Department for Evaluation

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Evaluation of Cross-cutting Issues in Norwegian Development Cooperation

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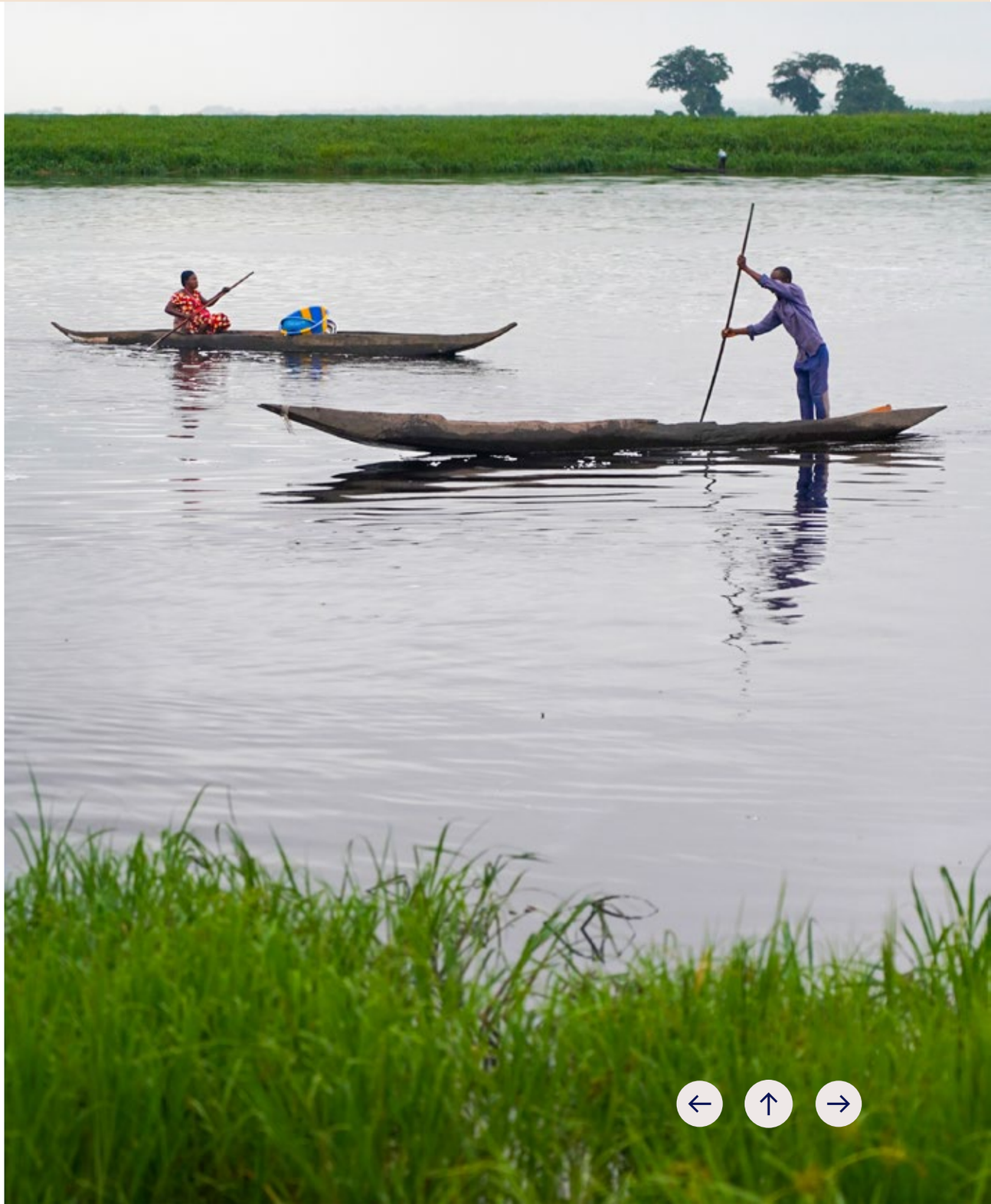

Preface

Some factors are considered fundamental for sustainable development, and should always be considered in Norway's development support:

- Human rights
- Women's rights and gender equality
- Climate and environment
- Anti-corruption

These are known as the four "cross-cutting issues". Over the years, various evaluations have revealed challenges in effectively considering these four issues in the design and implementation of development projects. As a result, a specific evaluation was deemed necessary to examine this topic more closely.

This evaluation provides an overall picture of the expectations surrounding the four issues and how they are addressed. The actual effects for beneficiaries are explored through a sample of projects in Nepal.

Several key lessons emerge from the evaluation. A major finding is that many development projects fail to systematically document potential negative effects on human rights, women's rights and gender equality, climate and environment, and anti-corruption. This gap suggests that the aid administration has not consistently ensured that its partners address these issues, which may reduce the overall effectiveness of the projects. The evaluation also found that some proactive measures are planned to promote the four cross-cutting issues. However, in a large majority of the projects, reporting of such measures is lacking.

Why are the expectations and requirements on cross-cutting issues not followed up in practice? The report points to several enablers and barriers for integration of cross-cutting issues. One challenge is related to the clarity and priority of expectations. Other factors are related to the aid administration's capacity, and guidance to and training of staff.

Ultimately, the report invites reflection on what realistic and clear ambitions for cross-cutting issues should be, and how to practically implement these to ensure sustainable development. The Department for Evaluation hopes this report will serve as a basis for addressing the challenges identified, with a view to improve the quality of Norwegian development cooperation and achieve better results on the ground.

The evaluation was conducted on behalf of the Department for Evaluation in Norad by the consultancy agency IOD Parc.

Tori Hoven

Tori Hoven
October, 2024

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This report presents the results of the Evaluation of implementation of cross-cutting issues in Norwegian development cooperation. The evaluation was commissioned by the Department for Evaluation in Norad and carried out by a team of consultants from IOD PARC. The team consisted of:

Ingela Ternström (Team leader) and Laura Smethurst (Deputy team leader), Enrique Young and Jake Barrett (Natural language processing), Shusil Joshi, Indu Tuladar, Jhalak Poudel and Diksha Mahara (Nepal case studies), with support from Gabi Volak (project management) and Si Ferguson (computing lead). Quality assurance was provided by Sadie Watson.

The team is grateful for the comments and insights shared by a long list of interviewees and focus group participants met online, in Norway and in Nepal – these have been crucial to the evaluation, and we appreciate the time and effort you have all contributed.

This report is the product of its authors, and responsibility for the accuracy of data included in this report rests with the authors. The findings, interpretations, and conclusions presented in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department for Evaluation.

Ingela Ternström
Stockholm, 12 July 2024

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
BOT	Build, own, operate, transfer
CLUA	Climate and Land Use Alliance
COVID-19	Coronavirus 19
CSV	Comma Separated Value
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
GESI	Gender Equity and Social Inclusion
LI-BIRD	Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, Research and Development
MA	Mission Alliance
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NCA	Norwegian Church Aid
NEA	Nepal Electricity Authority
NEAT	Nexus Environment Assessment Tool
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NICFI	Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative
NLP	Natural Language Processing
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
PTDSSP	Power Transmission and Distribution System Strengthening Project
RCDC	Rural Community Development Centre
REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
SASEC	South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UMN	United Mission to Nepal
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WHO	World Health Organisation

Executive summary

The Norwegian Government has identified four cross-cutting issues for Norwegian development cooperation. All development cooperation efforts are to be assessed based on how they affect or are affected by these cross-cutting issues, and efforts shall be undertaken to ensure that the issues remain on the international agenda:

- Human rights
- Women's rights and gender equality
- Climate change and environment
- Anti-corruption

This report presents the results of an evaluation of the implementation of the four cross-cutting issues in Norwegian development cooperation. The evaluation was commissioned by the Department for Evaluation in Norad, with staff managing development aid projects in the Norwegian aid administration and its partners being the main users.

The purpose of the evaluation is to "provide evaluative evidence about how cross-cutting issues are implemented in the Norwegian aid administration and ultimately contribute to better results on the ground". The evaluation is intended as a tool for learning, and aims to identify practical lessons, areas for improvement and unintended effects. The evaluation covers the period from 2018 to 2022, and a broad selection of thematic areas, sectors and partners.

Four evaluation questions are defined in the terms of reference for the evaluation:

1. What are the documented expectations and commitments to implementing cross-cutting issues in Norwegian development cooperation?
2. How is the Norwegian development administration implementing the four cross-cutting issues into the management of its programmes and projects? And to what extent is this implementation successful?
3. What are the enablers and barriers for the successful implementation of the four cross-cutting issues in the development programmes and projects?
4. What are human rights effects (impacts) at the country level (in Nepal) for the end beneficiaries and people affected by the projects funded by Norway?

Main deviations from the terms of reference include that the analysis for evaluation question two is limited to Norad documents and excludes projects with a cross-cutting issue as the main objective from the assessment of 'proactive' implementation of that same cross-cutting issue. Due to ethical considerations, interviews were not recorded, and interview transcripts will not be shared outside of the evaluation team.

Approach and Methods

The object of the evaluation is the implementation of cross-cutting issues in Norwegian development cooperation. This makes the evaluation complex and abstract in several ways. To address this, a theory-based approach was applied. A tentative theory of change, based on inception interviews, a review of internal documents and consultation with thematic experts formed the theoretical backbone of the evaluation. It supported development of tools and methods, supported the analysis of contribution and identification of main findings. Methodology to assess contribution was based on principles of contribution analysis and process tracing.

A human rights-based approach was applied to data collection in Nepal, to ensure identification of human rights effects and to ensure inclusion, transparency and an ethical approach towards interviews and focus group discussions with end beneficiaries. The approach was also participatory and utilisation-focused to the extent possible given the availability of stakeholders and resource available to the evaluation team.

Data was collected using document review, a survey, interviews and focus group discussions with many stakeholders in the aid administration, partner organisations (including agreement partners, intermediary partners and implementing partners) and (in Nepal) end beneficiaries. The analysis included a mix of computer-supported methods, group interviews with thematic advisors and team discussions. A key part of the evaluation was to assess implementation of cross-cutting issues at management level by applying a Natural Language Processing model to a sample of documents from Norad's archive.

Main findings

There are several conceptual challenges relating to the implementation of cross-cutting issues. Throughout the evaluation, difficulties in understanding, combining and implementing the different concepts and terms relating to cross-cutting issues have been highlighted in interviews with key stakeholders and noted by the evaluation team. The concept of 'do no harm' was identified as particularly difficult to grasp and 'unexpected negative effects' even more so. A common mistake was to describe risks to the project from cross-cutting issues, while leaving out the assessment of risks to the cross-cutting issues, from project activities. The review of Norad also found ample examples of a lack of understanding that projects may do harm also in areas they intend to promote.

Numerous commitments and expectations relating to the cross-cutting issues have been made by the Norwegian government. These vary in the strength, clarity and ambition. The minimum requirement at grant management level is perceived to be the 'do no harm' approach set out in the Grant Management Assistant. However, this does not fully reflect the commitments made by Norway at the international and national level.

Text analysis using Natural Language Processing found that when risks relating to cross-cutting issues are discussed in Norad project documents, this is rarely done in a manner that meets the 'do no harm' requirements. While nearly two thirds (64%) of the sampled agreements had associated design phase documentation containing at least some analysis of risks relating to cross-cutting issues, only a small share of the agreements that contained risk analyses (17% on average) assessed risks to cross-cutting issues in a way that met the 'do no harm' requirements set out in the Grant Management Assistant. The proportion of the agreements with risk analyses, that met the 'do no harm' criteria varied between the cross-cutting issues. It was highest for human rights (22%), and lowest for women's rights and gender equality. Results indicated that reporting on risks to cross-cutting issues in the follow-up phase was relatively low, with just under a third of sampled documents demonstrating evidence of reporting. Only 11% of these, however, were found to be reporting on risks in a manner that met the 'do no harm' criteria.

The text analysis also found that a small majority (58%) of the sampled agreements include proactive

measures to address at least one cross-cutting issues. Climate and environment was the cross-cutting issue with the highest level, with close to half of all sampled agreements demonstrating evidence of planned proactive measures to address the issue. Women's rights and gender equality was the issue with the lowest level, with just under a quarter of agreements in the sample demonstrating evidence of planned proactive measures. While a small majority of agreements demonstrated evidence of planned proactive measures to address cross-cutting issues, the analysis indicates that the extent of reporting on these is low. On average, only 12% of the follow-up documents analysed contained evidence of substantial reporting on measures to proactively address cross-cutting issues.

Grant managers and agreement partners are aware of the requirement to report on risks relating to cross-cutting issues. However, the requirement is perceived by some stakeholders as relating to reporting on risks, rather than a need to avoiding risks to the cross-cutting issues and it is not fully followed. All interviewed partners and case workers at Norad, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and embassies were aware of the requirement to assess and report on risks to the cross-cutting issues. In interviews, respondents consistently referred to the requirement to assess and report on risks – not to a requirement to actually avoid risks of negative effects on the cross-cutting issues. The main reasons case workers were not following the requirement was lack of time, to make assessments or to ask for advice, and unclear or non-existent guidelines and tools. Although there is competence relating to the cross-cutting issues, there is a need for increased contextualised and thematic knowledge relating to cross-cutting issues and a demand for trainings and capacity building on the cross-cutting issues.

Main barriers to implementation of cross-cutting issues cited by case workers in Norad, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and embassies were lack of time, lack of guidelines, tools and support for the assessment of cross-cutting issues. Although there are competency teams and thematic experts, there was limited time to access these. There is a lack of monitoring or accountability mechanism to underpin the minimum requirement set out in the Grant Management Assistant and limited guidance and tools on how to effectively apply it. There is also a lack of clarity around expectations to take a 'proactive approach' to cross-cutting issues at grant level.

