

# A DECADE OF SUPPORTING DEMOCRACY



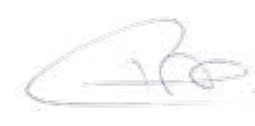
POLITICAL PARTIES OF FINLAND FOR DEMOCRACY - DEMO FINLAND



# A DECADE of supporting democracy



*Paavo Arhinmäki  
Left Alliance*



*Carl Haglund  
Swedish People's  
Party of Finland*



*Ville Niinistö  
Greens*



*Antti Rinne  
Social Democratic  
Party*



*Päivi Räsänen  
Christian Democrats*



*Juha Sipilä  
Centre Party*



*Timo Soini  
Finns Party*



*Alexander Stubb  
National  
Coalition Party*

**THE FINNISH PARLIAMENTARY PARTIES** express their warmest greetings to their co-operative organisation on its 10th anniversary! We are proud of the work Demo Finland carries out and we are committed to continue our support for democracy through Demo Finland in the coming years.

## FOUNDING DEMO FINLAND

The Finnish approach to democracy support | **Heli Järvinen &**

**Tiina Kukkamaa-Bah**

Dialogue as a means of reconciliation | **Sari Varpama**

Support for democracy is support for the future | **Mirja Ryyänen**

## AN ORGANISATION BY POLITICAL PARTIES

A common cause: Democracy | **Miapetra Kumpula-Natri**

Supporting democracy is supporting a life of dignity for all |

**Ulla Karvo**

No democracy without educated women | **Sanni Grahn-Laasonen**

A surprise task | **Eila Tiainen**

The cornerstone of democracy is participation | **Satu Haapanen**

## EFFECTIVE WORK IN PARTNER COUNTRIES

A joint agenda for Tanzanian women politicians | **Ave Maria**

**Semakafu**

Youth for gender equality in Nepal | **Laxmi Khatiwada**

New generation of politicians believe in cooperation in Tunisia

Bringing women's voices to public attention with the power

of co-operation

5 Empowerment through the experiences of Finnish politicians |

**Christine Chewe**

5 Self-confidence boosts women's participation |

6 **Bennadette Chabakalanga**

8 The Myanmar School of Politics clearing a path to

democratic dialogue

10 Youth dialogue for a healed nation in Sri Lanka

10

## WHY SUPPORT DEMOCRACY?

12 Democracy, sure – but how? | **Tarja Halonen**

13 Ending aid dependency by tackling the root causes of

15 underdevelopment | **Heidi Hautala**

16 A moment for celebration and reflection | **Roel von Meijenfeldt**

Good governance is a Finnish asset | **Eero Heinäluoma**

19 Learning to win – and lose | **Astrid Thors**

Political parties play a key role in democracy work | **Mari Kiviniemi**

19 Three things that Finland can share with the world | **Miika Tomi**

21 The power of example | **Saara Ruokonen**

22 Democracy support: the cornerstone of development | **Sebastian**

**Tynkkynen**

24 Democracy and development go hand in hand | **Lenita Toivakka**

46

46

46

46

**PUBLISHED BY** Political Parties of Finland for Democracy – Demo

Finland 2015

**EDITORS** Lassi Härmälä & Anna Juhola

**LAYOUT** Jesse Pasanen

**PROOFREADING** psEDIT

**PRINTED BY** Eura Print Oy

**COVER IMAGES** Maria Santto

Views expressed in this publication are personal and cannot be attributed to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland or Demo Finland.

SUPPORTED BY OFFICIAL  
DEVELOPMENT AID FROM THE MINISTRY  
FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF FINLAND

[WWW.DEMOFINLAND.ORG](http://WWW.DEMOFINLAND.ORG)



Heli Järvinen and Tiina Kukkamaa-Bah in Myanmar in June 2015

# FOUNDING DEMO FINLAND

## Demo Finland – the Finnish approach to democracy support

**DEMO FINLAND** was formed in 2005 to channel the expertise and experiences of Finnish political parties into Finland's international development co-operation. At the same time, it was envisioned that Finnish politicians would learn about the work of political parties elsewhere in the world, thereby getting firsthand experience of development co-operation and democracy support. Demo Finland, thus, has a unique mission to complement Finnish foreign policy.

Finnish parliamentary parties work together through Demo Finland and in doing so set an example of cross-party co-operation for our partners in new and transitioning democracies. As a co-operative body comprising all Finnish parliamentary parties, Demo Finland is unique also at the global level. Finnish competences relate to peaceful problem solving; cross-party co-operation and inclusive politics; and the political participation of women and

youth. Demo Finland's partners regard us as a neutral facilitator and they see Finnish politicians' involvement as important peer support.

During the ten years of our existence, we have managed to build trusting relationships with political parties in our partner countries. Our work has contributed to the strengthening of women's political participation in Tanzania and constructive co-operation between political youth and student organizations and peaceful elections in Nepal. Recently, Demo Finland has established new initiatives in countries such as Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Tunisia and Zambia. We have also cemented our position as an equal among international democracy support providers and have established co-operation projects with international sister organizations. All this requires long-term commitment and mutual trust.

The purpose of this publication is to give a voice to our greatest resource, the politicians. Through the experiences

of Finnish politicians and their peers in our partner countries we can reflect on the impact of our work. Democracy cannot function without democrats.

Finnish political parties can be proud of the work of Demo Finland. We are especially happy about the continued commitment of our member parties to support and participate in our work. Together we will strive to advance our efforts for another ten years.

**Heli Järvinen**

*Chair of Demo Finland*

*Member of the Parliament of Finland 2007–2011, 2015–  
Greens*

**Tiina Kukkamaa-Bah**

*Executive Director*

*Demo Finland*

## Dialogue as a means of reconciliation

**THE FACT** that all Finnish parliamentary parties came together to form Demo Finland, and that they were, and are, prepared to share their experience and expertise on a voluntary basis, is remarkable. Political parties are the gatekeepers in a democracy, the success of which depends on the accountability and inclusivity of the parties themselves. How a person gets to be in a position of power in a democracy is dictated within political parties, not just in elections. Therefore, a functioning party system is vital.

Democratic values supersede party politics: by working together, the Finnish parliamentary parties provide a powerful example of how to take responsibility in a multi-party system, something that is greatly needed in many young democracies. Democracy always assumes a local form and is based on local needs: there is no one model that can be exported. Democracy can be supported, however, and who would be better at that than the professionals, the political actors themselves? Peer support, working both

**“Democracy always assumes a local form and is based on local needs: there is no one model that can be exported.”**

ways, is at the core of Demo Finland's work. Democracy, like humans, is always imperfect; as Winston Churchill said, it is the worst form of government except for all the others that have been tried. It needs commitment and continuous work, just like Demo Finland has required over the past ten years to become the organisation it is today.

I had the pleasure of being the first Executive Director of Demo Finland, and my first tasks were to rent an office, open a bank account and get a computer. Much has happened since then, and Demo Finland has grown from a fledgling organisation into a serious democracy support actor in the international community. It is considered a proactive and progressive organisation with a lot to contribute, and Finland can be truly proud of Demo Finland and the commitment of its parliamentary parties to the support of democracy.

Many people should be thanked for Demo Finland's

development, not least the first, dedicated board and its Chairperson Mirja Ryyänen, and, of course, the subsequent boards and Chairpersons; political parties and their sub-organisations, active working group members, the parliament, supportive civil servants and international colleagues providing limitless support and advice. The staff of Demo Finland have shown exceptional dedication throughout the years. Demo Finland is all about co-operation and respect for equality and inclusion, the core values of democracy. Overcoming differences and agreeing to disagree is at the core of its work. It has been an interesting journey and long may it continue.

**Sari Varpama**

*Senior Adviser 2013–2015*

*Executive Director 2006–2013*

*Demo Finland*



Bertha Koda, Mirja Rynnänen and Ave Maria Semakafu  
in Tanzania in November 2007

**“The work of Demo Finland is a remarkable example of partnership based on real needs.”**

## Support for democracy is support for the future

**I WAS INTERESTED** in development policy as a youth but only got the opportunity to explore development co-operation when I was given international tasks as a parliamentarian. With responsibilities for the Council of Europe, the OSCE, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Foreign Affairs Committee as well as the European Parliament, I realized how important the role of democracy is and how vital it is to have well-functioning political parties. At the same time I started wondering why political parties play such a minor role in development co-operation, leaving aside sporadic sister party connections. This was particularly odd considering that official policies highlighted the importance of democracy for development.

I also felt that Finnish MPs did not know well enough

what development co-operation was all about in reality. Therefore, I thought, a new actor was needed to cater to the needs of Finland's partner countries in development co-operation as well as Finnish politicians interested in international development. In 2003 I was elected Vice Chair of the newly-founded Development Policy Committee, and thanks to my initiative, a separate working group began discussing the founding of a new actor that would focus on democracy support.

