



Annual Report 2021



DEMO
FINLAND

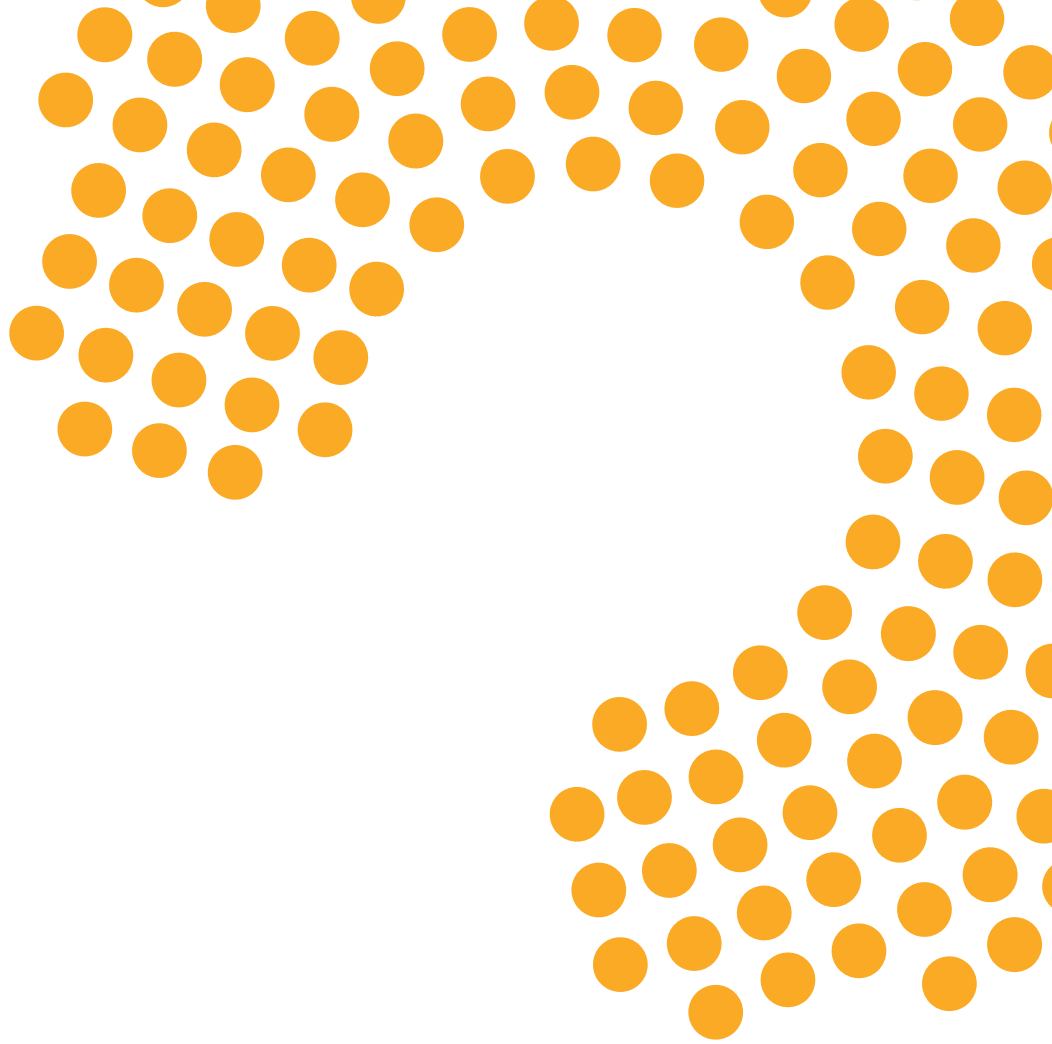
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Cover image:

Training for Sri Lankan women councillors in Colombo.

Photo: OTI.



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Democracy support ever more important

2021 was a particularly challenging year when it came to the development of democracy worldwide. Multiple assessments of the state of democracy that were conducted in 2021, including International IDEA's Global State of Democracy report, gave a strong indication that democracy was in crisis. For the first time in 30 years, the number of countries having turned into authoritarian states had exceeded the number of states having turned democratic. In addition, the report indicated that the quality of democracy had declined. It was evident that the global COVID-19 pandemic had a negative effect particularly on fragile democracies. By contrast, 2021 showed that stronger democracies were more resilient in being able to tackle major, unexpected crises.

While this news was very alarming, at the same time it meant that work to support democracies worldwide was ever more important. Demo Finland has consistently worked to strengthen underrepresented voices in politics, including women, the youth and persons with disabilities. This has been done primarily through strengthening political parties on a multi-party basis.

The decline in the global state of democracy has also been evident in a number of Demo Finland's partner countries. The illegal military coup in Myanmar in February 2021 marked a drastic halt to the previous promising democratic developments in that country. The suspension of the Parliament in Tunisia was unexpected and created a particularly challenging environment for democratic institutions and actors. The war in the Tigray region of Ethiopia which became a larger internal conflict, created uncertainty for the state of democracy. Nevertheless, our work in these countries continued with our partners with the hope that the developments would again turn positive in the future. Despite these challenging developments, Demo Finland continued its work with its partner organisations to strengthen dialogue between political parties in Myanmar and Tunisia, and to strengthen women's political participation in Ethiopia.

These developments in democracy made it ever more important to look for positive stories. The peaceful transition of power in Zambia following the elections in August 2021 was a story that gave the international community hope and inspiration for democratic success in a challenging time.

Demo Finland, as a democracy support organisation owned by all nine Finnish parliamentary parties, remains committed to strengthening democracy worldwide. Its work is underpinned by long-standing Finnish traditions of multi-party dialogue and strengthening women's and other underrepresented groups' voices in politics. Demo Finland does this work through funding from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.

Gary Klaukka
Executive Director

Overview


In 2021, Demo Finland entered a new strategy period. Demo Finland Strategy 2021–2025 leans on the proven strengths of the organisation: Multi-party dialogue, inclusion of underrepresented groups in politics and promotion of stronger democracy support policy remain the core areas of work. These pillars have been justified and remain relevant in Demo Finland’s work. The 2021 Annual Report reflects the current partnerships and commitments, yet new actions will be designed during the strategy period. The main novelty in the Strategy is that the new Theory of Change brings together the work both in partner countries and in Finland. Demo Finland’s Theory of Change links to the Sustainable Development Goals and Finland’s Development Policy Goals.


Since its founding, Demo Finland’s work has focused on providing support to political parties and rested on two pillars: multi-party dialogue and supporting the political participation of underrepresented groups in politics, in particular women and young people.

