

# Towards Inclusive and Sustainable Societies



**The Felm Program  
2026–2029**

# Content

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## Introduction

Felm's strategy serves as the foundation for its international work, with policy papers on key thematic priorities providing additional guidance for program activities. The revised strategy, approved in September 2024, and the policy papers, developed in autumn 2024 and spring 2025, were shaped through extensive consultations and dialogue with partners. Building on this groundwork, the Felm Program for International Cooperation, *Towards Inclusive and Sustainable Societies* (the Felm Program), will span 2026–2029 as the primary framework for implementing Felm's strategy.

In today's challenging global context, the Felm Program emphasizes the need for transformation, encouraging churches, communities, and societies at local, national, and global levels to speak up and act against injustice. The program is deeply rooted in Felm's strong values, traditions, and over 160 years of experience working with people in vulnerable situations. It builds on Felm's presence in diverse local communities and is carried out in collaboration with nearly 100 local churches and other partners across 24 countries.

This program document serves as the primary tool for operational planning and prioritization in Felm's International Cooperation. It provides a framework for resource mobilization and allocation, outlines guiding principles for working with partners and communities, and directs strategic support to Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America through seven priority themes. Felm's Development Cooperation Program, funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA), is an integral part of this overall program, with a specific focus on the last four thematic areas.

The program focuses on strengthening Christian witness, theological education, and church leadership while promoting inclusive, theologically grounded, and rights-based diakonia. It enhances the role of local actors in peacebuilding and reconciliation and builds community resilience in response to the climate crisis. Additionally, it addresses the right to quality and inclusive education for children and young people and strengthens humanitarian work. The cross-cutting objectives of disability inclusion and gender justice reinforce the role of churches and civil society in fostering more just, open, inclusive, and peaceful societies.

# 1. Analysis of the Operational Environment

The Felm Program is being launched in a time of great uncertainty. The global political landscape is shaped by multiple crises affecting development, peace, and security. Russia's unlawful invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 further destabilized an already strained global system, intensifying concerns over nuclear threats and increased militarization. Shifting power dynamics indicate a move toward a multipolar world dominated by transactional deal-making and where regional blocs and strategic alliances play an increasingly significant role in global politics. In the Middle East, escalating tensions between Israel and regional actors, coupled with the unprecedented destruction and human suffering caused by the war in Gaza, continue to drive humanitarian, political, and security challenges. In Africa, persistent conflicts have led to large-scale displacement and food insecurity, straining the capacity of international organizations to respond effectively. In Asia, the growing divide between the West and China is forcing countries to navigate complex geopolitical choices while navigating development and security challenges in the region. Meanwhile, Latin America—one of the most violent and unequal regions in the world—faces escalating disruptions from climate change and the evolving influence of organized crime. The Felm Program is thus implemented in increasingly volatile and rapidly changing contexts and diverse country contexts. To ensure evidence-based decision-making, adaptability, and conflict sensitivity, ongoing analysis is essential. A more detailed analysis of the context in Felm's program countries can be found in Annex IV.

This chapter provides a brief analysis of the operational environment in which the program was planned, highlighting key trends and developments that impact its focus areas. As part of program implementation, Felm is strengthening its regular, participatory context analysis processes at both country and program levels. Additionally, digital tools and artificial intelligence will be increasingly utilized to enhance analysis and support informed decision-making.

**The global church is striving to adapt to contemporary challenges.** Significant regional shifts are under way, with churches growing notably in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, while facing decline in Europe and North America. This shift is driven by population growth in Africa and conversions in regions like sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, and Latin America, where evangelical and Pentecostal movements are influential. In contrast, Christianity in Europe and North America is losing adherents to secularization, reflecting broader demographic and cultural trends. Theological education is evolving, with ecotheology gaining attention globally, exploring the relationship between religion and environmental issues. The concept of a theology of migration is also emerging, recognizing the permanent state of refugees and displaced persons. Theology of peace is emerging as well, looking into how theology can help achieve peace amid conflicts, and how religions can speak the language of peace.

**Church leadership faces challenges related to gender and diversity,** with a noticeable lack of women and minorities among leaders. Conservative views often dominate leadership roles, and charismatic leaders are gaining influence. Churches struggle to engage young people, often failing to address issues that resonate with them, leading to declining participation. Furthermore, in general young people lack access to leadership and decision-making in churches.

Networking among churches and religious organizations is crucial for addressing global challenges. Churches and religious leaders hold considerable influence worldwide, often intersecting with politics and social issues. However, at the same time there is a **crisis of a multilateral ecumenical model that mirrors the decline of multilateralism in general and raises tensions within denominations**, such as between the International Lutheran Council (ILC) and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), reflecting broader theological and social divides. Religious freedom is decreasing in regions like the Middle East and Southeast Asia, where religious minorities, including Christians, face persecution. The rise of religious extremism, including Christian extremism, is a concern, as is the use of religion for discrimination. Despite these challenges, Christianity can continue to promote compassion, justice, and social cohesion if interpreted accordingly.

**The Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDG) are still driving change.** As the world nears the final years of the SDGs, progress has regressed. The responsibility for achieving the SDGs is shared between international institutions, governments, and development donors, while the importance of civil society is increasingly recognized and civil society actors are seen as vital drivers of societal change, often filling the gaps left by other institutions. However, **the**

**implementation of the SDGs is being challenged by the increasing multipolarity and decline of multilateralism contributing to the lack of shared global agenda.**

**Population growth** in many parts of the world challenges governments in supporting youth. The legitimacy of the governments is often questioned when they fail to provide essential services. Global megatrends such as poverty, urbanization, migration, and the threat of global pandemics are likely to increase systemic problems. Global economic trends fluctuate due to the notable impact of migration and remittances, while global crises highlight the interdependence and vulnerability of economies to external shocks.

**Navigating the complexities of global politics and conflicts**, there has been a significant increase in violent conflicts, leading to heightened human casualties, displacement, and humanitarian needs, with civilians, especially people in vulnerable situations, suffering the most. Shifts in the international system, such as multipolarity and deglobalization, affect peacebuilding and international norms. The shifts in political power also change the environment and the conditions for development and peace. The changes in the international system may create more space for local ownership, but these changes can come with notable risks if international norms or rule-based order deteriorate. To operate in this ever-changing and complex landscape, a holistic and inclusive approach is needed.

At the local and regional levels, a broad trend towards authoritarianism, nationalism, and populism is apparent, intensified by a renewed media landscape and digital technologies. Overall **democratic engagement is declining**, polarization is increasing, and the anti-gender movement is growing stronger. In some regions, the integrity of states is being questioned as colonial borders are reassessed.

Despite their strengthened agency, **young people** face global challenges like unemployment, climate change-related crisis, political exclusion, vulnerability from social inequalities, and multiple discrimination. Hostilities exacerbate the pre-existing discrimination against **women and girls**. Gender-based violence (GBV) and discrimination intensify during confrontations. Women and girls with disabilities or from ethnic minorities as well as women, girls and LGBTQI+ persons, face a much higher risk of GBV. Globally, the anti-gender movement opposes “gender ideology”, sexual and reproductive rights, as well as rights of LGBTQI+ persons. All this challenges human rights and norms related to gender equality.

**Persons with disabilities** face disproportionate challenges in participation and leadership. Their involvement in decision-making is often limited, and their leadership is usually confined to organizations of persons with disabilities. Disability rights legislation does not reflect the voices of the persons with disabilities themselves, leading to inadequate representation. Funding trends favor international actors over small and local actors, with women's rights organizations and organizations of persons with disabilities rarely receiving direct support. Persons with disabilities are often seen as marginalized in different societal situations, as a group in need of special services, rather than as active actors and solvers of social problems.

**Education** remains a cornerstone of development, yet the quality of education is a pressing issue despite high enrollment rates. There is a growing need for an inclusive education approach. Many children and youth face challenges as the language used for classroom instruction and learning materials is not a language that they understand well. Informal education has a crucial role in complementing formal education systems and in some contexts, it remains the only education system available. The global learning crisis has further exacerbated these issues, with millions of children and youth, particularly the most marginalized, unable to realize their right to education. This crisis is marked by significant disruptions due to climate hazards and conflicts, which have disproportionately affected vulnerable communities.

**Addressing humanitarian and environmental crises** is crucial, as forced displacement and migration have reached record-high levels. **Climate change** and environmental issues add another layer of complexity, significantly impacting vulnerable communities. The effects of climate change are becoming more pronounced. **Biodiversity loss** threatens ecosystem services that are vital for all life forms. The decline in biodiversity exacerbates food insecurity and increases vulnerability to natural disasters, further complicating humanitarian efforts. The loss of biodiversity also disrupts the balance of ecosystems. The concept of loss and damage due to climate change is gaining recognition, emphasizing the

irreversible impacts on vulnerable communities. Both adaptation and resilience strategies require an intersectional approach to avoid inequalities among diverse groups.

**Shrinking civic space is a growing global concern.** The advancement of human rights, civil society, and inclusion in diverse societies are deeply interconnected, each reinforcing and relying on the other. A free and inclusive civic space allows individuals and groups to participate, exchange ideas, and collaborate to drive meaningful change in their communities. However, this space is increasingly under threat, even as digital communication channels expand. Repressive tactics—including physical harassment, murder, negative labelling, and restrictive legislation—are being used in 117 out of 197 countries (CIVICUS). Despite these challenges, civil society continues to adapt and resist, with new forms of activism emerging and gaining momentum. Felm collaborates with civil society organizations (CSOs) and churches that operate at various levels within civil society networks and the broader community, supporting their efforts to navigate and challenge these restrictions.

**Digital transformation and the rapid development of artificial intelligence** have brought significant changes but also highlight disparities in digital inclusion between the Global North and South. Many regions struggle with limited internet access and lack the necessary digital skills and infrastructure, or the price of using internet is often prohibitive. CSOs leverage these technologies for efficiency and outreach, such as mobile phones' transformative power in disaster response and early warnings. Generative AI offers analytics and prediction opportunities for efficiency and innovation, such as streamlining processes, enhancing humanitarian aid delivery, or managing program risks. Ethical concerns related to privacy, data security, environmental impact, and the ethical use of AI are paramount.

As of this writing, the **global aid system is undergoing profound change**. Over 80% of USAID programs will officially end in early 2025, shaking the international aid landscape. Simultaneously, many European governments are cutting development and peacebuilding budgets, driven by a shift toward national interests and military spending, particularly in alignment with the US. International development efforts are under increasing strain, as reduced aid budgets from major donors raise concerns about worsening poverty, health crises, and the impacts of climate change on vulnerable communities. On a technical level, development funding is moving away from traditional grants toward new financial mechanisms that promote private sector involvement, strengthen domestic resources, and uphold the international rules-based order. Increased collaboration among governments, donors, and private funders emphasizes sustainability, scalability, and trade-related development finance. CSOs are encouraged to adopt innovative financing strategies, diversify income sources, and form partnerships to ensure lasting impact. Tools like impact investing, blended finance, and catalytic grants are becoming crucial for advancing the SDGs.

## 2. Theological Foundation

The Church's missionary work is grounded on the work of the Holy Trinity in this world (**Missio Dei**). Mission is a task and calling given to both the Church and every Christian. We follow Jesus' example which is manifested in his life, teachings, and deeds.

Mission strives towards **transformation** of individuals and communities. Following Christ is the mission, gift, and joy of Christian life. We invite people to accept reconciliation with God and to follow the resurrected Christ. **The gospel and the faith that comes from hearing it transform individuals and communities**, creating hope and a desire to act so that God's goodness becomes a reality in the world. It also means liberation of people from the destructive forces that bind them, whether spiritual, material or social. Repentance and reconciliation with God, brought about by Christ, create a desire for mutual solidarity, renewal of communities, building mutual peace, and protecting the environment as part of creation. As part of the transformation, there is a recognition and dismantling of the burden of colonialism and distorted power relations.

The gospel is **contextual**; it always engages with the current environment, culture, language, and reality. This is a fundamental characteristic of Christianity. Just as God became human, the message becomes real and concrete again

and again. The gospel engages with the context but also transforms and challenges it. The surrounding reality is the soil in which the Holy Spirit works and makes the Good News a reality.

Mission is **holistic** by nature. This means proclaiming the gospel in words and deeds and working for justice. We support our partners in church work, peace work, development cooperation, humanitarian work, and advocacy. Holistic mission recognizes all dimensions of God's creation and therefore considers the various spiritual, physical, psychological, and social needs of people, as well as the connection of humans to the rest of creation. God's work of salvation concerns not only the whole person but also the whole creation, and Christ is present in all creation. Love, care, and protection for creation are also tasks for every Christian. This is the reason Felm carries out the mission together with local churches and other local partners.

The comprehensive theological foundation of Felm's mission is outlined in the documents Towards Life and Justice, Felm's Theological Foundation and Principles of Cooperation (2015) and The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission's (Felm's) understanding of missionary work (2024). Felm's policy papers about Christian Testimony, Diakonia, Peace and Reconciliation, Climate Resilience, Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Human Rights, and Economic Justice also explain the theological basis of the main outcomes of the program.

### 3. Felm's Approach

In addition to the theological approach described in the previous chapter, Felm's programmatic approach is based on **equal and diverse partnerships, adaptive management, a human rights-based approach, conflict sensitivity and do no harm, and strengthening of civil society**. The programmatic approach embodies a holistic vision of a sustainable, inclusive, and transformative impact, driven by people and communities and guided by a commitment to inclusiveness and strengthening civil society, supporting the ongoing decolonization process in the mission work and aid sector.

**Equal and diverse partnerships** are at the heart of Felm's approach, also having a strong theological basis. The biblical narrative by two disciples of Christ describing the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13- 32) highlights essential characteristics of the biblical and theological perspectives of partnership. The passage shows partners as disciples in a dynamic process, a shared journey of mutual challenges and needed support and encouragement. It demonstrates the fundamental way in which partnership operates through a genuine dialogue, which seeks to understand the other partner and makes the journey meaningful, but also in an act of communal sharing, breaking the bread together. For Felm, partnership is an equal relationship between partners who share common values and jointly define goals for this relationship. The program places strong emphasis on **partnerships with churches**, who will have a major role in the implementation. Felm values local expertise, recognizing that partner churches are best suited to develop their own contextual theologies and their leadership is essential for driving sustainable change within their communities. By encouraging partners to take leading roles, Felm ensures that solutions are locally owned and contextually relevant.

This fosters mutual trust and close relationships, requiring Felm staff to understand church dynamics, possess language skills, and collaborate as equal partners in God's mission. At the country and regional levels, Felm also works together with civil society, ecumenical actors, authorities, and other different institutions. At the global level, Felm partners with international and national civil society organizations, networks, international church federations and different consortia, ecumenical councils, and institutions.

Felm's **human rights-based approach** (HRBA) is guided by internationally agreed upon human rights norms and standards, as well as the principles of participation, inclusion, non-discrimination, equality, and accountability. This approach supports Finland's objective of strengthening a vibrant civil society and the prerequisites for sustainable social development and prioritizes structural changes that empower **marginalized groups** to claim and promote their rights while strengthening government duty-bearers' capacity and commitment to respect, protect, and fulfill these rights. Civil society actors are vital in fostering these transformative processes inclusively within their communities. Felm and its

partners continually reflect on and adapt their practices to align with HRBA principles, ensuring transparency and accountability. A key aspect of this approach is identifying vulnerabilities and risks of exclusion, particularly cases of multiple discrimination, through ongoing contextual analysis with partners. This guides Felm in implementing its programmatic work within the HRBA framework by focusing on inclusive participation and using human rights norms to define and monitor results.

