



Annual Report 2023



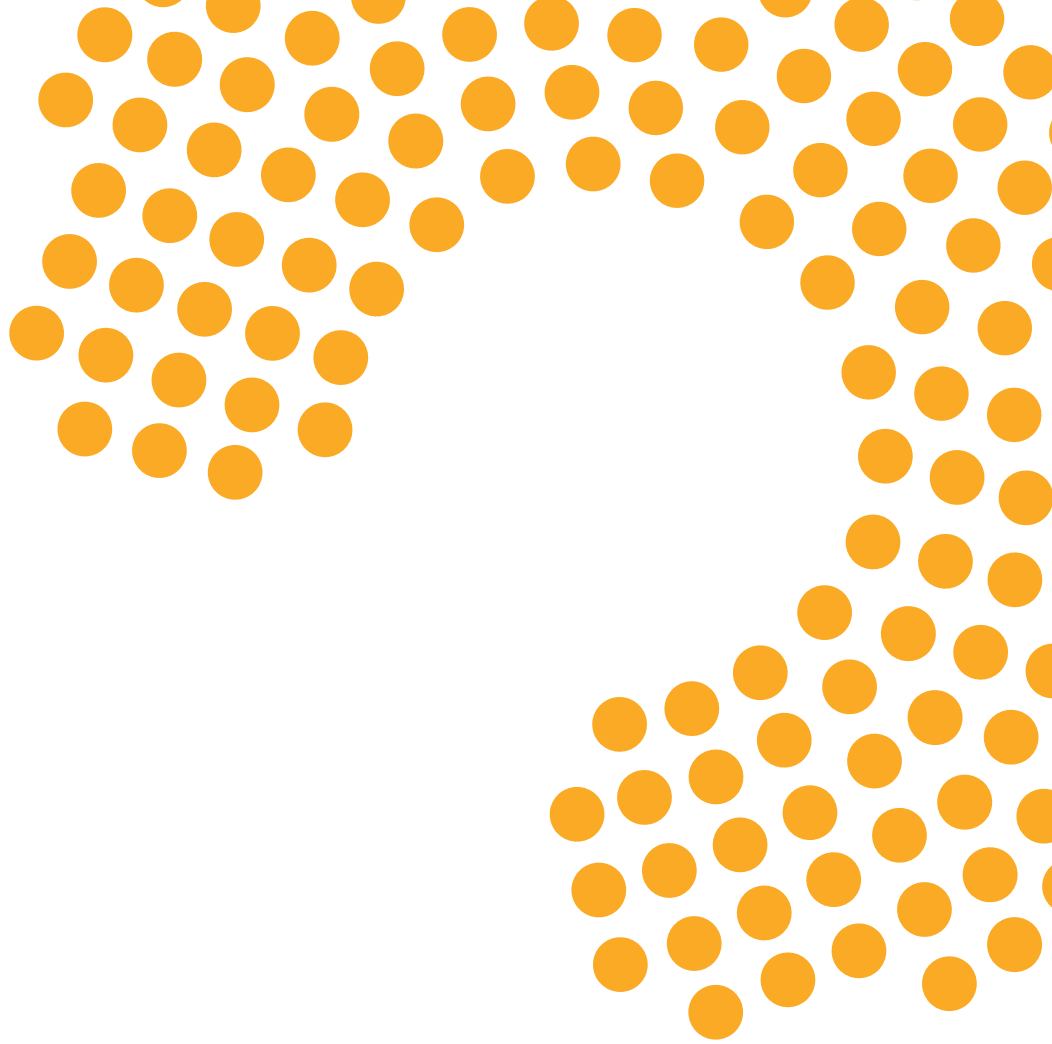
DEMO
FINLAND

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Cover image:

In 2023, the KIPP programme in Kenya launched a Political Party Awards and Recognition system for rewarding political parties for effective disability inclusion measures. Photo: WFD Kenya



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Geopolitical instability highlights the importance of democracy

The decline in the state of democracy around the world continued in 2023. According to data by the V-Dem Institute, which monitors the global state of democracy, only 13 per cent of the world's population was living in liberal democracies in 2023. Indeed, in 2023, only 18 countries were democratising, whereas 42 were turning more authoritarian.

While there are increasing signs of geopolitical instability, it is crucial to emphasise that strong democracies are shown to be resilient during times of crisis. Defending democracy not only as a value but also in practice remains as relevant as ever. Promoting democracy is a key tool for ensuring stability in foreign and security policies.

The country contexts for democracy support, including those for Demo Finland, are at times characterised by instability and political uncertainty. The work on enhancing multi-party dialogue with a focus on politically underrepresented groups – such as women, youth and persons with disabilities – remains important, and Demo Finland's cost-effective work has been proven to bring excellent results. Inclusivity is an objective as such, but it also improves the quality of decision-making and the democratic nature of political parties. Civil and political rights for all must be defended in order to enjoy fully-fledged democracy.

Finland held parliamentary elections in April 2023. Democracy is well noted in both the national and international parts of the new government's programme, which states that well-functioning democracy, rule of law, human rights and a vibrant civil society are prerequisites for sustainable social development, prerequisites that the government will support.

Demo Finland's Strategy underwent a mid-term review in 2023. The purpose of the mid-term review was to inspect the current strategic objectives in light of global and domestic changes alike in order to highlight the key contextual challenges and opportunities related to the achievement of long-term objectives. The mid-term review found that Demo Finland's strategic objectives for 2021–2025 are still relevant.

Demo Finland continues to provide its expertise to the Finnish parliamentary parties on the global state of democracy and Finland's democracy support. In 2023, Demo Finland continued to organise global citizenship educational training sessions for political parties' youth and women's organisations and worked with political parties to strengthen the inclusion of persons with disabilities within political party organisations. Demo Finland strengthened opportunities for peer learning and exchanging best practices and continued enhancing multi-party dialogue in 2023 both internationally and in Finland.