Multi-party democracy requires vibrant, representative, and programmatic parties that can carry out their multifaceted role at the core of the system. Parties play an important role in the identification of the needs and interests of people and in channelling those needs into decision-making, in reconciling conflicts of interest between groups of people, and in producing credible political programs to support decision-making. In addition, they ensure the functioning of democracy in the longer term by training both citizens and political leaders. When in power, parties


The overall Theory of Change of Demo Finland


1 Political parties are more inclusive, programmatic and democratic

 **We assume** that policy-based and inclusive parties contribute to a politics of accountability and more democratic societies.


 **We assume** that inclusive parties reflect better the diversity of societies and contribute to the realization of civil and political rights.

2 Political parties perform strengthened multi-party dialogue

 **We assume** that when political parties practise dialogue, they can enhance the weight, trustworthiness and transparency of political system and decrease polarization and conflicts.

 **We assume** that when political parties reach agreements through dialogue, the decisions are more sustainable and less likely to be reversed with a change of power.

3 Finnish parliamentary parties’ commitment to democracy support translates into strengthened policies

 **We assume** that when political parties and government officials have increased knowledge and awareness of the modalities and opportunities for democracy support, it will lead to more effective policies in support of democracy.

Overall goal: Strengthened and inclusive multi-party democracy 

bear responsibility for decision-making, while out of executive power they should hold decision-makers accountable. When parties are successful in these tasks, they ensure the well-being of democracy. Correspondingly, failure will lead to social mistrust, inequality and corruption.

Considering the key role parties play in democratic systems, they are the primary stakeholder groups of Demo Finland's programmes.

Outcome 1: Political parties are more programmatic, inclusive, and democratic

Political parties are the gatekeepers for democratic societies. To reflect the diversity of societies and to foster their representational role, political parties need to promote access to decision-making by underrepresented groups on various levels. Parties must ensure the political inclusion of women, young people, persons with disabilities and minorities. In a functioning multi-party democracy, and according to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, every citizen has the right to participate in decision-making, which makes inclusivity an objective. On the other hand, the quality of decision-making is improved if more diverse voices and experiences are heard and involved. Demo Finland encourages parties to develop strategies for the inclusion of underrepresented groups and provides support for the competence and empowerment of politicians belonging to such groups.

Parties need to respond to the interests of their voters and draw up policies that support the realisation of accountability towards the citizens. Demo Finland strengthens parties in terms of strategic thinking, political programming, ensuring inclusivity and good command of the principles of democracy. Parties are provided training for programmatic strategy work. The internal democracy of parties is reinforced and their dialogue with the civil society is supported.

In 2021, Demo Finland supported capacity building for young politicians in Finland and Tunisia, for women in Ethiopia, Finland, Sri Lanka and Zambia, and for persons with disabilities in Kenya and Zambia. Political parties were assisted with planning gender responsive strategies and practices in Sri Lanka and Zambia. In addition, political parties were familiarized in responding to the needs of persons with disabilities in Kenya and Zambia. In Mozambique, MPs were trained in implementing their oversight role over the management of natural resources. Demo Finland also produced a publication on intra-party democracy in Finland for the use of Finnish parties.

Outcome 2: Political parties perform strengthened inclusive multi-party dialogue

Constructive dialogue between political parties is essential to functioning multi-party democracy. Dialogue may lead to mutual respect and listening to the other party and create space for policies that take different views into account. Constructive and respectful political dialogue improves the citizens' confidence in representative democracy as a political system. Demo Finland strengthens the dialogue between parties to promote open political interaction. Demo Finland supports its partners in facilitating dialogue and creates and reinforces safe spaces for an ongoing dialogue between parties.

Multi-party dialogue is also a tool for building peace and engaging political parties as relevant actors in peace-building processes. This paves the way towards commitment of such actors, who in a post-conflict context and within post-peacebuilding time will be responsible for transparent and accountable decision-making structures.

In 2021, multi-party dialogue platforms and networks were supported and facilitated in Sri Lanka, Tunisia and Zambia. In Finland, the Democracy Academies organised for the youth and women wings of the political parties provided a safe space for peer learning and dialogue.

Outcome 3: Finnish parliamentary parties' commitment to democracy support translates into policies

The strengthening of and support for democracy around the world requires strong advocacy and international co-operation. Finland and the European Union are committed to supporting democracy internationally, but a value-based commitment may not be sufficiently evident in the policies being applied. Demo Finland strengthens the democracy support policies of Finland and the European Union by offering its expertise to governmental actors and decision-makers. Demo Finland creates additional value to international co-operation by participating in the activities of a wide variety of networks and highlighting the expertise of Finnish politicians.

In 2021, Demo Finland continued strengthening its role as the leading expert in democracy support in Finland. Demo Finland monitored ongoing and upcoming policy processes which had relevance to democracy support, providing its expertise for political parties and government officials to utilise. In practice, this meant participating in hearings in ministries and in the Parliament, publishing statements and positions and contributing to those drafted jointly by networks or multi-stakeholder committees.

Demo Finland's work in 2021 in numbers:



Demo Finland's programmes in 2020

Tunisia

The Tunisian School of Politics programme (TSoP) was founded in 2012 by Demo Finland, Centre des Etudes Méditerranéennes et Internationales (CEMI) and the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD). 2021 brought along a new programme phase as Demo Finland joined its partners CEMI and NIMD to co-fund the Tunisian component of the larger democracy support consortium called Power of Dialogue. Apart from working with young politicians in Tunisian parties, the programme strengthens the participation of young people in decision-making by further expanding co-operation with civil society and young people from outside political parties.

This new approach is timely, as the state of Tunisian democracy backslid during 2021 and the country ended up being defined as electoral autocracy by several international expert institutions. In July, President Kais Saied suspended the Parliament, removed the immunity of parliamentarians, dismissed the Prime Minister, and removed other high-level officials. The President has moved in an increasingly authoritarian direction, giving himself the power to rule by decree and attacking judicial independence. The measures were supposed to be temporary but have been extended indefinitely.

Despite the pandemic and the difficult political situation in the country, the Tunisian School of Politics continued to organise trainings for young politicians and CSO leaders as planned. Altogether 17 political parties participated in TSoP activities and dialogues, and 331 young politicians (154 men and 177 women) participated in the trainings. During the year 16 training sessions for a mixed group of young political and civic actors were organised, reaching a total of 70 participants. According to a post-training survey, 89% of them felt that after the training they are able to participate better in decision-making processes in their parties and organisations. Many felt that they had increased their organisational capacities and told that they had got new and better positions within their organisations. In addition, four "Training of Trainers" sessions were organised, and they equipped 11 TSoP alumni (4 men, 7 women) with knowledge and communication skills to further disseminate their skills within their respective parties.

