Nordic cooperation (in EUR department) or other stakeholders for Nordic cooperation</p>	<p>Financial management and reporting</p> <p>Coordination and coherence (between Nordic countries)</p>



## Information gathering and analysis

The Assessment Team collected information through interviews, from documents and from financial and project information provided by the MFA.

Interviews represented the principal source of information for this assessment. Overall, XXX interviews were held. Because of the ongoing pandemic, interviews were held online. They were semi-structured and loosely followed a standard interview guide (Box 1) while focusing on issues at hand with the specific interviewee. Over the course of the assessment period, interviews shifted from discussing exploratory and open questions towards validating and refining emerging findings.

**Desk review** covered both MFA and non-MFA documents:

1. **MFA-internal desk reviews** concerned documents summarizing the MFA's COVID-19-related decision-making (e.g., DPSG, QAG, ministerial meetings, nexus meetings), MFA policies, guidelines, regulations and announcements, COVID-19 update reports, and financial allocation memos.
2. The Assessment Team also **desk-reviewed MFA-external documents**. These were assessments conducted by other organisations on their response to the pandemic. Related desk-review findings are summarised in Annex 11.
3. The third source of information was **spreadsheets and documentation of financial decisions, as summarised in Annex 4**. A central source of information was the list of pandemic-related financial decisions that were maintained and updated by the Unit for Administrative and Legal Development Cooperation Matters (KEO-80).

### Box 1: Interview guide

This interview guide applies to general interviews with department and unit leadership. It also applies to interviews with MFA staff relevant to the case examples in units, embassies and missions.

1. **Introduction** (*this assessment, his/her responsibilities, since when in that position, etc.*)
2. **Narrative timeline of COVID-19 response** (*understand what changed because of COVID-19 and get an indicative timeline*)
  - a. In your own words, please describe how your department/unit/project reacted to COVID-19
  - b. What financial decisions were taken in response to COVID-19? When and why?
  - c. What other changes were made with respect to development cooperation plans and activities managed by your department/unit or in your project?
  - d. Was the Development-Humanitarian-Peace nexus considered part of the response? How?
3. **Relevance**
  - a. What was the rationale of this response with respect to Finland's development policy priorities?





- b. How did you (your department/unit) learn about what reaction was needed? How well did the response cater to those needs?

#### 4. Efficiency

- a. How quick and timely was the response?
  - i. From when you (your department/unit) were aware of what was required to a decision being made?
  - ii. From the decision to implementation (financial disbursement)?

#### 5. Coherence & coordination

- a. How was the response coordinated and synchronized with that of other donors?

#### 6. Looking forward

- a. What near- and long-term consequences and risks for development cooperation managed by the MFA do you anticipate?
- b. What needs and can be done about this?

#### 7. Strengths and weaknesses of the MFA (*this can also be covered during the earlier points, avoid duplication*)

- a. Considering all of the above, what would you consider the main internal strengths and weaknesses of the MFA's response to COVID-19? In terms of:
  - i. **Policies, rules and regulations** that support or stand in the way of a relevant, efficient and coherent response
  - ii. **Planning, decision-making and implementation processes**
  - iii. **Knowledge management**, i.e. generation and sharing of relevant information for identifying COVID-19 related needs and for deciding about and managing the response
  - iv. **Risk management**, i.e. the anticipation and management of COVID-19-related risks to ongoing and planned development cooperation activities
  - v. **Staff capacity**, i.e. COVID-19-related changes to MFA staff working conditions and the consequences this has for their work

#### 8. External opportunities and threats (*this can also be covered during the earlier points, avoid duplication*)

- a. Considering all of the above, what would you consider the most important factors *external to the MFA* that affect the MFA's response to COVID-19?
  - i. E.g., effects on development cooperation partners?
  - ii. E.g., effects on the MFA and its staff?

#### 9. Key learnings (*this can also be covered during the earlier points, avoid duplication*): What would you consider key learnings from the COVID-19 and the MFA's response for the future?

**Closing** (any other input for us? Who else to speak to? What documents to look at?  
Many thanks!)



Based on these three basic sources of information, the Assessment Team conducted the analyses required to answer the Assessment Questions. On the one hand, interviews, desk review and data analysis directly informed the Assessment Questions. On the other, they also provided the basis for further analysis.

The analysis of the **MFA's management response** documented changes fully or partly related to the COVID-19 pandemic along the following six dimensions:

1. **Financial response:** budget allocation decisions taken fully or partly because of COVID-19;
2. **Policy dialogue response:** changes to (multilateral) influencing activities and coordination with partners;
3. **Policies and procedures:** changes made to policies, guidelines as well as to the MFA's operating and decision-making procedures.
4. **Risk management:** changes made to existing (or development of new) risk management approaches
5. **Knowledge management:** changes made to MFA knowledge generation and management, including Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)
6. **Staff:** changes to working modalities and capacities of MFA staff.

In addition to the analysis of the MFA's response, the Assessment Team also conducted a response time analysis. To the extent feasible, this established timelines for major COVID-19 related events, related key MFA decisions, and related activities. The result was the semi-quantitative description of how fast the MFA was able to react to specific pandemic-related events once the need to act was established.

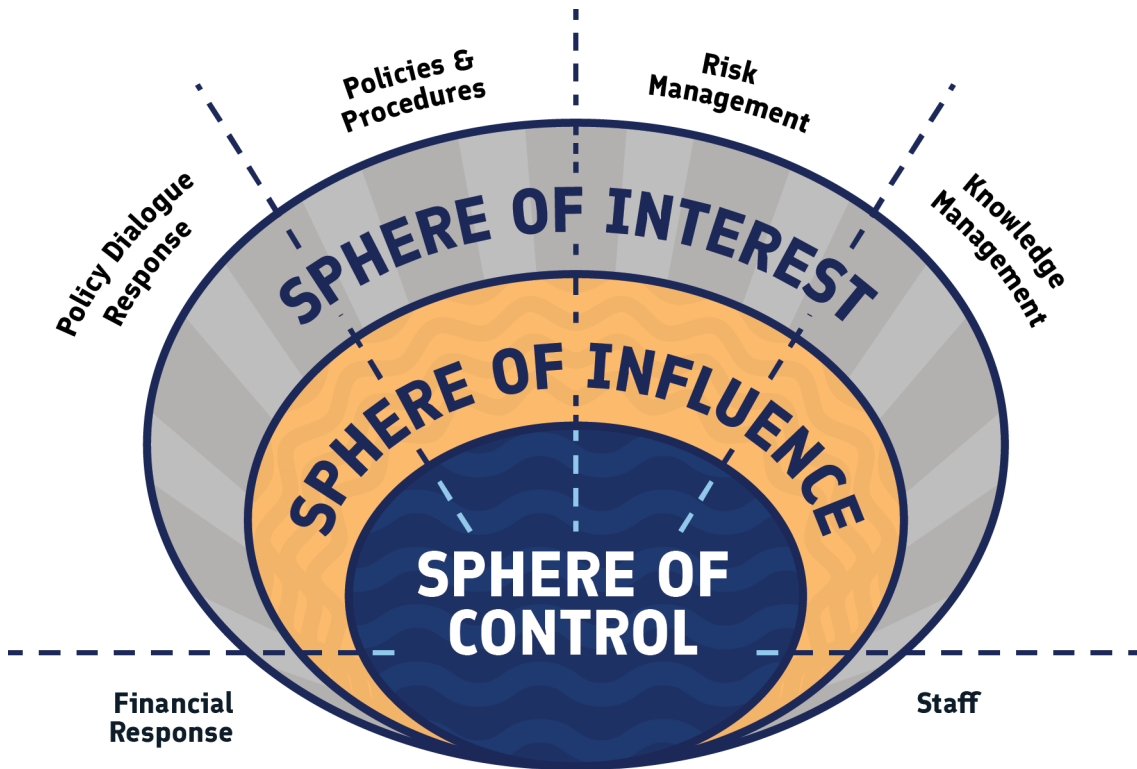
The Assessment Team conducted five focused case examples to illustrate and briefly showcase the specific aspects of the more generic MFA-wide response assessment. Because case example topics will differ significantly in nature, each case will cover the principal and specific Assessment Questions in its own way that is adapted to the nature of each case and the respective contexts. The rationale for selecting cases and the key findings for each case are summarised in Annex 5-9.

## Assessment Frameworks

The Assessment Team employed three frameworks to structure and guide its information gathering and analyses.

As briefly mentioned before, Figure 9 summarises the six dimensions used in the analysis of the MFA's pandemic response. It illustrates that these dimensions also apply to the MFA's partners (in the sphere of influence) and to the developing countries themselves (sphere of interest). While the assessment scope does not allow any in-depth analysis in these additional spheres, the analysis dimensions were also used when desk-reviewing other organisations' responses and during the case examples.

Figure 9 Pandemic response dimensions



Source: Assessment team

The second framework is the SWOT<sup>12</sup> analysis framework summarised in Table 3. It guided information gathering and was used to structure the formulation of conclusions and recommendations. It represents a standard framework widely used in consulting that segments issues along two dimensions: their help- or harmfulness and whether they are of the internal origin of the organisation under assessment, or rather represent attributes of the organisation's operating environment. Hence, applied to the MFA:

- **Strengths** are attributes of the *MFA* that are *helpful* for responding to the pandemic. Correspondingly, **weaknesses** are attributes of the *MFA* that are *harmful* and stand in the way of such a response.
- **Opportunities** and **threats** represent characteristics *external* to the *MFA* that help or harm its pandemic response.

12 SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.



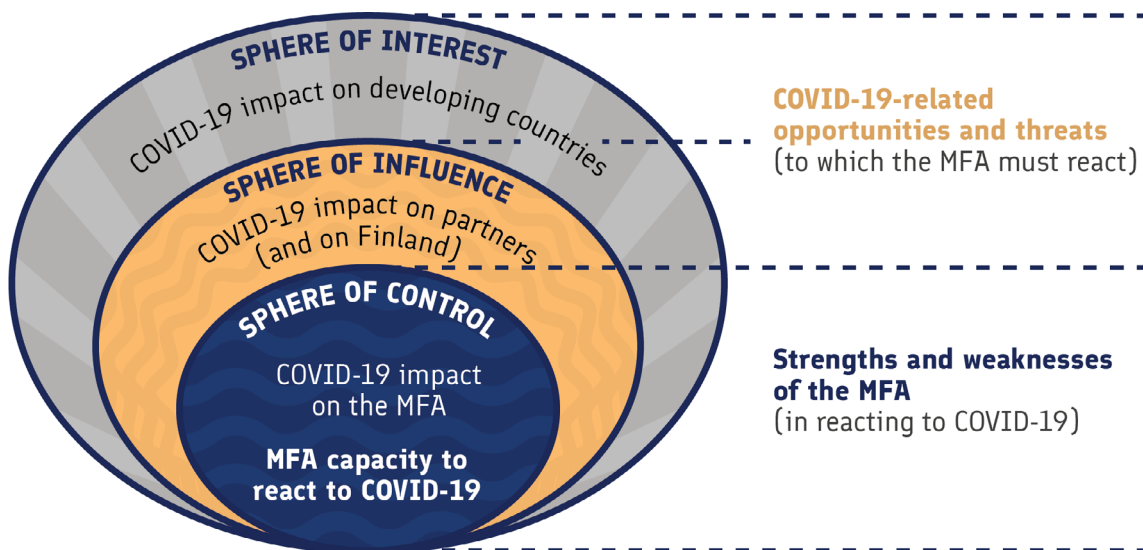
**Table 3 SWOT analysis framework**

	<b>POSITIVE (for optimal response to COVID-19)</b>	<b>NEGATIVE (for optimal response to COVID-19)</b>
<b>Internal origin</b> (attributes of the MFA)	<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<b>External origin</b> (attributes of the MFA's operating environment)	<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>

As illustrated in Figure 10, the MFA has different degrees of control over these four SWOT dimensions. Because of their internal character, strengths and weaknesses are – at least to some degree – factors that the MFA can directly control and manage. This means they can usually be addressed by straightforward lessons and recommendations.

In contrast, opportunities and threats represent MFA-external conditions and factors. The MFA has at best some influence over them, and often none at all. Here, lessons and recommendations must address how the MFA can best minimize risks and make use of opportunities.

**Figure 10 SWOT dimensions and spheres of control**



Source: Assessment team



## Annex 3: References and main documents consulted

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- MFA (2021). Report on Development Policy Extending Across Parliamentary Terms. Publications of the Finnish Government 2021:29
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- ILO (2021). ILO’s response to the impact of COVID-19 on the world of work: Evaluative lessons on how to build a better future of work after the pandemic. ILO Evaluation Office. December 2021. ([https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_mas/---eval/documents/publication/wcms\\_824659.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_mas/---eval/documents/publication/wcms_824659.pdf))



UNFPA (2021) Adapting evaluation questions to the COVID-19 pandemic. UNFPA Evaluation Office. February 2021.

Interim Report: System-Wide Evaluation of the UNDS Response to COVID-19, March 2022

**The Assessment Team consulted a broad range of MFA and government documents that are grouped and listed here:**

MFA (various). COVID-19 related project proposals and memorandums concerning multi-lateral cooperation in 2021

MFA (various). Department for Development Policy COVID-19-related guidelines and analysis on the COVID-19 effects on funding modalities, since March 2020

MFA (various). Department for Development Policy monthly overview reports on the COVID-19 situation in developing countries, dated from 29.3.2020 to 30.11.2021

MFA (various). Department for Development Policy documentation regarding the budgetary processes, including supplementary budget proposals, changes and reallocations of exclusive ODA budget (24.30.66) since March 2020.

MFA (various). Development Policy Steering Committee meeting minutes from 1.4.2020 to 17.11.2021

MFA (various). Emergency Committee meeting minutes from 25.2.2020 to 17.11.2021.

MFA (various). Guideline documentation concerning the distance work arrangements; duty travel; COVID-19 infections, and exposure situations; and COVID-19 testing from 12.2.2020 to 9.12.2021

MFA (various). Guidelines for locally hired staff, dated from 19.3.2020 to 15.1.2021

MFA (2021). Guideline for the Cross-Cutting Objectives in the Finnish Development Policy and Cooperation

MFA (various). Guidelines on Programme-Based Funding for Finnish INGOs, dated 19.7.2013 and 17.3.2021

MFA (various). Unit for Civil Society documentation regarding funding decisions and guidelines for Finnish INGO in 2020 and 2021

MFA (various). Meeting minutes of Ministerial meetings, dated from 3.4.2020 to 18.11.2020

MFA (various). Meeting minutes of Nexus working group, dated from 14.8.2018 to 4.6.2021

MFA (various). Meeting minutes of the Quality Assurance Committee, dated from 17.1.2020 to 8.11.2021

MFA (2020). Pandemic plan 24.4.2020



MFA (various). Regional departments' reports, memorandums and speaking notes relating to the COVID-19 situation since early 2020

MFA (various). Situation Picture by the Emergency Committee in 2021 and 2022 (3 reports).