Felm's approach commits to the minimum requirement to ensure that all activities are **conflict sensitive and do no harm (DNH)**. This is ensured by the three-level tools of the cross-cutting objectives of gender justice and disability inclusion. It is further implemented in the program activities, which are sensitive to tensions or problems and are designed to minimize unintentional negative consequences and maximize positive and peace-enhancing results. DNH also entails heightened human rights due diligence. The program activities are further reviewed through an intersectional lens to ensure gender justice and disability inclusion. Felm's approach to conflict sensitivity is based on an understanding of the political and cultural context in which it operates, as well as the ways its activities interact with that context. This awareness guides its efforts to minimize negative impacts and maximize positive outcomes. Conflict sensitivity as an approach is an ongoing learning process that requires adaptability in the face of uncertainty. It also calls for honesty and humility in recognizing the complexities of operational environments and the limitations of one's impact.

**Adaptability** in evolving contexts is a cornerstone of Felm's approach, reflecting its commitment to understanding and responding to the diverse and dynamic realities of the communities it serves. Guided by the principle of contextuality, Felm emphasizes the importance of deep engagement with and understanding of local contexts and cultures. This includes ongoing analysis, dialogue, and mutual learning with partners to ensure relevance and agility in program implementation. **Adaptive management** underpins Felm's work, addressing the complexity of volatile environments and socio-political change processes. This approach emphasizes learning, flexibility, participation, and locally led solutions. Felm integrates conflict sensitivity and risk management into its program design, identifying emerging risks and opportunities for timely adjustments. Partners act as agents of change, challenging power structures and driving transformative action.

Felm's approach to **strengthening civil society** focuses on sharing learning and knowledge with partner organizations to foster active citizenship and promote human rights, recognizing these as foundational for sustainable development and democracy. Churches and FBOs constitute a significant part of civic space. The goal is to empower individuals to demand transparency, accountability, and fair systems, while advocating for marginalized groups. Felm achieves this through targeted training, participatory methods, and digital tools, supporting local civil society actors and facilitating dialogue with duty-bearers. This comprehensive approach ensures that civil society actors are equipped to address both immediate needs and long-term challenges, fostering sustainable, community-driven solutions.

## 4. Program Theory of Change

The theory of change (ToC) demonstrates the focus and internal logic of the 2026-2029 Felm program. It is a revised version of the Felm program's ToC effective since 2023. It is updated to reflect Felm's new strategy, the recommendations of Felm's partners given in the partnership consultations in 2024, as well as the changes in the program context. The relevance and logic of the ToC were validated in December 2024 by the program level advisory group consisting of eight representatives of Felm's partners.

The ToC describes the key intervention areas, outcomes, and impact of the program. The program work in specific key intervention areas is anticipated to achieve the desired outcomes and intended impact, assuming the underlying assumptions remain valid. Given the program's diverse and complex social operational contexts, the ToC serves as a broader strategic framework reflecting the general program logic rather than a comprehensive representation of causal relationships.

To promote adaptability and stronger localization of the broad and complex program, outputs were not defined in the program-level ToC. Experience from the previous program has proven that rigid output definitions do not adequately capture the diversity of change across various contexts and projects. Felm and its partners work together to reach shared outcomes, with decision-making on appropriate **outputs and activities** for the accomplishment of the outcomes at the project level. This enables Felm’s project partners to design and implement locally led projects that reflect community needs and priorities, promote local ownership, and apply solutions rooted in local knowledge. It also ensures that interventions remain relevant and effective through enhanced flexibility. Stronger localization and adaptability of the program also enhance sustainability of the achieved results.

Instead of specific outputs, the ToC includes **key intervention areas** that describe the essential components of the program work and paths to change. They leverage Felm and its partners’ capabilities and focus on efforts where they are most likely to contribute to achieving the program outcomes. They serve as a framework for planning individual projects but are not directly monitored at the program level, and projects might opt for an alternative approach depending on their contexts. **Outcomes** are the medium-term changes the program contributes to, that are expected to be achieved within the four-year program period. Identifying and managing risks related to the attainment of the outcomes increases the program’s chances of producing change at that level. **Impact**, on the other hand, is a longer-term larger-scale change that the program intends to contribute to but is far beyond the program’s direct influence or lifespan.

The ToC is also based on key **assumptions** regarding the operational contexts, the behavior of other actors, and other external factors that influence the program’s success. Supported by ongoing **context analysis**, the identified assumptions will continuously be monitored to ensure their validity. **Risks** associated with these assumptions will also be managed. If significant changes occur, the validity of the ToC will be reassessed, and it can be adjusted to reflect updated assumptions and alignment with the changing context.

#### Summary of Revised Theory of Change for Felm Program 2026–2029



Figure I: Visualization of Theory of Change

At the impact level, the program is expected to result in **people and communities, filled with faith and hope, driving change towards just, equitable, and sustainable societies**. This will be achieved through seven interlinked outcomes. These seven outcomes are focused on **Christian Witness and Theological Education, Church Leadership, Diakonia, Inclusive Education, Peace and Reconciliation, Climate Resilience, and Humanitarian Work**, and they build on Felm’s global programming during 2022-2025. The outcome-specific sub-chapters 4.1-4.7 investigate how

these outcomes are expected to contribute to the impact and describe these outcomes in more detailed terms and highlight the change logic from key intervention areas to outcomes.

In the program's impact statement, the agency of the rights-holders, broadly identified as communities and people, is a central feature. Communities can be either faith-based communities, such as churches and parishes, geographic communities of persons living in a specific area, or other groups of people sharing common characteristics or interests, such as the community of speakers of a specific sign language. Due to the focus on rights-holders' agency, the impact goes beyond mere resilience, which is however a key feature in ensuring that rights-holders have the necessary resources to participate in development in the context of the polycrises. Therefore, the program will focus on strengthening the resilience of communities across multiple dimensions, ensuring they are better prepared to withstand and recover from varied crises and actively advocate for change and rights.

**Strengthened Christian life and creating preconditions for churches' growth** are key steps for filling people and communities with faith and hope, which leads reaching out to those who haven't yet heard about Jesus Christ and to spreading the Gospel. Faith and hope also relate to the spiritual resilience and motivation that churches, communities, and people need to drive change towards just, equal and sustainable societies despite great challenges and insecure context. The task of the church is to act as God's hands in different contexts. For this reason, the work is holistic and the three first outcomes and their key intervention areas in this program are strongly interconnected. Teaching and preaching, outreach and leadership training, as well as diakonia are all one work to which God invites the churches.

**Churches' broadened leadership and networks** are essential for the Church to be a strong and credible actor and mobilizer for societal transformation, embodying the values of justice, equality, and sustainability. Besides credibility, broadened leadership also means that marginalized and discriminated against groups, such as women, youth, persons with disabilities, and linguistic minorities participate in the decision-making of the Church, incorporating their perspectives of what a just, equal, and sustainable society would look like. **The engagement of Churches in inclusive diakonia that is rights-based and supported by strong theological grounds** allows the faith community to act against structural injustice in societies and creates a channel for community networks of sharing, reinforcing resilience and hope.

Amid the educational crisis affecting marginalized groups, it is crucial to **improve access to inclusive, quality education** for the most marginalized children and youth, enabling them to gain skills and knowledge to make a living and exercise their full rights as active members of society.

Conflicts and fragile situations threaten people's access to basic needs, putting their lives and rights at risk. Sustainable development cannot be achieved without peace, just as lasting peace requires inclusive and equitable development. Moreover, it is recognized that achieving sustainable peace requires solutions not being brought in from outside, but based on local knowledge, expertise, and leadership. For people and communities to drive change in the challenging circumstances, it is essential that **conducive space and potential of local peacebuilders to lead inclusive peace initiatives and processes** is improved. Through locally led and inclusive peace initiatives and processes, conflicts have potential to be transformed, and peace be built on a sustainable basis.

Furthermore, communities are increasingly affected by the deepening climate crisis, which threatens their access to basic needs, such as food and water, and exacerbates existing vulnerabilities. When **communities have improved their climate resilience and actively demand climate justice**, it reduces their vulnerability to disasters and environmental hazards and also enhances food security and economic stability. When communities can meet their fundamental needs, they are better positioned to engage in societal processes and hold duty-bearers accountable for respecting, protecting, and fulfilling their human rights. Moreover, addressing climate challenges contributes to reducing resource-based conflicts and fostering long-term stability, particularly in fragile contexts.

Humanitarian emergencies and protracted crisis are a recurring challenge for the communities Felm and its partners work with. Therefore, Felm staff, Felm partners, and **communities need to be better prepared for humanitarian crises**. When crises do occur, it is essential to ensure that **affected persons' life-saving needs are met**. Through effective humanitarian responses, community-level preparedness planning, and disaster risk reduction work, communities can build long-term resilience and better recover from sudden-onset crises and withstand protracted

emergencies. By adopting a **nexus approach**, the program integrates humanitarian response, peace work, and development efforts to address interconnected challenges in a more sustainable and coordinated manner.

The program is committed to the core promise of the Agenda2030 of leaving no one behind and highlights mission from the margins. Therefore, the inclusion of marginalized groups is supported by the cross-cutting objectives, **disability inclusion** and **gender justice**. The change the program seeks to promote cannot take place unless all persons can equally claim their rights and meaningfully participate as actors of change in society. The cross-cutting objectives are operationalized through the twin-track approach of mainstreaming and targeted actions and integrated into all outcome areas, as well as into monitoring of the ToC. **Advocacy** is used as a cross-cutting methodology across the program to ensure that systemic barriers to sustainable development, peace, and human rights are also addressed.

For the change to take place as described above, Felm **assumes** that sufficient funding and other resources will be available, and that Felm's partners will be able to maintain good relations with the local communities, as they are the key actors of change. Felm also relies on and works towards ensuring that the operating space will remain sufficiently open in the program countries for the civil society to be able to implement and monitor their work, and that Felm will be able to appropriately allocate resources and collaborate with partners in an adaptive manner, also responding to crises and other unexpected events and changes that may arise. These are general assumptions that underpin the ToC. Outcome-specific assumptions will be reflected on in the outcome chapters. The full list of assumptions and associated risks is integrated into the program results matrix.

## 4.1 Outcome Area: Christian life and preconditions for churches' growth have strengthened

The Felm program aims at **strengthening Christian life and preconditions for church's growth**, rooted in Jesus' teachings and actions. To remain relevant, the church must engage with society, understanding local contexts and sharing in people's struggles and hopes. This outward focus enables the church to participate in societal transformation while staying true to its mission.

Under this outcome Felm supports partner churches through three closely interlinked key intervention areas: (1) promoting theological education, (2) enhancing Christian education for all ages, and (3) providing tools for outreach. The needs and activities are context-specific and thus activities are always conducted in collaboration with church staff, committed volunteers, and members of the congregation to ensure that the community remains open and welcoming to new members.

To achieve the outcome, we assume that partner churches want to develop their activities and approach things in new ways, so that the churches stay open and structured in a way that offers equal space in the community to all members of society. We also assume that the churches want to grow, meaning they aim to reach people outside the church and have multiple congregations with active members. We assume furthermore that people want to study, graduate, and then work as church employers sharing power with volunteers

Projects related to this outcome are implemented in Cambodia, Nepal, Thailand, Hong Kong, Angola, Ethiopia, Senegal, Tanzania, South Africa/LUCSA, Colombia, Bolivia, Venezuela, Palestine, and Israel. Regional projects in Asia (2) and the Middle East (2) are also being implemented under this outcome. In addition, there are 3 global projects.

### 1. Developing Theological Education

Theological education provides tools for critical thinking, learning, and supporting the growth of the church. It also nurtures and maintains Lutheran identity and people's own spirituality. Felm supports training new pastors and continuing education for existing pastors. Collaborating with LWF, the program modernizes teaching methods, promotes financial sustainability, and ensures gender equality through balanced scholarship grants. Graduates receive mentoring, alumni activities, and leadership development, with a focus on empowering women. This comprehensive approach equips theologians, who are the future leaders of the churches, to address contemporary challenges in their church contexts.

Felm enhances cooperation between theological institutions, such as Lutheran Theological Seminary in Hong Kong and Mekane Yesus Seminary in Ethiopia just to name a few, and funders to improve educational quality and accessibility. Initiatives include distributed learning, innovative pedagogical methods, and enabling contextual theologies that resonate with local communities. By integrating diaconal vision and modern teaching, theological education becomes more relevant. Additionally, Felm supports partners in developing a pastoral toolkit, ensuring that church employees can use what they have learned in their own everyday work and efficiently advocate for just societies.

## ***2. Enhancing Christian Education for All Ages***

Christian education fosters spiritual growth by involving people of all ages in learning about the Bible and the message of Jesus Christ. The program promotes growth paths for children and adults to further faith development and active participation in church life. Christian education also helps individuals discover their calling in the church but also in social and economic life, deepening their spiritual commitment. Churches with limited resources often build on the contributions of volunteers, reflecting the biblical understanding of a congregation. For this reason, volunteers especially need support, encouragement, and Christian education to take on responsibilities in the church.

Because children are often heavily involved in Christian education activities, child protection and safeguarding are key aspects of the program and are integrated into all Christian education functions, promoting awareness and commitment among children, parents, and educators.

## ***3. Spreading the Gospel by Words and Deeds***

The church's mission is to grow and reach new people, following Jesus' command to baptize and teach in his name (Matt. 28). Growth is often driven by personal invitations or signs and wonders performed by God. Recognizing the importance of personal calling as well as theological and Christian education is essential for nurturing faith and inspiring new leaders.

The program strengthens local capacity for evangelization and supports churches in creating inclusive communities. In Tanzania and Ethiopia, Felm supports evangelism and the establishment of new congregations. In Bolivia, the program specifically supports the outreach efforts of youth at universities. SAT-7 television reaches children and youth across the Middle East. Evangelism is also supported through collaborative planning. Growth requires new pastors and recognizing to whom God wants to send the congregants. The program explores outreach methods with all partner churches in the Asia region through peer-learning processes. By fostering an open and inclusive theological dialogue, Felm supports the churches to share the gospel with all people.

Outreach efforts emphasize a dialogical attitude that respects diverse worldviews and avoids coercion. It confesses Christ as its own while respecting diverse worldviews and beliefs, embracing a missional approach that avoids coercion and monologue. Rooted in Christ's example, it emphasizes respectful dialogue and prophetic advocacy for the marginalized, seeking God among the poor and vulnerable where humanity, weakness, and imperfection are met with divine love. During the program period, the work will be developed beyond individual projects to achieve impactful results and ensure sufficient resources for sustainability.

Growth faces internal challenges, such as church disputes, fears, or prejudices, as well as external challenges like religious freedom issues or other denominations attracting members. Felm encourages partner churches to engage in ecumenical dialogue and advocacy, helping them remain open while renewing their Lutheran identity. This includes exploring Lutheran theology of blessing and charismatic expressions rooted in Jesus' resurrection through the pastors' toolkit. Felm is also involved in the LWF steering group, which invites partner churches to reflect on Lutheran mission in the 21st century.

## 4.2 Outcome Area: Churches have broadened their spiritual, diaconal, and organizational leadership and networks

Felm's program enhances the spiritual, diaconal, and organizational leadership of partner churches through dialogue and tailored support. Since churches operate in diverse contexts, leadership and organizational development are not mainly supported through projects but through consultative advisory support to meet each church's needs. This customization is made based on knowledge gathered with the partners. Support is provided for leadership at all levels: bishops, pastors, decision-makers, and volunteers. Also, strengthening leadership among minorities is vital. Effective leadership is essential for the missional church's identity, requiring spiritual guidance and organizational skills. The gospel emphasizes servanthship, diakonia, justice, love, equality, and self-renunciation. Leadership contradicting these values undermines the gospel's credibility.

