Felm Development Cooperation Progress Report 2025

Felm 1859

With support from Finland's development cooperation

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Summary

Felm's development cooperation program was implemented in nine countries: Cambodia, Colombia, Ethiopia, Mauritania, Myanmar, Nepal, Senegal, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe. The 2022–2025 program achieved strong results across climate resilience, inclusive education, and disability rights, with most targets met or exceeded. Evidence shows improved food security, educational participation and completion, and inclusion of persons with disabilities, contributing to greater resilience and social inclusion. The program's 34 partner projects achieved strong results with 98% funding absorption, effective management, and adaptive support.

In 2025, the program directly served a total of 228,850 direct beneficiaries. This figure comprises 200,123 rights-holders and 28,727 duty-bearers who were directly engaged through program activities. 58,644 of all rights-holders were women and girls, and 13,279 were persons with disabilities. The development cooperation program's costs totalled EUR 7.3 million, with EUR 6.3 million contributed by the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA). Administration costs were EUR 0.7 million of the total, covering all key departments. Development communications and advocacy, totaled EUR 142,415 (approx. 2%).

By 2025, the program made notable progress in climate resilience, inclusive education, and disability rights. The program established 172 functioning inclusive disaster risk management structures (target 100), while 79% of households were using climate-resilient agricultural practices (target 70%). There was also a significant improvement in food security: the average months of food shortage decreasing from 6 to 3.3 months. Inclusion in education expanded, with more than 16,000 students gaining access to education in their first or home language, over 2,200 teachers trained in multilingual and mother-tongue education, and 116 locally relevant learning materials developed. The proportion of students with disabilities in schools increased from 1.3% at baseline to 8% of enrollment on average, surpassing the 5%. Organizations of persons with disabilities gained stronger influence in policy and decision-making processes, contributed to 25 legislative and policy reforms (11 ongoing and 14 completed), and were consulted in 51 government policy processes, exceeding program targets.

One of the key lessons was that community ownership and the agency of participants emerged as an important factor in sustaining results. Projects that supported communities to take active roles in planning, implementation, and monitoring report stronger participation and continued engagement during implementation. Gender inclusion was also most effective when integrated throughout the project cycle rather than implemented as separate activities. Moreover, addressing needs in a more holistic way supports more stable results.

Tiivistelmä

Lähetysseuran kehitysyhteistyöohjelma toteutettiin yhdeksässä maassa: Kambodžassa, Kolumbiassa, Etiopiassa, Mauritaniassa, Myanmarissa, Nepalissa, Senegalissa, Tansaniassa ja Zimbabwessa. Vuosien 2022–2025 ohjelma saavutti vahvoja tuloksia ilmastokestävyyden, inklusiivisen koulutuksen ja vammaisten henkilöiden oikeuksien edistämisessä, ja suurin osa tavoitteista saavutettiin tai ylitettiin. Näyttö osoittaa parannuksia ruokaturvassa, koulutukseen osallistumisessa ja opintojen loppuunsaattamisessa sekä vammaisten henkilöiden osallisuudessa, mikä on vahvistanut yhteisöjen resilienssiä ja sosiaalista inkluusiota.

Ohjelman 34 kumppanihanketta tavoitti vuonna 2025 yhteensä 228 850 suoraa hyödynsaajaa. Näistä 200 123 oli oikeudenhaltijoita ja 28 727 vastuunkantajia, jotka osallistuivat suoraan ohjelman toimintaan. Oikeudenhaltijoista 58 644 oli naisia ja tyttöjä, ja 13 279 oli vammaisia henkilöitä. Kehitysyhteistyöohjelman kokonaisrahoitus oli 7,3 miljoonaa euroa, josta Suomen ulkoministeriön osuus oli 6,3 miljoonaa euroa. Hallintokulujen osuus kokonaisrahoituksesta oli 0,7 miljoonaa euroa, kattaen kaikki keskeiset tukitoiminnot. Kehitysviestintään ja vaikuttamistyöhön käytettiin 142,415 euroa (noin 2%).

Vuoteen 2025 mennessä ohjelman tuella perustettiin 172 toimivaa katastrofiriskejä ehkäisevää komiteaa (tavoite 100), ja 79 prosenttia kotitalouksista otti käyttöön ilmastonkestäviä maatalouskäytäntöjä (tavoite 70 %). Myös ruokaturva parani merkittävästi: keskimääräinen ruokapulan kesto väheni kuudesta kuukaudesta 3,3 kuukauteen. Myös koulutuksen saavutettavuus ja osallisuus lisääntyivät. Yli 16 000 oppilasta sai opetusta omalla äidinkielellään tai ensimmäisellä kielellään, yli 2 200 opettajaa koulutettiin monikieliseen ja äidinkieliseen opetukseen, ja ohjelmassa kehitettiin 116 paikallisiin tarpeisiin perustuvaa oppimateriaalia. Vammaisten oppilaiden osuus koulujen oppilaista nousi lähtötason 1,3 prosentista keskimäärin 8 prosenttiin, mikä ylitti selvästi asetetun 5 prosentin tavoitteen. Vammaisten henkilöiden järjestöjen vaikutusmahdollisuudet politiikka- ja päätöksentekoprosesseissa vahvistuivat. Ne osallistuivat 25 lainsäädäntö- ja politiikkauudistukseen (joista 11 on edelleen käynnissä ja 14 saatettu päätökseen) sekä olivat mukana 51 hallituksen politiikkaprosessissa, mikä ylitti ohjelman asetetut tavoitteet.

Yksi keskeisistä opeista oli yhteisöjen omistajuuden ja osallistujien toimijuuden merkitys tulosten kestävyydessä. Hankkeet, joissa yhteisöjä tuettiin ottamaan aktiivinen rooli suunnittelussa, toteutuksessa ja seurannassa, raportoivat vahvemmasta osallistumisesta ja sitoutumisesta koko toteutusajalta. Sukupuolten tasa-arvon edistäminen osoittautui tehokkaimmaksi silloin, kun se integroitui koko hankesyklin läpi eikä sitä toteutettu erillisinä toimintoina. Lisäksi tarpeisiin vastaaminen kokonaisvaltaisemmin tuki vakaampien ja pitkäkestoisempien tulosten saavuttamista.

1. Changes in the operating environment

1.1 Global trends in 2025

Felm's development cooperation program was implemented in nine countries on three continents: Cambodia, Colombia, Ethiopia, Mauritania, Myanmar, Nepal, Senegal, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe. The program also included regional activities in Eastern Africa. In 2025, the program continued to adjust to significant societal, political, economic, and environmental changes that are shaping both global and local operating environments.

The rules-based international order continued to erode throughout 2025. Geopolitical tensions deepened, and confrontation between great powers increasingly hindered collective action. Armed conflicts persisted or expanded in numerous regions, straining humanitarian systems and redirecting development funding toward acute crises instead of long-term peacebuilding and poverty reduction. Conflicts in Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan, and across the Sahel amplified global instability and contributed to widening rifts between different regions, intensified by critiques of inconsistent applications of international law and responses to human rights violations. Felm and its partners navigated these complexities through rapid, locally grounded responses in several program countries, including Myanmar, Ethiopia, and Mauritania.

Democratic backsliding continued across the globe. In 2025, civil society space shrank in all nine program countries, marked by tighter legal restrictions, increased surveillance, limits on expression and assembly, and more hostile working conditions for NGOs and community actors. In several countries—such as Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Cambodia, and Myanmar—elections and political processes were accompanied by repression, reduced transparency, and weakened civic freedoms. The tightening of funding regulations, reduced donor flexibility, and the politicization of development assistance further constrained local civil society actors' ability to operate and maintain resilience.

Climate change remained the most significant threat to livelihoods in Felm's program areas. Many of Felm's program countries experienced recurring or prolonged climate disasters: floods and landslides in Ethiopia and Nepal, extended drought in Mauritania and Zimbabwe, and severe weather variability across East Africa. The lingering effects of the 2023–2024 El Niño cycle further destabilized food systems and deepened food insecurity in several regions. Humanitarian needs expanded while social protection systems were often insufficient to support the most vulnerable groups. Women and girls remained disproportionately affected by climate-related shocks. Declining international assistance and shifts in donor priorities further threatened the stability and continuity of development initiatives.

Global economic uncertainty persisted, with inflation and currency volatility keeping living costs and operational expenses high across program countries. In many contexts—including Colombia, Myanmar, and Ethiopia—economic fragility, unemployment, and reduced purchasing power placed additional stress on communities and essential services. While some countries, such as Zimbabwe and Tanzania, experienced periods of economic recovery, these gains often failed to reach the most marginalized populations.

Artificial intelligence and rapid digital transformation created both opportunities and risks. While digital tools can improve access to information, education, participation, and monitoring, they also increase risks such as digital exclusion, weak data protection, bias, misinformation, harassment, and surveillance. For Felm and its partners, this underscores the importance of responsible data practices, digital literacy, and safeguards that ensure technology advances inclusion, rights, and locally led development.

In Finland, the political climate in 2025 remained challenging for civil society. Government austerity measures and policy changes raised concerns about the future of civic space and the sustainability of development cooperation. Budget cuts to NGOs and uncertainty regarding Finland's long-term development

commitments prompted strong collective advocacy efforts. Felm, together with other NGOs, actively engaged in public dialogue to defend development cooperation, highlight the crucial role of civil society actors, and call for predictable, long-term support for global human rights and poverty reduction.

1.2 Operating environment in Felm partner countries

Cambodia remained tightly controlled by the ruling Cambodian People's Party under Prime Minister Hun Manet. Activists, human rights defenders, and independent journalists faced legal harassment, intimidation, and shutdowns. Civil society organizations experienced a shrinking operational space due to government pressure and declining international development funding. Cambodia's high climate vulnerability continued to pose programmatic risks as floods and droughts disrupted agriculture and affected communities. Economically, the country struggled under the world's highest per-capita microcredit debt, with around 3.8 million households holding over $18 billion in microloans, creating severe social and financial stress. Border clashes with Thailand in late 2025 displaced over 450,000 people and triggered urgent humanitarian needs, compounded by the return of roughly one million Cambodian migrants.

Myanmar saw an escalation of conflict marked by fewer incidents in some regions but far more intense clashes, including expanded airstrikes and large-scale military operations. This severely disrupted rule of law and basic services, worsening conditions for civilians. Ahead of the December 2025 elections announced by the military authorities, new laws criminalized criticism of the electoral process and further restricted political participation and civic engagement. Cybersecurity regulations expanded state surveillance, tightening control over digital spaces and increasing risks for civil society, political actors and independent media. A major earthquake in March caused heavy casualties, widespread destruction and displacement, placing pressure on already overstretched humanitarian capacities. The economic situation remained fragile, with high inflation, currency depreciation, and limits on banking services.

Nepal experienced its most serious political upheaval since the civil war, triggered by Gen Z–led demonstrations that began peacefully but escalated into violent unrest after heavy police repression. The protests resulted in at least 73 deaths and ultimately forced Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli to resign. An interim government led by Sushila Karki was formed on 12 September 2025, dissolving parliament and scheduling new elections for March 2026. Alongside the Gen Z movement, pro-monarchy groups intensified nationwide campaigns demanding a return to monarchy and a Hindu state. A draft CSO bill that would have sharply restricted NGO operations was frozen after the change in government, easing civil society concerns, although misinformation during the protests created some suspicion toward INGOs. Climate impacts remained severe, with unpredictable rainfall, melting glaciers, and frequent floods and landslides. Heavy flooding in October particularly affected eastern Nepal. The unrest caused an estimated USD 586 million in damage and negatively affected tourism and Nepal's LDC-graduation prospects.

Ethiopia faced ongoing political instability, with tensions and localized conflicts in Amhara, Tigray, and Oromia continuing to undermine security and complicate the operational environment. Legislative changes affecting federal intervention and electoral processes added further complexity, creating a more restrictive space for political participation and civic engagement. Ethnic sensitivities remained central to all programs, requiring careful balancing in regions such as Tigray, Afar, and Gambella. The country also experienced significant climate-related hazards, including severe floods, landslides, and high climate variability. Additional shocks included a series of earthquakes in the Awash–Fentale region, precautionary evacuations due to volcanic activity, and Ethiopia's first confirmed cases of Marburg Virus Disease, all of which required strengthened risk management and health-safety measures.

Foreign interest in **Mauritania's** abundant mineral resources continued to grow in 2025, with China, the EU, and Canada seeking economic engagement. Fishery products also remained in high demand both do-

mestically and internationally. However, increasing investment is threatened by significant security challenges. Jihadist groups operating from Mali regularly cross the border, creating persistent external and internal security risks. These pressures intersect with long-standing human rights issues affecting former slaves and the growing number of people displaced by climate change and population growth. Together, they reinforce conservative governance and tight control over dissent. Although the government has prioritized expanding access to education, progress has slowed following the end of key funding.

Senegal's new government and president came to power with strong support from young urban voters demanding change. While some reforms have begun, progress is constrained by a deep public finance crisis, leading to strict budget cuts across social services and the suspension of many infrastructure projects. Public frustration surfaced in December, when student protests over unpaid allowances were met with a heavy-handed response. The abrupt closure of USAID-funded health and education programs further strained services and left communities vulnerable. Despite these challenges, Senegal remains more democratic and stable than many of its neighbors, continuing to attract migrants seeking safety or aiming to transit toward Europe and the United States. However, growing concerns about jihadist influence spreading from Mali have prompted the government to tighten security along border regions, reflecting heightened vigilance throughout the year.

Tanzania experienced severe political instability following the October 29 general elections, which were marked by repression, opposition bans, censorship, abductions, and violence. President Samia Suluhu Hassan was declared the winner with 98% of the vote, a result widely condemned due to the exclusion and imprisonment of key opposition figures. The post-election period saw mass protests and a harsh government crackdown, creating a climate of fear and dramatically tightening civic and political space. NGOs, religious institutions, and civil society actors faced heightened surveillance, legal restrictions, and intimidation, while international support for civil society weakened due to human rights concerns. At the same time, Tanzania confronted intensifying climate risks, including extreme rainfall, rising temperatures, and reduced agricultural productivity. The government advanced environmental governance reforms and secured funding for climate resilience initiatives. Despite strong macroeconomic indicators in 2025, the political crisis and shrinking donor support created uncertainty for development operations and foreign investment.

