



# Annual Report 2020



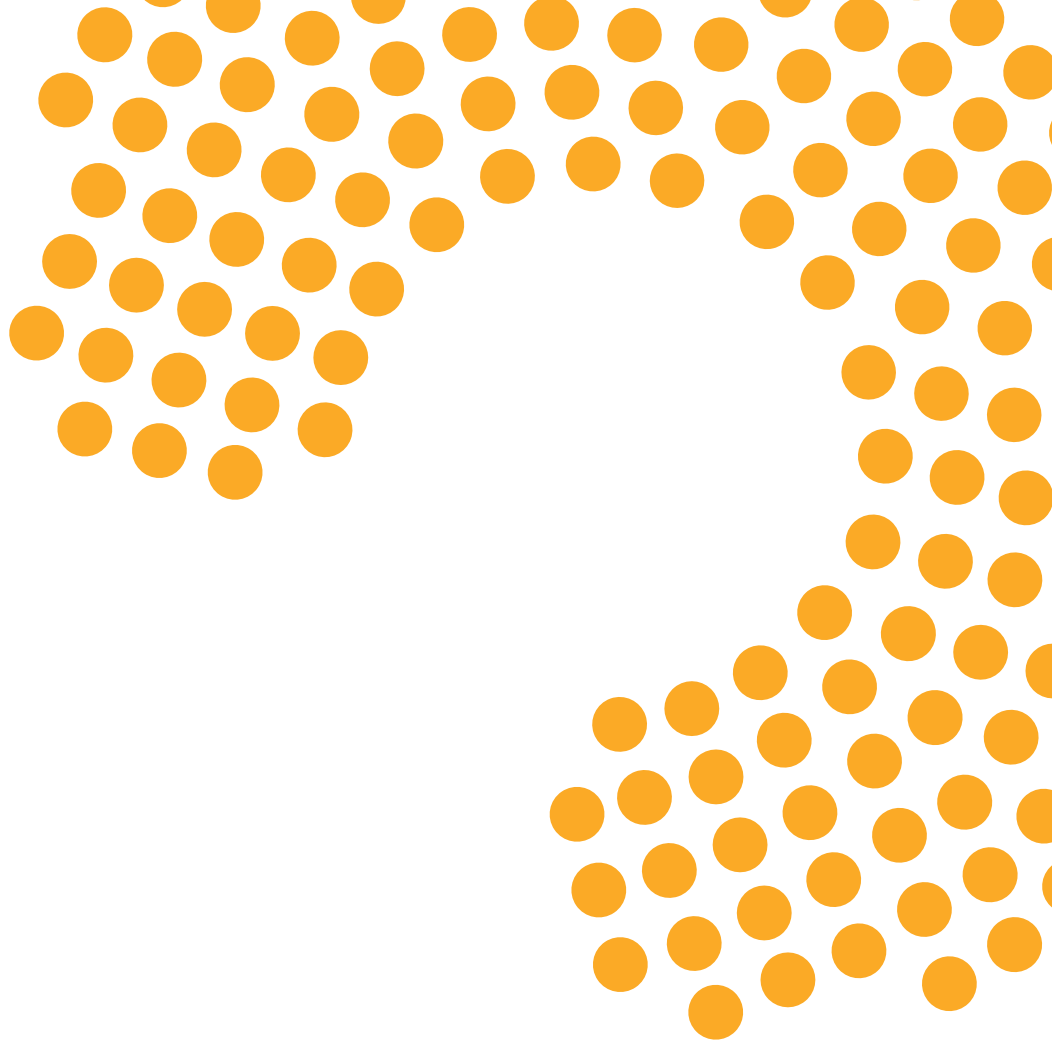
DEMO  
FINLAND

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**Cover image:**

The Democracy Academy in February 2020 brought together young politicians from all Finnish parliamentary parties.



# Contents

Foreword: Democratic backsliding continues	4
Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Demo Finland's programme	5
Overview	7
Demo Finland's programmes in 2020	10
Myanmar	10
Tunisia	12
Zambia	13
Mozambique	15
Ethiopia	16
Sri Lanka	16
Disability inclusion enhances democracy	18
Demo Finland's work in Finland	19
Advocacy and communications	20
Staff resources	22
Financial resources	23

# Democratic backsliding continues

In 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic was rampaging around the world and the rights of citizens were discussed everywhere, Demo Finland prepared its new Strategy for 2021–2025 with its stakeholders. In the context analysis done for the strategy process, one of the conclusions was that, while democratic governance and the multi-party system continue to spread into new countries around the world, anti-democratic currents grow stronger. Backsliding is occurring even in democracies that have previously been considered robust. Leading international research institutes<sup>1</sup> agree that the quality of democracy throughout the world is under serious threat. Restricting civil and political rights is shrinking the space for civil society. Efforts to interfere with the independence of the judiciary are eroding the rule of law and the trend of social and political polarisation is significantly present. Equality in politics and in representative institutions has advanced further than ever before, but at a slow pace.

The above emphasises the need for actors who defend and support inclusive multi-party democracy. Democracy support is an essential tool in the foreign, security and development policy toolbox of Finland and the EU, as it can be used to promote peaceful and stable social development in partner countries.

This Annual Report highlights the achievements and developments of the international programmes of Demo Finland in seven countries in 2020 as well as the achievements of the work with Finnish political parties and other relevant stakeholders in Finland and at the EU level. One of the main highlights of the advocacy done by Demo Finland and other member organisations of the European Partnership for Democracy (EPD) was that the new EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy calls for coordinated action of the EU and the Member States to promote responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making and to that end support pluralist party systems and political parties' capacities in a non-partisan manner.

