

6. Conclusion

Many Finnish NGOs have development projects with climate elements, although they have very few 'climate projects' as such. It is clear that NGOs have a good grasp on the basic problematic – the effects of climate change on developing countries. However, what is lacking in some cases is the know-how required to implement this high-level perspective in day to day development project work. Making climate change less abstract and bringing it to a more concrete level in terms of day to day work in the South was a key wish made by virtually all of the interviewed NGOs to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

One overall theme emerged from compiling this report – the coming together of development and environmental NGOs. Development NGOs need more environmental expertise, and NGOs concentrating on environmental issues are becoming more interested in development and are starting to work on their own development projects in the South. This blending of fields of expertise may provide opportunities for expanded cooperation between NGOs. Development NGOs might benefit from the climate expertise of environmental NGOs, and the development impacts of purely climate-related work have to be taken into account.

Finnish NGOs, climate change, and development cooperation



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1. Introduction

In recent years, climate change has risen to the forefront of development cooperation. It is generally acknowledged that poor countries suffer the most from the adverse effects of climate change. Those effects can already be seen in many of the countries that Finnish development NGOs work in.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland emphasizes the importance of taking climate change into account in development cooperation. The Finnish Development Policy Programme states that the environment is to be taken into account in development programmes and projects, and that, in the long run, Finnish development cooperation should be carbon-neutral.

The aim of this report is to illuminate the climate-related work of Finnish development NGOs. There are four sections included in this summary, which cover climate change related development projects, NGOs' work supporting low carbon development in the South, climate advocacy work done by NGOs in Finland and the South, and NGOs and EU climate policy.

2. Climate change in Finnish NGO projects

Finnish development NGOs have very few projects which aim directly at mitigation of or adaptation to climate change. There are some projects which can be seen as working towards mitigation, such as projects promoting the use of energy efficient ovens, which reduce the need for firewood and thus reduce the need to cut down forests. A number of the NGOs interviewed have such elements in their projects.

Projects aiming towards adaptation to the adverse effects of climate change are much more common. Many of these are related to agriculture, for instance helping local people adopt grain varieties which can survive droughts, or developing farming practices which can withstand flooding.

Some NGOs have also put a lot of resources into disaster risk reduction projects. Natural disasters such as extensive floods or hurricanes will become more common as a consequence of climate change, and many poor countries are particularly at risk. Finnish NGOs are conducting disaster risk mitigation projects in countries such as Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, and Mozambique. The projects vary in type, but what is common to most of them is building the capacity of the local community to meet the effects of natural disasters by, for instance, developing early warning systems.

3. Low carbon development

So-called low carbon development or 'green growth' has been at the forefront of recent discussions on climate change and development, and it is emphasized by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, as well.

Green growth means the decoupling of economic growth from the undermining of environmental sustainability – in other words, the idea is to find ways of generating economic growth without placing an excessive burden on the environment.

The projects of the Finnish NGOs interviewed for this report do not aim directly at generating economic growth, but the one way in which NGOs could contribute to low carbon development would be to reduce the carbon footprints of these projects themselves. Carbon-neutral development cooperation is an official goal of Finnish development policy.

Virtually none of the NGOs interviewed were implementing this goal. Some NGOs do take the climate effects of their projects into account, but mostly on an ad hoc basis, for instance by compensating for the carbon emissions of air travel or deciding not to finance partner organizations' requests for cars. Some NGOs say that they will try to take carbon emissions better into account in the future.

4. Climate advocacy

Finnish NGOs do climate-related advocacy work both in Finland and the South. In Finland, the emphasis is on political lobbying, or in other words, on attempting to influence Finnish politicians so that they would support more funding for climate change mitigation and adaptation, and act towards reducing emissions in Finland and all developed nations. Finnish NGOs have some advocacy and public information projects in the South, but mostly their advocacy work there is done in the form of supporting the work of Southern NGOs.

The Finnish NGDO Platform to the EU Kehys coordinates a working group on the environment and development, which brings NGOs, civil servants and academics together to share information on the linkages between climate change and development issues. The group also does advocacy work on climate issues both at the national and the EU level.

5. Finnish NGOs and EU climate policy

The Finnish NGOs interviewed follow EU climate policy actively, but to varying degrees. Some of the NGOs are part of an international umbrella organization, and they receive the latest information on EU climate policy from their Brussels office. Others follow EU policy as part of following international politics more generally.

Very little use has been made of funding opportunities provided by the EU for climate-related projects by Finnish NGOs. Two of the NGOs interviewed had pending funding applications for EU money; none had ongoing projects funded by the EU. Some of the NGOs said that they are interested in such funding, whilst others said that they are happy with the funding they receive from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and have no need to look into EU funding opportunities.