Unsurprisingly, the establishment of a new development organisation, and particularly the fact that the parliamentary parties were involved, caused suspicion. That is why the foundations were laid with special caution. The predecessor of the Development Policy Committee, the Advisory

Board for Relations with Developing Countries, published a report on parties' participation in development co-operation and that report was used as the benchmark. A lot of attention was paid to ensure that the new actor would respond to actual needs.

Right from the beginning, it was decided that every parliamentary party should commit to the action. When the real work began, it was evident that the multi-party approach was the right one. The feedback we received from partner countries reassured us that we were on the right path. Having said that, it is of utter importance that donors have really started to listen to what partners in developing countries have to say. The work of Demo Finland is a remarkable example of partnership based on real needs.

Also Demo Finland's very first project addressed a real need, in keeping with its founding vision: it supported the cross-party co-operation of Tanzanian women politicians. All the issues of a donor-dependent country marked the landscape in Tanzania. Furthermore, the participation and inclusion of women in politics had been very rare up till that point. All the right things were being said, but in practice the situation was far from ideal.

It has been extremely important to find courageous people who have had trust in our common agenda and have been determined enough to overcome prejudice – the same way prejudice was overcome when Demo Finland was founded. I will always remember these people who have guided us forward when there have been impasses in our way.

The work of Demo Finland is based on peer support,

mutual learning and dialogue. Politicians around the world will always find common ground, even though they might disagree on many issues. Politicians in partner countries have often wondered how Finnish politicians from different parties are good friends with each other. I think it is right to let our different opinions show. But in politics, it is not the people but the issues that argue. The platforms that have been established for youth and women politicians with Demo Finland's support are good examples of the fact that agreements are reached when one learns to listen to the reasoning behind other opinions.

It has been a great joy to see how Demo Finland's work has expanded to new partner countries. The work has been very determined, and as a result Demo Finland has become an integral part of democracy support. It has been important to focus limited resources to the core work and prove that it pays off. Effectiveness must be secured in the future too even though the methods may change over time.

I hope that Demo Finland achieves a status and funding that acknowledges the meaning and the uniqueness of the organization and that it would no longer be compared to traditional civil society organisations. I also wish that the parliamentary parties will recognize Demo Finland as a valuable asset and be proud to say that they have an organisation that allows them to effectively participate in international democracy support.

Finnish political parties must make a greater commitment to Demo Finland and there must be further efforts to build deep understanding of development and democracy. If that happens, Demo Finland's founding purpose will be met to

an even greater extent than it is now. Often, people activate through personal experience – there is still need for Demo Finland’s work both in Finland and in partner countries. I hope Demo Finland will be able to continue what it does best – advance the role of women and youth in development. In a few years’ time, perhaps one will look back and wonder why an organization like this did not exist before 2005.

### **Mirja Ryyänen**

*Chair of Demo Finland 2006–2007*

*Member of the Parliament of Finland 1987–1995, 1999–2003*

*Member of the European Parliament 1995–1999  
Centre Party*

# AN ORGANISATION BY POLITICAL PARTIES

## **A common cause: Democracy**

**DEMO FINLAND** has a clear mandate: to advance democracy and do it by co-operation of the Finnish parliamentary parties. I got a chance to engage with its work during the first years of its existence, first as a member of the board and later on as Chairperson. The first major project during my time was to support women’s participation in political decision-making in Tanzania. I will never forget those spontaneous moments singing “Wanawake” (we are women and yes we can) after – and sometimes also during – long seminar days with Finnish delegates and Tanzanian colleagues who had travelled from distant districts to Dar es Salaam. Another major project was facilitating the co-operation of political youth in Nepal with the aim to enhance

political participation and representation.

The proposed cuts to development funding by the current Finnish government raise concern and would affect numerous Finnish development organisations – including Demo Finland. The true meaning of development co-operation is to advance development in countries with urgent needs. I have always thought that participation of the private sector in development co-operation is valuable. The private sector can bind partnerships that enhance trading and clear the way for Finnish investments. However, now I am afraid that shortsighted business interests in development co-operation will be detrimental to other efforts, such as democracy support and assistance to civil society.

Even when cutting heavily, the good work done on the ground should not be affected. Democratic progress and stability are prerequisites for business efforts in developing countries. Risk means higher investment prices and the risks are lowered by political stability, strengthened by a functioning democracy.

Development can be understood in numerous ways and in addition to development co-operation there are other means to advance a more just world.

Of the issues that have been on my desk during my first year as a Member of the European Parliament, I could pick out two examples of this. The first one is the trade agreement between the EU and the US that definitely has a focus on Western trade. But one should not forget its more general effects. If labour rights and sustainable development, for instance, would form part of the final agreement, that would set a precedent for future trade agreements and also those done with developing countries.

An even more concrete example is conflict minerals and the work carried out in the parliament to discuss their import and use. We, as representatives of European citizens, want to make transparent the cash flows concerning minerals imported from conflict-ridden areas. Is the exploitation and regulation of natural resources in democratic hands or are external powers increasing the risk of conflicts and prolonging crises, bad governance and autocracy?

It is of utter importance to remember our responsibilities even when our own country

and continent are facing economic hardship and security concerns. Inward-looking politics and neglect of global development commitments will not serve anyone in the longer term, and that includes us Europeans too. By closing eyes, one can try to forget the rest of the world, but it will be difficult to navigate forward.

Congratulations to dear 10-year-old Demo Finland!

I wish a very good European Year of Development for everyone supporting development co-operation!

### **Miapetra Kumpula-Natri**

*Member of the European Parliament*

*Chair of Demo Finland 2008–2009*

*Member of the Parliament of Finland 2003–2014*

*Social Democratic Party*



**Miapetra Kumpula-Natri with a delegation of Finnish politicians in Tanzania in January 2007**

## Supporting democracy is supporting a life of dignity for all

**TODAY'S WORLD** is frequently a depressing place. The historical truth is that a human being does not learn from his mistakes. Pain and human suffering continue in different parts of the world as new conflicts arise. Earlier tragedies are forgotten and the suffering goes on.

Those who have grown up in democratically-governed countries easily take democracy for granted. In a country where the political system is based on democracy, citizens have rights that do not necessarily exist in authoritarian countries. The right to a life with dignity without corruption, a life with freedom of speech and the right to political participation are not respected everywhere.

Often those who come from democratic countries criticize their own society and especially political decisions.

We have that opportunity. We are not silenced or fed with propaganda that we are unable to question. We have the possibility to start changing things. Quite often just being aware of this possibility is all it takes for social peace.

Democratically-governed countries are usually more stable and peaceful, less corrupt, more reliable partners, and more respectful of the basic rights of citizens. Support for democratic transition can push conflict-affected countries towards peace.

Demo Finland supports democratic development that strengthens peace. Personally, I did not know about the organization before I was asked to become its Chair. My interest in international affairs was a good starting point for becoming engaged with Demo Finland.

**“When the significance of politics and democracy for development is understood, it is also understood that democracy sets the foundations of a good life for everyone.”**



Ulla Karvo at the launch of Tanzania Women Cross-party Platform in 2010

The experiences I had as the Chair of Demo Finland opened up new perspectives on development co-operation. In 2010, we launched a women's cross-party platform in Dar es Salaam to enhance political participation and equal opportunities for women in Tanzania. Although the subject was and still is serious, some memories make me smile. The cheerfulness of the Tanzanians was visible in the meetings, which was very different from what we are used to in Finland.

Demo Finland also worked to strengthen the democratic participation of youth in Nepal. It is still a very new democracy, and it will take time to consolidate democracy and explore the full range of its possibilities.

It has been a great pleasure to see Demo Finland's activities expand to new partner countries and see its role consolidated and strengthened. When the significance of politics and democracy for development is understood, it

is also understood that democracy sets the foundations of a good life for everyone. Democratic development increases the possibility for people to live in their homes and in their home countries.

Even during these economically challenging times, we must understand the significance of development co-operation. With carefully targeted use of dwindling funds, results can still be achieved. Demo Finland has used resources efficiently to undertake work that really matters in in Finland and all over the world. It would not have been possible without highly committed staff. Thank you!

Congratulations on the 10-year journey!

**Ulla Karvo**

*Chair of Demo Finland 2010–2011*

*Member of the Parliament of Finland 2007–2011*

*National Coalition Party*

## No democracy without educated women

**ILLITERACY** is one of the greatest enemies of democracy. There are 781 million illiterate adults in the world today. If a large share of citizens cannot read, then democracy can only be partially fulfilled.

The importance of education for development is agreed. 'Achieve universal primary education' is one of the UN Millennium Development Goals, set in 2000. Finnish development co-operation has also put serious focus on education.

As the Chairperson of Demo Finland, I got the chance

to visit Tanzania in autumn 2011 where Demo Finland has a project focusing on enhancing women's participation in politics.

Tanzanian women politicians explained to us the various pitfalls of the country's political system. The constitution guarantees 30% of parliamentary seats to women but the quota is usually filled with women who are relatives of the men with the most influential seats. Few female parliamentarians are elected to parliament.