Zimbabwe's political environment became increasingly unstable in 2025 as efforts to extend the president's tenure and the implementation of the PVO Amendment Act further restricted civic space. Human rights violations intensified, and NGOs faced growing legal and operational risks, significantly limiting advocacy, rights-based work, and community empowerment activities. The lingering impacts of the 2024 El Niño drought continued to strain water supplies, agriculture, food security, and energy production, while weak environmental institutions and damaging mining practices deepened ecological vulnerability. Economically, reforms helped stabilize inflation and strengthen the currency, with modest growth supported by agriculture, mining, manufacturing, exports, and remittances.

Colombia experienced a mixed civic space environment, with growing opportunities for public participation but also new restrictions and uncertainties for civil society. Although citizen engagement increased, marginalized groups continued to face barriers to inclusion, and defenders of fundamental rights encountered heightened risks. Environmentally, the government advanced regulations to protect key ecosystems such as the Amazon and páramos and encouraged renewable energy transitions and citizen participation in environmental management. These efforts contributed to progress in conservation, though illegal mining and deforestation remained significant challenges. Economically, Colombia faced a slowdown driven by political uncertainty, rising inflation, high unemployment, and a depreciating currency. Peace and reconciliation efforts progressed unevenly, as civil society initiatives persisted despite violence from illegal armed groups, polarization, and institutional instability.

2. Coordination and collaboration

2.1 Cooperation and coordination with other CSOs in Finland

Coordination with Finnish civil society organizations is a strategic element of Felm's work, as it enhances the quality, relevance, and collective impact of the MFA-funded Programme Support. Through joint analysis, shared learning, and coordinated advocacy, Felm can both contribute its program experience to wider sector dialogue and benefit from common positions, evidence, and good practices developed with peer organizations.

Felm actively participated in Fingo-led coordination among program-based NGOs. Felm's interest in this forum was to safeguard the predictability, transparency, and quality of program-based support funding and to strengthen a shared CSO voice in dialogue with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. In 2025, this included contributing to a joint open letter to decision-makers, shared messages for the Partnership Forum, and a consolidated response to the National Audit Office report on NGO development cooperation support.

Felm was a regular participant in the Quality and Impact working group of Finnish NGOs working in international solidarity. The focus of this cooperation across MFA-supported CSOs is to collectively strengthen program quality, results-based learning, and the use of evidence. In 2025, the group focused particularly on joint evaluations, organizational learning, and baselines, also providing Felm with relevant peer learning for program development.

Felm participated in Fingo's climate and development finance coordination to promote adequate climate finance, just adaptation, and stronger development financing commitments. This cooperation helped align CSO messages for national budget discussions, COP30 preparations, and the FfD4 process. See also chapter 3.5 on advocacy work.

Felm took part in Fingo-coordinated NGO–company collaboration, including Yrityskiihdyttämö and related matchmaking processes. Felm's interest was to explore responsible private sector partnerships that can support program objectives and create practical value for partners. This cooperation helped identify new partnership opportunities and contributed to the launch of a pilot presented in Chapter 2.2.

2.2 Cooperation and other funding sources

At the global level, Felm finalized its Global Funding Framework and launched country-level planning processes in priority countries: Cambodia, Colombia, Ethiopia, Myanmar, Nepal, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe. The framework provides strategic guidance for strengthening partner capacity, improving the coherence of funding approaches, and expanding opportunities for international collaboration and resource mobilization.

In Cambodia, Felm and its partner Integral Cooperation in Cambodia (ICC) finalized the implementation of the EKOenergy-funded project, which had been designed to complement and expand ICC's MFA-funded CRaSIL-project. The additional EKOenergy funding enabled the installation of eight solar-powered water pumps with 3,000 liter tanks in eight indigenous villages in Ratanakiri province, improving access to water for 1,195 households (i.e. 6,441 individuals, of which 3,214 females) during the dry season. As an added component to MFA funding, the project strengthened climate resilience, food security, and community-level renewable energy knowledge, and supported the broader objectives of Felm's climate resilience and livelihoods interventions in Cambodia.

In Ethiopia, Felm launched a new Finnpartnership-funded initiative together with Work Pilots Oy and the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus Development and Social Services Commission (EEC-

MY DASSC) as well as the Ethiopian Orthodox Church Development and Inter-Church Aid Commission (EOC-DICAC). The project aims to support marginalized young people's access to short-term work opportunities through a digital employment platform, adapted and piloted in the Ethiopian context. The initiative focuses on improving youth employability, strengthening local operational partnerships, and contributing to inclusive economic participation in urban areas. Felm's role includes local coordination, stakeholder engagement, and contextualization of the model, complementing broader MFA-funded programming on livelihoods, climate resilience, and youth inclusion. Furthermore, Finn Church Aid, Helsinki Deaconess Foundation, and the International Solidarity Foundation have also expressed interest in a potential project with Work Pilots Oy.

In Tanzania, Felm continued its engagement in the EU-funded consortium project on Interfaith actors supporting positive norms on gender equality. The project strengthens the role of civil society and interfaith actors in preventing child marriage, transforming harmful gender norms, improving access to support services for girls at risk, and advancing advocacy related to the revision of Tanzania's Law of Marriage Act. Project activities during the year included raising awareness of the significance of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process among civil society organizations, government representatives and media actors, as well as supporting the development of the UPR shadow report.

In Zimbabwe, Felm's capacity strengthening support to its partner Gwai Grandmothers Group (GGG) resulted in successful resource mobilization. GGG was awarded approximately USD 25,000 from the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI) to advance Sunflower Oil Production -initiative. The funding enables the establishment of community gardens, the purchase of a sunflower oil pressing machine, and training for community members. This support enhances livelihoods, promotes community-based entrepreneurship, and strengthens partner autonomy in securing diversified funding.

2.3 Multisectoral cooperation

In 2025, Felm strengthened its multisectoral approach by combining external funding, private sector cooperation, academic collaboration, and innovation partnerships in support of program objectives. This work focused on developing practical partnership models, mobilizing complementary resources, and testing new tools that could strengthen program quality, locally led approaches, and longer-term sustainability.

Linked to global and institutional funding efforts, Felm worked with Finnish private actors and companies, including Finnpartnership, EKOenergy, and Work Pilots Oy (see chapter 2.2), to secure complementary financing and draw on specialized expertise for joint initiatives. These partnerships helped connect program implementation with technical, commercial, and funding capabilities beyond Felm's traditional partner base.

Felm also continued its cooperation with the Gofore Impact Foundation and Valoa Ltd to develop participatory measurements in locally led peacebuilding utilizing digital tools. The process resulted in an evidence-based, co-created concept for reimagining how monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) can better support locally led peacebuilding. The co-creation process demonstrated a clear demand for more adaptive, participatory, and learning-oriented approaches. The process itself achieved meaningful engagement and validation of local perspectives, ensuring that the proposed solutions are grounded in real operational challenges and priorities.

In addition, Felm continued its collaboration with Aalto University and NullLAB through a quadruple helix approach that brought together academia, civil society, private sector actors, and local innovators. During the year, the cooperation resulted in a structured stakeholder repository, a co-creation forum for Felm's international network, and pilot partnership development modules. These outputs generated practical

tools and concepts that Felm began to apply in its work, strengthened internal capacity for cross-sector engagement, and supported the emergence of new collaboration opportunities.

3. Implementation strategies

3.1 Program activities

The 34 partner projects continued to operate in 2025 under changing operational and financial conditions, reaching an 88.7% overall program absorption rate and a 93.4% absorption rate for partners' projects. Program implementation was adjusted by streamlining PMEL functions, development communications, and advocacy work. While the overall absorption rate declined from the previous year, partners' project absorption remained at a solid level, reflecting continued implementation capacity and effective delivery in a constrained operating environment.

Felm continued its commitment to also supporting partners through humanitarian response when urgent needs arose in project contexts. In 2025, EUR 118,580 of MFA funding was reallocated to humanitarian work, representing a slight decline from the previous year while still enabling targeted support to partners responding to urgent needs in affected communities. This reflected Felm's ambition to strengthen the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus by linking timely crisis response with longer-term resilience, inclusion, and peace-sensitive development approaches in fragile and changing contexts.

In 2025, program innovation advanced through multisectoral cooperation with private sector actors and research institutions in both country contexts and international partnerships. Risk management was strengthened through the development of a new ISO standard-based system. This improved the program's ability to respond in a more integrated way to complex and changing contexts, including in Myanmar, Colombia, and Ethiopia.

Felm's anti-racism and decolonization work also moved from reflection to implementation through the Action Plan for Anti-Racism, approved in late 2024 and carried forward in 2025. The process strengthened more equal partnerships, local ownership, and attention to how decision-making, knowledge production, and resources are shared.

Felm's regional advisory support, thematic advisors, and partner advisory structures worked together to strengthen program quality and strategic direction in 2025. Regional and thematic advisors provided contextual analysis, technical support, and continuity across program countries, while the reformed Felm International Advisory Board (FIAB) and the Advisory Group for Program Work created structured channels for listening to voices from partner countries. Through these mechanisms, partner representatives contributed to strategic guidance on Felm's vision, partnerships, and international program priorities, as well as to operational dialogue on program design, the Theory of Change, PMEL development, methods, and shared priorities. This helped ensure that thematic expertise was both guided by local realities and used more coherently across the program.

Building on this engagement, significant effort was invested in developing the 2026–2029 program and preparing the related funding application. The process brought the two program components into a shared four-year cycle and was co-developed with partners to ground priorities in local realities and community needs. Participatory approaches, including Outcome Harvesting and partner involvement in the Core Humanitarian Standard self-assessment, strengthened mutual accountability and anchored monitoring and learning in local perspectives. Together, these processes supported more locally led, context-responsive, and equitable ways of working, while strengthening thematic development, results reporting, and program administration for the next cycle.

3.2 Alterations to the plans and reallocations

Table 1. Funds were reallocated for the following purposes:

Theme	Reallocated amount total, €	Share of total
Climate resilience and food security	140,840	27%
Marginalized groups	22,100	4%
Humanitarian assistance (food assistance, etc.)	101,540	19%
Program support/quality assurance	213,159	41%
Persons with disabilities	32,000	6%
Inclusive education	16,600	3%
Total reallocated funds	**526,239**	**100%**

3.3 Humanitarian work

In 2025, Felm supported wide-ranging humanitarian assistance to populations affected by conflict, natural disasters, and climate-related shocks. Total humanitarian funding reached EUR 779,980, channeled through Felm's Disaster Relief Fund (DRF), Children's Bank emergency funding, and reallocated development cooperation funds from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. Through 14 projects in total funded by three instruments and implemented via partners bilaterally and through ACT Alliance multi-agency responses, Felm reached an estimated 25,260 direct beneficiaries across ten countries, with a strong focus on children, persons with disabilities, and other highly vulnerable groups.

The DRF accounted for the largest share of humanitarian contributions, with EUR 582,000 allocated to eight interventions supporting 19,655 people. Responses addressed sudden-onset crises such as the earthquake in Myanmar, floods in Pakistan and Bolivia, and the massive humanitarian emergency caused by the protracted conflict in Gaza, where Felm channeled EUR 200,000 through ACT Appeal. Assistance combined cash and in-kind support, including food aid, emergency shelter, hygiene supplies, water and sanitation services, and psychosocial support. A significant portion of funding (EUR 100,000) was channeled through the ACT Alliance Rapid Response Fund, enabling timely responses to 17 local and regional emergencies globally and strengthening local faith-based actors' response capacity and decision-making.

Children's Bank emergency assistance complemented this work with EUR 79,400 dedicated to two child-focused responses in Bolivia and the occupied Palestinian territory, reaching 1,130 children. These interventions addressed both immediate survival needs—such as food, hygiene, and healthcare—and the continuity of education and psychosocial wellbeing. The integrated, family-centered approach helped mitigate the longer-term impacts of crises on children's development and protection.

In addition, Felm reallocated EUR 118,580 of development cooperation funding to humanitarian action in Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Myanmar, and Mauritania, reaching 4,475 people. These projects linked emergency relief with resilience-building by addressing climate-induced disasters, food insecurity, and protection risks, while also strengthening community preparedness and inclusion of persons with disabilities.

Moreover, in 2025 Felm conducted need and resource mapping of humanitarian response capacities among its staff and partners. Results of this mapping form the baseline for Felm's ongoing capacity strengthening initiative and development of its humanitarian process. Overall, Felm's humanitarian re-

sults in 2025 demonstrate a balanced response that combined rapid life-saving assistance with attention to protection, dignity, and longer-term resilience. Partnership-based implementation and flexible funding mechanisms enabled Felm to respond effectively to diverse crises while prioritizing those most at risk.

3.4 Advisory support in the regions

Table 2. **Felm advisors in regional positions during 2025**

Location	Position	Actual working time 2025 in person years
Global		
	Advisor for climate resilience	0,7
	Advisor for disability inclusion	0,8
Regional		
Latin America	Program Manager	0,5
	Regional Director	0,1
West Africa	Program Manager	0,2
	Senior Program Manager	0,5
Eastern and Southern Africa	Advisor for Financial Administration and Good Governance	0,4
	Senior Program Manager	0,2
	Regional Director	0,2
South and Southeast Asia	Country Director	0,6
	Advisor for Livelihood and Food Security	0,8
	Advisor for Financial Administration and Good Governance	0,3
Country specific		
Ethiopia	Advisor for Inclusive Education	1,0
	Country Director	0,3
Tanzania	Program Manager	0,8
	Advisor for Education	1,0
	Advisor for Communications	0,5
Nepal	Program Manager	0,7
	Country Director	0,6
Myanmar	Program Manager	0,2
	Advisor for Disability Inclusion	0,7
Person years		12,03

3.5 Advocacy work

Development policy remained central to Felm's advocacy in 2025 amid declining ODA across Finland and other donor countries. Felm actively engaged in discussions on financing trade and development policies, holding extensive dialogue with political parties and stakeholders (124 meetings). Advocacy also took place through party conferences, the Development Policy Committee, and networks such as Fingo, alongside strengthened Nordic cooperation. Through its partner network, Felm connected austerity impacts to realities in partner countries and contributed to public debate through seminars, research, and legislative input. Despite a challenging context, advocacy helped increase political awareness of ODA cut implications, protect existing funding structures, and maintain continuity in development policy priorities.