In 2020, Demo Finland was funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland under a specific budget line for the support of democracy and the rule of law. The increased funding and the in-depth and topical co-ordination with the MFA were a result of the committed joint planning of the MFA and Demo Finland in 2018–2019. The process resulted in Demo Finland having a stronger position in the implementation of Finnish foreign and development policy. This reinforces Finland's commitment for democracy support and shows the appreciation of the experience that Finnish political parties have in fostering the good practices of inclusive multi-party democracy.

*Jonna Haapanen, Director of Programmes*

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<sup>1</sup> Freedom House 2021: Freedom in the World 2021–Democracy under Siege; International IDEA 2020: Taking Stock of Global Democratic Trends Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic.; The Economist Intelligence Unit 2021: Democracy Index 2020; V-Dem Institute 2021: Autocratization Turns Viral–Democracy Report 2020.

# Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Demo Finland's programme

The COVID-19 pandemic posed a serious threat to democracy, as governments around the world used emergency provisions in response to it. According to International IDEA, 76 countries and territories have postponed national or sub-national elections, and around 60% of the countries in the world have implemented measures which could be considered as concerning from a democracy and human rights perspective<sup>2</sup>. These measures violated democratic standards because they were either disproportionate, illegal, indefinite or unnecessary in relation to the public health crisis. The V-Dem Institute also reports major and moderate violations to international standards as countries have tried to curb the pandemic<sup>3</sup>. Most of the violations took place in authoritarian countries, but the measures undertaken by some democracies have also raised concerns. The most common measures have been restrictions on media freedom and excessive use of emergency powers. The Democracy Index 2020 also noted an overall decline in democratic freedoms which concerned a large number of both democratic and authoritarian countries<sup>4</sup>.

Demo Finland programmes in different countries and in Finland were also affected by the consequences of the pandemic. The hardest hit was the programme in Ethiopia where the pandemic not only caused meeting restrictions but also was used to twice postpone the elections and the re-registration of political parties. This situation led to the postponement of most of Demo Finland's programme activities to 2021. In other Demo Finland programme countries, the restrictions varied, depending on the severity and timing of the pandemic.



<sup>2</sup> International IDEA 2020: Taking Stock of Global Democratic Trends Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic.

<sup>3</sup> V-Dem Institute 2021: Autocratization Turns Viral – Democracy Report 2020.

<sup>4</sup> The Economist Intelligence Unit 2021: Democracy Index 2020.

Most of the training and dialogue activities and meetings needed to be converted to online sessions at times, but for example in Tunisia, Zambia and Mozambique, training and dialogue sessions were also organised as physical meetings at times when restrictions were not very tight. Some activities were adjusted otherwise: in Zambia, for example, Demo Finland's partner organisation met all the female councillors throughout the country individually instead of organising a large national conference meeting. In Finland, all the events and meetings were held online after March 2020.

While it is commonplace for there to be occasional problems in Internet connectivity in different parts of the world, in general terms Demo Finland's partner organisations delivered relatively well in relation to the online capacity building and dialogue sessions. At times, online or hybrid sessions even had an advantage of allowing politicians from Finland or Demo Finland's staff to participate easily. In Finland, despite the cancellation of many regular events in which Demo Finland would normally reach out to stakeholders, such as party conferences and public events, working online created some new opportunities. This included, for example, doubling the number of people watching Demo Finland's events by having the opportunity to watch them on YouTube.

# Overview

The overall objective for Demo Finland's programmes during 2018–2020 has been a strengthened pluralistic and inclusive multi-party system in its operating countries. Demo Finland strives for political systems where political parties, which are essential and vital for a functioning democracy, are strong and knowledgeable, but also co-operative, open, diverse and willing to support the democratic system. It is crucial that parties also hear citizens and create channels for them to participate. Demo Finland supports political parties and politicians to build inclusive democracy in its programme countries and in Finland, always based on the needs of each context.

In 2020, Demo Finland had ongoing programmes in eight countries, including Finland.

In 2020, Demo Finland aimed at the following long-term outcomes:

- 1) A safe space for dialogue between all relevant political actors exists.
- 2) Political actors voice citizens' interests into party policies, through increased capacity.
- 3) Political actors and parties collaborate with each other in a responsive manner, and women participate actively in political processes.

## A safe space for dialogue between all relevant political actors exists

Strengthening trust and dialogue between political parties enables them to negotiate and act in a co-operative spirit. When parties approach co-operation from a multi-party perspective, they are also more able to influence and improve their own political system together. In 2020, Demo Finland and its partners continued to support and facilitate permanent multi-party platforms in Myanmar, Tunisia and Zambia. These platforms offer an important safe space for political parties to collaborate, discuss and learn from each other.

101 political parties were reached through Demo Finland supported programmes in 2020.

In Myanmar, an external evaluation concluded that Demo Finland and its partner the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy's (NIMD) joint Myanmar School of Politics programme (MySoP) has made a significant contribution to a safe space that reinforces dialogue, inclusive policy-making and an enabling environment for political parties at the sub-national level in the form of the Multi-Party Dialogue Platform (MDP) in Shan State. An important milestone was achieved when the Food Safety in Basic Education School Bill was passed in the Shan State Parliament in February 2020. The bill had been jointly formulated and signed by 12 members of the Platform.

In Tunisia, an external evaluation commissioned by Demo Finland in 2020 assessed that the high-level Multi-Party Dialogue Platform, implemented by Demo Finland's partner Centre des Etudes Méditerranéennes et Internationales (CEMI), is a unique forum actively promoting peaceful and

constructive interaction between political parties and different political actors in Tunisia. These dialogue activities have enabled the leadership of different parties to meet and strengthen their capacities to listen to different points of view.

Despite the tense political situation in Zambia, representatives of the political parties' women's wings have co-operated in the Women in Politics Platforms both at national and at district levels. The platforms met three times during the year at the district level and four times at the national level. This suggests that the female party representatives have been able to create safe spaces in a multi-party setting where dialogue is possible. The level and frequency of participation by female politicians and the interest of the parties' women's wings in the platforms were high.