**Sanni Grahn-Laasonen meeting members of the Tanzania Women Cross-party Platform**

We also discussed why illiteracy is still such a widespread problem in the country even though almost every Tanzanian child goes to school. According to these women, girls can be repelled by the lack of hygienic sanitary facilities, and long unsafe walks to schools. Many young women need to drop out of school because they fall pregnant.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, close to half of the women are illiterate. A society can only be truly democratic if all the citizens are able to participate. Women's participation in decision-making is vital for development.

Finland works in multiple ways to improve the rights of girls and women, and hence their democratic participation. Finland has bilateral country partnerships whose primary focus is on education in many countries, such as Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal and Palestine. Over 90% of children get basic education in all of these countries today.

The situation has improved in Tanzania too. The Finnish budget support has been directed to support girls' schooling and now at primary level, the number of girls attending school almost equals the number of boys.

It is important to discuss the education of girls and women at a time when the global community is preparing for this autumn's United Nations General Assembly at which a new wave of development goals will be discussed; the so-called post-2015 agenda. One must remember that it is not enough to be able to attend school. The next step is to discuss the quality of education and learning.

One crosscutting issue of Finnish development co-operation and policy is gender equality. Enhancing the roles of girls and women in society is provided a lot of space in the development policy of the new Finnish government and we must adhere to it. Democracies need capable and educated women.

**Sanni Grahn-Laasonen**

*Minister for Education and Culture*

*Chair of Demo Finland 2011*

*Member of the Parliament of Finland 2011–*

*National Coalition Party*

## A surprise task

**FOUR YEARS AGO**, as a newly elected Member of the Parliament of Finland, I was in a meeting of the Left Alliance parliamentary group and listened to a presentation about an organization called Demo Finland which I was not familiar with at the time. I understood that it was an association that parliamentary parties had founded and it was working on development co-operation, mainly in Africa back then.

I took a few brochures with me and did not think about it any further, until our party was asked to nominate a representative to Demo Finland's board – and not just as a board member, but chairperson! After some persuasion, I said yes – which was fortunate because the task was interesting and taught me a lot.

I hopped on to a moving train. During the ten years of existence, Demo Finland has implemented a variety of projects, both long-term and short-term, and sometimes as a response to sudden need, as in the case of the Arab Spring.

At the time when I became the chair, one of the biggest projects was the Tanzania Women Cross-Party Platform, a collaborative forum for the women's wings of Tanzanian political parties that aimed to increase women's political activity and participation.

In 2012 I participated in a meeting of the platform where women discussed their efforts for the preparation process of the new Constitution of Tanzania. At the same time, regional elections were held in Zanzibar and everyone

**“Democracy cannot be exported, but it can and should be supported.”**



**Eila Tiainen giving a speech at a Demo Finland seminar in the Parliament of Finland**

celebrated as one of the platform participants got elected.

The most crucial challenges that arose in the discussions were increasing the number of women at all levels of governance, and enhancing gender equality and the influence of women in every area of society. The Tanzanians were impressed by the way that Finnish women politicians co-operated across party lines (e.g. the Network of Women Members of Parliament) and by how women in Finland have reached notable positions in politics. Later on I came to know that the women politicians I met had succeeded in their efforts when women were guaranteed a share of the parliamentary seats in two different ways.

During the visit, I saw the significance of the work that small cooperatives of women undertake with very little support and it is not just political advocacy. The wellbeing of families is increased when women get to earn some money and when the health of women and girls – especially sexual and reproductive – is taken looked after. In 2014, I

visited Ethiopia where women and girls were also included in development projects, and special attention was given to their education. This visit further strengthened my belief in the significance of participation.

Demo Finland has done important work to increase the engagement of youth and women, and has educated young men how to solve their problems by dialogue. Accomplishing democracy and good governance requires long-term engagement, and often the results are not immediately visible. Democracy cannot be exported, but it can and should be supported. Demo Finland has a lot to do to increase this understanding, also here among the Finnish parliamentary parties and their supporters.

#### **Eila Tiainen**

*Chair of Demo Finland 2012–2013*

*Member of the Parliament of Finland 2011–2015*

*Left Alliance*

### **The cornerstone of democracy is participation**

**WHEN I WAS** the chairperson of Demo Finland, I came to understand how cross-party co-operation can give concrete tools for building just and inclusive societies. I had an opportunity to get to know Demo Finland's work in Nepal as well as to train women politicians in Libya and Tunisia. The Tunisian School of Politics is a very successful program. It plays an important role in a country that only recently adopted a democratic constitution, and where

some undemocratic powers are still trying to hamper the current democratic development. The determination of young Tunisian politicians to root democracy is very strong and therefore I believe that Tunisia will be able to cherish diversity and democracy, overcoming attempts to return to autocracy.

Lately I have been pondering the participation of youth and women in societal affairs here in Finland. I am con-

**“The strength of Demo Finland is that politicians from various parties and countries get to compare experiences, best practices and learn from each other.”**

cerned about how the youth feel alienated from decision-making. It is not the youth who should feel guilty. Adults have forgotten to listen to the needs of younger generations. The difficult language of politics and the feeling of not being able to influence tend to disengage people and especially youth from decision-making.

Growing into democracy begins at a young age. In the Nordic countries it is understood that children will become

responsible citizens if they are allowed to make decisions and take responsibility when they are young. However, social participation of young people in the Nordic countries is alarmingly low, and their interest in social matters is low.

Good structures have been created to increase youth participation, such as statutory student bodies or municipal youth councils. Youth participation should nevertheless be something more than making decisions about



**Satu Haapanen meeting with alumni of the Tunisian School of Politics in the Parliament of Finland in December 2014**

school meals or equipment for the school-yard once a year. Young people should be able to genuinely participate in decision-making processes from early on. Nearly all decision-making also concerns children and youth, no matter whether it is about town planning or health care, not even mentioning education.

In what ways, then, could we support youth participation? I interviewed a few youngsters, aged 15 and 16, about this. They had good suggestions for promoting participation.

Schools should teach children quite early how society works. Issues should be discussed more from the point of view of youth and how decisions affect young people. Politicians should visit schools more and there should be different kinds of active people in the media to offer young people some encouraging examples. Participation should be real: not only hearing, but genuine listening and inclusion in the decision-making process.

Asking young people's views and opinions would contribute to youth participation. They should be heard regularly. I also think youth should have the opportunity to participate in the work of municipal committees, and municipal boards and the national government should consider the views of young people. We must work to develop new forms of participation.

Young people find the language of politics too difficult. This is not a problem of youth only. We should ask whether

the language of politics is so difficult that it results in a large part of the population becoming alienated from decision-making and the use of power. If it is, we must take into account not only the language that politicians and media use, but also ensure that young people understand the essential concepts and structures of the society.

In democracy, everyone's opinion is valuable. It is important to encourage everyone to participate in the discussion and decision-making. Constructive dialogue should be practiced beginning in childhood. Everyone has the right to feel that they can have a say in matters that concern their own lives or in what kind of a world we live in today and in the future.

The strength of Demo Finland is that politicians from various parties and countries get to compare experiences, best practices and learn from each other. Young politicians get to participate in youth co-operation organized by Demo Finland and give their input to democratic development abroad. Youth must get firsthand experience and see that they can contribute to a more just and better world – nearby and far away.

#### **Satu Haapanen**

*Chair of Demo Finland 2014–2015*

*Member of the Parliament of Finland 2011–2015*

*Greens*

# EFFECTIVE WORK IN PARTNER COUNTRIES

## A joint agenda for Tanzanian women politicians

**IT WAS** with the support of Demo Finland that the Tanzania Women Cross-Party Platform (T-WCP), Ulingo, was established and later institutionalized. During the last ten years Demo Finland's support has been instrumental in supporting political women to unite and discuss ways to enhance democratic politics.

One of the key outcomes of our cross-party participation

is that women from different political parties managed to identify a common agenda and jointly press for the adoption of a women's agenda by the government and political parties. This was made possible through sisterhood, namely financial support and sharing of experiences, with Demo Finland and Finnish politicians.

T-WCP has managed to create a common force for wom-



**Eila Tiainen and Ave Maria Semakafu met in Finland in 2012**

en in politics; a force that advocates for gender equality in our electoral system and gives visibility to the cause of women amongst the political leadership class. The process of writing a new constitution for Tanzania was an opportunity that T-WCP seized to improve women's visibility and advocate for the rights of women and other politically-marginalized groups. The final document – compiled by Ulingo – was adopted as one of 12 key non-negotiable issues by the 'Wanawake na Katiba Coalition', a joint force for ensuring that the new constitution contains gender equality principles.

The mutual agreement and constructive co-operation between the platform's members is a major achievement. Members agree that once in T-WCP, the main agenda is women and not party politics. The involvement of NGOs and other civil society actors as partners has supported T-WCP to sharpen its agenda for gender equality in politics.

**Ave Maria Semakafu**

*Coordinator for the Tanzania Women Cross-Party Platform*

**IN TANZANIA**, Demo Finland supported the establishment of the country's first platform for co-operation between the women's wings of all parliamentary parties. The platform focuses on enhancing gender equality and it was institutionalized in 2010.