Climate advocacy was conducted internationally, nationally, and through media engagement. Participation in climate negotiations (Bonn and Belém) ensured civil society visibility and progress, especially on adaptation. Cooperation with ministries strengthened Felm's role in climate policy, and civil society contributions were increasingly recognized. At the national level, progress was limited due to political inertia, though climate finances were still evaluated in the annual climate report, and development NGOs climate group, led by a Felm specialist, were invited to submit contributions for the first time. Workshops and media engagement improved knowledge, visibility, and collaboration. Overall, civil society became more integrated into climate policy processes, and public and expert understanding of climate issues improved, especially from Global South perspectives. Felm produced 12 human rights statements in 2025, contributing to UN processes, national policy discussions, and themes such as gender equality, disability rights, and civic space. Advocacy was grounded in partner-generated evidence and linked closely to program work. Felm participated in key international forums (e.g., CSW69, UN Human Rights Council) and supported regional events like the SADC People's Summit. Collaboration through networks such as ACT Alliance and OECD DAC strengthened international advocacy. Nationally, Felm contributed to discussions on human rights and civic space, highlighting the role of civil society in inclusive development. (See chapter 3.8.)

Felm continued strengthening the advocacy capabilities of its partners via training activities and holding dialogues on how to integrate advocacy elements into projects. There was a focus on Cambodia and Colombia, where advocacy specialists provided intensive workshops. Moreover, advocacy projects were piloted by partners in Myanmar. As an overarching result, all partners showed increased capacities related to evidence-based advocacy, which they used to initiate new collaborations with governmental officials, provide new tools for Indigenous language learning, and mobilize actors in networks advancing human rights.

Felm also continued its thematic exchange and overall promotion of its development cooperation objectives with the World Council of Churches, ACT Alliance, and other key like-minded organizations in Europe, globally, and in program countries. The cooperation focused on coordination, advocacy, localization and decolonization, community-based programming, and religion and development, with cross-cutting themes of climate, gender, youth, and anti-racism, strengthening Felm's learning, networks, and strategic alignment.

3.6 Development communications

In 2025, the key focus areas of Felm's development communications were climate change mitigation and climate adaptation in developing countries, resilience, the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities, and the importance of education — especially mother-tongue and multilingual instruction. Felm produced a multitude of interesting and engaging content in various media channels about the program results and raised awareness of development cooperation.

Felm organized a press trip to Tanzania, where nine journalists and one photographer had the opportunity to explore Felm's development cooperation on the ground and visit three projects related to key focus

areas. The trip provided participants with a unique opportunity to meet project partners and local communities, document the work, and share the stories with Finnish audiences through various media outlets. The trip resulted in more than 30 publications across various media outlets such as Lapin Kansa, Vasabladet, Kotimaa, Uutissuomalainen, Keskisuomalainen, Silta, and Seurakuntalainen, reaching potentially over 500,000 people in print and 1.8 million people online.

An advertorial on the right to education in one's mother tongue was produced for Swedish-language newspapers Hufvudstadsbladet, Vasabladet, Österbottens Tidning, Syd-Österbotten, Borgåbladet, and Västra Nyland. The campaign reached over 320,000 readers in print and online.

A publication on climate resilience and climate finance was produced in cooperation with MustRead newsletter. In addition, climate-related themes were featured in a public-facing campaign displayed on HSL buses, VR commuter trains, and buses in Turku city transport. Over a two-week period, the campaign potentially generated 4.4 million impressions. During the program's final year, Felm conducted a monitoring communications visit to the climate resilience project in Nepal. The progress of the project has been followed and highlighted in Felm's communications on a regular basis. Based on the video and interview material collected during the trip, Felm will continue collaboration with influencer Pippa Laukka in 2026. Felm highlighted the rights of persons with disabilities in its communications, particularly through social media campaigns connected to the "Act Because You Can" (Toimi, koska voit) initiative, the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, and the COSP18 Conference of States Parties to the CRPD.

The operational environment for communications changed when Meta banned social issue advertising on its platforms in the autumn. This change affects the visibility of development communications on social media, as almost all development communication themes are classified as social issue advertising. As a result, the ban strengthens the role of communication channels other than social media.

Felm development cooperation and communication are regarded as important and reliable. According to a survey conducted in December among followers of Felm communications, 97% considered reducing poverty and inequality important, and 92% viewed Finnish development cooperation as important, with 80% believing it delivers results. The most valued themes were universal access to education, the rights of persons with disabilities, and climate action in developing countries. Felm development communication was seen as sufficient and reliable by the majority, though some respondents wished for even more concrete examples of impact and wider visibility across channels.

3.7 Global citizenship education

Global Agents is a learning-oriented global education platform whose goal is to promote understanding of sustainable development. Global Education Portal is a resource bank for teachers and educators that supports the implementation of global education. The portal is designed to be user-friendly and accessible: no registration is required, and the materials are organized by theme, educational level, and subject. The materials were disseminated through Fingo's global education network as well as through partner schools and teachers. In addition, the portal was promoted to educators through events, network meetings, and social media channels. The project was implemented in 2022-2025.

The year 2025 marked a period of increased visibility and strengthened educational cooperation for the Globaaliagentit project. The Globaaliagentit.fi website was launched at the Educa Fair in January, supported by promotional visibility in OAJ's magazines and a two-week campaign in collaboration with FREEED. According to Google Analytics, the site reached 3,600 users and 28,000 events during the year; however, a large-scale bot invasion inflated the total of 108,341 registered accounts, making it difficult to deter-

mine the exact number of real users. Verified human users—estimated in the hundreds—are primarily educators from schools and parishes, which aligns well with the project's target groups.

Throughout the year, the Globaaliagentit materials were widely presented to education professionals. At Educa, hundreds of teachers and student teachers were reached, and the nationwide series of "Kasvatuksen brunssit" events engaged a total of 290 parish education workers across nine locations. The project materials were also used in confirmation camps and in an international Erasmus+ partnership project. In addition, three interactive workshop packages were developed for schools, confirmation classes, and youth leadership training; these will be finalized in early 2026.

In terms of broader project outcomes, the number of education professionals reached exceeded the original target of 1,500, thanks especially to effective advertising and direct outreach. The goal of reaching 10,000 children and young people with the learning portal and mobile game proved overly ambitious, and the bot issue made exact usage numbers impossible to determine. Swedish language versions of the materials were produced in collaboration with Felm's Svensk service team. The year's communication highlights included the strong Educa-related visibility in OAJ magazines and the FREEED campaign, which reached more than 39,000 individual teachers.

3.8 Human rights based approach

Felm's development cooperation work is grounded in a human rights based approach (HRBA), which means addressing the root causes of marginalization, discrimination and injustice while strengthening both rights-holders' ability to claim their rights and duty-bearers' capacity to fulfil their obligations.

The climate resilience outcome area promoted HRBA principles by strengthening the participation and agency of vulnerable communities, with particular attention given to non-discrimination and inclusion (see chapter 4.1.). The inclusive education outcome area promoted the right to quality education for groups that face systemic exclusion, including children with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, linguistic minorities, women, and girls. Inclusion was advanced through accessible infrastructure, inclusive teaching methods, sign language education, mother tongue instruction, and targeted support for marginalized learners (see chapter 4.2.). The disability inclusion outcome area promoted participation, non-discrimination, empowerment, and accountability. In line with the principle of "*nothing about us without us*," the program strengthened the capacity of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations to claim their rights, participate in decision-making, and influence legislation, policies, and public services affecting their lives (see chapter 4.3.). The program also strengthened the capacities of duty-bearers, including local and government authorities, to fulfill their responsibilities to provide equal opportunities for all.

Gender equality, non-discrimination, and the empowerment of women was promoted throughout the program by capacity building, peer learning, and the integration of gender perspectives into partner organizations' work. The program strengthened the capacities of both rights-holders and duty-bearers to identify and address gender-based barriers, while supporting safer and more inclusive practices through the "do no harm" approach. Increased participation and agency of women in community development, education, and peacebuilding processes indicate progress towards the realization of equal rights and opportunities.

In terms of HRBA advocacy in 2025, this approach was translated into practice through concrete actions that enhanced participation, accountability, and access to human rights information. In Nepal, Felm supported advocacy communications training with a strong focus on human rights based approaches and the assessment of advocacy impact, helping partners to link communication, evidence, and human rights standards more effectively. In Tanzania, Felm supported dissemination and advocacy around the coun-

try-specific findings and recommendations of the UN Universal Periodic Review, increasing stakeholders' awareness of Tanzania's human rights obligations and of the actions needed for their implementation. Together, these examples show how Felm strengthens human rights in practice by building partner capacity, supporting informed participation in national and international accountability processes, and promoting the agency of marginalized groups.

4. Results

Over the program period 2022–2025, the program delivered strong overall results across its three outcome areas. Output-level targets were largely met or exceeded, and evidence indicates that the intended outcomes have been largely achieved, with variation across indicators and contexts. Overall, the results demonstrate that outputs have translated into outcome-level changes and that the Theory of Change has generally functioned as expected.

Clear signs of progress towards the intended impact are observable across all impact indicators, indicating improved resilience and inclusion of people from marginalized groups in the target areas. Food security improved significantly, with households reporting fewer months of food shortage. In education, student completion rates increased, although disparities persist at the lower secondary level and among learners with disabilities. The number of persons with disabilities engaged in mainstream community structures increased, demonstrating strengthened inclusion and participation. These results are consistent with the findings of the program's final evaluation conducted by independent evaluators, which identified emerging measurable impact and positive contributions to resilience and inclusion.

In climate resilience, the outcome was largely achieved, and strong progress across most indicators contributed to improved household resilience and coping capacity. Improved food security suggests that households are better able to manage and withstand climate-related shocks, contributing to more stable livelihoods and reduced vulnerability among marginalized groups. This is further supported by widespread adoption of climate-resilient agricultural practices and environmentally sustainable cooking solutions. At the same time, progress in diversification of resilient income sources, while substantial, remained below target, indicating continued constraints in fully reducing livelihood vulnerability.

In inclusive education, the outcome was achieved in most respects and contributed to more inclusive education systems, although progress across indicators has been more uneven. Increased enrollment of students with disabilities and improved student completion rates demonstrate progress in strengthening inclusion, which are also reflected in improved learning experiences and reduced barriers to participation for marginalized groups. At the same time, challenges remain in achieving more equal completion, particularly for girls at the secondary level and among learners with disabilities.

In disability rights work, the outcome was largely achieved, and progress at the outcome level supported increased inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities. Strengthened engagement of persons with disabilities in community structures and active participation of organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) in policy processes signal increased inclusion and recognition, as well as growing influence of persons with disabilities in decision-making and public processes. However, progress in attitude change and experienced respect has been more limited, indicating that some aspects of inclusion require longer-term engagement.

Variation in results can be observed both across and within outcome areas. Climate resilience shows particularly strong quantitative progress across multiple indicators. Disability rights work has been highly effective at achieving policy-level and participation-related outcomes, with several targets exceeded. In

contrast, inclusive education demonstrates solid progress in access and participation but slower advancement in equitable learning outcomes and completion. This indicates that while barriers to access have been reduced, systemic challenges affecting retention and learning outcomes persist.

Results also vary across contexts. In more stable environments, stronger institutional cooperation and system-level integration supported more sustained outcomes, such as in Cambodia, where disaster risk management structures were embedded into local governance systems. In fragile and crisis-affected contexts, progress was more uneven. Climate shocks limited gains in food security despite successful adoption of resilience measures, such as in Zimbabwe, where droughts, rainfall variability, and crop failures undermined recovery. Political instability and shrinking civic space affected advocacy processes in some settings, such as in Nepal, where protests disrupted engagement with duty-bearers. These differences highlight the importance of context-sensitive approaches and program flexibility.

The humanitarian–development nexus further supported program results by enabling flexible responses to changing needs in crisis-affected contexts. Reallocation of development funding to humanitarian actions helped address immediate food insecurity and protection risks, allowing vulnerable households to maintain participation in program activities while strengthening longer-term resilience and preparedness.

Cross-cutting objectives reinforced the relevance and quality of results across outcome areas. Climate resilience and environmental sustainability were systematically integrated across sectors, contributing to risk reduction and adaptation beyond dedicated climate interventions. Gender justice efforts supported increased participation and agency of women, although integration into organizational practices remained uneven. Disability inclusion was strengthened through improved data collection, capacity development, and practical tools, contributing to more inclusive programming and greater visibility of persons with disabilities. Together, these approaches enhanced the program's contribution to inclusive and sustainable development, while highlighting the need for continued efforts to deepen institutionalization and long-term impact.

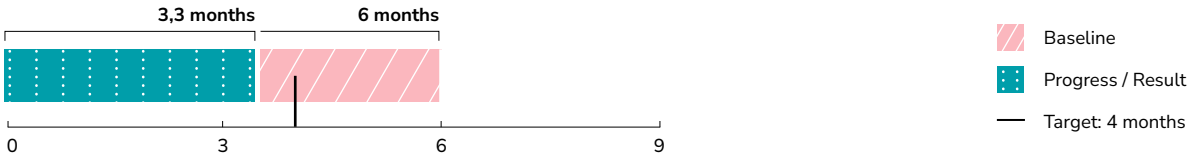
4.1 Outcome area 1: Resilience to climate change and disasters

The climate resilience outcome area demonstrated strong overall performance against its theory of change during the 2025 reporting year and across the program period, contributing particularly to SDGs 1, 2, and 13. Resilience to climate change and disasters has improved in targeted vulnerable communities through the consolidation of three mutually reinforcing pathways to resilience: 1) strengthened inclusive disaster risk management (DRM) capacities, 2) adopted climate adaptation and mitigation practices, and 3) diversified livelihoods, particularly for women and persons with disabilities. Across projects in Cambodia, Ethiopia, Mauritania, Nepal, Senegal, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe, these pathways were operationalized through locally led and community-based approaches integrating resilience-oriented practices into livelihoods, governance systems, and community structures.

A significant sign of improved resilience and progress towards the program's intended impact is the observed strengthening in food security in many program areas where climate resilience measures were implemented. The number of food shortage months experienced by households has reduced in nearly all measured projects, the projects' average having been reduced from 6 months to 3.3 months during the program period against the target of 4 months (II1). This result was achieved through integrated resilience approaches. For instance, in Ethiopia (ETK003), it was demonstrated how watershed restoration, diversified livelihoods, climate-smart agriculture, and energy-efficient technologies contributed to improved coping capacities under recurrent drought conditions. In Nepal (NPK004), program partners linked DRM

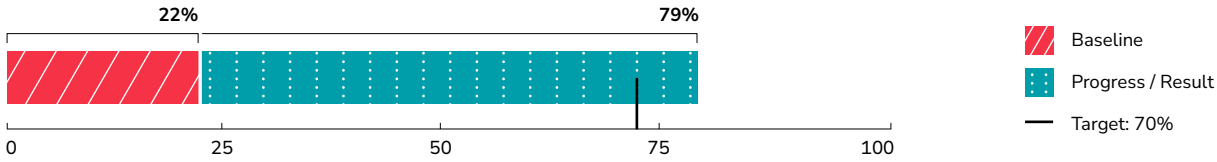
systems, climate adaptation planning, irrigation support, and institutional cooperation with municipalities, strengthening continuity of local preparedness and resilience structures. On the other hand, in Zimbabwe (ZWK002, ZWK003), no progress was made in terms of reducing the number of months with food shortage, as severe droughts, rainfall variability, crop failures, and water shortages continued to undermine food security despite ongoing interventions. Households adopted climate-resilient agricultural practices, but climatic shocks exceeded the capacity of many households to fully recover. These findings illustrate residual loss and damage, where adaptation and resilience measures reduced vulnerability but could not fully offset broader climatic pressures.