Everyday leadership actions shape culture, reflecting the gospel through transparency, good governance, and participatory models. The program fosters inclusive leadership by developing theology, structures, practices, and legislation. Initiatives promoting inclusivity, equality, and human rights enable minorities to take on leadership roles, building dynamic congregations that reflect societal diversity and empower vibrant church communities. Churches should use their religious and political power to advance justice locally and beyond.

To achieve the outcome, we assume that partner churches want to learn new, more modern leadership methods and want to empower congregants to act as leaders. We assume that the churches recognize different levels of power and leadership and aim to build relationships with the surrounding society.

Work related to broadening churches' organizational leadership and networks is implemented in Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand, Hong Kong, Ethiopia, Senegal, Tanzania, South Africa/LUCSA, Colombia, Bolivia, Venezuela, Israel. Regional projects in Asia (2), Africa (1), and Middle East (1) are also being implemented under this outcome. In addition, there are 3 global projects.

### *1. Strengthening theological, strategic, and inclusive leadership*

Strengthening theological, strategic, and inclusive leadership is crucial for effective and equitable leadership in spiritual and organizational contexts. Leaders need a deep understanding of theological principles, continuous spiritual growth, and high ethical standards to maintain trust and credibility. Felm supports leadership development for pastors, evangelists, paid workers, lay leaders, elders, and volunteers through mentoring, coaching, networking, and training. This also aids strategic planning through consultative support.

Organizational development responds to partner churches' needs for stronger structures, management, and administration, aligning with developing a diaconal theology of leadership and reinforcing theological identity. Leaders are supported to align actions with the church's vision and mission, ensuring clear direction and purpose. The program supports leaders of smaller churches through mentoring and bringing leaders together, such as the round table for churches in Asia.

Adapting to changing circumstances is vital for long-term success, including openness to innovative ideas and innovative approaches. Promoting diversity and equity within leadership structures ensures varied perspectives are valued, addressing inequities related to race, ethnicity, gender, disability, and other dimensions of diversity. Dialogue and support encourage leaders to reflect on practices and support initiatives like women's leadership. In Asia, this approach supports women's leadership in collaboration with LWF and ELCA.

### *2. Strengthening leadership for inclusive and rights-based diakonia and diaconal vision*

Churches follow Jesus' example, proclaiming God's kingdom and serving with love. Diakonia involves both attitude and action, and leaders' clear diaconal vision ensures it is central to the church's mission. Leaders' strong theological

expertise, strategy, and vision support rights-based, open, and unconditional diakonia, which is based on human rights principals and granted to all people regardless of their background, religion, gender, ethnicity, or other personal characteristics. From a human rights perspective, this entails a commitment to promoting and protecting all human rights, such as the right to life, liberty, equality, health, and education, without discrimination. Unconditional diakonia emphasizes the respect for human dignity and offers open opportunities for support and assistance based on fundamental human rights and equality.

### *3. Networking, peer learning, and joint advocacy*

Lutheran churches, often small and with limited resources, seek Felm's support for networking on leadership, theology, joint advocacy, and new practices. These networks enable peer learning and advocacy on issues like poverty reduction, climate justice, rights of persons with disabilities, and gender justice, for example in collaboration with organizations like the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches. Because commitment to diaconal work begins with leaders, Felm promotes stronger leadership for diakonia through supporting diakonia peer-learning initiative especially in the Africa region.

Strengthening leadership for diakonia also involves enhancing advocacy work of churches to promote good governance, social protection, and overall community well-being, and to support and encourage people to stand up for their rights. It amplifies marginalized voices and addresses power and wealth imbalances in the society. Church leaders who value diakonia lead the church to uphold principles of participation, inclusion, non-discrimination, equality, and responsibility.

## **4.3 Outcome Area: Churches are engaged in inclusive, theologically grounded, and rights-based diakonia**

The Felm Program aims at ensuring that churches are **engaged in inclusive, theologically grounded, and rights-based diakonia**. In the 4.2. the chapter discusses diakonia from the perspective of leadership and therefore there is a strong link between diakonia and church leadership. Diakonia is part of the essence and identity of the Church and hence an integral dimension of the nature and mission of the churches. Diakonia, the social ministry of the church, links what churches are and what they do. The church has a vocation of compassion and justice, manifested through its faith-based and rights-based action - diakonia. This action changes structures and strengthens individuals and is for everyone without conditions. It defends justice and non-discrimination and is community-based, with a strong sense of local ownership.

To achieve the outcome, we assume that partner churches have experience of as well as some capacity for carrying out diakonia. We assume that diakonia is an integral part of partners' understanding of being a church and that there are good examples in the partner churches of functioning diakonia that could be shared with peers and eventually replicated.

Particular attention will be given to projects implemented by Felm partner churches and Christian organisations regionally in Africa and the Middle East, as well as in Thailand, Nepal, Angola, Ethiopia, Tanzania, South Africa/LUCSA, Colombia, Bolivia, Venezuela, Palestine, and Israel.

### *1. Locally led and inclusive diakonia initiatives*

Churches are at the forefront of locally led and inclusive diakonia initiatives, which are community-based social ministry activities. These initiatives, organized by local congregations and church structures, aim to promote justice, equality, and inclusion and to actively change discriminatory structures and attitudes that maintain inequality and discriminatory practices. The program emphasizes churches' local ownership and participation, ensuring that the voices and needs of the community are central to the actions taken. These initiatives can range from small parish-level projects to larger development cooperation and humanitarian aid efforts, all focused on creating a just and inclusive society. Communities can get involved in these church-led diakonia initiatives in several ways. Volunteering their time and skills to support

projects, participating in planning and decision-making processes, and raising awareness about social issues are key. Financial support through donations or fundraising events is crucial, as is offering or participating in education and training programs to build capacity.

## *2. Advocacy to amplify diakonia initiatives*

Under the Diakonia outcome, one of the key intervention areas focuses on strengthening the quality and impact of diaconal projects, particularly at the parish level, by leveraging the power of advocacy. While diakonia begins as an unconditional service to neighbours in need, it inevitably leads to social transformation, challenging structural injustices and fostering change in line with God's call for prophetic witness. In Felm's program, church diakonia is committed to promoting human dignity and justice, aligning its work with the Agenda 2030 pledge of "leaving no one behind" and the principle of "nothing about us without us." Advocacy amplifies this mission by addressing root causes of injustice, influencing policies, and fostering awareness through education, public campaigns, and grassroots mobilization. For example, the LUCSA diakonia project in Southern Africa focuses on gender issues in contexts where women's basic human rights have been severely diminished. Strengthening the agency of churches in diakonia includes empowering them to develop their own sustainable vision, critically reviewing European models, and ensuring their work contributes to a more just and equitable society. As the world faces increasing social fragmentation and injustice, the church, through advocacy, plays a crucial role in speaking truth to power and facilitating systemic change in partnership with communities.

## *3. Networking and peer learning on diakonia work*

Networking plays a crucial role in diakonia work, enhancing the effectiveness and reach of diaconal ministries. Networking allows churches to share resources, expertise, and best practices. In the program, this collaboration leads to more effective and innovative approaches to addressing social, economic, and environmental challenges. This is especially clear in Zimbabwe and Ethiopia. It is not possible to separate climate issues from other diaconal work.

Churches can significantly enhance diakonia work through peer learning. By engaging in peer learning, churches can share their experiences, challenges, and solutions, leading to a deeper understanding of effective practices and innovative approaches. In Africa, the program's peer-learning regional initiative creates a collaborative environment and encourages continuous learning and adaptation. This helps churches to better address the needs of their communities and allow them to develop new skills and competencies. By learning from each other, churches can gain insights into different cultural contexts, methodologies, and strategies that they might not have encountered otherwise. This exchange of knowledge and skills can lead to more effective and culturally sensitive interventions.

## **4.4 Outcome Area: Access to inclusive quality education has improved**

Aligned with SDG 4, Felm's program aims at **improving access to inclusive education for children and young people from marginalized groups, especially for those who face barriers to learning related to disability, language, and gender.** The program's interventions relate to a diverse array of education activities, including preschool and basic education, theological education, and vocational and life skills training. Inclusive education projects are implemented in Angola, Bolivia, Cambodia, Colombia, Ethiopia, Hong Kong, Israel, Mauritania (exit), Myanmar, Nepal, Palestine, Senegal (exit), Tanzania, Thailand, Venezuela, and Zimbabwe, as well as in global projects. Felm's inclusive education work is carried out together with both church partners and CSO partners. Some inclusive education projects are funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, while others are part of Felm's General Program Work.

In the context of formal education, states have the primary responsibility for ensuring that the right to education is fulfilled and protected. In the context of formal education, the program assumes that the states are motivated to provide quality education and to include marginalized groups. In theological education, Christian education, or non-formal education contexts, other duty-bearers are involved, such as management of educational institutions or other leadership. In many situations, the duty-bearers may lack the capacities and resources to ensure the right to education for all, and

marginalized groups may not be at the heart of the duty-bearers' education policy or planning. Implementation may also be insufficient in removing the multiple barriers blocking access to education for these groups. This is why the program focuses on the following key intervention areas to achieve its education outcome:

### *1. Removing barriers to learning*

Persons with disabilities, Indigenous peoples and speakers of minority languages, and women and girls often face specific barriers to learning that prevent them from accessing their right to education. Felm and its partners work to identify and remove these barriers to ensure equal participation and access to education for all. This requires a multidimensional approach.

At the level of the school or learning environment, one of the most widespread barriers to learning is a lack of teachers equipped with the skills to work with students from marginalized groups. In this program, teachers receive pre-service and in-service training on inclusive education and participatory, child-friendly, and learner-centered teaching methodologies. Depending on the project context, teachers also receive training in mother tongue-based multilingual education, language supportive pedagogy, sign language skills, and/or gender responsive pedagogy.

Another common barrier to learning is the lack of appropriate and accessible learning materials. For example, speakers of minority languages may not have access to culturally relevant learning materials in a language they understand. This program's inclusive education projects involve the development, production, and utilization of inclusive learning materials. This includes digital learning materials that students from marginalized groups often have limited access to due to reasons such as gender, poverty, or living in a remote area.

Felm and its partners also work to ensure that school facilities and infrastructure are physically accessible for students with disabilities. Where appropriate, the program supports students with disabilities to access necessary assistive devices and equipment. Some projects also support students' school attendance through sponsorships and address issues related to malnutrition and health.

### *2. Promoting children's rights in families and communities*

In Felm's inclusive education work, children and young people are the main rights-holders in terms of the right to an accessible and safe learning environment. Felm and its partners work with families and communities to promote children's rights, including education and safeguarding. When children and young people have been made aware of their rights, they are also more able to advocate for themselves.

The active participation and support of families, communities (including church communities), and civil society is essential in the process of designing and implementing sustainable and inclusive education. Felm and its partners conduct community awareness-raising on topics including the rights of persons with disabilities and the importance of girls' education. Families of students from marginalized groups can access psychosocial support and services, and they can participate, for example, in school committees and other groups of parents and caregivers. An emphasis is placed on local ownership and the active involvement of community members. For example, Indigenous communities are involved in designing educational curriculum that is linguistically appropriate and that reflects their own cultural identity, which empowers communities and contributes to their resilience.

### *3. Advocacy for inclusive education*

Felm's inclusive education activities are carried out in both formal and non-formal contexts. In formal contexts, the government is the main duty-bearer with the obligation to provide access to education for all. The role of CSOs is to advocate for governments to uphold this obligation and to support governments by filling in the gaps where they may currently face difficulties. Therefore, non-formal education is used as a means for bridging the gaps in fragile and conflict settings (e.g., in Myanmar), or for example remote communities, linguistic minorities, or adults who would not have access to education within the formal system (e.g., in Nepal and Cambodia). Wherever possible, Felm and its partners work in close collaboration with local, regional, and/or national government authorities when designing and

implementing inclusive education activities. Felm and its partners also network and engage with local experts and educational institutions as well as with specialized CSOs and local and regional networks. In non-formal education settings, there may be other responsible actors such as church or community leaders or management of theological educational institutions who can be supported to ensure access to inclusive education for all.

The key intervention areas are interlinked and together they support the achievement of the desired outcome of access to inclusive education. For example, in projects in Ethiopia, educational materials are produced for deaf learners, in-service training is provided for teachers, and schools are equipped with resources and services to provide specialist support for deaf children and their families. There is also livelihoods support and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) for deaf students. Activities also include community awareness-raising to address stigma and discrimination as well as advocacy at the policy-maker level for the rights of persons with disabilities.

## 4.5 Outcome Area: Conducive space and potential of local peacebuilders to lead inclusive peace initiatives and processes have improved

The program aims at **improving conducive space and potential for locally led and inclusive peace initiatives and processes**. This implies that local peacebuilders have enhanced opportunities for peace work, their potential and capacity to carry out locally led and inclusive peace initiatives and processes is strengthened, while the local peace efforts are recognized and supported by international actors, including policy makers and donors. In the time of polycrisis, uncertainty, and changing global order, peaceful and sustainable solutions to conflicts must be contextual and strongly embedded in local knowledge, as well as being locally designed and implemented. Also, research shows that peace processes are more durable when rooted in local knowledge and ownership. Externally driven interventions often lack legitimacy and adaptability, while locally led and community-driven peace efforts better address root causes and build trust and lead to more resilient and lasting outcomes. Strengthening locally led peacebuilding is not just ideal but essential for lasting solutions.<sup>1</sup> The program equally recognizes the nexus between peace and development: the locally led initiatives, based on contextual needs, contribute to building peaceful and resilient societies, preventing conflicts, and fostering inclusive and sustainable development. At the center of peace and reconciliation work within the program is the recognition of the interconnected nature of systemic challenges in fragile contexts, when solutions also require a holistic and locally led approach.

Felm's peace and reconciliation work is locally led, inclusive, transformative, people-centered, adaptive and conflict sensitive, which are the key approaches and principles followed in our work. Felm's peace and reconciliation work in this program is geographically focused on supporting our partners in Colombia, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Myanmar, Israel, and Palestine. It contributes to SDG 16.

In line with Felm's peace and reconciliation approach and principles, the interventions support locally led peace initiatives and processes, strengthen inclusion in peace and reconciliation work, and strengthen meaningful and inclusive participation of young people in peace and reconciliation work, thus contributing to lasting and just peace and sustainable development.

The program operates with the assumption that the partners can safely and securely carry out peace and reconciliation, as well as development work, even in fragile or volatile contexts. While challenges such as shrinking civil society space persist, it is expected that there will always be at least some operative space where local actors can engage and carry out their work. The success of the program also relies on the continued trust, credibility, and strong relationships that Felm's partners have with local communities. Lastly, it is assumed that donors will remain committed and value Felm's emphasis on fostering locally led peace and reconciliation work, and that they will continue supporting civil society and maintaining emphasis on inclusivity and gender justice.

