

Terms of Reference for Joint Evaluation for Abilis, KIOS and Siemenpuu Foundations

1. Background to the evaluation

The three special foundations Abilis, KIOS and Siemenpuu give grants to CSOs in the developing countries and communicate development issues in Finland. They have been in cooperation with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (MFA) for about 20 years. MFA has provided funding and special guidelines to the Foundations from the beginning. The Foundations have been named *the special foundations* in order to make the difference to the other foundations that MFA is supporting through its' funding instruments.

The establishment of the Foundations was based on the study of the Finnish development aid coverage in 1995. The study indicated the clear need to have an additional, but a flexible funding window among Finland's development aid funding instruments. The interest of the Finnish development policy was also to channel more financial support to the named thematic areas, human rights, disability rights and environment. The Finnish NGOs and activists of the field shared the similar interests which led to the founding of the Foundations in 1998.

The Foundations' are independent actors of the Finnish civil society, and thus receive the MFA funding through the instruments designed for the civil society. Though the grant making activities of the Foundations can also be paralleled to the MFA funds for local cooperation managed by the Finnish embassies. For all the Foundations the MFA remains the core funder.

Today the MFA funding for the Foundations comes through the programme support modality of the MFA targeted to a set group of partnership organisations, umbrella organisations, and the three special foundations. Programme support by the MFA is discretionary government support based on the provisions of the Act on Discretionary Government Transfers (2001/688). It is guided by the *description of the modality* (2017) and the set *general conditions for the use of discretionary government transfers granted by the MFA and additional conditions for programme support* (2018). The present programme period funded by the MFA is 2018-2021.

The Foundations share many similarities in their approaches to the strengthening of the civil societies, the funding criteria and in the RBM tools and practices. Most of these practices have been developed together with the MFA. However, the thematic areas, arrangements of the funding windows (including the size and length of the support to CSOs) and target countries vary.

All Foundations identify themselves to be part of the global civil society movement and strongly believe in the necessity of movement building and active citizenship in advancing sustainable development. The issues driven by these movements are often still controversial and contested ones in the societies. Necessary social changes are results of multiple actions and actors.

The Foundations have been jointly evaluated by the MFA two times, in 2008 and 2016. The evaluations confirmed that the foundations are relevant for providing small scale NGO support. The foundations assist to implement Finnish development cooperation policy by supporting key cross-cutting objectives and the human-rights based approach to development. However, both evaluations have lacked some deeper analysis of the nature and operational mechanisms of the Foundations' work as grant makers to the projects that are initiated, planned and implemented by local civil society organizations (CSOs) in the South.

Programmes of the special foundations

Abilis Foundation supports projects that are planned, implemented and reported by small groups and associations of people with disabilities. Financial and technical support can be given to those thematic areas that are stated in the country profile papers and annual country programme plans. The special interest of Abilis Foundation is to strengthen participation and empowerment of persons with disabilities that can lead to improved realisation of human rights. Special attention is given to girls and women with disabilities due to multiple discrimination. Due to segregation of people with disabilities in families and communities, project grants can be focusing on awareness raising and trainings on disability. Access to education, vocational training and employment form a big thematic part of the annual grants. As grassroots level disability groups in remote areas and in the least developed countries are in the focus of Abilis, project grants are small. In 2018 the average size of grants was about 7000 €. In 2018 in total 161 new grants were approved and about 100 projects were on-going and started before 2018. The foundation of the Abilis work is the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. All activities supporting the ratification and implementation of the treaty are welcome for granting.

Abilis supports disability projects in the named programme countries that are Ethiopia, Tanzania and Uganda in Africa, and Myanmar, Nepal, Vietnam and Tajikistan in Asia. Additionally, Abilis provides grants to some projects in fragile countries and circumstances. These countries include Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Somaliland, Ukraine and Kosovo. Global Disability Diplomacy on Human Rights is the initiative of Abilis to promote the disability inclusion in all development and humanitarian aid work. Through active communication Abilis shares information about the programme, results of projects and topics related to disability and development.

The annual MFA funding of Abilis is 1 950 000 Euros during the period of 2018-2021. It is about 94 % of the annual income of Abilis.

