



FROM REACTIVITY TO RESILIENCE

Assessment of the Response
of Finnish Development
Policy and Cooperation
to the COVID-19 Pandemic

PUBLIC PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

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Assessment of the Response of Finnish Development Policy and Cooperation to the COVID-19 Pandemic

PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES SCOPE & METHODOLOGY



WHAT?

1. What was the MFA central level's response to COVID-19 pandemic for relevant parts development policy and cooperation and humanitarian assistance?
2. How **relevant** was the response (Finland's development policy, information available on the changing needs)?
3. How **efficient** was the response (time, changes in policy and operation)?
4. How **coherent** was the response?

What were the **strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats** of the response?

What to learn from the response?

Photo: Teemu Salonen / Lehtikuva



HOW? PART ONE

- **Desk review, spreadsheet analysis and 55+ interviews**
- **Analysis of the changes** (fully or partly) related to the COVID-19 pandemic along six dimensions:
 1. *Financial response*
 2. *Policy dialogue response*
 3. *Policies and procedures*
 4. *Risk management*
 5. *Knowledge management*
 6. *Staff working modalities and capacities*



HOW? PART TWO

...through:

- Financial analysis
- Dimension-by-dimension time-line analysis
- Summary MFA response time-line analysis
- Five focused case examples (ADB; UN New York; Ethiopia; Nepal; CSOs)
- Dimension-by-dimension SWOT analysis
- Summary SWOT analysis

Photo: John Schnobrich / Unsplash



What was the MFA's response?

See separate time-line document for findings regarding AQ1

Photo: Matti Paavonen / Wikipedia



How relevant was the response?

FINDINGS (AQ2)

Photo: Anna Shvets / Pexels



Findings on RELEVANCE

PART ONE



01. *Finland mobilized significant resources to respond to the needs created by the pandemic.*

02. *Finland's core funding to multilateral organizations was of critical importance for their pandemic response, and provided important influencing opportunities.*

03. *The MFA decided against making changes to Finland's development policy or overhauling the development cooperation because of the pandemic and instead made use of relevant adjustments to provide its response.*

Findings on RELEVANCE

PART TWO



04. *The MFA adjusted its allocations across aid channels in a relevant manner.*

05. *The MFA adjusted ongoing interventions as a response to the pandemic, but the relevance of the adjustments can only be fully evaluated when results can be assessed.*

How efficient was the response?

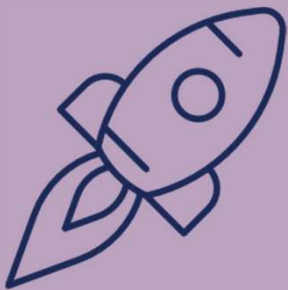
FINDINGS (AQ3)

Photo: Klaus Nielsen / Pexels



Findings on EFFICIENCY

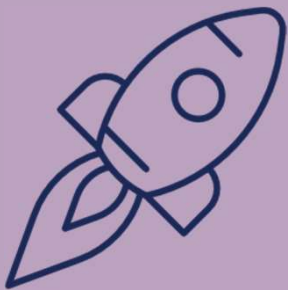
PART ONE



- 06.** *While the MFA's human resources response to the pandemic initially rightly focused on safety and maintaining operational capacity, it did neither deliver fully satisfactory outcomes on safety nor sufficiently support staff wellbeing in the prolonged pandemic situation.*
- 07.** *The MFA reacted quickly and flexibly. It decided to protect ongoing development cooperation, and no massive ceasing of activities was done despite resources needed and targeted to the pandemic response.*

Findings on EFFICIENCY

PART TWO

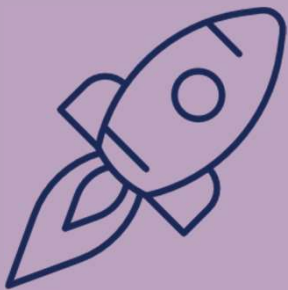


08. *There is mixed evidence regarding the soundness of the new option of flexibly using country/regional and CSO funds for humanitarian purposes.*

There are also issues regarding the MFA's organigram and decision-making that limit the scope of what was possible for the MFA in terms of the pandemic response.

Findings on EFFICIENCY

PART THREE

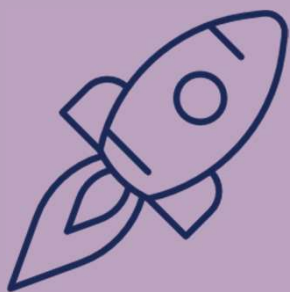


09. *The MFA managed rather well without pre-existing crisis response plans and pandemic-specific risk analysis.*

It would have benefited from a headquarters preparedness plan to support moving human resources at crises and better preparedness to monitor the effectiveness of the COVID-19-time development cooperation.