### Political actors voice citizens' interests into party policies, through increased capacity

Demo Finland aims to strengthen the accountability of parties towards their constituencies and citizens. Parties were encouraged to produce meaningful manifestos and election programmes, alternative policies and to promote a clear political vision. This required a strong focus on capacity building of parties as well as individual politicians. Supporting parties and politicians in programming and building their capacity on inclusive policy-making as well as dialogue allows the parties to formulate better policies and influence politics, thus representing their constituencies. Policy-based parties contribute to the accountability of politics among citizens.

In Myanmar, progress was made mainly at an individual level. The trainings within the Myanmar School of Politics programme have resulted in changes in the politicians' attitudes towards multi-party collaboration and knowledge on how to act as a politician. The alumni of the programme have in some cases reached higher positions within their parties. Still, further work is needed for these individual improvements to translate into tangible changes in party policies.

In Tunisia, the programme has increased collaboration between young politicians and civil society. Young politicians' soft skills, such as debating and influencing, have also been enhanced. The monitoring data shows that Tunisian School of Politics alumni now collaborate with civic actors more frequently: the share of those who meet civic actors or citizens at least twice a month increased from 52% in 2016 to 70% in 2020. With the increased collaboration with civil society and strengthened ability to be active in their respective parties, young politicians have more capacity to hear and advocate for citizens' interests in politics.

In Zambia, as large gatherings could not be organised in 2020, women councillors were supported in a very tailored manner. One-on-one capacity building trainings were implemented for altogether 97 women councillors throughout the country and this process involved the strategic review of their individual five-year work plans initiated in the beginning of the electoral cycle. The councillors were also given guidance on how to engage the electorate on various developmental programmes contained in the work plan. This enhanced their accountability heading into the 2021 elections.



In Mozambique, 46 newly elected MPs and 230 Members of Provincial Assemblies (MPAs) as well as technical staff of the Parliament were trained on topics related to planning and budgeting instruments, environment, climate change, gender equality and legislation from the point of view of better oversight of the extractive industries. Strengthening their knowledge and skills on these issues is essential for increasing the oversight role of Parliament and Provincial Assemblies in the natural resources sector.

## Political actors and parties collaborate with each other in a responsive manner, and women participate actively in political processes

A culture of open political interaction and active participation of women and other underrepresented groups was one of the focuses of Demo Finland's programme in 2020. Sustainable peace, stability and development of democracy require the co-operation of politicians despite their differing opinions. Politicians can enhance the trustworthiness and transparency of political parties by learning to co-operate and by having open dialogue. At the same time, the aim is that underrepresented groups like women, youth and minorities have equal chances in parties, and all actors in parties support inclusiveness. Both action for better involvement of women as well as general mainstreaming of gender equality as a principle are needed.

In Myanmar, the multi-party setting of trainings for politicians has created interest among politicians to collaborate with other parties also outside the trainings, and the training participants have reported an increase in cross-party co-operation compared to the beginning of the programme. A third of the alumni collaborated with politicians from other parties at least monthly.

In Tunisia, 70% of the young politicians involved in the programme collaborate with other political actors monthly, which is a significant increase compared to the figures in the beginning of the programme. Increased political dialogue across party lines is a very positive outcome, especially given the current political situation and fragmentation of the political party field in Tunisia.

In Zambia, political parties wanted to re-examine their already drafted gender equality plans and develop the quality of the plans further, which is a positive sign of their commitment to strengthen gender equality. Also, all the political parties have stated their will to enhance women's participation within their parties, and some encouraging signs, such as nominating women to executive positions, have been observed.

In Sri Lanka, with the support of Demo Finland and its partner One-Text Initiative (OTI), the Network of Women Councillors was established in 2020, with politicians from 11 political parties and 12 districts.

# Demo Finland's programmes in 2020

## Myanmar

Demo Finland and the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) founded the Myanmar School of Politics (MySoP) in 2014, and it has collaborated with political parties in the five easternmost States/Regions (Tanintharyi, Shan, Mon, Kayin and Kayah) and, since 2019, in the Yangon Region. MySoP gathered participants from all parties as well as regional Election Sub-Commission officers within one State or Region at a time. Training included topics such as political theory, policy-making, inter-party dialogue, gender equality and best practices in politics. By the end of 2020, altogether 283 alumni from 41 political parties were trained within the MySoP programme. Approximately a third of the participants were women. In addition, MySoP facilitated the Multi-Party Dialogue Platform in Shan State.

Demo Finland, together with NIMD, was also a member of the STEP Democracy consortium in Myanmar. The consortium was the largest democracy support programme in the country, funded by the EU and coordinated by International IDEA. The overall objective of the STEP Democracy programme was to contribute to the development of a democratic society founded on broad engagement in democratic institutions and processes. In the programme, Demo Finland supported the capacity building of female politicians and advocated for awareness on gender equality and gender action plans within political parties.

Myanmar's emerging democracy was thoroughly tested by the 2020 general election and the COVID-19 crisis. The November elections were conducted in a free, fair and mostly peaceful manner, and the election had a record high turnout despite COVID-19 restrictions. The percentage of women elected to Parliament rose to 19.6%, compared to 13.1% in 2015. More than 200 MySoP alumni from 37 political parties stood as candidates, out of which one-third were women. 42 alumni got elected – one third of them women. However, all the developments towards multi-party democracy in Myanmar were stalled in the military coup that took place on 1 February 2021. The coup has been strongly condemned by the European Union and its Member States and all democracy support actors. How to continue supporting multi-party democracy and democratic actors and political parties in the country in the future remains to be seen.