KIOS Foundation strengthens the realization of human rights by supporting the human rights work of civil society in developing countries. KIOS is channeling direct support to human rights projects planned and implemented by civil society organizations in developing countries. In this programme period, special emphasis is given to proposals focusing on women's rights and gender equality, human rights defenders, the rights of vulnerable and marginalized groups as well as advocacy work related to the rights of these priority groups.

In the supported projects, human rights are strengthened by human rights education, awareness raising, campaigning, monitoring and documentation of the human rights situation, advocacy work and legal aid, among other activities. In addition to project funding, KIOS supports the organizations by strengthening their capacity, networks and security.

KIOS directs its support mainly to six focus countries in East Africa and South Asia. Work is supported in East Africa in Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda. In South Asia support is channeled to Nepal, Sri Lanka and to Tibetan civil society organizations in exile. In 2018 KIOS made 14 new funding decisions and had 28 projects which had started before 2018. 28 earlier started projects were active in 2018. The average grant 2018-19 has been 60 000 €, varying from 18 700 € to 196 600 €. Grant contracts vary from 1 to 3 years.

The MFA granted KIOS a yearly sum of 1 120 000 € for the programme period 2018-2021. This is over 95% of the yearly income.

Siemenpuu Foundation supports projects that alleviate poverty and inequality, and decrease biodiversity loss and climate emissions. Projects aim to strengthen the rights of local communities, improve the state of the environment, advocate comprehensive ecological democratisation of society, and enhance the transition to a sustainable economy. Particular groups of beneficiaries include indigenous peoples and other forest communities and women. During the programme period 2018-2021, Siemenpuu calls for project proposals through five funding schemes: (1) A Just Transition to Ecological Democracy, (2) Forests and Coastal Ecosystems, (3) Biocultural Rights of Indigenous Forest Communities, (4) Rural Women and Food Sovereignty, (5) Climate and Energy Justice. In 2018 Siemenpuu made 17 new funding decisions (average funding 60 000 € - variance 180 000 € - 24 500 €; and length 36 -15 months) and had ongoing 33 projects that had started before 2018.

During this programme period main focus countries are Brazil, Indonesia, India, Mali, Myanmar and Nepal. New projects have been funded also in Liberia and Mozambique. In India Siemenpuu's support with the MFA's programme based funding will be discontinued by the end of 2019 as ruled by MFA. Siemenpuu's active communications work in Finland is based on the learnings from the supported projects.

The MFA granted Siemenpuu Foundation 920 000 EUR in 2018 and 720 000 EUR in 2019, 2020 and 2021. In 2018 MFA support was appr. 90 % of the income.

2. Rationale, purpose and objectives of the evaluation

This evaluation serves the dual purpose of accountability and learning. It should give an assessment of the results achieved so far in this programme period in strengthening the civil society and in relation to the specific objectives of each Foundation. It should assess the role that the Foundations play in the Finnish development cooperation, and the strengths and weaknesses of the Foundations' modality and grant making approaches. The evaluation should also provide analyses on the strengths and weaknesses of the Foundations' communications activities.

The evaluation will feed into the planning of the next programme period (2022-2025) and the strategy processes of the Foundations.

The objectives of this evaluation are

- To give recommendations to the development of the Foundations' modality,
- To give recommendations to the development of the Foundations' tools & practices in grant making and in communications activities
- To increase understanding on best ways to support the strengthening of the civil society

3. Scope of the evaluation

The evaluation deals with the years 2018-2019 of the ongoing programmes 2018-2021 of the Foundations financed by the MFA, covering the active projects during this period. The evaluation should focus on the Foundations' common modality framework, however also address the Foundations separately.

The evaluation should not focus on the results of individual funded projects and communications activities, but rather address the programme level.

Travel to project locations in 1-3 countries is expected.

The evaluation will be guided by the Evaluation manual by the MFA (based on OECD DAC and EU criteria) on parts relevant for CSO projects. The evaluation will utilize OECD DAC criteria, particularly relevance, impact and sustainability in the context of the Foundations' grant making mechanisms.

4. Issues to be addressed and evaluation questions

The evaluation is asked to address, but not necessarily to limit to the following evaluation questions:

1) What is the added value of the Foundations for Finland's Development Cooperation?