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<sup>1</sup> See for example: UNDP/UNV, 2021; Peace Direct, 2021, OECD, 2020; UN Peacebuilding Commission, 2022, PeaceRep, 2024; UNDP, 2021

To achieve the set outcome on peace and reconciliation, the program focuses on the following three mutually interlinked key intervention areas:

### ***1. Supporting locally led peace initiatives and processes***

Felm supports peace initiatives and processes that are locally led, designed, and implemented. In Felm's program, the peace and reconciliation needs and priorities are emerging from the context and locally defined by people and communities, including how peace is understood in different contexts, which implies that specific peace and reconciliation activities, as well as their scale, focus, approach, and methods, vary from each other. For example, in Myanmar, Zimbabwe, and Colombia, Felm's partners' work focuses on all tracks (local and regional, but also national level) and their interfaces. In addition, Felm's partners' work can take place in communities where peace is built from the bottom up and can also be combined with nexus activities.

Activities related to this key intervention area concern, for example, Felm's partners providing space and facilitation support for inclusive dialogues in different tracks, including interfaith and intra-faith dialogue or monitoring and verification. Felm and its partners can also provide technical support, e.g., on process design, conflict/context analysis, and knowledge management for the peace and reconciliation initiatives and processes, if requested. Other activities concern utilizing Felm's international networks for local peacebuilders to gain access, to create new opportunities, and to advocate for their processes and work. This type of peace and reconciliation activities in Felm's program are focused on Myanmar, Colombia, and Zimbabwe. Moreover, Felm organizes and supports the organization of relevant peer-learning activities and events jointly with its partners and other key stakeholders, for example on peace and reconciliation theology.

Felm's partners have a holistic approach to peace and reconciliation work, emphasizing that the peace and reconciliation efforts will not be meaningful or sustainable if implemented in isolation without addressing other contextual challenges faced by people and communities. In Ethiopia and Zimbabwe, this means, for example, projects combining climate resilience and peace work, and in Colombia, the integration of psychosocial support into peace work. Felm, together with its partners, is further strengthening and developing the double and triple nexus approach during this program period and there is also a strong focus on peer learning and advocacy in this respect.

Felm and its partners also strive to develop peacebuilding approaches, methods, and practices to support and enhance locally led peacebuilding. This may concern, for example, exploring digital innovations and solutions, working on the climate and conflict nexus, developing adaptive management approaches, or monitoring, evaluation, and learning. This contributes to increased potential and capacity of local peacebuilders to carry out locally led, inclusive, and sustainable peace initiatives and processes. Felm also works to increase commitment at policy level to locally led peacebuilding and having locally led peace efforts increasingly recognized as an important part of international peacebuilding ecosystem.

### ***2. Strengthening inclusion in peace and reconciliation work***

Felm places a special emphasis on the meaningful participation of all genders and persons with disabilities and highlights inclusion as a cornerstone in building just and sustainable societies. We support the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (Women, Peace, and Security) and the UN Resolution 2475 (Protection of persons with disabilities in armed conflict).

Felm will continue providing support to its partners in enhancing gender equality in programmatic and organizational levels as well as identifying entry points for more gender-responsive approaches. Felm is one of the civil society organizations implementing National Action Plan for Women, Peace, and Security (WPS), Agenda 1325. Felm is a member of cross-administrative WPS monitoring group coordinated by the MFA and reports annually to the MFA on related activities and their funding. In Felm's program, MFA funded women, peace and security related activities have been integrated into some development cooperation as well as peace and reconciliation projects, which will be continued during program phase 2026-2029. Through work with national WPS network Felm brings experiences of its partners' peace initiatives to wider audience and advocates for relevant topics to be integrated in national strategy development.

Moreover, Felm's partners will work, for example, with the communities to enhance women's leadership and inclusion in Zimbabwe and for preventing GBV as part of a nexus project in Ethiopia.

A key area of focus and development of Felm during this program period is to strengthen inclusion of persons with disabilities as a twin-track cross-cutting objective, and to engage in advocacy in this respect. The under-representation of persons with disabilities in peace initiatives and processes highlights the need for their active participation in building a truly inclusive and just society. Felm supports the leadership of persons with disabilities as significant change agents in peace processes. In Colombia, the program will strengthen the leadership of persons with disabilities as advocates of just and sustainable peace and support advocacy work that creates space for active involvement of persons with disabilities in enhancing just peace in Colombia.

### *3. Strengthening meaningful and inclusive participation of young people in peace and reconciliation work*

In many conflict zones young people make up much of the population. Conflicts often disproportionately affect young people and limit their life opportunities and access to quality education. Young people have unique, innovative, and fresh perspectives and approaches to peace and development work. Felm sees significant potential in young people as change agents for building peace in their own communities and societies. Moreover, as the impact of conflicts is aggravated when intertwined with climate crisis, there is potential in young people in their adaptation to climate change, biodiversity loss, and losses and damages. During this program period Felm aims to increase the tools and opportunities of young people to participate in peace and reconciliation work according to the UN Security Council Resolution 2250 (youth, peace, and security). This is done through advocacy and by engaging with and encouraging Felm's partners to increase participation of young people in their peace and reconciliation efforts and to engage with youth-led organizations. Felm is also exploring options to develop young people's engagement and skills in addressing climate-related and conflict-related challenges.

Peace education, fostering peace supporting competencies of individuals and groups, is one of the ways in which churches, civil society organizations, and institutions can support young people's potential to participate in peacebuilding. Felm especially aims to increase the capacity of churches to integrate peace education into their children and youth work as well as to increase the meaningful participation of young people in the peace and reconciliation initiatives of churches. Currently Felm supports partners' activities to develop peace supporting skills of children and youth, particularly in Israel and Palestine. Developing peace supporting skills can also provide an opportunity to transform given gender stereotypes, such as seeing young men as aggressors and perpetrators of violence, or young women as passive victims in conflict. Breaking down how these stereotypes are connected to gender norms and expectations can renew how young individuals see themselves as actors in peace and conflict. Similarly, understanding intersectionality is important in peace education to ensure inclusive opportunities for participation, e.g., for young people with disabilities.

## **4.6 Outcome Area: Communities have improved their climate resilience and actively advocate for climate justice**

The holistic nature of Agenda 2030 is present in the program's climate resilience related outcome, as it incorporates major elements of SDG1, SDG2, SDG13, and SDG15. It is expected that, as an outcome of the program, the target **communities have improved their climate resilience and actively advocate for climate justice** by the end of 2029. Felm's motivation for climate resilience and climate advocacy work is based on a Christian and ethical framework which includes the human rights-based approach and care for Creation in the pursuit of climate justice to all. Felm's approach is filled with faith that change is possible, and hope for a better future. The outcome aims to address the impacts of climate change on rights-holders in marginalized communities and promote their resilience, supporting them to advocate for climate justice through a community-based approach considering local cultures, ecosystems, and social structures. The outcome will be implemented through development cooperation projects in Colombia, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Nepal, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe. Additionally, Felm is implementing projects contributing to climate resilience in other countries such as Angola and Palestine through other funding sources.

Climate change is causing significant environmental, socioeconomic, and societal disruptions, with its impacts felt across the globe. It manifests through profound alterations in weather patterns, leading to extreme and unpredictable weather events and long-term shifts in ecosystems. Droughts, floods, heatwaves, and tropical cyclones are occurring more frequently and with greater intensity. These events degrade soils, destroy habitats, and lead to ecosystem collapse. Unsustainable land use and environmentally harmful practices exacerbate the effects of climate change and weaken the ecosystems' and communities' ability to adapt. The socioeconomic impacts of climate change are equally alarming and include loss of lives and assets, compromising agricultural productivity and livelihoods, exacerbating and creating poverty, food insecurity, displacement, health challenges, and conflicts. Therefore, climate change poses a direct threat to fundamental human rights, including the rights to life, health, shelter, and food.

Felm recognizes that climate change disproportionately impacts those who have contributed least to it. **Women**, with limited participation in decision-making processes and who are often tasked with providing household water and food, face increasing workloads as resources become scarcer. **Persons with disabilities** are especially vulnerable during disasters, with limited access to evacuation routes, aid, and recovery support. **Indigenous communities**, heavily dependent on natural resources, experience intensified challenges as their land and cultural heritage are threatened by climate change. **Children** are also among the most vulnerable groups and will experience increasing impacts of climate change during their lifetime. For example, migration due to climate change exposes children to risk, causes families to disintegrate, and disrupts educational continuity. Therefore, Felm works towards achieving climate justice. The human rights-based approach to climate change emphasizes equity and inclusivity, particularly for marginalized groups such as women, children, and Indigenous peoples. Grounded in the Christian faith, Felm also recognizes that Creation has its own intrinsic value that does not depend on all the benefits it can bring to people. The program focuses on the following four key intervention areas to achieve the outcome:

### *1. Inclusive, community-based climate adaptation and mitigation*

Community-based climate adaptation and mitigation is implemented through increasing community knowledge and capacity to address climate change and to adapt to its effects. Adaptation involves adjusting to current or expected climate impacts to reduce harm or seize opportunities. Mitigation refers to reducing greenhouse gas emissions or enhancing carbon sinks. Both are interconnected, especially at the community level, where actions contribute to development and climate resilience. The program supports communities to engage in sustainable climate adaptation practices that not only address immediate climate challenges, but also contribute to long-term environmental sustainability. By leveraging Indigenous knowledge systems and nature-based solutions, Felm seeks to reduce environmental degradation and to enhance the climate resilience of communities. The active role of rights-holders is essential, and vulnerable groups are actors, not subjects. Practices such as sustainable agriculture, water-saving methods, and sustainable energy solutions contribute to adaptation and mitigation. Many climate actions serve multiple functions. For instance, in reforestation, trees absorb CO<sub>2</sub>, create shade, and regulate local climate, helping ecosystems to adapt. Trees create habitats for a wide range of species, enhancing biodiversity. Practices such as conservation agriculture reduce emissions and enhance soil carbon storage. As for adaptation, diversified farming systems increase resilience to climate variability. These practices are beneficial to organisms, supporting ecosystems and biodiversity. Reducing chemical fertilizers and pesticides also minimizes soil and water pollution.

The program assumes that communities will be motivated to engage in these practices, and that local stakeholders will assume an active role in efforts to adapt and mitigate climate change.

### *2. Action on loss and damage*

Loss and damage refer to climate impacts that occur despite mitigation and adaptation efforts, divided into economic and non-economic impacts. It includes both rapid-onset (e.g., storms) and slow-onset events (e.g., sea-level rise, land degradation beyond repair). The program works to improve resilience to climate-induced impacts such as displacement, loss of livelihoods, and destruction of ecosystems. The program focuses on implementing early warning systems and nature-based solutions, aiming to mitigate the risks of climate-induced loss. Through research, learning from partners,

and advocacy at national and international levels, Felm strives to expand its understanding of loss and damage, while promoting policies that can better address these challenges. The success of this intervention assumes that governments and international organizations will support such initiatives, and that local communities will have the capacity to integrate these solutions.

### ***3. Disaster risk reduction and management***

The program aims to reduce vulnerability to extreme weather events and climate-related disasters through Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRR/M). By applying community-based DRR strategies, such as the implementation of early warning systems, improvements to local infrastructure, and the development of community preparedness plans, the program supports communities in moving from reactive emergency responses to proactive, comprehensive resilience-building. In various projects, not only the climate projects, the nexus approach also enhances the effectiveness of projects and serves the community best. For this intervention area to contribute effectively to the climate resilience outcome, it is assumed that local communities will want to adopt disaster preparedness measures and that authorities will support such initiatives.

### ***4. Climate advocacy and awareness-raising***

Through supporting climate advocacy and awareness-raising, the program aims to increase awareness and to support and build the capacity of rights-holders, including marginalized groups such as persons with disabilities, women and girls, and youth, to advocate for climate justice. Felm works with other FBOs, local partners, and international networks to advocate for inclusive climate policies, promote climate diplomacy, engage with the media, and support global policy work. Locally, the program fosters youth-led actions and environmental education. By emphasizing the importance of climate justice and inclusivity, Felm aims to broaden the support for climate action.

Climate-related challenges affect especially fragile and conflict contexts. This often calls for double or triple nexus programming, combining development cooperation with peace work and humanitarian work. For example, in Eastern Tigray Region in Ethiopia, the program addresses both climate change and conflict by promoting peaceful coexistence and climate-resilient livelihoods and renewable energy. It seeks to reduce tensions in the region while helping communities adapt to environmental stressors, fostering cooperation and sustainable development.

## **4.7 Outcome Area: Affected persons' life-saving needs are met, and communities are better prepared for humanitarian crises**

Humanitarian needs are at their highest level since the World War II and further increasing. A sizable proportion of the world's poor live in countries with unstable natural conditions, and the consequences of damage and loss caused by climate change are serious. Crises are multi-layered and simultaneous. Human-caused environmental change has reduced the resilience of environments. Sudden disasters such as droughts, earthquakes, and floods make life difficult and threatening. Wars and armed conflicts increase distress and prolong the need for assistance. Many countries are facing a food security crisis. The least wealthy countries suffer the most, as well as people in the most vulnerable situations, such as children, women, and persons with disabilities. More than one hundred million people have had to leave their homes and be displaced elsewhere in their own country or outside their own borders. It is increasingly important to strengthen the resilience of communities and people to face multiple and overlapping difficulties and crises. Disasters can also be anticipated and avoided, thereby alleviating human suffering and reducing the need for aid.

Felm's humanitarian work complements the existing long-term programming either in sudden disaster situations or in protracted crises on a need-based basis. Felm's humanitarian aid is issued quickly, efficiently, and in accordance with international norms and standards. It is funded through Felm's disaster relief fund, which is financed by private and parish fundraising and donors, and by development cooperation budget reallocations. Felm also can finance humanitarian work targeted at children with funds raised for its Children's Bank fund. In addition, Felm can also start

individual campaigns and collections in disaster situations. Felm will apply for EU/ECHO Framework Partnership Agreement status during the program period to diversify its funding base in humanitarian assistance.

Felm supports humanitarian programs primarily in countries where Felm already works and mainly responds to requests from established partners, who channel the help and implement humanitarian work. This is the most effective way to operate in disaster situations, and it allows Felm and its partners to leverage the nexus between humanitarian work and development and peace work. Localization and a partner-led approach bring added value to Felm's humanitarian work through equal cooperation and partnership as a basis of humanitarian aid. The decision to act outside the established operating countries is made on a case-by-case basis. A prerequisite for support outside Felm's program countries is that Felm's assistance is requested (by ACT Alliance, LWF, or other Felm partners) and the nature of the disaster is extensive.

The guiding principles of humanitarian aid are humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence. Assistance is provided to everyone, regardless of background. Felm is committed to the code of conduct and standards developed by humanitarian organizations. There are Sphere standards for aid work, which define, for example, food, water supply, minimum level of housing, and health services. They have been incorporated into the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS) in accordance with the principles of the Humanitarian Charter. Felm also complies with INEE standards created to guide humanitarian work in the education sector. Felm implements the IASC guidelines for taking persons with disabilities into account in humanitarian action. International human rights and international humanitarian law also apply in times of crisis. Felm's humanitarian work is guided by a humanitarian imperative and a rights-based operating model. In this way, Felm's humanitarian work is based on both humanitarian needs and people's right to assistance. Its activities apply the Do No Harm principle, according to which the activities of organizations must not have a negative impact on those persons within the scope of their activities or their living environment.

Felm's partners operate with communities where humanitarian crises may severely affect both the right-holders' and duty-bearers' lives. The program's capacity is to ensure that life-saving needs of persons affected by crisis are swiftly met, and that Felm, partners, and communities are better prepared for disasters and the consequent humanitarian crises. Meeting humanitarian needs is a crucial element to be covered on the path towards the change that the program intends to bring about.

