

# Walking the Talk – Human Rights-Based Development Policy and Cooperation in Finland

Public presentation and discussion

26 October 2023

Development Evaluation Unit (EVA-11)

# Programme



**09:15 Opening words** – Director, Antero Klemola. Development Evaluation Unit.

## Focus: Overall results and Policy

**09:20 Video greeting from Director, Thematic Engagement, Special Procedures, and Right to Development Division, Peggy Hicks.** Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, (OHCHR)

**09:25 Prepared comments: Senior Advisor Democracy and Human Rights, Birgitta Weibahr.** Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

**09:35 Presentation of Evaluation Results; Overall and Policy level** – Evaluation team

**09:55 Questions** from the audience in the room to evaluation team

## Focus: Context

**10:05 Presentation of Evaluation Results; Context level** – Evaluation team

**10:20 Questions** from the audience in the room to evaluation team

## Focus: Issues level

**10:30 Presentation of Evaluation Results; Issues level** – Evaluation team

**10:45 Questions** from the audience in the room to evaluation team

## Focus: Discussing Evaluation Results and Development Policy as part of Finnish Foreign and Security Policy

**10:55 Panel discussion** moderated by **Lotta Valtonen**, Ministry for Foreign Affairs

- Member of Parliament; Chair of the Board; Member of the Development Policy Committee, **Hilkka Kempfi**. The Finnish Parliament; Väestöliitto (Family Federation of Finland).
- Director General, **Titta Maja-Luoto**; Department for Development Policy
- Deputy Director General, **Erik Lundberg**; Political Department.
- Team Leader & Expert, **Katja Ilppola**. KIOS Foundation.

**11:20 Questions and comments** from the audience to the panel

**11:55 Closing words and closing the event** – Lead Evaluation Specialist, Nea-Mari Heinonen. Development Evaluation Unit.



# Presentation of Evaluation Results Overall and Policy level

Ian Christoplos (Team Leader)  
Henrik Alffram  
Annica Holmberg  
Elina Tran-Nguyen  
Roosa Tuomaala  
Christine Kamau  
Daniel Phiri  
Gabriel Wilhelm  
Christina Paabøl Thomsen

Sari Laaksonen (Service Coordinator)