The platform was granted official status and the right to lead a consultative process on gender issues during the

renewal of Tanzania's constitution. Thanks to the platform, the new draft of the constitution proposes a change to the electoral system by which one woman and one man would be elected from each constituency. This would increase the number of women in parliament as well as the possibility for women to have more influence in the parliament.

*All parliamentary parties are represented in the Tanzania Women Cross-party Platform*

## Youth for gender equality in Nepal

**ALL WOMEN**, regardless of their political affiliations, face common challenges and women working in politics are no exception. It is essential for young Nepalese women politicians to co-operate across party lines because for a politician who wants to succeed, it is essential to respect and value the beliefs and opinions of others. It is easier said than done, but then again it is possible to think outside the box and extend our comfort zones. We women politicians should support each other because it helps us to endure the common challenges in this arduous political journey.

The project, Mobilizing Youth for Gender Equality in Politics, aimed at young female politicians, is possibly the only one of its kind. The geographical scope of this program extends from Panchathar in the East of Nepal to Bajura in the Far Western Province. Increasing equality, identifying common issues, and developing a mechanism to address common challenges are the central tenets of this program. The success of the program lies primarily in its attempts to develop a common agenda for addressing these challenges.

I felt this program offered an opportunity for our fellow party members to re-engage in politics, thus contributing to increased political involvement of women. I believe this program has also helped us strengthen the relationships between different political parties, thereby helping us to find common ground and reduce the number of unpleasant incidents.

On a personal level, this program helped me to identify the critical challenges faced by women in politics. I got the

opportunity to interact with women from different political parties and it helped me gain deeper insights on issues we are facing. Moreover, it helped me understand the value of unity in diversity. I learnt how to be flexible and how to present my own views while respecting others' views. Additionally, I came to understand what is important for success, such as how to concentrate and focus on a topic, how to maintain that focus, and what practical strategies can be used to achieve success.

I was lucky to meet former Finnish Minister, Heidi Hautala. This wonderful opportunity helped me gain some critical understanding of international political affairs. I learnt that female politicians holding senior positions in both countries, Nepal and Finland, encounter similar challenges, as they attempt to escape from within narrow boundaries often defined by an overtly male-dominated political culture.

It was interesting to hear about the rise of women's participation in Finnish politics and it was inspiring to learn from the successful story of a female politician who had faced many struggles. This inspired me profoundly and gave me energy to undertake my work. I hope to continue my political activities with more passion than ever.

**Laxmi Khatiwada**

*Member of the Central Committee of Nepal Tarun Dal Youth organisation of the Nepali Congress Party*



*Hundreds of young women politicians were trained during the Youth for Gender Equality project all around Nepal*

In 2007, political youth and students' organizations of **NEPAL** started systematic co-operation to enhance the role of youth in politics. The co-operation started with the support of Demo Finland and was the first time in Nepal's history that these organizations agreed to work together.

Every significant parliamentary party has been involved in the process, meaning that former civil war enemies decided to sit down at the same table. In 2010, the organiza-

tions jointly published the first Nepal youth policy program.

During the election period in 2013, the organizations made a pledge of non-tolerance of electoral violence, thanks to a joint project of Demo Finland and the UNDP. The elections were the least violent in modern Nepalese history, which is notable in a country where electoral violence has been severe and often encouraged by political parties.

## New generation of politicians believe in cooperation in Tunisia

**TUNISIAN YOUTH** were at the forefront of the 2011 Jasmine revolution that ousted the former president Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali. However, soon after the revolution the youth found themselves far away from the tables where decisions on the direction of new and democratic Tunisia were made. This was partly due to the youth's own dissent from party politics and the slow progress of democratization has further alienated a large share of young Tunisians from democratic practice.

Around 70% of Tunisians are below 35-years of age and therefore the engagement of youth in decision-making is an important issue for the future of the country. The Tunisian School of Politics (TSoP) is trying to attract more active youth to join party politics while it is also empowering and supporting those younger generation politicians who are currently pursuing a career in politics.

The Tunisian School of Politics has a strong emphasis on cross-party cooperation and encouragement is sought also

from abroad. According to Kmar Gazzou from Nida Tounes it has been important to get peer support and see how things are done abroad. The School attracts trainers and guests from all over the world and the alumni of the school have participated in study visits to Bulgaria, Finland, France and the Netherlands.

However, Gazzou says that the opportunity to get to know youth from other parties and to understand their visions has been even more important: "Even though everyone would stick to their ideology, a major change in attitudes has taken place. There used to be no communication across party lines."

Hichem Hosni, representing Parti Populaire Progressiste, adds that the TSoP has offered a unique opportunity for dialogue: "In Tunisia, political education has been a privilege

of academics. The TSoP brought the progressive ones and the islamists, the liberals and the socials to sit around one table. It has cut down the once evident friction."

Manel Rhouma from Afek Tounes confirms these views by stating that getting to know politicians from her generation across party-lines is just as important as the skills and knowhow taught at the TSoP.

The new generation of politicians is willing to use these networks they have created. However, there is frustration due to the slow nature of democratization. "We have to remain positive, the democratization has only started. Sometimes we feel that we can only wait – maybe in five or ten years things have already changed when a new generation with fresh attitudes, more skills and eagerness to co-operate has stepped up."



*Kmar Gazzou and Hichem Hosni believe that youth are ready for co-operation across party lines*

**IN TUNISIA**, Demo Finland with its partners CEMI from Tunisia and the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy, founded the Tunisian School of Politics aimed at a new generation of Tunisian politicians. The school has around 50 students each year.

Fourteen alumni were elected to the Tunisian parliament in 2014 and three of them were given ministerial offices. One in four of the 200 alumni stood in the elections.

Young politicians participating in the Tunisian School of Politics focus on enhancing a constructive and co-operative political culture in Tunisia while also encouraging more young people to join party politics.

## Bringing women's voices to public attention with the power of co-operation

**DURING OUR CO-OPERATION** with Demo Finland here in Zambia, we have realized that we all face common problems and challenges as women in politics. What has changed is that now we know how working together across party-lines can help us.

Together we feel that we can speak up for the voiceless women in our society. For instance, we have been able to jointly raise the issue of gender-based violence and have an impact on confronting it. We have also raised the issue of girls who are discouraged to attend school, and because of our cross-party co-operation families are now much more willing to have their girls educated.

Thanks to the work of Demo Finland and Zambia National Women's Lobby, we are also keeping in touch and communicating in-between official events. We are working together to develop policies and actions together, giving each other advice. We talk to each other freely and we do not fight.

It is not only about the enhanced co-operation but we have also gained a lot of knowledge. We have learnt to be more assertive and speak out loud in public. We have more confidence now to present our ideas in our parties and skills to make an impact within our parties and in Zambian society.

Our aim is to have more women making decisions in Zambia and to have our platform working on a sustainable and independent basis without outside support. At the same time we want to spread our network wider to more districts, and eventually to all provinces and districts of the country.

*The cross-party Advisory Group of a joint project by Demo Finland and Zambia National Women's Lobby was interviewed on the 5th May 2015 in Lusaka*

**“Together we feel that we can speak up for the voiceless women in our society.”**

## Empowerment through the experiences of Finnish politicians

**MY MOTIVATION** to get involved in politics arose from the fact that my home area was facing too many problems and I did not feel that the people who were representing us back then were doing enough. It was 2006 and it was easy to get elected because people wanted change. In 2011 I faced competition in the election but people knew I had worked very hard and deserved a new term.

Even though I had experience in politics, the workshops by the Zambia National Women's Lobby and Demo Finland have given me a lot. Previously I did not have enough knowledge about women in politics. Now I have been able to use this knowledge and educate women in my community about the importance of women participating in politics.

In addition, the workshops have given me a lot of confidence about how to communicate better. I used to be afraid when a man spoke and I would not challenge him but now I do. I have gone on to educate my fellow women to do so. Furthermore, my participation with Demo Finland and ZNWL taught me a new way of addressing issues. I was

taught to interact with people in my ward and now we identify relevant issues together. The people in the ward appreciate very much that I do this.

I was given an opportunity to go on a study trip to Finland. I was excited as out of all the female councillors in my party I was the one selected. It was my first time out of the country. I learnt a lot about how women groups work together in Finland. I have used this experience as an example when discussing with women in Zambia, assuring them that it is possible to have more women in parliament.

**Christine Chewe**

*Councillor for Musakanya Ward*

*Patriotic Front*



Christine Chewe (on the right) got first-hand experience of Finnish politics as a member of delegation of Zambian women councillors in June 2014

## Self-confidence boosts women's participation

**I GOT INVOLVED** in politics through the activities of the Catholic Church. The Archbishop of Lusaka encouraged women to be active in politics. I was immediately given an application form as a joke, but I actually liked the idea and decided to join politics. Other women and my husband also encouraged me. The first Zambia National Women's Lobby meeting I attended became a turning point for my political career. I started taking politics seriously and became a councillor for my ward. The support I got from ZNWL was crucial because I was the first woman councillor here and there has never been a female member of parliament from my area.