- Do the Foundations succeed to add value and do they have a complementary role in relation to other modalities of Finnish Development Cooperation? If yes, how?
- How does the programme support modality of the MFA fit for Foundations' work? Are there issues that are not relevant and appropriate for the Foundations?

2) How well do the funding processes support the selection and management of grants

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the different funding modalities and mechanisms used by the Foundations? Are the used funding criteria relevant?
- How to strengthen the processes in choosing the right partners and projects for funding?

- How the Foundations could develop project management and support?
 - How have the Foundations succeeded to support grantees throughout the project cycle (planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting)? Strengths and weaknesses?
- 3) How do the Foundations' programmes strengthen the civil societies in the South?
- In which ways do projects strengthen the civil society? How could this be reinforced?
 - How do the grantees assess the changes in the targeted groups and their operating environment?
 - In what ways have the Foundations contributed to the capacity development of their grantees? What are the ways of capacity development that the grantees value the most?
- 4) How relevant are the communications activities (in Finland) of the Foundations?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses?

5. Methodology

The evaluation team is expected to use its professional skills and experience in defining the most relevant approach and methodology for the evaluation. Proposed methodology for the evaluation should be comprehensive to ensure a broad view of the Foundations' work.

Evaluation can include field visits to maximum 3 countries. Country/countries will be chosen together with the selected evaluation team.

As basis the methodology is recommended to include:

1. Desk review and analysis of documents
Key documents from each of the Foundation include (some of the documents are in Finnish or other languages than English):
 - Programme document 2018-2021
 - Sample of project documents (funding decisions 2018-2019 and earlier)
 - Annual report 2018 and draft report 2019
 - Funding criteria, project forms, management tools

Other key documents

 - Relevant guidelines from the MFA
2. Interviews, discussions and meetings with relevant stakeholders including
 - Foundations' representatives
 - MFA representatives
 - Other funders in the sectors of the Foundations
 - Grantees and beneficiaries
 - Other key stakeholders
3. Field trip

6. The evaluation process and time schedule

Abilis, KIOS or Siemenpuu Foundations will select the evaluators based on their proposals of interest. These proposals, including a work plan with the suggested evaluation criteria, budget and the CVs of the evaluators should be submitted by 15.11.2019 by e-mail to marjo.heinonen@abilis.fi, with the title “Joint Foundation Evaluation”.

If you have any questions related to the assignment, please send it to the email above by 5.11.2019. They will be answered 8.11.2019.

Time schedule for the evaluation:

Activities	Date
Contracting of evaluators	November 2019
Kick-of meeting	December 2019
Inception report	February 2020
Inception report meeting	February 2020
Interviews and possible field visits	March 2020
Draft Report	April 2020
Presentation of the report	May 2020
Final Report	May 2020

7. Reporting

The evaluators are asked to deliver the following reports in English language-

1. Inception report: On the basis of the desk study, the evaluators shall present an inception report. The inception report consists of the initial findings of the desk study, an evaluation matrix with the focused evaluation questions, a detailed and updated work plan and elaboration of methodology
2. Draft final report for comments
3. Final report: A maximum of 30 pages long report (excluding summary of max. 3 pages long and annexes)

8. Expertise required

The evaluation will be conducted preferably by an evaluation team, which consists of a Finnish and an international member. Required expertise and qualifications are:

- a good understanding on civil society movements and their dynamics, especially in the Global South
- a good understanding of CBO's organisational development and project management
- a good understanding on the human rights based approach to the development

- a good understanding of different modalities used to fund civil society organisations in the Global South (especially of Finland's Development Cooperation)
- solid experience in conducting evaluations in the development cooperation field and preferably programme evaluations of foundations and other civil society organisations
- excellent skills in English and Finnish.

9. Budget

The maximum budget for evaluation is 40 000 (forty thousand) euros including taxes and excluding costs of the field trip(s).

Costs for the field trip(s) will be covered separately based on the most affordable options and following the guidelines of Finnish State Travel Regulations.

10. Mandate

The evaluation team is entitled and expected to discuss matters relevant to this evaluation with pertinent persons and organizations. However, it is not authorized to make any commitments on behalf of the Abilis, KIOS or Siemenpuu Foundations.