Anu Juvonen
Executive Director

Demo Finland's Theory of Change

Demo Finland's Strategy 2021–2025 has been built on the proven strengths of the organisation, taking into consideration its unique mandate. Multi-party dialogue, inclusion of underrepresented groups in politics, and promotion of stronger democracy support policy are the core areas of work. Partnerships are based on long-term commitments, which contribute to the programmatic objectives set out in the Strategy.

Since the founding of Demo Finland, its 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 and more recently persons with disabilities. These pillars have been justified and remain relevant in the work of Demo Finland, while also building on the strong experience of Finnish political parties.

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 citizens and specifically in channelling those needs into decision-making, in reconciling conflicts of interest between groups of people, and in producing credible political programs to guide the decision-making. In addition, they ensure the functioning of democracy in the longer term by engaging both citizens and political leaders.

When in power, parties bear responsibility for decision-making, and while out of executive power, they should hold decision-makers accountable. Considering the key role political parties play in democratic systems, they are the primary stakeholder groups of Demo Finland's programmes.

The assumption of Demo Finland's Theory of Change is that policy-based and inclusive parties contribute to the accountability of politics towards citizens and thus to more democratic societies. This means that political systems which are based on multi-party democracy might gain more confidence among citizens and decrease polarisation. Another assumption is that when political parties practise dialogue, they can enhance the weight, trustworthiness, and transparency of their political system and decrease polarisation and conflicts. Finally, Demo Finland also assumes that when political parties and government officials have increased knowledge and awareness of the modalities and opportunities for democracy support, it is also given higher priority in policies.

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



Demo Finland's programmes in 2023

Ethiopia

Partners: Network of Ethiopian Women's Associations (NEWA), Ethiopian Women with Disabilities National Association (EWDNA)

Demo Finland has co-operated with NEWA since 2019 to strengthen women's capacity and their political participation on a multi-party basis. The objective of the programme is that women participate actively in political parties and political processes in the targeted regions, and that women with disabilities get the courage and learn the skills to participate in political decision-making at the local level. The programme is implemented at the national level in Addis Ababa and at the regional level in Oromia and Benishangul-Gumuz, and its activities include capacity building trainings for women politicians, awareness-raising on disability inclusion, and preparing a disability checklist for political parties. In 2023, NEWA has increased and deepened its co-operation with the Ethiopian Political Parties Joint Council in implementing the programme, which enables the programme to enhance multi-party dialogue.

Kenya

Partner: Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD)

Since 2020, Demo Finland and WFD have supported the capacity building of Kenyan political parties in the inclusion of persons with disabilities (PWDs) and strengthened the civil and political rights of PWDs through the Kenya Inclusive Political Parties (KIPP) programme. The activities include trainings for representatives of Kenyan political parties on the importance of the participation of PWDs in democracy and the challenges faced by PWDs in politics, and training organisations of PWDs in participating in political decision-making and advocating to political parties and other duty-bearers for the inclusion of PWDs in politics. Parties are also supported in mainstreaming disability inclusion in policy issues. In addition, the project supports civil society organisations, political parties, electoral and equity officials and parliamentary actors to form coalitions to advocate for disability inclusion at all levels of politics.

Mozambique

Partners: Instituto para Democracia Multipartidária (IMD), Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD)

With its partners, Demo Finland has supported the democratic governance of extractive industries and natural resources in Mozambique since 2017. The current project phase ended in 2023. The aim of the project was to enhance the oversight role of the Parliament and six Provincial Assemblies on the extractive industries and to increase their capacity to assess the implementation of the existing legislation on natural resource management. In the project, trainings were organised for relevant parliamentary committees, and members of these committees visited communities

affected by extractive industry in order to interact with the citizens to evaluate effects of the extractive industries. In addition, a platform for open and constructive dialogue was set up where national-level parliamentarians could share and interact with their provincial-level colleagues.

Myanmar

Partner: Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD)

Demo Finland and NIMD held democracy education programmes and supported multi-party co-operation and capacity building in Myanmar from 2014 to 2021. Following the military coup in February 2021, the activities were halted and new ways to support democratic actors in Myanmar were sought. In 2022, trainings were again launched online or outside the country, focusing on capacity building and supporting democratic dialogue processes at the subnational level. The programme continues to focus on political actors along with political parties, and the programme's connection with relevant and active CSOs has been strengthened. Participants for the trainings have been recruited especially among the alumni network of the previous democracy education programmes. The interest in participating in the trainings has remained strong.

Somalia

Partners: The Oslo Center, Puntland Development and Research Center (PDRC)

Demo Finland participated as part of a consortium led by The Oslo Center in a one-year project that provided technical support to political party association and promoted the political participation of women targeting all political actors in Puntland. The project was implemented in 2022–2023 and its goal was to strengthen inclusive multi-party co-operation. During the project, elected and aspiring women councillors and female party members were trained and women's political organisation in political parties and women's associations was supported. In addition, the project supported the establishment of a women's multi-party network and promoted women's co-operation with other key stakeholders.

Sri Lanka

Partner: One Text Initiative (OTI)

In co-operation with OTI, Demo Finland has supported women's political participation at the local level in Sri Lanka since 2019. The project started after Sri Lanka had introduced a new gender quota at the local level, which increased the number of women councillors considerably. Together with the public institute responsible for the training of all local-level politicians, OTI has trained women councillors on democratic skills and knowledge and their role in the councils. The project has also supported multi-party networking and dialogue between different political actors. Approximately 600 women have been trained throughout the programme. In 2023, the final year of the programme, OTI contributed to research on legal and other obstacles to women's political participation. In order to create larger social support for women in politics, also other women active in politics were included in the trainings in 2023.