Being a female politician in Zambia is not easy. There is a lot of corruption and the system usually favors men. When I have campaigned, I have come to know that men have been

telling their communities not to vote for a woman candidate.

The ZNWL and Demo Finland activities in which I have been able to participate have assisted me on an individual level but they have also helped our communities to see the value of women acting in leadership positions, such as councillor. On a personal level, I think I can be more assertive now and I want to work even harder. In addition, I could not have won a Gender Links Award without the knowledge I have got from the activities of ZNWL and Demo Finland.

**Bennadette Chabakalanga**

*Vice Chair for Kapiri Mposhi Council  
Movement for Multiparty Democracy*

**IN ZAMBIA**, women politicians are preparing for the 2016 elections. With Demo Finland's support the focus is on increasing the number of women councillors from the current representation of 6%. Demo Finland has trained all current councillors as well as aspiring candidates from all parties.

In addition, Demo Finland has strengthened women's cooperation across party lines at the local

and the national level. At the local level, cooperative platforms have been established at five project areas and at the national level the women politicians joined forces and made their first joint statement condemning acts of electoral violence that occurred during recent by-elections. The statement came less than a year from the beginning of their co-operation with Demo Finland.



*In Zambia, Demo Finland supports women politicians especially at the local level*

## The Myanmar School of Politics clearing a path to democratic dialogue

**BEFORE** the Myanmar School of Politics training, whenever we had a meeting with other political parties we were only arguing with each other and we did not find solutions. Now we are aware that even though we are competing with each other, we can still find a solution together for the benefit of our community.

Before joining MySoP some of us expected a multi-party setting to be uncomfortable. We thought that each party would only stick to their own group. We expected people to be rigid while debating and only favor their own party's views. But the reality we found was different – in fact, we were able to have a multi-party dialogue and share knowledge and experiences with each other. We enjoyed it a lot.

You know, if we deal or negotiate over issues, will someone get everything they want? It is important to know that nobody gets 100% in a negotiation. All parties and people should know the concept of negotiation; that is a fundamental condition of democracy. If we are not coordinating and collaborating with each other then laws will only exist

on paper and will not be enforced.

We wish that parties in other regions or states could also have a chance to present their different views and opinions within a MySoP course, and they could all learn how to appreciate diversity, the way we did.

If it is possible to open MySoP courses everywhere in Myanmar, it will be good for our country and we will have a chance to engage with them. We are sure that our MySoP alumni will support the development of our changing country.

We all want democracy and so we are travelers on our path to achieve it one day. On this path, it is not important who or which

parties are in the spotlight; we are all working together to achieve democracy.

*The participants of the first Myanmar School of Politics course, representing five different parties in the Tanintharyi region, were interviewed at the end of their 4-week intensive training.*

**“We were able to have a multi-party dialogue and share knowledge and experiences with each other. We enjoyed it a lot.”**



The first course of the Myanmar School of Politics was organized in Tanintharyi region in November and December 2014

**IN MYANMAR**, Demo Finland and the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy founded the Myanmar School of Politics in 2014. The school is the first of its kind in Myanmar and also the first program in the country to provide training on a multi-party basis at the local level.

The first courses, held in three different regions of Myanmar, have been praised because they have brought political parties together; a task that would have been impossible without outside support. The participants have reported that these kinds of courses are needed in every region and state in Myanmar.

## Youth dialogue for a healed nation in Sri Lanka

**DEMO FINLAND** together with One-Text Initiative invited us – young Sri Lankan politicians from all parties – to a roundtable discussion to share our experiences and discuss the future of our nation. Before the neutral space was created by these organizations, we only debated and discussed nationally-important issues within our own parties and communities. We were inside a frame we had created for ourselves, lacking the possibility to hear the voices of young people in other communities.

During the joint workshops it was amazing to notice that

we don't actually have as many differences in our visions and opinions as we thought. And even if our opinions are divided on some issues, we understand that we all want to build our nation together and encourage reconciliation. We learnt from each other that all the political parties are motivated to work for a better, united and healed Sri Lanka, and now thanks to the dialogue process facilitated by Demo Finland we can listen to one another and have a better understanding of the realities and needs of different communities.

This dialogue process has paved the way for open evaluation and discussion about our stances and it has given us an insight into the ideas we have about our future in Sri Lanka. We never before had a platform for this discussion: this is the first time in 30 years that political youth groups got the chance to meet and talk to each other.

These workshops opened our eyes to new perspectives and motivated us to listen to other parties' ideas. We want to use this as a foundation for the future because we will definitely, in the future, meet at different political events. I hope this trust will help us resolve issues better than our seniors have done. Most importantly, we learnt to agree to disagree and now we are expecting to continue our dialogue to ensure all parties in Sri Lanka are united around democracy and good governance.

We are hoping for a better, freer, independent country for future generations. We know this is the wish of every person of every ethnicity, every religion and every community in Sri Lanka. We have learnt that dialogue is the only way to solve disputes. Most of us will be local, provincial and national leaders in the future. The brotherhood and sisterhood that we have built will be even more beneficial one day in the future than it is today. We are committed to maintaining these honest relationships we have begun.

*Youth leaders representing all parliamentary parties were interviewed in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on the 7th of June 2015 during the 3rd Sri Lankan Youth for Democracy dialogue workshop.*



Youth politicians held a workshop in Jaffna in Northern Sri Lanka in the summer of 2015

In 2015, **SRI LANKAN** political youth organizations started co-operating to enhance the role of youth in politics and to advance conciliatory, peaceful politics.

The youth chose to focus their co-operation on a national reconciliation process. The Sri Lankan civil war of-

ficially ended in 2009.

It is the first time when all youth organizations from the parliamentary parties have agreed to formally cooperate and engage in a constructive dialogue.

# WHY SUPPORT DEMOCRACY?

## Democracy, sure – but how?

**WE ARE SURELY ALL CONVINCED** by the importance of democracy for all people and for all nations. It strengthens peace between nations. It is when we take a look at the practical applications of democracy that opinions differ. Most of the so-called old democracies find their own model better than others.

In reality, most of the models are the results of various compromises. Sometimes the end result functions well and sometimes not. All the models have their pros and cons. It would be at least fair to tell this to the countries that are in the first phase of building their democracy.

There are unicameral and bicameral parliaments. There are voluntary elections but also democracies that make it compulsory to vote. Even the secrecy of the ballot varies. The latest trend in Western democracies seems to be photographing the ballot paper when voting, which does not seem very clever.

In some models the head of state is elected directly by the voters and in some other models selected electors elect the head of state. In some countries, there is a term limit for the president or other heads of state. In many countries, even in the European Union, the leadership of the country

is determined by order of succession. In fact, the number of monarchies in Europe is relatively high.

In many countries, a member of parliament becoming a minister means that a deputy must take their place in parliament. In Finland, however, this is not the case. All in all it seems that democracy can be implemented with a lot of variations – and people are still satisfied.

### **Elections are important, but they are not everything**

Western countries are sometimes criticized for focusing too much on elections. Fair and honest elections of course form a healthy foundation for a democratic society, but one also needs to pay attention to what happens between elections. The elected representatives need to respect human rights, including the rights of minorities.

Effective election monitoring also requires longer-term and deeper expertise on the election country than is usually possible. For example, imbalances in candidacy between men and women or the distribution of seats are often explained by a broader pattern of gender inequality in the society. Ethnic, religious or social differences should be ob-

served in the same manner. A completely flawless country probably does not exist, but a more equal society should be the goal. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) has done valuable work on that. Greater transparency of systems already helps identifying problems.

In this democracy-building work, Demo Finland is a bit closer to the grassroots level. Usually it is the political parties that choose candidates for elections. How political parties work matters greatly on whether men and women have equal chances to become candidates or whether youth

are engaged. The party organs also determine what kind of possibilities there are for party members to co-operate with each other or with representatives of other parties.

New democracies should get rich and critical information. It would be useful to share views on differences between multi-party and two-party systems or different voting systems. The so-called old democracies should have the courage to explain more about the difficulties and challenges they have faced. For example, it should be acknowledged that as years go by many people lose interest in political

**“The so-called old democracies should have the courage to explain more about the difficulties and challenges they have faced.”**



Tarja Halonen visiting Nepal in November 2014

participation even if they have faced no judicial barriers and the society still requires change. Sharing this would make co-operation more equal and smoother.

Successful co-operation depends on many other things too. None of the countries has only one problem to fix; usually it is a truly complicated task. One can also think about it the other way around: democratization is a continuous process that is not only about holding elections. But one has to start with something. Finland is a good partner for beginners: it is not only a quite equally developed country according to international comparison, but it is also small enough for its influence not to become too great or for partners not to get too dependent on it.

### **Rule of law and good governance**

The importance of an independent judiciary and good government should be highlighted for many countries. Faith in democracy is easily undermined if the impact of political decisions is not visible in daily life. However, achieving this impact is not easy.