There was a difference between Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Norad respondents in the extent to which they had support from leaders and colleagues for work on cross-cutting issues. Survey respondents from embassies perceived greater support from colleagues and leadership on cross-cutting issues than Norad respondents. Embassy respondents also found the commitments and expectations clear to a greater extent than Norad respondents.

All partners included in the evaluation have policies, strategies or approaches that encompass the four cross-cutting issues to at least some degree. To a varying degree, agreement partners support downstream partners to assess, monitor and report cross-cutting issue risks and impacts. The evaluation identified three main approaches to implementation of cross-cutting issues among partners - some focus on reporting in line with the grant agreement, some translate the Norwegian cross-cutting issues into organisational-level strategies, and some have developed their own policies, strategies etc.

The study of human rights effects for end-beneficiaries in Nepal indicated that both understanding of human rights as a cross-cutting issue and awareness of responsibilities for implementation were low among project implementers. Implementing organisations have policies on cross-cutting issues which cover some human rights aspects, but there was a low understanding of these among project/field staff.

The evaluation found limited evidence that the implementing organisations included in the sample of projects in Nepal applied a human rights-based approach and put effective processes in place to support participation, accountability and non-discrimination. There was limited participation of target groups in the design of programmes, and mainly one-sided information flows. In some projects there was more scope for input from participants during programme implementation.

The evaluation identified some good practices to support accountability but also missed opportunities, especially at the community level. All four projects included a focus on addressing the needs of the most marginalised members within the community but reports of some groups being excluded suggest that projects had not thoroughly assessed how to ensure non-discrimination and equality.

All four projects contributed to human rights through their selection of activities and target groups (as opposed to implementation of human rights as a cross-cutting issues). The evaluation also found evidence of missed opportunities to contribute to reducing inequality and discrimination, and evidence of failure to assess and mitigate some relevant risks.

Conclusions

Overall conclusions to the evaluation questions:

- **A large number of commitments have been made by the Norwegian government to the four cross-cutting issues.** These illustrate a wide range of objectives that go beyond the commitment to do no harm. The expectations on case workers and partner organisations expressed in the Grant Management Assistant are not fully aligned with the commitments made by the Norwegian Government.

- **Cross-cutting issues are not well covered in Norad project documents.** Overall, Non-Governmental Organisations are the agreement partner group with the highest proportion of design phase documentation meeting the 'do no harm' criteria for project documentation (within the text analysis). There were some small differences between thematic areas, and the cross-cutting issue with the highest proportion of design phase documents meeting the 'do no harm' criteria was human rights.

- **Key barriers to implementing cross-cutting issues include lack of understanding, lack of time, resources, guidance, and unclear monitoring mechanisms.** There is a demand for increased knowledge, guidance and tools to support the implementation of cross-cutting issues in the aid administration and in partner organisations. Furthermore, the survey indicate that there may be a lack of recognition from leadership on the importance of cross-cutting issues, this perception that was more common among Norad survey respondents than survey respondents from embassies. The requirement relating to cross-cutting issues expressed in the grant management system is perceived as the valid instruction, but findings suggest that grant managers often do not know how to implement it well and often fail to implement it.

- **Positive effects on human rights for end beneficiaries are limited in the sampled Nepal projects.** There are positive effects on human rights for end beneficiaries in Nepal via the main objectives of the studied projects, but not from consideration of human rights as a cross-cutting issue. There were shortcomings in the application of a human rights-based approach in project implementation.

Overall Conclusions

- **There are substantial challenges relating to the implementation of cross-cutting issues.** The combination of being abstract and hard-to-grasp issues, that require substantial contextual as well as thematic knowledge to fully assess, and the lack of time, resources and guidelines available to case workers, contribute to explaining why the demands regarding cross-cutting issues are poorly fulfilled in Norad documentation.

- **There are examples of partners that overcome these challenges, but others that are struggling.** The partner organisations included in this evaluation that have incorporated cross-cutting issues the most into programming, have invested heavily in developing policies, guidelines, tools and trainings to support implementation. Other partners studied have policies but not as well developed tools to support implementation. Local partners implementing the projects studied in Nepal did have policies or guidelines that incorporated the four cross-cutting issues, but these were poorly implemented at field level.

- **How to deal with cross-cutting issues is to a large extent outsourced to agreement partners and project implementers,** generally without clear guidance, oversight or accountability. There is little evidence of successful implementation of cross-cutting issues that result from requirements relating to their management or information and support to partners on commitments or how to implement them. Agreement partners are left to find ways to implement the cross-cutting issues based on their own interests and demands from other donors and actors. Some partners do so successfully while other struggle. Several noted that they would like more support from Norad and Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

- **The level of ambition and implementation of cross-cutting issues in Norwegian development cooperation depends on the level of ambition, knowledge and resources of agreement partners – and on their control over implementing partners.** All agreement partners covered by the evaluation had policies, strategies, guidelines or similar that encompassed the four cross-cutting issues. These vary in scope and approach: some focus on collecting the information required by the grant management, some were adapted to other donors of financiers' requirements, and some were integral aspects of the organisation's approach to ensure quality, sustainability and effectiveness. In most cases, the agreement partners' policies and guidelines to cross-cutting issues were more ambitious and more specific than those expressed in the Grant Management Assistant.

Photo: **Synnøve Aasland** | Norad

Recommendations

1. **Knowledge and understanding:** Norad, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Climate and Environment should work together to increase the knowledge and understanding of the concepts and terminology, as well as motivation for implementing cross-cutting issues. Partners with advanced levels of implementation should be asked to contribute. The competence teams in Norad should be strengthened and provided with more resources dedicated to supporting case workers and partner organisations.

2. **Alignment:** The text in Meld. St. 24 should be reviewed and alignment to other commitments made by the Norwegian government assessed and discussed, and revisions of the overall policy towards cross-cutting issues should be considered. The English translation of the Meld. St. 24 should be revised to better reflect the original text in order to ensure that all partners have the correct information. The requirements and instructions in the Grant Management Assistant should be, where possible, aligned with the commitments made by the Norwegian government or be explicit on where and why alignment is not possible. The requirements should include clearer guidance on when it is appropriate to promote positive impact. Calls for proposals and instructions to applicants and partners should clearly reflect expectations regarding cross-cutting issues.

3. **Clarity:** Norad and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should develop a clearer policy/position on how the requirement to implement the 'do no harm' approach to cross-cutting issues within the Grant Management Assistant sit alongside efforts to mainstream cross-cutting issues (a 'proactive approach'). This should support monitoring of adherence to commitments made within the four thematic issues. This could also help leverage work underway to develop guidance, tools and frameworks on mainstreaming issues such as gender, climate and human rights. Action plans/ frameworks on cross-cutting issues should clearly set out how the 'do no harm' approach relates to requirements in the Grant Management Assistant.

4. **Guidance and tools:** Existing guidance in the Grant Management Assistant should be revised and tools developed to support effective assessment and mitigation of risks to and from cross-cutting issues at grant level. These should be developed and shared across the four cross-cutting issues (to ensure consistency and support efficiencies) both within Norad and Ministry of Foreign Affairs and with implementing partners. The guidance should include examples of good practice and risk assessments, and include tailored orientation, e-tutorials, resource materials, and analytical tools to apply to different contexts/sectors. Dissemination should accommodate interaction between experts, grant managers and project management, e.g. webinars where staff and implementers can ask questions on guidance and approach. Dissemination should target all levels of partners, i.e., from national to local level partners, along with field-level staff.

5. **Sharing of good practice:** Informal and formal learning and sharing of good practice should be supported through, e.g. development of a community of practice on cross-cutting issues across Norad and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Given time and resource pressures, at the minimum it could operate virtually through, e.g. a Teams site (with a clear but simple terms of references) used to share resources, examples, ask questions. Staff champions can be identified and work with competency teams to support this. Showcasing good practice within implementers could also support better implementation of cross-cutting issues across all partner groups. The enablers identified within agreement and implementing partners within Chapter 5, e.g. good toolkits, strong monitoring, accountability and learning mechanisms, should be considered when sharing good practice or refining guidance for agreement partners.

6. **Prioritisation:** Stronger messaging on cross-cutting issues by senior leadership within Norad and Ministry of Foreign Affairs could incentivise staff to prioritise cross-cutting issues more at grant level alongside other priorities. This should be underpinned by a simple communication plan (including use of communication tools such as the intranet etc). It could also support greater allocation of resources (e.g. within competency teams) to help effective implementation. A senior champion could be identified to drive clearer messaging (also to strategic partners) and ensure integration within, e.g. thematic work and strategies. The senior champion could provide a central point for convergence of reporting/accountability lines on cross-cutting issues to support accountability.

7. **Follow-up:** Clearer monitoring and accountability systems for effective follow-up of compliance with requirements in the Grant Management Assistant are required. Reporting systems that are being implemented, e.g. using policy markers, could also be used to identify capability gaps on and incentivise implementation of cross-cutting issues. Spot checks on implementation across the four thematic issues could be integrated into any programme/partner/portfolio reviews. An annual reporting commitment on progress in implementing cross-cutting issues to a specified senior leader/champion could be put in place.

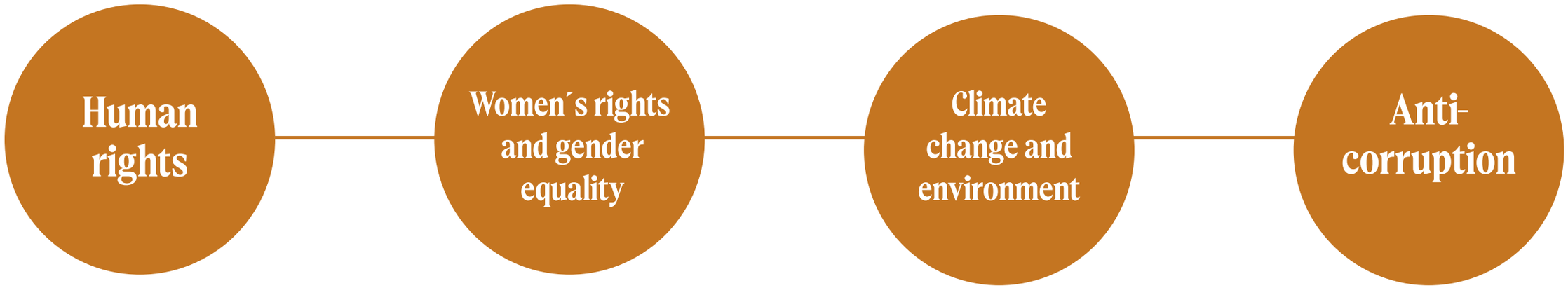
8. **Partner capacity:** In the present approach to cross-cutting issues, the quality of implementation relies to a large extent on the partner organisations' systems, views and capacity relating to cross-cutting issues. If this approach is continued, these aspects should be prioritised in the assessment of partners and projects.

9. **Mainstreaming within contracts:** To ensure implementation of cross-cutting issues among all partners' interventions, the Norwegian development cooperation should have a substantive clause in the contractual framework that defines the contractual role and responsibilities of partners to address cross-cutting issues through programme and project design, implementation, monitoring, and reporting.

1

Background

Norwegian development cooperation has committed to four cross-cutting issues that shall be considered in all aspects and at all levels of Norwegian development cooperation:



The intention is that by promoting and avoiding harm to these issues, the situation for end-beneficiaries and affected people will be improved and the effectiveness and sustainability of development cooperation will increase. However, evidence from previous studies[1] is repeatedly indicating shortcomings that the cross-cutting issues are not sufficiently considered at the management level, in project implementation and in follow-up. Problems include whether cross-cutting issues are at all considered, how to balance making an assessment of potential harm to the cross-cutting issues from a project and how to combine the need for avoiding harm with an intention to have a positive impact on the same cross-cutting issue. This evaluation aims to provide insight into why this occurs.

1 See e.g. OECD DAC (2019) Development Co-operation Peer Reviews Norway.

1.1 The Evaluation

The **purpose** of the evaluation is to "provide evaluative evidence about how cross-cutting issues are implemented[2] in the Norwegian aid administration and ultimately contribute to better results on the ground".[3] The evaluation applies the definition of implementation provided in the Terms of Reference, which states that "implementation" should be broadly interpreted[4] and that effectiveness' shall be assessed both in terms of how cross-cutting issues are implemented at the management level, and in terms of the results for end beneficiaries.[5] Additionally, the evaluation is intended as a tool for learning, and aims to identify practical lessons, areas for improvement and unintended effects. Four evaluation questions are defined:

- **Evaluation question 1:** What are the documented expectations and commitments to implementing cross-cutting issues in Norwegian development cooperation?
- **Evaluation question 2:** How is the Norwegian development administration implementing the four cross-cutting issues into the management of its programmes and projects? And to what extent is this implementation successful?
- **Evaluation question 3:** What are the enablers and barriers for the successful implementation of the four cross-cutting issues in the development programmes and projects?
- **Evaluation question 4:** What are human rights effects (impacts) at the country level (in Nepal) for the end beneficiaries and people affected by the projects funded by Norway?

2 The Terms of Reference states that "implementation" should be broadly interpreted, while 'effectiveness' is assessed both in terms of how cross-cutting issues are implemented at the management level, and in terms of the results for end beneficiaries (Terms of Reference, p.3)
3 Terms of Reference: Evaluation of cross-cutting issues in Norwegian development cooperation, p.2.
4 See Chapter 1.2.
5 Terms of Reference, p.3.

Photo: **Marte Lid** | Norad

The **main users** of the evaluation are staff managing development aid projects in the Norwegian aid administration and its partners. The scope is limited to 2018-2023. All four cross-cutting issues are covered[6], and the evaluation covers programmes administered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norad and the Ministry of Climate and Environment and their partners[7].