MFA (2021). Staff coping survey findings

OECD (2021). Letter on Finland Mid-term Review, 25 March 2021, Helsinki – Paris. DCD/ME(2021)33 <https://www.oecd.org/dac/peer-reviews/DAC-mid-term-Finland-2021.pdf>

Prime Minister's Office (various). COVID-19 guidelines from 4.3.2020 to 21.8.2021

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World Bank: <https://blogs.worldbank.org/developmenttalk/covid-19-leaves-legacy-rising-poverty-and-widening-inequality> October 2021

Government budget proposals 2018-2021 <https://budjetti.vm.fi/indox/index.jsp>

Parliamentary decisions on government budget 2018-2021: [www.eduskunta.fi](http://www.eduskunta.fi)

COVID-19 Global Evaluation Coalition: Lessons from Evaluation <https://www.covid19-evaluation-coalition.org/lessons-from-evaluation/>

World Bank - IEG Lesson Library: Evaluative Resources and Evidence to inform the COVID-19 Response. Independent Evaluation Group <https://ieg.worldbankgroup.org/topic/covid-19-coronavirus-response>.

EvalCrisis – lessons learnt. European Union: <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/devco-ess/wiki/eval-crisis-lessons-learnt>

UNDP Evaluation During COVID-19: <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/guideline/covid19.shtml>





# Annex 4: Analysis of the MFA's pandemic-related financial decisions

The financial analysis informs the evaluation findings relating to relevance and efficiency, and to some extent, also coherence. First, this section presents the Assessment Team's (AT) approach. Then, key figures of the COVID-19 pandemic-related financial response are shown in the 'Overview of MFA's Financial Response.' This is followed by a more detailed description of the financial decisions processes and changes since the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Approach

The financial analysis is based on the appropriations within the budget category for the Exclusive ODA budget (24.30.66), covering the period from early 2020 to the end of 2021 and the related financial processes. While the analysis focuses on the COVID-19 pandemic-related budgetary shifts, references to the overall patterns are also made. The analysis is descriptive, and it covers the following levels of decisions:

- Level 1: Supplementary Budget Proposals through the parliamentary approval process (*Lisätalousarvioesitys*). These changes concern the current year's allocations to the Finnish Development Cooperation (24.30.66) and other reallocations within its approved budget sub-categories.
- Level 2: Changes to Exclusive ODA budget (24.30.66) allocations that require the Ministry of Finance's (MoF) approval (*Tilijaottelun muutos*). These changes concern reallocating funds from the previous years (within the 3-year budgetary window).
- Level 3: Reallocations within the nine subcategories of Exclusive ODA budget (24.30.66.1 through 24.30.66.9) (*sisäisen budjetin tarkistus and määrärahan ja myöntö- ja sopimusvaltuuksien sisäiset budjetit*). These concern the shifting of funds within these subcategories or new allocations to the units for the purpose defined in the decision.
- Level 4: This category contains financial allocations done internally by the involved units without requiring higher-level approval.

Each level is examined in terms of the change patterns and the extent to which the changes were motivated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis relies mainly on documented information according to the publicly available decision documentation and proposal and decision documentation by the MFA. The quantitative analysis is complemented by the analysis of the documentation and interviews about the decisions at hand.

Level 3 and 4 analysis is supported with categorising the decisions by the extent to which they seem motivated by the COVID-19 pandemic. This categorisation was done in collaboration with the MFA (KEO-80). The scale consists of the following three categories and criteria:

- **'Entirely COVID-19 motivated'** – Without the COVID-19 pandemic, the decision would not have taken place and (virtually) all funding in the decision is dedicated to the COVID-19 pandemic response;



- **‘Significantly COVID-19 motivated’** – Without the COVID-19 pandemic, the decision would possibly still have been taken but would have looked different. A significant portion of the funding is dedicated to COVID-19 response, but not all; and
- **‘Somewhat COVID-19 motivated’** – The decision is somewhat influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic but would not look significantly different without the pandemic.

For instance, Gavi’s COVAX programme’s support is considered an ‘entirely’ COVID-19 motivated financial allocation. At the same time, an increase of (or new extra core funding) to a multilateral partner as the pandemic response (e.g., for Gavi and WHO) is considered ‘significantly’ COVID-19 motivated because while the COVID-19 situation has influenced the decision at the MFA, use of this type of core funding exclusively for COVID-19 specific purposes is not certain.

‘Somewhat’ COVID-19 motivated decisions were originally added to the decision compilation list by the MFA and reflected a loose link to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the decision documentation does not explicitly contain information about the use of funds for the COVID-19 response. Hence, this represents the least well-defined and well-determined among the three categories and should therefore not be over-interpreted. In contrast, the “entirely” and “significantly COVID-19 motivated” categories are more clearly defined and should accurately reflect the realities of the MFA’s motivation for these decisions.

## Characteristics of the dataset

The Level 1 and Level 2 data compilation is based on budget proposals, related financial tables, justification memos and decisions from public sources, and on MFA internal memos.

The Level 3 and Level 4 analysis that constitutes the core analysis of the overall response of the MFA to the pandemic is based on the compilation of the decisions put together with the support of the MFA (KEO-80). The data set contains details regarding the amount of each allocation, recipient organisation, funding channel, geographic focus, unit, and a description. In some cases, the intervention code, the date of the decision and the weblink to information on the MFA webpage were also available and included. The data set was organised and cleaned for analysis. The final data set for the Level 3 and Level 4 analyses contains 73 decision items (or rows).

The data set does *not* include:

- Allocations or changes concerning the official development assistance (ODA) managed by other ministries than the MFA;
- Non-ODA allocations;
- Changes made within the Civil Society funding mechanisms managed by KEO-30 (within the budget category 24.30.66.8). A summary of these funds are provided at the end of the financial analysis section;
- Changes to the Finnfund risk guarantee; and
- Decisions initially included in the data set, but that had no explicit reference to the COVID-19 pandemic after closer examination.

The dataset does also not include ongoing core funding to multilateral organisations, even though part of this is used by these organisations for their respective pandemic responses. This is because



these core-funding decisions were not motivated explicitly by the pandemic and would have also been paid out in the absence of COVID-19.

Primarily, one decision item consists of one decision with a distinct intervention code. However, in some cases, one decision item has been divided into multiple rows as separate items to enable more detailed analysis. For instance, in the case of humanitarian allocations, items under one intervention code could be divided into multiple decision items (or rows) to bring nuance to the data (e.g., by the geographic location).

## Limitations

The data limitations mainly concern the Level 3 and 4 analyses:

- The data set does not cover the actions or decisions that were done within the mandate and scope of the multilateral partners that receive core funding from the development cooperation funds.
- The categorisation of the COVID-19 relevance always contains a certain degree of judgement based on the information available to the AT in the decision documentation and through the interviews and consultations with MFA staff members.
- Since Level 4 decisions are based on the internal arrangements of the respective MFA units, the dataset is likely not covering most of them.

Considering the above, the assessment team does not claim to cover all COVID-19 pandemic motivated financial decisions taken by the MFA in terms of official development Assistance. Because the data set was developed in close collaboration with the responsible unit in the MFA (KEO-80), the AT, however, assumes that it provides a rather complete overview of the “entirely” and “significantly” COVID-19 motivated Level 3 decisions.

In a similar vein, the summary of Level 1 and Level 2 decisions should also be fairly complete.

### Overview of MFA's financial response to the COVID-19 pandemic

The MFA's entirely COVID-19 motivated financial response to the pandemic through Exclusive ODA budget amounted to **EUR 88.4 million** from when the pandemic began until the end of 2021. In addition, decisions considered ‘significantly’ motivated by the COVID-19 situation covered **EUR 22.4 million**.

Together, these two categories represent a total financial response of **EUR 110.8 million** and cover 64 decision items. This amount represents 7.4% of the total approved budget<sup>13</sup> for the Exclusive ODA budget (24.30.66) 2020 and 2021.

The primary recipients of these COVID-19 motivated allocations were Gavi - the Vaccine Alliance, the World Health Organisation (WHO), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), and the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). Together, these recipients received 57.6% of the total EUR 110.9 million.

As outlined above, the “somewhat” COVID-19 motivated category is the least reliable because it is questionable and somewhat speculative which decisions to include – and which not. That category

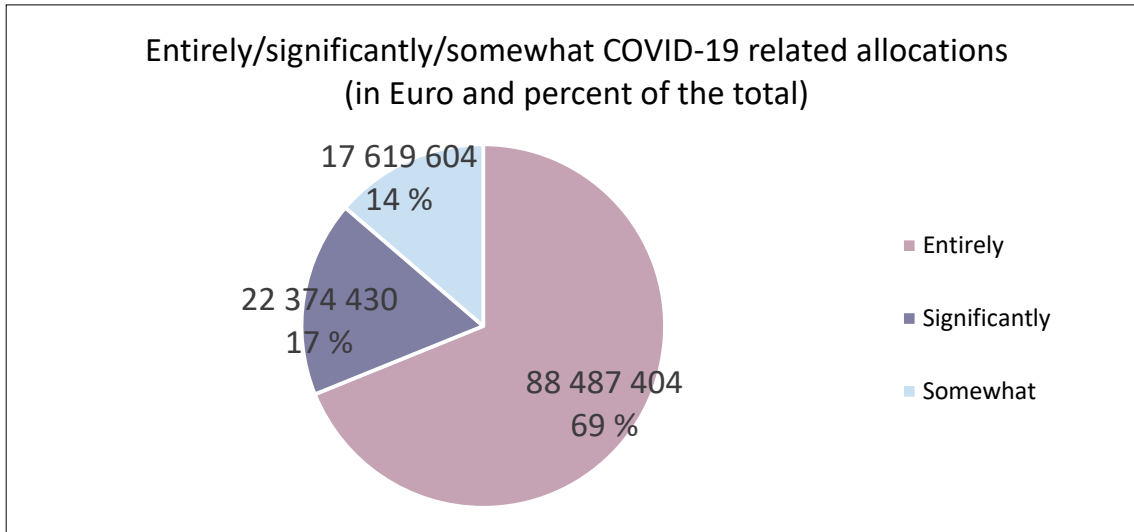
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<sup>13</sup> A total of EUR 1 505 795 000 (for budget title 24.30.66) in 2020 and 2021.



amounted to EUR 17.6 million but should not be over-interpreted and was not included in the total sum above, which, the AT suggests, best reflects the MFA's total financial COVID-19 response within the Exclusive ODA budget title. All three categories are shown in Figure 11.

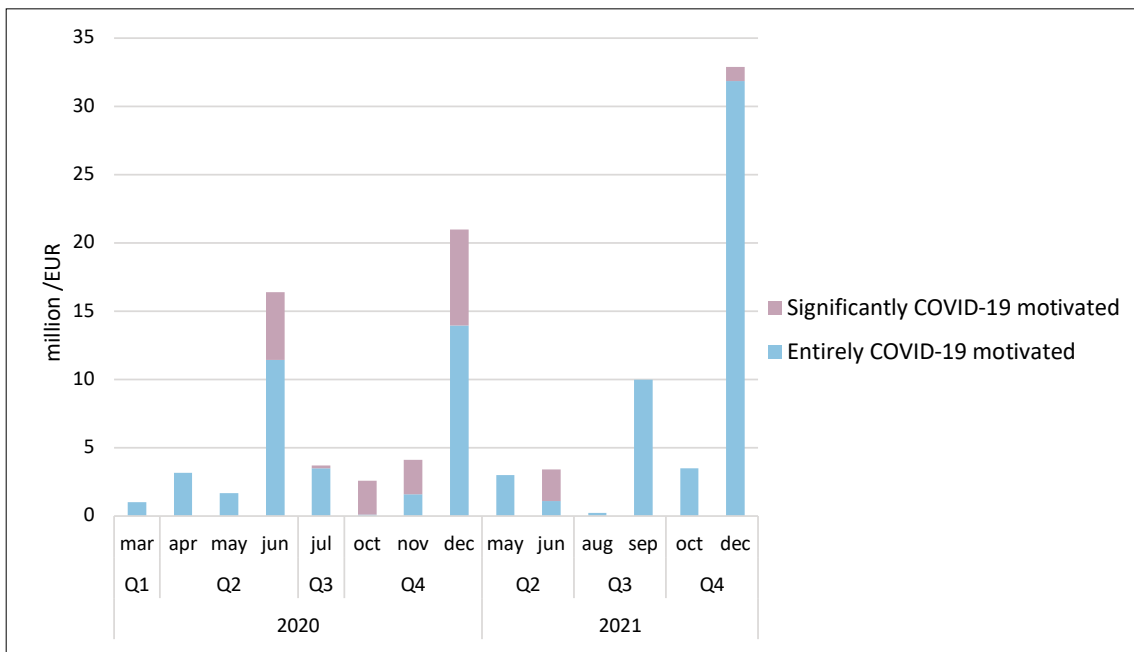
**Figure 11 MFA's response to the COVID-19 pandemic within the Exclusive ODA budget funding**



Source: Assessment Team

Figure 12 shows entirely and somewhat COVID-related financial decisions<sup>14</sup> on a timeline since the COVID-19 pandemic was declared in March 2020. The peaks in 2020 relate mostly to the reallocations and changes made by the MFA regional departments as well as the humanitarian pandemic response. In 2021, peaks related mainly to the MFA's allocations to Gavi and COVAX.

**Figure 12 Timeline of 'entirely' and 'significantly' COVID-19 related allocations in 2020 and 2021**



Source: Evaluation Team/finance data compilation

<sup>14</sup> The timestamp was available for 59 out of 64 decision items in the categories of 'entirely' and 'significantly' COVID-19 motivated.



## Changes to Exclusive ODA budget in 2020 and 2021

In 2020, Exclusive ODA budget (24.30.66) was EUR 735.5 million, including an increase of EUR 50 million over what had initially been allocated for 2020. The parliament approved this increase on November 27th, 2020, as part of the seventh supplementary budget process. It was linked to the COVID-19 pandemic effects and to previously identified funding needs.

In 2021, Exclusive ODA budget (24.30.66) amounted to EUR 770.3 million. This included another increase (of EUR 9.2 million) over the initially planned allocation. The approval for that increase took place on December 1st, 2021, as part of the fourth supplementary budget process. While the increase was not directly related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the approved proposal package contained allocations relating to the COVID-19 pandemic response (including vaccine donations and humanitarian assistance of EUR 24.1 million in total).