Tunisia

Partners: Centre des Etudes Méditerranéennes et Internationales (CEMI), Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD)

Demo Finland supports the Tunisian School of Politics (TSoP) that brings together young people from political parties and civil society organisations and offers them knowledge as well as practical tools for working in politics and co-operating. TSoP alumni number over 500 and their capacities and skills in multi-party co-operation are further strengthened through alumni trainings. At the moment, the political situation in Tunisia is difficult as the country's president has taken the country further in an authoritarian direction. In 2021, CEMI established a new dialogue initiative for young people active in political parties and CSOs so that their voices can be heard in this new politically challenging situation. TSoP also organises public debates and political discussions on topical issues. Safe space for dialogue and open discussion is increasingly needed in the current political context of the country.

Zambia

Partners: Zambia National Women's Lobby (ZNWL), Disability Rights Watch (DRW)

Since 2020, Demo Finland, together with ZNWL and DRW, has strengthened inclusive multi-party system and in particular equal opportunities for persons with disabilities (PWDs) in politics. The project focuses on building the capacities of political parties on disability-inclusive measures and supporting political parties in developing strategies, guidelines or action plans which better reflect the inclusion of PWDs. Besides the training and advocacy activities, the programme has supported the creation of a political dialogue network for PWDs, which is now advocating for disability inclusion in political decision-making independently of the programme.

Uganda/WYDE

Partners: NIMD as the cluster lead, WFD as a cluster member

The Youth Participation in Public Affairs programme of the EU's Women and Youth in Democracy Initiative (WYDE) aims to improve the enfranchisement, empowerment, and inclusion of youth in all levels of democratic participation at the national, regional and global scales. The geographical focus of the programme is on Sub-Saharan Africa. Demo Finland, NIMD and WFD work under one of the programme clusters providing support to Uganda Democracy Academy. The support targets 35 young leaders from seven political parties under the Multi-Party Youth Forum. Demo Finland provides technical support in form of curriculum building and enhancing co-operation with the alumni network. The support will be extended to Kenya Democracy Academy as well.

Finland

Demo Finland builds the capacity and commitment of Finnish political parties to democracy support and enhances multi-party dialogue. Demo Finland supports in particular the inclusivity of Finnish political parties by providing targeted capacity development activities and by offering opportunities for peer exchange with the participants in Demo Finland's international programmes. Democracy Academy for political youth and student organisations is organised annually to increase the understanding of young politicians on democracy and to create a safe space for dialogue. In 2023, a renewed training concept titled Democracy Defenders was organised for political women's organisations. Demo Finland also continued its work to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities by coordinating the collaboration of all parliamentary parties. Peace and Dialogue training for MPs and international advisors of political parties was continued as the new election term began in 2023.

Demo Finland's work in 2023 in numbers:



Programmes supported
in **10 countries**
(including Finland)



**102 political
parties** reached



**1 132 female and
644 male politicians**
reached through Demo
Finland's international
programmes

Main results of the programmes

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

To reflect the diversity of societies and to foster their representational role, political parties must promote access to decision-making by underrepresented groups on various levels. Demo Finland encourages political parties to develop strategies for the inclusion of women, young people and persons with disabilities and provides support for the competence and empowerment of politicians belonging to these groups.

Political 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 political parties in terms of strategic thinking, political programming and good command of the principles of democracy. The internal democracy of political parties is reinforced and their dialogue with the civil society is supported.

With Demo Finland's support:

- political parties in different countries have adopted concrete measures and committed to promoting inclusiveness in their structures
- politicians belonging to underrepresented groups have gained skills, confidence and networks that have enabled them to engage in decision-making or advocate for issues that are important to them
- collaboration between different stakeholders has been strengthened to effectively promote inclusive and democratic practices in politics

In Ethiopia, several political parties have activated in enhancing inclusion: Six political parties initiated the establishment of women's wings, six political parties changed their women's wings' meeting hours to minimize the risk of participants facing sexual harassment, and the same six parties started reviewing their documents into a gender inclusive direction. One political party has completed reviewing its party documents and it has made changes to make it easier for women to participate. They also set a 30% quota for women in the party leadership. One political party established a working group for women and persons with disabilities (PWDs).

Gender inclusiveness has started to gain the political party leaders' support in Ethiopia.

Gender inclusiveness has started to gain the political party leaders' support : In previous years, the review meetings with political parties on women's political participation were attended mainly by rank-and-file members, but the meeting in December 2023 brought together 43 participants,

most of them party leadership, from 25 political parties. As further examples of the programme attracting interest by higher-level actors than before, the Political Parties Joint Council has established a working group on persons with disabilities. The electoral office National Electoral Boundaries Commission of Ethiopia also supported organisations of persons with disabilities to prepare and publish accessible material on political participation.

The programme in Ethiopia has supported traditional coffee table sessions that have encouraged persons with disabilities to advocate actively for social and political issues. As a result of this activation, the programme was able to establish four youth organisations for PWDs in 2023. These organisations started preparing their action plans for the 2025 general elections. In addition, 21 persons with disabilities started political action in local associations.

Political parties have expressed their interest in developing disability inclusion by requesting EWDNA for guidelines to help them assess their party documents and practices. EWDNA has developed a policy-level disability inclusion checklist for political parties that will be published in 2024.

In Kenya, there are now 13 more persons with disabilities appointed to the national Executive Committees of 8 political parties compared to the end of the previous year.