# Evaluation assignment

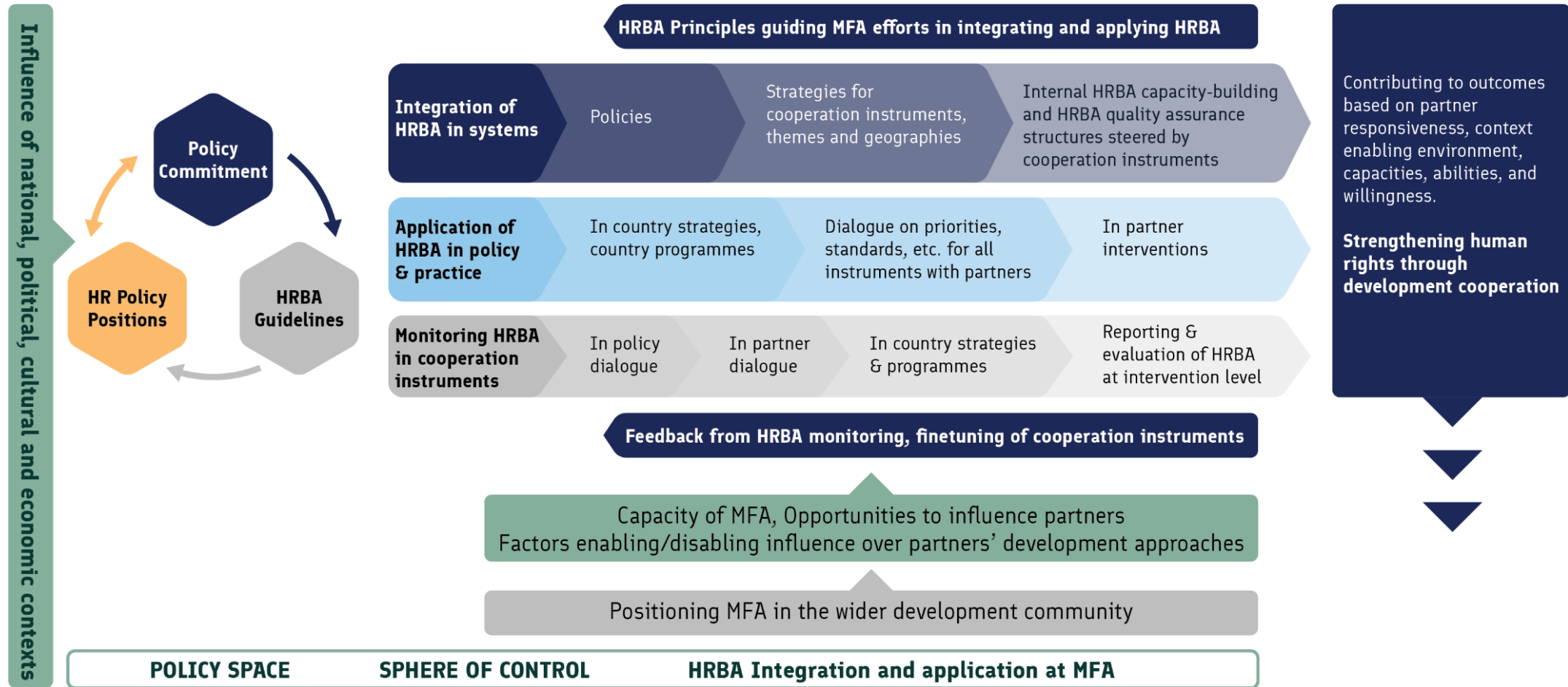
## Purpose, scope and lines of evidence

- To draw strategic lessons from how HRBA is applied in development policy and cooperation
- Focus on a current 'snapshot' across the cooperation instruments
- Based on case studies, document review and survey

## Evaluation questions

- How and to what extent has HRBA been applied in the planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting of development cooperation funded by the Ministry? (document-based analysis)
- What have been the specific effects and value in actual terms of using the HRBA for the effectiveness of various interventions, more transformative changes and ultimately for the realization of human rights and development policy objectives?
- How is the HRBA interacting with risk management of development cooperation interventions?

# Evaluation Theory of Change



# Evaluation Results - HRBA in Documents 1/2

## HRBA in plans

- Plans are relatively ambitious and reflect MFA guidance
- Focus on intentions, less explanation of processes towards achieving HRBA goals
- Country programmes strongly emphasise HRBA and reflect diverse contexts
- Quality of HRBA analyses in plans vary across (and within) the cooperation instruments
- Bilateral and multilateral plans are stronger
- In private sector and ICI plans, references to HRBA are often very limited
- Quality of HRBA analyses in CSO plans are mixed

# Evaluation Results - HRBA in Documents 2/2

## HRBA in reports

- Less attention to HRBA in reports than in plans
- This apparently reflects short intervention timeframes and in some cases, weak reporting skills
- Reports tend to focus on outputs, whereas HRBA is about processes, as well as institutional, attitudinal and behavioural outcomes
- Country programme reports are stronger, as they are based on HR objectives, specify HRBA/CCO reporting, and reflect conflict and political economy analyses

# Evaluation Results - HRBA in practice 1/4

## Cooperation instruments and modalities performing their role

- HRBA strongly apparent in country programmes and bilateral interventions due to active engagement of MFA on the ground
- MFA's HRBA-related influence on multilaterals has a strong gender and disability focus; more comprehensive HRBA is apparent in multi-bi interventions
- HRBA apparent in CSO and FLC interventions, but follow-up limited and mixed record of linking to human rights assessments
- Integration in ICI and private sector interventions improving somewhat due to proactive support, but remains limited (reflecting different expectations)



# Evaluation Results - HRBA in practice 2/4

## Effectiveness of HRBA implementation

- Effectiveness relates to both process and goal achievement
- Consistency and long-term commitment are part of what makes HRBA effective
- Most effective with rights-holder capacities to demand accountability
- Somewhat less regarding duty-bearer capacities
- Non-discrimination strong, but limited to gender and disability
- Limited results regarding transparency

# Evaluation Results - HRBA in practice 3/4

## Enablers and hindrances to effectiveness

- Interventions can help claim rights to services (e.g., disability), but harder to influence on higher level duty-bearers to sustain services
- MFA strong at using HRBA for 'gatekeeping', but monitoring is limited
- Focus on 'levels' ensures HRBA is in focus, but just tells part of the story
- HR and conflict assessments strategically important; weaknesses can hinder systematic attention to needed changes in institutional norms
- HR law/mechanisms can strengthen HRBA, but insufficiently applied
- MFA does not have enough human resources to achieve HRBA aims