Young political and civic actors have increased organisational capacities and they have got new and better positions within their organisations. According to a post-training survey, 89% of them felt that after the training they are able to participate better in decision-making processes in their parties and organisations.

To activate the political participation of young people in general, a popular new social media channel "Freesh" was founded (Youtube, Instagram and Facebook). Through this platform hundreds of videos and posts were made related to the historical and current developments of the society and political context, and the channel reached thousands of viewers or followers.

The political crisis had some effects on the implementation of the activities in relation to multi-party dialogue. Some progress was still made as new ways to navigate in the challenging political climate were invented and new spaces for inclusive dialogue between the political party members

and CSO representatives were created. In total, three permanent multi-party dialogue platforms were active in 2021, two of them being freshly launched.

In December, CEMI officially launched “Youth Collaborative Platform” which brought together 25 young participants from different political parties and CSOs to discuss political, economic and social issues. These are youth activists from political parties and civil society who want to bring their voice to public discussion to defend democracy. New Youth Council with 20 representatives (10 men, 10 women) brought together youth not belonging to any political parties or CSOs. The high-level Multiparty Dialogue Platform (MDP) for those parliamentary parties that have more than 4 seats in the Parliament continued its meetings throughout the first half of the year.

The well-established Tunisian School of Politics debates and “couscous politique” discussions were also organised during 2021, gathering 349 participants. The topics varied from digital transformation to political communication and from youth participation to strategic planning. Throughout the political crisis CEMI had active communication with the political parties at different levels. CEMI continued to be seen as an impartial and professional actor, yet vocally defending democratic values and the role of political parties in Tunisian society.

Ethiopia

Since 2019, Demo Finland and the Network of Ethiopian Women’s Associations (NEWA) have strengthened women’s capacity in political participation in Ethiopia on a multi-party basis, and supported women’s active participation in elections both as voters and as candidates on regional and national levels. The objective of the programme is that women participate actively in political parties and political processes in the targeted regions.

The armed conflict and the Tigray crisis that has been going on since November 2020 in Ethiopia strongly affected the political context. The humanitarian situation got worse during 2021 in the whole Northern Ethiopia, and the Federal Government declared a state of emergency in November. An investigation by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) showed that several parties had committed attacks on civilians, unlawful killings, detentions and sexual and gender-based violence within the conflict.

Ethiopia held national elections in June after various postponements, and despite the threat of violence, the electoral period itself was mostly peaceful. However, not all opposition parties participated in the elections as several ended up boycotting them.

Demo Finland’s partner NEWA held pre-electoral and one post-electoral consultative meetings with political parties’ leadership. The consultative meetings were aimed at equipping the leadership with the necessary skills to appreciate the value of inclusion, especially gender equality within political parties and in policy-making. A workshop was organised for female party members to identify the main challenges they face as women or in bringing women into politics. Consequently, three separate workshops in Addis Ababa, Oromia and Benishangul-Gumuz were held to train political leadership skills for women. In total, 114 female politicians participated in these trainings from 13 different parties.

In relation to the elections, 42 female candidates representing 15 parties went through a training programme. In a review meeting afterwards, some participants referred to the increased self-esteem and confidence as candidates, helping them to “be in the forefront”. However, several challenges were also listed which female candidates faced during the election, such as lack of financial resources, fear of candidacy affecting their professional career or status in the labour market and worsened security situation during the campaign period.

Pre-election trainings increased the self-esteem and confidence of female candidates.

Female politicians from 24 parties received media training, which according to the pre- and post-testing of the participants significantly increased their understanding on the role of media in politics and in showing female politicians as role models for young women. With the support of the programme funds, TV & radio commercials were posted, a TV panel discussion held, and a weekly radio discussion programme run in the three programme areas in order to encourage women to be active in Ethiopian politics.

After the elections, NEWA participated also in the institutionalisation of the Joint Council of Women Political Parties’ Members, originally established by the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE).

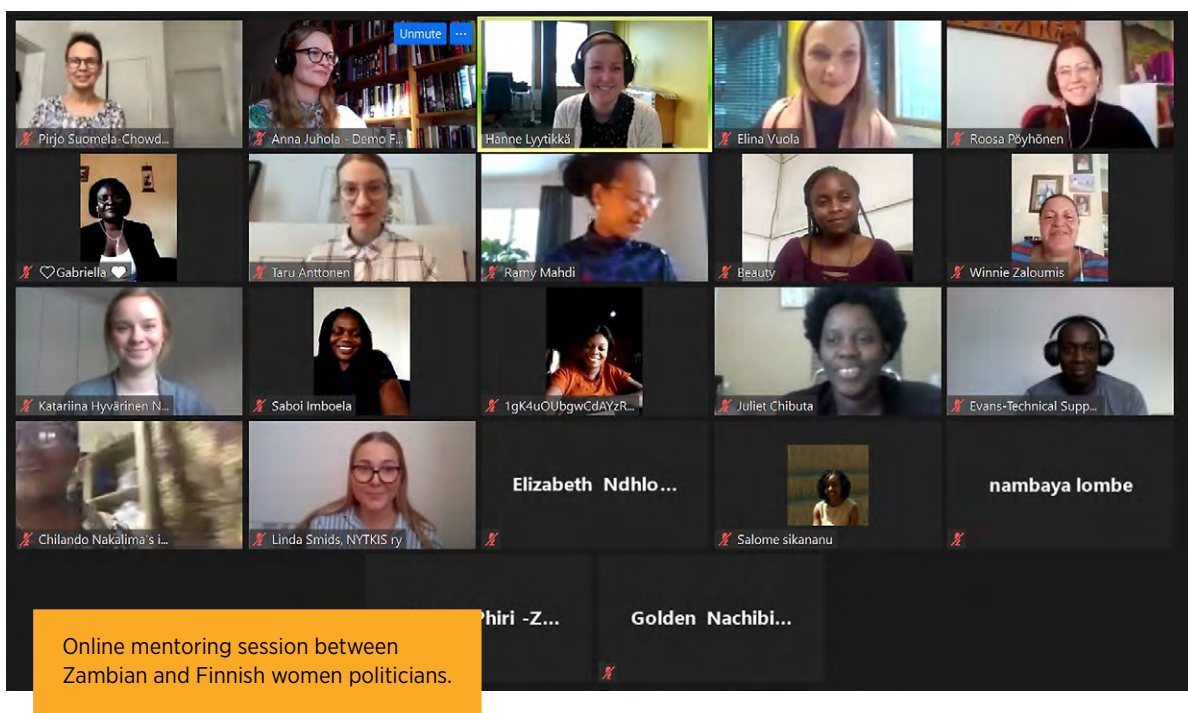
Demo Finland also collaborates with Ethiopian Women with Disabilities National Association (EWDNA) which addresses the civil and political rights of women with disabilities. In 2021, Training of Trainers on voter education for EWDNA members was organised before the elections. After the training, 32 coffee discussion sessions were organised at 5 branches of the nation-wide EWDNA network, engaging 960 women with disabilities. In these sessions, the women identified and discussed the challenges of the electoral process from the point of view of disability inclusion.