In Kenya, a major advancement has happened in the review of strategies, practices and structures of political parties. There are now 13 more persons with disabilities (PWDs) appointed to the National Executive Committees of 8 political parties compared to the end of the previous year. 14 political parties are successfully implementing pledges and commitments to strengthen disability inclusion and 14 political parties now have a functioning, institutionalised disability league.

The KIPP programme has expanded and drawn increased interest from new political parties: The number of political parties in the programme grew from 13 to 20 in 2023, and 11 new political parties have expressed their wish to join the programme.

The programme's engagement with the Kenya Disability Parliamentary Association (KEDIPA) led to important outcomes: For example, organisations of persons with disabilities reviewed the draft Persons with Disabilities Bill 2023 and submitted a memorandum through KEDIPA with additional recommendations to the National Assembly and Senate for further consideration.

All in all, the KIPP programme has contributed to a systemic change in Kenya by increasing the capacity of both rights-holders (persons with disabilities) and duty-bearers (the government, political parties and state agencies) in increasing meaningful political participation on PWDs.

In Mozambique, the members of Parliament (MPs) and members of Provincial Assemblies (MPAs) engaged in the programme have much more knowledge on the extractive industry (EI) sector and there is an enhanced commitment by the MPs to monitor the EI sector at the end of the programme.

There is increased co-operation between MPs, MPAs, and CSOs on EI-related issues. In 2023, 14 national or local CSOs working on natural resource management participated in the programme's meetings or trainings. Similarly, an improved dialogue with the MPs and MPAs on citizens' concerns and oversight visits to the communities can be seen, with a total of 16 community meetings organised in 2023. These forms of co-operation and consultation are expected to continue even after the new representatives for the assemblies are elected in 2024.

The programme supported the preparation and drafting of the proposal of the Sovereign Wealth Fund (SWF) law. This law is a key to guiding the sustainable and appropriate management of the significant revenues gained from the EI sector. The programme provided training for MPs on the SWF and organised visits to other countries with similar law to exchange experiences and reinforce the knowledge of the MPs. The SWF law was successfully approved in December 2023 and it is expected to enter into force in 2024.

In Myanmar, 2023 saw widespread resistance, both armed and unarmed, against military rule. Throughout the difficult situation, the citizens' hunger for knowledge and education on democracy remains high. During the year, NIMD and Demo Finland's programme organised three Democracy School trainings for a total of 51 participants in which the previously developed MyDemocracy School mobile application was used as part of the training programme. The application consists of information on various topics such as the role of political parties, the use of social media, constitutions and gender in politics. In addition, the programme organised three online learning seminars, each attracting 80 or more participants.

The MyDemocracy School application has 520 users and the discussion forum feature is used actively. It has turned out to be a learning tool with extended reach as the users share their acquired knowledge within their networks. In addition, there have been efforts by some participants to circulate content from the democracy trainings in their local communities and institutions. These findings underscore the potential ripple effect of democracy education and how one individual's initiative can lead to a broader impact within their community.

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The trainings and learning seminars encouraged young people, women, and ethnic leaders to seek a common ground for understanding as they engaged in cross-party peer learning and sharing, the importance of which should not be underestimated in the very difficult current context of Myanmar. The participants learned about the intricacies of other ethnicities, exchanged perspectives and built trust and understanding. All of this resulted in fostering a more inclusive political agenda. In addition, collaboration between CSOs and political parties was strengthened through sharing challenges and good practices.

In Somalia, the one-year project shaped the political environment of Puntland by supporting political associations to adopt issue-based campaigns, inclusive policy development, and promoting dialogue approaches. The project strengthened the skills and understanding of 133 politically active women of decision-making processes, policy development and advocacy. The project also supported the establishment of a multi-party network for women in order to bring together women from different political parties and agree on common areas for advocacy to enhance the participation of women in politics.

The project provided training for 23 women candidates in local elections. Gender quota guidelines and the closed-list model were debated, as these are the only existing mechanisms that ensured the increase of the representation of female councillors from 15% to 26% in the three constituent districts. Out of the 23 trained candidates, 12 were elected. Two women went ahead to vie for deputy mayor and were successful in gaining support from their political associations to choose women as leaders.



Women politicians at the local level have gained new skills and confidence through trainings supported by Demo Finland. Photo: Demo Finland

In Sri Lanka, an external evaluation of the 4-year co-operation found that the programme has been relevant and coherent in addressing the specific situation in Sri Lanka regarding women’s political participation. The project effectively enhanced the skills, knowledge, and confidence of elected women councillors, indicating a successful transition from mere numerical representation to professional participation in political processes.

In 2023, six trainings were conducted for former local councillors and a wider group of women interested in joining politics in order to strengthen their knowledge and skills. The trainings covered topics such as digital communication in election campaigning, responsibilities of the local councils, diversity

and social inclusion, negotiation skills and conflict management and economic conditions. A total of 260 members of the women’s network from 20 political parties took part in the trainings.

To adapt to the politically challenging context of Sri Lanka, including economic turmoil, political instability and indefinitely postponed local elections, the programme developed a new approach to co-operation with the Sri Lanka Institute of Local Governance. 187 Local Government (LG) Secretaries were trained in social inclusion as an initiative to institutionalise social inclusion practices in the LGs with the expectation that, once new councillors are eventually elected to LGs, trained LGs will be more inclusive in their daily operations and will make the work of elected councillors easier.

In Sri Lanka, the project effectively enhanced the skills, knowledge, and confidence of elected women councillors, indicating a successful transition from mere numerical representation to professional participation in political processes.

In Tunisia, a total of eight Tunisian School of Politics (TSoP) training sessions were organised in 2023. The sessions focused on the consolidation of the values of democracy, pluralism, and mutual respect. Several participants advanced within their organisations and were elected to political bureaus. For example, 11 out of 20 members of the new elected executive bureau of the political party “Democratic Courant” are TSoP alumni or participants.

