



EVALUATION

Programme-based Support through
Finnish Civil Society Organizations II



Evaluation on Finland's Development Policy and Cooperation

2017/3b

EVALUATION 2 ON THE CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS RECEIVING PROGRAMME-BASED SUPPORT AND SUPPORT FOR HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Finn Church Aid

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SUMMARY

Background and methodology

The Finnish Government has provided Programme Based Support (PBS) to Finnish Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) since 2005. Currently, PBS is channelled to 17 organisations, three foundations and two umbrella organisations.

Civil society development cooperation is guided by the Development Policy Programme of Finland and by guidelines for Civil Society in Development Policy. Additionally the humanitarian assistance (HA) of CSOs is guided by Finland's Humanitarian Policy. Support to CSOs is believed to ultimately lead to reduction of poverty and inequality, and in relation to HA to saving lives. Civil Society strengthening is an important condition for this.

In 2015, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (MFA) decided to carry out evaluations on CSOs receiving multiannual PBS in three rounds until mid-2017. This second (CSO 2) evaluation was kicked-off in June 2016 covering the six CSOs receiving both PBS and HA funding: Fida International, Finn Church Aid (FCA), Finnish Red Cross, Plan Finland, Save the Children Finland and World Vision Finland.

This evaluation aims to assess:

- Results achieved by the PBS and HA funded programmes of CSOs;
- Value and merit of PBS and HA funded CSO-programmes; and
- Coordination and management of PBS and HA as separate funding instruments.

The CSO 2 evaluation covers the period 2010-2016 and it consists of CSO-specific sub-studies and an overall synthesis report. This report concerns the sub-study on FCA.

FCA is a faith-based organisation whose key objective is to promote the enjoyment of human rights without discrimination. FCA is the largest organisation in development cooperation and the second largest in HA in Finland with over 60 years of experience in aid work. FCA carries out development cooperation, HA and advocacy work on behalf of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Finland. In 2015 FCA's annual budget was € 44.7 million, of which one third was funding from the Finnish Government. Since 2011, FCA's programmatic focus has been on three rights-based priority themes that aim to improve people's well-being: the Right to Livelihoods (R2L); the Right to Quality Education (R2QE); and the Right to Peace (R2P). Advocacy is mainstreamed under each theme. FCA currently implements PBS and HA in 15 countries in four continents.

In the sub-study on FCA, research was done on the policy, strategy and project-portfolio funded by the MFA (both PBS and HA). Fieldwork was done in three representative countries for the overall PBS and HA portfolio: Jordan, Nepal, Somalia/ Somaliland.

Main findings and conclusions

Relevance

Deeply embedded in community work, FCA's interventions are relevant to today's development needs as well as prolonged crises. FCA's HA activities save lives in the immediate aftermath of crises through the provision of essential goods and services such as food, water and education-in-emergencies. Early recovery activities are appropriate for linking relief, recovery and development (LRRD). Interventions are needs-based, targeted to vulnerable population groups, and are planned and implemented with community participation, ensuring their relevance to the local context and to the target groups. FCA has found its comparative advantage within its three thematic areas, R2L, R2QE and R2P.

Complementarity, coherence and coordination

The three Rights themes, complemented by strong local level and sub-national advocacy, are internally coherent and allow FCA to focus on specific areas where it has the greatest expertise. Interventions are complementary to, and coordinated with, those of other actors in both PBS and HA, contributing especially to the Global Education Cluster in emergencies.

Effectiveness

While the interventions have produced tangible results and the three interlocking Rights themes work well in tandem and aptly reinforce LRRD, effectiveness of the thematic approach has not yet been assessed for instance through dedicated thematic evaluations.

Capacity development benefits local partners in project implementation and management but is more challenging in organisational capacity development.

FCA's advocacy work has positive spinoff effects at community and sub-national levels. FCA's advocacy in Finland raises awareness on crises and humanitarian needs, and raises FCA's profile, generates revenue and enhances the 'Finnishness' of FCA's programmes globally.

Efficiency

MFA's separate funding systems (PBS and the annual project proposal system for HA) creates additional administrative costs. Short term funding to HA causes inefficiencies in areas where protracted crises require long term interventions.

FCA's country offices are efficiently run with optimum use of resources. It has good and improving Results Based Management tools. Support from the FCA's Head Office does not reach all duty stations equally to ensure efficiency in programme implementation or provide guidance to country staff. FCA, like other organisations, encounters difficulties in finding staff willing to deploy to challenging countries and at times key posts are not filled in a timely manner.

Impact

Impact of FCA-supported PBS, HA and advocacy is evident at individual, household and community levels. A challenge is finding the right indicators that

permit impact measurement in short-term programmatic timeframes, particularly on behavioral, social and policy changes.