Zambia

Demo Finland, together with its partner organisation Zambia National Women’s Lobby (ZNWL), has promoted women’s political participation in Zambia since 2013. The focus of the programme has been on trainings of women councillors and women interested in politics, trainings for political parties and their women’s wings both at national and local level, supporting political parties in preparing gender equality plans and facilitating cross-party co-operation among women. The programme was carried out nationally and in three districts (Lusaka, Kapiri Mposhi and Kaoma).

Political polarisation in Zambia deepened in 2020, and elections in 2021 contributed to the tense political climate. In 2021, economic distress, restrictions on fundamental freedoms of assembly and expression, pressure on the media, excessive use of police force against the opposition, and the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to a further deterioration of the political environment. Despite this, the elections were held in a mostly peaceful atmosphere and power was transferred peacefully. Notably, voter turnout rose to an all-time high of over 70%, with young people in particular voting actively. Although the peaceful transfer of power has been celebrated for a reason, the election result was not very promising in terms of the representativeness of democracy – the number of elected women dropped and the participation of persons with disabilities was even lower.

2021 was the last implementation year of the four-year “Empowering Women for Effective Participation in Politics” programme. During 2021, multiple trainings were organised for political



parties and their women’s wings on gender equality and gender equality plans, and advocacy meetings were held at national level with each of the nine participating political parties on topics related to the 2021 elections. Trainings for individuals reached 19 aspiring women candidates, 55 campaign managers and 128 recently elected women councillors.

Two meetings were organised for the National Women in Politics Platform (NWIP) and three meetings for the three local level Women in Politics Platforms (LWIP) each, and an international mentorship session was carried out between The Coalition of Finnish Women’s Associations (NYTKIS) and NWIP Executive Members in February 2021. Additionally, the female politicians organised 12 community discussion forums with 360 participants in 2021.

According to an external evaluation commissioned in 2021, the programme had managed to enhance solidarity amongst women politicians by institutionalising the Women in Politics Platforms at both national and local levels. The evaluation also stated that female councillors have voiced citizens’ interests into community development initiatives, women councillors’ capacity to interact with the society has improved and they have more knowledge and skills regarding politicians’ roles and democratic concepts. The programme has contributed towards women’s influential and active participation within their political parties and political processes. Over half of the Women in Politics Platform members have increased their positions within their parties, some up to Vice Presidents or Party President.

In August 2020, Demo Finland started a new two-year programme which is implemented jointly by the ZNWL and Disability Rights Watch (DRW). The main objective of the programme is to strengthen the inclusive multi-party system and in particular the equal opportunities for persons with disabilities (PWDs) in politics. The programme is carried out in Lusaka and Mansa.

2021 was the first full implementation year of the programme “Strengthening the Political Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Zambia”. During this first year of implementation, the

programme aimed to enhance the essential skills of PWDs for influencing public affairs and politics.

Women politicians have become more influential and active within their political parties and in political processes.

The capacity of political parties was built in targeted training programmes on disability measures: 80 participants (39 men, 41 women), including invited PWDs, attended trainings for political parties in Lusaka and Mansa. The programme activities also included trainings on political participation for PWDs (77 participants, 45 men and 32 women), the preparation of a mentorship programme for future politicians with disabilities, the production of information, education and communication materials, the creation and launch of a political dialogue network for PWDs in both Lusaka and Mansa and production of two policy briefs.

Additionally, cross-cutting advocacy work including press conferences on topics such as PWD participation in pre- and post-electoral periods was carried out throughout the programme period. DRW implemented disability audits with six parties, assessing both physical barriers and accessibility issues and the inclusion-level party structures, party documentation and institutional policies. The trainings and audit results motivated the parties to identify gaps and start developing their disability inclusion plans.

In Mansa, 13 of the participants of the training for PWDs were elected and some appointed to serve in Ward Development Committees and Constituency Development Fund Committees. Participants from Mansa were able to engage in media advocacy, and participants from Lusaka spearheaded a petition for the President on the need to include PWDs in politics. A positive indication of the interest and commitment of political parties to enhance their inclusiveness measures and to include PWDs in their operations is that 5 political parties have undertaken measures to create disability inclusion plans, and during the 2021 elections 13 candidates with disabilities were adopted for the general elections by three different political parties.

Mozambique

In Mozambique, Demo Finland supports the democratic governance of extractive industries and natural resources with its partners Instituto para Democracia Multipartidária (IMD) and NIMD. The programme is part of Finland's bilateral country strategy in Mozambique and aims at enhancing the oversight role of the Parliament and six Provincial Assemblies on the extractive industries sector 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.

In 2021, the political context of Mozambique was influenced essentially by the pandemic but also the still unsolved conflict in Cabo Delgado, where there have been challenges in keeping the environment safe and promising for the investors as well as taking care of the internal refugees while restoring law and order in the area. The SADC deployed troops in Northern Mozambique to support the Mozambican military, which has facilitated the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the region. At the same time, the militant terrorists have split into smaller groups and continued their attacks. Although the ideology of these militants is said to be rooted in radical Islam, the majority of fighters are estimated to be motivated by non-religious factors such as deep social inequality, poverty, unemployment and lack of future prospects.

To improve the oversight role of the Parliament and MPs at national and provincial level, several training sessions were organised for MPs on revenue management, human rights, gender equality and climate change linked to extractive industry (EI). The trainings covered six Provinces: Inhambane, Manica, Tete, Zambezia, Nampula and Cabo Delgado. As a result, the reports and recommendations given to the Government and relevant actors have been better structured, as well as the level of the interventions and engagement of the MPs and Members of Provincial Assemblies (MPAs) in the meetings about EI, which shows that they are applying the knowledge they have gained about extractives. The 42 participating MPs (33 men, 9 women) reported increased knowledge in their oral feedback given at the sessions.

An International Conference on Extractive Industries and Gender Equality was held in November with the aim to contribute to the strengthening of the capacities of women parliamentarians. It was attended by the leadership of the Women’s Parliamentary Office, the Presidents, Vice-Presidents and Rapporteurs of the Committees of the Parliament and 25 female MPs. Also, a training of Magistrates Judges on conflict related to EI was implemented. The trained Magistrates Judges will play a key role in complementing the role of the Parliament and Provincial Assemblies in overseeing the resolution of the problems of communities affected by EI projects, as well as overseeing compliance with legislation within the EI.