**Table 4 Approved Exclusive ODA budget budgets (24.30.66) in 2020 and 2021**

	2020 (AT THE END OF THE YEAR) IN EUR	2021 (AT THE END OF THE YEAR) IN EUR
24.30.66.1 Multilateral development cooperation	227 933 000	245 713 000
24.30.66.2 Country-specific and regional development cooperation	180 818 000	180 311 000
24.30.66.3 European development fund	67 800 000	62 100 000
24.30.66.4 Non-country specific development cooperation	42 385 000	77 920 000
24.30.66.5 Humanitarian assistance	112 570 000	98 500 000
24.30.66.6 Planning and support functions and communications of development cooperation	4 180 000	4 235 000
24.30.66.7 Evaluation and internal audit of development cooperation	1 350 000	1 230 000
24.30.66.8 Development cooperation conducted by civil society organisations (and municipalities)	75 800 000	79 850 000
24.30.66.9 Concessional credits	22 700 000	20 400 000
24.30.66 Exclusive ODA budget TOTAL	735 536 000	770 259 000

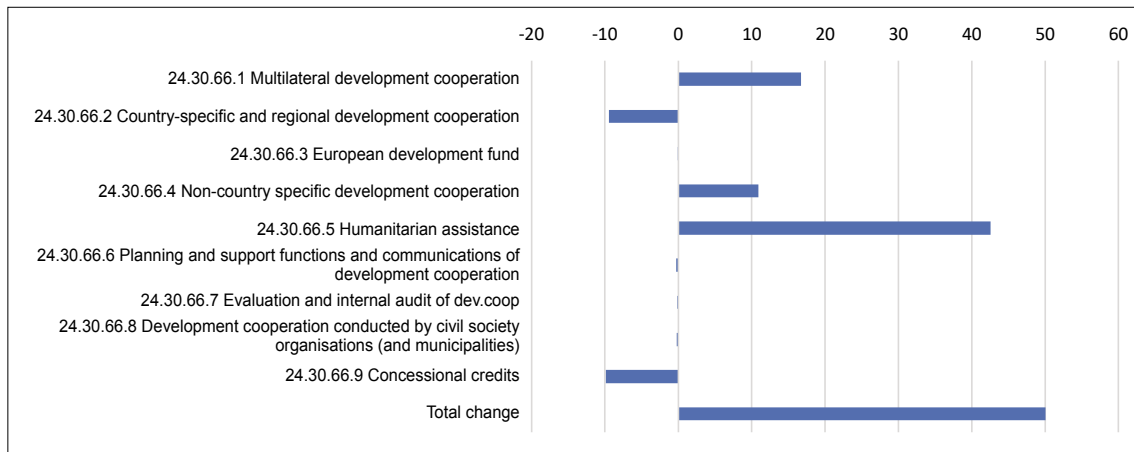
Source: Valtion talousarvioesitykset <https://budjetti.vm.fi/>

During the years, substantial reallocations occurred between the different line items of the Exclusive ODA budget (24.30.66). Figure 13 and Figure 14 illustrate the main change patterns. Most importantly, the humanitarian assistance (66.5) increased significantly by EUR 42.6 million (+59%) in 2020. Most of that increase (EUR 40.1 million) reflected reallocating of 2020 funds as newly granted funding in line with the approved budgetary frame. In addition, the shifts of unused allocations from 2018 and 2019 resulted in an additional EUR 2.5 million for the humanitarian assistance (66.5) budget category.



Other increases in 2020 occurred in the budget categories for multilateral (66.1) and non-country specific development cooperation (66.4), with an additional EUR 16.7 million and EUR 10.9 million, respectively. The increase in the multilateral category (66.1) was driven by the 2020 budgetary reallocations (Level 1) and shifts in the unused allocations from the earlier years (Level 2). The re-allocations of the 2020 funds mainly drove the increase to the non-country specific budget category.

**Figure 13 Overall changes to the budgetary categories in 2020 (million EUR)**

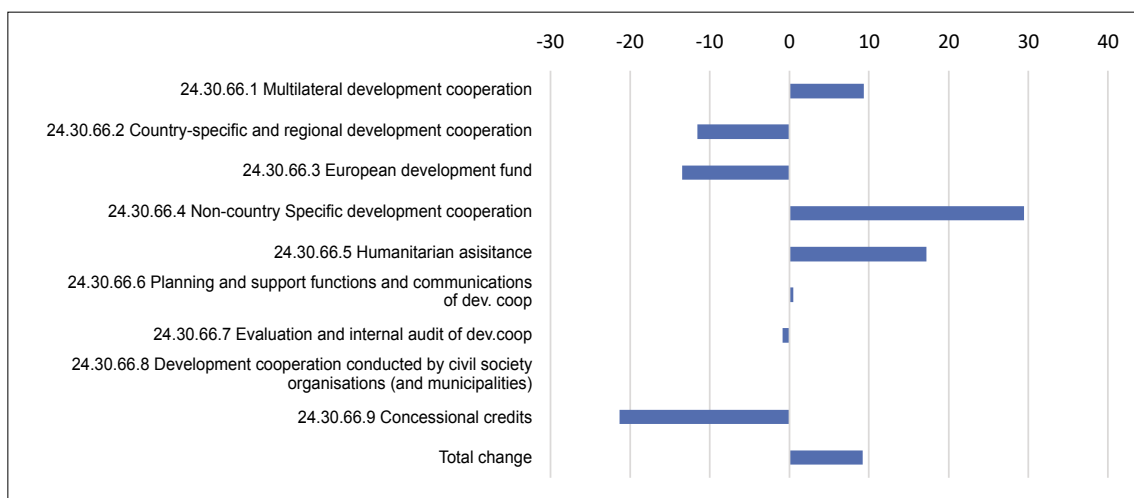


Source: Assessment Team data compilation

In 2021, the principal increases concerned the same budget categories as in 2020. However, the main change was seen in the non-country specific development cooperation budget line (66.4) with EUR 29.5 million. This was entirely related to Finland's Team Europe commitment in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic and was utilised for vaccine donations and other funding for the Gavi programme and the COVAX mechanism.

Other increases in 2021 occurred in the budget categories 66.1 and 66.5 (multilateral development cooperation and humanitarian assistance), with EUR 9.4 million and EUR 17.1 million, respectively.

**Figure 14 Overall changes to the budgetary categories in 2021 (million EUR)**



Source: Assessment Team data compilation



## Supplementary Budget Proposals (Level 1)

The year 2020 saw seven supplementary budget proposal processes (*lisätalousarvioesitys*). This was significantly more than during an average year. Since 2002 only once, in 2013, there were as many as five supplementary budget proposals. The main content and decisions relating specifically to COVID-19 within Exclusive ODA budget (24.30.66) were:

- **The second supplementary budget proposal** ( April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020) approved EUR 9.37 million for humanitarian assistance (24.30.66.5) with the statement that it will be utilised ‘among other things for the COVID-19 pandemic response.’ The same budget proposal added EUR 0.5 million for the ‘non-country specific development cooperation to be further allocated for Gavi - the Vaccine Alliance. The documentation states that because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the budget allocations for the country and regional development Cooperation (66.2) and ‘development cooperation conducted by civil society organisations and municipalities’ (66.8) can be redirected for humanitarian assistance, emergency response and recovery.
- **The fourth supplementary budget proposal** ( June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2020) approved the increase of the Finnfund risk guarantee up to EUR 150 million. The same budget proposal added EUR 5.0 million to ‘Humanitarian Assistance’ (66.5), justified with the COVID-19 situation.
- **The seventh supplementary budget proposal** in 2020 (November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020) increased the Exclusive ODA budget by EUR 50.0 million. This increase was described as caused by the COVID-19 related burden to the health care systems in developing countries. Based on the decision details, the AT estimated that 64% of the intended allocations directly relate to the COVID-19 pandemic response in a significant manner as humanitarian assistance, contributions to WHO, “Education Cannot Wait”, as well as for Finnish innovation cooperation within the UN system.

In 2021, there were four supplementary budget proposals. The main content and decision relating to the COVID-19 and Exclusive ODA budget (24.30.66) were:

- **The third supplementary budget proposal** ( June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2021) approved to increase the non-country specific development cooperation (66.4) and humanitarian assistance (66.5). This included approval of EUR 10 million allocations for the COVAX AMC as Finland’s vaccine donation. The allocation is part of Finland’s commitment to the Team Europe initiative in response to the pandemic, and a corresponding deduction was made to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health’s budget (33.70.20). Humanitarian assistance (66.5) was increased with EUR 2 million to be directed for the COVID-19 pandemic response. The same budget proposal reduced the country-specific and regional development cooperation (66.2) by EUR 2 million and the European Development Fund by EUR 13.4 million.
- **The fourth supplementary budget proposal** ( December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021) approved EUR 12.6 million for the non-country specific budget category to be further allocated for the COVAX AMC as Finland’s vaccine donation. In addition, EUR 11.5 million was added for the humanitarian assistance budget category to be distributed, among other things, for the COVID-19 response.





## Reallocation of unspent funds (Level 2)

The Level 2 decisions (“tilijaottelun muutos”) concern reallocations of unspent funds from the previous years. Since the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 and until the end of 2021, three such KEO-led budgetary processes took place with COVID-19 related financial decisions.

- Reallocation of unspent funds approved July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020:
- EUR 1.0 million were allocated to the KEO-90 unit for the recently established UN COVID Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund and to support WHO’s work further. Unspent funds from 2019 and UNICEF allocations were channelled for this purpose (66.1).
- EUR 0.5 million were reallocated for UNTIL and the DevPlat initiative to develop digital solutions to the challenges developing countries faced during the pandemic (66.4) (this decision was cancelled later on).
- EUR 2 million were allocated from 2019 funds for KEO-90 for Gavi - the Vaccine Alliance.
- EUR 1.8 million Increase in Humanitarian Funding to KEO-70. As a background justification, past reductions of humanitarian funds are discussed; Finland’s reduced credibility and ability to influence are concerned due to the low level of humanitarian funding. Overall increased need for humanitarian funding over the past years and the COVID-19 situation relate to the justification.

Reallocation of unspent funds approved December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020:

- EUR 2 million from the 2018 unspent allocations is directed for the multilateral development cooperation (66.1) to support Global Partnership for Education (GPE) COVID window (funds managed by KEO-50).
- EUR 683 250 were allocated to the humanitarian funds from 2018 unspent funds.

Reallocation of unspent funds approved November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2021:

- EUR 5,9 million from the unspent 2019 and 2020 funds were transferred for unspecified funds for the COVAX programme.
- 2019 and 2020 unspent funds were allocated to the humanitarian funds. The purpose of the humanitarian assistance was specified in the memo, and criteria for the “needs-based” imperative were highlighted. It was noted that the pandemic increased the need for humanitarian assistance, and this was specified as one purpose for the reallocated funds. Pandemic-related support for IFRC was established.

## Funding allocations at the Unit level (Levels 3 and 4)

Analysis of the Level 3 and 4 decisions concerns allocating the funds to individual MFA units within the approved budgetary frame of Exclusive ODA budget (24.30.66). Overall, 72 decision items were included in this analysis. This covers EUR 128.4 million of those decisions that are ‘Entirely’;



‘Significantly’ as well as ‘Somewhat’ COVID-19 motivated. These are mainly newly granted allocations. However, a small proportion of the decisions concern changes to previously allocated funds managed by the MFA’s regional units (6.1% of the overall COVID-19 related allocations).

As depicted in Table 5 and Table 6, only five decisions within the non-country specific funding category (66.4) constitute 32% of all COVID-19 motivated allocations. This can be explained by four considerably significant provisions for Gavi, including the COVID-19 vaccine donations. As discussed above, the 66.4, 66.5 and 66.1 budget categories also increased significantly in 2020 and 2021. At the same time, the country-specific and regional development cooperation (66.2) funds were subject to reductions.

**Table 5 Overview of the ‘Entirely,’ ‘Significantly’ and ‘Somewhat’ COVID-19 motivated financial decisions in 2020 and 2021, number of decision items**

	ENTIRELY	SIGNIFICANTLY	SOMEWHAT	TOTAL	%
24.30.66.2 Country-specific and regional development cooperation	21	7	2	30	42
24.30.66.5 Humanitarian aid	17	7	3	27	38
24.30.66.1 Multilateral development cooperation	3	2	2	7	10
24.30.66.4 Non-country specific development cooperation	3	2		5	7
24.30.66.7 and other <sup>15</sup>	2		1	3	4
	46	18	8	72	100

Source: Assessment Team data compilation

**Table 6 Overview of the ‘Entirely,’ ‘Significantly’ and ‘Somewhat’ COVID-19 motivated financial decisions in 2020 and 2021, amount in EUR**

	ENTIRELY/ EUR	SIGNIFICANTLY/ EUR	SOMEWHAT/ EUR	TOTAL/EUR	%
24.30.66.2 Country-specific and regional development cooperation	20 704 151	7 070 000	3 550 000	31 324 151	24
24.30.66.5 Humanitarian aid	23 007 253	6 504 430	8 500 000	38 011 683	30
24.30.66.1 Multilateral development cooperation	6 500 000	6 000 000	5 499 604	17 999 604	14
24.30.66.4 Non-country specific development cooperation	37 870 000	2 800 000		40 670 000	32
24.30.66.7 and other	350 000		70 000	420 000	0
	88 431 404	22 374 430	17 619 604	128 425 438	100

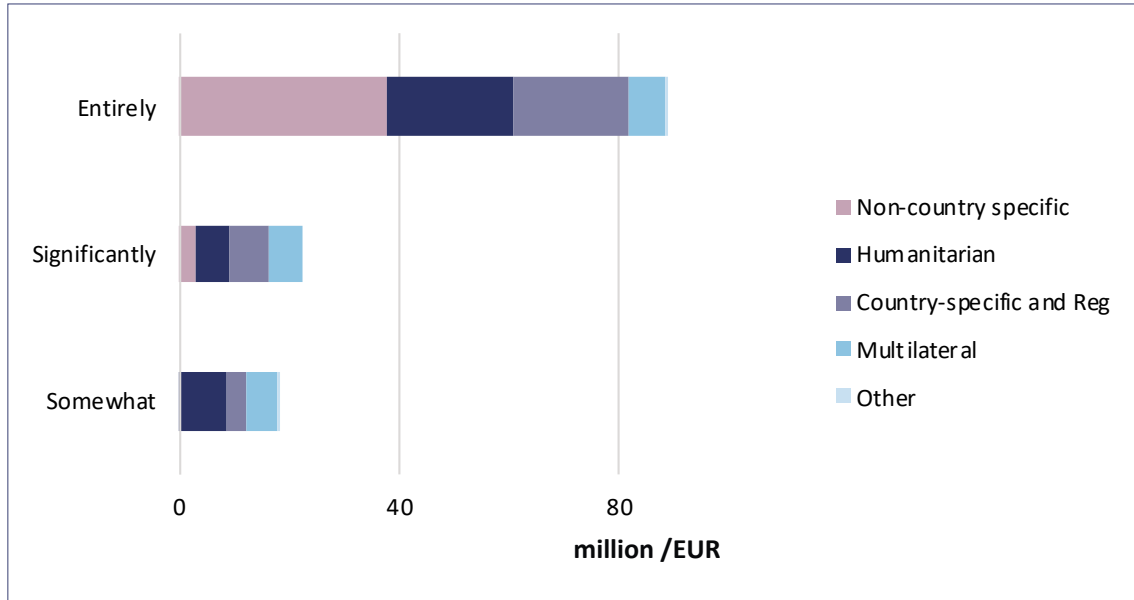
Source: Assessment Team data compilation

<sup>15</sup> This category includes the Evaluation Unit’s COVID-19 related allocations (66.7) and a consultancy cost of EUR 70 000 for KEO (budget category unmarked)



Figure 15 demonstrates how decision items from the sub-categories of 24.30.66 are distributed as 'entirely', 'significantly' and 'somewhat' COVID-19 motivated financial decisions.