# Evaluation Results - HRBA in practice 4/4

## Added value of Finnish HRBA

- HRBA provides important normative strategic direction
- HRBA takes depth of commitments a 'step further' (than CCOs)
- HRBA is a common basis for encouraging more ambitious aims among partners ranging from small local CSOs to multilaterals
- HRBA provides direction for overcoming HR abuses in conflict contexts (even though current guidance on the triple nexus is weak)

# Recommendations

- Reaffirm HRBA as a core principle
- Support partners to improve assessment of both outcomes and processes
- As part of Finland's 'DNA', HRBA should be reinforced within MFA's international 'positioning'
- Move beyond 'gatekeeping' to encourage partners to use HR analyses as a basis for their monitoring and reporting
- Part of this move should be to shift MFA resources to longitudinal dialogue
- MFA and its partners should both invest in more/deeper analyses of power, HR contexts and risks of doing harm

# Recommendations

- MFA should both coach weaker partners to become 'more sensitive' and also apply stricter screening and monitoring
- Raise expectations on partner monitoring/reporting regarding HR outcomes, processes and risks
- Mobilise advice to help partners align with international HR systems
- Build on partner to partner-led HRBA capacity development in CSOs/FLCs
- Continue with current systematic attention to HR in ICI and PSIs
- Focus on specific priority areas for improvement with multilaterals
- Shift bilateral/country programme resources to act as HR learning hubs

# **Presentation of Evaluation Results**

## **Context level**

# Long-term partner countries (Tanzania, Mozambique) 1/2

- Focus is on the awareness and capacities of rights-holders to claim accountability from mainly local duty-bearer structures; less focus on building the capacity of duty-bearers
- Partner organisations with policies or guidelines on HRBA and transformative perspectives have a more explicit dialogue on how to put rights-based principles into practice
- The degree of boldness in national human rights advocacy in situations of shrinking civic space is related to broad donor cooperation, and alliance building

# Long-term partner countries (Tanzania, Mozambique) 2/2

- Capitalising on the experience that exists among Finnish actors does not come automatically; systematic approach needed for sharing lessons
- Partners' knowledge of how to discuss HRBA during project design is key; tailoring of rights-based practices to the local context and issues is overlooked when the context is not thoroughly analysed
- The CCOs of gender equality and inclusion of persons with disabilities have helped to strengthen the principles of participation and non-discrimination in the design of interventions; broaden the “target approach” to a more intersectional approach to become more effective



# HRBA in conflict contexts (Somalia, Kenya, Palestine) 1/2

- Uncertainty prevails regarding how to apply HRBA in triple nexus contexts; despite strong results, there are no standard solutions
- Value of current guidance is questioned, calls for adaptation to different contexts
- HRBA highlights structural nature of problems and inadequacy of short-term responses
- HRBA effective at micro level (often related to services), but influence on higher level duty-bearers limited
- Influence on accountability of local authorities and some success engaging women in democratic processes

# HRBA in conflict contexts (Somalia, Kenya, Palestine) 2/2

- Some partners lack tools and capacities to assess and describe HRBA related changes in attitudes and influence over sociocultural norms
- In conflicts, humanitarian needs are generally in focus, suggesting that HRBA involves transcending these narrower perspectives
- Results achieved in addressing power imbalances, but there are limits
- Tensions exist between reducing conflict risks and demanding greater respect for HR

# HRBA in transition contexts (Kenya, Zambia, Vietnam) 1/2

- Transition implies changes in the roles of MFA and Embassies in managing Finland's development cooperation with an increasing share of cooperation managed by instrument-specific structures in Helsinki
- Systematic analysis of the strategic implications of MFA's role in the transition process remains limited for HRBA implementation in Zambia and Kenya
- The level of HRBA implementation and achievement of HRBA results varies greatly, also within funding instruments
- In PSIs and other business focused interventions, the focus is on corporate HR responsibility and thereby on HR due diligence processes

# HRBA in transition contexts (Kenya, Zambia, Vietnam) 2/2

- Diminishing focus on strengthening the capacities of government stakeholders as primary duty-bearers
- Extent to which *do no harm* has been reflected in the understanding of risks and risk management of interventions varies greatly
- Weak implementation of HRBA is not related to implementing partners' fear of context specific HR challenges, but rather to weak knowledge and understanding of HR and HRBA, and their relevance to interventions  
*-> need for concrete and pragmatic capacity development essential*