Finland has been more active than others in raising the topic of good governance in international discussions. Internationally, corruption is more of a rule than an exception. According to international comparison (Transparency International), the Nordic countries do exceptionally well. This is probably due to culture and transparency of governance. Cultural change is a long process. It is not easy to dismantle beliefs that consider honesty to be stupidity and cunning to be intelligence.

Transparent governance helps to identify problems.

If the amount of work of officials is unreasonable and salaries not sufficient for living, then at the grassroots level there is a big risk of corruption. People need to get birth certificates for their children in order to send them to school and companies need to get licenses in order to start doing business legally. If licenses and certificates were available on time and free of charge, there might be no further need for this sort of corruption. However, a raft of measures is needed to end the massive corruption committed by big companies.

An incorruptible and efficient judiciary is also essential for healthy economic growth. Judicial systems cannot be exported as such, but strengthening the principles as part of democracy is possible. The former President of the Supreme Administrative Court of Finland, Pekka Hallberg, has done a lot of good work on this.

### **Society with social justice and equality**

The rise of economic, social and cultural rights to an equal role with civil and political rights has taken a long time. The Nordic welfare state model has gained a foothold in discussions about democracy models that contribute to sustainable development. Balancing individual freedoms, mutual responsibility and wellbeing is challenging, and further complicated by the impact of uncontrollable globalization.

Measuring wellbeing only with economic growth has already attracted widespread critique for being too narrow a perspective. Indicators that describe a true welfare society are much better suited for analyzing inequalities between genders or ethnicities. Recently, many interna-

tional conferences have recognized that increasing gender equality is an essential prerequisite for more sustainable and successful societies. At the moment it mostly means improving the situation of women. In this field, Finland has a lot of potency because we have much to share. Change is possible and it will benefit the whole society. We should forget about modesty when telling about the results, but there is no need to boast either.

My own experience of international co-operation – the latest being from Harvard University in spring 2015 – has shown me that there is a lot of interest towards our country especially on education and healthcare, but also in other sectors.

### **Why Demo Finland?**

The way Demo Finland is contributing towards strengthening democracy is a very interesting model. Different views and interests are natural in all communities, but how to solve these issues in practical development work is very interesting. There is a lot of talk about elections and their significance for democracy, but a lot less attention given to the political parties. At the very core of Demo Finland's work is support by parties for parties. The participation of all parliamentary parties shows that it is possible to co-operate, which may be useful also in the partner countries. As Demo Finland's work has continued on the same basis for years, even a decade, it is becoming more and more convincing.

I have had the chance to co-operate with Demo Finland previously in Nepal together with the Club de Madrid. It is an organization of former democratically-elected heads of state

and prime ministers that aims to contribute to various challenges with the practical experience of its members. One of its principles is also to accept different political backgrounds – as long as the election to political office has been legal.

Nepal has encountered a lot of difficulties during its history. This small Himalayan state has suffered from earthquakes. Building roads is challenging even in normal conditions, and earthquakes are a constant risk. The political situation is not much easier: two regional superpowers, China and India, often create tension in the area. Nepal's recent history is all too colourful with its armed clashes. It is hardly surprising then that creating the new constitution has already taken almost a decade. Meanwhile, the people in Nepal must continue with their daily lives and hard work.

The work that Demo Finland is doing has been very valuable. Others have been able to build on it. I congratulate the parliament and Demo Finland for the work they have done and wish the co-operation to continue in the future. You are important for the people in the region and contribute to creating a brand for Finland that is admired elsewhere.

### **Tarja Halonen**

*President of the Republic of Finland 2000–2012*

*Minister for Foreign Affairs 1995–2000*

*Minister of Justice 1990–1991*

*Minister for Nordic Cooperation 1989–1991*

*Minister at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 1987–1990*

*Member of the Parliament of Finland 1979–2000*

## Ending aid dependency by tackling the root causes of underdevelopment

**IF WE WANT TO ERADICATE** poverty and inequality and end the plunder of natural resources, we must tackle the root causes of the problems. As the Minister for International Development, I became more convinced that there is no development in a country that does not have democracy. Democracy means accountability and a society in which citizens can form associations, assemble and freely express themselves. Citizens must also have the possibility to elect new governments in free and fair elections.

Demo Finland can tackle the root causes of underdevelopment by enhancing multi-party democracy and by encouraging women and youth to participate in democracy-building in co-operation with civil society.

What makes Demo Finland's work especially valuable is that as a co-operative organization of the Finnish parliamentary parties it fosters cross-party co-operation for societal development in its partner countries. As the Vice Chair of Demo Finland I came to appreciate the fact that its member parties always avoided the temptation to try to channel funding for their own international projects.

As minister, I had the opportunity to get to know Demo Finland's work in Tanzania and Nepal. I was particularly impressed by a women's group on the Tanzanian island of Zanzibar that held local decision-makers accountable for the use of regional development funds. In Nepal, Demo Finland has also had good results working with young political leaders and supporting parties in creating much-needed jobs for young people. They have also helped overcome

the confrontations of the civil war. I also got the chance to discuss things with the brilliant women who had been elected in the first parliament and understand how in the following elections men pushed them aside because they found the women a threat to their positions of power. Even in very different countries the experiences of politicians can be compared. Youth leaders were also interested in hearing how I had to give up my position in the Finnish Government.

Many developing countries are about to step into a new era where they want to get rid of aid dependency with their own natural resources. The best way for donors to contribute to this just and important goal is to support the building of institutions that are accountable. Demo Finland is at the very core of this work, as are the parliamentary networks of international organizations such as the World Bank.

Special support is needed in fragile states where there is no democracy and good governance, human rights are violated and the economic situation is unstable. Fragility and poverty go hand in hand. Finland has done well in directing more support to these countries lately and Demo Finland has a lot to contribute to developing fragile countries.

Building democracy is not easy. The majority of states can be considered authoritarian and unfortunately the number is growing. Leaders that rule in one-party systems are defying constitutions by destroying any possibilities for free and fair elections and by interpreting all activity of citizens as endangering the interests of the state.



Heidi Hautala expressed her support for development co-operation at the World Village -festival in 2015

According to my own observations, a presidential system of government further increases the risk of national assets benefiting a narrow elite at the expense of the majority. It would be interesting to study the connection to high-level corruption of this kind of system. The President of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Joseph Kabila, is known to have benefited as much as the value of the state's education budget for several years due to mining license trade. In Azerbaijan, journalist Khadija Ismayilova has been imprisoned for revealing that President Ilhan Aliyev earned 600 million euros for his family for business with the Finnish-Swedish company TeliaSonera.

Demo Finland's good work – along with other Finnish development NGOs – is about to collapse due to the

radical budget cuts that the government has agreed. It is irresponsible to cut 38% from the world's poorest. It is particularly short-sighted to cut from organizations like Demo Finland that tackle the root causes of development problems and whose activities are just what is needed for ending aid dependency.

### Heidi Hautala

*Member of the European Parliament 1995–2003, 2009–2011, 2014–*  
*Vice Chair of Demo Finland 2008–2009*  
*Minister for International Development 2011–2013*  
*Member of the Parliament of Finland 1991–1995, 2003–2009*

## A moment for celebration and reflection

**THERE IS CAUSE** for celebration for Demo Finland's success as a cutting-edge organization in the field of international co-operation. Advancing and consolidating democracy by providing support to political parties is still an innovative approach.

Political parties are often considered off limits in development support because outside support for political institution-building can be seen as interference in domestic affairs or an infringement on sovereignty. But how can the improvement of governance be assisted if key political actors of emerging democracies are left out; the political parties whose function is to select leaders and make policies? Do political parties not matter or are they too difficult to engage?

The decision of Finnish political parties to tackle this challenge jointly, by establishing Demo Finland, was a well-considered response. A body has been created that provides assistance to partner countries despite political divisions: Demo Finland enables political leaders to meet and enter into dialogue rather than argue. These platforms for leaders can develop political reform agendas from within while managing potential conflict peacefully. This process of providing assistance builds trust and commitment towards the implementation of essential reforms. It

is an approach that works and warrants wider application.

One of the focus areas of Demo Finland and its expertise on gender parity in the political arena, has been welcomed and creates added value in democracy support.

10 years ago, a world governed by democratic states appeared to be a vision within reach. Today, competing visions of universal order are creating chaos in an increasingly interdependent, globalized world.

European leaders need to wake up to this new reality. Visionary political leadership is required to move beyond the present internal European preoccupations to a more hands-on, unified European foreign policy; a policy that makes substantial strategic investments in building a rules-based, democratic world community with respect for universal human rights. Retreating to a foreign policy reduced to pursuing national economic interests will prove self-defeating in the long-term. Europe's somber history is a testimony to this perilous shortsightedness. Strong enduring partnerships with democratic actors in other countries – the mandate of Demo Finland – can help stem the tide.