A relevant part of the work is bringing the EI-related capacity building and oversight visits as part of the schedule of the relevant Parliamentary Committees and also to support the Committees in consolidating their findings to be put in practice with the Government. The oversight visits are carried out with greater knowledge and ownership than before, which can be seen in better structured reports, in which the MPs and the MPAs present findings and recommendations to public and private entities according to their area of intervention and responsibility.



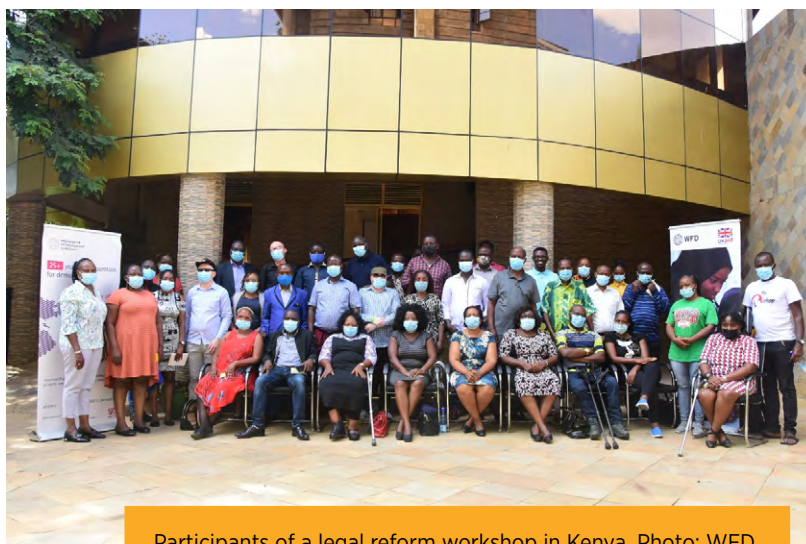
International Conference on Extractive Industry in Maputo, Mozambique. Photo: UNU-WIDER.

The trainings and oversight visits of the Provincial Assembly Members (MPAs) in 6 Provinces engaged 307 MPAs (216 men, 91 women), which makes 63% out of all MPAs. In addition, 42 technical staff members of the Parliament (19 men, 23 women) and 48 Provincial Assemblies' technical staff members (30 men, 18 women) were trained. The training ensured that there are knowledge and skills related to oversight available within the Parliament and Provincial Assemblies even beyond the duration of this project since technical staff often has more permanent position, not directly linked with the electoral cycle. After the trainings, it was noted that the interventions and presentations of the elected representatives in the EI seminars were better presented and structured, which demonstrates that the technical staff have engaged and provided better assistance to the elected, with their presentations, speeches, programmes of oversight visits and in the reports of activities in the scope of the EI.

Parliamentary Committees carried out oversight visits to areas affected by extractive industry with greater knowledge and ownership than before. This is seen in better structured reports, in which the MPs and the MPAs present findings and recommendations to public and private entities.

Kenya

Demo Finland, with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) launched the Kenya Inclusive Political Parties (KIPP) programme in August 2020 to promote the involvement and participation of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in politics. The programme works with 13 political parties and various disabled persons' organisations (DPOs) and civil society organisations (CSOs) to ensure that



Participants of a legal reform workshop in Kenya. Photo: WFD.

political parties respond to the strategic and practical needs of PWDs within their internal party structures, political commitments and the contestation of elections, with a particular view to the 2022 elections.

Despite progressive legal and policy framework, PWDs in Kenya continue to experience systemic exclusion. This has been particularly acute in the areas of political representation in elective and appointed positions, with limited efforts by political parties to provide a conducive environment for PWDs to engage in politics.

The Kenyan political stage was dominated by accelerating campaigning in 2021. The 2022 general elections are likely to change the political set-up of the country, and there is some concern of a repeat of the electoral violence that occurred during previous elections.

In 2021, political parties participating in the KIPP programme were exposed to a range of capacity building interventions which included training, mentorship, and bilateral and cross-party engagement forums through which their appreciation on disability inclusion was raised. DPOs and CSOs were also supported to enable them to constructively engage political parties on issues affecting their PWD participation. Targeted capacity building was delivered to 21 CSOs and DPOs with the focus on advocacy for PWD inclusion in politics.

The political parties have made good progress in the review of their party documents, with 9 political parties having put in place new or updated measures to promote disability inclusion and 9 political parties having formed disability leagues/caucuses. The political parties jointly developed and presented memoranda on proposed amendments to the Political Parties Act, the Political Parties Primaries Bill, and the Persons with Disabilities Bill, all pieces of legislation crucial to the enhancement of inclusivity in politics.

9 political parties have put in place new or updated measures to promote disability inclusion and 9 political parties have formed disability leagues/caucuses. Political parties, disabled persons' organisations and CSOs also jointly drafted minimum standards of inclusion for political parties.

On the other hand, through targeted training and support for bilateral advocacy forums, participating DPOs and CSOs were able and motivated to rally political parties to present amendment proposals. An important achievement during 2021 was the joint effort by DPOs, CSOs and political parties to create a synthesis of key considerations in political inclusion of PWDs and packaging these into a framework of 10 Minimum Standards of Inclusion, which have been

documented in a booklet and lobbied to the Electoral Commission (IEBC) and the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties of Kenya.

Generally, participating DPOs and CSOs have demonstrated increased confidence to engage political parties and state actors. For instance, the Kenya Disability Parliamentary Association KEDIPA and County Assemblies Disability Caucus CADICA made presentations to the IEBC on the barriers to the engagement of PWDs in electoral processes and sought the IEBC's support in ensuring some of these barriers are addressed during the August 2022 elections.

Myanmar

In Myanmar, Demo Finland and NIMD have founded the Myanmar School of Politics (MySoP) in 2014. The work focuses on young people, women and ethnic political leaders, supporting them in becoming influential actors of change by voicing, monitoring and advocating for inclusive political agendas at the sub-national level.

The year 2021 was dramatically marked as the year of military coup in Myanmar. On February 1st, democratically elected members of the ruling party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), were ousted by the military, Tatmadaw, followed by the proclamation of a state of emergency and declaration of power vested in commander-in-chief of the military. At the same time, the military declared the results of the November 2020 elections fraudulent and invalid. The Tatmadaw stated its intent to hold a new election by the end of the state of emergency, which currently has been altered to continue until August 2023. The Tatmadaw formed their State Administrative Council (SAC) to serve as government and appointed persons to take over government positions.