In 2023, four Training of Trainers (ToT) sessions along with an evaluation session were held to 12 TSoP alumni from political parties and CSOs seeking to disseminate the knowledge and skills acquired within their respective organisations. Some of the participants have announced that they were requested to conduct training sessions within their organisations or their professional network.

The Youtube channel “Freesh” has been created earlier in the programme to provide simplified



Pluralism and mutual respect were among the topics of the Tunisian School of Politics trainings. Photo: CEMI

and appealing political content aimed at re-engaging youth who are not politically active. In 2023, it posted 127 videos and 77 posts with topics related to economy, politics as well as youth engagement and participation. At the end of the year, “Freesh” had 199,700 followers on different media platforms and a total of 8.7 million views, which suggests that it has successfully captured the attention of disengaged young people with its content addressing current societal topics.

In Uganda, the first edition of the Uganda Democracy Academy for young politicians took place successfully. As a result of trust-building activities, the communication among the participants representing different political parties started to change from general distrust to listening to each other and understanding each other’s perspectives. The participants found it valuable that the sessions did not only focus on leadership but encouraged them to become democratic leaders. Demo Finland contributed to the curriculum development and the implementation of the Democracy Academy by delivering a training together with cluster partner WFD.

In Zambia, a political dialogue network for persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Lusaka and Mansa has been established in the previous programme phase, and an advocacy plan for the network was developed and finalised in 2023. As a follow-up, the participants of the network who live and work in Mansa met with the Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ) in their district to discuss how the ECZ can facilitate their participation in the next election in 2026. The network is now in the process of getting legally registered, which will enable it to, for example, raise funds independently.

In Zambia the number of PWDs joining political parties on their own initiative is increasing, as is the recruitment of PWD members by political parties.

According to an evaluation carried out in 2023 and monitoring data, the number of PWDs joining political parties on their own initiative is increasing, as is the recruitment of PWD members by political parties. Eight political parties started reviewing their party documents, structures and practices in the previous phase of the programme, and in 2023, final disability inclusion plan drafts



The kick-off of the Uganda Democracy Academy was a success. Photo: NIMD Uganda

were disseminated by seven political parties. According to the evaluation report, all political parties involved find the project relevant.

The programme's support has encouraged persons with disabilities to carry out advocacy work independent of the programme, which is a sign of the sustainability of the programme. In 2023, PWDs had meetings with all eight partner parties involved in the programme in Mansa and they conducted awareness-raising programmes in four TV and 13 radio programmes. This has led other PWDs to contact the programme wishing to join, also from outside the programme areas.

In Finland, Demo Finland organised its 7th Democracy Academy for the youth and student organisations of parliamentary parties. The Academy consisted of a training weekend in Helsinki and a study visit to Brussels. Drawing from global education approach, the Academy increased the level of understanding of democratic and authoritarian developments in international contexts, interconnection between democracy and sustaining peace, and democracy support in Finnish foreign policy. According to the feedback, 88% of the Academy participants estimated that their knowledge and understanding of the global state of democracy was increased and 80% evaluated that they could utilise this knowledge further in their political activities.

90% of the Democracy Defenders training participants stated that the training increased their confidence to take part in debates regarding foreign and security policy.

Demo Finland's Democracy Defenders training for women's wings of parliamentary parties increased the level of participants' understanding of the global state of democracy and women's political participation and created an atmosphere of trust and peer-learning between the representatives of political women's organisations. All participants estimated that their knowledge on the training topics had increased and 90% evaluated that they could use this knowledge in their work within their political parties. Also, 90% of the participants stated that the training increased their confidence to take part in debates regarding foreign and security policy.

Demo Finland’s multi-party working group on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in Finland continued its work in 2023. With the working group, Demo Finland organised several events and meetings to enhance the inclusion of PWDs, including an election-related public event and a roundtable discussion on the accessibility of elections with the Ministry of Justice. The working group assessed that the collaboration between political parties had been rewarding and had initiated concrete changes within some of the political parties, including updating policy programmes, giving a stronger mandate to the political parties’ disability working groups and investing in the accessibility of activities and communications.



Training for persons with disabilities on participation in national processes and political structures at local level in Mansa district, Zambia. Photo: DRW

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

Constructive dialogue between political parties is essential to a functioning multi-party democracy. Dialogue may lead to mutual respect 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 political 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-peace building time will be responsible for transparent and accountable decision-making structures.

With Demo Finland's support:

- 9 multi-party platforms and networks were active in five countries (Finland, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Tunisia, Zambia)
- political parties as well as other stakeholders had safe spaces to engage in dialogue and search for common ground on different political issues

In Ethiopia, negotiations were supported between political parties, NGOs, and other relevant actors on the establishment of a multi-actor network in women's political dialogue. The initiative came from the Political Parties Joint Council. The network consists of women politicians and representatives of civil society and certain ministries. Its role is to discuss obstacles to women's political participation and to facilitate this participation. NEWA has been asked to be one of the network's facilitators, which is taken into account in the programme's planning for 2024.

In Kenya, a technical working group (TWG) has been set up in earlier programme phases. It is an advisory expert group consisting of representatives of political parties, organisations of persons with disabilities and other civil society organisations. In 2023, the TWG worked actively and independently carrying out technical advice and advocacy towards political parties and state actors. The TWG's work was an example of a functioning, constructive multi-party dialogue.