Some deviations from the Terms of Reference were agreed upon with the Department for Evaluation during the inception phase. These include:

- The scope for evaluation question 2 is limited to Norad documents (clarification of the Terms of Reference by the Department for Evaluation), but the timeframe for evaluation question 2 is extended to also include documents archived in 2023.
- For evaluation question 2, projects/programmes with a cross-cutting issue as the main objective will be excluded from the assessment of 'proactive' implementation of that same cross-cutting issue but will be assessed for 'do no harm' implementation and are not excluded from other parts of the evaluation.
- To enable a human rights-based approach and implementation of ethical considerations, interviews will not be recorded, and interview transcripts will not be shared outside of the evaluation team. Interview transcripts will be destroyed after completion of the evaluation.

The evaluation took place from September 2023 to March 2024, with primary data collection from December 2023 to March 2024.

6 Except in Evaluation question 4 which focuses on human rights impact in Nepal.

7 Except for Evaluation question 2, which only covers Norad documentation.

1.2 The Evaluation Object

The object of this evaluation is the implementation of cross-cutting issues in Norwegian development cooperation.[8] As per the Terms of Reference, implementation of cross-cutting issues is interpreted broadly to include how cross-cutting issues are understood, considered, assessed, followed up, mitigated, remedied, and included in project reviews and evaluations. This makes the evaluation complex and abstract in several ways. The object is not a tangible entity, but rather a set of abstract and multidimensional concepts, often subject to varying interpretations. Furthermore, implementation needs to be assessed throughout the various stages of project management and at different levels of Norway's development aid administration and its partners, as well as at field level.

Prior to 2016, Norway had defined three cross-cutting issues, and the objective was to promote these. In 2016, human rights were added and the scope of Norway's ambition in relation to addressing cross-cutting issues was changed from a proactive approach to having a stronger focus on doing no harm, with the key message being that:

> *All development efforts are to be assessed on the basis of how they affect, or are affected by, these cross-cutting issues. The cross-cutting issues shall as a minimum be included in the risk management of all development efforts.*[9]

In inception interviews, this shift was attributed to a realisation that the previous ambition was too high. As such, Norway's ambition to addressing cross-cutting issues is lower than many other countries and has been criticised by OECD DAC.[10]

There is no wider framework or theory of change that outlines how the cross-cutting issues shall be implemented, and the envisaged longer-term results of implementing cross-cutting issues in this manner are not clearly defined. This sets the present evaluation apart from evaluations of programmes or interventions where intended results and the way to achieve these are described in programme proposals, results frameworks, intervention logics, etc.

Considering these challenges, the evaluation developed a tentative theory of change that sets out key steps in implementation and a working definition of what constitutes effective implementation of cross-cutting issues.[11] The theory of change was developed based on a review of published documents[12] and internal requirements and guidance on cross-cutting issues and interviews during the inception phase. The theory of change was developed in consultation with the evaluation team's thematic experts and the Department for Evaluation. The theory of change has helped fine-tune the approach and methods of the evaluation. In Chapter 7, the theory of change and assumptions are revisited and challenged in a synthesis and discussion of the evaluation's key findings.

8 Terms of Reference, p. 3.

9 Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016. Meld. St. 24 (2016–2017). Melding til Stortinget, Felles ansvar for felles fremtid Bærekraftsmålene og norsk utviklingspolitikk (hereinafter referred to as 'Meld. St. 24'). Author's translation.

10 OECD DAC (2019) Development Co-operation Peer Reviews Norway.

11 A Theory of Change is essentially a comprehensive description (often with an illustration) of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context. It includes both the results chain (outputs – outcomes – impact), the links between these, assumptions that need to be fulfilled for the links to be realised, and risks.

12 A summary is presented in Annex 4a.

Figure 14 in Annex 5a illustrate the tentative theory of change, and thematic theories of change for each of the four cross-cutting issues. Examples of key assumptions underlying the theory of change are presented below:

- **Systems and processes:**
  - Lead implementers have strong programme management systems.
  - There are clear processes to apply sanctions and clear and consistent organisational procedures and communication around this.
  - Processes and relationships exist to support implementers'/project's engagement with civil society.
- **Culture, leadership and norms**
  - Organisational cultures value and has strong ethos around CCIs and empowers staff to act.
  - Strong and consistent messaging from organisation leadership on importance of cross-cutting issues.
- **Capability and resource**
  - There is good understanding of context and issues (across project locations) to, e.g. identify entry points for implementing CCIs.
  - Staff have access to appropriate and user-friendly tools and training/capacity building.
  - Dedicated resource within organisations/projects to identify and implement CC issues, and time and budget to implement measures and use any tools effectively.
- **Behavioural**
  - Staff are motivated and feel empowered to implement and proactively identify and report issues/opportunities.
  - Staff believe that it is common practice to promote CCIs across the project and that they will be recognised and/or rewarded for this.

2

Methodology

This chapter describes the overall approach, methods for sampling, data collection and analysis, ethical considerations and challenges and limitations. A detailed presentation was provided in an inception report that has been approved by the Department for Evaluation in Norad.

2.1 Overall Approach

To address the complexities surrounding the evaluation object discussed above, a **theory-based approach** was applied, and initial theories of change were developed to form the theoretical backbone of the evaluation (see Chapter 1). The theories of change have been the basis for the overall design, and for fine-tuning methodology and data collection tools. Principles of **contribution analysis**[13] were applied to assess if there was support for the hypothesised theory of change for the implementation of cross-cutting issues. The assumptions in the theory of change were assessed against pre-existing information and data collected during the evaluation, and conclusions were drawn about the validity of the theorised pathway to change. The key steps are summarised in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1

Key Steps in the Evaluation's Use of Contribution Analysis

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Set out the cause-effect problem to be addressed. The cause-effect problem in this evaluation, captured by the purpose of the evaluation, is how cross-cutting issues are implemented in the Norwegian aid administration, and if and how this contributes to better results on the ground.	Develop a theory of change. A theory of change illustrating intended results chain and assumptions was developed, informed document review and technical experts on the evaluation team. The overall theory of change was complemented by thematic theories of change for each cross-cutting issue (see Annex 5a).	Revise the theory of change. The theory of change was revised, and detail added, based on further document review, inception interviews and discussions in the evaluation team.
Step 4	**Step 5**	**Step 6**
Set out the cause-effect problem to be addressed. The cause-effect problem in this evaluation, captured by the purpose of the evaluation, is how cross-cutting issues are implemented in the Norwegian aid administration, and if and how this contributes to better results on the ground.	Develop a theory of change. A theory of change illustrating intended results chain and assumptions was developed, informed document review and technical experts on the evaluation team. The overall theory of change was complemented by thematic theories of change for each cross-cutting issue (see Annex 5a).	Revise the theory of change. The theory of change was revised, and detail added, based on further document review, inception interviews and discussions in the evaluation team.

13 Mayne, J. 2001. Addressing attribution through contribution analysis: using performance measures sensibly. Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation 16: 1-24. For a more recent reference and other sources, please see Frans L. Leeuw. (2023) John Mayne and Rules of Thumb for Contribution Analysis: A Comparison with Two Related Approaches. Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation **37**:3, 403-421.

The evaluation's approach was participatory and utilisation-focused, to the extent possible given the availability of stakeholders and limited time of the evaluation team. This included interaction with a wide range of actors involved in Norwegian development cooperation including semi-structured interviews that gave room for discussions with different functions within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norad and the Ministry of Climate and Environment and agreement and implementing partners. Interviews and group discussions followed checklists rather than strict protocols to give room for reflection. An inception phase seminar provided scope for comments and discussions of evaluation design. Group discussions with thematic experts gave additional information and insight on preliminary findings. Validation seminars in Oslo and Kathmandu provided the opportunity for key stakeholders to comment on and discuss key findings and recommendations before preparing the final version of the report. Comments by key stakeholders and the Department for Evaluation have been considered in the final report.

Photo: **Martha Haukaas** | Norad

2.2 Approach and Methodology per Evaluation Question

Evaluation Question 1: Commitments and expectations to implementing cross-cutting issues in Norwegian development cooperation

Evaluation question 1 findings are largely based on an extensive and systematic search and review of international and national-level strategies, policies and frameworks, instructions and guidance internal to Norwegian development cooperation and shared with implementing partners. In total, 105 commitments or expectations were identified within a total of 77 relevant documents.[14] These were categorised according to theme and level (international, national, instructions to staff in government agencies and instructions to partners). Chapter 3 presents a selection of commitments, based primarily on the evaluation's assessment of their strength (e.g., in terms of being legally binding) and relevance (e.g., across all Norwegian or sectoral-specific development activities). A full list of documents with commitments and expectations identified is available in Annex 4a, part 2.

14 To note, the review includes several documents that predate the evaluation's timeframe, documents authored by domestic Norwegian ministries, and a sample of available country and sectoral strategies.

Evaluation Question 2: Implementation of cross-cutting issues in Norad in project documents

Evaluation question 2 entailed a machine learning approach that involved the development of a natural language processing (Natural Language Processing) model to analyse management documents. The sample for this evaluation question was limited to Norad documentation only. This was received by the team in the form of a large, largely unstructured data dump, which contained the entirety of Norad's digital archives. From this data dump, a sample of relevant documentation was extracted by using templates and key word searches to identify design phase documents (decision documents, project proposals etc.) and follow-up phase documents (final and periodical reports, etc). In total, 61,193 potentially relevant documents were extracted from the archive. The sampled documents were also scanned for agreement numbers, to enable analysis at the agreement level as well as exploration of relationships between cross-cutting issue implementation and agreement characteristics. Of the 61,193 documents extracted from the archive, 33% (20,384) contained agreement numbers, and it is this subset that was judged to be most relevant, and which formed the primary sample for analysis for answering evaluation question 2.

The model was designed to automatically analyse the content of sampled documents and categorise them against a three-point ordinal scale that was developed to capture the quality of cross-cutting issue implementation in both design phase and follow-up phase documentation. The three levels of the scale are summarised in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1

Scale of Levels for Implementation

Level	Definition
Insufficiently Implemented	**In design documentation:** the document does not contain a substantial[15] analysis of risks to cross-cutting issues associated with the implementation of the intervention. **In follow up documentation:** the document does not contain substantial reporting on risks to cross-cutting issues associated with project delivery.
Do No Harm[16]	**In design documentation:** the documentation contains a substantial analysis of risks to cross-cutting issues associated with project delivery. **In follow up documentation:** the document contains substantial reporting on risks to cross-cutting issues associated with project delivery.
Proactive	**In design documentation:** the document demonstrates the integration of cross-cutting-issue specific objectives into a project/programme results chain.[17] **In follow up documentation:** the document demonstrates reporting on cross-cutting issue-specific objectives articulated in a project/programme's results chain.

15 Note that the analysis of risk is only considered substantial if: a) clearly identifies at least one risk factor which may result in a negative impact on the relevant cross-cutting issue; b) the identified risk factor relates specifically to potential unintended negative effects resulting from project implementation (as opposed to risks to project delivery posed by operating context); and c) identifies a mitigating measure for responding to the identified risk.

16 Note that the 'do no harm' level corresponds to the minimum requirements for cross-cutting issue implementation in management documentation, as set out by the Grant Management Assistant.

17 Note that project's which have cross-cutting issue as a primary focus are not assessed for 'proactive' integration of that cross-cutting issue but are assessed for 'proactive' integration of other cross-cutting issues and for 'do no harm' implementation across all cross-cutting issues.

The development of the Natural Language Processing model required the compilation of a dataset of text examples, drawn from the available documents, representing instances of each level of the ordinal scale outlined above. These examples were used to define a set of logical, linguistic rules that the model would implement to identify and categorise instances of criteria satisfaction in the remainder of the sampled documents. The model was developed using the Python programming language, making use of its suite of widely used and well-regarded Natural Language Processing packages. Once specified, the initial model was 'trained' on the example text. This process involved running the model on the identified examples and iteratively refining its specifications until it was categorising the text consistently and accurately. The model was additionally designed to iteratively refine itself through the addition of further, automatically determined linguistic rules as it was run on the sampled documents.

The model was run on the full sample of documents and resulted in a dataset in which each observation represented an individual document that had been processed. This dataset formed the basis for the analysis presented in Chapter 4 to answer evaluation question 2. Where possible, documents were also matched to their corresponding agreements to enable an assessment of relationships between cross-cutting issue implementation and agreement characteristics as well to enable analysis of results at the agreement level.

A more detailed overview of the methodology followed for this component of the evaluation is available in Annex 5b.

Evaluation Question 3: Barriers and enablers for successful implementation of cross-cutting issues in development programmes and projects

To identify enablers and barriers in response to evaluation question 3, the evaluation needed to understand the mechanisms behind the assumptions. For this reason, contribution analysis was complemented with aspects of process tracing whereby the causal mechanisms behind assumptions were identified and tested against data.[18] They departed from the theory of change and initial findings from the Natural Language Processing analysis of Norad documentation. In line with contribution analysis, the evaluation analysed existing evidence, and collected additional data, to verify if there is support for the assumptions that underpin the theories of change. Taking the commitment in Meld. 24 as an example, "All development efforts are to be assessed on the basis of how they affect or are affected by these cross-cutting issues."[19] This is captured by requirements in the Grant Management Assistant to include cross-cutting issues in risk assessments. One assumption that must be fulfilled for the Theory of Change to hold is that case workers ensure that risks relating to cross-cutting issues are assessed in programme documents.

For this reason, the evaluation applied aspects of process tracing to unpack assumptions and contribution stories into more detailed descriptions of the mechanisms behind how different actors work on cross-cutting issues and why. Continuing the example above, whether case workers ensure that cross-cutting issues are sufficiently covered in e.g., risk assessments may depend on whether they have guidance, knowledge, and time to assess programme documents. In accordance with process tracing, key assumptions from the theories of change were developed into testable hypotheses, such as "Aid managers have sufficient knowledge to assess if risk assessments are reasonable"; "There is an organisational culture that promotes attention to cross-cutting issues" and "There are guidelines for how to assess if programme documents fulfil the demands in the Grant Management Assistant".

