

# Guideline for the Cross-Cutting Objectives in the Finnish Development Policy and Cooperation

## Contents

1. Introduction .....	1
2. Cross-cutting objectives .....	2
Gender equality .....	2
Non-discrimination with an emphasis on disability inclusion .....	3
Climate resilience .....	3
Low emission development .....	3
Protection of the environment with an emphasis on safeguarding biodiversity .....	3
3. Minimum standard: do no harm .....	3
4. Advancing the cross-cutting objectives beyond the minimum standard .....	5
Mainstreaming .....	5
Targeted action .....	5
Policy influencing .....	6
Table 1. The minimum standard .....	4

## 1. Introduction

This Guideline supports the effective implementation of the Finnish Development Policy and its cross-cutting objectives. The Guideline is in line with the Human Rights-Based Approach in Finland’s Development Cooperation Guidance Note (2015). It aims to strengthen the quality and accountability of Finland’s development policy by integrating human rights and the cross-cutting objectives and implementing them in an integrated manner.

Finland’s development policy is based on international human rights norms and standards<sup>1</sup>, and the UN’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development<sup>2</sup>. Finland’s goal is to ensure that the human rights of all people are realized. Leave No One Behind is a core principle of the 2030 Agenda and in line with the human rights-based approach to development. The human rights framework and the implementation of

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-listings>

<sup>2</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

the 2030 Agenda requires addressing systemic discrimination and marginalization across all 17 Sustainable Development Goals. They call for specific attention to discrimination, including multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, based on, for example, gender, disability, age, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, property, birth, sexual orientation or gender identity. Finland aims in its development policy and cooperation to eliminate all forms of discrimination<sup>3</sup>. This approach calls for increasing the availability of quality disaggregated data and statistics.

The right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is recognized as a human right by the United Nations General Assembly. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Paris Agreement, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework as well as other multilateral environmental agreements are binding on Finland and instrumental in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

International human rights mechanisms supported by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights produce country and sector specific normative guidance that can be a useful source of information in work towards achieving the cross-cutting objectives.

## 2. Cross-cutting objectives

Finland's Development Policy has five cross-cutting objectives. They form the basis that links Finnish policy priorities to the overall objectives of reduction of poverty and inequality. The objectives are gender equality, non-discrimination with an emphasis on disability inclusion, climate resilience, low emission development and protection of the environment with an emphasis on safeguarding biodiversity.

### Gender equality

Within the international human rights framework, gender equality is a key aspect of equality. As part of and continuum to the human rights-based approach, the particular focus on gender equality as a cross-cutting objective entails that specific attention needs to be paid to gendered impacts in all actions and activities of development policy and cooperation. The gendered impacts have to be looked at within the framework of human rights, with a particular focus on the rights of women, girls and sexual and gender minorities. In work related to gender equality, a key reference is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Also other international human rights instruments include key provisions related to the rights of women, girls and sexual and gender minorities and are relevant for the implementation of the cross-cutting objective on gender equality.

Gender equality is a key driver of sustainable development. The aim of gender equality as a cross-cutting objective is to ensure that all people, regardless of their gender, can equally contribute to and benefit from development. The cross-cutting objective guides Finnish development policy and cooperation to systematically assess and address gender-based discrimination and advance gender equality throughout all activities.

---

<sup>3</sup> As per the international human rights framework and the EU guiding framework, including the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy.

### Non-discrimination with an emphasis on disability inclusion

The principle of non-discrimination lies at the heart of the human rights-based approach. It underlines the need to eradicate the root causes for non-realization of an individual's human rights. The aim of non-discrimination as a cross-cutting objective is to ensure that different forms of discrimination, including multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, are taken into account when interventions are planned, implemented and evaluated. Thus, in order to ensure the realization of the principle of non-discrimination, an assessment of equality and risks of discrimination in society are needed.

Non-discrimination as a human rights principle that covers all forms of discrimination is an important element of Finland's human rights policy. In Finland's development policy and cooperation, the emphasis is on addressing the discrimination against persons with disabilities. Also, the focus in this guideline will be on mainstreaming disability inclusion specifically rather than non-discrimination broadly. In assessing and addressing discrimination against persons with disabilities, the main reference is the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

### Climate resilience

The aim of climate resilience as a cross-cutting objective is to enhance climate change adaptation, to reduce vulnerability and to strengthen the resilience of people, ecosystems and societies to climate risks and the impacts of climate change. Climate resilience is one aspect of overall resilience that is affected, besides climate change, by multiple other factors - such as environmental degradation, economic shocks, conflicts and pandemics.

### Low emission development

The aim of low emission development as a cross-cutting objective is to mitigate climate change and to facilitate the transition to low emission development, and soon after to climate neutrality, that minimizes greenhouse gas emissions and enhances sinks of greenhouse gases while taking into account wider development impacts. This will contribute to the goal of the Paris Agreement to limit the global average temperature rise to 1,5° C, or a maximum of 2° C, above pre-industrial levels.

### Protection of the environment with an emphasis on safeguarding biodiversity

The aim of protection of the environment with an emphasis on safeguarding biodiversity as a cross-cutting objective is to address the other two dimensions of the triple planetary crisis, besides climate change, namely biodiversity loss and pollution. This includes preventing environmental degradation and enhancing the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystems.