Multi-party and multi-actor collaboration was strengthened in 2023: On top of the partnerships created earlier, the programme created seven new partnerships between organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) or other civil society organisations (CSOs), The Kenyan Disability Parliamentary Association (KEDIPA) and other actors to hold political parties to account for their commitments on disability inclusion. There are seven new KEDIPA and County Assemblies Disability Caucus (CADICA) members who take part in the programme's activities. KEDIPA, CADICA, OPDs and CSOs engaged in issues related to disability inclusion five times and drafted three position papers in 2023.



The KIPP Awards recognises political parties and other actors that are committed to promoting the political inclusion of persons with disabilities in Kenya. Photo: WFD Kenya

In Myanmar, amid ongoing civil conflict, a significant milestone was achieved in Kayin State with the establishment of a multi-stakeholder dialogue platform. This initiative brought together 15 stakeholders who, despite severe risks, committed to regular meetings to address political updates and collaborate on a unified vision. These dialogue meetings aimed to reach a consensus for the ongoing state constitution drafting process, emphasising inclusivity and equality. This effort created a trusted, locally governed space for sustainable democratic discourse and collaboration.

In Sri Lanka, the women politicians’ multi-party network continued its work, bringing together women from 20 political parties. Hosted under the Sri Lankan Institute of Local Governance, the network offers women politicians support through social media channels and peer exchange.

In Tunisia, the space for political parties and political action has further narrowed during 2023. CEMI offers a safe space where all participants can securely exchange ideas and engage in peaceful, judgement-free debates no matter how polarised their views might be. This space and support are desperately needed in the country struggling through political, economic and social crises.

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During 2023, CEMI has conducted five TSoP debates engaging 157 representatives from political parties and CSOs, two public debates engaging 52 representatives from political parties and CSOs, and one consultative council engaging eight representatives from political parties and CSOs. In addition, two “couscous politique” events, i.e. informal discussions while sharing a meal, were organised engaging 48 representatives from political parties and CSOs. These dialogue activities addressed topical issues related to the national context and highlighted youth participation in public affairs.

Young peoples' interest and involvement in politics have declined in Tunisia. The Youth Council was created in 2021 to target youth who are not engaged in a political party or an association. During 2023, five workshops were conducted. These sessions provided 30 young people with knowledge related to democratic values, pluralism and dialogue. A Youth Collaborative Platform was also developed from an online platform to a meeting place for young people outside of the capital area. In 2023, three Youth Collaborative Platforms involved a total of 93 participants, a significant increase from the previous year. The platform has helped young people to acknowledge the importance of their active role in civil society.

In Zambia, a major development in 2023 was the formation of a technical working group (TGW) using Kenya's TWG as a model, however adjusting it to the Zambian context. This was a result of international peer learning and multi-party dialogue facilitated by the KIPP programme in Kenya. TWG is an expert body consisting of representatives of political parties, CSOs and organisations of persons with disabilities. Its role is to advise all concerned actors in enhancing disability inclusion in political parties and political decision-making. The group provides political parties with a neutral, competition-free space to discuss disability inclusion.

In Finland, the Democracy Academy for the youth and student organisations of the political parties provided a safe space for peer learning and dialogue. The participants stated that the most important take-away from the training was the connection made with representatives from other political parties and that dialogue highlighted how they share same values and ideas across party lines. With Demo Finland's facilitation, the youth and student organisations drafted a joint statement demanding party politics to be included in democracy education in schools. The statement was signed by the youth and student organisations of all parliamentary parties.

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Demo Finland also facilitated the collaboration of women's organisations of all parliamentary parties. As a result, they released a joint statement in the run-up to the parliamentary elections, demanding equal representation of women in the decision-making concerning Finland's foreign and security policy, for example in Committee seats and chairpersonships.



Demo Finland's Democracy Academy provided a safe space for peer learning and dialogue among young politicians. Photo: Demo Finland



In the party congresses, Finnish political party members shared their views on what works well in Finland's democracy. Photo: Demo Finland

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

Demo Finland's mandate to work in the field of international democracy support and with political actors is based on the collaboration and commitment to democracy development of all parliamentary parties within Demo Finland.

The strengthening of and support for democracy around the world requires strong advocacy and international co-operation. Finland and the European Union have committed to supporting democracy internationally, but a value-based commitment may not be sufficiently evident in the policies being applied. Demo Finland supports the democracy support policies of Finland and the European Union by offering its expertise to governmental actors and decision-makers.

Demo Finland aims to grow its reputation as a recognised expert on multi-party democracy over the strategy period 2021–2025. In practice, this means that the utilisation of Demo Finland's expertise on democracy expands further, and its messaging reaches the target audience more widely.

In 2023, Demo Finland continued to provide its expertise to political parties, government officials, and other stakeholders, and monitored ongoing and upcoming policy processes, which had relevance to democracy support. In preparation for Finland's parliamentary elections, Demo Finland gave support and guidance to political parties in their foreign and security policy programmes and key messages for the elections. Other relevant policy processes are described in the chapter on advocacy and communications.

Demo Finland visited the party congresses of its member parties and reached hundreds of political party members in five party congresses. At the exhibition stand, Demo Finland raised awareness on the importance of democracy support and collected good practices of Finnish multi-party democracy, encouraging the visitors to think about what works well in Finland's democratic system.

Demo Finland gave 23 statements or other consultations and 18 expert speeches, three of which were requested by political parties.

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Advocacy and communications

Demo Finland's advocacy aims to translate value-based commitments to democracy into well-implemented, long-term policies to support democracy. As the global state of democracy is declining, we believe that democracy support should be invested in and developed more strategically. Finland should set democracy as the priority for foreign and security policy, and the EU should take a more prominent role in defending democracy globally.

In 2023, Demo Finland's advocacy work focused on the parliamentary elections held in April, the government negotiations that followed and finally the implementation of the new government programme by Prime Minister Petteri Orpo's Government.