The analysis is limited to how the cross-cutting issues are implemented in the development cooperation project management, from calls for proposals to implementation on the ground. Data for the analysis of evaluation question 3 was collected via a survey, interviews with Norad and Ministry of Foreign Affairs experts on the four cross-cutting issues and review of documents related to implementation of cross-cutting issues in Norad and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and interviews and document review for a selection of eight projects (presented in Chapter 2.3). The survey was sent to case workers in Norad, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and embassies. For the selected projects, case workers within the aid administration were interviewed about their work on cross-cutting issues in general and in the selected projects. Key stakeholders in partner organisations involved managing the selected projects were interviewed about how cross-cutting issues are implemented in their respective organisations and in the selected projects.

By comparing the information collected with assumptions identified in the theory of change and key aspects of the processes developed from these, the evaluation identified missing links in the hypothesised processes and factors that enabled or hindered implementation of cross-cutting issues.

18 See e.g. Bennett, A (2010). "Process Tracing and Causal Inference." In Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards, 2nd ed., ed. Henry E Brady and David Collier, 207–19. Lanham, MD. Rowman and Littlefield. For arguments for combining the two methodologies, please see Befani and Mayne (2014) Process Tracing and Contribution Analysis: A Combined Approach to Generative Causal Inference for Impact Evaluation, IDS Bulletin Vol. 45, Number 6.

19 Meld 24, p.11.

Photo: **Marte Lid** | Norad

Evaluation Question 4: On human rights effects for end beneficiaries and people affected by Norway-funded projects in Nepal

Human rights impact on end-beneficiaries was assessed for a selection of projects in Nepal. For each project, potential human rights effects were identified and used for tailoring interview and focus group questions to each project's thematic area and implementation method. Data was collected by document review and interviews with country-level and implementing partners, as well as in focus group discussions with representatives of target populations.

The team applied aspects of a human rights-based approach to data collection to ensure inclusion, transparency and an ethical approach towards interviews and focus group discussions with end beneficiaries at field level. This included collecting primary data reflecting internationally recognised human rights indicators from targeted beneficiaries, rights holders, and other groups affected by the sampled projects, and within these, groups that are underrepresented and at risk of human rights violations or discrimination in the Nepali context. The team adhered to the six aspects of data collection as outlined by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) as per the evaluation's human rights-based approach, noting that many harmful practices that impact human rights in Nepal are deeply rooted in patriarchal norms and power imbalances.

The assessment also borrowed practices from the Human Rights Impact Assessment.[20] In focus group discussions, the team used elements of Outcome harvesting[21] to collect evidence of change relating to human rights. The approach prescribes open-ended questions about change in areas that relate to (intended) outcomes – in this case changes relating to aspects of the human rights situation for end beneficiaries and target populations.

20 Götzmann, Nora; Bansa,l Tulika; Wrzoncki, Elin; Poulsen-Hansen, Cathrine; Tedaldi, Jacqueline and Høvsgaard Roya (2020) Human Rights Impact Assessment Toolbox, Danish Institute of Human Rights.

21 Wilson-Grau, R (2015) Outcome Harvesting. Better Evaluation. Retrieved from http://betterevaluation.org/plan/approach/outcome_harvesting Wilson-Grau, R and Britt, H (2013). Outcome Harvesting. Ford Foundation, November 2013, https://www.intrac.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Outcome-harvesting.pdf

2.3 Methods for Data Collection and Analysis

Data Collection Tools

The evaluation applied a mixed methods approach to data collection (see Annex 5 for further details on data collection):

Document review was performed to contextualise discussions and findings and enable identification of important themes or issues to be addressed through primary data collection. The document review includes international and national-level documents, instructions and guidance internal to Norwegian development cooperation. For a selection of projects and programmes, grant scheme rules, calls for proposals, project applications, reports and accompanied assessments, reporting guidelines and templates, as well as implementing partner data were reviewed.

Key Informant Interviews and focus group discussions allowed for in-depth exploration of themes identified through document review in an individual or small group (e.g. for thematic advisers) settings where respondents were able to openly share both positive and negative experiences and perspectives, and any unintended effects especially at the end-beneficiary, community and partner levels. Interviews were semi-structured, with interview guides to ensure key topics were covered (see Annex 5e). Focus group discussions were designed with careful participation and facilitation, especially in relation to vulnerable populations in Nepal.

An online survey was used to collect evidence from a broader group of respondents in Norad and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. While the questions were quantitative in nature to enable quantitative analysis and to keep the time required to respond short, there was also room for adding comments. The online survey tool SurveyMonkey was used to collect survey data.

Photo: **Ken Opprann**

Photo: **Marte Lid** | Norad

Analytical Process and Tools

MaxQDA was the primary tool for analysing qualitative data, including relevant documents, interview and focus group discussion transcripts. The evidence was coded against a pre-determined coding framework, enabling the identification of common themes and relationships in the evidence. The use of a unified platform and coding framework supported triangulation by making comparison and cross-referencing of evidence from multiple sources easier, thereby improving the robustness and validity of findings.

Quantitative data from the online survey was analysed using PowerBi to develop graphics to illustrate the frequency of different responses, and for cross-tabulation to investigate differences in responses across different stakeholder groups. Due to low response rates multivariate analysis of survey data was not carried out.

Results from the Natural Language Processing component of the evaluation were compiled into a single dataset which, where possible, incorporated agreement-level characteristics. The analysis, conducted using the R programming language, included analysis of these results on both document and agreement level for design phase and follow-up phase documents.

Data from different sources and data collection methods was compared (triangulated) to identify contradictory information and ensure that findings were based on credible data. Discrepancies between different sources have been highlighted in the presentation of findings.

As part of the contribution analysis, the team brought together evidence from the different parts of the evaluation to respond to the purpose of the evaluation. The theories of change, assumptions and processes identified in the inception phase were assessed against the information gained from the Natural Language Processing analysis and primary data collected. The analytical process also involved team discussions and feedback sessions with key stakeholders in Oslo and Nepal to provide important opportunities for joint learning and analysis of preliminary findings.

2.4 Sampling and Selection of Sources

The evaluation relies on data collected from a selection of sources:

The assessment for evaluation question 2 is based on Norad documentation only, as per a decision by the Department for Evaluation in Norad. Details about the process of identifying documents for the analysis are presented in Annex 5b. The intention was to use the findings of the analysis of Norad documentation to ensure that projects with both 'insufficient', 'do no harm', 'proactive' implementation of cross-cutting issues at management level were included in the analysis for evaluation question 3 and 4. Due to delays in the Natural Language Processing analysis, this could not be pursued.

A sample of eight projects were selected to collect in-depth information about implementation of cross-cutting issues at management level (for the analysis of evaluation question 3). Four of these projects formed the basis for data collection relating to human rights impact for end beneficiaries in Nepal (for the analysis in evaluation question 4).

To promote learning and utilisation to a breadth of agencies and partners involved in Norwegian development cooperation, the evaluation aimed to include a broad range of stakeholders. The samples were purposely selected to include programmes managed by the Ministry of Climate and Environment, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Norad, by various types of partner organisations and within different thematic areas. The key sampling criteria were:

- Government agencies: Norad, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Climate and Environment shall be included in the sample
- Partner organisations: different types of partner organisations shall be included
- Sector: main sectors (based on size of funding) should be reflected in the sample[22]
- The programmes/projects implemented in Nepal shall focus on projects with a high risk of negative impact on human rights[23]

22 Those sectors that are identified as Norwegian priority sectors (e.g. in Nepal) or receive a high level of spend by the Norwegian development cooperation.

23 As instructed by the Department for Evaluation in Norad.

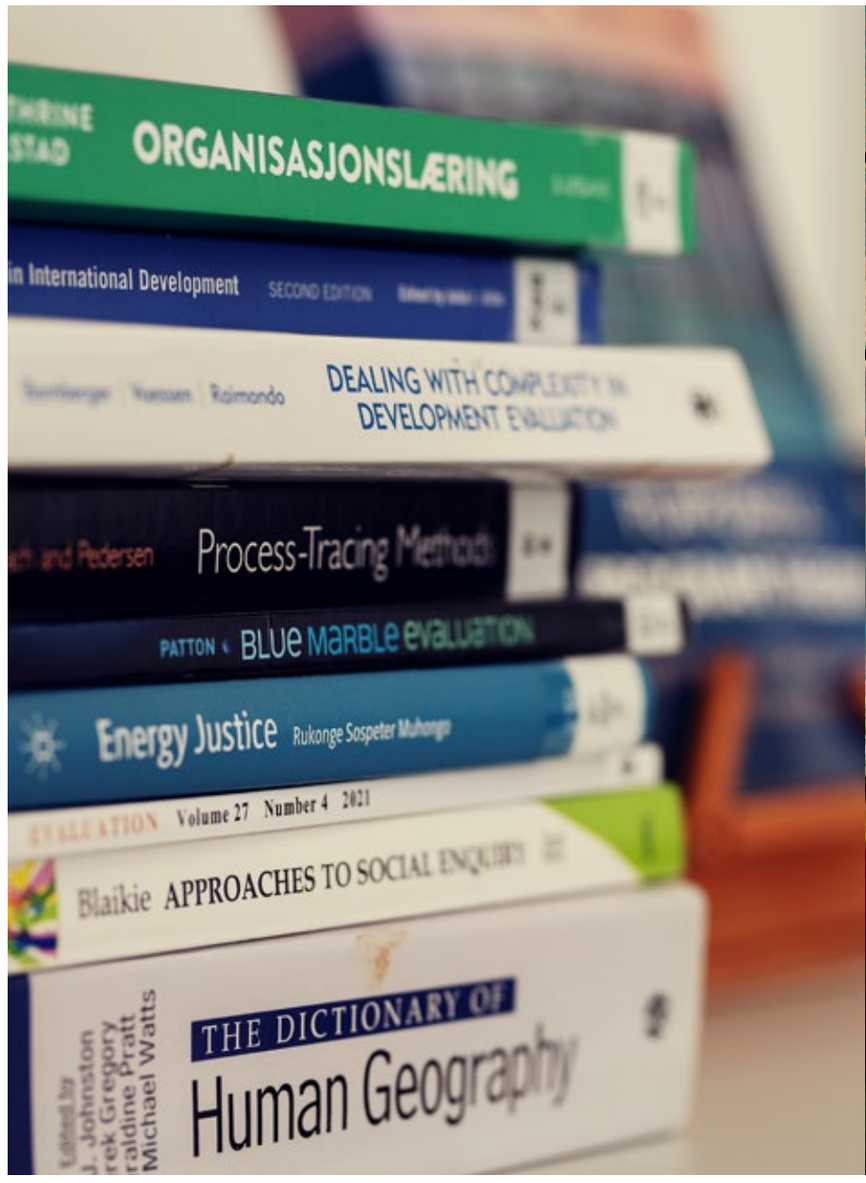


Photo: **Nadia Frantsen**

The table below gives a brief overview of the selected programmes/projects.
Annex 5d presents further details on the sampling process.

TABLE 2

Overview of Programmes/Projects included in the Sample

Projects Included in Sample						
#	**Number**	**Years**	**Title**	**Partner**	**Implementing partner**	**Description**
Norad - Development Fund (DF) – Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, Research (LI-BIRD)						
1	QZA-16/0389-28	2018 – 2022	Climate change adaptation for marginalised rural communities	DF	LI-BIRD	Increased food and nutrition security, income and resilience of women and marginalized families, including rebuilding after 2015 earthquake. Seed and climate policy work.
Norad - Digni – United Mission Nepal (UMN) – Mission Alliance (MA)						
2	QZA-18/0159-269	2020 - 2022	MA - Livelihood and education Nepal	Digni	United Mission to Nepal and Rural Community Development Centre (RCDC)	Livelihood project tentatively focusing on education and environment.
Ministry of Climate and Environment - Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative (NICFI) – Climate and Land Use Alliance (CLUA)						
3	KLD-NICFI-43	2018 - 2022	Targeted support to Climate and Land Use Alliance (CLUA) strategy	CLUA	CLUA	Contributes to achieving emission reductions from deforestation and forest degradation. CLUA also aims to maintain and increase the role of forest carbon sinks (Natural Carbon Capture) and to contribute to a shift in protein consumption.
Norad - Malthe Winje AS						
4	RAF-16/0059 RAF-17/0031	2018 – 2022	Malthe Winje AS Feasibility study Phase II small hydropower East-Africa	Malthe Winje AS	Malthe Winje AS (MW)	Feasibility study Phase II of small hydropower projects in East-Africa. Malthe Winje identified a project portfolio of 10 potential small hydropower projects in East Africa they want to develop on a BOT basis (build, own, operate, transfer) with local partners.

TABLE 2 CONTINUED

Overview of Programmes/Projects included in the Sample

Projects Included in Sample						
#	**Number**	**Years**	**Title**	**Partner**	**Implementing partner**	**Description**
Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Norwegian Embassy to Nepal - Asian Development Bank (ADB)						
5	NPL-18/0008	2019 – 2022	Power Transmission and Distribution System Strengthening Project (PTDSSP)	ADB	Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA)	South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) - PTDSSP Upgrade substation capacity to allow more hydropower into the grid and to have better access to clean energy and reduce imports of coal electricity.
Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Norwegian Embassy to Nepal - UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS)						
6	NPL-18/0006	2018 - 2021	UNOPS Reconstruction of schools	UNOPS	UNOPS	Reconstruction and retrofitting of schools that were damaged by the earthquake, including: access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), disability accessible drinking water, book corner/library, playground facilities, classroom furniture, connection to electricity, boundary walls.
Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)						
7	QZA-20/0048	2020 - 2022	Humanitarian Response	NRC	NRC Country Office	Humanitarian response to various countries.
Ministry of Foreign Affairs/Norad - Norwegian Church Aid (NCA)						
8a	QZA-19/0212	2020 - 2022	Governance/ Humanitarian response	NCA	NCA country offices	Humanitarian response to various countries. As NCA has support via both Norad and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, an additional agreement was added to give opportunity for comparing grant management of the same organisation in the two agencies.
8b	QZA-20/0052-8		Humanitarian response	NCA	NCA country offices	

The selection of interviewees and focus group discussion participants aimed to achieve relevance and to ensure representation from as many relevant groups as possible, reflecting the participatory, human rights-based approach to the evaluation. The evaluation ensured both men and women and stakeholders with different perspectives were included in the respondent samples for all of evaluation question 3 and 4. For evaluation question 4, the selection process also aimed at ensuring that the views of marginalised and/or vulnerable groups were reflected.