**Figure 15 Division by the budgetary category and level of relevance to COVID-19**



Source: Assessment Team data compilation

Multilateral development cooperation (66.1) represents a relatively small portion of the COVID-19 motivated financial decisions covered in this assessment. However, it should be noted that multilateral partners are by far the most observed recipient of the COVID-19 related allocations. 86% of the assessed COVID-19 response was channelled through diverse multilateral partners (see Table 7). Moreover, as remarked earlier, it should also be remembered that the present analysis does not include ongoing core funding to multilateral organisations, even if this contributed to their respective pandemic response as well.

**Table 7 Breakdown of COVID-19 related allocations by recipient type**

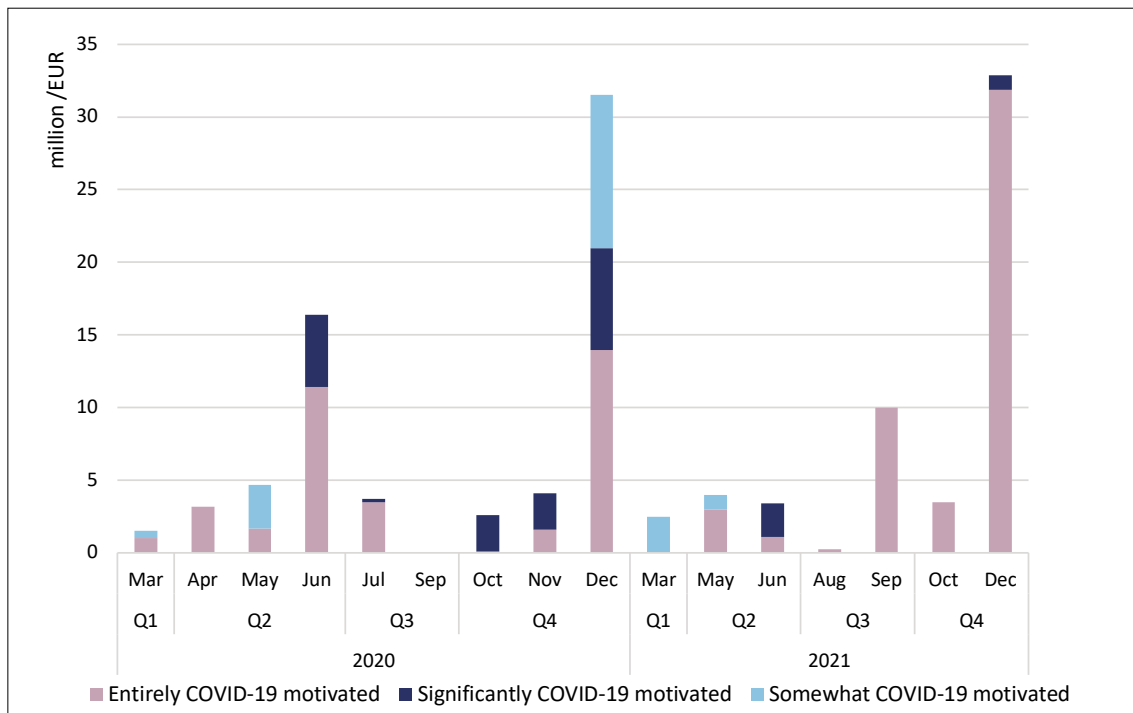
RECIPIENT TYPE	EUR	%
Multilateral, non-UN	57 470 000	45
Multilateral, UN	52 752 698	41
Red Cross Movement	6 900 000	5
Other	11 302 740	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>128 425 438</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Assessment Team data compilation

As presented in Figure 16, the timeline shows the division of all those decision items that had a date available (see also the detailed timeline available separately from the MFA for details). 58 out of all 72 decision items rated as 'entirely', 'significantly' and 'somewhat' COVID-19 motivated financial allocations had an indicative date available.



**Figure 16 Timeline of 'entirely', 'significantly', and 'somewhat' COVID19 motivated financial allocations**



Source: Assessment team data compilation

The **2020** allocations from March to May reflect the MFA's early response to the pandemic. The first decision took place as early as March 9th (EUR 1 million to WHO) and was followed by, i.e., responses to the COVID-19 related humanitarian appeals by UNHCR and Red Cross. The peak in June 2020 consists mainly of the MFA's regional departments' allocations (EUR 11.1 million) and humanitarian assistance through KEO-70.

Before the December peak, on November 27th, seventh supplementary budget proposal approved an additional EUR 50.0 million to exclusive ODA budget (24.30.66). Hence, the December peak consisted of diverse COVID-19 related commitments made in the supplementary budget, including additional core funding to WHO (EUR 5 million), Education Cannot Wait funding and COVID-19 related allocations for humanitarian and multilateral partners. These varied in the level of the COVID-19 motivation.

In addition to the volumes presented in Figure 15 timeline, the Unit for Civil Society (KEO-30) approved 56 changes/reallocations (EUR 5.5 million) of previously allocated funds for Finnish INGOs. According to the interviews, these decisions concentrated on the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic and decreased towards the end of 2020 (see text box for more details)

**The 2021** records show a decrease in the number of COVID-19 -motivated decision items. Out of the 58 decision items that contained a date, 41 took place in 2020 and 17 in 2021. Yet, in monetary terms, the MFA continued to make significant COVID-19 motivated financial allocations in 2021. These were mainly contributions to the Gavi COVAX programme as vaccine donations and other support (all together EUR 40.4 million). The peaks in September and December 2021 consist primarily of these Gavi contributions and some humanitarian assistance.



## Box 2: Financial response by KEO-30

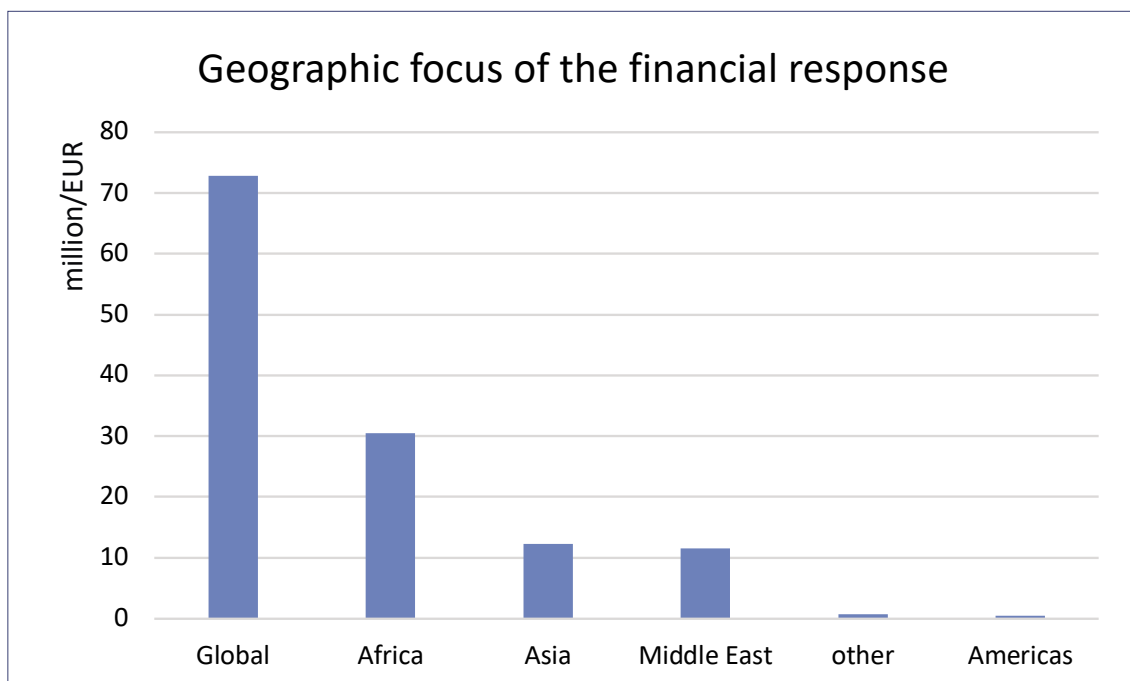
*In addition to the analysis provided above, the Unit for Civil Society (KEO-30) approved a significant number of COVID-19-related changes on the previously allocated funds for the Finnish Non-Governmental Organisations. Overall, EUR 5.5 million was repurposed mainly to respond to COVID-19 pandemic effects. The changes were approved based on the proposals submitted by 22 partner organisations. These changes took place mostly during 2020 and focussed on the early days of the pandemic. The AT identified 56 related decision items ranging from EUR 866 to EUR 1.5 million.*

*The top 5 MFA partner organisations repurposing funds were the Finnish Red Cross, Plan International Finland, Abilis Foundation, Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (FELM), and Fida International. All these organisations also receive programme-based support managed by KEO-30.*

*Source: Finance compilation, KEO-30 interviews*

Figure 17 shows the geographic division of MFA's COVID-19 motivated decisions. As reflected earlier, the response has been primarily channelled through multilateral partners. A significant proportion of these allocations were either core contributions or other centrally managed mechanisms. Thus, over half of the allocations were "global" and not specified by country or region. At that same time, especially Africa and the Middle East represent regions that Finland emphasizes in its development cooperation and thus are also exemplified in the pandemic response.

**Figure 17 Geographic focus of the COVID-19 pandemic response**



*Source: Assessment Team data compilation*



# Annex 5: Focused case example: Finnish support to – and influence on – ADB’s response to the pandemic

## 1. What is the case about, and what happened in terms of the Covid-19 pandemic response?

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is a regional development bank with a focus on Asia and the Pacific. ADB is headquartered in the Philippines and has 31 field offices around the world. Finland has been a founding member of ADB since the bank was established in 1966. As a shareholder, Finland ranks among the smaller member countries and holds 0.34% of ADB’s capital stock (equaling USD 520 million as of the end of 2020). As a contributor, Finland has committed a cumulative total of USD 201 million to the Asian Development Fund (ADF) until the end of 2020.

It should be noted that Finland’s financial support to ADB has contributed to how the bank could respond to the pandemic. The fact that this funding is not included in the Assessment Team’s financial response analysis is only due to the fact that it was decided before and/or independent of the pandemic.

ADB was selected as an example case for two reasons. First, it demonstrated a significant financial response to the pandemic, with total commitments increasing by 32% from USD 24.0 billion in 2019 to USD 31.6 billion in 2020, USD 16.0 billion of which were part of ADB’s COVID-19 response, as defined by the bank itself. ADB was also selected as an example case because Finland held the Deputy Executive Director position for a three-year term from September 2018 to August 2021. The next time Finland will be directly represented in ADB’s constituency (the voting group representing Canada, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden) will be with an advisor position to the Executive Director in 2026.

Overall, ADB’s response to the pandemic consisted of two large response packages:

1. A USD 20 billion package to support ADB’s developing member countries in countering the macroeconomic and health impacts caused by COVID-19. This package includes USD 2.5 billion in concessional and grant resources and USD 2 billion earmarked for the private sector.
2. The USD 9 billion Asia Pacific Vaccine Access Facility (APVAX) to support developing member countries with procurement and delivery of COVID-19 vaccines.

Most ADB staff had to work from home since the pandemic began. Eventually, many international staff moved back to their respective home countries.

For all development banks, Finland’s multilateral influencing activities are guided by the overall long-term priorities of i) gender equality and persons with disabilities, ii) education, iii) climate



change, and iv) innovations and responsible business. Specifically for ADB, education and innovation/business were chosen as two key priorities.

Examples for influencing activities were:

- Participation in ADF13 negotiations from late 2019 to 2020. (ADF13 covers the period 2021 to 2024);
- Board and committee work, including formal and informal preparatory interactions;
- Dedicated events and activities at ADB (mostly virtual from March 2020 onwards);
- Frequent interactions with ADB's Europe office in Frankfurt, Germany;
- Staff secondments:
  - Finnish education advisor seconded by MFA to ADB end of 2019 (Jukka Tulivuori: <https://development.asia/expert/jukka-tulivuori>);
  - Tomi Särkioja, assigned to ADB's country office in Hanoi, Vietnam, to promote the private sector and, in particular, innovation:
- Contributions to trust funds:
  - ADB Ventures Investment Fund 1 (total Finnish contribution of USD 20 million);
  - Carbon Market Program: Future Carbon Fund (total Finnish contribution of USD 20 million);
- Cofinancing to ADB projects (e.g., Nepal/education and regional/trade).

## 2. How relevant was the MFA's response regarding ADB?

2.1. Finland supported ADB's response to the pandemic through board and committee work. Board and committee-related work increased significantly because more (about twice as many) loan proposals needed to be prepared and approved by the board in weekly meetings, using accelerated procedures.

2.2. Finland continued its influencing activities with ADB along the pre-pandemic priorities of education and innovation/business. All influencing activities, however, suffered from pandemic-related restrictions and not all planned events and visits could be held online. Influencing also relied on interactions with ADB's Europe office in Frankfurt.

- Regarding education, MFA-internal reporting on influencing activity results in 2020 noted that ADB had continued to increase financial commitments and strategic focus on education and a Finnish education advisor was seconded to ADB and remained productive throughout the pandemic.
- Regarding innovation/business, Finland invested EUR 20 million into ADB Ventures Investment Fund I, which supports technology sector growth companies and also has a climate change relevance. In addition, a private sector development expert was funded at the ADB Vietnam office. During ADF13 preparations and pledging meetings,



MFA-internal reporting also noted that ADB's procurement from Finnish companies had grown significantly from 2019 to 2020.

2.3. In addition, Finland - in concert with other countries in and beyond its ADB constituency - pushed for the continued observation of ADB principles and priorities also during the pandemic for the inclusion of gender equality and climate considerations in project preparation. Ultimately, according to MFA staff interviewed, these considerations were included in ADB's COVID-19 related policies, and gender remained also mainstreamed across ADB's pandemic response.