In a reflection of the stagnating trend of democracy in the world, honest questions should be asked about the adequacy of the current foreign policy instruments and how they enact their mandates. Have bureaucratic procedures and tenders for providing democracy and development support not overtaken the ability for strategic interventions in essentially political processes? Have technocratic

logical framework approaches not resulted in patronizing attitudes that alienate partners who are struggling to advance democracy? Democracy knowledge is too often delivered as a 'product' and subsequently misused by recipients for purposes contrary to the development of democracy.

Democracy is a noun and a verb at the same time. In emerging democracies, developing a practice and culture of democracy is principally a process; a process that is best served by empowering partnerships based on mutual respect.

Congratulations to the political leadership and staff of Demo Finland on their 10th anniversary for building the institutional capacity to provide this valuable service. I have no doubt that the demand for your services in to-

day's complex international arena, in good co-operation with your European counterparts, shall only increase in the years to come. If we cherish democracy ourselves, investment in democracy elsewhere is the best value for our money!

**Roel von Meijenfeldt**

*International expert on supporting democratic transitions and consolidation*

*Executive Director of the Netherlands Institute for*

*Multiparty Democracy 2002–2011*

*Director of the Capacity Building Programme for*

*Sustainable Democracy at International IDEA 1996–2002*

## Good governance is a Finnish asset

**FINNISH** development policy has taken huge strides forward over recent years and decades. Based on the experience gathered, we are now increasingly focusing on helping people to help themselves.

The political culture and governance of developing countries play a key role in achieving sustainable and tangible development results. A functioning democracy and good corruption-free government are vital for developed and developing countries alike.

It is rational to invest in development projects where our input can create the most leverage. This means support for democratic institutions and incorruptible decision-makers

and civil servants.

A functioning democracy, respect for the rights of opposition, and good governance are areas that Finland's example could be worth of showcasing to the world. Good governance is certainly something at which Finland excels. In Finland, being in opposition does not mean expulsion from public discourse or losing civil rights, as in some other countries.

There are plenty of untapped opportunities for supporting political systems and governance. My personal wish is that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland would continue to increase its emphasis on good governance and democracy in Finnish development policy.

## “The political culture and governance of developing countries play a key role in achieving sustainable and tangible development results.”

Policies are worthless without people implementing them. Co-operation between Demo Finland and the Parliament of Finland is an underutilized relationship – we could do much more.

For the parliament, it is important to maintain connections with developing countries and balance our Eurocentrism. Concrete training or development projects in co-operation with Demo Finland could ensure that these links

result in far better outcomes. Currently, our delegations are often involved in much too shallow dialogues and do not make the effort to provide real expertise in areas where the parliament and other decision-making bodies excel.

That being said, I hope that the Parliament of Finland, Demo Finland and our Foreign Ministry choose democracy support and assistance for good governance as their permanent priority areas in development cooperation.

### Eero Heinäluoma

*Member of the Parliament of Finland 2003–*

*Speaker of the Parliament of Finland 2011–2015*

*Social Democratic Party*

## Learning to win – and lose

**I WAS FOLLOWING** Demo Finland's first steps from the sidelines. My friend, Gunvor Kronman, was closely involved in the founding process and she gave me regular updates. The debate centered on the model of the new organization: how were we going to cooperate to support democracy?

The model chosen has been a good one and an appropriate one for a Finnish organization. We Finns have been able to cooperate across party lines for quite a long time. We can give a good example of spontaneous cooperation and show we have shared values no matter what party we belong to.

When organizing workshops for our partners, it has been interesting to listen to other Finns describe our political

system and the reasons and actions behind our welfare state. It is valuable to bring up how women in Finland got full political rights before any other country in the world. Women's suffrage is not a product of the welfare state, but a prerequisite of it. Therefore, I am also glad that the work of the Network of Finnish Women Members of Parliament has been of great interest to our partners.

We have done a lot through Demo Finland: we have presented insights on electoral systems, parliamentary work, women's cooperation, and performance in electoral debates, to name just a handful. There is one other vital element that should not be forgotten when talking about democracy: one

must learn how to hand over power after losing an election.

I assume that all of us involved in international political cooperation have at one time faced a situation in which our appeals for international support to help a mistreated political force somewhere in the world have been in vain. Often, after gaining power, political actors behave in just the same underhand way as their oppressors and predecessors did.

The rule of law is a principle that must be taken into account in democracy support. Without the rule of law there is no democracy. One also must be prepared to lose power in politics.

It is difficult to imagine that minorities' rights would be respected without the rule of law. Minorities need the protection of institutions and laws. Way too often those who claim to be democrats do not support the rights of minorities.

Romano Prodi once told me that during the expansion

of the European Union, he came to realize that we are all minorities. This understanding would certainly help in realizing democracy today and decreasing the number of disputes and conflicts.

Any attempt to create ethnically homogenous countries results in an enormous number of casualties. According to the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, violent conflicts between countries have almost disappeared during the last 70 years. However, violence and conflicts occur today within countries and between different ethnic groups. We have witnessed this kind of violence in Europe and that is why the OSCE countries established a body that I am currently serving as its head. The HCNM – High Commissioner on National Minorities has a mandate to get involved in situations where there are tensions involving national minorities.

## “Way too often those who claim to be democrats do not support the rights of minorities.”



Astrid Thors interviewing Tanzanian politicians at the World Village festival in 2008

As I mentioned earlier, the rule of law and institutions are important in realizing minority rights and creating solid communities, but of course political parties and leaders play a central role too. From my point of view, it is an enormous challenge to make leaders understand the needs of minorities and the need to build bridges between groups of people. The current atmosphere in Europe and the OSCE area is concerning. There are more and more political movements that mobilize support by creating confrontation. It is important to keep this in mind in Demo Finland's work as well.

The HCNM rarely works directly with political parties but last year we started an initiative with Demo Finland's Dutch sister organization. We are trying to help and encourage Georgia's political parties to work for and with the country's minorities; we noticed that some of the parties in power had never visited the areas predominantly occupied by these minorities.

### Political parties play a key role in democracy work

**FOR 10 YEARS**, Demo Finland has done exemplary work in supporting democratizing countries. For a Finnish organization, it is natural to focus on enhancing equal participation of women and youth and on cross-party co-operation. Regarding to these areas, we have a lot to offer democratizing countries because representation of women and youth in the Finnish parliament is high by international comparison and co-operation across party lines has been commonplace in a country of coalition governments.

With these words I want to congratulate Demo Finland. It does exceptionally important work in building favorable conditions for democracies to function and flourish. There are NGOs and there are political parties – both have critical roles and tasks that no one else could fulfill. The work done to ensure that emerging political parties organize themselves democratically and are able to identify how suppression techniques are used against weaker forces is vital. This work helps build societies that are more versatile, more solid and more resistant to forces that want to regress towards autocracy.

#### Astrid Thors

*OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities  
Member of the Parliament of Finland 2004–2013  
Member of the European Parliament 1996–2004*

We take the above-mentioned principles for granted, but in many developing countries they still need to be constantly justified. However, a proper balance of genders and ages in the decision-making process is essential because parliaments and other organs make decisions that influence the rights and duties of all citizens, public services and the development of the whole society.

Fortunately, there is more and more information available on the positive impact of gender equality for the de-



Mari Kiviniemi met Zambian politicians during their delegation visit in Helsinki, Finland in June 2014

**“Despite cultural differences, political actors face similar challenges everywhere in the world and as a result there is a lot of interest in Finnish democracy knowhow.”**

velopment of society. Research shows that the more women there are in parliament, the more there is equality in the whole society. The presence of women in governments has led to the improvement of public healthcare services. In addition, having female ministers increases the trust of citizens towards decision-makers. Similarly, a fair representation of young MPs produces similar beneficial effects for the whole of society.

In addition to sharing information, Demo Finland's grassroots training has a key role in building democracy. Exporting democracy as such is not possible, but sharing good practices and ways to influence society, encouraging participation and giving support are cornerstones of democracy work.

I have had the chance to get engaged in Demo Finland's activities and I have learnt that sharing experiences and

giving peer support is not only useful but also rewarding. For example, the training that Demo Finland and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs organized in 2012 in Libya for women candidates in the parliamentary elections showed in a practical way that rich personal experience in politics is useful for supporting democratization. Despite cultural differences, political actors face similar challenges everywhere in the world and as a result there is a lot of interest in Finnish democracy knowhow.

#### Mari Kiviniemi

*Deputy Secretary-General of OECD  
Prime Minister of Finland 2010–2011  
Member of the Parliament of Finland 1995–2014  
Centre Party*

## Three things that Finland can share with the world

**FINLAND** is one of the best countries in the world. In international comparisons we are continuously ranked high in different sectors. We are at the top in equality; education; clean environment; competitiveness; absence of corruption; freedom of the press; positive impact on the rest of the world; skills; happiness; and child-friendliness. But of course, we have things to improve.

If you were asked why Finland functions as it functions, what would you answer? I came across this question in May 2015, when as a representative of Demo Finland I gave a training on Finnish society to decision-makers in Tunisia – one of the youngest democracies in the world.