To identify survey respondents, a request for contact information to persons involved in project management was sent to heads of sections in Norad and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and to Norwegian embassies. The request was sent to 204 persons, of these, 33% responded, resulting in a list of 209 persons that received an invitation to the survey. Of these, 35% responded.

Table 3 below shows the number of respondents in interviews, focus group discussions and the survey. The evaluation also had feedback and validation meetings with the Norwegian Embassy to Nepal, the United Nations Office for Project Services, United Mission to Nepal and Li-Bird, with Norad and Ministry of Foreign Affairs thematic experts on human rights, women's rights and gender equality, and climate and environment issues, and a validation workshop for all key stakeholders in Oslo.

TABLE 3

Number of Respondents in Interviews, Focus Group Discussions and the Survey

Organisation	Interviews (individual and in group)	Interviewees		Focus group discussions/ Group meetings	Focus group discussions/ Group participants		Survey respondents	
		M	F		M	F	M	F
Norad	9	3	8				13	26
Ministry of Foreign Affairs		2	2				2	6
Embassies	1		1	3	7	5	5	19
Ministry of Climate and Environment/Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative	2	1	2					

TABLE 3 CONTINUED

Number of Respondents in Interviews, Focus Group Discussions and the Survey

Organisation	Interviews (individual and in group)	Interviewees		Focus group discussions/ Group meetings	Focus group discussions/ Group participants		Survey respondents	
		M	F		M	F	M	F
Agreement partners/Norwegian partners								
Climate and Land Use Alliance	3		3					
Development Fund			2					
Digni	1		2					
Malthe Winje AS	1	1						
Mission Alliance	2	1	1					
Norwegian Church Aid	3	2	1					
Norwegian Refugee Council	3	1	2					
Field level partners for projects in Nepal								
United Nations Office for Project Services	3	3		17	61	53		
Norwegian Embassy Nepal	4	4	4					
Asian Development Bank	7	9	1	5	18	22		
Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, Research and Development	4	4		10	40	57		
United Mission to Nepal				9	28	92		
Total	**43**	**31**	**29**	**41**	**147**	**224**	**20**	**51**

2.5 Ethical Considerations

IOD PARC's Ethical Code of Conduct was applied, to ensure genuinely informed consent, confidentiality, impartiality, transparency, and safety and that the rights and dignity of respondents and other evaluation stakeholders were upheld. As per the human rights-based approach, the team developed prior assessments of potential sensitivities and required safeguards for vulnerable groups. Special safeguarding procedures were put in place when interviewing children, e.g., in terms of ensuring parent/guardian informed consent, age-appropriate questions and accompaniment by an appropriate adult. The team also agreed with the Evaluation Department that interviews would not be recorded.

As the number of interviewees per organisation or type of organisation is quite small and the evaluation has promised that independent respondents shall not be possible to identify, the report is intentionally vague in referring to interviewees. For evaluation question 4, the evaluation has reported the observations made regarding shortcomings in the application of a human rights-based approach directly to the relevant project staff, rather than in public via this report.[24]

24 The evaluation had preparedness to apply a complaints mechanism with accompanying remedies, in case more severe negative impacts on human rights of end beneficiaries or affected populations were identified but did not need to use it.

Photo: **Marte Lid** | Norad

2.6 Limitations

Below are the main limitations that the evaluation faced and their implications for the interpretation of the evaluation findings. The evaluation has collected information from a large number of sources and has used several different methods to collect and analyse data. The findings are largely consistent across sources and methods. Inconsistencies have been highlighted and investigated and do not seem to stem from poor quality of data. Large parts of the data is qualitative data, collected from individuals in interviews or focus group discussions. The evaluation has not noticed any attempts at misrepresenting information, although different sources have to some extent presented different views on the same issues. The evaluation assesses that the reliability and internal validity of the data is high. The external validity is limited but findings relating to management of cross-cutting issues at grant management level are assessed to be valid also for projects not included in the evaluation. The learning potential from the evaluation is assessed to be high.

TABLE 4

Limitations

Limitation	Mitigating Actions	Implication for Evaluation
Low response rate to survey, unclear respondents in Ministry of Foreign Affairs The survey response rate was approximately 30%. In addition, not all sections responded to the request for contact information to potential survey respondents.	The survey was sent to all personal email addresses received from heads of sections in Norad and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and to the contact address in embassies. Three reminders were sent. Survey data was triangulated with information from other sources and discrepancies have been highlighted in the report. The response rate was especially low from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and there are indications some Ministry of Foreign Affairs departments may have responded as a group rather than individuals.	There is a remaining risk that the survey data is biased, as the tendency to respond may be linked to characteristics such as having stronger interest in implementation of cross-cutting issues. However, survey data should be treated as indicative, not representative of all staff involved in project management.
Challenges accessing documents	The evaluation sought to access all relevant documents from all projects and partners included in the sample. Despite searches in both Norad and Ministry of Foreign Affairs archives and requests directly to case workers and partners, the evaluation could not access all relevant documents. In particular, annexes to decision documents and agreements were often missing. This included e.g. risk assessment tables.	The evaluation has complemented searches in Norad and Ministry of Foreign Affairs archives with requesting documents directly from relevant partner organisations. The shortcoming has resulted in that some findings are based mainly on interview and survey data.

TABLE 4 CONTINUED

Limitations

Limitation	Mitigating Actions	Implication for Evaluation
Limited size of sample Data collection at project level is limited to eight projects, effects for end beneficiaries were assessed in four of these, and only for human rights effects in Nepal. The analysis of documents in response to evaluation question 2 is limited to Norad documentation only.	The selection of programmes was made to include a broad range of partners and thematic areas, and findings from evaluation question 2 and 3 suggest no significant differences in the approach to implementation across the cross-cutting issues. Data from the selected programmes was compared with survey data and differences highlighted.	Findings should be applied to other contexts with caution: The number and breadth of projects limit the external validity of the findings. However, it also gives an overview of practices in different organisations. The results relating to implementation at grant management level are mainly consistent across projects, which makes the evaluation confident that these findings are valid to other projects. Findings from the Natural Language Processing analysis are based on Norad documentation only. Challenges identified are likely to be similar, but the survey results indicate that the treatment of them may differ in Ministry of Foreign Affairs and embassy documentation. Findings about application of an human rights-based approach at field level in Nepal are mainly consistent across the four projects, which speaks to some degree of external validity.
Delays in the Natural Language Processing analysis The data dump for the Natural Language Processing component was much larger than expected, totalling 750GBs. Although the evaluation included documents from more years than the evaluation time frame, this is much higher than the approximately 10GB per year stated in the tendering Q&A. This encompassed the entirety of the Norad digital archive, including various types of documents not relevant for the evaluation, and documents lacked useful naming and categorisation.	This substantially extended the sampling process and left several documents and agreements unmatched. The identification of examples used in the training component of Natural Language Processing analysis had to be done manually, as Norad staff could not point the team to agreements demonstrating effective integration of cross-cutting issues. The results from the Natural Language Processing were received much later in the evaluation process than initially expected, disrupting the plan to utilize Natural Language Processing results to guide sampling and tools for other evaluation questions. Planned feedback loops between evaluation question 2 and 3 were not possible, hence barriers identified through evaluation question 2 results could not be explored in evaluation questions 3 or 4.	The example text used to train the Natural Language Processing model was complied manually. This introduces a risk of bias in the model's subsequent classification of documents. To address this potential source of bias, the examples were validated by technical experts on the team. Moreover, the model was programmed to automatically update the rules used for classification based on subsequent examples identified during processing. The loss of feedback between evaluation question 2 and 3 has reduced the level of analysis of barriers and enablers. The effect on reliability and validity is assessed to be small, it is mainly the depth of information that has been affected.

TABLE 4 CONTINUED

Limitations

Limitation	Mitigating Actions	Implication for Evaluation
Challenges around collecting primary data on human rights issues Key human rights principles were translated into less abstract examples relevant to the four sampled projects but were still challenging/abstract for community-level focus group discussion participants to relate to. There are multiple other development cooperation projects and government activities in the field visit areas, other donors support some of the sampled Nepal projects.	The team had to adapt their approach and be more specific in guiding the discussions and could not fully implement the outcome harvesting approach. The data collected on human rights effects in the sampled project locations is reliable and has been triangulated. However, other human rights effects (positive and negative) may have occurred which were not captured by the evaluation. It has not been possible to isolate the effects on human rights from external factors, as many aspects interact in the local context. The analysis has focused on contribution to human rights impacts, and on whether the projects have applied a human rights-based approach in the implementation of the projects.	The findings to evaluation question 4 provide examples of positive and negative effects but should not be seen as evidence that other effects did not occur. The findings indicate contribution, not attribution. Effects of the studied projects cannot be isolated from effects from sources external to these projects. Hence the findings regarding human rights effects have low external validity. However, findings relating to the consideration of a human rights-based approach in the implementation of the programmes were consistent across the partners and are assessed to have some external validity.

Photo: **Martha Haukaas** | Norad

3

Expectations and Commitments to Implementing Cross-cutting Issues in Norwegian Development Cooperation

This chapter presents an overview of expectations and commitments relating to the four cross-cutting issues. The presentation is largely based on an extensive and systematic search and review of documents. In total, 126 commitments or expectations were identified within a total of 80 relevant documents.[25] These were categorised according to theme and level (international, national, instructions to staff in government agencies and instructions to partners). Policies, strategies, and guidelines of partners included in the evaluation sample are not covered here but included in the assessments in Chapters 5 and 6. A full list of documents with commitments and expectations identified is available in Annex 4a, part 2.

Meld. St. 24 (2016-2017) 'Common Responsibility for Common Future' (hereinafter 'Meld. St. 24)[26] describes how Norway will adapt to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and sets out key priorities for Norway's development efforts, including defining the four factors that shall be cross-cutting issues for all Norwegian development policy and aid.

> *All development efforts are to be assessed on the basis of how they affect or are affected by these cross-cutting issues. The cross-cutting issues shall as a minimum be included in the risk management of all development efforts. This will reduce the risk that the efforts we support have unintended negative consequences for these issues. The cross-cutting issues shall in addition be actively promoted through concrete goals and objectives in prioritised areas and through political dialogue.*[27]

The following sections summarise the statements in Meld 24 (2016-2017) regarding each cross-cutting issue and a selection of other commitments made to the four cross-cutting issues at international and national level – summaries of key commitments within instructions to staff in government agencies and instructions to partners are in Chapter 5. Note that this chapter's selection is based primarily on the evaluation's assessment of their strength (e.g., in terms of being legally binding) and relevance (e.g., across all Norwegian or sectoral-specific development activities).

Photo: **Marte Lid** | Norad

25 To note, the review includes several documents that predate the evaluation's timeframe, documents authored by domestic Norwegian ministries, and a sample of available country and sectoral strategies.

26 Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016. Meld. St. 24 (2016–2017). Melding til Stortinget, Felles ansvar for felles fremtid Bærekraftsmålene og norsk utviklingspolitikk (hereinafter referred to as 'Meld. St. 24'), pg 29.

27 Meld. St. 24, pg 29. Author's translation. Note that the English summary places more weight on the dialogue aspect and does not mention reducing risks, unintended consequences or actively promoting the four issues (Norwegian Government, 2016. Meld. St. 24 (2016–2017) Report to the Storting (white paper). English summary. Common Responsibility for Common Future - The Sustainable Development Goals and Norway's Development Policy.

3.1 Human Rights

Meld St. 24 states that in line with Meld. St. 10 (2014-2015), Norway has a rights-based approach in national and international work towards the SDGs and notes that a rights-based approach contributes to attention to structural discrimination and follow-up of the principle that no-one shall be left behind. Human rights as a cross-cutting issue shall have special focus on participation, accountability and non-discrimination. [28] [29]

While the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a key document at international level, it is mainly Articles 1 and 2 (statements about equality and non-discrimination) that are relevant in this analysis of human rights as a cross-cutting issue.[30] However, as a UN member and a funder of multiple UN agencies, Norway implicitly supports the Secretary General's calls for *'all entities of the UN system to mainstream human rights into their various activities and programmes within the framework of their respective mandates'* and supports the statement of common understanding[31] relevant to development cooperation of UN agencies:

- All programmes of development cooperation, policies and technical assistance should further the realisation of human rights as laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments.
- Human rights standards contained in, and principles derived from, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments guide all development cooperation and programming in all sectors and in all phases of the programming process.
- Development cooperation contributes to the development of the capacities of 'duty-bearers' to meet their obligations and/or of 'rights-holders' to claim their rights.

Several commitments at both national and international level relate to human rights in specific areas or for specific groups: a selection is presented below.

Norway is also a state party and has a legal obligation to implement the UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which emphasises *'the importance of mainstreaming disability issues as an integral part of relevant strategies of sustainable development'*.[32] The national level Equality for All strategy aims to ensure compliance with the convention and states *'The development cooperation is to have a twin-track approach in which mainstreaming of the rights of persons with disabilities is combined with targeted measures'*.[33] It includes various commitments to integrating disability within specific sectors and when working with different partners. Also at national level, the Action Plan on Gender and Sexual Diversity commits Norway to '*Contribute to ensuring that queer people's need for protection and basic services is addressed in humanitarian responses' and 'work to*

28 Norwegian Government, 2014. Meld. St. 10 (2014-2015), Muligheter for alle – menneskerettighetene som mål og middel i utenriks og utviklingspolitikken.