***An external evaluation concluded that the Myanmar School of Politics programme made a significant contribution to a safe space that reinforces dialogue, inclusive policy-making and an enabling environment for political parties at the sub-national level in the form of the Multi-Party Dialogue Platform of Shan State.***

In 2020, MySoP organised eight State/Region-level alumni forums, three election candidate trainings and one training on the topic of “How to be a Great MP” for newly elected MPs, all online. 188 alumni participated in the alumni forums, and 91 politicians in the candidate trainings. A total of 31 newly elected State/Region level MPs from 10 political parties, also MySoP alumni, took part in the training for MPs. The Multi-Party Dialogue Platform (MDP) of Shan State held four meetings during the year, two of which were held face-to-face and two online. The platform consisted of 23 members from 11 political parties.

MySoP made a significant contribution to a safe space that reinforces dialogue, inclusive policy-making and an enabling environment for political parties at the sub-national level in the form of the Multi-Party Dialogue Platform (MDP) in Shan State. 12 MPs, all members of the MDP, jointly signed the Shan State Law of Food Safety in Basic Education School Bill, which was approved by the State Parliament in February 2020. The law was the first multi-party effort on State/Region level legislation in Myanmar, and it was a truly collaborative effort enabled by a supportive environment that MySoP has managed to create in the MDP. Four new law proposals were also planned by the MDP members. Trust among the MDP members and a significant level of institutionalisation of the platform indicate sustainability of the dialogue. All in all, there has been a shift in the political culture from confrontation to dialogue between the political parties of Shan State.

Multi-party co-operation of politicians has strengthened also in other States/Regions thanks to MySoP courses where participants from different parties got to know each other and learn together. The participants' collaboration with representatives of other parties has increased throughout the years, as approximately one-third of the participants now collaborate across party lines regularly, compared to 11% in 2016. MySoP courses have also strengthened the political skills and knowledge of the participants.

In the STEP Democracy programme, a women's caucus was established in Shan State with the aim to provide an informal and safe space for female politicians through an ongoing dialogue platform. As a starting point, Demo Finland organised an online female politicians' knowledge and empowerment training for potential caucus members. Subsequently, a women's political caucus working group was formed and dialogue meetings with senior female politicians representing 24 political parties across Shan State were organised online. Demo Finland also supported a process of data collection from 34 participating parties at the State/Region level to measure the progress on the actions that parties take to ensure gender equality and on the practices parties have to ensure greater inclusiveness. The interview data revealed positive developments in the mindset and institutionalisation of several political parties on gender inclusion and the participation of women. For example, more than half of the participating political parties were using a quota system to guarantee the representation of women in party executives. The increase in the number of women candidates in the 2020 elections followed the same trend.

## Tunisia

The Tunisian School of Politics (TSoP) was founded in 2012 by Demo Finland, Centre des Etudes Méditerranéennes et Internationales (CEMI) and the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD). TSoP offers young politicians knowledge as well as practical tools for working in politics. It is also a space for politicians to work together in a multi-party setting. In addition, TSoP facilitates a high-level Multi-Party Dialogue Platform that brings together all parliamentary parties with more than three seats in Parliament.

Political polarisation marked the year 2020 in Tunisia after the 2019 parliamentary elections and a shift in the political landscape that led to a fractured party landscape. Political parties were initially not able to easily form a majority coalition after the elections and the Government was formed only after a second attempt in February 2020, four months after the parliamentary elections. In September 2020, a technocratic government took office after the resignation of the Prime Minister.

Despite the pandemic and the difficult political situation in the country, 146 trainings were organised by TSoP in 2020. These included trainings for young politicians, for the Executive Bureau Members from political parties and for parliamentary assistants. In addition, Multi-Party Dialogue Platform meetings and political debate sessions were facilitated. 411 persons (48% men and 52% women) from 17 political parties took part in the activities.

The Dialogue Platform has gained an established role as a unique forum actively promoting peaceful and constructive interaction between political parties and different political actors in Tunisia. According to party representatives, the dialogue activities have enabled them to meet people from other parties and strengthened their capacities to listen to different points of view. The Platform's level of influence on policy formulation has gradually improved. The discussions in the Dialogue Platform have led to policy initiatives and the level of influence of the Platform has evolved as some questions discussed within the Platform meetings were subsequently publicly supported by some political leaders.



A training session for TSoP alumni and Finnish Democracy Academy participants in February 2020.

TSoP alumni have reported increased collaboration with both civil society and politicians from other parties. In 2020, 70% of the alumni indicated that they collaborate with civic actors at least twice a month, the figure being 52% in 2016. Also 70% indicate that they collaborate with other political actors at least once monthly, compared to 48% in 2016. This is a very positive result and shows that the Tunisian School of Politics can greatly enhance political dialogue across political party lines, even outside events facilitated by CEMI. Furthermore, the regional and international contacts through seminars, meetings and visits were considered useful by the participants.

The trainings have also strengthened the participants' understanding of concepts and processes of democracy and politics and ability to analyse them in the context of Tunisia. The strengthening of soft skills related to, for example, debating and influencing have been much appreciated by the participants. They have used the acquired skills in their political activities and in advancing in their political careers.

Several alumni have also noted that the programme has strengthened their self-confidence and motivation to be active in their parties, as well as their capacity to accept differences and to work in a constructive way. The knowledge the alumni had gathered was shared with a wider political party audience through four trainings of trainers sessions that were organised for the alumni, some of whom then organised training sessions within their parties.

***70% of the Tunisian School of Politics alumni indicate that they collaborate with other political actors at least once monthly, compared to 48% in 2016. According to an external evaluation, another relevant achievement of the programme is the strengthened capacity of alumni to be active in their parties and to advance in their careers.***

## Zambia

Since 2013, Demo Finland has, together with the Zambia National Women's Lobby (ZNWL), supported the political participation of women especially at the local level in Zambia. The programme consists of strengthening the skills of female municipal councillors and women interested in politics, supporting political parties in drafting gender action plans and facilitating women's multi-party co-operation. There is a National Women in Politics Platform (NWIP) and three district-level Local Women in Politics Platforms (LWIP) in place.