The military coup was a very dramatic change of affairs for Myanmar's citizens and the international community and meant a backlash in the development of multi-party democracy in the country. It provoked massive resistance by the population nationwide and due to this resistance, the Tatmadaw has been unable to gain total control of the public administration, economy—and citizens of Myanmar. Moreover, the military has lost further territorial control in the border areas. The coup is thus by no means a fait accompli and still “in process” after more than a year of protests and fighting. In response to the coup, several elected MPs formed the Committee Representing the National Parliament (CRPH). Moreover, in April, a National Unity Government (NUG) was established on the basis of an interim Federal Democracy Charter, to act as a government in exile.

Despite the crises and all the challenges brought along with it, the citizens of Myanmar have clearly shown their will for democracy. That is the key reason for democracy support organisations to keep and renew their commitment to supporting the democracy of Myanmar in every way possible.

Despite growing rifts between democratic political actors over perpetual and dramatic shifts in power dynamics, the MySoP alumni network remained amicable and resilient. Although MySoP limited direct interactions with key actors on social media channels immediately after the coup for the safety of staff, alumni from different political parties continued to share messages of support in group chats that were started and facilitated by MySoP in the past. This continuation of engagement between alumni under extremely polarising circumstances is a significant factor to consider when weighing the lasting impact of MySoP's trust building and dialogue initiatives, especially considering the complex histories of trust issues and conflict that existed long before the coup.

Due to the changing political context following the military coup, the programme was redesigned, and democracy schools will be carried out in online form.

In addition, the participants of the earlier established Multiparty Dialogue Platform of Shan State have shown great resilience and have continued to be in contact with each other and MySoP, which gives good signs that multi-party dialogue in the longer term will also be possible.

Due to the changing political context, Demo Finland's and NIMD's previously planned programme

had to be redesigned and the office in Yangon was closed. In result, the programme will continue operating from outside the country. The programme is based on Demo Finland's and NIMD's aim to support political parties at the sub-national level in Myanmar to collaborate, participate and influence in legitimate and inclusive political processes. Central in the approach is to facilitate equal participation and diversity as well as rebuild a culture of dialogue and trust. In the course of its work over the years, MySoP has been able to build the capacity and skills of more than 300 sub-national level political party members. In the new situation, the need for this kind of support continues.

As online trainings are less of a security risk, the democracy schools in online form will be the first activity to be carried out in the new setting. Initial analysis of the target group was done in 2021 and the courses will take place in the first half of 2022.

Sri Lanka

Demo Finland has supported women's political participation in Sri Lanka since 2019 with its partner organisation One Text Initiative (OTI). The work focuses on district level. The current Parliament only has 12 female MPs out of 225, but an important avenue for female politicians is the 25 percent quota for women in Sri Lankan local councils, where nearly 2,000 women currently serve their voters. As most of these women were new when they entered these roles in 2018, there are many gaps in their skills and knowledge. In addition, they face a lot of prejudice.

For Sri Lanka, 2021 was a year of increasing economic difficulties. Prolonged lockdowns and travel restrictions due to COVID-19 have had a negative influence on important sectors like tourism, garments, services and transportation. In addition, the remittances from Sri Lankan workers abroad have decreased significantly. Looming debt crisis has caused high inflation and caused shortage of basic necessities like food and medicines (exacerbated by the Government's shortly introduced ban on fertilisers), as well as forced the Government to introduce regular power cuts.



In 2021, OTI trained 302 female local councillors to increase their knowledge on the laws and operational procedures of the local governance system in Sri Lanka. These women from 4 provinces, 7 districts and 82 councils went through a training that was conducted in co-operation with the Sri Lanka Institute of Local Governance (SLILG) and covered topics such as understanding the local government system, mandate and responsibilities of a council member, understanding the diverse needs of the constituency, preparation of council budgets and the challenges faced by women councillors.

A network of women councillors now has 130 members from different political parties.

Pre-and post-tests showed that the trainings had been successful and self-confidence as well as knowledge levels of the councillors had increased. The average knowledge level increased from 53% to 89%, and the level of incorrect answers reduced from 49% to 11%.

Building on the female councillors' network established under Demo Finland's pilot project in 2019–2020, female councillors were also encouraged to create and maintain links across party lines. The network currently has 130 members.

To enhance women's performance as better political leaders in the councils, OTI has advocated, together with SLILG, for the establishment of Women's Committees in local councils. Up to date, 25 new Women's Committees have been established. These Committees will help women councillors to actively channel opinions and concerns of their voters and bring focus to gender equality at the local level.

In 2021, OTI commissioned a study on the gender policies and practices of Sri Lankan political parties. The research showed that the great majority of the women entering politics do so as a result of their family background and connections, and that although parties make a conscious effort to recruit women, little effort is made to ensure that women can access leadership positions.

During the research process, the team managed to draw attention of the parties to the need of a gender policy and the lack of gender parity within parties. Hence, the interview process itself can be considered a process of learning for political parties. As a result of the research and discussions with parties on gender sensitivity, two major Sri Lankan parties expressed interest to develop gender policies with the support of OTI.

To tackle the lack of representation of female politicians in Sri Lankan media, OTI conducted a study of women local councillors' presence in the Sri Lankan media landscape and wrote articles of the stories of women local councillors. 10 Tamil speaking and 10 Sinhala speaking women politicians were selected. Based on their interviews, articles were written in both Sinhala and Tamil to highlight the challenges and achievements of women politicians. This aims at improving the image of women politicians in media, which is needed for the society to give them more support and recognition.

In addition to media work, OTI also carried out advocacy on gender equality in politics, supporting the re-establishment of the Women Parliamentarians' Caucus and worked with the Gender and Elections Working Group representing NGOs and CSOs with a link to gender equality as well as with the Election Commission members. The activities included women's day activities and a compilation of electoral reform recommendations from the point of view of gender equality for the Parliamentary Selection Committee on Election Reforms.

Finland

In Finland, Demo Finland aims to build the capacity and commitment of Finnish political parties to democracy support and to enhance multi-party dialogue. Demo Finland offers its expertise to Finnish political parties and government officials so that their commitment to democracy may turn into effective democracy support policies. Furthermore, Demo Finland supports the inclusivity of Finnish political parties by providing targeted capacity development activities.

In autumn 2021, Demo Finland organised two Democracy Academies: one for political youth and student organisations and one for political women organisations. The Democracy Academy for youth focused on the state of democracy both globally and in Finland. The programme included presentations by experts as well as dialogue sessions between the participants. All the Democracy Academy participants reported improved capacities which they could utilise in their activities within their political parties, and 94% of the participants estimated that dialogue with other participants was meaningful.

The Democracy Academy for women focused on foreign and security policy. The programme consisted of presentations by various experts, debate coaching and workshops on foreign and security policies within the participants' parties. Seven of the representatives also participated in a study visit to Warsaw, Poland. In Warsaw, the group visited key organisations in the field of foreign and security policies as well as local NGOs. Following the study visit, eight women organisations signed a joint statement demanding stronger EU action to tackle Poland's gender equality regression.