Findings on EFFICIENCY

PART FOUR



10. *The pandemic slowed down many actions, and since it has prolonged, building back better and greener has not fully begun.*

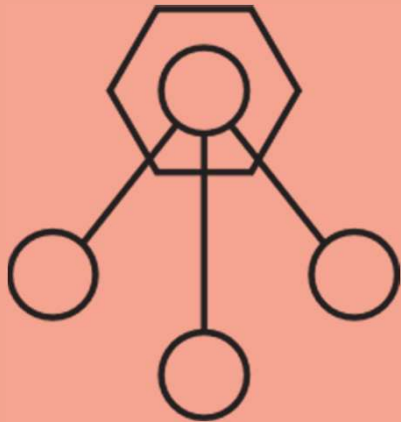
Yet, the pandemic also created some opportunities for both enhancing the quality of development cooperation and advancing some development cooperation priorities faster.

How coherent was the response?

FINDINGS (AQ4)



Findings on COHERENCE



11. *Internationally, Finland made good use of existing coordination and cooperation channels and took part in new mechanisms.*

12. *At the national level, coordination and collaboration within the Finnish government resulted in mixed results for the MFA.*

What were the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the response?

CONCLUSIONS



Dimension: Financial Response



C1

The MFA provided a quick and early financial response and a notable health and vaccine response, despite moderate development cooperation resources, which are largely committed at the beginning of each year, and the scope of development policy set.

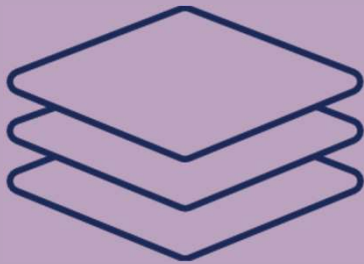
Dimension: Policy Dialogue & Multilateral Influencing



C2

The MFA made use of the opportunities for amplifying influence on its policy priorities, the UN reform and the coherence agenda.

Dimension: Policies & Procedures



C3

The MFA found a pragmatic and relevant balance between responding to immediate health-related needs created by the pandemic and serving its established development cooperation priorities.

C4

The MFA's pandemic response was efficient within what was possible considering the MFA's decision-making structure and culture. However, some adaptations in procedures were not always clear to all staff.

Dimension: Risk Management



C5

The pandemic has – in addition to affecting implementation – hindered the planning of new interventions as well as monitoring and evaluation of existing interventions.

Managing the risk by using multiple channels of delivery but with an emphasis on multilateral organisations and working with local partners has worked well for the MFA.

Dimension: Knowledge Management

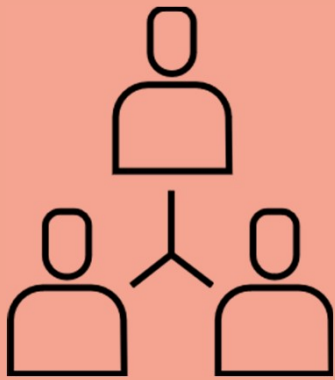


C6

There is a knowledge gap, not only at the MFA, on the results of the development cooperation conducted at the time of the pandemic, which can only be bridged later.

This means that there could be a big wave of bad news ahead regarding the effectiveness of projects planned and implemented during the pandemic.