2.4. ADF13 preparations had already matured when the pandemic struck. This was an issue. ADF13 was pledged in three replenishment meetings in November 2019, February 2020, and September 2020. This timing was considered not optimal by interviewed MFA staff because the foundations of ADF13 had already been laid - with overall knowledge of the pandemic but without dedicated activities or priorities - when the pandemic was declared in March 2020, just after the second replenishment meeting. ADF13 was ultimately adapted, but the overall timing had not been optimal.

2.5. Self-reporting by ADB stresses the timeliness and the significant volume of the response, but there does not seem to exist a systematic assessment yet of the adverse effects the pandemic had on ADB's operation and on the results of its projects. The question of how relevant ADB's pandemic response (rather than the MFA's response vis-à-vis ADB) has not been further assessed because it exceeds the scope of the present assessment. This said, a recent independent analysis found that "ADB's response was most significant in the countries that most needed support—low-income economies with sharp GDP declines and limited fiscal response capacity."

### **3. How efficient was the MFA's response regarding ADB?**

3.1. Sufficient autonomy and "free hands" (in addition to the necessary experience and skill) of the persons representing Finland at ADB were considered critically important. This was because the need for quick decision-making, especially during the early months of the pandemic, did not leave sufficient time to obtain clearance from Helsinki on all matters.

3.2. Without being able to establish linkages to the efficiency of the MFA's response relative to ADB, the Assessment Team notes that KEO-50, the MFA unit covering ADB, has seen frequent staff shortages and changes in 2020 and 2021.

### **4. How coherent was the MFA's response regarding ADB?**

4.1. As in other international organisations, Finland worked in close concert with other like-minded countries within and beyond its ADB constituency group.

### **5. Additional observations and conclusions**

5.1. **Weakness (and opportunity):** As a relatively small organisation with limited staff resources, the MFA is unable to rely on its own analysis for determining the best course of action for large institutions such as ADB. This means that Finland needs to rely on close cooperation with its (larger) donor partners and on the common sense and experience of a few key staff members for providing feedback, direction and leadership to its multilateral partners. This general insight also applies during the pandemic.





5.2. **Opportunity:** Finland had especially strong access to ADB governance during the pandemic, while it held the Deputy Executive Director position from summer 2018 to summer 2021. Presently, Finland relies (again) on close collaboration and representation through other like-minded countries in and beyond its ADB constituency group.

5.3. **Threat:** Finland's multilateral influencing activities vis-à-vis ADB were negatively impacted by the fact that ADB (and MFA) staff could mostly not work from their offices. In the case of ADB, this meant that most international staff eventually returned to their respective home countries, making effective collaboration more difficult. Moreover, according to MFA staff interviewed, online interactions could not replace the informal interactions ("corridor meetings") considered important for partner alignment and influencing.

Sources:

- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asian\\_Development\\_Bank](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asian_Development_Bank)
- 2020 Asian Development Bank Annual Report, Asian Development Bank, 2021 (weblink: <https://www.adb.org/documents/adb-annual-report-2020>)
- Interviews
- <https://www.adb.org/what-we-do/covid19-coronavirus>
- Asian Development Bank Member Fact Sheet: Finland, October 2021, ADB (weblink: <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/27763/fin-2020.pdf>)
- Internal document: Multilateral development policy cooperation and influencing – synthesis since 2020, MFA, 16.8.2021 (translated into English from the Finnish original)
- Internal document: Report on ADB influencing activities and results in 2020, MFA, May 2021 (translated into English from the Finnish original)
- Internal document: Note of discussion of ADB 2020 influencing activities and results with KEO management, MFA, May 2021 (translated into English from the Finnish original)
- 2020 Development Effectiveness Review, ADB, April 2021 (weblink: <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/695916/defr-2020.pdf>)
- How Effectively is the Asian Development Bank Responding to COVID-19? An Early Assessment. Azusa Sato, Rakan Aboneaaj, and Scott Morris. Center for Global Development. August 2021.



# Annex 6: Focused case example: Finnish support, influence and leadership in the pandemic response of UN Women and the coordination with other UN agencies

## 1. What is the case about, and what happened in terms of the COVID-19 pandemic response?

This case focuses on how Finland leveraged its presidency of the UN Women Executive Board to influence the pandemic response of UN Women. In addition, because it was UN Women's turn until summer of 2020 to coordinate between UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS, UNICEF, UN Women and WFP, Finland's Permanent Representative to the United Nations chaired both the UN Women Board meetings as well as the joint board meetings between all six agencies during the beginning of the pandemic. In this way, influence also extended beyond UN Women to the other five agencies. Another opportunity was that several of these agencies revised their strategic plans during this period.

UN Women is the United Nations entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. Finland has supported UN Women since it was established in 2011. Between 2011 and 2020, Finland provided an aggregate contribution of USD 133.6 million to regular resources and USD 61 million to other resources. Since 2014, Finland remained among the top-five contributors to regular resources, and in 2020, it was the largest contributor to regular resources with USD 20.2 million (and the third-largest government contributor in total with USD 32.3 million).

It should be noted that the core and softly earmarked funding Finland has provided to the agency has contributed in a significant way to UN Women's pandemic response. The fact that this funding is not included in the Assessment Team's financial response analysis is only due to the fact that it was decided before and/or independent of the pandemic.

During the pandemic, Finland has been active in presiding over the UN Women Executive Board and the Bureau, in chairing the joint boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN Women and WFP, and in organising a range of informal briefings, town hall meetings and other formal and informal coordinating and advocacy activities.

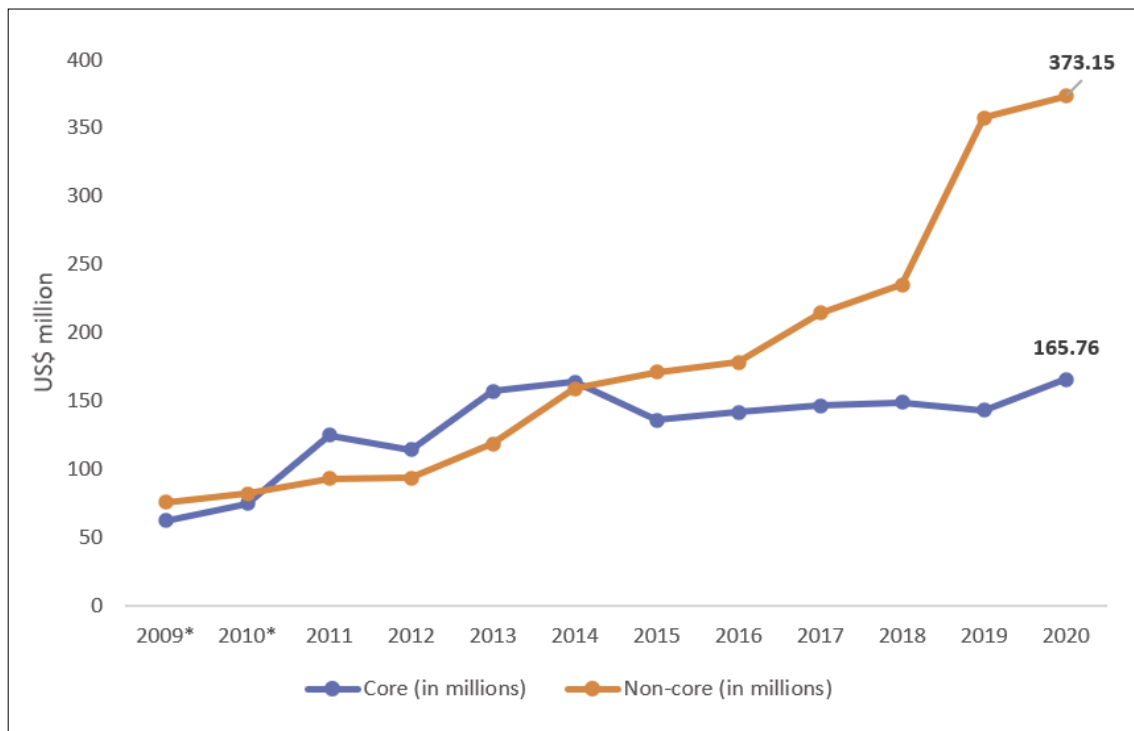
The New York region was severely affected by the pandemic in the spring of 2020, and all mission staff worked from home from March to June 2020. After that, a rotation scheme was established, and the mission remained open since then.



## 2. How relevant was the response regarding UN Women?

2.1. Finland has been a staunch supporter of providing UN Women with core funding. This reflects Finland's overall development policy and cooperation priorities and was especially relevant during the pandemic, also in view of the declining core funding share in UN Women's overall resources (see Figure 18). According to UN Women's reporting and interviews held, the unrestricted core funding provided by Finland, much of which was paid out early in the year, allowed UN Women to quickly and flexibly react to the pandemic.

Figure 18 UN Women's funding contribution trend



Source: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/partnerships/donor-countries/contribution-trends>.

2.2. Finland's support for UN Women - both in terms of funding and leadership - was relevant because it quickly became clear that the impact of the pandemic was deeply gendered. Women and girls suffered increasing numbers of intimate partner violence due to the lockdowns and also carried the majority of the burden of household chores and care. Women also represented the majority of healthcare and other essential workers most affected by the pandemic. Hence, the pandemic underlined the relevance of Finland's support to UN Women as a gender-focused agency in the UN system. This is illustrated by what Ville Skinnari, Minister for Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade of Finland, said in October 2020: "Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has deepened many aspects of gender inequality. It is recognized that women and girls suffer disproportionately from the pandemic and its social and economic consequences. I think that it is critical that in the recovery phase, women are included in all decision making. Economic stimulus packages must address the needs of women and girls fairly and equally. The pandemic has shown us that enhancing gender equality is more important than ever" (<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/10/partner-profile-finland-minister-for-development-cooperation-and-foreign-trade-ville-skinnari>).



### 3. How efficient was the response regarding UN Women?

3.1. As mentioned in the context of relevance, Finland's core funding to UN Women allowed the agency to react quickly to the challenges posed by the pandemic, both in terms of direct action as well as in terms of acting as a gender advocate for the UN's overall pandemic response.

3.2. Finland's leadership, coordinating and influencing activities likely contributed to a range of results. While no direct attribution is possible, it seems likely that Finland was an important influence in the gender dimension of the UN system's overall response to the pandemic. Because this was achieved by only a few key MFA staff working in concert with their colleagues in other countries, this can be considered a highly efficient use of these human resources in the MFA's response to the pandemic. Examples for results to which Finland likely contributed are:

- Finland - together with other like-minded countries - lobbied for and supported the "UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund". Apart from channelling critically needed resources, this Fund had two important additional effects in line with the priorities of Finland's development policy and cooperation for the UN system:
  - According to interviewed MFA staff, there had been the risk of a more fragmented and competitive agency-by-agency COVID-19 response which the Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) – at least in theory - could help mitigate.
  - Since the Fund was channelled through the UN's Resident Coordinator system, it was also believed to help strengthen the coordinating function of the Resident Coordinators further.
- According to people interviewed, Finland frequently and consistently lobbied for UN Women to play a more prominent role in guiding and supporting the UN system's pandemic response from a gender perspective. This also included the humanitarian assistance response. While not a humanitarian organisation itself, UN Women is a member of the Reference Group on Gender in Humanitarian Action, which is part of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), the UN's global body for coordination of humanitarian assistance and now has strengthened status in the IASC itself.
- Despite some political controversy and the pandemic, Finland and other like-minded countries successfully lobbied for reflecting Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in a clear and consistent way in the updated strategic plans of several UN agencies.

3.3. During its UN Women Executive Board presidency, Finland contributed to organising Board meetings more effectively and efficiently by reducing meeting agendas (e.g., moving briefings to separate, informal online meetings), clarifying responsibilities, and empowering the Bureau.

### 4. How coherent was the response regarding UN Women?

4.1. Following established tradition (see, for example, the 2020 evaluation of Finnish influencing activities in multilateral organisations), the Finnish position regarding the COVID-19 pandemic was closely coordinated and mutually reinforced within the MFA as well as with like-minded countries, such as the Nordic group.

4.2. While beyond the intended scope of the Assessment Questions on coherence, it should be noted that the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund has been a key building block of a coherent pandemic response of the UN system.



## 5. Additional observations and conclusions

5.1. As was evidenced in an earlier evaluation (2020 multi influencing evaluation), Finland has been able to relevantly, effectively and efficiently make use of the double opportunity of chairing both the UN Women Executive Board and the joint Board meetings of six UN agencies. While no attribution can be made to Finland alone, Finnish influence likely contributed to a more coherent and gender-sensitive pandemic response.

5.2. One lesson is that a global crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic can also represent an opportunity for accelerating large-scale institutional reform processes such as increased coordination and collaboration between different UN agencies and the UN Resident Coordinator system. For example, the UN Secretary-General's Designate for the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund said: *“The Fund has served as a showcase of UN reform. It has brought 24 Agencies, Funds, and Programmes together to help countries cast a wide and inclusive net of protection and support.”*

5.3. The fact that most meetings - including all Board meetings - had to be held online during the pandemic had both advantages and disadvantages:

- The main disadvantage was that the “corridor” was lacking, i.e. there was no opportunity for informally liaising and coordinating with meeting participants, and that interactions during the meeting itself, including chairing, became more difficult to manage.
- Advantages concerned the fact that meetings could more easily be organised because they were not anymore linked to actual travel. This allowed meeting agendas to be reduced (to focus on key priorities during one meeting) by outsourcing some issues to separate informal briefings or workshops. Online or hybrid meetings also allowed relevant individuals - for example, MFA staff from Helsinki - to participate more easily.

In weighing these pros and cons, interviewees felt that while wanting to return to in-person meetings in the case of formal Board meetings, the habit of online or hybrid informal briefing and other sessions was so value-adding that it should also be kept after the pandemic.

Sources:

- 2020 Sessions and other meetings involving UN Women: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/executive-board/documents/2020>
- UNW on Finland as partner: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/partnerships/donor-countries/top-donors/finland>
- Interviews (in person and by email questions)
- UN Women Annual Report 2019-2020: The World for Women and Girls. UN Women, 2020.
- A UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19. United Nations. April 2020.
- 2020 Global Report of the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund. UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office. 2021.
- UN Women Executive Board reports:
  - Report on the annual session of 2020, 22 to 23 June 2020



# **Annex 7: Focused case example: Finnish support to the CSOs in response to the COVID19 pandemic illustrated by the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (FELM) as a programme-based funding recipient**

## **1. What is the case about, and what happened in terms of the COVID-19 pandemic response?**

This case concerns the response of the Unit for Civil Society (KEO-30) to the COVID-19 pandemic and uses the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (FELM) as an example. FELM was selected as the case organisation based on the consultations with KEO-30. FELM is a long-term recipient of the MFA's programme-based funding for the Finnish INGOs. According to the MFA, the FELM Development Programme 2018-2021 was supported by the MFA with EUR 20.28 million covering 13 countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. As stated in the FELM webpage, the 2018-2021 development programme "promotes the rights of people who face discrimination, advances social and economic justice and builds peace and reconciliation". The programme focuses on empowerment, livelihoods, education and food security, emphasizing equal opportunities for discriminated groups, communities, and societies.