The political situation in Zambia continued to polarise during 2020 and the approaching 2021 general elections already influenced the political climate. The main political processes were the attempted amendment of the Constitution and the creation of a new electoral register.

The Women in Politics Platforms met three times at the district level and four times at the national level in 2020, and individual capacity building trainings were implemented for altogether 97 women councillors one-on-one throughout the country. In addition, advocacy meetings and opportunities for international peer exchange were also organised.

As the political situation in Zambia remains tense, the willingness of the female politicians to cooperate in the three districts where the programme is active is already an important achievement. One signal of increased collaboration was from Lusaka district, where the LWIP made an initiative to raise funds for a maternity clinic. LWIPs have also been able to identify female aspirants for the 2021 general elections and have promised to support and rally behind them. There was multi-

party collaboration also at the national level, as the NWIP also organised fundraising for a common cause and released three joint press statements.

In 2020, co-operation between LWIPs and NWIP was enhanced, as the women’s wings’ representatives took the role of trainers in trainings organised for local-level women’s wings. This enhanced the learning between women in politics at local and national level, and increased intra-party democracy within the political parties’ women’s wings.

As large gatherings could not be organised in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, women councillors were supported in a bespoke manner in the one-on-one capacity building trainings. This process involved a strategic review of their individual five-year work plans initiated at the beginning of the electoral cycle. The individual trainings for local councillors gave an excellent opportunity to strengthen the councillors’ capacity to carry out their work plans and be accountable to their constituencies, as the trainings were tailored to each councillor’s needs. In addition, political parties were supported in developing their gender equality plans further. ZNWL organised three to four one-on-one advocacy meetings and training sessions with all political parties so that they would proceed with their gender action plans. According to feedback, political parties are looking forward to having gender equality plans in place before the 2021 elections to contribute towards the adoption of an increased number of women candidates for the elections.

***One-on-one capacity building trainings were implemented for altogether 97 Zambian women councillors. The councillors were also given guidance on how to engage the electorate on various developmental programmes contained in their work plans. This enhanced their accountability heading into the 2021 elections.***



Zambian politicians on a learning and experience sharing visit to Rwanda in December 2020.

To promote international peer exchange, Demo Finland facilitated an online mentoring session in June for the NWIP and the Coalition of Finnish Women's Associations (NYTKIS), in which Finnish politicians shared experiences on violence and harassment against women in politics with the NWIP executive members. The focus was on political parties' good practices on tackling the issue, and both Finnish and Zambian participants found the exchange useful and felt that they face common problems. Additionally, NWIP representatives enhanced their knowledge on strategies of women's political participation within and across political parties and networks during an exchange visit in Rwanda in December.

## Mozambique

In Mozambique, Demo Finland supports the democratic governance of extractive industries and natural resources with its partners Instituto para Democracia Multipartidária (IMD) and the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD). The programme is part of Finland's bilateral country strategy in Mozambique and its second phase is implemented during 2020–2023. It aims at enhancing the oversight role of the Parliament and six Provincial Assemblies on extractive industries and at increasing the capacity of these elected members to assess the implementation of the existing legislation and management of natural resources in the country. According to the evaluation of the first phase of the programme (2017–2019), it is very relevant to the sustainable and transparent governance of Mozambique's natural resources.



Staff members of Instituto para Democracia Multipartidária (IMD) and Demo Finland came together with the Ambassador of Finland and staff members of the Embassy of Finland to Mozambique in February 2020 to kick start the second phase of the programme.

The year 2020 started in Mozambique with the swearing-in of the newly elected President, Members of Parliament (MPs), Governors and Members of the Provincial Assemblies (MPAs) following the general and provincial elections in 2019. In the elections, the ruling party FRELIMO strengthened their power in the Parliament, gaining a two-thirds majority of seats.

During the year, 46 of these new MPs and members of three parliamentary committees as well as 230 MPAs were trained on issues related to extractive industries. Also, nine meetings with MPs and seven meetings with MPAs were organised for CSOs working on natural resource management or community representatives. In addition, the programme offered expert support for the parliamentary committees, and three policy briefs on topical subjects were published. Trainings for parliamentary technical staff on oversight were initiated and will be an important element for the sustainability of the results.

Since the elections were only held in 2019, relevant policy or legislative initiatives related to the extractive industry were not yet presented in 2020.

## Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, Demo Finland and the Network of Ethiopian Women's Associations (NEWA) started a pilot project to strengthen women's capacity and their political participation on a multi-party basis, and to support women's active participation in elections both as voters and as candidates on regional and national levels. The project offers trainings for female politicians and maps out gender plans of different political parties.

In 2020, the postponement of the elections scheduled for August led to an unresolved conflict between Tigray Region in the north of the country and the Federal Government. The Tigray conflict has further increased the instability of the country's political situation.

Due to the postponement of the elections and re-registration of political parties, many project activities were delayed to be implemented in 2021. Electoral candidate trainings could not be organised in 2020, but NEWA produced a women's political leadership training manual and organised media-related activities, such as a panel discussion on television and a radio programme to increase awareness on women in politics.

A new partner was identified in 2020, as the Ethiopian Women with Disabilities National Association (EWDNA) joined the project in order to give it a disability inclusion element. Some positive steps towards strengthening the political rights of women with disabilities have been taken lately, but a lot remains to be done, related to, for example, implementing the new election law and including persons with disabilities in political parties' policies and manifestos. During 2020, EWDNA processed the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia's voter education material into braille and produced a sign language video version as well. In addition, a radio programme on the importance of women with disabilities participating in different socio-economic activities was produced with an estimated audience of 4.5 million people.

## Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, Demo Finland started a pilot project with One-Text Initiative (OTI) in 2019 to support female politicians in a multi-party setting at local council level, with the intention to establish a network of women councillors. A 25% quota for women at Sri Lankan local councils was introduced in 2017, and in 2018 almost 2,000 women entered the local councils, which up to then had had only 2% women members. This was an opportunity to strengthen women's involvement in Sri Lankan politics.

In March 2020, the Parliament of Sri Lanka was dissolved, and new elections were scheduled for April. This was done in accordance with the Constitution that allows for the Parliament to be dissolved after it has sat for four and half years of its five-year term. However, due to the deteriorating COVID-19 situation, the elections eventually had to be postponed several times and were finally held in August.



Training for local council members of the Northern Province of Sri Lanka.



In 2020, active women local councillors were identified and a network of 40 councillors was established. Currently the network has members from the main two language groups, from six provinces, 12 districts, 34 local councils and 11 political parties. The network members were trained on how to act as politicians, how to deal with the media and how to see the diverse links between equality and sustainable development.

***A network of 40 women local councillors was established in Sri Lanka to support women politicians in a multi-party setting. The network has members from the main two language groups, from six provinces, 12 districts, 34 local councils and 11 political parties.***

For politicians, it is essential to understand how to use social media and engage with traditional media, and this was one of the topics covered by the women's network. Participants' virtual meeting skills were also strengthened, as online skills became highly important during the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants were given hands-on support related to the use of media in their political

work, including topics such as the prevention of hate speech in the social media. After the training, participants felt more confident to use social media to reach out to their electorates and over 80% of them now have their own Facebook pages, which most of them did not have before.

OTI also engaged in several advocacy activities to increase women's possibilities to participate in Sri Lankan politics. During the period leading up to the parliamentary elections, OTI took part in an advocacy campaign organised by women's organisations. Parallel to International Women's Day and the "One Vote for Her" campaign on social media, several NGOs, INGOs and local organisations working towards an inclusive political space for women was brought together under the Gender and Elections Working Group (GEWG) in an advocacy event. The event, involving local councillors, provincial councillors as well as women parliamentarians, highlighted the importance of women in decision-making prior to the general election and demonstrated the solidarity between women across political party lines.

# Disability inclusion enhances democracy

In 2020, Demo Finland took a step further in its work for inclusive democracy as it started to support disability inclusion in politics in Kenya and Zambia.

In Kenya, Demo Finland started a partnership with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD). A pilot programme entitled “Kenya Inclusive Political Parties” (KIPP) was launched in August, with the intention to support more disability-inclusive political commitments within political parties. KIPP’s aim is that political parties have effective provisions in place to respond to the strategic and practical needs of persons with disabilities (PWDs) within their internal party structures, political commitments and policies.



A training for staff and volunteers of the Zambia National Women’s Lobby (ZNWL) and Disability Rights Watch (DRW) in October 2020.

Interactions with political parties within the programme already showed some results after the first months of implementation. By the end of 2020, five targeted political parties had signed a Memorandum of Understanding with WFD, which is a clear indication of the commitment towards inclusion of PWDs within the parties. The parties have also been willing to review their policy documents and manifestos to capture changes in the light of the upcoming election process.

In Zambia, Demo Finland’s long-term partner Zambia National Women’s Lobby (ZNWL), together with Disability Rights Watch (DRW) initiated a new project entitled “Strengthening the Political Participation of Persons with Disabilities”. The project strives at persons with disabilities having increased opportunities to exercise their civic rights and participate effectively within political parties in Zambia.



In Zambia, PWDs are often neither aware of nor able to exercise their political rights. Demo Finland aims to increase the access of men and women with disabilities to politics by building their confidence and the required skills for public influencing.

The project started in late 2020 and some progress was already achieved in the improvement of skills and knowledge in disability inclusion of key political party representatives. A training on disability inclusion for political parties was organised with 46 executives of political parties attending the training. The knowledge of the participants in relation to recognising the importance of disability inclusion increased by 38 percentage points. Some of the political parties have already started to take concrete steps to include persons with disabilities in politics, which is a positive signal towards the expected project outcomes.

Participants of the Democracy Academy's study visit met with different parliamentary groups in the Tunisian Parliament.



## Demo Finland's work in Finland

In Finland, Demo Finland's programme work as well as its communications and advocacy aim at developing the capacity of Finnish political parties in democracy support, multi-party dialogue and development policy, and building their commitment in supporting democracy worldwide. Furthermore, Demo Finland offers opportunities for political party members to participate directly in international democracy support, therefore introducing current and future politicians to issues related to democratisation.

In February, Demo Finland organised the Democracy Academy 2020 for the youth and student organisations of Finnish parliamentary parties. The Democracy Academy consisted of a two-day training in Helsinki and a study visit to Tunisia. The theme for the Academy was the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In the training, 27 participants from nine parties followed expert lectures and discussions as well as engaged in dialogue and peer learning. The training increased participants' knowledge of issues related to democracy and the 2030 Agenda, and feedback highlighted the importance of the Democracy Academy as a unique peer-learning platform for all the parliamentary parties' youth and student wings. 95% of the Democracy Academy participants evaluated indicated that they can apply their increased knowledge and skills in the future.

***95% of the Democracy Academy participants evaluated indicated that they can apply their increased knowledge and skills on the 2030 Agenda and democracy in the future.***

One Democracy Academy participant from each of the nine parties also joined a study visit to Tunisia. This included deepening their understanding of Tunisia's democratisation process and peer learning with Tunisian youth politicians. All the participants indicated that the visit was either very useful or quite useful, regarding their work and political careers.

One of the outcomes of the ongoing collaboration with the youth organisations of the parliamentary parties was a joint statement signed by all the nine youth organisations at the end of 2020, as part of an advocacy campaign by Demo Finland and Varusmiesliitto (The Finnish Conscripts' Union), advocating a change in legislation to allow voting at garrisons, making it easier for conscripts to be able to exercise their right to vote.