# **Presentation of Evaluation Results**

## **Issues level**

# Innovations and trends towards transformational programming

- Innovations strongest in interventions implemented under the CSO, FLC and multilateral instruments
- Very few innovations focus on enhancing the capacity of duty bearers
- Finland supports innovation through funding of organisations that are applying innovative approaches, but few indications that innovative approaches are promoted through MFA's monitoring and follow-up
- Innovative approaches require donors that (i) accept a level of risk, (ii) provide flexible funding arrangements and (iii) are prepared to fund scaling up of successes

# HRBA in partnering with multilaterals

- Level of HRBA implementation in MFA-funded multilateral development cooperation varies greatly (strong commitment within UN, lack of explicit commitment e.g., in IFIs)
- HRBA related influencing has largely focused on the CCOs on gender equality and inclusion of persons with disabilities with good results, but also gaps related to the MFA's minimum requirements
- More comprehensive promotion and monitoring of HRBA stronger in multi-bi interventions and other thematically focused multilateral interventions
  - > Learning from and linkages to these interventions essential for strengthening global-level HRBA influencing

# HRBA in severe headwinds

- Selection of partners that are already HRBA-skilled and committed impacts the level of application of HRBA in headwind contexts and issues
- Combining advocacy work with technical support to local duty-bearers in their role as service providers is a constructive approach, facilitating dialogue on human rights in headwinds
- Dialogue with duty-bearers a viable application of HRBA in headwinds
- The effectiveness of the reviewed interventions is most salient at the rights-holder level
- High level of risk awareness among implementing partners is also related to the use of HRBA



# From cross-cutting objectives to HRBA, lessons from disability programming

- HRBA values exemplified by 'nothing about us without us' commitments
- The architecture of support to disability makes it a HR flagship for Finland, but lessons not applied in other intervention areas
- Strong sensitive (service provision) interventions, but paths to transformation unclear
- MFA, UNPRPD, DPF and Abilis 'remind' partners of CRPD responsibilities
- Overcoming isolation and enhancing dignity central to HR related to disability

# Discussion

## Panel

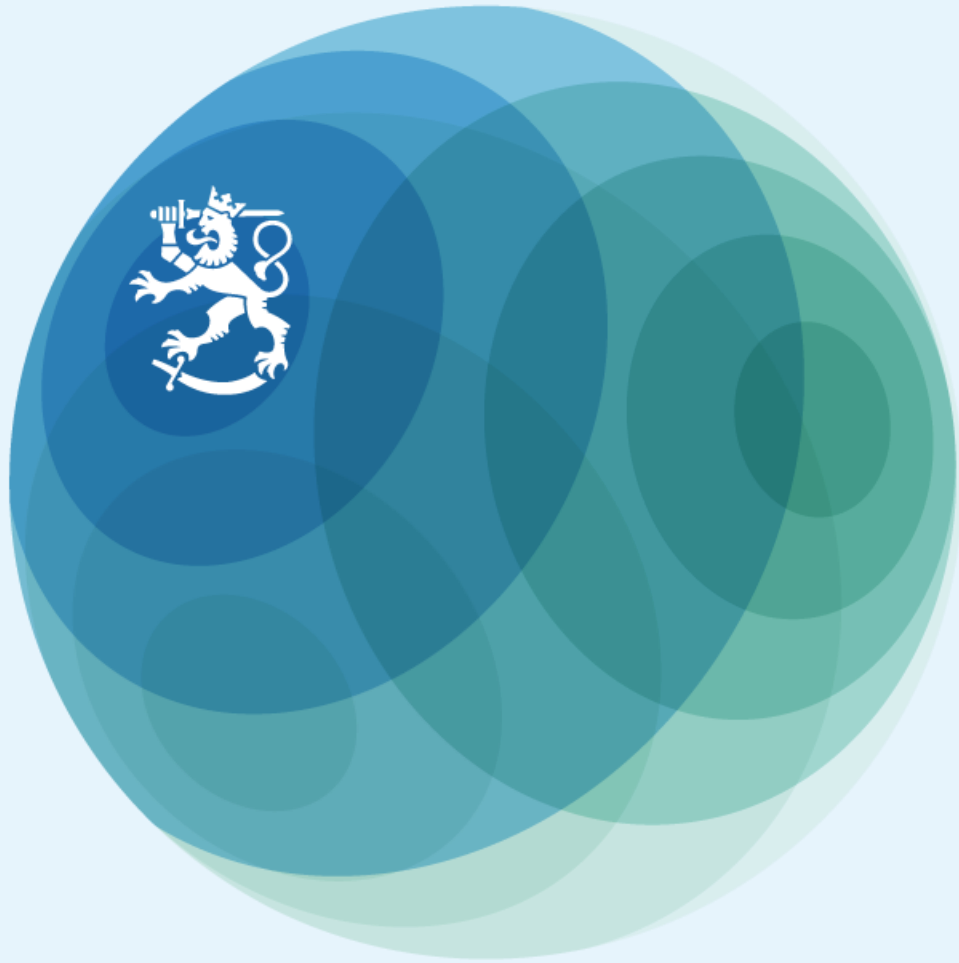
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Director General, **Titta Maja-Luoto**. Department for Development Policy; MFA.