The FELM reporting indicates that while the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic varied by programme country, the effects were significant, requiring the adoption of new working approaches and adapting project contents towards a more humanitarian focus. The effects on staff and partners were also evident, requiring an emphasis on safety measures and the application of remote work modalities.

The early pandemic response of KEO-30 emphasized close communication with the INGOs as well as prompt response concerning the unpredictable effects of the pandemic for CSO operations. The Guideline for Programme-Based Support for Partner Organisations, published already in 2013, enabled utilising the programme-based funding for the crisis response in case of an emergency in the implementing countries, subject to the KEO-30 approval.

Following the FELM's early risks assessment at the start of the pandemic, a proposal for repurposing the 2019 unspent funds was submitted to KEO-30 on April 7, 2020. The repurposing aimed to respond to the effects of the pandemic and concerned EUR 227 000 of MFA's programme-based funding allocation. The next day, the proposal was approved by KEO-30 (April 8, 2020). According to the reporting, these funds were utilised for FELM's emergency response programme and targeted the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in five programme countries. The pandemic response included information campaigns, protective gear, WASH activities, and food security and



livelihoods support. In addition, in some cases, FELM modified the contents of other ongoing projects, extended project implementations periods and postponed project evaluations due to COVID-19 pandemic effects, as agreed with KEO-30.

According to the KEO-30 interviews, further guidelines regarding the adaptation to the pandemic were published by KEO-30 already in March 2020 and further specified again in April 2020. In June 2020, KEO-30 removed the self-financing requirement concerning the four funding mechanisms managed by the unit. Following this guideline, the reporting indicates that FELM redirected the corresponding self-funding appropriations for other operational costs, which partially also supported the ongoing implementation of the development cooperation programme. KEO-30 extended the practice in June 2021 by requiring only 50% of the regular amount of self-financing for 2021 funding.

## **2. How relevant was MFA's response?**

2.1. In the case of FELM, the MFA response was timely and relevant. The communications and approval process of the early revisions to the programme implementation were promptly responded to, requiring only brief but justified revision documentation. Within the context of the pandemic, the MFA's mechanisms enabled FELM to adapt its programme in diverse ways: 1) redirecting funds for activities on the COVID-19 pandemic response; 2) modifying the contents of the ongoing projects, and 3) extending the project implementation periods if required. This was possible because of the flexibility built into the KEO-30 procedures, including repurposing the programme-based funding for the emergency response.

2.2. The removal of the self-funding requirement from the KEO-30 financial mechanisms aimed to ease the financial pressure caused by the COVID-19 related uncertainties. This was seen as a direct response to the constraints faced by the Finnish INGOs in their fundraising because of the COVID-19 pandemic. While not directly indicated regarding the example organisation, in a tight financial situation, removal of the self-financing would facilitate the continuation of the operations despite the reduced fund-raising potential during the pandemic. In the long-run self-financing requirement supports the financial independence of the Finnish CSOs. However, on a temporary basis, it was timely as a response to the pandemic situation.

## **3. How efficient was the MFA's response?**

3.1. The early days of the pandemic were hectic for the KEO-30 staff. However, there was a commitment to respond (and approve) the modification inquiries as promptly as possible. In the case of FELM, the early requests for repurposing the funds were approved within only one day. In this sense, processing modifications to the programme-based support for the Finnish CSOs was efficient, enabling the operations to continue. KEO-30 continues to emphasize open communication with the partner CSOs and the exchange of information and lessons.

## **4. How coherent was the MFA's response?**

N/A





## 5. Additional observations and conclusions

5.1. FELM recorded diverse lessons regarding the effects of COVID-19 effects and response. For instance, the lessons regarding risk management, the need to utilise networks, and risk preparedness offer valuable information for KEO-30.

Sources:

- FELM webpage: <https://felm.org/development-cooperation/>
- MFA press release: Kansalaisjärjestöjen ohjelmatuet vuosille 2018–2021 myönnetty (9.2.2018): [https://um.fi/uutiset/-/asset\\_publisher/GRSnUwaHDPv5/content/kansalaisjarjestojen-ohjelmatuet-vuosille-2018-2021-myonnetty](https://um.fi/uutiset/-/asset_publisher/GRSnUwaHDPv5/content/kansalaisjarjestojen-ohjelmatuet-vuosille-2018-2021-myonnetty)
- Ministry of Finance decisions - Valtion avustusten myöntäminen UM/2018/13, Valtionavustuksen myöntäminen kehitysyhteistyön ohjelmatuen muodossa Suomen Lähetysseura ry:lle (SLS) vuosille 2018 – 2021 (dated: 12.01.2018)
- <https://valtioneuvosto.fi/paatokset/paatos?decisionId=0900908f80587473>
- FELM Annual report 2020 and its annexes submitted to MFA
- MFA KEO-30 guideline (23.6.2021 – updated from the 15.4.2020 version): [https://um.fi/documents/397000/0/Korona+yleislinjaukset+ja+ohjeet+kj+toimintaan+p%C3%A4iv-ityys\\_+omarahoitus+2021\\_23062021.pdf/9038d6f7-660b-83b4-43a8-c283fceb164?t=1624537669493](https://um.fi/documents/397000/0/Korona+yleislinjaukset+ja+ohjeet+kj+toimintaan+p%C3%A4iv-ityys_+omarahoitus+2021_23062021.pdf/9038d6f7-660b-83b4-43a8-c283fceb164?t=1624537669493)
- KEO-30 Interview (Head of Unit and Senior Officer) 14/12/2021
- KEO-30 Interview (Senior Officer) 20/12/2021
- KEO-30 internal memo: Koronakooste (24/6/2021)
- KEO-30 decision memos



# Annex 8: Focused case example: Finland’s support to Ethiopia in the COVID-19 pandemic response

## 1. What is the case, and what happened in terms of the COVID-19 pandemic response?

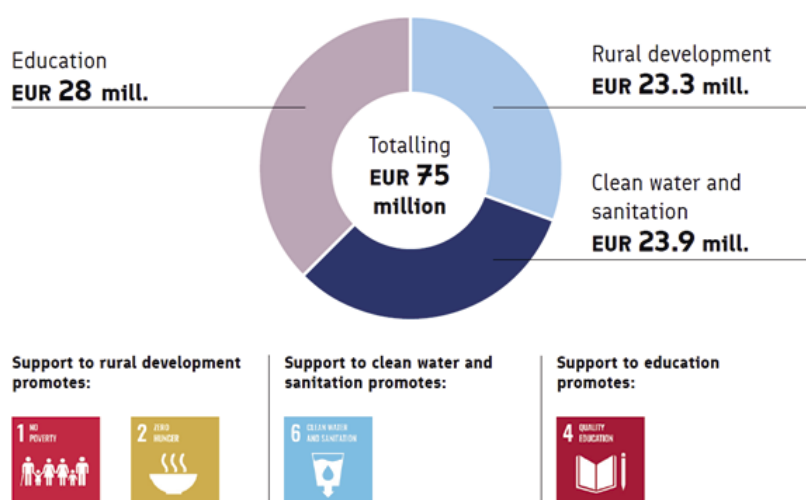
Ethiopia has been Finland’s bilateral partner country in development cooperation since the 1960s. Current Ethiopia country strategy and country programme for development cooperation were finalized in 2020/21, and the previous programme ended in 2019.

While the political and military crisis related to Tigray has overtaken the COVID-19 pandemic in significance with regards to development policy and cooperation with Ethiopia, at the start of the pandemic, the focus was on the response to the pandemic as the situation in Tigray unfolded later. As such, Ethiopia presents a case where the pandemic response has been further complicated by the country-specific political and military crisis at its more mature stage.

In 2021–2024, Finland directs its bilateral development cooperation mainly to support rural economic development, improve water services, and develop the quality of inclusive basic education. Resources are also channelled to improve the operational capacity of private sector operators. Finland’s support to Ethiopia for 2021–2024 will total EUR 75.2 million (Figure 19).

Figure 19 Finland’s planned development cooperation appropriations for Ethiopia 2021-2024

### FINLAND’S PLANNED DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION APPROPRIATIONS FOR ETHIOPIA 2021–2024



Source: MFA Finland



## 1.1. Economic development

Expected outcome (formulation by the MFA): Economic growth and opportunities to earn a living in rural areas will be improved

Ongoing programmes and projects:

- Development project for agricultural value chains (AgroBIG II), totalling EUR 10.1 million in 2017–2022
- Responsible and Innovative Land Administration programme (REILA II), totalling EUR 7.8 million in 2017–2022

What happened in the economic development in terms of the COVID-19 pandemic response?

Both projects prepared adjustment plans and continued implementation. AgroBIG's adjustment plan presented measures to keep the programme functions ongoing as much as possible and measures to ensure preparedness for activity implementation after the acute phase of the COVID-19 outbreak is over.

REILA's adjustment plan was built around three scenarios for three different situations related to the severity and duration of the pandemic restriction measures and included detailed plans for all results areas. Implementation seems to have followed a mixture of the scenarios.

## 1.2. Water sector

Expected outcome (formulation by the MFA): Clean water and sanitation facilities will promote health and wellbeing

Ongoing programmes and projects:

- Community-based rural water services and sanitation project (COWASH IV), totalling EUR 18.4 million in 2021–2024
- Contribution to the water sector's multi-donor Consolidated WaSH Account (CWA), totalling EUR 4.0 million in 2020–2023

What happened in the water sector in terms of the COVID-19 pandemic response?

- Predecessor to COWASH IV (COWASH III) was provided with an extension and additional funding to support the operation of water supply systems and sanitation and hygiene functions in areas critical to the pandemic. The additional funding provided was EUR 2 670 000. The extension bridged the gap to the start of the COWASH IV in spring 2021.



### 1.3. Education sector

Expected outcome (formulation by the MFA): All children will have access to high-quality education

Ongoing programmes and projects:

- General Education Quality Improvement Programme (GEQIP-E), totalling EUR 20.9 million in 2017–2023
- Continued technical assistance for inclusive education to GEQIP-E, totalling EUR 1.45 million in 2018–2022
- Increasing Access to Protective and Inclusive Learning Opportunities for crisis-affected Children in Tigray Region, totalling EUR 2 million in 2021-2023

#### What happened in the education sector in terms of the COVID-19 pandemic response?

Inclusive education's adjustment plan was built around three scenarios for three different situations related to the severity and duration of the pandemic restriction measures and included measures to keep implementation ongoing; measures to ensure preparedness for normal activity implementation after the acute phase of COVID-19 outbreak was over; and measures the project could provide to support the Government of Ethiopia's efforts in the pandemic. Implementation followed a mixture of the scenarios. The planning for the support for crisis-affected children in Tigray linked to the Education Cannot Wait framework programme stemmed initially as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic and recurrent natural disasters and was later enforced by the political conflict, which eventually determined the geographical location for the support.

## 2. How relevant was MFA's response?

2.1. Finland continued supporting projects relevant to Ethiopia, and many of the projects were adjusted to include activities of particular relevance in the pandemic context. The adjustments were in line with Finland's development policy priorities, including Human Rights Based Approach and Cross-cutting Objectives. Relevant adjustments included support to distance learning and the operation of water supply systems and sanitation and hygiene functions in areas critical to the pandemic.

## 3. How efficient was MFA's response?

3.1. Decisions to continue project implementation and adjust them were timely and took place in the first couple of months of the pandemic despite the additional burden put on the management and staff by it. Some planning of future interventions has been on hold, but this mostly links to the military crisis and less to the pandemic.

3.2. Embassy staff in Addis Ababa highlighted two factors that had contributed to the successful adaptation of the projects to both the military and health crises: the information held and provided by local project staff and the trust between local authorities and Finland, which resulted from the long-term collaboration.

3.3. In the case of Ethiopia, some interviewees considered the swift move of most consultant international staff in projects and also Embassy staff away from the duty station detrimental or questionable from the point of view of project adaptation and implementation. There are mixed views on this within the management and staff working with Ethiopia.



## 4. How coherent was the response?

4.1. Launching of the Team Europe may have at its start resulted in the creation of expectations that could not be met. Team Europe in Ethiopia was at the beginning mostly about coherence and communication, less about concretely adding to the response provided by the Member States. The EU Delegation started in May/June 2020 mapping support provided by the Member States and the ensuing Team Europe response mostly laid out what the Member States were already doing. Additional EU inputs were, according to the Embassy and MFA staff in Helsinki, rather limited at the beginning of the pandemic i.e. in the first half of 2020. However, after that, the EU stepped up assistance.

4.2. Regarding the allocation of humanitarian assistance funding, there appear to have been some gaps in consultations and joint decision making between the ALI department and the Unit for Humanitarian Assistance (KEO-70) at the MFA in Helsinki and the Embassy in Addis Ababa.

## 5. Conclusions

5.1. Some gaps in consultations and joint decision making were observed in funding related to the double- or triple-nexus in the context of funding for Ethiopia, and these could be reviewed further by the MFA to learn lessons for further advancing Finland's nexus approach.

5.2. Perhaps one of the "test cases" for the Team Europe approach during the pandemic, any lessons learned from Ethiopia could be of interest to Finland and the other Member States. The MFA could advocate for or commission a multi-member state case study to capture such lessons.



# Annex 9: Focused case example: Finland's support to Nepal in the COVID-19 pandemic response

## 1. What is the case, and what happened in terms of the COVID-19 pandemic response?

Nepal has been Finland's bilateral partner country in development cooperation since the 1980s. The current Nepal country strategy and country programme for development cooperation was finalized in early 2021.

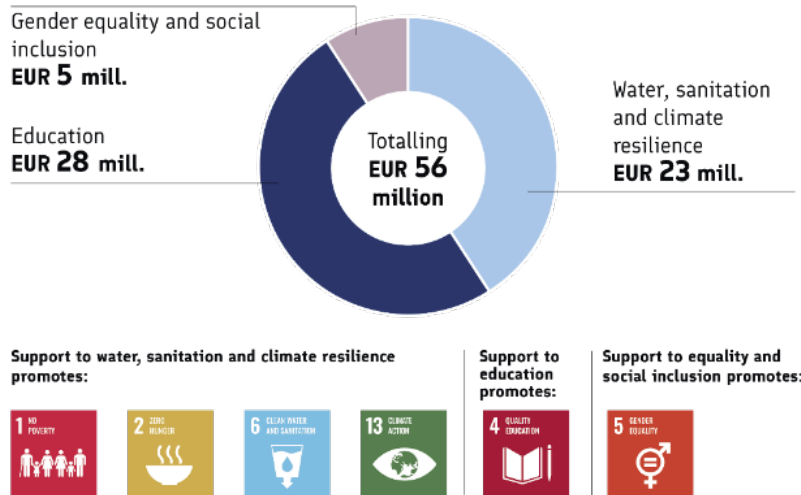
Nepal was selected as a case example in this assessment as Finland's partner country in Asia, where the COVID-19 pandemic response has played a dominant role compared to Afghanistan and Myanmar, where yet more significant developments have overshadowed even the pandemic and required adjusting development cooperation and humanitarian assistance. Nepal is also a country where Finland is a relatively important donor. Donor presence in Nepal, an LDC becoming a medium-income country, is limited. According to Finland's Embassy in Kathmandu, only Finland and Germany are engaged in this bilateral development cooperation from the three EU Member States with embassies in the country.