II1: Average number of months the HHs in the target communities have experienced shortage of food or shortage of money to buy food during the past year



The positive trend in food security was accompanied by improvements in several dimensions of resilience to climate change and disasters, indicating that communities were better equipped to anticipate, adapt to, and recover from climate-related and disaster-related shocks. By the end of the program period, 172 communities had functioning, inclusive DRM structures in place, substantially exceeding the set target of 100 (OI1.1; baseline: 1). This reflects strong progress in establishing DRM structures, though the degree of demonstrated functionality and inclusiveness varied across contexts. Furthermore, on average amongst climate projects, 62.3% of households were using wood saving stoves or alternative environmentally sustainable fuel for cooking in the targeted communities where data was reported, showing substantial progress from the baseline of 8% and exceeding the target of 52% (OI1.2). Adoption rates varied between contexts, but many projects achieved substantial uptake of wood-saving stoves and alternative sustainable fuel solutions. 79% of households in the target communities reporting on this indicator were employing climate-resilient agricultural practices, against the target of 70%, which is significant progress from the baseline of 22% (OI1.3). The strongest results emerged where projects combined several complementary adaptation measures simultaneously. More than 7,000 households gained an additional, sustained source of income during the program period that is not vulnerable to the same hazards as their initial income source, including over 2,300 women-headed households and nearly 1,300 households with persons with disabilities (OI1.4). While this is below the target of 11,000 households, the figure likely underestimates total achievement due to incomplete reporting, and still represents meaningful progress, particularly in expanding resilient livelihood options and reducing reliance on rainfed staple crop production.

OI1.3: % of HHs in the target communities that are employing climate-resilient agricultural practices



Strengthened capacities of the targeted communities in inclusive disaster risk management were achieved not only through establishing DRM structures, but also through strengthening practical preparedness and local resilience capacities. A total of 110 local disaster risk reduction strategies and plans were developed against a target of 70 (OPI1.1.1), approximately 23,900 persons were trained in disaster risk reduction and manage-

ment against the targeted 11,600 (OPI1.1.2), and nearly 370 community awareness-raising sessions were conducted on disaster and climate risks against a target of 330 (OPI1.1.3). Together, these outputs strengthened local preparedness systems, coordination mechanisms, and community capacities to identify and respond to climate and disaster risks. As an example, in Cambodia (KHK002), DRM structures even became embedded within local community governance. Intertwining action with official governance structures pooled resources and expertise, thus increasing the ownership of the duty-bearers and sustainability of results.

Capacities of the targeted communities to implement and sustain inclusive climate adaptation and mitigation measures improved over the program period, contributing to strengthened resilience through increased adaptation of environmentally sustainable practices and locally appropriate adaptation measures. Over 11,700 households were involved in implementing climate change mitigation methods and/or technologies against a target of 6,000 (OPI1.2.1). Likewise, more than 10,000 households benefited from climate change adaptation measures against the targeted 5,900 (OPI1.2.2). In Nepal (NPK004), in 2025 alone, out of over 800 households that received climate-smart agricultural technologies and irrigation support (e.g., benefiting from irrigation ponds, solar irrigation, and electric boring systems), 172 were households with persons with disabilities that were provided with specifically tailored technology packages. In addition, adaptation and mitigation awareness sessions and environmental education activities supported behavioral change and wider community uptake of environmentally sustainable practices. Several projects also reported strengthened local replication and uptake of adaptation practices beyond direct beneficiaries, suggesting potential for sustainability beyond the project period.

Capacities of the targeted communities and especially women and persons with disabilities to diversify their livelihoods improved during the program period, contributing to strengthened resilience through more diverse income sources that are less sensitive to hazards. Altogether, over 30,000 smallholders were reached through measures increasing their sustainable agricultural production and/or access to markets compared to the targeted 11,200 (OPI1.3.1). Out of these, the majority were women (approximately 16,300) and over 1,300 were persons with disabilities. Additionally, some 17,000 persons were reached through measures aimed to diversify their income from other income sources than staple agricultural crops against the target of 6,000 (OPI 1.3.2), including over 10,300 women and more than 1,200 persons with disabilities, and nearly 11,300 persons were involved in newly established or supported existing MSMEs/cooperatives against the target of 5,900 (OPI1.3.3). Out of this figure, the majority (6,600) were women and 800 were persons with disabilities. Overall, diversification led to more balanced livelihood portfolios, reducing sensitivity to climate-related risks affecting any single source of income. Evidence across projects suggests that this contributed to improved income stability and financial security. In Ethiopia (ETK005), for instance, households reported increased household income, expanded savings, and reduced dependency on aid, reflecting strengthened economic resilience, and subsequently improved living conditions and enhanced food security.

Overall, the program demonstrated strong operationalization of its Theory of Change across all major resilience pathways. Particularly strong results emerged where projects combined technical measures, community organization, institutional cooperation, and livelihood support into integrated resilience approaches, with locally led implementation strengthening ownership and contributing to more sustainable outcomes. Topically, as the climate crisis continues to deepen, loss and damage approaches have now been more strongly integrated in the programmatic work during the new program phase. Further strengthening of this area remains of paramount importance.

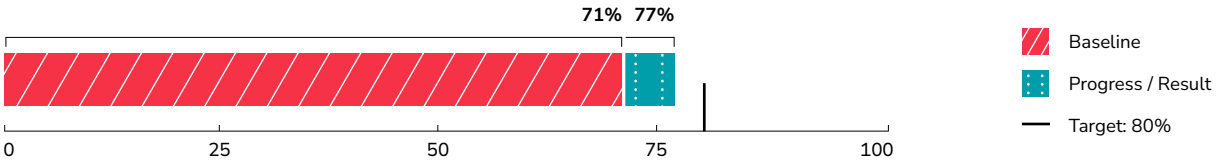
4.2 Outcome area 2: Inclusive, quality education

Contributing to SDG 4, this outcome area expanded access to quality, inclusive education for children and young people from marginalized groups and helped remove systemic barri-

ers that exclude them from learning. The results were driven through three mutually reinforcing pathways: strengthened multilingual and mother tongue education, improved inclusive and safe learning environments, and widened access to vocational education and life skills training, especially for women and persons with disabilities. Together, these efforts have strengthened schools, communities, and local systems to better support learners who face persistent exclusion, including children and young people with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, linguistic minorities, and women and girls across Cambodia, Colombia, Ethiopia, Myanmar, Nepal, Senegal, and Tanzania.

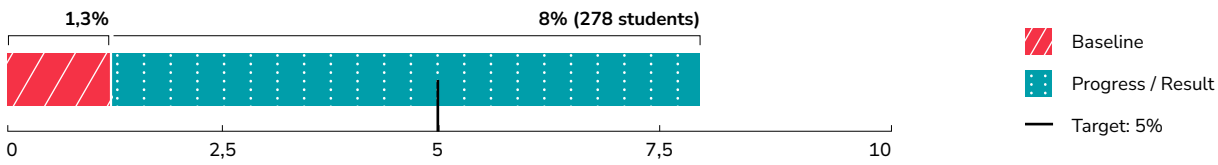
Program interventions in inclusive education have contributed to improved inclusion of people from marginalized groups through improved access to inclusive, quality education, particularly among children and youth from marginalized groups. Students' completion/survival rate increased from the baseline of 71% to average achievement among reporting projects of 77% during the program period, remaining slightly behind the target of 80% (II2). At the primary education level, the rate reached 88%, with girls' rate slightly higher than that of boys. At the lower secondary level, however, the rate was only 70%, and girls' rate remained considerably below that of boys at 61%. At both levels, the rate for persons with disabilities was around 50%. These results indicate that while access has improved, significant challenges remain in ensuring equitable completion, particularly for girls at secondary level and for learners with disabilities. External factors such as economic pressures and climate-related livelihood shocks continue to affect attendance and completion, particularly in rural contexts, where children may be withdrawn from school due to income needs, migration, or increased household responsibilities.

II2: Completion/survival rate at primary and lower secondary education in targeted schools/classes



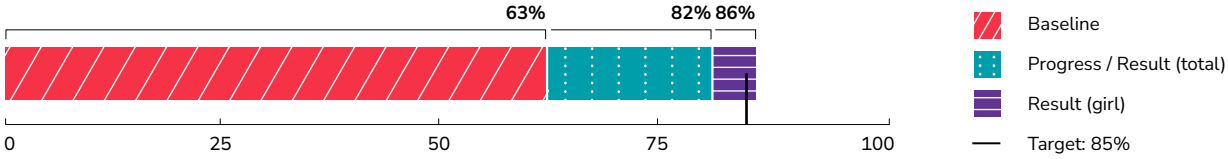
The number of students with disabilities in targeted pre-primary and primary schools reached 278 by the end of the program period. Among schools with available data, students with disabilities represented on average 8% of total enrolment, exceeding the 5% target and demonstrating a substantial rise from the baseline of 1.3% (OI2.3). This indicates improved access to education for a group traditionally largely excluded from education. However, the representation of students with disabilities was higher at pre-primary (15%) than primary level (3.5%). In Nepal (NPK006), the program has contributed to improved access to education for marginalized groups, such as children with disabilities and Dalit girls. For example, the percentage of students with disabilities in targeted schools increased from 1.4% to 5.7% during the program period. Previously, children from marginalized groups dropped out of school at an earlier stage due to accessibility challenges in the schools, which the program partner has addressed, for example, through accessible infrastructure development and strengthened capacities in inclusive teaching methods.

OI2.3: Number and % of students with disabilities in the targeted pre-primary and primary schools



During the program period, there were more than 16,000 students in the targeted schools whose first or home language was a language of instruction. The percentage of students in program-supported schools reporting on this indicator whose first or home language is a language of instruction has increased from 30% at baseline to 100% at the pre-primary level, 45% at the primary level, and 55% at the secondary level (OI2.1) as more teaching was provided in students' first or home language. While the overall average of 54% remains below the target of 80%, this represents considerable progress during the program period and reflects increased opportunities for students, particularly those from ethnic minority backgrounds, to access education in their first or home language and transition gradually to other languages in multilingual contexts where such approaches remain relatively rare. Furthermore, children's school experience improved markedly. Compared to the baseline of 63%, by the end of the reporting period, 82% of the surveyed children were happy to come to school most of the time, nearly reaching the target of 85% (OI2.4). For girls, the rate was even higher at 86%. This suggests that the program has contributed to more supportive and inclusive learning environments. Additionally, in total, over 3,000 of the non-formal education students targeted by the project have gained functional literacy skills against the targeted 1,800, including more than 2,100 women and 44 persons with disabilities (OI2.6). In Colombia (COK002), because of improved literacy skills, women have been able to participate more actively in community processes, engage more effectively with public institutions such as health and administrative services, and take on a stronger role in household decision-making. The program also contributed to strengthening the role of Indigenous communities in shaping and organizing their education systems, as reflected in increased participation of community leaders, traditional authorities, and councils in education processes, more structured engagement with government institutions, and enhanced capacity of communities to manage and further develop their own education provision.

OI2.4: Degree to which children feel happy to come to school.



Multilingual and mother tongue education have strengthened in targeted schools and communities. More than 2,200 teachers or teacher education students were trained by program partners on multilingual or mother tongue education, thus achieving the target of 2,200 (OPI2.1.1). The majority of these were at the primary level. In addition, approximately 3,900 community leaders and government authorities were involved in promoting multilingual or mother tongue education, nearly doubling the target of 2,000 (OPI2.1.2). Furthermore, 116 learning materials relevant to the local cultural context were developed, mostly at pre-school and primary levels, which exceeds the target of 33 (OPI2.1.3). In Tanzania (TZK002), results were achieved even in a context with restrictive language policies, where only education in the national language is permitted. Language supportive pedagogy was applied in teacher training at Makumira University, where future science teachers were trained to ease the students' adjustment from their home languages to the official national language of instruction. In Ethiopia (ETK001), access to education in sign language expanded for learners who rely on it as their primary language.

Capacities of schools and communities to offer an inclusive, safe, and protective learning environment have strengthened. Both the physical environment and the behavior of teachers and school management towards the students have been addressed. In 85 schools, infrastructure or materials have been adapted for students with disabilities during the program period, against the targeted 86 schools (OPI2.2.4). In addition, in Ethiopia (ETK001), a substantially larger number of schools, primarily at the primary level,

received adapted learning materials and/or sign language–friendly resources, bringing the total number of supported schools across the program to 680, although the extent of adaptations may vary between schools. In terms of infrastructure adaptations, these include installing ramps and widening doors, as well as building toilets spacious enough for students using wheelchairs. Over 3,200 teachers and teacher education students were trained by program partners on inclusive and child-friendly teaching methods, exceeding the target of 2,300 (OPI2.2.1). During the program period, more than 8,700 community leaders and government authorities were involved in promoting inclusive education, against the baseline of 532 and target of 920 (OPI2.2.2). These included representatives of school management, community leaders, and local, regional, and national government representatives. In Cambodia, inclusive classes have been set up in several public schools following the changes in legislation partly achieved through the advocacy efforts of Felm's partners. Students with disabilities are now transitioning gradually from non-formal to formal education. Furthermore, nearly 20,000 caregivers of children from marginalized groups were reached by program partners through educational activities on their children's right to education, exceeding the target of 15,000 (OPI2.2.3). Parents were widely engaged by the projects to support inclusive education, playing an important role, for example, in Senegal (SNK002) in organizing community-based pre-education when no public services are available. In Ethiopia (ETK001), the parents of deaf and hard-of-hearing students were learning sign language, allowing their children to participate in family life and express their feelings much better than before, reducing their isolation from their peers and community at large.