29 Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Opportunities for All: Human Rights in Norway's Foreign Policy and Development Cooperation, Meld. St. 10 (2014-15) Report to the Storting (White Paper),

30 United Nations General Assembly, 1948. Universal declaration on human rights. General Assembly resolution 217A.

31 UN (1997), UN Programme for Reform, https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/6959-The_Human_Rights_Based_Approach_to_Development_Cooperation_ Towards_a_Common_Understanding_among_UN.pdf, accessed 06/12/23)

32 Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Norway signed 2007, ratified 2013).

33 Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2022). Equality for all, Norway's strategy for disability-inclusive development (2022-2025), pg 3.

increase the inclusion of queer people and queer organisations in the development and implementation of humanitarian efforts.'[34]

Human rights in the education sector are governed by a range of commitments: as a supporting state of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (1993), Norway recognises the importance of strengthening human rights through education. The declaration reaffirms that *'States are duty-bound [...] to ensure that education is aimed at strengthening the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms.'* As a supporting stater of the SDGs, Norway has committed to by 2030 *'eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations'* (SDG 4.5), and *'build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all'* (SDG 4.8).

The UN Framework on Climate Change emphasises that *'Parties should, in all climate change related actions, fully respect human rights.'*[35] As a signatory this should guide Norway's work on climate change both at home and abroad. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, referred to in the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) safeguards, commits to *'The full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders, in particular indigenous peoples and local communities'.*[36] As a party to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Norway has signed up to *equitable governing systems and to recognising and respecting indigenous rights* within the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.[37]

Various national-level strategies include commitments to human rights in specific areas, such as the Strategy for Promoting Freedom of Expression, which states that *'It is necessary to take an integrated, long-term approach in the international efforts to promote human rights'* and *'Key priorities include gender equality, the inclusion of people with disabilities and other marginalised groups.'*[38] The most recent Gender Action Plan also notes that *'our efforts [to improve gender equality] are rooted in human rights'.*[39]

34 Norwegian Ministry of Culture and Equality (2023), The Norwegian Government's Action Plan on Gender and Sexual Diversity (2023-26), Action Plan, pg 37.

35 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), part 2, 2010, pg 4.

36 The Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) safeguards were defined in the UNFCCC. (REDD+ Safeguards, pg, 1).

37 The High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People (1993), Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), https://www.cbd.int/convention, accessed 06/12/23, p3 (target 3).

38 Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2021), Freedom of Expression, Strategy for promoting Freedom of Expression in Norwegian foreign and development policy, pg 8 and pg 15.

39 Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2023), A Just World is an Equal World, Action Plan for Women's Rights and Gender Equality in Norway's Foreign and Development Policy (2023–2030), pg 16.

Photo: **Marte Lid** | Norad

Several national-level commitments relate to human rights and environment and natural resources: The Climate Change Hunger and Vulnerability Strategy states that *'...indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge will therefore be integrated into Norway's efforts. Norway will work to safe guard the rights of indigenous groups and local communities, including small-scale producers, as stewards of resources and ecosystems.'*[40] Meld. St. 22 (2016-17) states that *'The Government will: - work to combat forced labour and human trafficking in the global fisheries industry...'*.[41] Additionally, the Government's Plan for Sustainable Food Systems in the context of Norwegian Foreign and Development Policy states that *'The Government will work to ensure that Norway's partners consider the needs of marginalised groups in all [food systems] projects and programmes supported by Norway.'*[42]

Norway's most recent Humanitarian Strategy recognises human rights as a central objective to humanitarian efforts, *'The goal of humanitarian action is to save lives, alleviate suffering and safeguard human dignity and rights in armed conflicts and humanitarian crises'*, and recognises the importance of contributing to *'a human rights-based, coordinated, and long-term response to the major refugee situations.'*[43]

40 Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs (2023), Climate Change Hunger and Vulnerability Strategy – strategy for climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction and the fight against hunger, pg 7.

41 Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2016-17), The Place of Oceans in Norway's Development and Foreign Policy, Meld. St. 22 (2016-17) Report to the Storting (White Paper), 2016-17, pg 53.

42 Norwegian Ministries, Food People and the Environment (2019), The Government's Plan for Sustainable Food Systems in the context of Norwegian Foreign and Development Policy, 2019-2023, pg 11.

43 Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2024), Norway's Humanitarian Policy, 2024-2029 pg8/pg32.

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3.2 Women's Rights and Gender Equality

Meld. St. 24 states that, in line with the 2030 Agenda, the government works towards gender equality and strengthening the rights of all girls and women. Women's rights and gender equality as a cross-cutting issue shall reduce the risk that supported interventions cause unintentional discrimination of women or men.[44]

SDG Target 1.4 sets out that *'by 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance.'*[45]

The SDG targets relating to gender equality and education are SDGs 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3, with targets that *'by 2030 all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes'*[46]; *'all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education'*;[47] and *'equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university'*.[48]

Another international-level commitment to mainstreaming in education is in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Beijing +5, *'In addressing unequal access to and inadequate educational opportunities, governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of main-streaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes, so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively.'*[49] In the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, Norway endorses mainstreaming gender within all activities of the United Nations and as a UN member commits to this, *'The equal status of women and the human rights of women should be integrated into the mainstreaming of United Nations system-wide activity. These issues should be regularly and systematically addressed throughout relevant United Nations bodies and mechanisms.'*[50]

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is an international legally binding document, in which Norway has committed *'To take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women by any person, organization or enterprise'*.[51]

At national level, the Norwegian Government's Action Plan on Gender and Sexual Diversity (2023-26) states that *'Our goal is to mainstream the gender perspective in our efforts under all relevant budget items. However, until this goal has been achieved, funds may in some cases be earmarked specifically for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment'*.[52] It clarifies that *'The [Gender] Action Plan is to be followed in all countries and this work is to be mainstreamed into all the Foreign Service's efforts. It is to be reflected in*

44 Meld. St. 24, pg 29.
45 UN (2015), The Global Goals, https://www.globalgoals.org/goals/, accessed 05/12/23, (SDG target 1.4).
46 UN (2015), The Global Goals, https://www.globalgoals.org/goals/, accessed 05/12/23, (SDG target 4.1).
47 UN (2015), The Global Goals, https://www.globalgoals.org/goals/, accessed 05/12/23, (SDG target 4.2).
48 UN (2015), The Global Goals, https://www.globalgoals.org/goals/, accessed 05/12/23, (SDG target 4.3).
49 UN (2015), Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Beijing +5 Political Declaration and Outcome , pg 52.
50 United Nations (1993), The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, pg 13.
51 UN (1979), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, pg2.
52 Norwegian Ministry of Culture and Equality (2023), The Norwegian Government's Action Plan on Gender and Sexual Diversity (2023-26), Action Plan, p 32.

Photo: **Espen Røst** | Panorama

internal management tools, such as annual work plans and various reports.[53]

In the most recent Gender Action Plan for Norwegian foreign and development policy, it is stated, *'We will and must work broadly to promote women's rights and gender equality across the breadth of Norway's foreign and development policy'*.[54] The plan also reemphasises that cross-cutting issues *'...serve as mandatory minimum requirements that apply irrespective of sector, partner, and type of programme.'*[55] At sectoral level, the most extensive and detailed commitments to integrating gender are in peace processes, namely the Women's Peace and Security Plan. The evaluation has identified ten commitments/expectations to gender equality and women's rights within this plan, for example: *'Norway will: integrate the women, peace and security agenda and a gender perspective into Norwegian peace and security efforts nationally and internationally, and into relevant national policy planning...'*[56]; and *'....include women and integrate a gender perspective into national efforts to prevent and combat violent extremism; - promote the integration of a gender perspective and women's participation in counterterror efforts and in the prevention of violent extremism internationally...'.* [57]

As for human rights, several commitments refer to specific thematic or geographic areas. There is an overlap across the three cross-cutting issues of human rights, women's rights and gender equality, and climate change and environment. Women's rights and gender equality are committed to in, for example, the Government's Plan for Sustainable Food Systems in the context of Norwegian Foreign and Development Policy (stating that *'Norway will therefore work to strengthen women's rights and their role in food production'*)[58] and in the White Paper on Gender Equality in Practice (which claims that *'the Government wants the climate negotiations to incorporate a clear gender equality perspective'*).[59] This reflects commitments endorsed by Norway at international level on integrating gender when, e.g. supporting activities to achieve sustainable development and combatting desertification within the Convention to Combat Desertification[60] and the New Urban Agenda[61], respectively.

53 See previous footnote p 33.
54 Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2023), A Just World is an Equal World, Action Plan for Women's Rights and Gender Equality in Norway's Foreign and Development Policy (2023–2030), pg 16.
55 Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2023), A Just World is an Equal World, Action Plan for Women's Rights and Gender Equality in Norway's Foreign and Development Policy (2023–2030), pg 20.
56 Norwegian Ministries (2023), Women, Peace and Security (2023-30) – Norway's National Action Plan, pg 7.
57 Norwegian Ministries (2023), Women, Peace and Security (2023-30) – Norway's National Action Plan, pg 21.
58 Norwegian Ministries, Food People and the Environment, The Government's Plan for Sustainable Food Systems in the context of Norwegian Foreign and Development Policy, 2019-2023, pg 15.
59 The Royal Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion (2015), Gender Equality in Practice – Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, Report to the Storting – White Paper Meld. St. 7, (2015-16), pg 209.
60 United Nations (1994), The Convention to Combat Desertification.
61 United Nations (2016), New Urban Agenda.

Norway's international Strategy to Eliminate Harmful Practices (2019–2023) strengthens Norwegian efforts against female genital mutilation, child marriage and preference for sons, stating that *'Efforts will be strengthened through targeted measures and as part of development cooperation activities relating to education, health care, gender equality and human rights.'*[62]

Several national-level commitments are also within national strategies for humanitarian and educational sectors, *'Norway also attaches importance to digitalisation in its support for global education, and particular priority is given to girls' education and participation in society in this context'*.[63] Within the humanitarian sector, *'The gender perspective is to be integrated into all our humanitarian efforts, and special priority is to be given to women's rights and participation.*[64] *'These [cash transfer] programmes must also be designed to ensure that they do not undermine protection efforts. In particular, women's interests must be safeguarded'*.[65] *'The Government will: .... require organisations that receive humanitarian support from Norway to take a rights-based approach and integrate the gender perspective into all aspects of their work'*.[66] Sectoral-level commitments also feature within the Sahel Strategy, e.g. within ensuring political participation and economic rights and Norway's engagement with multilateral development banks.

62 Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research (2021), Freedom from Negative Social Control and Honour Based Violence, Action Plan, 2021-24, pg 51.
63 Meld. St. 24, pg 29.
64 Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2018), Norway's Humanitarian Policy, 2018, pg 6
65 Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2018), Norway's Humanitarian Policy, 2018 pg 25-26.
66 Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2018), Norway's Humanitarian Policy, 2018 pg 42.

Photo: **Marte Lid** | Norad

3.3 Climate Change and Environment

Meld. St. 24 states that the inclusion of climate and environment in development cooperation is a prerequisite for reaching the goal of poverty reduction. It notes that climate and environment interventions may have negative consequences on the cross-cutting issues. Climate and environmental assessments, clarification of overlapping user or ownership rights and inclusive processes with local populations are therefore particularly important.[67]

The commitment to mainstreaming climate and environment is in Norad's Strategy towards 2030, *'Our goal is that climate and environmental concerns will be integrated into all our work and be a guiding principle when developing new partnerships and initiatives.'*[68] The Ministry of Foreign Affairs's Climate Change Hunger and Vulnerability Strategy commits to assessing the impact of projects on climate, *'All projects receiving funding from Norway must have assessed the project's potential adverse impacts on greenhouse gas emissions or climate change vulnerability'*.[69] There are similar commitments to integrating climate and environment and understanding the impact of activities on climate and environment across all development cooperations and in certain areas (sectors or partnerships) – a selection is presented below.

The national-level commitments reflects commitments made at the international level, primarily within United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), *'Take climate change considerations into account, to the extent feasible, in their relevant social, economic and environmental policies and actions, and employ appropriate methods, for example impact assessments, formulated and determined nationally, with a view to minimizing adverse effects on the economy, on public health and on the quality of the environment, of projects or measures undertaken by them to mitigate or adapt to climate change'*[70].