Felm's humanitarian work primarily supports members of vulnerable population groups, which amid disasters are often women, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities and minorities within the communities served by the partners' projects. Protection is particularly targeted at those who are in the most vulnerable position and in need of the most support. Felm responds to their needs and areas of convergence among humanitarian work, development cooperation, and peace work comprehensively, making use of the nexus approach where appropriate.

The work focuses on three key intervention areas leading to meeting people's basic needs and increased preparedness of communities:

### ***1. Emergency life-saving support interventions in disaster situations***

Through emergency support, the program aims at ensuring adequate food, shelter, and clean water for people in the event of sudden disasters. Responding to the basic needs of affected people helps save lives during and immediately after a crisis and supports people in their survival during crisis and disasters. Felm also supports the early recovery of communities from crises by protecting the environment and livelihoods and by promoting the recovery of affected people and communities.

In protracted crises, such as refugee situations or conflicts, Felm's humanitarian work can be, for example, promoting inclusive schooling or supporting food security and providing psycho-social support.

### ***2. Emergency preparedness and humanitarian response capacity***

To support communities to be better prepared for crises, Felm's humanitarian work includes strengthening Felm's and Felm's partners capacity in disaster preparedness and humanitarian aid vis-à-vis developing the skills and conditions for averting as well as minimizing loss and damage. DRR work in the communities is integrated into long-term development

work. Precautionary measures aim to reduce the scale of the damage, the number of victims, and the need for aid, acknowledging that preparedness is less costly than exposure to disasters. Prevention, risk reduction, and strengthening resilience are part of Felm's comprehensive programming. Humanitarian aid complements long-term programming in sectors like development cooperation, creating important synergy between the program's humanitarian work and climate resilience outcomes.

### 3. Developing and strengthening inclusion in humanitarian work

Persons with disabilities are more affected by disaster risks and do not have access to or benefit from humanitarian aid on an equal basis with other community members. Felm focuses on disability inclusion by ensuring access to assistance and full and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities at all stages of humanitarian work. Felm promotes inclusion by training its own staff and the partners' staff, as well as cooperating with local organizations of persons with disability and other organizations promoting disability rights. Felm brings disability inclusion expertise to the activities of our international networks and to humanitarian advocacy work, acknowledging intersections of humanitarian work, gender justice, and disability inclusion.

## 4.8 Humanitarian-Development-Peace Triple Nexus in the Theory of Change

The program's ToC enables the use of a triple nexus approach in contexts where partners indicate the willingness and need for applying it. The triple nexus refers to the interlinkages and collective efforts between *humanitarian, development, and peace* (HDP) work to address conflicts, development challenges, and humanitarian action in a complementary and holistic approach. It puts affected people and communities at the center and seeks areas of convergence, i.e., synergy and meeting points of different areas of work among HDP fields in each context by working towards "collective outcomes" that are more than the sum of their parts. The triple nexus approach aims to effectively reduce people's needs, risks, and vulnerabilities, having prevention of crisis and conflicts as a shared goal and shifting from delivering humanitarian assistance to ending need. Felm's approach at various levels creates visions to de-escalate crises, enhance safety and ensure human rights amid crises, and accelerate recovery from crises. The HDP nexus is part of the UN reform and working towards the SDGs. The HDP nexus approach aims to achieve collective, measurable outcomes based on joint analysis. In practice, it refers to parallel, coordinated, and complementary interventions that require flexibility from all areas of work or support forms. In this program, triple nexus programming starts with a joint analysis among humanitarian, development, and peace work, engaging partners and relevant Felm staff. Felm and its partners acknowledge that members of affected communities are best at prioritizing their own needs and applying participatory methods and adaptive management.

Clear mandates and coordination between and among HDP actors in the project and/or between other relevant actors in the project area are the key in triple nexus programming. The approach requires avoiding overlapping, duplication, and exhausting members of affected communities by continuous and concurrent needs assessments.

Triple nexus in Felm is locally led and applied through a variety of tailored activities. HDP activities may be applied at the same time in a project or program, but they do not have to be. The emphasis among three elements can shift and change during the project period. In Felm's forthcoming triple nexus projects in Ethiopia and Zimbabwe, humanitarian work combines short-term activities such as food aid with continuous activities such as psychosocial support and GBV case management. These are integrated into development cooperation activities, such as livelihoods, as well as community-based peace work in ways that enhance the project's overall impact. The triple nexus in this program will be operated by using program funding for all development and peace work, whilst humanitarian work will be operated using reallocated funds as requested through the MFA program-based support instrument. The implementation of the triple nexus requires co-creation from practitioners and flexibility from funding instruments, applicable to both project-level and country-level programming, where humanitarian, development, and peace projects converge.

## 4.9 Cross-cutting Objectives in Felm's Program

The Felm Program is guided by two cross-cutting objectives: **disability inclusion and gender justice** serving the SDGs (4, 5, 8, 10, and 16). These cross-cutting objectives are operationalized by applying a **twin-track approach** where

mainstreaming is systematically integrated throughout the entire program and into institutional structures and policies, combined with and supported by targeted actions addressing the rights of persons with disabilities and the rights of women and girls as well as sexual and gender non-conforming people. Felm recognizes and reacts to the evolvement of **disability inclusion** and **gender justice** concepts throughout the program period, ensuring a holistic and equitable approach. These objectives aim at achieving broader systematic change by guiding how various interventions are operationalized throughout the program to strengthen the agency of people of all genders and persons with disabilities as rights-holders.

In the Felm Program, **disability inclusion** refers to the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in all their diversity, the promotion of their rights, and integrating disability-related perspectives into all actions in compliance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Disability inclusion occurs when persons with disabilities can equally and fully participate in, and access, all aspects of society. Moreover, **gender justice** refers to the universal right to equality, aiming to protect and promote the dignity of all people, regardless of gender or sexual orientation. It seeks equality, a balance of power between genders, and the dismantling of discriminatory and repressive structures in line with principles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

To operationalize the mainstreaming of gender justice and disability inclusion, the **three-level tool** is followed. The minimum standard for the program is **do no harm (DNH)** (level 1) ensuring that interventions do not have a negative impact on the realization of the rights of women, girls, sexual minorities or gender non-conforming persons, or persons with disabilities. The human rights risks and barriers to inclusion and equal participation are assessed, addressed, and monitored. In addition to minimum standards, some projects and program elements **promote** (level 2) these objectives by raising awareness of rights-holders and duty-bearers on the rights of all genders and sexual minorities and persons with disabilities while implementing specific activities to advance their human rights. The most advanced level of mainstreaming aims at **transformative** changes (level 3) addressing the root causes of discrimination against persons with disabilities and gender-based inequalities by contributing to structural changes. Analyzing projects against these three categories supports setting realistic targets for the mainstreaming of cross-cutting objectives and their monitoring in the program.

### *Priorities and development areas during the program 2026-2029*

The cross-cutting objectives focus on advancing equality and inclusion through priority and development areas, ensuring a transformative and sustainable impact. Key priorities include **meaningful participation** of persons with disabilities, all genders, and sexual minorities in all their diversity (SDG5) as **actors of change**; identifying and **removing discriminatory barriers** (SDG10, 4); and prioritizing **accessibility** and holistic **intersectionality** in decision-making (SDG8, 10). Development areas for gender justice, identified with partners, include reaching the do no harm level in all projects within the program by the end of the program period, promoting men's participation in advancing gender justice, addressing the global anti-gender movement, and supporting partners in advancing LGBTQI+ rights. For disability inclusion, the focus is on strengthening the HRBA to disability, enhancing the capacity of persons with disabilities as change agents and human rights advocates, and strengthening the theological approach to disability. During program implementation, the emphasis will be on **learning from and sharing good practices and lessons learned** from targeted actions and projects on a more advanced level in mainstreaming the cross-cutting objectives. This will involve conducting partner-led learning meetings, sharing and discussing good practices, preparing and disseminating case studies, and organizing training on the cross-cutting objectives. Felm's engagement in the Women Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda enhances thematic learning from partners and peer organizations. Felm and Abilis will cooperate to promote and mainstream the rights of persons with disabilities, focusing on their role in climate change actions and peacebuilding processes through mutual learning, information sharing, and network building.

## 4.10 Focus on People in Vulnerable Situations and Historically Marginalized Groups

Felm's work focuses on people in vulnerable situations and historically marginalized groups as rights-holders. Felm's partners are experts in the varying contexts and in the different thematic areas of the program and its intervention areas, and their projects propose solutions based on this knowledge and on their extensive experience, community presence, and dialogue with the right-holders, all in support of strong local ownership of the agenda. Felm has accumulated extensive experience in working with the most marginalized groups, which has repeatedly been evaluated as Felm's clear added value and strength.

For example, in Colombia, the focus is on Afro-Colombian and Indigenous peoples, minority language speakers, persons with disabilities, and landmine accident survivors. In Africa, the work in Ethiopia targets women, persons with disabilities and their families, deaf individuals, smallholder farmers, economically disadvantaged households, marginalized ethnic groups, and youth. In Tanzania, programs emphasize children, youth, farmers, pastoralists, and disadvantaged households. Zimbabwe prioritizes orphaned and vulnerable children, youth, farmers, and disadvantaged households. In Asia, Cambodia focuses on girls, women, children, youth, persons with disabilities, and Indigenous peoples. Myanmar supports children with disabilities and ethnic minorities. Nepal's programs aid children and individuals with disabilities, marginalized groups like Dalits and ethnic minorities, youth, and climate-vulnerable farmers. Disability inclusion and gender justice are mainstreamed in all projects, with targeted actions for persons with disabilities and women or girls where relevant.

While Felm works with groups that have been marginalized for various reasons, Felm further identifies the needs of and focuses on women and girls, persons with disabilities, and ethnic minorities. Felm recognizes and acts with tailored interventions upon the multiple intersecting and overlapping factors contributing to marginalization in relation to gender, social class or caste, disability, or ethnic background. The program responds to the needs of the marginalized with actions that strengthen the role of women and persons with disabilities as active agents in their communities and supports their empowerment in the processes of change in which they participate. While in some contexts working with the churches that represent educated middle class, Felm also strengthens their agency in building inclusive societies and serving vulnerable groups in their communities.

In line with the HRBA, the program also addresses the key stakeholders responsible for respecting, protecting, and fulfilling the rights as primary or secondary duty-bearers. The program's advocacy activities (see chapter 4.11) support the partners' projects in addressing duty-bearers as active agents of change in the supported development processes, with a strong emphasis on strengthening their ownership and long-term commitment to the principles and processes carried out by the partners' projects and the program.

## 4.11 Advocating for Change

The importance of advocacy has increased during the past years at Felm, as demonstrated by the partnership consultations in 2024 emphasizing the value of joint advocacy between Felm and its partners. They also highlighted the need to build capacity and knowledge through co-learning. Advocacy is integrated into all program outcomes and plays a key role in achieving the intended results.

Through advocacy, Felm and its partners tackle structural and systemic barriers to sustainable development, peace, and human rights. It strengthens democratic participation, civil society's operational freedom, and evidence-based decision-making. Advocacy helps identify political, governance, financial, or cultural processes that impact program implementation. Co-learning enhances advocacy skills, linking local interventions with decision-making and policy development at multiple levels. Felm supports advocacy through the "global advocacy project" and "advocacy clinic" concept, emphasizing partner-led initiatives. Additionally, Felm addresses systemic injustices that hinder progress in Finland and beyond.

### *Key priorities for advocacy:*

- *Climate Resilience:* Addressing systemic barriers to adaptation and loss & damage (L&D). Felm's partners work to improve policy coherence across governance and financial instruments, ensuring climate action aligns with advocacy for climate justice.
- *Human Rights and Inclusive Education:* Promoting inclusion and challenging discrimination, particularly for persons with disabilities. Advocacy efforts influence policies and curricula to uphold diverse learners' rights.
- *Peacebuilding:* Supporting local peacebuilders in conflict resolution. The program promotes a nexus-based approach to peacebuilding as an alternative to traditional, linear models.

Beyond these priorities, Felm advocates for fair and transparent funding, such as official development aid and climate finance. Local challenges often require higher-level solutions to secure funding for community actions. Felm contributes to best practices in OECD Development Aid Committee discussions, EU and Finnish foreign development policies, and UN negotiations on finance, human rights, and sustainability.

### *Advocacy as a methodology*

Felm's advocacy is human rights-based and led by partners and networks. It follows principles of inclusion, participation, non-discrimination, transparency, and accountability. The primary method is critical, evidence-based, and inclusive dialogue. Advocacy often faces opposition but adapts to restrictive environments where civil society operates under limitations.

There is no one-size-fits-all advocacy approach. Instead, methods must be tailored to each context in a bottom-up manner based on partner needs. The advocacy "toolbox" offers adaptable strategies to advance the program's objectives. Success is pursued through publicity, knowledge-sharing, political engagement, accountability mechanisms, and governance improvements. Advocacy targets political, cultural, economic, social, material, and technological structures. It addresses injustices identified in the program's contextual analysis. For example, persons with disabilities face exclusion from businesses, disaster planning, and climate finance, and women and girls experience discrimination in political decision-making and livelihood opportunities, such as land ownership and loan access.

Advocacy enhances impact by scaling up, down, horizontally, and inwards:

- *Scaling up:* Expanding successful local initiatives to higher governance levels (e.g., integrating methods from a local deaf school into a national curriculum).
- *Scaling down:* Implementing national or international policies locally, especially where administrative capacities are weak (e.g., inclusive disaster risk planning).
- *Scaling horizontally:* Spreading successful models across regions (e.g., climate-resilient farming techniques or childcare quality standards).
- *Scaling inwards:* Driving cultural and political change (e.g., engaging traditional leaders on disability rights or shifting attitudes toward plastic waste and recycling).

Felm and its partners tackle systemic injustices like corruption and discrimination, which cross national borders. They leverage diverse advocacy coalitions and seek new opportunities in changing political landscapes. Understanding policy coalitions helps Felm focus its resources where they can create the most impact and drive structural change aligned with program goals.

## 5. Implementation Arrangements

### 5.1 Felm's Program Strategies

Felm's work is guided by the recently revised strategy (2024) and thematic policy papers (2024-2025), based on continuous contextual work, partner consultations, and risk management seen through lenses of adaptability. According to Felm's strategy, the objectives and priorities of operations highlight that churches and people in vulnerable situations are at the core of Felm's activities. Felm aims to strengthen churches and create sustainable and prosperous communities. Churches and other civil society actors are important drivers of the transition towards a just, equal, and sustainable future. They are peacemakers that strengthen communities' resilience to and ability to recover from climate change and other crises. Churches can serve as important examples by supporting human rights and strengthening the principles of non-discrimination in all activities.

The key principles for program implementation include:

**One Program Approach:** Felm's program integrates all international work, including multi-year development cooperation supported by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA). This approach ensures synergy and uniformity across themes while adhering to MFA requirements. The revised theory of change (ToC) is shared and refined to align with the priorities of the updated strategy. Special emphasis is placed on strengthening Christian witness, theological education, and church leadership while promoting inclusive, theologically grounded, and rights-based diakonia.

**Adaptivity and Partner-Led Approach:** Flexibility and a partner-led approach are central to program implementation. The ToC is established at the outcome level, allowing projects to align with overarching objectives while accommodating contextual and partner priorities. Adaptability, partner leadership, and decentralisation require flexible project planning. Therefore, adequate time is allocated for planning during the first year of the program cycle. Partners play an active role in planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Additionally, an Advisory Group, composed of partner representatives, will provide input throughout the program cycle.