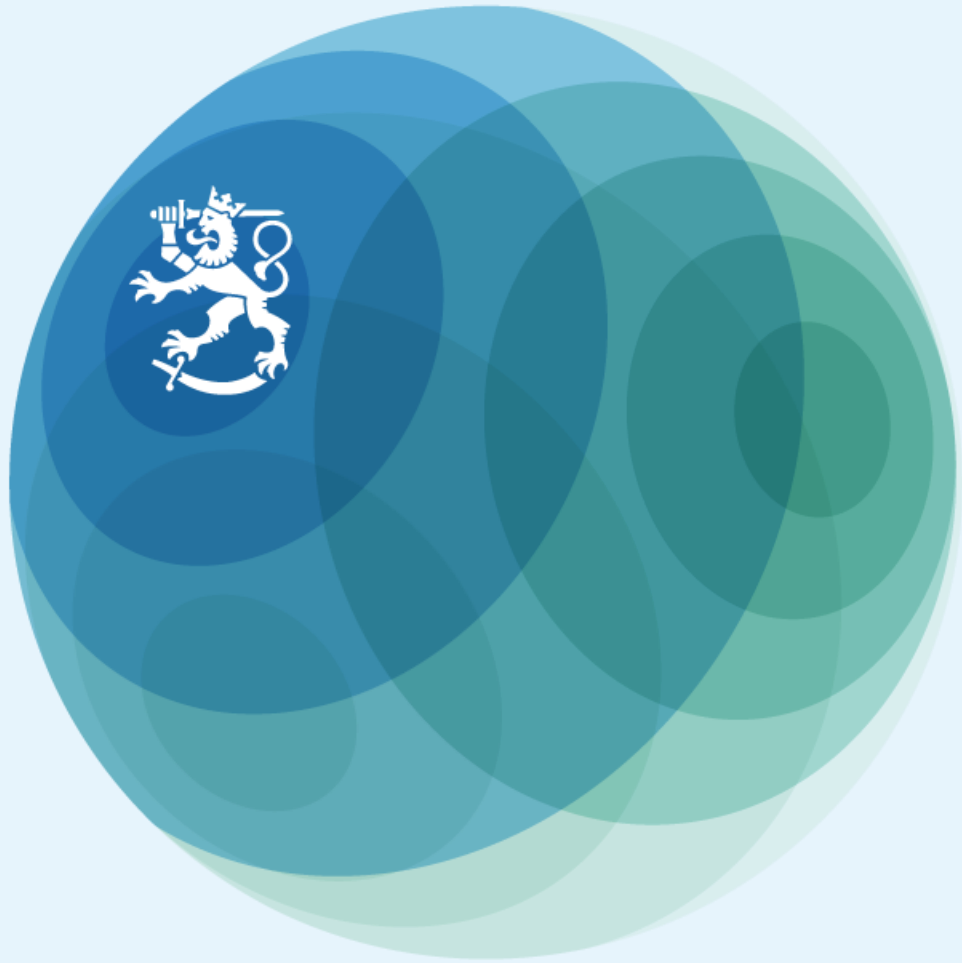
Deputy Director General, **Erik Lundberg**. Political Department; MFA.

Team Leader & Expert, **Katja Ilppola**. KIOS Foundation.

Moderator: **Lotta Valtonen**



# Questions and comments



**Closing words**