The program has also facilitated improved access to vocational and life skills training, especially for women and persons with disabilities. Through the program, more than 2,800 students were enrolled in non-formal education, including literacy classes or life skills training, against the target of 2,000 students (OPI2.3.2). Out of these, nearly 2,000 were women and almost 340 were persons with disabilities. The percentage of persons with disabilities among the vocational and life skills learners has increased from 4.7% in 2022 to 12% in 2023 and 15% in 2024 but dropped slightly to 12% in 2025. One reason identified in Cambodia (KHK004) was that for persons with disabilities, finding jobs after vocational training is extremely challenging, reducing parents' motivation towards the end of the program. Positive experiences in Nepal with linking a supervised internship program to the training could be replicated in other program countries in the next program period.

Overall, the results demonstrate that the program's Theory of Change has broadly held. Progress is evident in increased participation, improved learning environments, higher completion rates at the primary level, and expanded inclusion of previously excluded groups, such as children with disabilities, ethnic and language minorities, and women and girls. At the same time, the results highlight persistent gaps in equitable learning outcomes and completion, particularly at the secondary level and among learners with disabilities. External pressures, including economic constraints and climate-related shocks, continue to affect education continuity, underscoring the importance of strengthening resilience at the household and community levels.

4.3 Outcome area 3: Rights of persons with disabilities

Contributing to SDGs 10 and 16, program outcome area 3 has contributed to improving the integration of the rights of persons with disabilities into government policies and practices with active involvement of persons with disabilities and their organizations. In line with the principle of "nothing about us without us," the program has strengthened capacities of civil society organizations (CSOs), especially organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs), to promote and advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities so that they can, for example, take part in government consultations, working groups, and processes on legislation and policies that define the implementation of the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

Overall, across the projects in Cambodia, Nepal, Myanmar, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, and Colombia, the program was successful in reaching its objectives. Progress, reflected in largely achieved targets, was driven by the leadership, agency, and ownership of persons with disabilities and OPDs in advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities. Additionally, OPDs were supported in strengthening their institutional capacities, deepening collaboration through awareness raising and advocacy between government duty-bearers, and raising awareness on disability rights to addressing attitudinal barriers in local communities.

At the impact level, Felm's program is designed to enhance resilience and promote inclusion of individuals from marginalized groups. From a disability perspective, the program systematically monitors the participation of persons with disabilities in mainstream community structures and groups among communities (II3). Since the beginning of the program, 834 persons with disabilities (249 female) were engaged in the mainstream community structures and groups (II3). While this substantially exceeds the target of 76 persons, the figures are not directly comparable, as target data was unavailable from most projects. Nevertheless, the results demonstrate improved inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities across several individual projects. For instance, in a project addressing rights of persons with psychosocial disabilities in Nepal (NPK001), 178 persons with disabilities (131 female) engaged in mainstream community bodies, such as school management boards, forest users' groups, and mothers' groups, with a baseline value set at 0. In Myanmar (MMK001), 235 persons with disabilities (108 female) engaged in mainstream education, including non-formal education structures, where the students received vocational training and alternative education. Non-formal education in Myanmar can be understood as a mainstream community structure because it takes place within everyday social interactions and community networks, shaping participation, social norms, and inclusion without relying on formal institutional systems. In Cambodia (KHK003), through awareness raising and collaboration with local authorities, 346 persons with disabilities have become more engaged in parents' groups and in schools. Improved inclusion and acceptance within the community have opened better opportunities for engagement and participation in community structures. However, despite increased engagement and participation of persons with disabilities in their community groups, discussions, and activities, equal and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities remains uneven compared to persons without disabilities. Also, equal engagement and participation of women with disabilities in community structures compared with men with disabilities remains a concern in many communities. Double roles as care and support provider and receivers, gender roles in the community, and limited access to information and other opportunities hinder women's participation. There is a need for continued efforts and awareness raising to ensure continuation of more equal engagement for youth and women with disabilities.

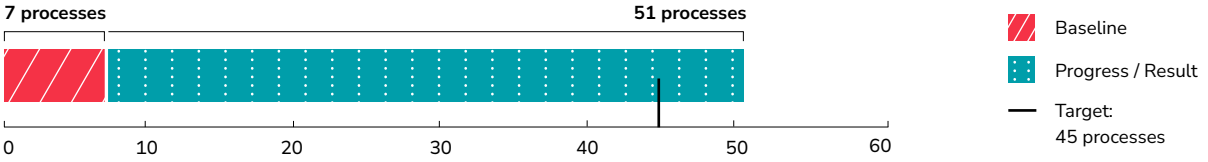
During reporting period of 2022-2025, OPDs' and persons with disabilities' strengthened capacities contributed to OPDs' abilities to advocate for 11 ongoing and 14 completed legislative and policy reforms in Rwanda, Burundi, and Ethiopia, exceeding the target of 9 policy enforcement processes (OI3.1). Supported OPDs actively advocated for and influenced policies, legislation, and policy enforcement reforms to promote non-discrimination, equality, and the rights of persons with disabilities. In 2025 in Ethiopia (ETK004), completed legislative reforms included, for instance, a driving license reform for deaf drivers, allowing deaf or hard-of-hearing drivers to obtain a driver's license. Additionally, Ethiopian Electoral Proclamation and the General Educations Proclamation were completed. In these processes, OPDs brought disability rights perspectives to the attention of decision-makers. In Burundi (XXK004), an updated law on the national census included the use of the Washington Group questions (WGQ) in census processes, ensuring better national-level data regarding persons with disabilities in future censuses. Furthermore, OPDs in Burundi advocated for the integration of disability-inclusive actions into UNDP's country plan 2024-2027. UN country plans guide the funding, priorities, and partnerships of key UN agencies in the country, bringing disability rights into longer-term development agendas and scaling impact through wider UN influence at the national level. OPDs continue to engage in ongoing legislative and policy process-

es, which makes their active engagement in multiple policy processes visible. As a result of this program, OPDs have been recognized as a more legitimate stakeholder in policy and decision-making processes. The duty-bearers value input and expertise of persons with disabilities, and value their engagement more. For instance, in Rwanda and Burundi, active engagement of OPDs in climate related policy processes resulted deeper networks and consultancies with ministries.

In addition to national-level advocacy, approximately 4,000 persons with disabilities, including nearly 1.800 women, were actively involved in raising awareness of their rights in communities, significantly exceeding the target of 430 (OPI3.2.3; baseline 0). For instance, in Ethiopia (ETK004), traditional tea and coffee ceremonies provided inclusive, trusted social spaces that fostered open dialogue, reduced stigma, and encouraged especially women with disabilities to speak confidently about their rights.

Since 2022, the strengthened capacities of the supported organizations and the efforts to raise awareness and train government officials and decision-makers on the CRPD also contributed to consultations of the supported OPDs in 51 policy processes during the program. These included 18 national-level, 13 regional-level, and 20 local-level processes in Burundi, Rwanda, Ethiopia, and Nepal (OI3.2). This is an excellent achievement, as the program expects to influence 45 government processes. OPDs were consulted by government stakeholders, indicating their strengthened recognition as valued experts and a shift from advocacy alone towards sustained participation in decision-making processes. For instance, in Burundi, OPDs were invited by the government to engage in climate change adaptation and mitigation measures, and their advisory support was requested to ensure that climate policies become inclusive, accessible, and responsive to the situation of persons with disabilities in climate catastrophes.

OI3.2: Number of government processes where OPDs have been consulted



The number of targeted OPDs engaged in disability rights advocacy remained stable over the reporting period, with 96% of the supported OPDs engaging in advocacy in 2025, and a total of 56 supported OPDs engaging in advocacy over the 4-year period (OPI3.1.2). This suggests that most targeted organizations have reached a level of consistent engagement. Furthermore, qualitative evidence indicates strengthened participation, including more sustained advocacy actions and strategic efforts.

Findings in the endline survey indicate that 37% of persons with disabilities report feeling respected by others most of the time, 57% sometimes, and 7% not at all (OI3.3). While the endline figure falls short of the 60% target, it reflects a modest improvement from the 30% baseline at the start of the program. At the same time, although engagement of persons with disabilities in advocacy and community structures has increased, this has not consistently translated into improved attitudes and respect. This suggests that change in attitudes is a long and slow process, but also that participation alone does not shift deeply rooted stigma and discrimination. This limited progress highlights that changes in attitudes among community and family members require sustained and systematic efforts, including continuous awareness raising. Importantly, feeling respected is closely linked to opportunities for equal participation in society, such as access to education and employment. For example, despite completing relevant education and vocational training, youth with disabilities continue to face barriers in accessing labor markets (KHK003).

Conflicts and increasing humanitarian need in the project implementation areas caused challenges and interruptions for implementation in some projects (COK003, ETK001). Political instability, such as the Gen Z protests in Nepal, also disrupted advocacy efforts and shifted duty-bearers' priorities, resulting in government funding being redirected to non-disability-related priorities and leading to setbacks in advocacy results (NPK001, NPK002).

A key lesson from the ending program cycle is the need to address gender-based discrimination and barriers more systematically among women and men with disabilities as well as girls and boys with disabilities. Although many projects have taken concrete steps to reduce barriers to participation and promote access for women with disabilities, more consistent and intersectional approaches are still needed to tackle gender-based inequalities effectively. This is addressed in the new program cycle by developing tools for disability and gender analysis for partners' use.

4.4 Humanitarian-development nexus

Felm recognizes that complex multi-crises require a holistic nexus approach, which depends on the use of relevant forms of support coordinated simultaneously or in an alternating manner according to the needs of the affected populations in the project area. With the exception of two wars that have caused massive humanitarian crises in Gaza and Ukraine, most "natural" catastrophes that required external emergency interventions in 2025 were induced by climate change. While some natural catastrophes required large-scale humanitarian responses, others were recurrent "lean periods" in development cooperation project areas that required external intervention to address temporary humanitarian needs of the project participants, thus enabling their participation in development cooperation activities once their basic life-saving needs were addressed. Felm reallocated EUR 118,580 of development cooperation funding to humanitarian action in Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Myanmar, and Mauritania, reaching 4,475 people. These projects linked emergency relief with resilience building by addressing climate-induced disasters, food insecurity, and protection risks, while also strengthening community preparedness and inclusion of persons with disabilities.

4.5 Cross-cutting objectives

Climate resilience and low-emission development

Climate resilience functioned as a strong cross-cutting theme throughout the program portfolio during 2025 and across the program period, directly supporting SDG 13 as well as SDGs 2, 1, and 5. Climate resilience, adaptation, environmental sustainability, and awareness raising were integrated not only into dedicated climate projects, but also into livelihoods, humanitarian response, education, advocacy, and organizational development. Across the portfolio, projects promoted climate-smart agriculture, water management, reforestation, fuel-efficient stoves, environmental education, and diversified livelihoods adapted to climate risks. Climate mainstreaming was also strengthened institutionally. Climate policy translations were published in multiple languages, climate impact monitoring tools were introduced, and annual carbon footprint calculations continued.

Climate-related training and awareness activities expanded during 2025 and made use of previously produced materials, such as the climate resilience handbook, and planning programmatic approaches to loss and damage. Climate change was additionally mainstreamed through communications and advocacy. Videos, campaigns, media outreach, and educational materials highlighted themes such as reforestation and climate adaptation in Nepal and Tanzania. Climate training and awareness activities were also organized within LWF and IELCO in Colombia, demonstrating that climate resilience and environmental sustainability increasingly functioned as portfolio-wide priorities rather than isolated thematic interventions. This was supported by preparing a GIS-based analysis on the expected climate vulnerabilities in the

program areas in Colombia, Zimbabwe, and Cambodia. Overall, through these activities, the capabilities of Felm partners to plan, execute, and evaluate climate resilience were increased. In addition, during 2025, Felm commissioned case study research on disability inclusion, gender justice, and climate resilience in Felm projects. This research collected qualitative and quantitative data through interviews with Felm advisors and project partners, document analysis, and relevant secondary sources. The resulting publication synthesized key findings across the three thematic areas, identified good practices, and outlined lessons learned alongside concrete recommendations to guide future cross-cutting thematic work.

In the future, the priority is to further strengthen systematic approaches that support all partners in reaching at least the do *no harm level*, while advancing towards more proactive and transformative engagement. This includes strengthening the use of tools such as the Climate Marker for planning and monitoring. The quantification of the carbon impacts of reforestation and land restoration could also be strengthened, not only to understand the full greenhouse gas impact of Felm's program, but also to build capacities and access to emerging carbon markets under the Paris agreement article 6.

Gender justice

During the program period 2022–2025, Felm promoted gender justice as a cross-cutting objective across its program, with the overarching aim of ensuring that partner organizations operate at least at the *do no harm* level of the three-step model. Gender justice contributes directly to SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and functions as a cross-cutting priority across the 2030 Agenda. This objective was pursued primarily through capacity building, peer-learning activities, and the development of practical tools (for instance, a gender analysis tool).

In line with annual plans, partners were supported through targeted trainings, peer-learning activities, and guidance aimed at integrating gender justice into project planning and implementation. A gender analysis tool was developed during 2024 and prepared for broader implementation in 2025. The tool was designed to be adaptable to diverse contexts. While partners were introduced to gender analysis during the program period, its systematic use and regular follow-up varied, and monitoring of its application remained uneven. Strengthening and developing these follow-up mechanisms has been identified as a key area for future development and will be conducted in the following program period.

In 2025, gender-related training sessions were held in Ethiopia, Cambodia, and Zimbabwe, alongside peer-learning activities in Nepal and Cambodia. These processes provided spaces for partners to reflect jointly on shared challenges, exchange practical experiences, and adapt gender-related tools to their specific contexts. Some planned activities were postponed due to organizational changes within partner institutions and evolving security situations. Nevertheless, engagement with the cross-cutting objective continued where conditions allowed, supporting continuity in learning and dialogue. During 2025, Felm also commissioned a case study on disability inclusion, gender justice, and climate resilience in its projects. As noted earlier, the study identified good practices, lessons learned, and it provided recommendations to guide future cross-cutting thematic work.

Across the program period, the integration of gender justice can be described as relatively consistent across countries and thematic areas, with partners recognizing gender justice as a relevant and legitimate concern. At the same time, the depth of implementation varied. Competing priorities, limited resources, and contextual constraints affected partners' capacity to move beyond minimum requirements. While gender considerations were often acknowledged at the project level, their incorporation into routine organizational processes was less systematic.

At the community level, the integration of gender perspectives contributed to positive changes. In several contexts, women's participation and agency increased, and women were more frequently recognized as

active contributors to community development, peacebuilding, and education. In some cases, the inclusion of men, such as spouses of participating women, in gender-related trainings supported broader acceptance of change and reduced resistance to women's participation.

