

Complementarity is the key when considering different channels for development cooperation. (...) For example, I consider development cooperation by NGOs well suited for supporting education and health care sectors.

Paavo Väyrynen, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development, June 2008

Finland



Has Finland established a timetable to reach the target of 0.51% by 2010? YES
Will Finland meet the 0.51% target without inflating its aid? NGO prediction: YES

In 2008, Finland reported €790m as ODA. As a percentage of GNI, this was 0.43%. The government has recently said that Finland will meet its 0.51% target by 2010. However, Finnish NGOs point out that this will only happen as a result of the impact of the financial crisis on GNI. As there was no debt cancellation in 2008, Finland's aid was inflated only with refugee costs. However, the government is currently discussing reporting student costs as ODA, and there are also voices calling for the inclusion of security and peacekeeping expenses.

Spending less than has been budgeted has been a growing problem for Finland for several years. It has been reported that in 2008 only 78% of Finland's budget for regular development cooperation was spent.

• Aid quality

There is a clear decline in the Finnish government's support for gender equality. A recent evaluation reveals that the number of projects focusing on gender has decreased and simultaneously gender mainstreaming is not working properly. In addition, there are no mechanisms or indicators to evaluate the gender mainstreaming.

In terms of transparency, it has become more difficult to access information on development policy. In principle, most of the documents are labelled as public and open to consultation, but in practice, important decisions related to development policy are made without proper consultation, such as the decision on reversing the trend of increasing the use of budget support.

With regards to democratic ownership of aid, there are increasingly questions over the Finnish government's treatment of national NGOs as independent actors. There has been discussion that Finnish NGOs should focus their cooperation on Finland's bilateral priority countries. Moreover, it has been proposed that NGOs should take over sectors where the bilateral cooperation is decreasing. At the same time, government consultation with Finnish NGOs has grown more sporadic, and Southern NGOs are consulted even less. However, Finland is still successfully promoting the rights and possibilities of NGOs in partner countries.

Finland's performance on technical assistance also needs to improve. Finland has not adopted any guidelines aimed at improving donor coordination of technical assistance. Finnish NGOs are worried that the decisions on TA are not based on the needs and priorities of the partner countries.

Finnish NGOs urge their government to:

- Live up to the commitments made in Paris and Accra, especially around the principle of ownership.
- Raise its ODA level to 0.7% with steady annual increases in order to fulfil its international commitments.
- Fulfil the commitment to promote gender as a cross-cutting issue in all development cooperation.
- Ensure and increase public participation in decision-making.
- Acknowledge the integrity and independence of NGOs.

Finland's genuine and inflated aid