The five cross-cutting objectives strongly interlink with each other. The dynamics driving poverty and inequality, including those resulting from climate change, environmental degradation and biodiversity loss, are an interplay of multiple human dimensions and external factors.

## 3. Minimum standard: do no harm

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs' (MFA) Guidance Note on the Human Rights-Based Approach to Development states that none of the MFA funded development interventions should further exacerbate or contribute to discrimination or human rights violations. To ensure this, a basic human rights assessment need to be carried out in the planning phase of all interventions, in order to be sufficiently aware of the human rights situation. This is done to avoid unintentional negative effects on the

enjoyment of human rights and to ensure that the intervention does not contribute to discriminatory structures, norms and practices.

The “do no harm” standard applies also to the cross-cutting objectives and is the minimum standard for their implementation.

Finland works in different contexts through diverse partnerships and instruments for influencing and implementing its development policy goals. The standard of doing no harm applies equally across all of these. However, the strategies for implementation will vary.

**Gender equality and non-discrimination with an emphasis on disability inclusion:**

The minimum standard related to gender equality and non-discrimination with an emphasis on disability inclusion entails that an intervention does not have a negative impact on the realization of the rights of women, girls, sexual or gender minorities or persons with disabilities.

**Climate resilience, low emission development and protection of the environment with an emphasis on safeguarding biodiversity:**

Environment and climate related risks as well as the impacts climate change, environmental degradation and biodiversity loss already affect societies and ecosystems. If not managed, the impacts of climate change, environmental degradation and biodiversity loss could hurt or undermine the results of our development cooperation. On the other hand, our development cooperation should not cause adverse impacts on climate, environment or biodiversity.

Table 1. The minimum standard

<b>Gender equality Non-discrimination with an emphasis on disability inclusion</b>	<b>Climate resilience Low emission development Protection of the environment with an emphasis on safeguarding biodiversity</b>
<p>Analyses is undertaken in which the gendered impacts and the impacts on the rights of persons with disabilities are assessed (either as a separate analysis or as part of a context/human rights assessment).</p>	<p>Environment and climate related risks and impacts of climate change, environmental degradation and biodiversity loss on the intervention are screened, if necessary assessed, and then avoided or minimized and managed.</p> <p>If these risks or impacts cannot be avoided or minimized and managed, the intervention should not be funded.</p>
<p>Risks for the realization of human rights of women, girls and persons with disabilities are assessed, avoided and mitigated. If the risks or impacts cannot be avoided or minimized and managed, the intervention should not be funded.</p>	<p>The impacts of the intervention on the environment (including biodiversity) and climate are screened, and if necessary assessed. Any adverse impacts should be avoided or minimized and managed.</p>

	If the adverse impacts cannot be avoided or minimized and managed, the intervention should not be funded.
Barriers for equal participation and inclusion by all genders and persons with disabilities are identified and addressed.	
Accessibility of the environment, information, communication, transportation, services etc., as well as harmful attitudinal barriers that affect participation of persons with disabilities are assessed, avoided and addressed.	
Impacts of the intervention on gender equality and disability inclusion are continuously assessed and monitored.	
Data disaggregated by sex, disability and age is systematically collected, analyzed and used for the purpose of the intervention.	

4. Advancing the cross-cutting objectives beyond the minimum standard

Finland’s development policy and cooperation should not only focus on avoiding negative impacts, but also aim to make a positive contribution. Thus, opportunities to advance the cross-cutting objectives should be proactively sought and supported. The ways to advance them are threefold: mainstreaming, targeted action and policy influencing.

Mainstreaming

Mainstreaming is a strategy to ensure that a certain issue is integrated throughout an entire context or theme. It means, for instance, using a gender, disability, climate, environment or biodiversity perspective in a given context, policy document, strategy or programme. Mainstreaming should include paying attention to internal institutional and structural set-up and human resources policies. In mainstreaming, it is important to be specific and explicit about how mainstreaming is done, and with what objectives, resources and follow-up and quality control mechanisms.

Targeted action

Targeted action means that the focus of an intervention, or a part of it, specifically advances one of the cross-cutting objectives. This can entail specific programmes that are aimed at, for example, advancing the rights and empowerment of women or persons with disabilities, climate change mitigation or adaptation, protection of the environment or enhancing biodiversity as a principal or significant objective. The scope of a targeted action is clearly defined. Targeted action should be based on the partner countries’ priorities and needs, supporting the implementation of their commitments such as national action plans or other relevant policies and strategies.

## Policy influencing

Policy influencing means the conscious endeavour to take influence on a policy process with a view to changing the policy outcome. In the context of the cross-cutting objectives, it means ensuring that gender equality, disability inclusion, climate resilience, low emission development or protection of the environment with an emphasis on safeguarding biodiversity are integrated in policy documents across all areas of Finland's development policy and cooperation. Further, it means that Finland is active on these topics at the international level, for example in the boards of the multilateral organizations or initiatives. This can entail both influencing the content and quality of policy and other documents related to the themes of the cross-cutting objectives, or ensuring that they are integrated into other topics and policy frameworks that are relevant for Finland's development policy and cooperation.