Using the three-step model, most partners reached the *do no harm* level by the end of the program period. While training activities supported basic awareness, the integration of gender considerations into routine organizational practices remained inconsistent. Progress beyond the minimum level will be supported through further developing continued, systematic support, clearer follow-up mechanisms, and stronger institutionalization to ensure sustainability. This will be addressed by further developing and institutionalizing practical tools for gender and inclusion analysis, alongside clearer processes for their regular use, follow-up, and integration into program design, implementation, and monitoring.

Disability inclusion

The cross-cutting objective of disability inclusion contributes to SDGs 10 and 16. Felm's priority development area for disability inclusion was to expand the use of Washington Group data collection tools at the program level to improve disability-inclusive data collection and programming.

In 2022-2025, Felm piloted the use of the Washington Group Short Set of Functioning questions (WG-SSQ) as part of data collection processes in the development cooperation program. Partners received technical support, training, and guidance from Felm's advisors for data collection. During the program, the WG-SS tool was tested in multiple settings, and the usefulness of the tool was recognized, especially in household survey settings. However, the tool also indicated a growing need for development of qualitative data collections tools, as the WG-SS tool provides limited data focusing mostly on quantitative data. One of the key findings from the development cooperation program's mid-term evaluation was that some of Felm's development cooperation partners have limited understanding of the human rights-based approach to disability inclusion and how to incorporate the approach comprehensively into their work. To address this, Felm created the pedagogically designed workshop Removing Barriers for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities with the objective of enhancing partners' capacity to assess and address barriers to inclusion in their day-to-day work. This material was used in 2025 in a peer-learning session in Zimbabwe, Colombia, and Ethiopia bringing partners together to reflect and learn, resulting in stronger joint understanding on disability-inclusive methodologies and practices.

During the final program year, good practices and lessons learned in mainstreaming disability inclusion were collected to better support systematizing and exchanging successful practices. These good practices were shared in disability inclusion workshops and case studies publications, and they were compiled into a project monitoring and planning tool for mainstreaming cross-cutting objectives. The tool collects good practices from partners' practices as well as internationally recognized and tested good practices. During the planning phase of the new program cycle, the tool was used in project-level planning dialogues to identify gaps in mainstreaming and ways that each project could advance mainstreaming at the project level.

4.6 Contributions to development policy

Felm's MFA-supported program contributes to Finland's development policy by translating policy priorities into rights-based, locally led implementation together with civil society partners. In 2025, Felm's contribution focused on strengthening the link between local evidence and policy dialogue on human rights, civic space, inclusion, climate justice, and the role of civil society in sustainable development.

At the policy level, Felm supported partners to participate in national and international accountability processes, produce advocacy inputs, and use community-based evidence in dialogue with authorities.

This included work linked to UN Universal Periodic Review recommendations and capacity building on human rights-based advocacy communications, strengthening partners' ability to connect local realities with policy commitments.

Felm also brought partner experience into Finnish and international policy dialogue, including discussions on development financing, civil society space, climate finance, and responsible private sector cooperation. This helped ensure that policy discussions were informed by practical evidence from partner countries and by the perspectives of communities in marginalized positions.

A separate appendix on MFA aggregate indicators was submitted earlier as requested. The appendix provides detailed indicator-level evidence on how Felm's 2025 results contribute to MFA aggregate indicators and complements this chapter's policy-level analysis.

Overall, the 2025 experience suggests that Felm's added value lies not only in alignment with national priorities, but in addressing the gap between policy commitments and inclusive, resilient implementation at the local level.

4.7 Contributions to partner countries' sustainable development policies

In **Nepal**, Felm's development cooperation supports locally identified priorities and national policy implementation through partnerships with Nepali organizations together with both federal and local governments. In the current program period, the work is focused on Karnali Province in line with the Government of Nepal's recommendation to geographically target INGO support to remote provinces. Partner projects promote green, resilient, and inclusive development by strengthening climate-resilient livelihoods, food security, inclusive education, mental health, and the rights of persons with disabilities. Close cooperation and joint budgeting with the local government increase ownership and commitment, while advocacy through NGO networks supports an enabling environment for civil society. Felm's partner Sahas youth groups empower youth to participation and hold duty-bearers accountable for their actions in climate resilience building. A strong practice has been to build local government ownership from the outset so that, as projects phase out, municipalities take over key activities and, in some cases, also allocate public funding to continue the activities.

Cambodian partner projects contributed to national development by translating national commitments on inclusive education, disability inclusion, and climate resilience into practical action at the local level, especially in underserved rural areas. Their contribution was therefore less about directly influencing policy design and more about making existing policies operational and more inclusive. Felm's partner Epic Arts has engaged the authorities in considering the needs of persons with disability in government disaster risk planning and operations. At the same time, the projects also highlighted a critical gap: national policy frameworks alone do not ensure equitable implementation without local capacity, community ownership, and targeted support for marginalized groups. One practical example is the support for inclusive education, where partner projects helped schools and communities improve access and participation for Indigenous children and children with disabilities through teacher training, community engagement, and more accessible learning environments, thereby reinforcing the implementation of Cambodia's Education Strategic Plan and Inclusive Education Action Plan.

The **Myanmar** projects were only partially aligned with government development cooperation policies, and this alignment must be treated critically rather than assumed. While the projects corresponded in principle with formal policy commitments on inclusive education, disability rights, and equitable access to learning, these commitments had limited practical credibility in the post-coup context, where governance

was fragmented and state institutions lacked both legitimacy and consistent implementation capacity. In this sense, the projects did not so much reinforce a functioning government policy framework as compensate for its failure to deliver on rights-based commitments.

In **Ethiopia**, Felm's work combined support to nationally relevant policy objectives with responses to persistent implementation gaps. Cooperation with the Ethiopian National Association of the Deaf expanded to universities and teacher training institutions, strengthening inclusive education and supporting national efforts to advance the rights of persons with disabilities. At the same time, experience shows that policy alignment alone is insufficient without continued investment in institutional capacity and local implementation. Felm also advanced a Finnpartnership-supported private sector collaboration on a digital solution for youth work placements and employment. While relevant to a clear structural need, its longer-term value depends on whether it can be embedded in local institutions rather than remaining a stand-alone pilot. Climate work supported food security, disaster risk reduction reduced vulnerability, and rapid response to landslide-related needs demonstrated the value of flexible instruments in a shock-prone context.

In **Tanzania**, Felm's work in the education sector aligns with national sector priorities by supporting locally relevant initiatives that improve equitable access to quality education. The PITA project implemented by Tumaini University Makumira contributes to Tanzania's competence-based education reforms by strengthening the pedagogical skills of lower secondary school teachers in disadvantaged schools in Meru District. It supports implementation of the Education Sector Development Plan 2025/26–2029/30, the Education and Training Policy 2014 (2023 edition), and the Curriculum for Ordinary Secondary Education Form I–IV (2023) by promoting learner-centered teaching, problem-solving, and digital literacy. The project also addresses a key local challenge by improving teachers' capacity in language supportive pedagogy, helping to strengthen learning outcomes and reduce dropout during the challenging transition from Swahili-medium primary education to English-medium secondary education.

In **Zimbabwe**, Felm's work supports nationally relevant priorities on food security, livelihoods, disability inclusion, and climate resilience, while operating in a context where economic instability and recurrent shocks continue to constrain implementation. In 2025, cooperation with the Zimbabwe Council of Churches in Gwanda strengthened vulnerable households' resilience through integrated support to food security, income generation, disaster preparedness, and inclusive community-based approaches. The work is broadly aligned with government efforts, but its relevance lies equally in sustaining locally led delivery where public systems face limited capacity to respond consistently. This underlines Felm's added value not only as a policy-aligned actor, but as a partner helping translate broad development priorities into practical resilience at the community level.

In **Colombia**, Felm's work contributes to nationally relevant priorities related to peace implementation, protection of vulnerable communities, environmental justice, and the rights of Indigenous peoples, Afro-Colombians, women, and persons with disabilities. Through partnership with the Lutheran World Federation and the Colombian Evangelical Lutheran Church, the work supports community-based peacebuilding, protection of human rights defenders, livelihoods, psychosocial support, and mine action in areas affected by conflict, displacement, and natural resource-related violence. This is broadly aligned with Colombia's peace and inclusion commitments, but the operating context remains marked by insecurity, weak territorial implementation, and continued pressure on civil society. Felm's contribution is therefore grounded not only in policy alignment, but in responding to locally identified protection and resilience needs in areas where national commitments are unevenly realized.

5. Beneficiaries

The total number of direct beneficiaries of the program reached 228,850 people in 2025. The number consists of 200,123 rights-holders and 28,727 duty-bearers directly reached by the program. Table xx shows the detailed disaggregation of rights-holders and duty-bearers by age, gender, and disability status.

Table 3. Number of beneficiaries 2025

	Total	Age 0-14		Age 15-24		Age 25	
		Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Rights-holders	200,123*	34,280	30,986	21,452	19,607	51,298	41,958
... of whom persons with disabilities	13,579 (6.8 %)	2,329 (6.8 %)	2,234 (7.2 %)	1,448 (6.7 %)	1,420 (7.2 %)	2,912 (5.7 %)	2,553 (6.1 %)
Duty-bearers	28,727*			1,505	1,748	9,581	11,000
... of whom persons with disabilities	1,602 (5.6 %)			146 (9.7 %)	179 (10.2 %)	475 (5.0 %)	578 (5.3 %)
Indirect beneficiaries	3,537,754						
... of whom media users	1,523,432 (43%)						

*) The total of disaggregated rights-holders/duty-bearers is less than the total of rights-holder/ duty bearer beneficiaries, since the disaggregation was incomplete.

53.5% of all rights-holders were women and girls, maintaining the targeted share of female rights-holders. The biggest group was women over 25 with 51,298 beneficiaries. Over 25 was also the biggest participant group for men, reaching 41,958 beneficiaries. The program reached 21,452 girls and 19,607 boys from the age group 15-24 and 34,280 girls and 30,986 boys from the age group 0-14.

13,279 persons with disabilities were reached, representing 6.8% of all rights-holders in 2025. Despite a relative decrease of 2 percentage points from the previous year, the number of participants with disabilities increased numerically. As in previous years, the share of identified persons with disabilities was the highest (7.1%) among beneficiaries aged under 15, followed by the age group 15-24 (7.0%), thanks to the strong focus on inclusion in the education sector work. Adult persons aged over 24 years with disabilities have been the hardest to identify and reach (Table 3). The proportion of this age group was 5.9% in 2025, while the average share of this group during 2022-2025 was 5.2%.

The number of duty-bearers participating in the program through advocacy and awareness-raising activities increased significantly, reaching a total of 28,727 duty bearers (47% female, 53% male) in 2025. Most duty-bearers were aged over 25 years. 5.6% of duty-bearers identified as persons with disabilities. Despite the progress, persons with disabilities are still clearly underrepresented among duty-bearers. In 2025, the program reached 2,014,322 indirect beneficiaries. These beneficiaries were family members, neighbors, friends, and relatives of the direct program participants, members of broader communities, and other groups benefiting from the wider impacts of the program through the direct beneficiaries. In addition to this, an estimated 1,523,432 people were reached through different forms of media, such as radio and TV programs, advocacy campaigns, and social media, bringing the total number of indirect beneficiaries to 3,537,754.

Beneficiaries during the program period 2022-2025

The annual number of program participants increased each year. The total number of direct beneficiaries during the program period was 307,144, consisting of 261,748 rights-holders and 45,396 duty-bearers. 54% of the rights-holders were female and 10.7% were persons with disabilities. 42.5% of the duty-bearers were female, and 5.4% were persons with disabilities.

Indirectly during the four-year period, the program reached over 3,982,100 people, of whom 83% were through radio, TV, and other forms of media.

The tables below present the cumulative number of beneficiaries during the program period (Table 4), and the annual figures and development of beneficiary numbers during the four program years (Table 5).

Table 4. Total number of beneficiaries during the program period 2022-2025

	Total		...of whom persons with disabilities
Rights-holders	261,748	141,259 (54.0%)	27,893 (10.7%)
Duty-bearers	45,396	19,298 (42.5%)	2,448 (5.4%)

Indirect beneficiaries	Total	... of whom reached through media
	3,982,186	3,314,217 (83.2%)

Table 5. Development of the beneficiary data during 2022-2025

Year	Total No. of bene-ficiaries	... of whom Rights-holders (RH)	... of whom Duty-bearers (DB)	Annual increase, all ben-eficiaries (RH+DB)	Annual share of female rights-holders (RH)	Annual share of female duty-bearers (DB)	No. of persons with disabil-ities /all benefi-ciaries	% of persons with disabili-ties / all benefi-ciaries	Indirect benefi-ciaries, incl. media users*
2025	228,850	200,123	28,727	33.0 %	53.0 %	38.6 %	15,181	6.6 %	3,537,754
2024	172,060	157,180	14,880	8.3 %	50.0 %	47.4 %	13,393	7.8 %	6,079,272
2023	158,846	149,660	9,186	33.3 %	55.0 %	42.4 %	9,411	5.9 %	2,897,091
2022	119,160	110,000	9,160		47.0 %	36.9 %	8,020	6.7 %	1,028,000

*) The number of indirect beneficiaries include media users each year, but not disaggregated before year 2025

6. Resources of the program

6.1 Staff in Finland

The program staff was composed of both program staff in Finland and advisory support staff in the program countries, with 8.9 full-time equivalents (person-years) allocated to the Helsinki office and 14,35 full-time equivalents to the partner countries. This chapter focuses on the staff in Finland.

The development cooperation program staff in Finland was composed of both part-time and full-time staff. The part-time staff included the Head of Unit, Program Support 50%, Advisors for PMEL 100%, Advisors for Communication 80%, and Thematic Advisors with total 60% share. The full-time staff consisted of six staff members: Program Director for Development Cooperation, Finance Manager, Administrative Coordinator, Senior Program Advisor, Project Coordinator, and Program Coordinator. The salary of the Advisor for Humanitarian Aid was entirely covered by Felm. The Felm Gender Advisor worked closely with the development cooperation program throughout the year.

The role of the Unit for Program Support and Institutional Funding in Felm's development cooperation program is to advise and support the program globally, including humanitarian aid. The Helsinki-based thematic advisors provided capacity building and support to both Felm staff and partners.

6.2 Financial report

Co-financing of the development cooperation program by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs

In 2025, Felm's total development cooperation expenditure amounted to EUR 7,289,957. Of this, EUR 6,302,482 came from MFA support used during the reporting year, including grant funds carried over from 2024. The funds were used in line with the annual plan. All projects were covered by valid project agreements and related addendums, including agreed amendments to the budgets.