95% of the women's Democracy Academy participants estimated that their skills and readiness to take part in political debate over foreign and security policy issues were enhanced.

According to the feedback, 95% of the women's Democracy Academy participants estimated that their skills and readiness to take part in political debate over foreign and security policy issues were enhanced. All the participants reported that they could utilise what they had learned in future party activities.

In April, Demo Finland published a report on intra-party democracy of the Finnish parliamentary parties. The publication examined how party members can take part in the decision-making in their respective parties and what official and statutory internal democracy practices the various parties have. The report was widely appreciated by party members, and the General Secretaries of the Finnish parliamentary parties commented on the findings of the report in the launch event.

Demo Finland also published a policy brief "Strengthening Women's Political Participation". The policy brief provided an overview of the justification and support for political participation of women and reasons for their underrepresentation in politics. It included recommendations for donors, national governments, and political parties on how to strengthen women's participation in politics.

Women's political participation was also the topic of a research paper by the European Democracy Hub with support from Demo Finland. The research paper "Bolstering Women's Political Power: Lessons from the EU's Gender Action Plan II" and a series of country case studies analysed whether the European Commission's second Gender Action Plan had been successful in prioritising support

Participants of women's Democracy Academy in a study visit to Warsaw.
Photo: Demo Finland.



to women's political empowerment. According to the research, the EU's role in overcoming barriers to women's political participation has been modest despite the Gender Action Plan.

A Peace and Dialogue Group consisting of Members of Parliament was established by Demo Finland in 2020 to enhance the skills of MPs on multi-party dialogue to allow them to provide their experience and competence for multi-party co-operation in Finland's partner countries or other relevant contexts. In 2021, Demo Finland trained nine Finnish MPs representing seven parliamentary parties in political dialogue facilitation and mediation skills.

In December 2021, the group received its first request to support multi-party dialogue in the Post-Election Seminar for the Parliament of the Bahamas. The online dialogue facilitation was organised by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) on the topic of political peacebuilding and conflict resolution. MP Eva Biaudet represented the Peace and Dialogue Group in the seminar.

Advocacy and communications

Demo Finland's advocacy work aims to promote democracy support in political party programmes and in national and international policies.

In Finland, the advocacy work focused on three key government policy papers affecting democracy support in foreign and development policies: the Report on Development Policy across Parliamentary Terms, Finland's Africa Strategy and the Government Report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy. In its statements, Demo Finland underlined that tackling the negative development of democracy globally demands a stronger emphasis on democracy support. These policy papers included democracy as a top priority for Finland's development and foreign policies.

In addition, Demo Finland gave a statement to the Finance Committee of the Finnish Parliament regarding the state budget for the year 2022, contributed to the MFA's annual report on the implementation of the 1325 National Action Plan and was active in Finland's process of drawing up the first National Action Plan on the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution on Youth, Peace and Security.

During 2021, Demo Finland continued campaigning for the improvement of voting rights of conscripts in Finnish Defence Forces together with all youth wings of Finnish parliamentary parties and Varusmiesliitto (The Finnish Conscripts' Union). The campaign contributed to changes in legislation as in municipality elections, a temporary legislation was passed and later that year the change was incorporated in the electoral legislation that enabled garrison voting in all elections.

At the EU level, Demo Finland took part in several advocacy processes led by the European Partnership for Democracy (EPD) by contributing to joint statements and responding to consultations. At global level advocacy, a significant new initiative was the Global Democracy Coalition, which was convened by International IDEA and other democracy organisations from around the world including Demo Finland. The goal of the Coalition was to create a network of organisations committed to the advancement of democracy, working together to engage constructively with the Summit for Democracy, hosted by the United States Government. The Coalition released joint statements and organised a stream of online side-events in the run-up to the Summit. Demo Finland was a co-organiser in one of the events and Demo Finland's Executive Director attended another event as one of the speakers.

Demo Finland's communications aims to increase awareness on the importance of democracy for sustainable development and of inclusive political parties for a functioning multi-party democracy, and to strengthen Demo Finland's status as Finland's leading expert of international democracy support. New Communications Strategy 2021–2025 was finalised in March.

Demo Finland's main communication channels were its website, regular newsletter and social media platforms Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn. The renewal of the website in 2020 was clearly reflected in the visitor data of 2021, as the number of sessions on the website in 2021 increased with 78% compared to 2020. 39 articles and blogs were published on the website, with an increased focus on expert blogs by Demo Finland's own staff, in addition to the member parties' regular inputs.



MPs Mika Niikko (Finns Party), Veronika Honkasalo (Left Alliance) and Mari Holopainen (Greens) in the World Village Festival in Helsinki, Finland. Photo: Tanja Ryhänen.

Several public online events were organised and reached over 1000 participants:

For the International Women's Day, Demo Finland joined forces with EPD and its member organisations in a joint event "Women Who Lead". On the same day, the EPD members organised a roundtable discussion with four EU representatives on how equal participation and leadership can be promoted by EU. Demo Finland was one of the organisations sharing experiences and good practices in the discussion.

In April, Demo Finland launched its publication on intra-party democracy in Finnish parties in an online event in which the General Secretaries of all the parliamentary parties discussed the issue. The topic also sparked lively discussion among the participants.

At the World Village Festival, organised only online, Demo Finland held a discussion where five MPs discussed how global problems such as climate change or inequality could be solved by means of democracy. At SuomiAreena event, Demo Finland organised a discussion that focused on the declining state of democracy globally and on whether democracy in Finland is at risk. The panellists included politicians from eight political parties. On the International Day of Democracy, Demo Finland organised an online seminar on democracy and rule of law.

Human 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 the staff's professional attitude through capacity building, encouraging mutual learning, providing opportunities to exercise and hone new skills, and through having a supportive and stimulating working environment.

During 2021, there were 10 staff members working in the Helsinki headquarters. To support the regular staff there were two interns during the year.