The key objectives of the Nepal country strategy for the period 2021–2024 are reducing social inequalities, supporting sustainable development and climate and disaster resilience, and diversifying political and economic cooperation between Finland and Nepal in view of Nepal's transition to a middle-income country. In the period 2021–2024, Finland's bilateral development cooperation with Nepal focuses on improving climate resilience and health through the sustainable water supply, sanitation and hygiene and livelihood development, supporting an inclusive education system and gender equality and social inclusion. The planned budget for the Country Program is EUR 56 million between 2021 and 2024 (Figure 20).



Figure 20 Finland's planned development cooperation appropriations for Nepal 2021-2024

## FINLAND'S PLANNED DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION APPROPRIATIONS FOR NEPAL 2021–2024



Source: MFA Finland

### 1.1. Education sector

Overall objective (formulation by the MFA): An inclusive education system that provides students with the necessary skills contributing to Nepal's economic and democratic development

Ongoing programmes and projects:

- Sector-wide Nepal's School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) is currently finalizing. Nine donors were involved in the SSDP, and more than 90% of the funding comes from the Nepalese government. Finland contributed EUR 22.5 million to the programme between 2016 and 2021.
- Support to Nepal's new School Education Sector Plan (SESP) is in its starting phase. The government of Nepal is planning to finance around 90%. Finland will be one of eight donors with EUR 19 million contributions between 2022 and 2026.
- Of the EUR 8 million in aid under UNICEF's Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP) 2018–2022, EUR 4 million is targeted to the education sector to improve the quality and coverage of education.
- Technical Cooperation Support to Education Sector in Nepal (TECSES). The project will help to enhance the quality of education, especially at the provincial and local level, and will have a budget of EUR 5 million from Finland and a planned delegated contribution of EUR 5 million from the EU in the period 2022–2027.



What happened in the education sector in terms of the COVID-19 pandemic response?

- In the multi-donor support context, a joint decision was taken to provide additional funding through the education sector programme (SSDP), notably to support distance learning. Finland's additional support was EUR 2.5 million over the two years 2020-2021. Also, non-cost extensions were granted; payment rates had remained at normal levels. The consultation process for the new education sector programme (SESP) was affected by the pandemic.
- In the context of the UNICEF CPAP, the programme was adjusted, and Finland's funding was re-allocated in support of the new distance-learning component of the programme. Re-allocations were made as follows: USD 300,000 in 2020 and USD 700,000 in 2021.
- In the bilateral context, the start of the new education project had to be postponed, and the formulation was ongoing towards the end of 2021.

## 1.2. Climate Resilience and water supply and sanitation

Overall objective (formulation by the MFA): Communities' improved climate resilience and WASH-related health

Ongoing programmes and projects:

- Rural Village Water Resources Management Project (RVWRMP) Finland is providing EUR 15 million for the project between 2016 and 2022. The European Union is providing EUR 20 million for the project through delegated agreement.
- Sustainable WASH for all (SUSWA). A WASH project in the remote Karnali province of Nepal in 2021-2025.
- Green Resilient Agricultural Productive Ecosystems (GRAPE). The aim of the project carried out in the Karnali and Far Western provinces between 2021 and 2024 is to achieve climate-resilient green growth through value chains. The project is jointly funded by Finland, Germany and the European Union. Finland is contributing EUR 4 million to the project.
- Finnish-Nepali Project for Improved capability of the Government of Nepal to respond to the increased risks related to the weather-related natural disasters caused by climate change between 2018 and 2021. The project is implemented by the Finnish Meteorological Institute, and it has a budget of EUR 500,000.
- Towards Arsenic Safe Drinking Water in Nepal between 2020 and 2023. The project is implemented by the Finnish Environment Institute and the Geological Survey of Finland, and it has a budget of EUR 1 million.
- Of the EUR 8 million in aid under UNICEF's Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP) 2018-2022, EUR 4 million will be targeted to the water WASH sector.



What happened in the WASH sector in terms of the COVID-19 pandemic response?

- WASH projects continued implementation with some delays and adjustments of activities.
- In some projects, some funding (RVWRMP EUR 70,000 and UNICEF USD 300,000, out of which 200 000 USD in 2020 and 100 000 USD in 2021) was re-allocated, in particular in support of procuring protective and hygiene equipment.

### **1.3. Gender equality and social inclusion**

Overall objective (formulation by the MFA): Enhanced non-discrimination and prosperity of women and girls including those with disability and in a vulnerable situation.

Ongoing programmes and projects:

- Support for the country strategy of UN Women between 2018 and 2022. Finland is contributing EUR 4 million to the programme being the biggest UN Women donor in Nepal.

What happened in the promotion of gender equality in terms of the COVID-19 pandemic response?

- The MFA agreed to a swift re-targeting and re-allocation of funding (USD 620 000 in 2020 and USD 250 000 in 2021) for the purposes of gender-based violence (GBV); food-, hygiene product- and cash-aid; and community kitchens.

#### **Other support to Nepal in terms of COVID-19 pandemic response**

- At the request of the Nepal Government, Finland sent material assistance to Nepal through the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism in May 2021. The material assistance of 30 thousand tonnes included face masks, protective visors, protective gloves and medical gowns. In Finland, the Ministry of the Interior collaborated with the MFA, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, and the National Emergency Supply Agency, and the decision to provide the support was taken within a week from the request made by Nepal. The European Commission coordinated the pooling of assistance and supported the Member States in the arrangement of logistics and in transport costs of such consignments. Visibility was well coordinated and high in Nepal.
- Finland participates in COVAX in Nepal. While the financial support is limited, according to the Embassy of Finland's visibility in the COVAX context is rather high.

#### **Other points related to COVID-19 pandemic response**

- Mo
- nitoring has been difficult, and some evaluations have been desk-based only.





## 2. How relevant was the MFA's response?

2.1 Finland continued supporting projects relevant to Nepal, and many of the projects were adjusted to include activities of particular relevance in the pandemic context. Relevant adjustments included support to distance learning, support to women affected by the pandemic, and support for procuring protective and hygiene equipment.

The continued project support, as well as the project adjustments, were relevant with respect to Finland's development policy priorities, including Human Rights Based Approach and cross-cutting objectives. A case in point was the re-targeting of the UN Women country strategy to respond to the pandemic needs in the areas of GBV; food-, hygiene product- and cash-aid; and community kitchens.

In assessing the relevance of its response through the interventions, Finland has relied for the most part on monitoring, information and analysis by the multilateral partners, although in late 2021, a monitoring visit focusing solely on the COVID response monitoring was conducted to UN Women project locations. While this may be the case at other times too, the pandemic era travel restrictions (international and in Nepal) and the ensuing reliance on online consultations and secondary information has increased the reliance. Bilateral consultations with the Government of Nepal have been postponed, which has, according to the MFA, been unfortunate. Many meetings have gone into distance/hybrid mode, which has posed its challenges.

## 3. How efficient was the MFA's response?

3.1. Decisions to continue project implementation and adjust them were timely in spite of the additional burden put on the management and staff by the pandemic. Many interventions supported by Finland in Nepal are either multi-donor funded or through a multilateral organisation. According to interviews, this seems to have been beneficial to the timeliness and ability to continue implementation of the projects, particularly in the case of those pandemic-related project adjustments which required a good network of CSOs available for distribution of the COVID relief support packages. Yet, the multilateral had problems in absorbing other funds (non-COVID related).

3.2. In the main water-sector project, Rural Village Water Resources Management Project, implementation continued as planned, including for construction works, and the payment rate in 2020 was high at 92%. Much of the success is, according to the Embassy, achieved because of the efforts of the local deputy-CTA and their team, as they stayed put and managed the implementation when the (limited number of) international staff were brought out of the country.

3.3. While some planning of Finland's future interventions has been slowed down because of the pandemic, the Nepal Team in Helsinki notes that collaboration with the Embassy in Kathmandu has deepened, and there has been more participation in distance and hybrid modes to meetings in Nepal by the team in Helsinki and the other way round.

## 4. How coherent was the MFA's response?

4.1. Donor coordination in Nepal has worked well in the pandemic, according to the Embassy and Nepal Team in Helsinki. Sector meetings have been organised as hybrids and within schedule and have, according to the MFA, worked well.



4.2. Finland's response to the Government of Nepal's request for material assistance through the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism was relevant, timely and direct. It was well coordinated by the actors in Finland and with the EU.

## **5. Conclusions**

5.1. Finland is an important development partner to Nepal, with relatively significant and long-term support provided to some of the key sectors. This offers opportunities in providing support to building back better and greener.



# Annex 10: Summary and dimension-by-dimension SWOT analysis

Table 8 Overall SWOT: key terms

	<b>POSITIVE (for optimal response to COVID-19)</b>	<b>NEGATIVE (for optimal response to COVID-19)</b>
<b>Internal origin</b> (attributes of the MFA)	<b>Strengths</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pragmatic, quick and flexible response</li><li>• “Resilient” development policy</li><li>• Information sharing</li><li>• Strong partnerships and networks</li><li>• Motivated staff</li></ul>	<b>Weaknesses</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Doing a lot with 0.47%</li><li>• Under-staffed</li><li>• Unit silos</li><li>• Unclear top-level responsibilities and decision-making</li><li>• Less reliable M&amp;E</li></ul>
<b>External origin</b> (attributes of the MFA's operating environment)	<b>Opportunities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pulling together in Finland</li><li>• Global will to act</li><li>• New opportunities for policy dialogue and influencing</li><li>• New efficient hybrid working methods</li><li>• Better prepared for next lockdown</li></ul>	<b>Threats</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stretching of development priorities</li><li>• Dilution of HA principles</li><li>• Forgetting pandemic know-how</li><li>• Key lessons hiding in plain sight</li><li>• Staff fatigue and loss of motivation</li><li>• Information security: more can mean less</li></ul>



**Table 9 SWOT: financial response**

	<b>POSITIVE (for optimal response to COVID-19)</b>	<b>NEGATIVE (for optimal response to COVID-19)</b>
<b>Internal origin</b> (attributes of the MFA)	<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The MFA is a small organisation with a pragmatic problem-solving approach. This enabled:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Quick &amp; early financial response; and</li> <li>◦ Flexible adaptation of ongoing projects.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• It also allowed a pragmatic and rather un-bureaucratic balance between serving immediate health-related needs caused by the pandemic and safeguarding results and countering pandemic impact in established development cooperation priorities.</li> <li>• Since several years (and before the pandemic), the MFA has found an effective way to identify and reallocate unspent development cooperation funds.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Because of Finland's size as a country but also due to the fact that ODA is still below the envisaged 0.7% of Gross National Income (0.47% in 2020), the absolute volumes of development cooperation and humanitarian assistance remain moderate in view of the overall needs caused by the pandemic.</li> <li>• Flexible allocation of resources is limited by the fact that most resources in a given year are already committed and/or cannot be easily repurposed.</li> </ul>
<b>External origin</b> (attributes of the MFA's operating environment)	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Ministry of Finance and the Finnish Parliament were quick and supportive in financial decision-making, with turnaround times significantly faster than in earlier years.</li> <li>• The established policy priority and practice of Finnish core funding support to multilateral development partners enabled these agencies to relevantly and efficiently respond to the pandemic.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Exclusive ODA budget is fragmented with a total of nine sub-categories. This means that moving funds between these categories cannot be handled by the MFA alone but requires approval by the Ministry of Finance and/or even Parliament. While this did not hold up the process during the pandemic, it represents a factor that may reduce response efficiency in future crisis situations.</li> </ul>



**Table 10 SWOT: policy dialogue & multilateral influencing**

	<b>POSITIVE (for optimal response to COVID-19)</b>	<b>NEGATIVE (for optimal response to COVID-19)</b>
<b>Internal origin</b> (attributes of the MFA)	<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The MFA is considered a trusted and reliable partner by key multilateral partners.</li> <li>• Finland has a history of strong Nordic and like-minded country collaboration</li> <li>• The MFA has strategically focused on a strong presence (membership and representation in governing bodies) in a few key organisations.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finland, as a relatively small (financial) donor, is limited in terms of being represented and heard by more development partners</li> <li>• Responsible units for policy dialogue and multilateral influencing continue to not have sufficient staff to make use of all relevant opportunities for influencing.</li> </ul>
<b>External origin</b> (attributes of the MFA's operating environment)	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The pandemic fostered a strong global will to act, and highlighted needs in several of Finland's priority areas. This created windows of opportunity for thematic influencing and accelerating reform processes (e.g. in the UN).</li> <li>• Crises such as the pandemic but perhaps more such as the political and military crisis in Ethiopia call for closer collaboration of the domains of humanitarian assistance and development policy/cooperation (double-nexus) and peace (triple-nexus). Finland could have opportunities to impact by operationalising such nexus approaches.</li> <li>• In several cases, Finland fortuitously was in a good position for influencing the pandemic response of others (e.g. UN agencies in New York and ADB).</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of the recommendations of the 2020 influencing evaluation may have been delayed because of the pandemic.</li> </ul>



**Table 11 SWOT: policies and procedures**

	<b>POSITIVE (for optimal response to COVID-19)</b>	<b>NEGATIVE (for optimal response to COVID-19)</b>
<b>Internal origin</b> (attributes of the MFA)	<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The MFA is a small organisation with a pragmatic problem-solving approach. Regarding policies and procedures, this enabled:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Establishing clarity early on regarding continued reliance on existing development cooperation priorities also during the pandemic</li> <li>◦ Accelerating QAG decision-making</li> <li>◦ Making increased use of internally repurposing development cooperation funds towards humanitarian assistance</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Traditionally, the MFA has stable long-term development cooperation and humanitarian assistance policies</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apart from a mention in a recent report to parliament, Finland's development cooperation policy is not explicit about crisis response outside of established priorities. Humanitarian assistance policy does not have that issue because of its needs-based approach.</li> <li>• MFA is an integrated ministry. This resulted in an incomplete top-level line management structure, and - apart from within units - it remains somewhat unclear who exactly is responsible for what. In the same vein, the status and scope of decisions are not always clear.</li> </ul>
<b>External origin</b> (attributes of the MFA's operating environment)	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The pandemic created new needs, several of which Finland could serve well within its established development cooperation priorities. In this way, the pandemic helped to validate Finland's development policy priorities.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finland has also supported a health-related pandemic response. Going forward, the continued expansion of the MFA's partner portfolio to also include health partners such as WHO and GAVI can stretch policy priorities and operational capacities thin.</li> <li>• If not managed well, inconsistencies in how humanitarian assistance is allocated by the CSO and regional department units can damage Finland's reputation as a strongly HA principle-driven donor.</li> <li>• Distance working may have made decision-making more difficult in some cases and may have reduced clarity on the status of decisions taken.</li> </ul>