Administration costs accounted for 10% of the total development cooperation program expenditure. These costs covered the administration of Felm's development cooperation funds across the organization. In addition to the International Department, shares were allocated to the Department for Parish Relations and Fundraising, the Finance and Administration Department, the Communications Department, the Managing Director's office, the Board of Directors, and general administration. Total costs for development communications and advocacy were EUR 142,415 (approximately 2%).

Development cooperation program self-financing share

Felm's operations are financed by parishes of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, Christian organizations in Finland, the MFA, the EU, and individual donors. In fiscal year 2025, Felm's total income was EUR 28.1million, compared with 27.5 million in 2023 and 27.2 million in 2024. Of this total, EUR 19.6 million came from sources other than the MFA, compared with EUR 16.3 million in 2024. This non-MFA funding consisted mainly of parish budget appropriations, church collections, parish volunteer activities, testamentary donations, other direct donations and collections, and other income. Parish budget appropriations were not used to cover the self-financing share because they include funds collected through the church tax. The self-financing share of the development cooperation program also excludes grants allocated to operations in Finland, other income, and other grants received from the MFA. Further details are provided in Felm's report on operations and financial statements.

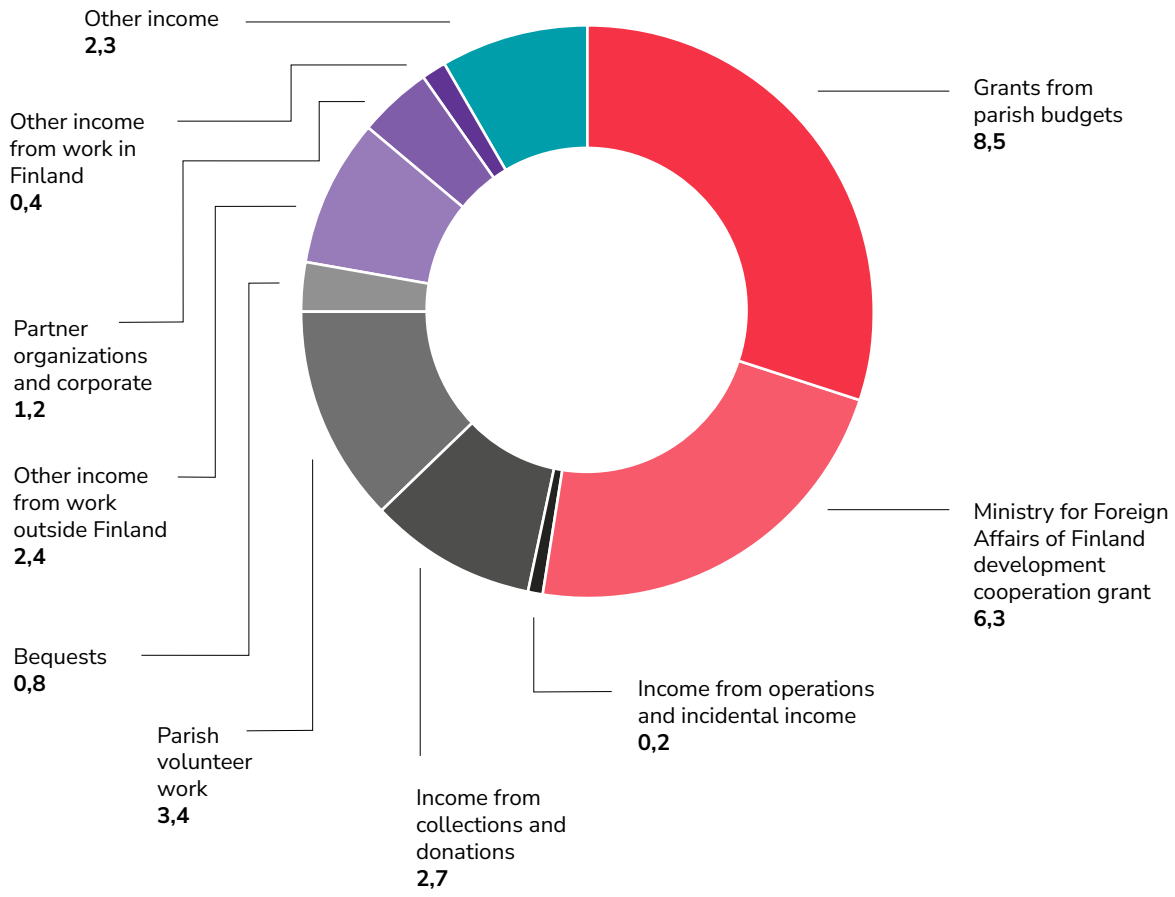
In 2025, Felm received EUR 1,159,848 in earmarked funds for the development cooperation program from individual donors, either directly or through parishes, compared with EUR 981,319 in 2024.

Permanent funding sources include long-term service agreements with parishes and organizations to support individual projects or specialist positions. In parishes, these funds were raised through bazaars, voluntary work, events, collections, and mission circles.

In 2025, the total self-financing share of Felm's development cooperation program was EUR 987,476, compared with EUR 981,319 in 2024. Of this, 10.7% was allocated to projects promoting the rights of persons with disabilities and 89.3% to other projects.

An external auditor audited the development cooperation activities funded by the Finnish government. The auditor's reports are part of the financial report. According to KPMG's 2025 audit report, the financial statements give a true and fair view of the association's financial position and operating results in accordance with Finnish accounting legislation and statutory requirements.

Table 6. Felm income 2025



7. Sustainability and capacity building

7.1 Partners' capacity building

Capacity building continued to play a central role in Felm's collaboration with partners, with a strong emphasis on strengthening cross-cutting objectives. Partners received support both on-site and virtually, with tailored actions that deepened thematic expertise, strengthened organizational systems, and fostered shared learning across regions. For example, gender justice and disability inclusion capacity was strengthened in Tanzania, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Colombia, and Nepal in workshops that reinforced awareness of intersectional inequalities and provided partners with concrete approaches for inclusive project design and implementation. HRBA trainings organized (for example, in Nepal) ensured that participation, accountability, transparency, and non-discrimination remained embedded in the projects.

Peer learning and cross-regional exchange continued to be essential components of capacity building, especially in Asia and Africa. Learning events covering cross-cutting objectives, end-of-project learning discussions in Senegal and Mauritania, and exchanges between Rwanda and Burundi created important platforms for sharing good practices and reflecting on program outcomes. A climate resilience handbook and Ethiopia's peer-learning activities further contributed to South–South collaboration. Zimbabwean partners, along with the Gwai Grandmothers Group, benefited from organizational management and funding capacity-building sessions, complemented by outcome harvesting training to improve results documentation. Colombian partners received support in applying the triple nexus approach and disability inclusion methods as well as in outcome harvesting.

Advocacy capacity building expanded significantly during 2025. These activities strengthened strategic communication, message development, and policy engagement capabilities.

In 2025, all Felm partners in Asia (Nepal, Myanmar, Cambodia) received training on safety and safeguarding. These trainings have strengthened partners' understanding of Felm's requirements and expectations and supported partners in applying these principles in their own work. In addition, peer learning and sharing of best practices were encouraged by partners.

7.2 Developing Felm's capacity

Felm staff training and capacity development were practically oriented and focused on supporting the key processes and concepts used in the program, as well as presenting means and tools for project and program work. For example, Felm's International Department staff, whose work is linked to the program work in Helsinki or in program countries, were trained in the outcome harvesting method and qualitative data collection. This training aimed to strengthen the participants' understanding of the method and skills to measure behavioral change for monitoring and evaluation. Training sessions were also organized on themes such as the human rights based approach, safeguarding, disability inclusion, and climate resilience. Staff members delivered training sessions but also took part as participants in training sessions designed for partners. These shared learning experiences have been found to be beneficial to the collaboration between Felm's advisors and partners. In addition, the findings of the final evaluation of the program were shared and discussed between the staff and partners for mutual learning and inspiration.
In 2025 particular attention was given to the Core Humanitarian Standard, as Felm is engaging in a self-assessment process measuring itself against the standard in 2026. A light first assessment was conducted regarding Felm´s organizational capacities in spring 2025, followed by trainings and consultations with all staff, mostly at the unit level. Partner training sessions took place in Cambodia, Ethiopia, Myanmar, and Zimbabwe and are being continued in 2026 to cover all Felm partners. The results will inform

organizational capacity development initiatives and priorities, particularly in the areas of strengthening community participation and local leadership, safeguarding and complaints mechanisms, and knowledge management and learning, among other issues.

7.3 Sustainability of the projects

Institutional sustainability of the projects is considered strong. It is based on local ownership, capacity building, and close cooperation with other local actors, governments, and institutions. Evaluations confirm that most partner projects successfully built strong local ownership anchored in local community structures. For example, in Nepal (project NPK004), the climate-smart agriculture and market systems developed in the project were embedded into municipal budgets and cooperative structures with formal agreements, securing long-term continuation. According to the final program evaluation, 70% of the project owners have high confidence in the sustainability of the achieved results beyond the project phase.

Improved capacity and skills, diversified livelihoods, and small business opportunities, together with access to financial systems such as cooperatives and revolving funds, strengthened the economic sustainability of households and communities. In several cases, communities were able to reinvest profits and expand their production. Market linkages and cooperatives enhanced financial resilience in Ethiopia (ETK006). Women and persons with disabilities especially benefited from livelihoods and skills training, which improved their financial independence in Ethiopia and Colombia (ETK001, COK003). Challenges that remain include limited access to market, inflation, and weak financial mechanisms.

Sociocultural sustainability is considered strong, particularly in projects working with ethnic or other minorities in Colombia, Ethiopia, and Cambodia (COK002, ETK002, KHK002), due to community ownership and integration of local knowledge and cultural values into projects. In Nepal (NPK001), advocacy and promotion of Indigenous knowledge, mother tongue education, gender equality, and disability inclusion have led to positive shifts in attitudes and social norms as well as improved policy recognition. Deeper structural barriers, such as control over assets, remain a challenge in many cases. However, women and persons with disabilities are increasingly recognized as drivers of sustainability, and their active participation and leadership is considered critical in maintaining achievements beyond the project lifecycle.

Technological sustainability has been ensured using appropriate, low-cost, and locally maintainable technologies, but also by introducing digital tools and materials. For example, in Mauritania (MRK002), the production of mudbrick stoves provided a highly sustainable low-tech solution using local materials and skills. In Senegal (SNK001), climate-resilient agroecological techniques, such as composting, have been widely adopted, as have renewable energy systems and simple infrastructure solutions in Tanzania (TZK001). The importance of the availability of local repair capacity and appropriate financing mechanisms is emphasized. Digitalization is expected to reduce reliance on external inputs, which also contributes to environmental and economic sustainability. Accessible digital tools and materials were introduced in different kinds of projects, e.g., the use of scalable digital teaching resources in Myanmar (MMK002).

Environmental sustainability was central for projects focusing on climate resilience and adaptation to climate change. Training and adaptation of climate-smart practices, such as low-cost agroecological techniques in agroforestry in Senegal (SNK001), improved waste management, composting, renewable energy, and ecosystem restoration, as well as contributing to reduced emissions, improved biodiversity protection, and resilience to climate change. The use of local materials and low-emission approaches also reduced environmental impact. Community-based risk management systems strengthened adaptation to climate shocks such as floods and heavy rains. Integration of traditional ecological knowledge in Colombia (COK002) into environmental education has reinforced sustainable behaviors.

7.4 Localization and ownership

Fostering localization and ownership is at the core of the Felm program, and the program's external final evaluation confirmed that strong local ownership was amongst the most significant factors contributing to the program's achievements. According to the evaluation, "Many projects were consistently anchored in existing local community structures, and several successfully leveraged contributions of labor, time, or financial co-sharing, indicating strong ownership." This programmatic approach is embedded within a larger organizational context, where localization and ownership are promoted using the terminology of anti-racism and decolonization. Felm's anti-racist and decolonization work is grounded in the need to critically examine development cooperation practices, power relations, and institutional approaches from the perspective of localization and human rights based approaches (HRBA). Felm's Anti-Racist Action Plan, approved in December 2024, builds on a multi-year participatory process involving staff and partners. Its implementation is overseen by the Decolonization and Anti-Racism Working Group, which reports annually to Felm's Executive Management Group.

In 2025, implementation focused on strengthening equal partnerships, increasing local ownership, and shifting decision-making, knowledge production, and resources closer to partners and rights-holders. Felm strengthened partnership-based programming by co-designing the new 2026-2029 program and projects with partners and in consultation with the Program Advisory Group, consisting of 8 members from Felm partner organizations (from the operational side). Partners were actively involved in defining priorities and approaches to the new program. Moreover, participatory monitoring and evaluation was enhanced through the integration of outcome harvesting, which enables partners to document change based on locally defined outcomes and lived realities.

An organization-wide Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) self-assessment was conducted with active partner participation across multiple regions. The process strengthened mutual accountability, beneficiary-centered approaches, and dialogue on power relations and division of labor between Felm and partners. CHS implementation will continue in 2026.

Furthermore, Felm supported partners in diversifying funding sources through global funding support, reducing dependency on single donors, and strengthening organizational resilience. During 2025, Felm also planned an initiative and pilot to develop its approach to other than project-based support in the next program period 2026-2029.

In the Africa region, Regional Partnership Days provided a platform for joint reflection on power, localization, and program quality. Peer-learning activities took place in both Africa and Asia as well as CHS trainings in Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Cambodia, and Myanmar. Moreover, local Felm staff recruitment was increased in the regions, with a reduction in roles of staff members from Finland.

7.5 Partnerships

Promoting strong, equal partnerships with partner organizations is at the core of Felm's identity and links closely to Felm's agenda of decolonization, localization, and strengthening ownership as discussed in the previous chapter. Several mechanisms have been created to integrate partners into the development of Felm's work and strategic decisions.

Based on the external final evaluation made at the end of the program (2022-2025), partnership with Felm was the most frequently mentioned success factor by partners, selected by around 90% of respondents. This indicates that Felm's role as a facilitator, source of technical support, or strategic partner was widely perceived

as central to project success. Partnerships with local actors (e.g., communities, local authorities, or organizations) followed, selected by about 70% of respondents, underlining the value of strong local collaboration.

In Finland, one of Felm's key partnerships are the Evangelical Lutheran Church, congregations and Christian associations. Felm engages with them through communications, participation opportunities, and a wide range of domestic events and services. Felm funds much of this work through its own financial resources.