In 2020, Demo Finland organised training for a group of Finnish MPs on dialogue and mediation skills to create a pool of MPs that the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Embassies can call upon to support political dialogue in different contexts. This group of MPs received their first training in 2020 and continues to be trained further in 2021.

## Advocacy work and communications

In 2020, important progress took place around the Finnish and EU development and democracy policies. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (MFA) started to draft two central policies: the Africa Strategy and the Government's Report on Development Policy Extending Across Parliamentary Terms. The first includes a concrete action point regarding democracy support and the latter splits one existing development policy priority into two, making peaceful, democratic societies a new priority of its own which means that democracy has been given emphasis in both. In the EU framework, two important action plans were launched at the end of 2020, strengthening the Union's democracy support: the EU Human Rights and Democracy Action Plan and the Gender Action Plan. All in all, there was a marked improvement in democracy support policies of Finland and the EU in 2020.

Demo Finland participated in these processes by organising events and attending the MFA's working group and through the Development Policy Committee, and at EU level through the European Partnership for Democracy (EPD). In addition, Demo Finland was invited to provide input in consultations and hearings of parliamentary committees. Demo Finland's work was also highlighted in Finland's Voluntary National Review report to the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) as an example of the crucial link between democracy and sustainable development.

The objective of Demo Finland's communications is to raise awareness of the importance of democracy and functioning multi-party systems to sustainable development and emphasise the role of political parties as actors responsible for development.

Demo Finland launched a new website and visual identity in September 2020. The new website is accessible and more responsive, and more expert content, such as blogs, is produced on the website. The number of visitors increased by 25% and the number of page visits by 88% compared to 2019. The growth in the number of followers accelerated also in most of the social media channels, varying from 12% on Facebook to a notable 192% on LinkedIn.

Events are an integral part of Demo Finland's communications. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, major changes were made to Demo Finland's plans. However, by organising events online, Demo Finland was able to reach new audiences around the country, and the opportunity to watch webinar

recordings afterwards on Demo Finland’s YouTube channel more than doubled the number of people reached through public events.

In January, one face-to-face event was organised by Demo Finland and the MFA while launching International IDEA’s Global State of Democracy 2019 report. Demo Finland celebrated the International Day of Democracy on 15 September with an online seminar that elaborated on how Finland supports and defends democracy in its foreign policy. In November, Demo Finland was invited to co-organise a webinar on violence against women in politics. The main host was the Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy (DIPD), and the third co-organiser was the Olof Palme International Center from Sweden. In addition, Demo Finland organised a webinar in December on election observation which served as the launch event of Demo Finland’s report that highlighted experiences of Finnish MPs in Election Observation Missions.



International IDEA’s Secretary-General Kevin Casas-Zamora speaking at the launch event of the Global State of Democracy 2019 report in Helsinki.

## Staff resources

The staff of Demo Finland must have very specific knowledge and skills, including diplomatic sensitivity, country-specific knowledge, and exemplary communication skills in the context of a globally unique multi-party environment. Demo Finland invests in maintaining a motivating environment that supports capacity building, encourages mutual learning and provides opportunities to exercise and hone new skills.

At the beginning of 2020, there were seven staff members working in the Helsinki headquarters, and by the end of the year this had grown to nine staff members. In March 2020, Demo Finland moved to new office premises in Kalasatama, Helsinki.

Demo Finland's Board, elected for two years and with a rotating presidency, consists of representatives from Demo Finland's member parties. In 2020, the composition of the Board was as follows:

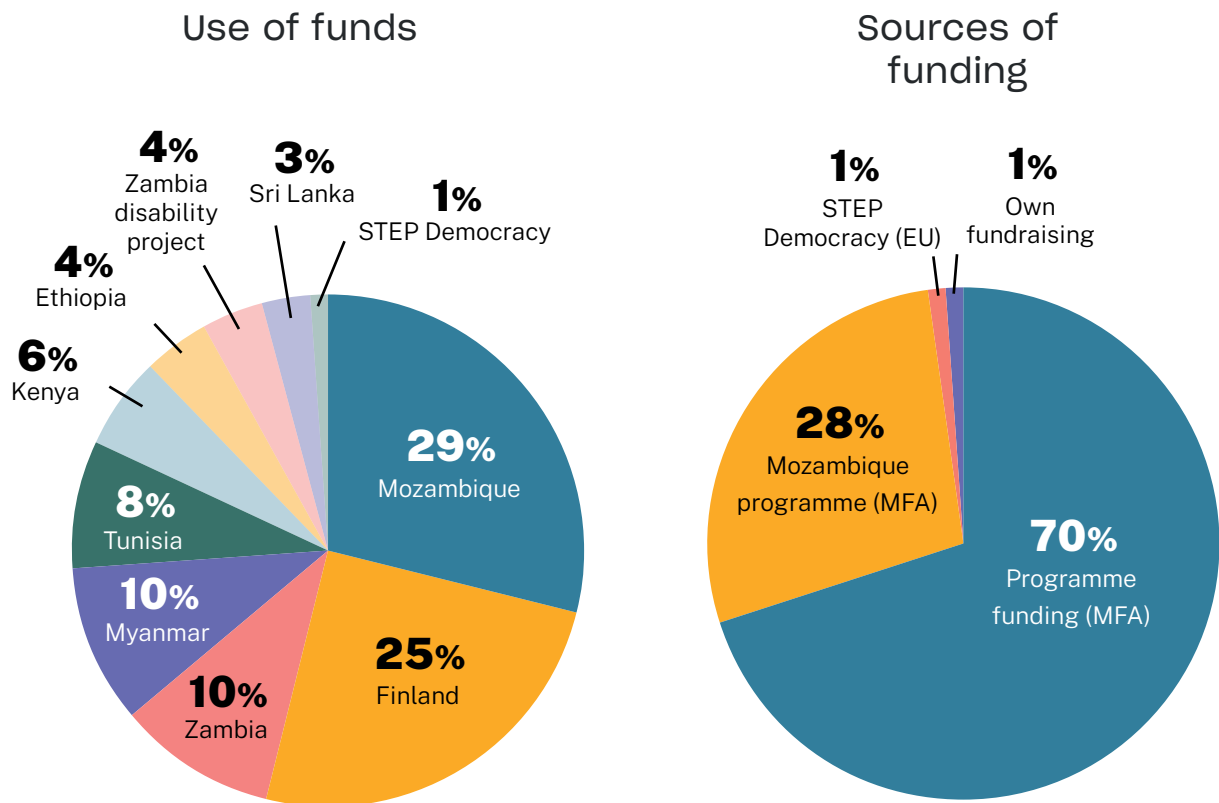
<b>Finns Party</b>	two seats (including Chair)
<b>Christian Democrats</b>	one seat (first Vice-chair)
<b>Social Democratic Party</b>	two seats (including second Vice-chair)
<b>National Coalition Party</b>	two seats
<b>Centre Party</b>	two seats
<b>Greens</b>	one seat
<b>Left Alliance</b>	one seat
<b>Swedish People's Party</b>	one seat
<b>Movement Now</b>	one seat