**Expanding Cooperation Modalities with Partners:** Moving beyond project-based cooperation enhances impact and agility. Alternative instruments and unallocated funds provide greater flexibility. The program increasingly relies on the Felm Fellowship model, advisory support through consultative methods, flexible funding modalities, and peer learning. The goal is to balance funding between projects, general support, and unallocated funds to address emerging needs effectively.

**More Decentralized Programming and Management:** Reducing centralization strengthens regional management, ownership, and implementation. Regional teams will receive ongoing support from Helsinki throughout all programming stages to ensure effective execution and alignment with strategic goals.

**Enhancing Programmatic Impact and Synergies Through Consortium Approach and Diversified Funding:** Felm aims to enhance program impact by engaging with global and institutional funders, forming strategic partnerships, and adopting a consortium approach. By pooling resources and expertise, Felm seeks to create synergies, expand its funding sources, improve sustainability, and ensure resilience in global and institutional funding. Strengthening internal capacities in global funding mechanisms and collaborating with other ecumenical and like-minded actors and expert organizations will allow Felm to integrate consortium-based models into new program initiatives, increasing reach and long-term growth.

### 5.2 Regions and Countries of Operation

Felm's program 2026-2029 includes the following regions: Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East. In 2026 Felm is working in the following countries of operation: Angola, Bolivia, Botswana, Cambodia, Colombia, Ethiopia, Hong Kong, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Palestine-Israel, Senegal (until 2028), Syria, Tanzania, Thailand, Venezuela,

and Zimbabwe. The program also includes regional and global program work. Felm has decided to exit from mainland China, Mauritania, Oman, Pakistan, and Taiwan. Felm supports partners in the exit countries based on the jointly agreed upon exit plans. In humanitarian aid, Felm focuses on its long-term program countries. Decisions on humanitarian funding to non-program countries are made on a case-by case basis using the criteria listed in Felm's policy document on humanitarian aid.

Felm focuses its program work in countries and contexts well known to Felm through its long-term partnerships. This brings synergy in terms of efficiency and nexus potential. For example, the peace and reconciliation program work in Colombia, Zimbabwe, and Myanmar provides a double or triple nexus advantage for Felm.

### 5.3 Working Together: Partnerships in the Program Work

As part of the program revision process, Felm's partnership portfolio has been evaluated at the global, country, and regional levels. It is based on the updated Felm strategy, and the focus areas selected therein, as well as the approved partnership principles. As a rule, churches are at the heart of the partnership, and the project work supports this. At the same time, it is also ensured that, at global, regional, and country levels, the partnerships form an entity that produces comprehensive change, does not depend on a single partner, and in which the relationship between the different partners and the content and complementarity of their work are carefully considered. The number of partners has been reduced, as Felm wants to deepen existing partnerships and focus on the smaller number of countries and themes selected for the program. This also produces new learning and consortium capabilities for Felm and its partners. The portfolio includes various partners, large and small, church and civil society actors, with whom equal and productive cooperation is planned and implemented together.

**In international ecumenical partnerships,** Felm especially strengthens cooperation with other actors engaged in holistic missionary work (e.g., Church of Sweden, Kerk in Aktie, DanMission, Mission 21, ELCA,) strengthening joint learning and coordination in partner support and donor requirements. Felm will also continue cooperation with the Lutheran World Federation, e.g., in the development of theological education. Through LWF cooperation, Felm gains access to global theological education networks, and the cooperation increases impact and enhances operations. Felm also continues as an active member of the World Council of Churches and the ACT Alliance global network.

Felm fosters long-term **partnership relations with churches and organizations** in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America, which share the same development values and vision, and that are the most efficient actors to reach local communities. The program is implemented by 74 partners, out of which 21 are churches, 12 are Christian councils, forums, or institutes, 26 are FBOs with their local branches, and 15 are CSOs. A total of 36 partners are in Asia, 20 in Africa, 11 in the Middle East region, and 3 represented in Latin America. The five global partners are the World Council of Churches, Lutheran World Federation, ACT Alliance, Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network, and ACT EU.

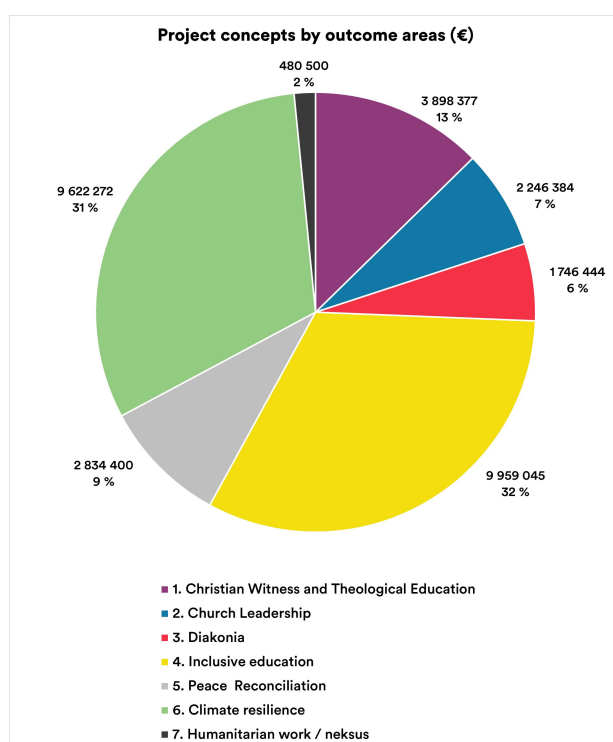
The program's partners reflect the long-term collaboration that Felm fosters with like-minded organizations. Felm's partnership portfolio has been evaluated at the global, country, and regional levels. It is based on the Felm strategy and the focus areas selected therein, as well as the approved partnership principles. The document outlines mechanisms for due diligence, transparency, and accountability in evaluating partnerships for the 2026-29 period. Due diligence involves assessing the partner's capacity to manage resources and security risks effectively, ensuring they are legally registered and compliant with local legislation, and demonstrating capacity in project management, including having anti-corruption policies. Transparency requires partners to commit to good governance, ensuring their operations are open, non-discriminatory, and promote human rights and justice. Accountability involves partners adhering to good governance practices, showing commitment to effective project implementation, and complying with legal requirements. These mechanisms ensure responsible management and ethical practices in partnerships.

In 2019, Felm established the **Felm International Advisory Board (FIAB)**, bringing together representatives from its global, regional, and country-level partners. FIAB serves as a platform for coordinating partnerships and enhancing communication between Felm and its partners.

Together with its partners, Felm wants to develop a wider understanding of partnership where fellowship is the basis for all cooperation. Therefore, starting in 2026, Felm is introducing the **Felm Fellowship**, an inclusive network open to both current and former partners, regardless of whether they continue to receive budget funding from Felm. The Fellowship fosters mutual training, exchange, and collaboration, creating an innovative partnership and networking model that deepens interaction and shared learning. At the heart of the Felm Fellowship is the principle of fellowship-based partnership, encompassing various forms of collaboration. This includes financial project cooperation, co-worker exchange programs, and other modes of engagement. By emphasizing knowledge sharing and collective growth, the Fellowship ensures that partnerships can continue in diverse ways, even if direct financial support from Felm ends. The Felm Fellowship aims to strengthen partner networks, facilitate the exchange of valuable insights, foster spiritual connections, and sustain a shared journey as part of the global church. Through this expanded and deepened partnership model, Felm reaffirms its commitment to long-term collaboration and collective mission. Partners from former countries of operation, such as Namibia, Pakistan, and China mainland, are invited to be part of the Felm Fellowship.

## 5.4 Projects

The Felm Program consists of partners' projects that are strategic in implementing the program theory of change and achieving the goals through impactful, responsible, and sustainable work. In 2026 the program consists of around 100 projects, of which about 30% are in Asia, about 35 % in Africa, around 15 % in Latin America and around 10 % in Middle East. In addition, the program has six global projects to enhance cross learning within the program and the partner projects. Thematically the projects are divided as follows under the outcome areas:



Note that the number of humanitarian projects is larger annually, as aid decisions are made based on needs during the year. The percentage share in the figure shows only the planned humanitarian work in the triple nexus projects. The overall program implementation is subject to financial resources and annual funding decisions.

## 5.5 Stakeholders, Networks, and Coordination

The program holds significant value for local actors by aligning with their priorities and, where applicable, **integrating with national development plans and policies**. This alignment can enable actors to leverage local expertise and resources, fostering connections between in-country initiatives and broader development efforts. As a result, projects may enhance impact, improve coordination, and reduce duplication. Additionally, regional and global networks help

link local and national efforts to broader frameworks, such as the Universal Periodic Review process and collective SDG initiatives.

**Local networks** play a crucial role in the implementation and coordination of the program by providing a platform for collaboration and resource sharing among various stakeholders, including CSOs, local and national authorities, research institutions and universities, private sector entities, and the media. Local networks enable the pooling of resources as well as local knowledge and expertise, which is essential for addressing context-specific challenges and ensuring the relevance of the program initiatives. ACT Alliance country forums and international civil society organizations' networks are vital for coordinating efforts and avoiding duplication. Felm has prioritized partners who are part of local and national networks focusing on key development issues relevant to the program. Regular meetings, joint planning sessions, and shared monitoring frameworks ensure efficient resource use and alignment with local and national goals. Leveraging local networks helps spread identified good practices, scale up successful interventions, and foster a sense of ownership among communities, leading to more significant and lasting positive impacts.

**Regional and global networks** significantly enhance the program impact by linking local and national efforts to broader frameworks and initiatives, and by integrating regional and global initiatives at the local level. These networks upscale the exchange of knowledge as initiated at the local level, share knowledge across various contexts, and help to improve the quality, effectiveness, and accountability of the work, allowing space for advocacy on the global development agenda. Felm's participation in networks such as the CHS Alliance, ACT Alliance, ACT Alliance EU, Lutheran World Federation, and the World Council of Churches allows Felm to engage in global advocacy and contribute to the global development agenda. These networks further open access to a broader range of expertise and resources, which Felm's partners can use to address complex development challenges. Regional and global networks boost the visibility and credibility of local initiatives, making it easier to secure additional funding and support from international donors and stakeholders.

## 5.6. Private Sector Cooperation

Governments, societies, and businesses face increasingly complex and interconnected challenges. These changes affect resources and funding, especially in development efforts in the Global South. To address these challenges, Felm builds innovative partnerships that create effective and lasting solutions. Felm engages in development and peace activities with new types of partners. These include businesses driving economic growth, universities producing knowledge and entrepreneurial solutions, governments shaping policies and funding research, and civil society organizations (CSOs). This "quadruple helix" model fosters collaboration where each partner strengthens and supports the others, leading to systemic innovation and cost-effective solutions.

Felm promotes interdisciplinary and cross-sector collaboration to tackle persistent social issues like climate change, poverty, gender inequality, and peacebuilding. By working with businesses and universities, Felm enhances social innovation, develops new models, and empowers stakeholders. Over time, the program further expands its partnerships to include more institutions from the countries where Felm operates. Successful collaborations drive scalable, community-led solutions—from renewable energy innovations to inclusive education technologies. Felm also advances climate justice research and strengthens cooperation with leading institutions such as the University of Helsinki, Aalto University, the Academy of Finland, and the University of Turku. It also builds private sector connections through Finnpartnership and actively participates in the Fingo Powerbank network to enhance private sector collaboration.

## 5.7 Advisory Support

**Felm's advisers and program managers in the regions** play a crucial role in supporting program implementation in the countries of operation. Their responsibilities include continuous program monitoring and maintaining an ongoing dialogue with partners. Felm's thematic, administrative, and financial advisers in the regions provide essential guidance on planning, implementation, monitoring, and the further development of projects in collaboration with partners. Beyond their technical expertise, they possess a deep understanding of the diverse contexts in which partner organizations operate. This knowledge enables them to contribute to continuous context analysis and risk assessment.

The administrative and financial advisers ensure high-quality program management and financial operations across all activities. Recognizing the importance of strong financial management, Felm prioritizes continuous capacity building in financial and administrative management of partner projects. This is achieved through advisory support from finance and governance staff, as well as by fostering learning and knowledge-sharing between partner organizations. The learning processes within the program also support expanding the program with new technical and financial opportunities. These new openings serve partners' interests by increasing visibility and recognition for the agendas carried out within the program's project portfolio. To ensure a fair balance between partner support and advisory needs, Felm remains committed to strengthening financial and administrative capacities through ongoing collaboration and training.

**Global thematic advisers** support regional and country teams, as well as partners, in project planning, implementation, and shared learning. They offer thematic and methodological guidance, best practices, and insights drawn from partners' experiences in various contexts. Through targeted training and co-learning activities, they play a key role in strengthening the capacity of partner organizations. Thematic advisers—both at the head office and in the regions—focus on key themes such as Christian witness and theological education, church leadership, diakonia, inclusive education, climate resilience, gender justice, disability inclusion, and the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus.

**Advocacy advisers** from the Communications and Advocacy Department collaborate with thematic advisers and partners in integrating advocacy effectively into program work and addressing structural and systemic barriers to sustainable development, peace, and human rights. They support co-learning that strengthens advocacy skills by linking local interventions with decision-making and policy development at multiple levels. Advocacy advisers, together with thematic advisers and program managers, jointly implement the “global advocacy project” and “advocacy clinic” model, emphasizing partner-led initiatives. Their efforts ensure that advocacy remains a core component of Felm's program approach, enhancing its impact across various operational contexts.

## 5.8 Learning Together

Felm's learning approach emphasizes integrated capacity building, contextualized learning, dialogue, and participatory training methods to ensure sustainable impacts for both partners and staff. Learning is facilitated on key topics and intervention areas, fostering collaboration and capacity sharing between Felm and its partners. The approach addresses both program outcomes and practical development needs.

Continuous peer learning is embedded in the program cycle, with training activities planned and budgeted alongside project initiatives. Capacity strengthening is a collaborative process that uplifts and supports local leaders while fostering reciprocal learning. It involves co-creating knowledge with CSOs and FBOs, valuing their expertise and lived experiences, and prioritizing shared learning over top-down instruction. By recognizing and amplifying local wisdom, Felm builds relationships rooted in mutual respect and solidarity.

Contextualized learning ensures that content is relevant to local culture, language, and circumstances. Participatory methods, such as community workshops and peer learning, are central to this process, supported by digital tools and online platforms. Collaborative learning is encouraged through peer learning networks, knowledge sharing, and forums for best practices. By facilitating peer learning and applying best practices, Felm fosters knowledge co-creation across projects.

Training on key issues, such as Results-Based Management (RBM), enhances program efficiency. Potential barriers to learning are identified and addressed in the early planning phase using diverse and participatory methods to minimize challenges. Additionally, Felm promotes internal synergies and actively engages in advocacy and networks at national and international levels to share knowledge and strengthen collective impact.

## 5.9 Communications

The main goal of Felm's program-level communications is to enhance the visibility of program results and the realities of the communities Felm works with, to ensure transparency, and to strengthen accountability towards supporters and donors. Communications highlight the impact of Felm's work, ensuring that key stakeholders remain informed and engaged.

The core focus of communications is to showcase the tangible results achieved through Felm's programs, to amplify the voices of local communities, and to provide evidence-based insights into the effectiveness of initiatives. Content production prioritizes relevance, clarity, and accessibility, ensuring that communications align with the needs and interests of supporters, donors, and the wider public.