Table 12 SWOT: risk management

	<b>POSITIVE (for optimal response to COVID-19)</b>	<b>NEGATIVE (for optimal response to COVID-19)</b>
<b>Internal origin</b> (attributes of the MFA)	<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The MFA has quickly and intensely worked on understanding and mitigating COVID-19 related risks in the early months of the pandemic.</li> <li>• In this context, the fact that Finland depends to a large extent on analysis and information provided by its partners was actually an advantage.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The MFA has little capacity for independently monitoring project progress and COVID-19 impacts during the pandemic.</li> <li>• The MFA has little in-house capacity for foresight-related research that could have further supported and accelerated the pandemic response.</li> </ul> <p><i>It should be noted that the Review Team does not consider it a weakness that specific pandemic-related risks were absent in project-level risk assessments because it is not cost-effective to attempt to plan for everything in advance. In contrast, as outlined under threats below, the pandemic now needs to be included in these risk matrices.</i></p>
<b>External origin</b> (attributes of the MFA's operating environment)	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working more closely with local partners as well as both more extensive use of local consultants and the digital leap present opportunities to all stages of development cooperation project life-cycle management, including MEL/KM.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Since very little is known about the degree to which the pandemic will affect project planning, implementation and longer-term development objectives, this represents a significant risk that needs to be carefully monitored. In other words, there may be a big wave of bad news coming regarding the effectiveness of projects implemented (and planned) during the pandemic.</li> <li>• Small organisations may at crisis be vulnerable to accepting and operationalising decisions that are not fully based on the agreed parameters. Even with the best of intentions, such eventualities may be risky, at least from the reputational point of view.</li> </ul>



**Table 13 SWOT: knowledge management**

	<b>POSITIVE (for optimal response to COVID-19)</b>	<b>NEGATIVE (for optimal response to COVID-19)</b>
<b>Internal origin</b> (attributes of the MFA)	<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <p>The MFA established effective sharing of relevant pandemic-related information, for example, through the series of KEO briefings.</p>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <p>The MFA largely relies on the information provided by others. This is per se not a problem and adequate in view of the relatively small size of the MFA compared to peer ministries of larger countries. However, the MFA also possesses a rather limited capacity to “make sense” of the wealth of pandemic-related knowledge that is available internationally.</p> <p>The status and scope of decisions were not always clear to staff. This is mostly related to how management responsibilities in the MFA are structured (see “weaknesses” in the “policies and procedures” dimension) but may also be related to how decisions are shared with and introduced to the staff.</p>
<b>External origin</b> (attributes of the MFA’s operating environment)	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <p>Internationally, there are very significant information resources related to the pandemic, including its impact on programming, suitable evaluation approaches, and lessons and good practices.</p>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <p>Practical pandemic response know-how acquired by MFA staff may get lost due to staff changes and rotations.</p> <p>Important information related to the pandemic may be “hiding in plain sight”, meaning that it is available in theory, but not in an easily digestible and usable form for application by the MFA.</p>





Table 14 SWOT: staff

	<b>POSITIVE (for optimal response to COVID-19)</b>	<b>NEGATIVE (for optimal response to COVID-19)</b>
<b>Internal origin</b> (attributes of the MFA)	<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many MFA staff are motivated and resilient and have maintained their work performance even under difficult circumstances.</li> <li>• In most cases, the MFA has been able to bring back overseas staff when needed</li> <li>• MFA leadership and the HR units have been able to support staff throughout the pandemic, and the importance of staff wellbeing - including psychological - is recognized.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rigid organisational structures (“silos”) in the MFA inhibit flexible staff reallocations to temporarily balance uneven workloads between units and departments. <i>(It should be noted that this does not apply within units where unit directors were able to balance work between unit staff).</i></li> <li>• The persistent staff shortages (and net hiring stop) at the MFA have exacerbated pandemic-induced workload imbalances further and caused key positions to remain unstaffed for months.</li> <li>• There may have been limited options or lack of political will to support staff wellbeing more effectively during the pandemic, especially regarding staff with young children, difficult living conditions, or especially sensitive to social isolation during lockdowns. Many unit directors felt left alone in dealing with these issues.</li> <li>• Initially, the MFA’s online tools were overwhelmed by the sudden increase in usage</li> </ul>
<b>External origin</b> (attributes of the MFA’s operating environment)	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remote working methods allow easy inclusion of staff from different locations. This represents a useful innovation option compared to pre-pandemic practices.</li> <li>• The MFA can learn important lessons from the impact of the pandemic on its staff. This can be applied in future security- or health-related crises that require staff to work from home.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff resilience and will to perform may hide cumulative fatigue and beginning burnout which, if unchecked, may result in the departure of valuable employees.</li> <li>• Bringing back overseas staff abruptly effectively stopped some ongoing work. While this reflected a correct prioritisation of staff safety, hasty and unplanned departures can cause significant delays and loss of project results.</li> <li>• Strict adherence to security regulations may actually increase related risks by “pushing” staff to use insecure tools for online communication if the tools approved by the MFA do not allow all the necessary online participation.</li> </ul>



# Annex 11: Desk review of COVID-19 response of other organisations

The Assessment Team has conducted a desk review of how other development organisations have responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, three strands of information have been reviewed:

1. Reviews and evaluations of the pandemic response of specific organisations;
2. Information and research offered by some organisations to inform and support pandemic response; and
3. Information and research offered to inform how to best evaluate projects, programs and institutions in the context of the ongoing pandemic.

The first point has been reviewed in most detail. The following reports have been desk reviewed by the Assessment Team:

- *The COVID-19 Pandemic: How are Humanitarian and Development Co-operation Actors doing so far? How could we do better? Synthesis of early lessons and emerging evidence on the initial COVID-19 pandemic response and recovery efforts. The COVID-19 Global Evaluation Coalition (synthesis report).* June 2021. (<https://www.covid19-evaluation-coalition.org/evaluating-the-response/how-humanitarian-actors-face-covid-19.htm>)
- *Real-Time Assessment of the UNICEF Response to COVID-19: Global synthesis report.* UNICEF. June 2021. (<https://evaluationreports.unicef.org/GetDocument?-fileID=18263>)
- Sida's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Brief. Sida. April 2021.
- (<https://cdn.sida.se/publications/files/10205073sidabriefresponsetocovid-19webb-sidas-response-to-the-covid-19-pandemic.pdf>). In addition, several related online resources were reviewed (see Section XXX).
- Evaluation de la riposte d'Enabel à la pandémie de COVID-19 : Analyse globale.
- ([https://www.enabel.be/sites/default/files/evaluation\\_riposte\\_covid\\_rapport\\_complet.pdf](https://www.enabel.be/sites/default/files/evaluation_riposte_covid_rapport_complet.pdf))
- ILO's response to the impact of COVID-19 on the world of work: Evaluative lessons on how to build a better future of work after the pandemic. ILO Evaluation Office. December 2021. ([https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_mas/---eval/documents/publication/wcms\\_824659.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_mas/---eval/documents/publication/wcms_824659.pdf))



Points 2 and 3 have been reviewed in less detail, only covering a fraction of the – by now – large available repository of online resources. Reviewed resources to inform the pandemic response (point 2) were as follows:

- *Lessons from Evaluation*. COVID-19 Global Evaluation Coalition. (<https://www.covid19-evaluation-coalition.org/lessons-from-evaluation/>):
  - *Issue 1: Food Security*. August 2020.
  - *Issue 2: Gender Equality in Education*. September 2020.
  - *Issue 3: Climate Resilience and small island developing states (SIDS)*. February 2021.
  - *Issue 4: The Use of Cash Transfers in Humanitarian and Development Settings*. November 2020.
  - *Issue 5: Gender Equality*. October 2020.
- IEG Lesson Library: Evaluative Resources and Evidence to inform the COVID-19 Response. Independent Evaluation Group, World Bank. (<https://ieg.worldbankgroup.org/topic/covid-19-coronavirus-response>).

Regarding how to evaluate during the pandemic (point 3), the following resources have been reviewed:

- *Good practices during COVID-19*. IEO UNDP and OECD DAC Evalnet Joint Guidance Note for Evaluation Units.
- *EvalCrisis – lessons learnt*. European Union. (<https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/dev-co-ess/wiki/evalcrisis-lessons-learnt>).
- *Evaluation During COVID-19*. UNDP. (<http://web.undp.org/evaluation/guideline/covid19.shtml>).
- *Adapting evaluation questions to the COVID-19 pandemic*. UNFPA Evaluation Office. February 2021.

The most comprehensive assessment to date is the synthesis of initial lessons from bilateral and multilateral COVID-19 response and recovery efforts conducted by the COVID-19 Global Evaluation Coalition, which covered some 200 evaluations, as well as other lesson-learning exercises such as results monitoring, action reviews, and internal reflection exercises conducted between March 2020 and February 2021, thus reflecting the first year of the pandemic. This synthesis report summarised its overall findings as presented in Figure 21.



Figure 21 Overall findings' summary - COVID-19 Global Evaluation Coalition's synthesis report



Source: OECD/DAC COVID-19 Global Evaluation Coalition

Based on this assessment and the other reports reviewed, the Assessment Team concluded the following:

**In developing countries, the COVID-19 pandemic severely affected also sectors other than health.**

Even in countries with limited direct health impacts, indirect socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic were reportedly severe. These include, inter alia, rising food insecurity, malnutrition and poverty, increased threats of violence and abuse, and school closures. The correlation between gender and COVID-19 was highlighted and is also prioritised in available online resources to inform pandemic response (e.g., in the case of the COVID-19 Global Evaluation Coalition). The UNICEF report also highlights deteriorating mental health as an important consequence of the pandemic.

**Most organisations considered their own response to the pandemic to be relevant. But this assessment seems mostly based on what type of support partners requested rather than on solid evidence from pandemic-related beneficiary needs on the ground.**

Most response actions were reported to be relevant to beneficiary needs and to reflect national partner country plans and the agencies' priorities. There is, however, considerably little evidence on actual relevance from the beneficiary perspective, simply because these needs were not exactly known at the time. Rather, relevance is usually inferred from what support national and development partners had requested. For example, the UNICEF report questions whether accurate data and understanding had sufficiently informed those requests about real needs on the ground.



**With relevance for the Finnish response, several organisations concluded that their existing strategies had remained relevant also during the pandemic.**

Because the pandemic affected many sectors beyond its immediate health impacts, non-health priorities often address important indirect effects of the pandemic. For example, the ILO synthesis report concluded that ILO strategies and actions remained broadly relevant in the context of the pandemic and could make an important contribution to a human-centred recovery.

In this context, it should be noted that a rich body of research, evaluation and on-the-job findings has been accumulated since the pandemic started, on which a more detailed assessment of relevance can be based because of when the desk reviewed reports were compiled, this is not yet always fully reflected.

**Reports are explicit about additional pandemic response activities but remain comparatively silent about interventions that were delayed or rendered irrelevant by COVID-19.**

The reports describe threefold responses in terms of development cooperation and humanitarian assistance:

1. Launching of new and upscaling of existing COVID-19-related interventions
2. Adaptation of ongoing interventions to ensure their success under the pandemic, and, with less detailed descriptions
3. Delayed or stopped interventions.

From the perspective of the agencies, responses were usually considered significant and well-implemented both in terms of new and adapted activities, i.e., along with the first and second of the above-mentioned points.

Reports were generally vaguer about the interventions that were delayed or rendered altogether irrelevant by the pandemic. A typical example is the COVID-19 Global Evaluation Coalition synthesis that concludes that *“The pandemic caused significant implementation delays, thus increasing the likelihood of not meeting planned output targets in the difficult context of the pandemic”*, but without concluding to what degree these risks actually materialised. In a similar fashion, the ILO synthesis states that *“to varying degrees, those leading the projects were able to adjust their planned activities”*.

**Most organisations described shifting to faster and/or simplified operating procedures.**

In terms of the agencies themselves, the reports consistently describe shifting to adapted (remote) work modalities, balancing an increased workload with headquarters issues, and adopting simplified and accelerated operating procedures.

**Reports agree that the initial responses occurred quickly, starting in March or April of 2020.**

Most reports paint an overall optimistic picture of their organisation’s COVID-19 responses, including its timeliness, at times tending towards being somewhat self-congratulatory. The COVID-19 Global Evaluation Coalition synthesis report nevertheless posed the question of whether this was fast enough and if the response could have been further accelerated.



**Coordination is mentioned, but there is no conclusion regarding the ensuing coherence of the response.**

Reports indicated that existing coordination mechanisms were used (in the country, but also donor-specific as in the “Team” approaches in the EU and Belgium) but did not go into detail about the ensuing coordination effectiveness of coherence. Responses channelled through the multilateral system were considered to be fast and (naturally) coherent. SIDA also considered multilateral core funding to be important to allow multilateral agencies the necessary flexibility.

**Some reports mentioned that the pandemic helped bring different organisational units closer together.**

The most explicit finding to this end comes from the ILO synthesis report, which concludes: *“The COVID-19 pandemic has led to strengthened internal collaboration and has improved communication in some programmes. The ILO showed that, when faced with a crisis, it could overcome its tendency to ‘work in silo’”.*

**Highlighting positive aspects of new work modalities introduced during the pandemic, the reports remain undecided about their effectiveness.**

While hailing the need and lower cost of new working modalities such as remote monitoring or third-party needs assessments, the reports also pointed out that the effectiveness of these approaches was yet unverified and that it remained open to what degree some of these practices could become the new normal.

**Examples for strengths and weaknesses of the organisation(s).**

Among reported key strengths were pre-existing strong relations with development partners, and the willingness and ability to react and adapt quickly was considered a necessary strength, including a higher than usual risk appetite.

Reported weaknesses were reduced implementing capacities, sketchy and/or unreliable information about actual needs and implementation progress and results of interventions, results frameworks and indicators that were not useful under pandemic conditions, unsustainable pressures on staff, and displacement effects the focus on combating the pandemic had on other activities.

**Examples for opportunities and threats faced by the organisations(s).**

One frequently reported opportunity was that innovation pressure resulted in increased risk appetite, allowing, for example, the quick introduction of new working modalities or the introduction of simplified operating procedures.

Systemic threats were focused on immediate action at the expense of mid- and long-term response (e.g., systems strengthening) the inability of partners to move to and use online/remote tools. In developing countries, setbacks with ongoing development work were considered to pose a risk.



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Ministry for Foreign  
Affairs of Finland