As a signatory of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and Accra Agenda for Action, Norway has committed to greater harmonisation of environmental impact assessment, '*(Article 40) Donors have achieved considerable progress in harmonisation around environmental impact assessment (EIA) including relevant health and social issues at the project level. This progress needs to be deepened, including on addressing implications of global environmental issues such as climate change, desertification and loss of biodiversity. (Article 41). Donor countries jointly commit to, e.g., Strengthen the application of EIAs and deepen common procedures for projects, including consultations with stakeholders; and develop and apply common approaches for "strategic environmental assessment" at the sector and national levels.'* [71]

Norway has also endorsed mainstreaming biodiversity within key sectors and multilateral engagements, *'We commit to putting biodiversity, climate and the environment as a whole at the heart of both of our COVID-19 recovery strategies and investments and of our pursuit of national and international development and cooperation...We commit to mainstreaming biodiversity into relevant sectoral and cross-sectoral policies at all levels, including in key sectors such as food production, agriculture, fisheries and forestry, energy, tourism, infrastructure and extractive industries, trade and supply chains, and into those key international agreements and processes which hold*

67 Meld. St. 24, pg 29.
68 Norad (2021), Norad's Strategy towards 2030, pg 8.
69 Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs (2023), Climate Change Hunger and Vulnerability Strategy – strategy for climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction and the fight against hunger, pg 12.
70 UN (1992), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2010/awglca12/eng/14.pdf, accessed 05/12/23, pg 7.
71 OECD (2005), Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and Accra Agenda for Action, Page 9

levers for change... We will do this by ensuring that across the whole of government, policies, decisions and investments account for the value of nature and biodiversity, promote biodiversity conservation, restoration, sustainable use and the access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from their utilization.[72] Norway has also reflected an international level commitment to reduce pollution at national level, *'Environmental concerns must be taken into consideration in all Norwegian development cooperation. Norway has an obligation to ensure that assessments of environmental and social impacts are carried out in connection with the use of Norwegian development cooperation funds.'* [73]

At national-level, the only sectoral commitments are for trade and investment and humanitarian work, *'Norway seeks to ensure that trade and investment agreements promote green growth and take climate change and environmental considerations into account.'*[74], and *'The Government will support processes where natural resource management is seen in an overall perspective, i.e. across sectors and different administrative levels....'*[75] and specifically in relation to water supply activities, *'It is particularly important to ensure good environmental assessments and site analyses, standards, control and follow-up of construction and housing projects.... The impacts of climate change, for example in relation to water supply, must be taken into greater consideration in this work.*[76] Within the latest humanitarian strategy, *'The Government will support efforts to promote preparedness, disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation as part of an integrated approach to reducing vulnerability and humanitarian needs.'*[77]

72 Leaders' Pledge for Nature (2020), United to Reverse Biodiversity Loss by 2030 for Sustainable Development, pg 2-3.

73 UN Environment Programme (2019), Norwegian Implementation Plan for the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, 2019, pg 28.

74 Norwegian Ministry of Climate and Environment (2020), Norway's Climate Action Plan 2021-30 (Meld St.13 (2020-21) Report to the Storting White Paper, pg 35.

75 See previous footnote, pg 40.

76 Ibid.

77 Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2018), Norway's Humanitarian Policy, 2018 pg33.

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3.4 Anti-corruption

Meld. St. 24 states that Norway supports the work to follow-up the United Nations Convention against Corruption and the implementation of the OECD anti-bribery convention[78]. Anti-corruption as a cross-cutting issue shall provide sufficient assurance that interventions supported by Norway do not contribute to corrupt practices, neither in the interventions nor in society. Special focus shall be placed on increased openness and transparency, and participation of beneficiaries to achieve increased accountability.[79] The international and national level commitments identified generally go beyond a zero-tolerance approach to corruption in terms of financial irregularities/fraud within Norwegian-funded activities and in a few cases focus on addressing specific corruption problems at the sectoral level.

Whilst the evaluation has not identified any recent international-level commitments that have been ratified by Norway, Norway has reemphasised its commitment to addressing anti-corruption as a cross-cutting issue on the international stage, e.g. at the International Anti-corruption conference. *'Norway is committed to the OECD 2016 Recommendation of the Council for Development Cooperation Actors on Managing the Risk of Corruption: 1. Ethical guidelines are in place. 2. Anti-corruption assistance/advisory services are available. ...Oversight, grant management reviews, and investigations are carried out. Assessment and management of corruption risks are required.'* [80] Norway has ratified the 2004 UN convention on anti-corruption.[81]

As an OECD member, Norway implicitly endorses OECD recommendations on managing risk and corruption, for example, *"...Assure that training of all staff involved in posts that are more directly involved in dealing with corruption risks (such as programme design, management, procurement and oversight) goes beyond the internal ethics and reporting regime, to include corruption risk identification, assessment and mitigation approaches as well as main international obligations to which their country has committed to'*.[82]

At the sectoral level, more commitments were identified within climate and environment compared to other sectors. At international level, Norway has agreed to supporting greater transparency and anti-corruption in their activities related to urban and rural development. *'We will support subnational and local governments in their efforts to implement transparent and accountable expenditure control instruments for assessing the necessity and impact of local investment and projects, based on legislative control and public participation, as appropriate, in support of open and fair tendering processes, procurement mechanisms and reliable budget execution, as well as preventive anti-corruption measures to promote integrity, accountability, effective management and access to public property and land, in line with national policies'.*[83] Within Norway's national biodiversity plan there is also a commitment to addressing anti-corruption in the form of environmental crime, *'The Government will: ....'Support efforts to combat environmental crime, including fisheries-related crime, among other things through relevant international processes and programmes'*.[84]

78 Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions.
79 Meld. St. 24, pg 29.
80 International Anti-corruption Conference (2018), Anti-corruption conference statement, pgs 7-9
81 United Nations (2004), United Nations convention on anti-corruption.
82 OECD (2016), OECD's Recommendation of the Council on Development Cooperation Actors on managing risk and corruption, pg7-8
83 United Nations (2016), New Urban Agenda, pg 34
84 Ministry of Climate and Environment, Nature for Life – Norway's national biodiversity Plan, Meld. St. 14 (2015-2016), Report to the Storting (White Paper), 2015-16, pg 18. N.b. before evaluation's timeframe but presented to demonstrate example of commitment to implementing anti-corruption as cross-cutting issue.

3.5 Expectations on Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Norad staff and partners

The Grant Management Assistant clearly states the requirement for implementing cross-cutting issues through the 'do no harm' approach. As the Grant Management Assistant sets the rules for grant management within the Norwegian development cooperation, this can be interpreted as compliance-related and thus a strong expectation. Approximately 10 pages within the Grant Management Assistant relate to cross-cutting issues including on financial mismanagement.[85] The Grant Management Assistant does not set clear requirements on taking a 'proactive approach' beyond signposting to annual budget instructions. The Grant Management Assistant notes that some projects may require a proactive approach to cross-cutting issues. Beyond noting that annual budget instructions will identify some of these programmes, there is no clear expectation or guidance on when it might be relevant to take a proactive approach or guidance on how to do this.

The annual departmental budget allocation letters to Norad also set out some expectations related to cross-cutting issues beyond what is presented in the Grant Management Assistant and the 2023 instructions include a clear target for gender, *'Norad shall contribute to ensuring that at least half of all bilateral aid has gender equality as a main or sub-goal'*.[86] This is reinforced in the 2024 instructions along with energy, climate and food being named as priority areas for integrating gender equality. A commitment to ensuring that Norad contributes to 'the objective that Norwegian development policy and aid shall be human rights-based' also appears in the 2024 instructions.[87]

The requirement to implement cross-cutting issues is reflected within various templates provided to staff, e.g. to support reporting, project visits or meetings. However, their incorporation cannot be seen as guidance on 'how' to implement at different points of the project cycle, but more as a reminder to consider cross-cutting issues. Only one commitment within documents setting out behavioural expectations for civil servants was identified. Within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ethical guidance, there is an expectation that staff should 'ensure that environmental considerations are taken into account in daily operations.'[88]

At the time of data collection for this evaluation, the evaluation could not identify any published toolkits or examples of good practice on how to implement cross-cutting issues for Norad and Ministry of Foreign Affairs staff and implementing organisations. Whilst there are sections on each of the four thematic issues in the Grant Management Assistant, they mostly signpost to external resources provide limited utility within the Norwegian context and does not set out what good practice looks like.

85 This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

86 Det Kongelige Utenriksdepartement (2023), Tildelingsbrev til Direktoratet for utviklingssamarbeid - Norad for 2023, https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/82928efb0ef545cd904e03ab51b51470/tidligere-ar/tildelingsbrev-til-norad-for-20234083741.pdf, pg.5, accessed 20/12/23.

87 Det Kongelige Utenriksdepartement (2024), Tildelingsbrev til Direktoratet for utviklingssamarbeid - Norad for 2024, tildelingsbrev-til-norad-for-2024.pdf (regjeringen.no) accessed 07/03/24.

88 Kommunal-og moderniseringsdepartment, Etiske retningslinjer for statstjenesten, revised 2017, etiske_retningslinjer_rev_2017.pdf (regjeringen.no), pg 17, accessed 12/03/24. (Ethics Guidelines for civil servants). N.b., translated from Norwegian.

The requirement to implement cross-cutting issues is clearly documented in instructions to grant recipients or applicants in the grant scheme rules template and grant scheme rules sampled.[89] There is more detailed guidance on financial irregularities within documents shared with implementers. Beyond this, the evaluation has not been able to identify clear guidance or any further detail on how partners can implement the 'do no harm' approach or when or how a proactive approach should be considered.

The commitment to respecting human rights and combatting corruption is reflected in the ethical guidance for implementing organisations[90], but there is no detail on or further guidance underpinning how to operationalise this. A review of a sample of grant scheme rules identified that cross-cutting issues are sometimes reflected within assessment or performance criteria for grants.

89 Norwegian MFA (2023), Template for 'Grant scheme rules'. Grant scheme rules set out the requirement for implementers to give 'adequate consideration' to cross-cutting issues and 'identify material risk factors that may have a negative impact on the four cross-cutting issues, and (must) analyse and manage these risks throughout the project cycle'.

90 Norad (2014), Ethical guidelines – Guide for Norad's grant recipients, https://www.norad.no/globalassets/filer-2015/sivsa/ethical-guidelines---guide-for-norads-grant-recipients.pdf?id=22093

Photo: **Marte Lid** | Norad

3.6 Overall Findings

The strength and clarity, (e.g. if explicitly or implicitly stated) of the 36 commitments/expectations identified at international level varied. Many were identified in international frameworks, conventions, agendas and some are legally binding. Therefore, many of the commitments at this level are considered as strong, insofar as they involved Norway signing or endorsing an international agreement, which in some cases was ratified in parliament. Based on a review of all identified commitments (see Annex 4b for a full list), the commitments within agreements ratified by Norway were concentrated mainly within education and climate and environment conventions/frameworks as compared to other sectors.[91] In many cases, the commitments/expectations are not especially clear or specific on level of ambition, do not have targets attached (apart from the SDG goals) and often use the relatively vague 'mainstreaming' language. In some cases, the language implies a more 'proactive or ambitious, approach' to cross-cutting issues, such as 'eliminating disparities'.

Most of the 48 commitments/expectations identified at national level are within white papers or published government strategies or action plans authored by Norwegian ministries[92]. Commitments at this level can therefore be assessed as strong overall given they represent official government policy, although they are generally not legally binding. Overall, the commitments/expectations were clearer and more explicit, and generally reflected higher levels of ambition in implementing cross-cutting issues, than at international level. In some cases, however, the language remained vague. For example, there were several commitments to implementing an human rights-based approach but no clear definition of what this entails in the context of Norwegian development cooperation.

Except for a higher number of commitments for gender at national level, there are no significant differences in numbers of commitments between thematic issues. The commitments for anti-corruption can be classified

as weaker due to the nature of the documents they appear in (e.g. recommendations rather than official government policy) when compared to the other three thematic issues.

There is variation in the strength, clarity and ambition of commitments/expectations to implementing cross-cutting issues. This makes identifying the objective of cross-cutting issue implementation within the Norwegian context challenging. Whilst the minimum requirement at grant management level is through the 'do no harm' approach set out in the Grant Management Assistant, this is not consistent with some commitments made by Norway at the international and national level (whose more ambitious language signals a proactive approach). ●

91 Based on the totality of commitments identified by the team – not only the ones presented above, see Annex 4b.

92 Documents listing commitments/expectations published prior to the evaluation's timeframe but deemed relevant are included in Annex 4.

4

Implementation of Cross-cutting Issues in Norad Project Documentation

4.1 Overview

This chapter contributes to our response to Evaluation Question 2: How is the Norwegian development administration implementing the four cross-cutting issues into the management of its programmes and projects? And to what extent is this implementation successful?

The analysis is limited to a sample of design phase and follow-up phase documents extracted from Norad's digital archive. Design phase documents include, among others, original applications (sometimes appended to agreement documents themselves), decision documents, and other documents associated with the assessment and approval of applications. Follow-up phase documents include progress reports submitted by agreement partners, as well as other documents associated with the follow-up of agreements, including field visit reports. For the design phase, the unit of analysis is the agreement (because risks and proactive measures relating to cross-cutting issues only need to be described once in project plans). For the follow-up phase, the unit of analysis is the document (because all reporting within an agreement should include risks and proactive measures relating to cross-cutting issues).

A natural language processing model was developed to automatically process the sampled documents to assess how cross-cutting issues were implemented. This model was designed to machine-read the content of each sampled document and classify it using a scale with three categories that measure the varying *quality* of cross-cutting issue implementation. The three categories included in the scale are:

1. **Insufficiently Implemented:**

1.1 **In design phase** documentation, this category means that the sampled document does not contain a substantial[93] analysis of risks to cross-cutting issues associated with the implementation of the intervention.

1.2 **In follow-up phase** documentation, this category means that the document does not contain substantial reporting on risks to cross-cutting issues associated with project delivery.

93 Note that the analysis of risk is only considered substantial if: a) clearly identifies at least one risk factor which may result in a negative impact on the relevant cross-cutting issue; b) the identified risk factor relates specifically to potential unintended negative effects resulting from project implementation (as opposed to risks to project delivery posed by operating context); and c) identifies a mitigating measure for responding to the identified risk.

2. **Do No Harm:**

2.1 **In design phase** documentation, this category means that the sampled document does contain a substantial analysis of risks to cross-cutting issues associated with the implementation of the intervention.

2.2 **In follow-up phase** documentation, this category means that the sampled documented does contain substantial reporting on risks to cross-cutting issues associated with project delivery.

3. **Proactive:**

3.1 **In design phase** documentation, this category means that the document demonstrates the integration of cross-cutting issue-specific objectives into an intervention's results chain[94].

3.2 **In follow-up phase** documentation, this category means that the document demonstrates reporting on cross-cutting issue-specific objectives articulated in an intervention's results chain.

94 Note that project's which have cross-cutting issue as a primary focus are not assessed for 'proactive' integration of that cross-cutting issue but are assessed for 'proactive' integration of other cross-cutting issues and for 'do no harm' implementation across all cross-cutting issues.

