



SUPPORTING DEMOCRACY

– THE FINNISH EXPERIENCE

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DEMOCRACY is a predominant form of government in the world today. In Africa alone 2010 has seen elections in more than 20 countries. The popular support for democracy has never been bigger. Democracy doesn't mean only free elections but has a greater meaning to the citizens who vote; they aspire to a more dignified and rewarding life through engagement with society. It also relates to values such as equality and freedom.

FINLAND applies a holistic approach to democracy. Democracy is inextricably associated to human rights, rule of law, good governance and to anti-corruption. Democracy is more than civil and political rights, it is also about economic, social and cultural rights. Due to historical circumstances, differences in cultures, and stage of development, democracy is practiced in diverse forms around the world. Many democracies face challenges with issues such as gender, corruption, law and order.

Finland, in unison with the International Community under the auspices of the United Nations has committed itself to democracy and good governance. Democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights and a dynamic civil society create the preconditions for socially sustainable development, which in turn makes poverty reduction and sustainable economic growth possible and thus improves the wellbeing of people.

Finland considers that while democratic systems may vary in forms and shape, democracy has evolved into a universal value. Democracy ensures that rulers can be held accountable for their actions and democracy also ensures the rights of all, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, of indigenous

peoples and vulnerable groups. The ability of men and women to participate on equal terms in political life and in decision-making is a prerequisite of genuine democracy.

Finland supports locally driven democracy processes by an appropriate mix of financial and political instruments tailored to the specific situation of the country. About ten per cent of the Finnish official development assistance (ODA) is applied on democracy support activities. The objective of this brochure is to present some forms of Finnish democracy assistance through few country examples focusing on the question - what is good democracy assistance made of?

NICARAGUA: **Local democracy and ICT**

Finland has successfully funded the improvement of information and communication technology in municipalities throughout Nicaragua. The programme aims improving municipal services and enables local people to participate actively in municipal decision making. In addition to strengthening local financial management and establishing municipal information offices. The programme covers twenty municipalities.



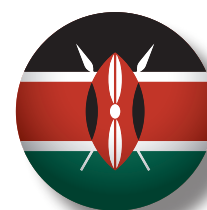
The programme has made possible the provision of a wide array of information to local residents on the affairs of the municipality. Information on the municipal budget and its execution is available for all the people at municipal information offices. This has greatly improved the accountability and transparency of local governance systems in Nicaragua. Systematic access to information on municipal affairs enables citizens to have an understanding of the municipal finances. Furthermore, informed citizens can thus engage effectively in the participatory budgeting programme of their municipalities with the aim of setting priorities and steering public spending based on the needs of local people. This has released funds for programmes that aim at reducing local poverty.

An important programme of the local governance programme in Nicaragua is to facilitate access to internet for all. The public availability of municipal documents, including minutes of the local government meetings and budgetary information, can be found in the web sites of the municipalities. At municipal information offices local residents have the possibility to access internet and apply for different government services available in internet. The wide access to internet has provided local entrepreneurs the possibility to create their own web sites which has had a marked impact specially on the tourism industry. The web sites, administered by local governments, are used to inform local people on municipal payments and taxes. As a

result the tax revenues in all municipalities involved in the project have increased, local government services have improved, and control over the use of public finances have become more transparent. The municipal plans are available in their web-sites which also give local people a possibility to comment on the use of public finances. This has been a great step towards increasing local democracy.

KENYA: **Democracy and women**

Women's position in Kenyan governance reflects the gender imbalances still predominant in the country. The persistent marginalization of women in political representation is reflected on their participation in bodies such as the parliament, only 7.3%, or the executive cabinet, where their participation is even lower. The new constitution of Kenya, approved in August 2010, represents a major step towards correcting this situation. It will enhance women's representation by introducing gender quotas in the parliament and the senate. Thus, at least 16 of the 47 members of the new Senate will be women.



Finland has consistently supported initiatives to promote democratic governance and gender equality in Kenya, either as a component of sectoral programmes or as specific thematic activities, such as its present support to the Gender and Governance Programme (GGP), which also receives the contribution of other donors. Finnish bilateral support to GGP started in 2007. The programme is implemented by more than 20 civil society organizations and managed by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

GGP has been instrumental in raising awareness on women's political representation in the process leading to the referendum on the new constitution. GGP supported civic education activities to highlight women's gains in the proposed constitution. It also

supported the successful organization in Nairobi of a national women's conference on the constitution attended by hundreds of women from various regions of the country.