Felm's communications will:

- Share success stories and impact narratives from program areas to illustrate progress and challenges in achieving development goals.
- Promote transparency and accountability by providing timely reports and updates on program implementation.
- Engage supporters and donors through diverse communication tools, fostering continued support and commitment to Felm's mission.
- Strengthen the capacity of local partners in strategic communication to enhance their ability to share program results and lessons learned within their communities.

The effectiveness of communications will be assessed using indicators such as audience reach, attitude change, and stakeholder feedback. Development communications are reported separately as part of the development cooperation program.

Felm's communications emphasize key thematic areas, including outreach work of the churches, theological education, church leadership, diakonia, inclusive education, peace and reconciliation, and climate resilience. Communications also highlight the voices of marginalized communities and vulnerable populations.

Felm will utilize a range of communication channels to maximize reach and impact. These include dedicated reports, media campaigns, radio and podcasts, various social media platforms, publications such as *Lähetysseuran* and *Mission* magazine, partnerships with influencers, and building media relations. National, church-related, and local media will be engaged to amplify program visibility. Annual program results reports will be published on Felm's website and serve as a basis for press releases, articles, and social media content. Communications will aim to create immersive and compelling content that helps audiences understand the realities of the communities Felm serves.

Felm's partners play a key role in communicating about the program and especially their projects to the target communities and groups, local authorities, and other stakeholders, e.g., in project activities and meetings, and through their own communication channels and networks. For project-level communication, the partners use the formats and strategies that are the most appropriate for the given context and audience (e.g., discussion in a community meeting, material written in the local language, images). Felm monitors that partners' transparency and accountability practices and structures are of good quality. Felm's project manual gives guidance to partners on related good governance practices. Felm also develops transparency and accountability practices with partners as a part of the Core Humanitarian Standard self-assessment (first round planned for 2026).

### *Development Communications*

The main purpose of Felm's development communications is to ensure transparency, openness, and accountability of development cooperation and to report the results of the work. The Finnish public has the right to know how the

resources of Finland's development cooperation are used, and to learn about the achievements, challenges, and learning in the projects.

In the operating countries, Felm reports about the projects together with partners, which also raises awareness of Finland's role in global development. Felm's partners have an essential role in communicating about the results and achievements of the program in the communities. In addition, Felm builds the capacity and supports the communications skills of the partners and learns from their local expertise. Communications activities are planned in dialogue and close cooperation with the partners. Felm reports on its work related to inclusive education, peace and reconciliation, and climate resilience, which contribute to achieving the SDGs. In addition, Felm raises awareness of the nexus approach of humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding work. Felm's approach is to bring the voices of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups to public discussion.

In Finland, the target audience of Felm's development communications includes the public, members of the parishes of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Finland, and supporters of Felm. During the program period, Felm communications will reach 500,000 – 2.5 million people in Finland annually.

In addition, the Felm Program includes global citizenship education (GCE) work that contributes to the realization of SDG target 4.7. The thematic priorities in the GCE work are climate resilience and biodiversity loss. Felm has strong networks through dioceses and parishes to reach young people in Finland. The main target group of the GCE project is the newly founded youth influencer groups, which have been mandatory in every parish since 2019. During the program period, the project will directly reach 1,500 young people and 500 educators and church youth workers. The indirect reach is 5,000 people.

## 5.10 Work plan

The **Program Work Plan (2026-2029)** serves as a strategic framework guiding the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the program over four years. It outlines key activities, responsibilities, and milestones to ensure the program's effectiveness, sustainability, and alignment with funding and partner priorities. The plan encompasses several core components: **inception activities**, including partner project finalization and administrative foundations; **planning**, covering annual program strategies and sustainability measures; **monitoring and evaluation**, ensuring continuous project assessment and risk management; **learning and capacity building**, fostering collaboration through training and peer learning; and **program development**, enhancing innovation, humanitarian capacity, and advocacy efforts. Each activity is assigned to responsible teams, ensuring coordinated execution and impact measurement throughout the program cycle. The work plan will feed into the annual planning processes.

| Main Program Activities                                                                    | 2026 |    |    |    | 2027 |    |    |    | 2028 |    |    |    | 2029 |    |    |    | Program            | Responsibilities and Remarks                                             |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|----|----|----|------|----|----|----|------|----|----|----|------|----|----|----|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                            | Q1   | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q1   | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q1   | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q1   | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 |                    |                                                                          |
| Inception phase                                                                            |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |                    |                                                                          |
| Finalization of partner project plans according to confirmed funding                       |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    | Felm (incl. DevCo) | Partners supported by Regional and country offices and Thematic advisors |
| Program's admin foundation (delegation of authorities, project agreements, archiving etc.) |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    | Felm (incl. DevCo) | Program management/HQ, finance and administration, regional directors    |
| Staff & partner programme introduction                                                     |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    | Felm (incl. DevCo) | Program management/ HQ, country offices                                  |
| Adjustments to program indicators and monitoring tools/ methods                            |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    | Felm (incl. DevCo) | PMEL advisor coordinates, partners co-design                             |
| Baseline review planning and implementation                                                |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    | Felm (incl. DevCo) | PMEL, country offices, partners                                          |
| Program sustainability planning                                                            |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    | Felm (incl. DevCo) | Partners and Felm staff                                                  |

| Planning                                                                                                |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |                    |                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                      |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Context and risk analysis                                                                               |   |   |   | ★ |   |   |   | ★ |   |   |   | ★ |   |   |   | Felm (incl. DevCo) | Felm regions for country context and risks; Felm HQ for global context and risks                                                            |                                                                                                                                                      |
| Annual program plan                                                                                     | ★ |   |   |   | ★ |   |   |   | ★ |   |   |   | ★ |   |   | Felm (incl. DevCo) | Strategy and programme unit, Programme support unit (esp. DevCo team for MFA annual plan). Management Team of the International Department. |                                                                                                                                                      |
| Planning of the next program period                                                                     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | ★                  | Felm (incl. DevCo)                                                                                                                          | Felm HQ, Felm field staff, partners                                                                                                                  |
| Program sustainability and project exit planning                                                        |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | ★ |   |   |   |   | ★                  | Felm (incl. DevCo)                                                                                                                          | Partners and Felm staff, MTR report & operationalization                                                                                             |
| Monitoring                                                                                              |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |                    |                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                      |
| Continuous monitoring of projects                                                                       | ● |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |                    | Felm (incl. DevCo)                                                                                                                          | Regional Program Managers, Regions and country offices, other staff responsible for projects, according to PMEL plan and donor-specific requirements |
| Continuous monitoring of risks and assumptions, changes in context                                      |   |   |   | ▲ |   |   |   | ▲ |   |   |   | ▲ |   |   |   | ▲                  | Felm (incl. DevCo)                                                                                                                          | Regional and country offices, annually updated matrix                                                                                                |
| Annual review discussions with partners                                                                 |   |   |   | ● |   |   |   | ● |   |   |   | ● |   |   |   | ●                  | Felm (incl. DevCo)                                                                                                                          | Regions and country offices, Thematic advisors                                                                                                       |
| Annual and semi-annual project reports                                                                  | ▲ |   | ▲ |   | ▲ |   | ▲ |   | ▲ |   | ▲ |   | ▲ |   | ▲ |                    | Felm (incl. DevCo)                                                                                                                          | Partners                                                                                                                                             |
| Basic information survey for church partners                                                            |   |   | ▲ |   |   |   | ▲ |   |   |   | ▲ |   |   |   | ▲ |                    | Felm                                                                                                                                        | PMEL team (Advisor for Programme Management)                                                                                                         |
| Project audits                                                                                          | ★ |   |   |   | ★ |   |   |   | ★ |   |   |   | ★ |   |   |                    | Felm (incl. DevCo)                                                                                                                          | Partners commission, external auditor conducts                                                                                                       |
| Quarterly project financial reports                                                                     | ● | ▲ | ● | ● | ● | ▲ | ● | ● | ● | ▲ | ● | ● | ● | ▲ | ● | ●                  | Felm (incl. DevCo)                                                                                                                          | Partners                                                                                                                                             |
| Annual programme reporting (narrative, financial, audit)                                                |   |   | ▲ |   |   |   | ▲ |   |   |   | ▲ |   |   |   | ▲ |                    | Felm (incl. DevCo)                                                                                                                          | Programme support unit coordinates (esp. DC management, PMEL)                                                                                        |
| Monitoring of the cross-cutting objectives                                                              |   |   |   | ● |   |   |   | ● |   |   |   | ● |   |   |   | ●                  | Felm (incl. DevCo)                                                                                                                          | Partners and program managers for project level, Thematic advisors through indicators and reviews for program                                        |
| Review and evaluation                                                                                   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |                    |                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                      |
| Programme baseline analysis and reporting (DevCo)                                                       |   |   | ● |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |                    | DevCo                                                                                                                                       | PMEL team leads, DevCo team supports for MFA specific BL and targets                                                                                 |
| Programme baseline analysis and reporting (Felm program)                                                |   |   | ● |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |                    | Felm (incl. DevCo)                                                                                                                          | PMEL team                                                                                                                                            |
| Internal reviews on cross-cutting objectives (baseline + annually reviews with shifting regional focus) |   |   |   | ● |   |   |   | ● |   |   |   | ● |   |   |   | ●                  | Felm (incl. DevCo)                                                                                                                          | Thematic advisors baseline + annually, 2nd year support from consultant                                                                              |
| Regionally planned and managed targeted evaluations / reviews                                           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |                    | Felm (incl. DevCo)                                                                                                                          | Felm regions                                                                                                                                         |
| Participatory Mid-term review (DevCo)                                                                   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | ● |   |   |   |   |                    | DevCo                                                                                                                                       | Facilitation by External consultant, management by PMEL, design and facilitation together with DC team                                               |
| Participatory Mid-term review (Felm program)                                                            |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | ● |   |   |   |   |                    | Felm (incl. DevCo)                                                                                                                          | Facilitation by External consultant, management by PMEL                                                                                              |
| Final external evaluation (DevCo)                                                                       |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | ●                  | DevCo                                                                                                                                       | External evaluator, managed by DC Program advisor, technical support PMEL                                                                            |
| Final external thematic evaluation on congregational work                                               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | ●                  | Felm                                                                                                                                        | External evaluator, managed by Strategy and Program unit, technical support by PMEL                                                                  |
| Main learning activities                                                                                |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |                    |                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                      |
| Annual program review meetings                                                                          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |                    | Felm (incl. DevCo)                                                                                                                          | Design and facilitation by PMEL, DC program advisor                                                                                                  |
| Regional strategic meetings                                                                             |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |                    | Felm (incl. DevCo)                                                                                                                          | Regions and country offices                                                                                                                          |
| Thematic advisory groups                                                                                |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |                    | Felm (incl. DevCo)                                                                                                                          | Thematic advisors and working group members                                                                                                          |

| Partner learning and capacity building                                          |  |  |  |  |   |   |  |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |   |                    |                                                                                            |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|---|---|--|---|---|---|--|--|--|---|---|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Training and capacity sharing                                                   |  |  |  |  |   |   |  |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |   | Felm (incl. DevCo) | Thematic advisors, DC program advisor, FELM field staff                                    |
| Peer learning workshops with partners, collecting and sharing of good practices |  |  |  |  |   |   |  | ★ |   |   |  |  |  |   | ★ | Felm (incl. DevCo) | Regions, country offices coordinate, Thematic advisors and Partners contribute             |
| Global citizenship education, advocacy and development communications           |  |  |  |  |   |   |  |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |   |                    |                                                                                            |
| GCE activities                                                                  |  |  |  |  | ★ |   |  |   | ★ |   |  |  |  | ★ |   | Felm (incl. DevCo) | Felm advisor for GCE                                                                       |
| Advocacy                                                                        |  |  |  |  |   |   |  |   |   | ★ |  |  |  |   |   | Felm (incl. DevCo) | Felm advisors for advocacy together with partners                                          |
| Development communications                                                      |  |  |  |  |   | ★ |  |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |   | Felm (incl. DevCo) | Felm communications unit                                                                   |
| Specific programme development processes                                        |  |  |  |  |   |   |  |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |   |                    |                                                                                            |
| Strengthening 3N approach and humanitarian capacity                             |  |  |  |  |   |   |  |   | ★ |   |  |  |  |   |   | Felm (incl. DevCo) | Felm advisors and thematic advisors                                                        |
| Innovations and private sector partnership development                          |  |  |  |  |   |   |  |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |   | Felm (incl. DevCo) | Global funding team, DC management, grant management, Regions and countries as appropriate |
| Developing global thematic projects                                             |  |  |  |  |   |   |  |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |   | Felm (incl. DevCo) | Felm advisors and thematic advisors                                                        |



Reporting milestone



PMEL milestone (baseline, evaluation, end-line)



Process/program milestone

## 6. Resources

### 6.1 Financial Resources for Project Work

The priorities for resource mobilization and allocation of both financial and human resources are informed by the Felm Program and regional strategic priorities (Annex V). The program will be implemented in three highly diverse regions. The contexts, environments, and needs differ greatly and frame the regions' thematic choices and their emphasis within the program theory of change.

The overall budget for project work for 2026-29 is tentatively at the level of 31,201,392 euros. The funding available will influence the level of the program budget. The MFA development funding for project work is estimated to be about 57% of the overall budget for project work. The overall project work applied from the MFA for development cooperation in the program-based application is 17,920,000 euros for the period 2026-2029. The breakdown to annual project work costs in the MFA funded development work is 4,522,000 euros in 2026; 4,718,000 euros in 2027; 4,560,000 euros in 2028; and 4,120,000 euros in 2029. Felm will also apply MFA funding for peace and reconciliation work based on needs and available funding.

The breakdown of project volume by outcome areas is as follows: **Climate Resilience** emerges as the most prominent area, comprising **36%** of the projects; following this, **Inclusive Education** accounts for **20%**, showcasing the importance of accessible and quality education in the program's framework. The **Peace and Reconciliation** sector represents **12%**, underscoring efforts to promote stability and conflict resolution within communities. **Christian Witness and Theological Education** represents **15%**, reflecting an investment in faith-based learning and leadership development. Meanwhile, **Church Leadership** represents **8%**, reinforcing the role of spiritual guidance in community development. **Diakonia** and the **Humanitarian Work component in multi-year triple nexus projects** make up **6%** and **3%**, respectively. In addition to humanitarian work in triple nexus programming, Felm implements humanitarian aid projects based on needs and requests from partners. Thus, volumes in humanitarian aid projects fluctuates annually as the aid decisions are made during the year.

Geographically the project budget is divided between different regions as follows: **Asia 34%**, **Africa 40%**, **Middle East 5%** and **Latin America 13%**. Thus, Africa and Asia are in the geographical focus of the programme, but within each thematic component, the emphasis on regions and specific countries can vary. The resource allocation depends also on

the themes. Some require large projects and significant financial investment while some thematically crucial projects can be implemented with very small budgets. Felm will continue to build on the ELCF parishes and MFA funding but will continue to invest in diversification of its resource mobilization.

Securing and managing program funding is essential for Felm to continue its mission-driven work in church cooperation, development, peace and reconciliation, and humanitarian aid. Recognizing the growing need for long-term financial stability, the emphasis is on diversification of funding sources, proactive donor engagement, and strengthened partnerships.

## 6.2 Human Resources for the Program

Felm's human resources planning for the program aims to respond to partner needs and effectively implement Felm's strategy and program theory of change. Thematic adviser resources are allocated to the core themes of the theory of change, ensuring that Felm possesses the necessary expertise to support partners, enhance the quality and impact of work, and facilitate reporting and learning. Additionally, expertise of partners and networks is actively leveraged to complement the expertise of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission.