Connectedness and sustainability

FCA strives for durable and transformational results, building resilience in populations in disaster-prone areas and contributing to peaceful coexistence among communities. Programmes mainstream disaster risk reduction but are weaker at addressing climate change challenges that can lead to conflict or displacement. Absence of exit strategies means that FCA has no clear plans of when to disengage, although new guidance should improve the exit planning.

Main recommendations:

1. FCA should continue with its current strategy to target the poorest and most marginalised populations in both PBS and HA;
2. MFA should continue supporting FCA's innovative interventions relevant to today's prolonged crises;
3. FCA should focus more on developing greater organisational capacity of its partners, preparing those who would be apt candidates to absorb direct financing from donors in countries and contexts where this would be possible;
4. FCA should continue to develop and deepen inter-linkages of the three Rights themes, complemented by strong advocacy, to maximise its rights-based comparative advantage and expertise;
5. FCA should continue its effective advocacy messaging and highlight its role as a successful 'change agent';
6. MFA should consider multi-year (e.g. 3-year) funding for FCA's HA projects in protracted crises. This would achieve greater cost efficiencies and help retain key staff through longer job expectancy;
7. FCA should ensure equal coverage to staff serving in all duty stations and ensure they get the guidance and consultations they need;
8. FCA should develop more meaningful strategies to anchor people in their communities and make greater use of livelihoods and education as platforms to promote Disaster Risk Reduction and climate change awareness that would help communities to achieve greater resilience against recurring crises;
9. FCA should ensure that programme and project design includes handover and exit plans; and
10. FCA should coordinate more with other actors outside immediate partnerships in national and local coordination platforms, where it can share its achievements and operational information.

KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
Strategic and Thematic Focus		
<p>FCA's Programme Based Support (PBS) provides contributions in thematic areas of Right to Education (R2E), Right to Livelihoods (R2L) and Right to Peace (R2P), which are well aligned with its strategy and Finnish development cooperation policy priorities. FCA's programmes focus on the poorest and most marginalised people and communities. Vulnerability is also considered, as one of the criteria for selection of target areas. FCA fills in gaps, for example, by providing education in emergency situations and to vulnerable population groups such as refugees, Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) and the poorest members of the communities that host them. Gender analyses are not done systematically. The themes R2E, R2L and R2P are appropriately leveraging FCA's grassroots contacts and experience.</p> <p>Humanitarian assistance (HA) interventions meet needs of refugees, Internally Displaced People (IDP) and host countries, and also act to anchor communities in their own or first-asylum countries.</p>	<p>FCA's PBS and HA are relevant and well aligned with Finland's development and humanitarian policies. Deeply embedded in community work, FCA's interventions are relevant to today's prolonged crises which impel people to flee to countries far from their borders. They appropriately link relief, recovery and development (LRRD).</p> <p>The coverage of FCA's actions are in line with FCA's and MFA's priorities to reach most vulnerable, poor and marginalised people in contexts of recurring poverty and crisis. Attention to gender is prioritised, but gender analyses are not done systematically and root causes of inequality are not always paid sufficient attention.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. FCA should continue with its current strategy to target the poorest and most marginalised populations in both Programme Based Support (PBS) and HA. It should assess the root causes of inequality in contexts where these create tensions and risk spilling over into conflict and/or displacement. 2. MFA should continue supporting FCA's innovative interventions relevant to today's prolonged crises which impel people to flee to countries far from their borders and continue to fund early recovery activities in emergencies because they are appropriate to safe-guarding people's dignity, offering them a base to re-launch themselves and cope with recurrent crises.
Partnerships		
<p>FCA works with local partners who consider the relationship as true partnership rather than merely as implementation of sub-contracting (PBS and HA).</p> <p>Finnish funding has a multiplier effect on attracting institutional partners in countries where FCA works: European Union (EU), United Nations (UN) and government authorities (especially at local and regional levels). These seek FCA's expertise to intervene in areas of its comparative advantage: education, rural livelihoods and peace and reconciliation.</p> <p>FCA capacity development of local CSO partners focuses mainly on project- management and implementation. Organisational capacity development has been less prominent. FCA has measurement tools to measure partners' capacity needs but these are not systematically used in country offices.</p>	<p>Finnish PBS funding enables FCA to build strong partnerships domestically and globally. These add value to its portfolio of programmes and projects.</p> <p>While local CSO partners appreciate their relationship with FCA, the FCA-supported capacity development is mostly limited to project management. There is less emphasis on organisational capacity development and FCA finds it challenging to contribute to overall vibrant civil society in contexts where civil society space is shrinking.</p> <p>Capacity development of partners is not recognised in PBS framework reporting, though vibrant civil society is an important goal of this framework.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. FCA should focus more on developing organisational capacity of its partners, preparing those who would be apt candidates to absorb direct financing from donors in countries and contexts where this would be possible; and include capacity development in the PBS framework reporting.