The activities of GGP become now even more relevant: to consolidate the gains enshrined in the new constitution and to ensure that gender participation trickles down to the local level, improving women's position in governance as well as in the political processes in Kenya. To achieve this goal, the activities of GGP are implemented at the national and local levels.

Finland is especially aware of GGP activities targeted at the grass root level, in communities where women, that traditionally haven't had the right to speak in public or participate in politics, are empowered and encouraged to voice their views and to take part in governance and democratic processes, thus, providing solid foundations to Kenya democracy.

VIETNAM: Democracy and local development

Finland is providing sectoral budget support to the implementation of the Targeted Poverty Reduction Programme (P135) of the government of Vietnam. P135 targets the most vulnerable municipalities (communes) in Vietnam to enhance their access to basic infrastructure, improve education and raise people's awareness on the achievement of better livelihoods and living conditions, as well as to train local officials on the improved delivery and management of services.



Finnish cooperation pays particular attention to the focus of P135 on poor municipalities and villages in mountainous areas, above all those with a high concentration of impoverished and disadvantaged ethnic communities. To achieve the ultimate goal of poverty

reduction, the execution of the programme emphasizes key aspects of grassroots democratic governance, empowerment of marginalized groups, participation in the planning and implementation of activities, and decentralization.

P135 management is decentralized to the municipal and village levels, applying specific mechanisms to ensure that the local authorities and communities assume "ownership" of the programme.

In addition to making a successful contribution to the achievement of the poverty reduction goals, the programme has been a major driving force in the decentralization process in Vietnam. It is expected that the increased capacity of local authorities for service provision, together with the creation of an environment that maximizes the participation of the communities in decisions on their development, are durable components of development and democracy in the country.

MOZAMBIQUE: Democratic governance and general budget support

Mozambique has made great strides in social and economic development since independence. However, the limited capacity of the government has been unable to keep pace with mounting needs. Investment in development projects remains low as a result of weak public finances and most of the population still lives in poverty.



To ameliorate this situation, Finland, as part of a consortium of donors, is providing General Budget Support (GBS) to the government to finance development activities. The total GBS contribution by the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the European Commission and 13 EU Member States including Finland represents close to 15% of the state budget of Mozambique.

The cooperation on GBS is based on the priorities of the Poverty Reduction Strategy of the government of Mozambique and on the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the Government and the donors. The MoU sets out the structure and process for the monitoring of the GBS, as well as the Underlying Principles, which include, among others, safeguarding peace and promoting free, credible and democratic political processes; independence of the judiciary; rule of law; respect for human rights; good governance; and probity in public life, including the fight against corruption.

While the Underlying Principles are meant to ensure that the GBS is implemented in accordance with the agreements between government and donors, the compliance with the Underlying Principles requires the introduction by the government of administrative and governance practices that would eventually permeate to all the levels of the administration.

The added value of GBS in promoting good governance in Mozambique can be appreciated in the context of the general elections held in October 2009. To address the concerns of the donor group that a breach in the underlying principle might have occurred in the electoral process, an early, intensive political dialogue was initiated with the government of Mozambique in the context of the General Budget Support. As a result, the government proposed a set of actions to address the challenges identified in the field of democracy and good governance. Both, the Budget Support Donors Group, chaired by Finland from June 2009 to June 2010, and the Government were satisfied with the result.

GBS has made it possible that themes such as democracy and good governance become key topics in the political dialogue. The dialogue has led to concrete actions, such as the decentralization of the administration and more efficient public finance management which has fostered accountability between the government and its citizens.

TANZANIA: **Democracy and Political Party Assistance**

The Political Parties of Finland for Democracy (Demo Finland) programme in Tanzania targets gender equality and strengthening of women's political participation.

The emphasis is on cross-party cooperation between women politicians, training and capacity building of women's wings of the parliamentary parties, as well as on local level cooperation with the local branches of the women's wings.



Demo Finland's programme in Tanzania culminated during the International Women's Day festivities in March 2010 in Dar es Salaam with the official launch of the Tanzania Women Cross-Party Platform (TWCP). The TWCP brings together women politicians across party lines from the five parliamentary parties, in order to work together on improving women's issues and women's political participation in Tanzania. The TWCP aims to strengthen the role of women and the role of the women's wings within their parties. The Platform also strives to increase women's political participation in all levels of government, from village level to parliament as well as within the party structures.

Demo Finland functions as a co-operative organisation for Finnish parliamentary parties. It seeks to enhance democracy by carrying out and facilitating collaborative projects between Finnish political parties and political movements in developing countries. The purpose of these collaborative projects is to promote dialogue and mutual learning on different forms of democracy, and the challenges and possibilities thereof.

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