It is not possible to copy the Finnish model of society that has evolved throughout history, but it is possible to recognize the basic pillars and share good practices with others. According to my experience, Finnish society and functioning democracy are based on three things: transparency of decision-making, equal inclusion of citizens, and mutual trust. The first two are prerequisites for the last one. To be able to trust society, one has to know what is going on and have the possibility to get engaged in it.

There are three features of open decision-making: transparency of discussions, transparency of documents and openness of communications. This guarantees that citizens can monitor the use of power, how their rights are respected and get engaged. Unfortunately, these excellent principles are more of an exception than a rule in the world.

Equal inclusion of citizens is another practice on which our society is based that Finns can be proud of. Between elections, citizens can have their say via citizen initiatives on issues on a municipal-, national- or European level and in this way challenge decision-makers. The citizen initiative on equal marriage rights that was accepted in 2014 is a great example of the effect of this opportunity. In addition, supporting the participation of women and youth is one of the secrets behind the success of our small country.

At its weakest, democracy is just a way to tackle disagreements in a non-violent way, but at best it is also an effort towards the wellbeing of an entire nation. However, mutual goals can only be created if there is mutual trust. Trust, on the other hand, is best created with transparency and everyone having equal opportunities to engage in decision-making about their own future.

This is why Finland has a lot to give to the world. Moreover, Demo Finland has unique expertise on the practical work to support developing democracies. Together, Finland and the Finnish democracy experts can contribute greatly in places where our support is most needed.

### **Miika Tomi**

*Board Member of Demo Finland 2014–2015  
National Coalition Party*



Saara Ruokonen at the World Village festival in 2013

## The power of example

**AS THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR** of a political women's organization and board member of NYTKIS – the Coalition of Finnish Women's Association I have been engaged in cross-party co-operation for almost 15 years. Through Demo Finland's gender working group I had the opportunity to contribute this experience to the work of Demo Finland.

Thanks to meeting Tanzanian and Zambian women politicians in their home countries and in Finland, I have seen that enhancing the role of women meets similar challenges regardless of cultural distinctions. The biggest challenges are funding and attitudes.

In Demo Finland's gender working group I have been especially impressed by the power of example. By this I mean

the reactions of our overseas guests to our stories about our ways of working inside political parties and in society.

When visiting Zambia and Tanzania we have been able to discuss on the same level as our counterparts – woman to woman – but by visiting Finland they have seen things in a way that makes it easier for them to understand certain issues. Intra-party democracy has been one of these issues, namely the fact that in the party congress decisions by party leadership can be criticized without resulting in negative consequences. Another one has been the fact that an MP in Finland is like any other member of society; no reception with flowers, travel by public transport, no car with a personal driver.

One year the aim was to especially empower young female politicians from Tanzania, and therefore all the politicians visiting Finland were under 30 years old. They wished to visit a Finnish home and I offered to host the group. First, I asked the women to share why they had got engaged in politics. However, one of them, a young Muslim woman from Zanzibar, asked me to first explain why I was so strong. I was surprised at first but then I somehow understood what she meant with her question.

I told them that there were two factors behind it. The first one was that my father always supported me. In practice this meant that he always treated me in the same way as my brothers – I was accepted as a girl and equal with my brothers. The second point was that from the very beginning, I had to learn to cope with boys in their world. When my brothers sometimes bullied me I had to stand up for myself and find ways to cope with it.

As I was telling this, the woman who had posed the question started to look excited. She realized the significance of her own brothers. She told me that her mother had said Muslim girls were not allowed to swim. However, her brothers had secretly taught her how to swim. With the help of her brothers, she had breached a cultural barrier and had been able to participate in a “man’s world”. This had given her the courage to get engaged in politics, which is a world dominated by men.

Change is possible, and we, Finnish women politicians can show an example through Demo Finland’s gender equality work.

**Saara Ruokonen**

*Executive Director of Christian Democratic Women in Finland 2000–2015*

## Democracy support: the cornerstone of development

**IN 2013**, I participated in a training program for youth politicians organized by Demo Finland. The highlight of the program was a study visit to Nepal. It was an eye-opening experience. World can be changed, but not necessarily by buying ourselves some good conscience. We need long-term engagement that aims to change people’s minds in order for changes in power structures to be possible.

We think too often that developing countries will rise up when we just increase development funding. In reality

the situation can even regress if the funding is not spent in the right way. The dollars in the hands of a bad government prevent people from fighting against corruption.

To my understanding, the most important goal of development co-operation is enhancing peace, because that makes everything else possible. Building democracy, preventing conflicts and promoting human rights are needed to achieve peace. As nations are empowered to decide on their issues in a democratic way, they have a real oppor-

tunity to get on their feet and the wellbeing of people can be sustained, unlike in a constantly collapsing system punctuated by coups.

Demo Finland is at the core of this sort of development co-operation. In addition to the concrete activities in its partner countries, as a collaborative cross-party organization it can also enhance Finnish politicians’ knowledge on development priorities and in this way contribute to achieving long-term development goals.

**Sebastian Tynkkynen**

*Third Vice Chair of the Finns Party  
Chair of the Finns Party Youth*

**“To my understanding, the most important goal of development co-operation is enhancing peace, because that makes everything else possible.”**



Sebastian Tynkkynen participated in a study trip to Nepal that was organized by Demo Finland and UNDP’s Nordic Representation Office

## Democracy and development go hand in hand

**IN ITS FOREIGN** and development policy, Finland highlights human rights, democracy and good governance. We know democratic states that respect human rights are more stable and less prone to conflicts. Participation in decision-making that concerns people's lives is at the core of development and one of the key issues of a rights-based approach. Stable society is also a basis for a favorable and sustainable business environment.

Political parties have a key position in representative democracy and its development. However, transparent political parties that are able to have an open dialogue with each other are a prerequisite for a functioning multi-party system.

As a co-operative organization of the Finnish parliamentary parties, Demo Finland is a unique actor in global terms. It enhances pluralistic democracy by facilitating collaborative projects between Finnish political parties and political movements in developing countries from a multi-party standpoint and with a focus on mutual learning.

Demo Finland has done particularly meaningful work for enhancing the participation of women and youth. A good example is the School of Politics that the organization supports in Tunisia, which is aimed at young politicians. 14 of its alumni were elected to the parliament and three of them became ministers in 2014.

With Demo Finland, active members of the parliamentary parties get information and experience about political systems and development in developing countries, including

the challenges they face. This contributes in different ways to the implementation of Finland's development, human rights and foreign policies.

We will continue to promote the role of women and democratic societies in Finland's development policy and development co-operation in the future.

On its 10th anniversary I extend my warmest greetings to Demo Finland.

### **Lenita Toivakka**

*Minister for Foreign Trade and Development  
Member of the Parliament of Finland 2007–  
National Coalition Party*



**Lenita Toivakka giving a speech at the launch of a Demo Finland gender equality toolkit in June 2015**

**FOR A DECADE**, Demo Finland has fostered democracy and active civil society in Finland and around the world. The organisation has in a remarkable manner provided Finnish knowhow to places that request assistance in building their future. At the same time, numerous Finnish politicians have seen both the urgent need and the opportunity to provide a helping hand. Supporting democracy in developing countries creates stability, security and joint responsibility. I wish Demo Finland the best of luck and prosperity in fulfilling its mission.

### **Päivi Räsänen**

*Chairperson 2004–2015  
Christian Democrats*

**THE SWEDISH** People's Party of Finland has always treasured the rule of law, a functioning democracy and true interaction between the citizens and the decision-makers. Human rights, the right to education and support for democratic development must always form the core of development policy. Democracy enhances human rights, equality and fosters economic development. Therefore, the Swedish People's Party of Finland values the work of Demo Finland and acknowledges its significance.

### **Carl Haglund**

*Chairperson  
Swedish People's Party of Finland*



# POLITICAL PARTIES OF FINLAND FOR DEMOCRACY

Demo Finland is a co-operative organisation of Finnish parliamentary parties. It's been enhancing democracy over a decade by facilitating collaborative projects between Finnish political parties and political movements in new and developing democracies.

## MEMBER PARTIES:

**Centre Party**

[www.keskusta.fi](http://www.keskusta.fi)

**National Coalition Party**

[www.kokoomus.fi](http://www.kokoomus.fi)

**Finns Party**

[www.perussuomalaiset.fi](http://www.perussuomalaiset.fi)

**Social Democratic Party**

[www.sdp.fi](http://www.sdp.fi)

**Greens**

[www.vihreat.fi](http://www.vihreat.fi)

**Left Alliance**

[www.vasemmistoliitto.fi](http://www.vasemmistoliitto.fi)

**Swedish People's Party of Finland**

[www.sfp.fi](http://www.sfp.fi)

**Christian Democrats**

[www.kd.fi](http://www.kd.fi)



### DEMO FINLAND

Töölöntorinkatu 2 B, 00260 Helsinki

FINLAND

+358 41 708 1928

[info@demofinland.org](mailto:info@demofinland.org)

[www.demofinland.org](http://www.demofinland.org)

SUPPORTED BY OFFICIAL

DEVELOPMENT AID FROM THE

MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

OF FINLAND