At the global level, Felm has two international partnership advisory structures: the Felm International Advisory Board (FIAB) and the Program Advisory Group (PAG). The current FIAB members are from Ethiopia, Cambodia, Zimbabwe, Nepal, Taiwan, Venezuela, Jordan, and Finland, and they meet twice a year. The overall role of FIAB is to advise Felm on the implementation of its vision and mission. This includes advice on strategic priorities, the international program and its implementation, the policies relevant to Felm's international program, and Felm's partnership policy. The other structure, PAG, met three times in 2025 and discussed topics such as context and risk analysis in Felm program planning, the monitoring and evaluation plan for Felm's program 2026-2029, Felm's global funding, the Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS), Felm's result reporting 2024, Felm's project manual 2026-2029, and the integration of Felm's cross-cutting objectives into program strategies and implementation.

Felm has also established Felm Fellowship, an innovative global partnership community that aims to strengthen collaboration, shared learning, and networking among Felm's global partners. This also includes partners who no longer receive funding from Felm. The platform has been widely appreciated among partners for continued and diversified partnership and learning with and among Felm's partners.
Felm's key international networks include the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, and ACT Alliance, with whom Felm collaborated closely both globally as well as in program countries to advance program goals through advocacy, coordination of efforts, and knowledge exchange, among other means. For example, Felm participated in country level ACT forums and cooperated with ecumenical councils to create complementarity, strengthen effectiveness, and enhance the overall impact of Felm's work. See chapter 3.5 on Advocacy for related examples of joint work. As an additional example of Felm's efforts for stronger partnerships with and among its partner organizations at the regional level, a regional disability project in Asia (Nepal, Cambodia, Myanmar) brought the partners together in November 2025 to share good practices and to learn from each other. The challenges encountered in many of these countries are similar, and thus this kind of exchange is very important. Similarly, this kind of learning and networking has been organized at the country level in Nepal, Cambodia, and Myanmar, as well as in Africa, where Africa-wide Partnership Days were organized in December 2025.

8. Risk management

8.1 Risk management system

In 2025, Felm continued to adopt a risk management policy aligned with ISO 31000:2018. This policy aligns program and country-level risk management approaches, guiding decision-making through Notion. The process focuses on managing uncertainties within the organization's control with tailored risk treatment plans. Annual risk reporting is based on identified risk treatment plans, ensuring continual oversight and transparency via Notion.

Risk factors are reviewed in context analysis workshops for country-specific assessments organized annually. Risk management is implemented at the national and program levels, with a three-year cycle from 2025 to 2027.

Safeguarding is a fundamental component of Felm's operations, aimed at protecting individuals from harm, including sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (SEAH). Felm adheres to international safeguarding standards set by ACT Alliance and the CHS Alliance, including the IASC Six Core Principles on sexual exploitation and abuse. Felm's policies include the Code of Conduct, Child Safeguarding Policy, Policy against SEAH, Principles for Safer Space, and Anti-Corruption Policy. All employees and representatives are required to comply with these policies.

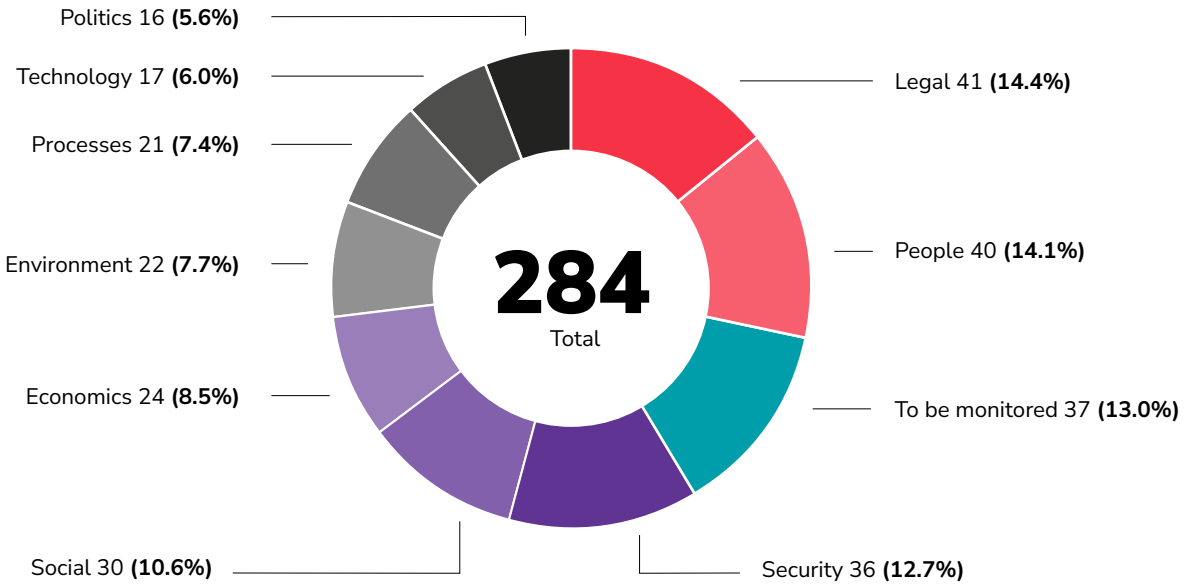
Felm has established a comprehensive safeguarding risk assessment framework that is systematically integrated into all project planning. Where projects involve contact with children, a dedicated child safeguarding risk assessment is also required. Felm also provides regular safeguarding training to its partners based on a three-year cycle, with risk awareness forming a core component of the training (in 2025, all partners in Asia were trained). Felm strengthens its accountability structures to ensure that community members have access to appropriate and safe reporting channels. Partners are also informed that if an allegation concerns Felm, the Felm Whistleblowing Channel must always be used. In addition, Felm has introduced a Visitor's Code of Conduct to ensure that all short-term visitors to project sites are aware of safeguarding principles and reporting mechanisms.

To ensure that these accountability mechanisms are widely understood, the program applies communication strategies aligned with the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS). Information is shared via the Felm website, a three-year training cycle beginning in 2025, and ongoing communication between program staff and partner organizations to maintain awareness and understanding. These responsibilities are mentioned in the Project Agreement.

8.2 Risk management in 2025

During the end of 2025, regional teams and country teams were tasked with identifying risks in their operating countries, following the categorization of the new risk management system. A total of 284 risks were found, and a total of 401 mitigation actions were planned for the coming years. The risks identified are divided into the categories as follows:

Table 7.



Several key lessons emerged from realized risks during 2025. In many contexts civic space continued to shrink (e.g., Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Myanmar), and flexible operational models and relocation of staff proved essential for maintaining program continuity. Political unrest caused by parliamentary or presidential elections affected the implementation of projects (e.g., Ethiopia, Nepal, Tanzania) and required high adaptability from projects and staff, as in some cases the staff was relocated for a period. Economic instability and inflation required adaptive budgeting and strengthened local ownership to safeguard implementation (e.g., Myanmar). Climate-related disruptions slowed down project implementation and highlighted the need for disaster preparedness (e.g., Nepal, Mauritania), while heightened security threats underlined the importance of remote monitoring and flexible planning (e.g., Ethiopia, Colombia). Generally, health security risks, particularly in fragile healthcare environments, were mitigated through flexible support and comprehensive staff insurance. The limited prioritization of disability rights in some countries reinforced the value of mainstreaming inclusion and improving data collection.

9. Monitoring, evaluation, and learning

In the final year of the program, the focus of the MEL activities was on collecting quality data on the results, learning, and best practices of the program, conducting final evaluations at the program and project levels, and preparing for the next phase of the program.

Data collection in projects was supported through multiple activities. Data collection instructions and templates for projects were updated for the endline data collection. The Felm PMEL team also prepared project-specific indicator reporting formats as an additional annex to project annual reports to ensure clear communication between Felm and the partners about project indicator values, especially regarding outcomes and impact, and to improve data quality for the final reporting year. Other actions in 2025 included assessing overall complementary data collection needs, and based on this, preparing measures to strengthen reporting on program results, particularly in relation to the rights of persons with disabilities.

An external final evaluation of the program was conducted at the end of 2025. Meanwhile, 32 external final evaluations were also implemented in projects, as well as two internal reviews. Project partners oversaw the development of the Terms of Reference and related tendering and procurement with guidance and quality assurance from Felm program managers.

Preparations for the program period of 2026-2029 were underway with support for partners' project planning and the development of Felm staff's capacities in qualitative data collection and outcome harvesting. Capacity development in qualitative methods was a recommendation from the mid-term evaluation of the program, and as outcome harvesting is introduced as a new method of monitoring in the program period 2026-2029, the Felm PMEL team commissioned a mini-training program from Learning Loop focusing especially on outcome harvesting. The program consisted of self-guided study on the Fabo platform, four online training sessions, and tailored mentoring sessions for different groups within Felm staff and management. Zimbabwean partners were trained in outcome harvesting with the lead of Act Church of Sweden, with a small contribution from Felm.

Summary of MEL during the program period 2022-2025

The MEL system was mostly set up during the first year of the program, and included, for example, launching new versions of the Felm Project Manual and project reporting forms, conducting a baseline assessment, major updates to the online project reporting portal, rolling out the new financial monitoring processes, and building Felm staff's capacity in results-based management through a mini-training series.

Over the program period (2022-2025), Felm staff reported having conducted 286 visits to monitor projects, including visits to project sites, visits to partners' offices, review sessions organized in safe locations outside of the project region, and structured remote monitoring visits conducted online. In-person project monitoring by Felm staff was challenging in certain contexts, such as in Myanmar and in conflict-prone regions in Ethiopia and Colombia. Solutions included, for example, monitoring through online meetings and separate in-person monitoring meetings outside of the actual project location. Apart from monitoring visits, regular project reports, including quarterly financial reports and semi-annual narrative reports, were essential to project monitoring.

The main tool for program results monitoring during the period 2022-2025 was Felm's program indicators, which were incorporated into partners' project-level results matrices and annually aggregated to the Felm program results matrix. Felm has put significant effort into supporting the use of these indicators in projects over the years, including templates and guidelines for data collection, reviewing and commenting on project results matrices, and trainings on the use of the Washington Group Short Set of Questions for identification of persons with disabilities when implementing surveys. However, the original set of indicators was too complicated for most partners, and already at baseline significant data gaps appeared. The set of indicators was revised based on observations made during annual reporting, especially in 2023 and in 2024. Some indicators were abandoned altogether, whereas some were simplified or clarified. For 2025 annual reporting, Felm developed separate forms for partners' submission of indicator data to further enhance data quality and standardization. These efforts gradually improved data quality and the use of indicators in projects. However, Felm learned that in the next program, the indicators should be much simpler, include more qualitative measures, and be designed in closer cooperation with partners from the start to create a shared understanding and ensure they meet the SMART criteria.

The program was evaluated twice: a mid-term evaluation was conducted in 2024 and a final evaluation at the end of 2025. Both were independent external evaluations, and together they covered the criteria of impact, effectiveness, relevance, and sustainability, giving recommendations for both the 2022-2025 program period and the following one. The sharing of evaluation findings and recommendations with Felm partners was slow after the mid-term evaluation due to sensitive information about a repressive context being included in the report, as well as language barriers. Therefore, the final evaluation process was carefully designed to overcome these challenges. The evaluators presented their report to Felm staff and partners in English in December 2025. The evaluation was separately presented and discussed by Felm staff in Spanish and French with partners in Colombia and Senegal respectively.

The program also put efforts into developing and piloting new MEL processes and tools. The program experimented with digital data collection using KoboToolbox, especially with partners in the Africa region. However, after some testing, it was decided that digital data collection best works as a project-level tool when the partner has the capacity and interest, rather than a uniform program-level process. Learning processes were developed at the program level, especially through the establishment of a Program Annual Review, which took different forms over the program period. Also, Project Review Discussions with partners were launched. The development of these new processes suffered from the change negotiations in 2023, as well as high staff turnover both in the program countries and in Helsinki. Development of the learning processes will continue in the new program period.

9.1 Lessons learned

Across the program, a key lesson is that strong partner capacity combined with adaptive approaches and flexible implementation supports continuity in changing conditions. In contexts affected by conflict, instability, and climate-related shocks, such as Colombia and Ethiopia, projects were able to continue despite access

and operational constraints when community structures were able to maintain activities locally and implementation adapted to these conditions. This highlights the importance of investing in partner capacity while maintaining flexibility in planning and delivery, including adjusting timelines and methods when needed.

Community ownership and the agency of participants emerged as an important factor in sustaining results across several projects. Projects that supported communities to take active roles in planning, implementation, and monitoring report stronger participation and continued engagement during implementation. In practice, this was reflected in community committees, peer groups, and self-help structures, where participants took roles in implementation, follow-up, and decision-making. In Colombia and Nepal, peer-based approaches increased participation in community activities, and in Ethiopia, self-help groups supported both income generation and engagement. In several cases, these structures were involved in managing activities and resources at the community level. Participation was reported to be stronger where projects maintained regular contact with project participants and learning was allowed to happen over a longer period of time, rather than relying on one-time activities. It also depended on practical conditions, such as the use of local languages, small groups, and adapted facilitation.

A further lesson is the importance of engagement with local authorities and service providers. Projects report that working with duty-bearers through planning, training, and coordination supported uptake of approaches within existing systems. This is seen, for example, in Ethiopia and Nepal, where project approaches were adopted in schools or integrated into local government systems. In addition, documenting results and using evidence supported engagement with authorities and contributed to these processes. Projects also show that combining community awareness with improvements in services strengthened results, for example, linking parental awareness with teacher training, learning materials, and accessibility measures in education.

A related lesson is that simple, locally adapted technologies are more likely to be adopted and sustained. Projects introduced approaches such as agroforestry, improved stoves, irrigation methods, and climate-resilient agriculture. In several cases, these were adopted by households beyond the direct project groups, indicating that practical and low-cost solutions can spread beyond initial targets.

The cross-cutting objectives (gender justice, disability inclusion, and climate resilience) were most effective when integrated throughout the project cycle rather than being implemented as separate activities. Gender equality outcomes improved when practical barriers to participation were addressed through flexible approaches and targeted support for women's leadership and decision-making. Disability inclusion, child safeguarding, and psychosocial support were strongest when embedded in everyday practices, addressing not only infrastructure but also attitudes, systems, representation, and overall program quality.

Finally, a key lesson is that addressing needs in a more holistic way supports more stable results. Projects that combined livelihoods, environmental activities, and social support were better able to respond to multiple needs at the same time. In some contexts, psychosocial support was used to support participation in fragile settings. Several projects also note that change processes take time, and that continued support to community structures and engagement with local institutions is needed beyond the project period.

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