Dimension: Staff

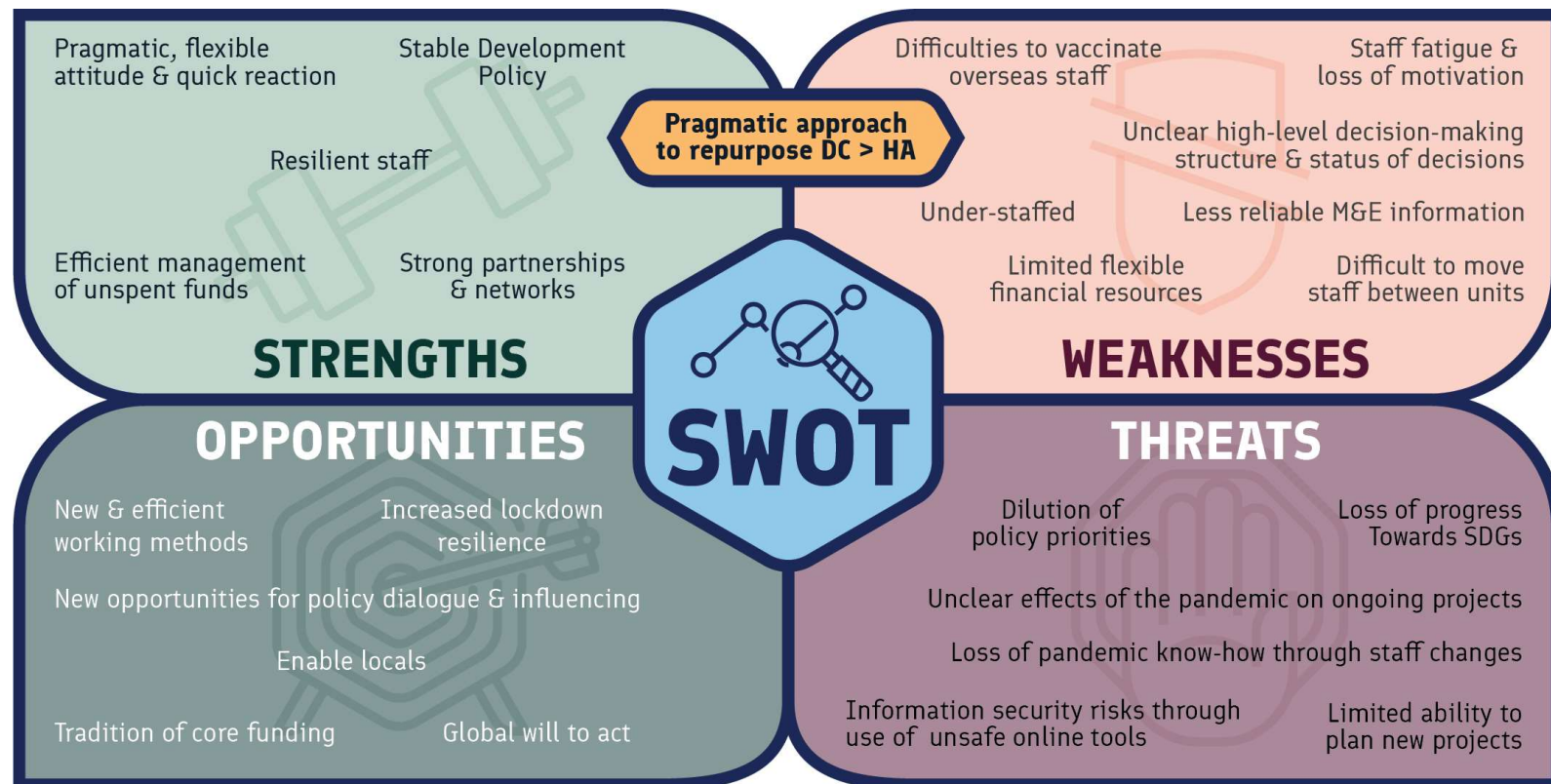


C7

The MFA's pandemic response owes a large debt to the motivated, devoted and at times overburdened staff, but the organisation could not secure the safety of all staff at equal footing throughout the pandemic nor provide sufficient easing of workload.

Summary SWOT analysis

Regarding the key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the MFA's response to pandemic



What to learn from the response?

RECOMMENDATIONS



Crisis response in development policy



R1

Make crisis response an explicit element of Finland's development policies.

Efficient management of a crisis response

PART ONE



R2

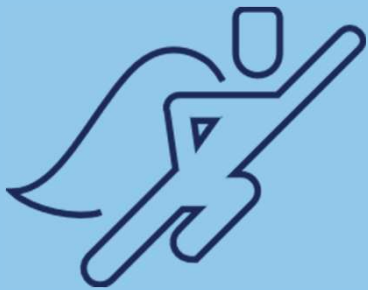
Formalise the decision-making and enforcing powers of the Development Policy Steering Committee – especially during crisis response and for matters requiring inter-departmental execution.

R3

Maintain the current approach of taking and operationalising portfolio-level decisions by the relevant units – within their respective mandates – also in providing crisis response.

Efficient management of a crisis response

PART TWO



R4

Strengthen information sharing on decisions made, particularly with regards to what is the status of a decision, who needs to apply it and how to do it/where to get advice.

Risk management and supporting operations & planning to carry on in crises

PART ONE



R5

For crises response, rely on multi-bi as a means of delivery, and in other channels of delivery, carefully transfer authority and responsibility towards local stakeholders.

R6

Make tangible plans for building back better and greener.

Risk management and supporting operations & planning to carry on in crises

PART TWO



R7

In the next crisis, once it hits and the first parameters are known, quickly develop a specific crisis risk assessment template and apply it to all ongoing and planned projects.

Knowledge management in crises



R8

Focus on obtaining information on the impact of the pandemic on implementation and results of ongoing work (in all channels) and on supporting and influencing the multilateral, CSO and other partners to do their part..

Support staff during a crisis response



R9

Influence the relevant authorities and legislation, rules and regulations, as well as budget processes which restrict the MFA from discharging its full duties as an employer in the areas of staff health and safety.

R10

Strengthen crisis resilience of MFA human resources by more flexibly adapting staff workloads and shifting capacities.



Kiitos!

Thank You!