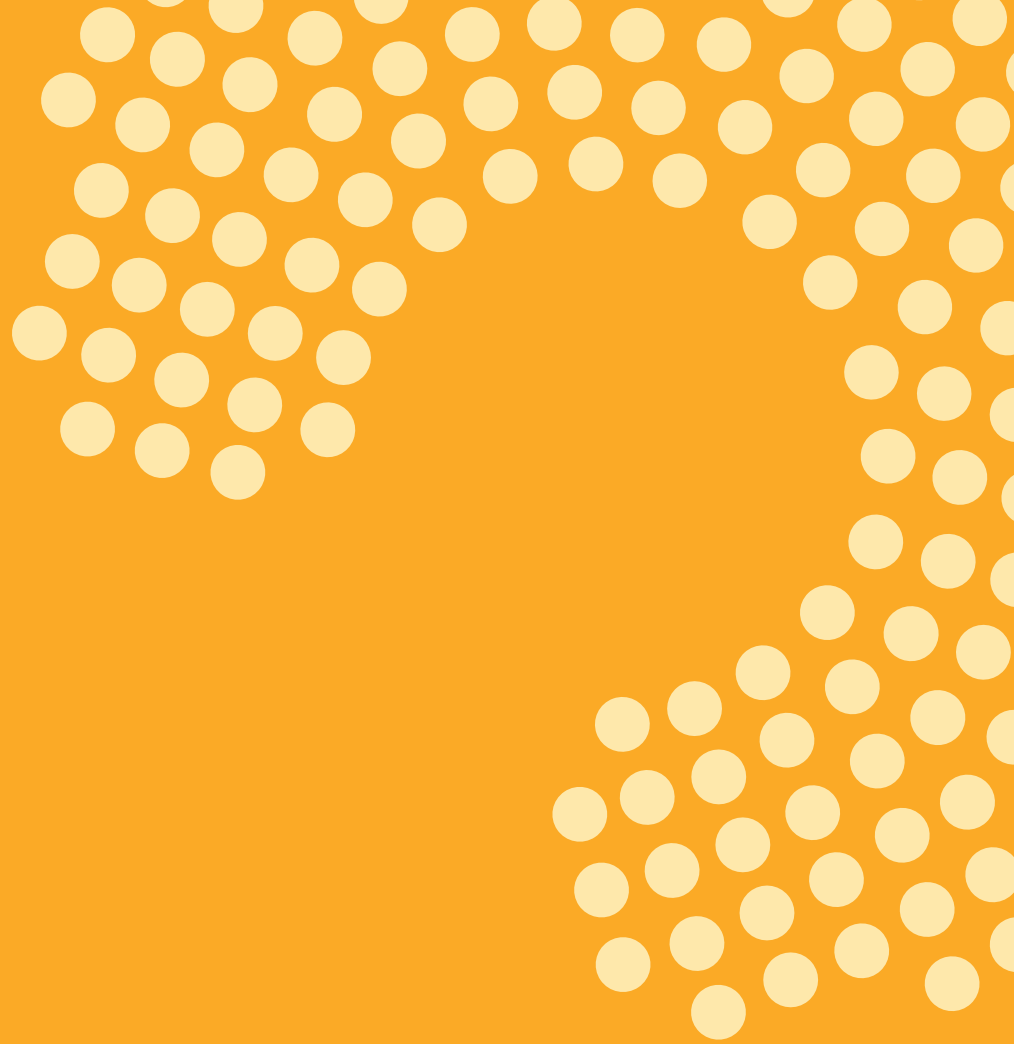
A Senior Advisory Group was set up for the period of 2020–2023. The group consists of high-level representatives of political parties, with previous merits in development policy or democracy support. These members were named by all the parliamentary parties and their task is to advise and support Demo Finland in its advocacy work and thematic discussion and debates.

# Financial resources

The MFA-funded programme's total costs during 2020 were around 1.15 million euros. Demo Finland also received funding from the Finnish MFA for the bilateral Mozambique programme, of which around 55,000 euros were used in Finland, around 400,000 euros in Mozambique and around 20,000 euros by the Dutch partner NIMD. Together with NIMD, Demo Finland received funding from the EU in the framework of the STEP Democracy programme in Myanmar, which has an annual budget share of around 580,000 euros. Demo Finland also collected around 10,000 euros as membership fees from its member parties.

Demo Finland's own capital increased by 10,140 euros during the year, reaching 37,013 euros.





**Political Parties of Finland for Democracy – Demo Finland** is a co-operative organisation of all Finnish parliamentary parties. It enhances democracy by supporting collaborative projects between Finnish political parties and political parties in new and developing democracies.

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