Demo Finland was invited to the government negotiations in May to give expertise on the priorities for trade and development policies. The new government programme stated that Finland's foreign and security policy is based on the rule of law, human rights, equality, and democracy. Democracy was also mentioned as a prerequisite for sustainable development, which the Government maintained to support.

Demo Finland played an active role in the preparatory working group of the democracy support report commissioned by The Development Policy Committee. The report "Democracy requires strengthening everywhere" presented the current state of Finland's democracy support policies and comparisons to other Nordic countries.

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In regard to EU-level advocacy work, Demo Finland was a co-signatory in EPD's recommendations for the EU Defence of Democracy Package. European Democracy Hub, a joint project of EPD and Carnegie Europe on democracy knowledge-production, produced its Annual Review of Democracy Support. Demo Finland provided knowledge on Finnish democracy support and democracy policy for the Review.

One of the key developments on a global level was the second Summit for Democracy held in March. Demo Finland participated in the process of the Summit as a founding member of the Global Democracy Coalition. Demo Finland also worked in the Summit for Democracy Cohort on Gender Equality. During the year of action, the Gender Cohort identified recommendations for strengthening democracy by promoting gender equality.

As part of the Summit for Democracy, Demo Finland organised a side event on the inclusion of underrepresented in decision-making in collaboration with The Carter Center and Finland's, Sweden's and Ireland's embassies in Lusaka, Zambia.

Demo Finland's communications aim to increase awareness about 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 an expert organisation of democracy support. The target groups of Demo Finland's communications are mainly political parties and politicians in Finland, donors, as well as democracy experts and practitioners in Finland and abroad.



With the multi-party working group on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in Finland, Demo Finland organised an election-related public event. Photo: Demo Finland

In 2023, Demo Finland focused especially on strengthening its role as the leading expert of international democracy support in Finland and invested in the visibility of the International Day of Democracy.

During the two weeks leading up to the International Day of Democracy, Demo Finland put enhanced emphasis on external communication with the aim of increasing public awareness of the importance of democracy for peace and security and raising Demo Finland's profile as an expert on democracy. During this time, Demo Finland's social media visibility increased: ads on Facebook and Instagram got more than 163,000 impressions and 3681 clicks to the campaign website that contained information on the topic and tips on what everyone can do to strengthen democracy. In addition, Finland's national public broadcasting company Yle interviewed the keynote speaker of Demo Finland's International Day of Democracy seminar.

There was a slight increase of 1.3% in the number of Demo Finland's website visitors in 2023, and the number of newsletter subscribers increased by 20%. During the year, 39 articles and blogs were published on the website and 6 newsletters in Finnish and 4 newsletters in English were sent out. Demo Finland co-operated with its member parties on content, as the parties produced blogs to Demo Finland's website in their turn. The number of social media followers continued to grow especially on Instagram (17%) and LinkedIn (20%).

Public events and discussions that Demo Finland organised or co-organised reached around 800 participants in person and online. The International Day of Democracy seminar which is Demo Finland's most important event of the year gathered a record number of 196 participants in-person and online. The seminar focused on whether Finland really supports democracy in its foreign policy and the event got excellent feedback from the participants.

Other main events were an election-related seminar on the political participation of persons with disabilities in Finland and the launch event of Demo Finland's policy brief on this issue. More than 160 persons attended these two events.



The Summit for Democracy side event of Demo Finland, The Carter Center and Finland's, Sweden's and Ireland's embassies brought together decision-makers and experts in Zambia to discuss the inclusion of underrepresented groups. Photo: The Carter Center

Human resources

Demo Finland's most important resource is its expert staff. Demo Finland is an equal employer.

In recent years, the nature of Demo Finland's work has changed from everyday office work to hybrid work. Our staff works flexibly part of the week remotely and part at the office. At the end of the year 2023, Demo Finland made plans to move to new premises more suitable for hybrid working.

In HR administration and occupational safety and health, we invested in well-being at work in many ways. In 2023, we employed an average of twelve people, in addition to an occasional trainee. Four persons were on study, family and other leave during 2023.

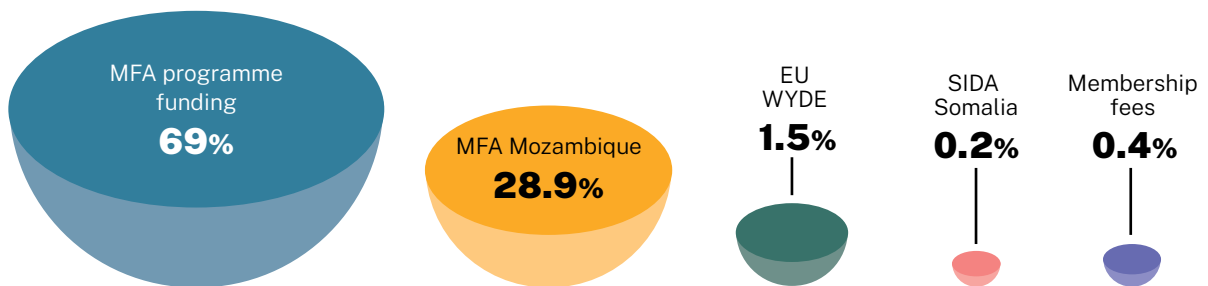
In 2023, Demo Finland commissioned and launched an internal Prevention and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Policy (PSEA). The policy resulted in setting up a whistle-blower channel on Demo Finland's website and in naming a PSEA contact person at Demo Finland. The new policy was also introduced to Demo Finland's international partner organisations.