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA)		
<p>FCA has developed policy guidance papers as well as global objectives for each of its thematic priority areas.</p> <p>FCA's work is based on HRBA principles, supporting people to realise their rights: Education in Emergencies (EiE) and emergency livelihoods are recognised as protective and life-sustaining activities, particularly espoused in early recovery principles. FCA's three Rights themes work well when implemented together (PBS and HA) but even a programmatic focus on only one thematic area can provide entry points to the other two. Effectiveness of the three Rights themes has not been assessed as no thematic evaluations have taken place so far.</p>	<p>FCA's approach to promoting Human Rights through three thematic priority areas is relevant although a holistic conceptual framework would be needed.</p> <p>Analyses on human rights, vulnerability, gender and conflicts are not used sufficiently to measure outcomes and impact, undermining the evidence base of human rights-based support for targeted interventions.</p> <p>Human rights related impact indicators in projects and programme level are not defined.</p>	<p>4. FCA should continue to develop and deepen inter-linkages of the three Rights themes, complemented by strong advocacy, to maximise its rights-based comparative advantage and expertise, and conduct evaluations of the three Rights-based themes.</p>
Advocacy		
<p>In PBS and HA, FCA works with partners who advocate at grassroots and sub-national levels to bring about change. FCA is effective in changing mindsets and bringing about positive results, e.g. improved hygiene practices in Somaliland and resolving clan disputes in Somalia. Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) awareness is well-learned through livelihoods and education projects. However, FCA does not highlight its positive role as a 'change agent' sufficiently in its communications (reports, website etc.) and no advocacy-specific evaluation has yet been undertaken to measure its benefits.</p>	<p>Effective advocacy has positive spinoff effects at community and sub-national levels. Awareness raising and campaigning in Finland raises FCA's profile and generates revenues, but more could be done to highlight achievements.</p>	<p>5. FCA should develop a strategy for advocacy and conduct advocacy-specific monitoring and evaluation regularly.</p>
HA in protracted crises		
<p>FCA's early recovery activities in protracted crises need more time than the MFA's one year funding to achieve sustainable results. A separate funding system (PBS and the annual project proposal system for HA) is not efficient since it translates to more administrative costs and fragments activities.</p>	<p>The need to replicate HA projects year after year in protracted crises is inefficient for all stakeholders. The MFA division of the PBS and HA funding envelopes creates challenges for linking relief and development more closely.</p>	<p>6. MFA should consider multi-year (e.g. 3-year) funding for FCA's HA projects in protracted crises. This would achieve greater cost efficiencies and help retain key staff through longer job expectancy. It would also improve linkages between relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD).</p>

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
Administrative efficiency		
<p>Country Offices (CO) are run efficiently with sound planning, decision making and cost control. Some hardship COs are not visited regularly. This risks decision making, can cause delays and compromises efficiency.</p> <p>FCA provides competitive salaries but faces difficulties recruiting and retaining key staff in particularly challenging countries, e.g. CAR, Somalia and Haiti.</p>	<p>FCA's Country Offices are efficiently run with optimum use of resources and cost-saving measures. However, Head Office support is not provided equally to all duty stations.</p>	<p>7. FCA should ensure equal coverage to staff serving in all duty stations and ensure they get the guidance and consultations they need, and consider increasing incentives (hardship allowances) to retain staff deployed in challenging countries.</p>
Sustainability		
<p>FCA's strategic choice of engaging local partners in implementation has increased ownership and sustainability. However, there is little evidence that FCA assesses governments' willingness and capacity to sustain rights-based interventions once programmes phase out. FCA's humanitarian interventions in protracted crises are premised on achieving longer term results by building beneficiary resilience. FCA's programmes and projects are less sustainable in contexts experiencing severe effects of climate change.</p> <p>Exit planning is not an integral part of the FCA's project/ programme cycle.</p>	<p>FCA has developed Country Programme entry and exit principles but exit planning is not an integral part of the project/ programme cycle.</p> <p>FCA's programmes and projects in countries experiencing increasing climate change need re-thinking to meaningfully address climate change challenges that may lead to conflict or displacement.</p>	<p>8. FCA should develop more meaningful strategies to anchor people in their communities and make greater use of livelihoods and education as platforms to promote DRR and climate change awareness that would help communities to achieve greater resilience against recurring crises.</p> <p>9. FCA should ensure that programme and project design includes handover and exit plans.</p>
Coordination		
<p>In both PBS and HA, FCA works through existing structures and avoids creating parallel ones. In HA, coordination with international actors e.g. with the Global Education Cluster is good, but the level of coordination and collaboration with national and local actors varies by country and by intervention.</p>	<p>Coordination is good in many contexts especially at international levels, but at national and local contexts it is more uneven.</p>	<p>10. FCA should coordinate more in national and local coordination platforms, where it can share its achievements and operational information.</p>