To provide effective thematic and administrative support to partners, Felm integrates thematic expertise with project management instead of separate positions. Since project governance and adaptability are closely linked to content, objectives, and thematic competence, this integrated approach enhances overall effectiveness.

The goal is to ensure that personnel are both professional and strategically positioned for operations and fundraising. Human resource planning aligns with global fundraising priorities, emphasizing country-specific and theme-specific needs. Thematic expertise will primarily be strengthened in operational countries, while new thematic adviser positions in the Helsinki office will only be added in exceptional cases.

HR planning for the program places particular emphasis on experts with strong experience in working with churches and using a consultative approach. Theological and diaconal expertise will be reinforced. Additionally, during the upcoming programme period, expert roles will focus on fostering an anti-racist approach, networking, advocacy, fundraising, and strengthening joint learning.

The number of locally hired experts will increase, particularly in focus themes, financial management, and project management. Felm will ensure that locally hired staff have the necessary support, including language assistance, diversity considerations, and equal participation opportunities.

## 7. Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

Felm's planning, monitoring, evaluation, and learning (PMEL) system is grounded in the **results-based management (RBM)** approach, which is integrated into both program management processes and PMEL tools. RBM supports the achievement of program results in line with the ToC, results framework, and project plans through decision-making informed by data, knowledge, and learning. Felm also places significant emphasis on the quality of processes, particularly regarding the principles of inclusion and non-discrimination, which Felm tries to ensure in all PMEL processes. A specific focus has also been put on stronger localization and adaptability, as well as taking steps towards developing a more decolonized PMEL system. This means that PMEL aims at ensuring that the program is responsive to various local contexts and needs, fostering more equitable partnerships and sustainable results. Additionally, the PMEL system incorporates joint learning with partners to continuously improve the program, aligned with adaptive management practices. Even if Felm's PMEL system is not fully based on adaptive management, elements of the approach have been gradually incorporated, especially as the experience of working in complex conflict contexts has highlighted its merits. Felm also uses and develops adaptive M&E methods, such as outcome harvesting, together with some of its partners. Detailed information on the PMEL system, processes, and activities are presented in the PMEL plan as an annex. Some key elements of the program's PMEL processes, relevant to most projects that form a part of the program, include:

**The planning** of the program for 2026–2029 began in spring 2024, informed by the initial discussions on the update of Felm’s strategy. In August 2024, a core group of Felm’s staff was appointed to coordinate the process, and soon after that, an advisory group consisting of selected representatives of Felm’s partners’ program staff members was formed to advise the program planning and program work. In autumn 2024, regional teams revised the partnership portfolio and conducted country-level context analyses and risk management planning using a new digital platform. To design the program’s ToC for the program period of 2026–2029, the ToC for the previous program phase (2023–2025) was revised to align with Felm’s new strategy, partner consultations, and changes in context, integrating cross-cutting objectives, the triple nexus, and advocacy work.

Project planning has been divided into two phases: designing project concept notes (Sep–Dec 2024) and in-depth planning (Mar 2025–Jun 2026). An inception phase in early 2026 will establish project management structures and conduct baseline assessments and create space for sustainable project planning together with the target communities and stakeholders.

Annual planning cycles include annual program-level planning, coordinated by Felm headquarters based on the program’s work plan, and annual project work plans with budgets, which are drafted by partners at the beginning of each year and discussed and agreed upon between the partner and the Felm Regional Program Manager.

**Program monitoring** is conducted at both the global program and project levels. At the program level, the monitoring focuses on the ToC and its underlying logic (results, cross-cutting objectives, context, risks, assumptions). This forms the basis for program-level decision-making, learning, and adaptation, communications, and reporting to Felm’s board and donors. The monitoring of the program’s results is based on aggregating and analyzing indicator data, outcome harvesting, and assessments. The monitoring of the results of each outcome area and impact is outlined in detail in the results framework. Each program outcome is measured through indicators relevant to the expected change, and annual numeric data is collected on the scope and volume of the program. Community-level assessments at the program baseline, mid-term, and end support impact monitoring. In line with the adaptive management approach, the validity of the ToC and/or program implementation will be reassessed when significant changes occur, and necessary adaptations will be made.

The cross-cutting objectives (CCOs) are monitored against a three-level model, and projects are screened against the model at baseline. The progress of mainstreaming according to the model is monitored via assessments. Program-level annual monitoring of CCOs is primarily based on disaggregated indicator and other numeric reporting data, while project-level annual monitoring of the CCOs is integrated into regular monitoring processes and tools.

Project monitoring involves reviewing partner reports, conducting monitoring visits, holding annual review meetings, and maintaining continuous communication. Partners oversee implementation and day-to-day monitoring according to their M&E plans and Felm’s guidelines. They submit various reports (financial, narrative, annual, audits) to Felm for feedback and approval.

The main **program-level review and evaluation** elements include: an internal baseline review to establish program indicator baselines and target values, and to ensure evaluability; regionally conducted targeted reviews, including internal reviews on the cross-cutting objectives by region and targeted reviews and evaluations planned and managed at the regional level; participatory mid-term review facilitated by an external consultant to support further development of the program and to guide the planning of the following program; and two separate external final evaluations. Initially, it is planned to conduct a thematically focused final evaluation looking into how well the program has managed to implement the strategy’s objectives related to congregational work. This evaluation will provide accountability to Felm’s board and members and support further development of the next program. Another final evaluation would cover the program components financed through the Program-Based Support of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (MFA PBS), focusing especially on assessing and analyzing program impact and sustainability and serving accountability purposes besides learning. Assessment of the cross-cutting objectives will also be integrated into the program-level baseline review, mid-term review, and final evaluations. All projects financed through MFA PBS are externally evaluated at least once during the program cycle, and for other projects, it is recommended to conduct either an internal or an

external review at least once during the program cycle, based on the needs of the partner and project. Other donor requirements may apply based on source of funding of the project.

In the program, a strong emphasis is placed on **continuous and collaborative learning** with partners as an integral element in the various processes of program and project management. Throughout the program cycle, reviews and evaluations are designed to feed into learning, with recommendations discussed and disseminated widely within Felm and its partner organizations to enhance learning and decision-making. Learning is facilitated through various processes at diverse levels, with monitoring and evaluation providing information that enables Felm and its partners to adapt programming based on insights gained. Annual program review meetings and regional strategic meetings ensure the program remains on track and identify areas for improvement and strategic adjustments. Thematic advisory groups, partner-led workshops on CCOs, and peer learning workshops enhance the sharing of knowledge, best practices, and lessons learned within the program. They are also documented and widely shared with partners and communities. Additionally, Felm participates in various networks in Finland and internationally to share its learning and to learn from others.

## 8. Risk Management Policy and Safeguarding

Felm adopted a new **risk management policy** in 2024, aligned with the ISO 31000:2018 standard, establishing clear responsibilities throughout the organization. This policy aligns program-level and country-level risk management approaches, guiding decision-making effectively through the Notion online platform. The risk management process focuses on managing uncertainties within the organization's control, with risk treatment plans tailored to available resources. It follows the ISO 31000:2018 guidelines in a cyclical manner, with annual risk reporting based on identified risk treatment plans. Notion ensures continual oversight, transparency, and adjustment. By adhering to this structured yet adaptable process, Felm aims to proactively address risks and uncertainties while leveraging potential opportunities for improvement.

Felm's **risk management approach** is structured and comprehensive, designed to deliver consistent results. It is tailored to the organization's unique context, ensuring relevance and effectiveness. Stakeholder involvement is a key component, incorporating their insights into the process. The approach is dynamic, adapting to new risks and changes in context. Decisions are based on the best available data and expertise, considering human behavior and culture. Felm is committed to continual improvement, evolving with the organization and its environment.

During the program implementation, in annual context analysis workshops, identified risk factors are checked and used for country-specific risk analysis both at the country and program levels. Coinciding with this, training of risk/security management and safeguarding is to be conducted for both implementing partners and Felm staff, covering all operating and managerial contexts. Felm acknowledges the heightened risks of financial misconduct, fraud, resource abuse, corruption, and collusion, especially when working in fragile contexts. Felm and its partners take proactive responsibility in addressing these through training, pre-emptive monitoring, and auditing. Felm commits to promoting high ethical standards, transparency, and fraud prevention by fostering openness, honesty, and accountability — to those we serve, our supporters, and those who finance our operations. The organization adheres to the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policies of the MFA and ACT Alliance, emphasizing honesty, stewardship, and integrity in all its work.

In partnership, Felm upholds mutuality and transparency, ensuring accurate and timely programmatic and financial reporting. Through continuous monitoring, the organization identifies areas for improvement and provides tailored capacity-building plans for partners.

**Safeguarding** is a critical aspect of Felm's operations, protecting individuals from harm, including sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (SEAH). The organization is dedicated to safeguarding staff, consultants, contractors, volunteers, and community members from harm, including SEAH-related risks. This commitment includes preventing, addressing, and responding to harm, especially in vulnerable situations with unequal power dynamics. Felm adheres to international safeguarding standards from the ACT Alliance and CHS Alliance. Key principles include zero tolerance, do no harm,

confidentiality, accountability, intersectionality, gender, and cultural sensitivity, a survivor/community-centered approach, mandatory reporting, and organizational learning.

Felm's policies include the Code of Conduct, Child Safeguarding Policy, Policy against SEAH, and Anti-Corruption Policy. All employees and representatives must comply with these policies. Prevention is crucial, emphasizing proactive measures to prevent harm. Children and adults must be informed about their right to be safeguarded and how to report concerns safely. This is ensured in the project planning processes.

Felm uses a risk management approach to safeguarding, involving proactive mitigation, monitoring, reviewing, and reporting risks at all levels. Safeguarding risk assessments are conducted with partners during project design and monitored during implementation. For example, child safeguarding involves identifying and managing risks to children in activities. Projects involving children require dedicated risk assessments, which are participatory and involve the children in question. Risk assessments consider external factors like cultural norms, conflict, and socio-economic conditions to highlight vulnerabilities and plan mitigation actions.

Any safeguarding concerns must be reported immediately through Felm's whistleblowing channel or to a supervisor. The whistleblowing channel is accessible via the Felm website. The program ensures that rights-holders, duty-bearers, and stakeholders have multiple avenues to raise issues or suspicions of misconduct. These channels include direct reporting to staff, a whistleblowing channel managed by the Chamber of Commerce and Takana Oy, and a Complaints Committee that follows a structured process to document, address, and implement corrective actions. To ensure these accountability channels are well-communicated, the program adopts strategies from the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS). Information about the channels is displayed on the Felm website, a comprehensive training program educates staff and partners on a three-year cycle starting from 2025, and ongoing communication between program staff and partner organizations ensures continuous awareness and understanding of the channels. Handling notifications received by the aid recipient involves a CHS-based process, including initial handling through normal line management discussions, review, and monitoring through the PMEL line, and a tailored process by the Complaints Committee.

## 9. Sustainability and Exit

Sustainability is integrated into the program and its projects from the initial stages of planning. The deep understanding of the program contexts and the strong thematic expertise of Felm and its partners are valuable assets in analyzing various aspects of sustainability and designing sustainability and exit strategies both at project and program levels.

**Institutional sustainability** is a key element in the overall sustainability of the program results. Strong emphasis is placed on capacity development as well as on the sustained use and further development of the capacities gained both at the level of individuals and institutions. Human rights-based advocacy towards government duty-bearers, structures, and institutions in carrying out their responsibilities is considered essential. The commitment of stakeholders to continue their active role is monitored and addressed as necessary during the implementation of the program.

Felm's partners have the leading role and the ownership of the projects. As local organizations, they will continue with the program areas after the program completion. Open dialogue and working and learning together throughout the program cycle are seen to contribute to partners' long-term commitment and ensure the continuation of the initiated processes.

Ensuring **economic sustainability** of development interventions and their results is challenging in fragile and vulnerable contexts that involve poverty. Economic sustainability is taken into consideration at three levels: a) The economic sustainability of partner organizations is enhanced by supporting the diversification of sources of income and networking for collaboration and synergies with other development actors; b) The limited availability of local financial resources of government institutions, civil society actors, and communities is acknowledged. The program supports local stakeholders in finding local solutions. Instead of financial incentives, the program invests in stakeholders' ownership and motivation through joint planning, working, and celebrating successes together; c) The program supports economic

sustainability of the communities by diversification of household income. Attention is also given to sustainable employment, entrepreneurial skills, and business development processes.

For **socio-cultural sustainability**, it is essential to acknowledge the social and cultural factors such as norms and beliefs in the context, both those that are likely to support positive change as well as those that may be root causes of human rights challenges and cause discrimination. The long-term nature of change in social norms and beliefs is recognized. The partners' and Felm's deep understanding of the social, cultural, and religious contexts in program areas and their capacity to link their thematic expertise to project management in interaction with local stakeholders is considered a major advantage. Strong emphasis is placed on joint planning and implementation with communities, government duty-bearers, and local CSOs to build open dialogue and trust. This is also essential for ensuring that the designed solutions truly fit the local socio-cultural context. Duty-bearers and civil society actors play a key role in sustaining the development efforts initiated by the program. In this way the socio-cultural and institutional sustainability of the program are closely interlinked.

In terms of **technological sustainability**, specific attention is paid to the capacity of the users and suitability of technological solutions. In addition, durability, maintenance, repair, and replacement of the solutions in the long term is ensured, including both hardware and digital solutions. Hardware inputs are expected to relate to climate change mitigation and livelihoods diversification as well as to creating accessible learning environments. Increasing emphasis is placed on digital solutions, such as climate-smart technologies and inclusive digital systems.

**Environmental sustainability** is an integral part of project design. It is essential to consider all intended interventions from this perspective, ensuring that the chosen solutions contribute to long-term environmental sustainability. Felm invests in joint learning and capacity sharing with partner organizations in environmental and climate sustainability. In this program, climate justice and sustainable solutions to the climate crisis are considered priorities.

The above-mentioned aspects of program sustainability and their related risks are regularly monitored as part of the program PMEL and risk management. Timely adjustments are made to project plans as required. At the program level, sustainability strengths and risks are analyzed as part of annual reviews and reporting and assessed in program evaluations. On the program level, the continuous program monitoring, annual review discussions, and the mid-term evaluation guide the focusing of the following program as well as decisions on projects heading for **exit**.

**Sustainability considerations and, where appropriate, initial exit strategies** are discussed during the inception phase of projects. More detailed exit plans are developed once it becomes clear which projects are likely to conclude and which may continue into the next program phase. Felm supports a gradual phasing-out approach when relevant. As part of this process, Felm assists partner organizations in establishing connections with other actors and potential donors while encouraging networking at local, national, and international levels. When an exit is anticipated, preparations will begin well in advance, particularly for long-term project partnerships. Partners may receive support in securing alternative funding or transitioning activities to other institutions or organizations.

**For country exits, Felm has a specific exit-plan format** in which the exit process is planned well before the last phase-out year. There is also a comprehensive exit checklist in which all the details of phase-out activities are planned and described. The responsibilities and duties of each partner are defined to secure smooth handing over process. This list includes administrative, HR, handling of documents, as well as handing over issues like equipment and cars etc. Felm has several long-term partners which require special attention, especially to staff and property issues. These exit processes are planned carefully so that there is minimal harm caused to the partners and/or staff.

## ANNEXES:

- I. Results Matrix
- II. Implementation Plan for Cross-cutting Objectives
- III. Plan for Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
- IV. Country-level Context Analysis
- V. Regional Strategic Priorities