

Cross-cutting objectives of development cooperation

According to the 2004 Government Resolution on Development Policy, cross-cutting themes in the implementation of Finnish development policy were

- promoting the rights and status of women and girls as well as gender and social equality
- taking environmental issues into consideration
- promoting the rights of the disabled and equal opportunities to participate.

These themes represent the focuses of Finland's development policy, and Finland has made a commitment to promote them as part of the international community. They have a direct bearing on the key objective of Finnish development cooperation, which is to reduce poverty. The significance of aid designed to protect the environment has also grown as a result of climate change. The themes are also closely connected to the goals and objectives in the UN's Millennium Declaration, which are meant to be achieved by 2015. The aim is to implement cross-cutting themes by mainstreaming them in all project activities or supporting them in special projects.

Promoting equality and the state of the environment is included as the main objective or an important action in a large part of Finland's development cooperation projects. The state budget for 2008 earmarks 668 million euros for development cooperation.

The audit indicated that on the policy level Finland's activities to promote cross-cutting themes and take them into consideration have mostly been proper and adequate. At the practical level, however, policy objectives have been implemented only partially and the weight given to them has in fact diminished.

The objective of the equality strategy approved by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs has been to increase the effectiveness of Finland's development cooperation policy substantially by promot-

ing gender equality and women's rights. The audit found that is not discernible at least in aid decisions for projects aimed at promoting equality, whose share of the money spent on all bilateral projects has remained roughly the same in recent years. The resources that have been allocated for this purpose are not commensurate with the weight given to promoting equality in the Government Resolution on Development Policy.

The amount of aid that has been made available to improve the state of the environment has declined in recent years, and there have been large annual fluctuations in the aid that has been granted to developing countries to meet international environmental commitments. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs does not have an approved environmental strategy.

According to the audit, the principles in the Government Resolution on Development Policy and recommendations concerning the disabled are hard to see in the practical implementation of development cooperation. The ministry lacks a strategy for the disabled on which to base activities. During the past five years the amount of funds allocated for the disabled has not grown to speak of.

Implementing the mainstreaming of cross-cutting themes faces many challenges and development needs. Mainstreaming requires sufficient personnel resources and financing, defining responsibilities, developing skills and conducting systematic monitoring. One general problem appears to be that taking themes into consideration is haphazard institutionally and depends too much on whether individuals are interested and have the necessary knowledge and experience.

In the planning of development policy at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, spending targets have not been set for individual themes. To make activities more objective-oriented and improve the steering of development policy, this is however necessary. Showing the link between objectives and financial resources would also improve preconditions to evaluate the effectiveness of activities.

The steering of activities should be based on indicators derived from the UN's Millennium Goals and other monitoring and evaluation criteria describing the effectiveness of development cooperation so that the connection between projects and outcomes and the effectiveness of promoting cross-cutting themes is visible. Indicators should also allow the evaluation of cost-effectiveness and

economy. The ministry's development cooperation quality group should have a tool it can use to ensure that cross-cutting themes are taken into consideration in projects. Such a tool should also be available for NGOs and missions when they make aid decisions.

The audit indicated that development cooperation information systems do not serve the ministerial monitoring of development cooperation or the keeping of statistics and reporting. For example, information on projects' development policy objectives in the intervention system only covers intergovernmental, bilateral projects properly. The recording of information in the system has also been inconsistent. Development cooperation information systems should be improved so that the project information they contain is as comprehensive and reliable as possible in order to serve monitoring, statistics and reporting needs.

Performance reporting by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and in the development cooperation report has not dealt with cross-cutting themes. The effectiveness and efficiency of activities aimed at promoting cross-cutting themes and the cost-effectiveness of different forms of activity should be monitored with the help of indicators and clearly defined monitoring and evaluation criteria.

Spot checks were made in Ethiopia and Tanzania. Promoting cross-cutting themes had been taken into consideration to a varying degree in the projects that were checked. Nevertheless, every project aimed to promote at least one of the themes. Themes were generally visible in the form of significant actions. Improving the status of the disabled was often the main objective in projects arranged by NGOs. Promoting all cross-cutting themes in the same project was rare, however. Moreover, the requirement that all cross-cutting themes should be taken into consideration in all projects was not felt to be reasonable, since this can weaken the effectiveness of activities.

The risk in mainstreaming is that the objectives that have been set for a theme will become blurred during the implementation of a project, particularly if funds have not been appropriated for this specific purpose. Budgeting by theme would make activities more objective-oriented and transparent.

Project monitoring and reporting revolved around outputs. Reporting on impacts was sketchy. In many organisations and projects, this kind of reporting is being developed, however. Shortcomings

were observed in the monitoring and reporting of information disaggregated by sex.

In budget support for Tanzania, promoting cross-cutting themes is quite visible in the objectives that have been set in the national poverty reduction programme. The problem is practical implementation. Arranging the monitoring of cross-cutting themes properly in budget support cooperation is still under way.

Using local cooperation funds to promote cross-cutting themes was clearly more comprehensive at the Ethiopian Embassy than at the Tanzanian Embassy. The Ethiopian Embassy provided support for every theme area. The Tanzanian Embassy, on the other hand, did not support a single project promoting environmental protection in 2006, and support for other cross-cutting themes was also meagre.

In the opinion of the National Audit Office, project-level evaluation and its results should be better linked to performance reporting and the evaluation of cross-cutting themes as a whole.

Procedures and practices both at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and between the ministry and missions aimed at ensuring the complementarity and coordination of multilateral cooperation appeared to work well for the most part.

In donors' cooperation at the country level, the most concrete expression of the division of labour is the cooperation strategy between the government and donors. The aim is to divide aid evenly among different sectors, with no more than three donors operating in each sector. Among the main recipients of Finnish development aid, coordination has proceeded farthest in Tanzania, where a cooperation strategy was prepared in 2006. In the division of labour environmental matters are Finland's strong point. Success has not been achieved in all aspects of dividing aid evenly, as some donors have withdrawn completely from the education sector.

The European Union and UN bodies have started separate processes to improve complementarity and the division of labour. In cooperation at the country level, international organisations often strive for active leadership in all issues falling within their competence and are less willing to approve a division of labour than bilateral actors.

In cooperation countries' administration, ministries and agencies have their own areas of responsibility and they see promoting cross-

cutting themes as a secondary task. Consequently issues involving the environment, equality and the disabled receive attention in the division of labour among donors according to the assigning of areas of responsibility, which hampers the monitoring of cross-cutting themes.