Financial resources

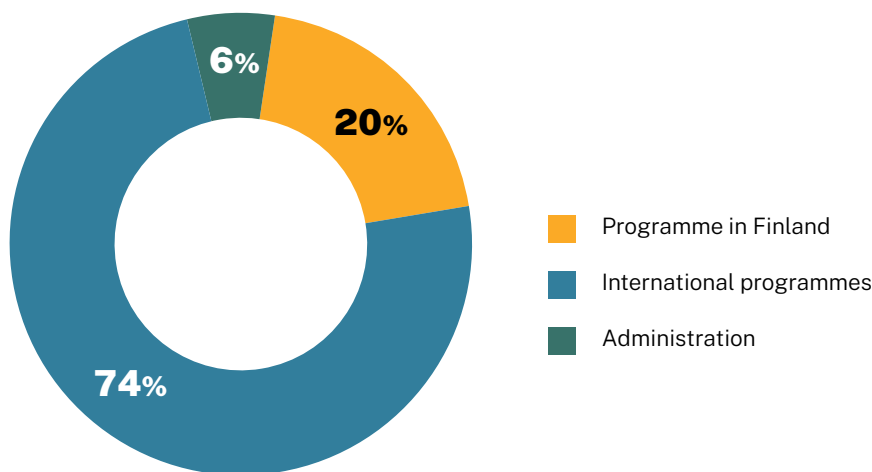
The total revenue in 2023 was EUR 2.4 million, compared to EUR 2.6 million in 2022. The organisation's total expenses in 2023 were EUR 2.4 million, compared to EUR 2.6 million in 2022. The financial year 2023 was successful in many ways. The Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) -funded programmes' total costs during 2023 were around 1.71 million euros. Demo Finland also received funding from the MFA for Finland's bilateral programme in Mozambique, The Oslo Center as funding from the Swedish Development Agency SIDA for the programme in Puntland and the European Commission for the WYDE Civic Engagement programme.

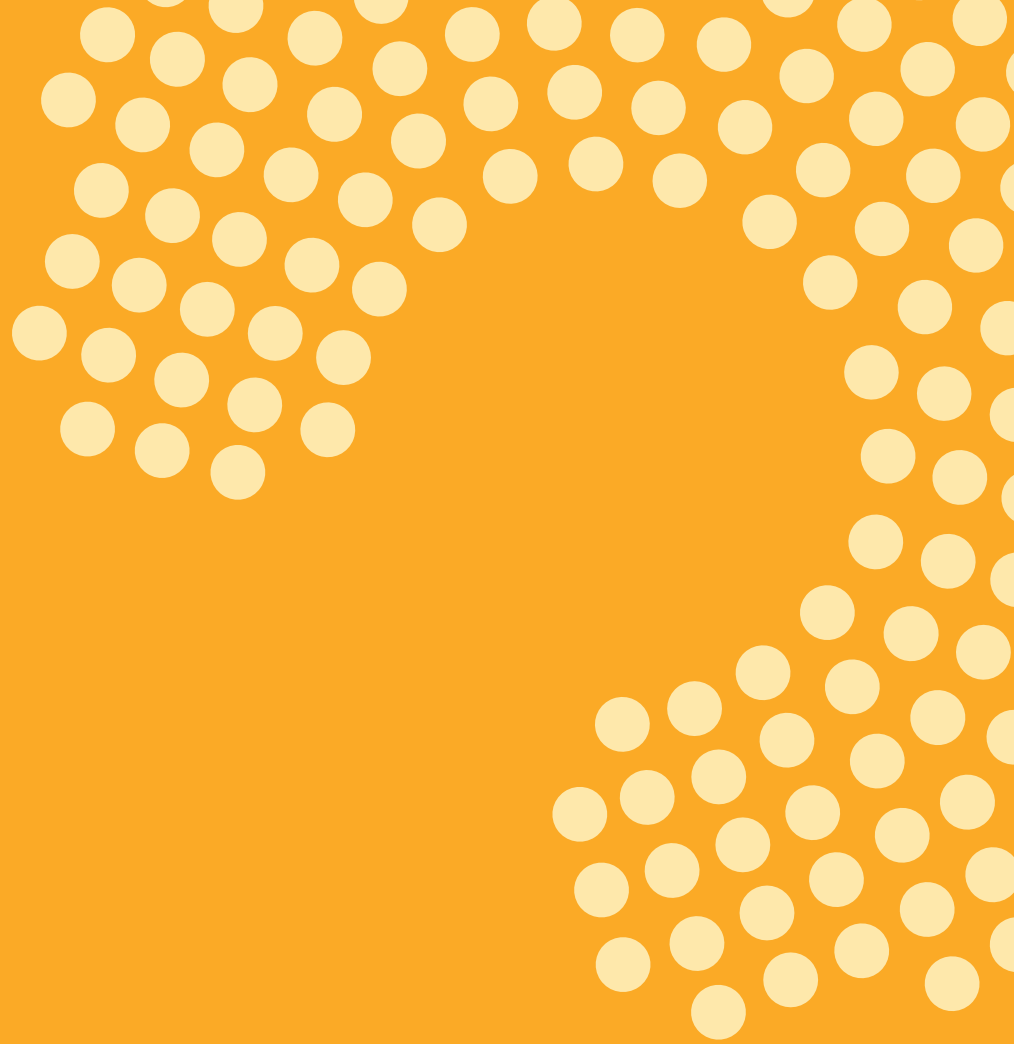
Demo Finland also collected 10 000 euros as membership fees from its Finnish member parties.

Sources of funding



Use of funds





Political Parties of Finland for Democracy – Demo Finland is a co-operative organisation of all Finnish parliamentary parties. It enhances democracy by strengthening the political participation of women, youth and persons with disabilities in particular and by supporting dialogue between political parties.

www.demofinland.org