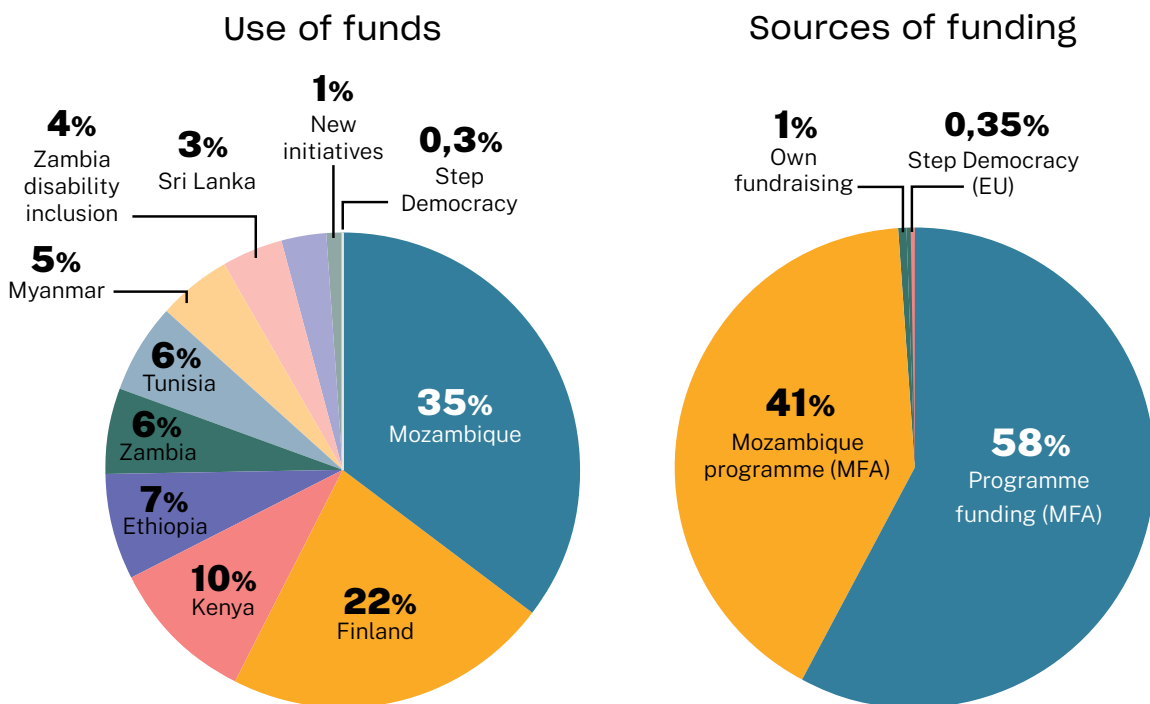
Demo Finland's Board, elected for two years and with a rotating presidency of the political parties, consists of representatives from Demo Finland's member parties. In 2021, the composition of the Board was as follows:

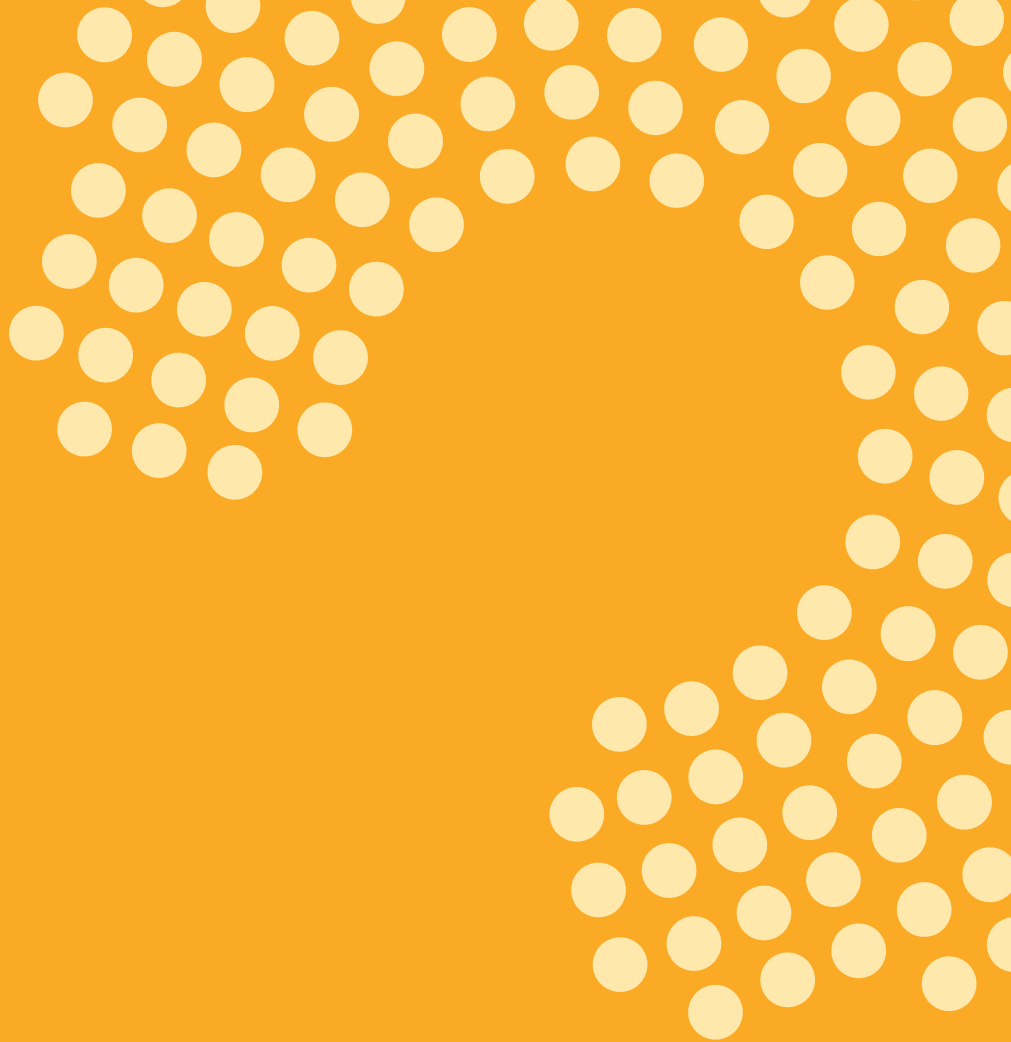
Finns Party	two seats (including Chair)
Christian Democrats	one seat (first Vice-chair)
Social Democratic Party	two seats (including second Vice-chair)
National Coalition Party	two seats
Centre Party	two seats
Greens	one seat
Left Alliance	one seat
Swedish People's Party	one seat
Movement Now	one seat

Financial resources

The MFA-funded programme's total costs in 2021 were around 1.53 million euros. Demo Finland also received funding from the Finnish MFA for Finland's bilateral programme in Mozambique, of which around 44,000 euros were used in Finland, around 735,000 euros in Mozambique and around 31,000 euros in the Netherlands. Together with NIMD, Demo Finland received funding from the EU in the framework of the Step Democracy programme in Myanmar, which ended in September 2021. The total costs of the NIMD–Demo Finland part of the programme during the partial last year were around 132,000 euros, around 7,000 euros of which were used directly by Demo Finland. Demo Finland also collected around 10,000 euros as membership fees from its Finnish member parties.

Demo Finland's own capital increased by 11,020 euros during the year, reaching 48,033 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