In some cases, documents may be classified as belonging to more than one category. Specifically, documents classified as 'proactive' may also be classified as 'do no harm' or 'insufficiently implemented'. For example, if a document contains a substantial analysis of risks associated with a CCI *as well as* measures to proactively address the issue, it would be categorised as both 'proactive' *and* 'do no harm'. Similarly, if a document contains no active analysis of risks associated with a CCI, but does contain measures to proactively address the issue, it would be classified as proactive *and* insufficiently implemented. Note, however, that if a document is classified as 'insufficiently implemented', it *cannot* be also classified as 'do no harm'.

Photo: **Marte Lid** | Norad

4.2 Cross-cutting Issue Implementation at the Design Phase

Overview

This section provides an overview of how cross-cutting issues were implemented at the design phase of Norad's programme management cycle. The sample for this section is a total of 6,982 design phase documents extracted from Norad's archive which were successfully matched with a total of 916 agreements. The unit of analysis for this section is the agreement, because it is not a requirement that *all* design phase documents associated with an agreement contain details relating to cross-cutting issue implementation. As such, for an agreement to be classified as 'do no harm' with respect to a cross-cutting issue, at least one design phase document for that agreement must contain a substantial assessment of risks relating to that cross-cutting issue. Similarly, for an agreement to be classified as 'proactive' with respect to cross-cutting issues, at least one design phase document for that agreement has to articulate measures to actively promote that issue.

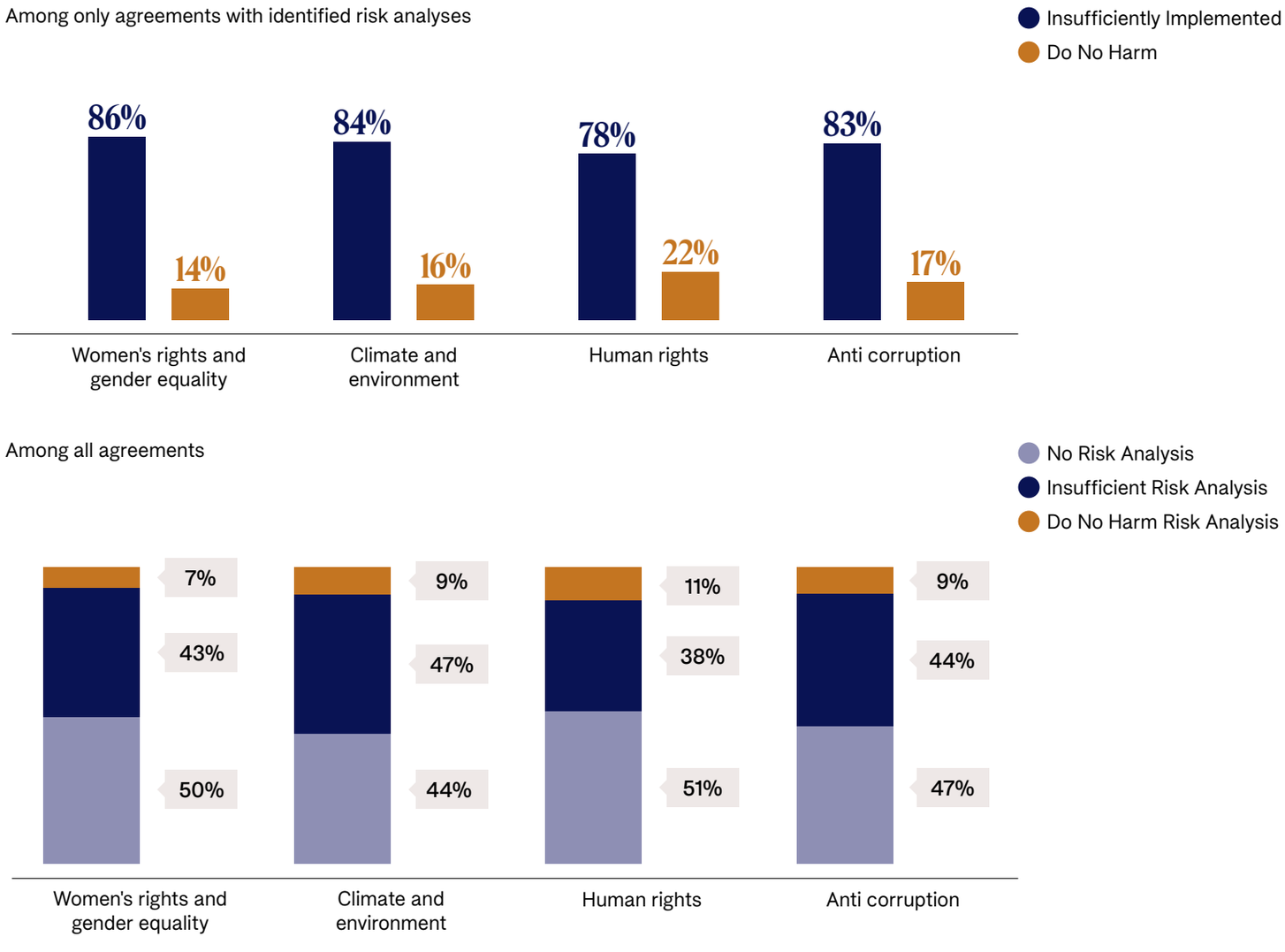
The Quality of Assessments of Risks to Cross-cutting Issues in the Design Phase

Most of the agreements represented in the sample had associated design phase documentation that contained analysis of at least one risk relating to at least one cross-cutting issue. Evidence of risk analyses for cross-cutting issues in design phase documentation was found for 64% of the agreements that were represented in the sample. This implies that in most cases, there is at least some effort consider risks in relation to cross-cutting issues during the design phase of agreements.

However, only a minority of sampled agreements with analyses of risks relating to cross-cutting issues in design phase documentation demonstrated evidence of analysing risks in a way that fully satisfied the 'do no harm' criteria. As illustrated by figure 2 below, the proportion of sampled agreements with risk analyses that contained a *substantial* assessment of risks to cross-cutting issues varied by the specific issue in question. The figure is highest for human rights (22%), and lowest for women's rights and gender equality (13%). When averaged across the four cross-cutting issues, 17% of sampled agreements with risk analyses are assessing risks in a *substantial* manner. Overall, this means that the proportion of sampled agreements with risk analyses that meet the 'do no harm' criteria is low, as illustrated by figure 2.

FIGURE 2

Quality of Risk Assessments in Design Phase



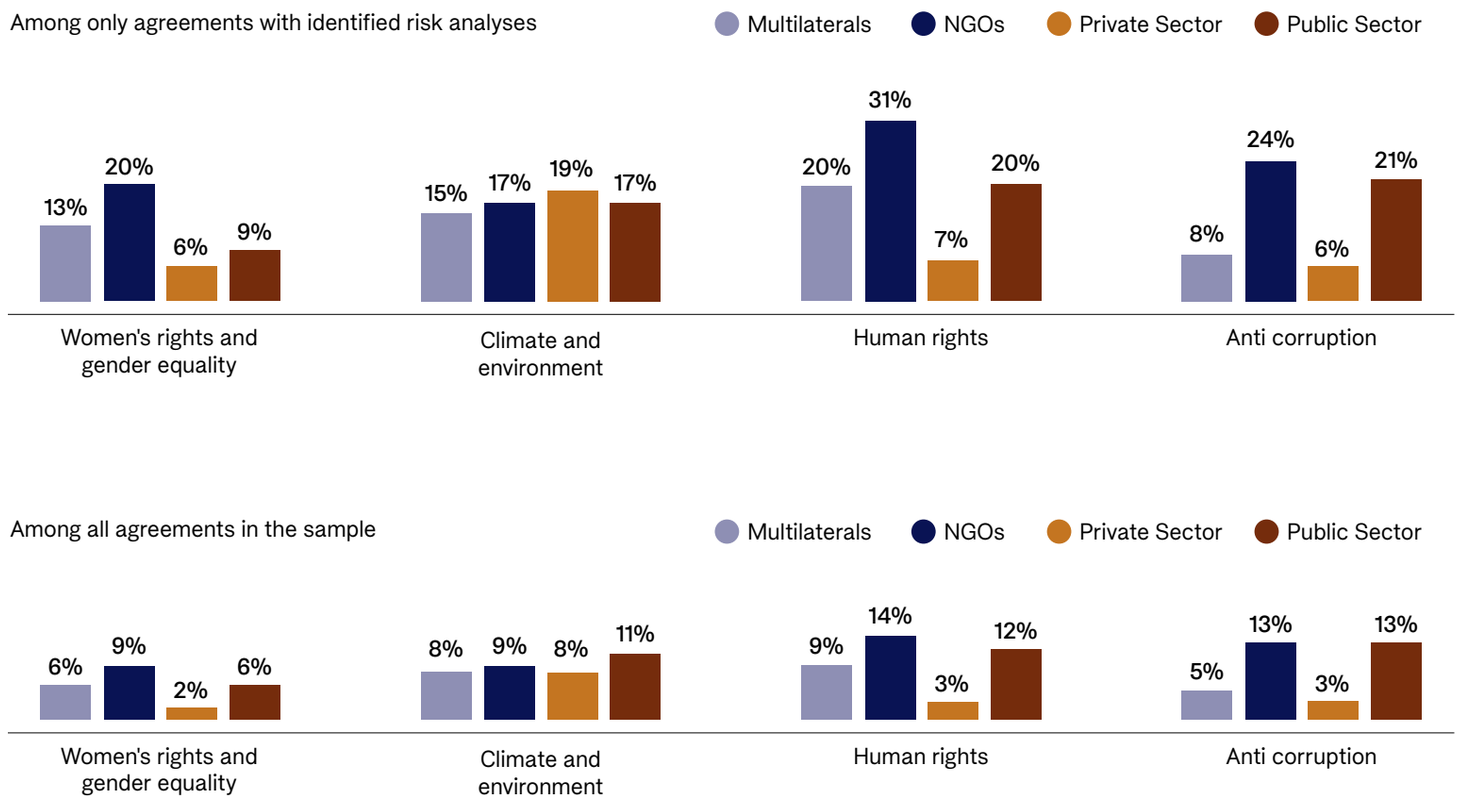
This implies that in most cases, analyses of risks to cross-cutting issues are not carried out in a manner that fully satisfies the do no harm principles reflected in Norad's Grant Management Assistant. When the training dataset for the Natural Language Processing model was being compiled, we found multiple examples of *insubstantial* risk analyses, which provide some insights into the various reasons that they are categorised as 'insufficiently implemented'. In several cases, design phase documents made the simple claim that an intervention posed no risk at all to a given cross-cutting issue, but failed to provide any evidence that a thorough assessment of potential risks had been carried out. Often, this was associated with a claim that the objectives of the intervention itself implied that there were no plausible risks to the cross-cutting issue in question. For example, in the section requiring an assessment of risks to women's rights and gender equality, one design document simply indicated that "the project itself is focused on strengthening women's rights and gender equality" and that therefore "it brings positive impacts on [sic] this regard". Examples of such reasoning were found for each of the cross-cutting issues during the compilation of the training dataset.

The extent to which risk analyses in design phase documents contained substantial assessments of risks to cross-cutting issues varies by the group of agreement partner, with Non-Governmental Organisations demonstrating the strongest performance in this respect[95]. Differences in the proportion of risk analyses meeting the 'do no harm' criteria across different groups of implementing partners were found to be statistically significant[96] for each cross-cutting issue except for climate and environment, where variation was less marked. As illustrated by Figure 3 below, on the whole Non-Governmental Organisations were the agreement partner group that had the highest proportion of risk analyses in design phase documentation that fully met the do no harm criteria. This difference was particularly marked with respect to human rights, and women's rights and gender equality. Interestingly, the private sector agreement partner group performed most strongly in fulfilling the 'do no harm' criteria for assessing risks to climate change and environment.

These findings imply that Non-Governmental Organisations are the group of agreement partner that are most likely to fulfil the 'do no harm' criteria outlined in Norad's Grant Management Assistant.

FIGURE 3

Proportion of Agreements Meeting the 'Do No Harm' Criteria by Agreement Partner Group



95 Norad's development aid statistics categorise agreement partners into 15 different groups. To facilitate analysis, these fifteen groups have been aggregated into 5 larger groups. The approach adopted to aggregated agreement partner types is as follows: 1 **Multilaterals**; which includes the multilateral institutions group only; 2 **Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs);** which includes 'international NGOs' , 'local NGOs', 'Norwegian NGOs', and NGOs from other donor countries; 3 **Private Sector**, which includes the private sector in developing countries, the Norwegian private sector, and the private sector in other donor countries 4 **Public sector**, which includes governments/ministries in developing countries, public sector in other donor countries, and the Norwegian public sector;

96 Significance determined by chi-squared tests

The extent to which risk analyses in design phase documents contained substantial assessments of risks to cross-cutting issues also varies by target area[97]. As illustrated in Figure 4 below, on average agreements with the "governance, civil society, and conflict prevention" target area were most likely to have design-documents that contained analyses of risks to cross-cutting issues that fully me the 'do no harm' criteria. Notably, however, while this target area performed particularly well regarding analysing risks to human rights and women's rights and gender equality, it performed much less well with respect to assessing risks to climate and environment. There was less variation in performance between other target areas. That said, the "environment and energy" and "production sectors and trade" target areas performed comparatively with respect to assessing risks to women's rights and gender equality.

97 The 'target area' variable in Norad's development aid statistics classifies agreements according to ten thematic areas. Variation in cross-cutting implementation was explored for the five target areas with the highest levels of representation in the agreements represented in the sampled documents; i) 'Environment and energy'; ii) Production sectors and trade; iii) Governance, civil society, and conflict prevention; iv) 'Education'; and v) 'Health and Social Services'.

FIGURE 4

Proportion of Agreements Meeting the 'Do No Harm' Criteria by Target Area

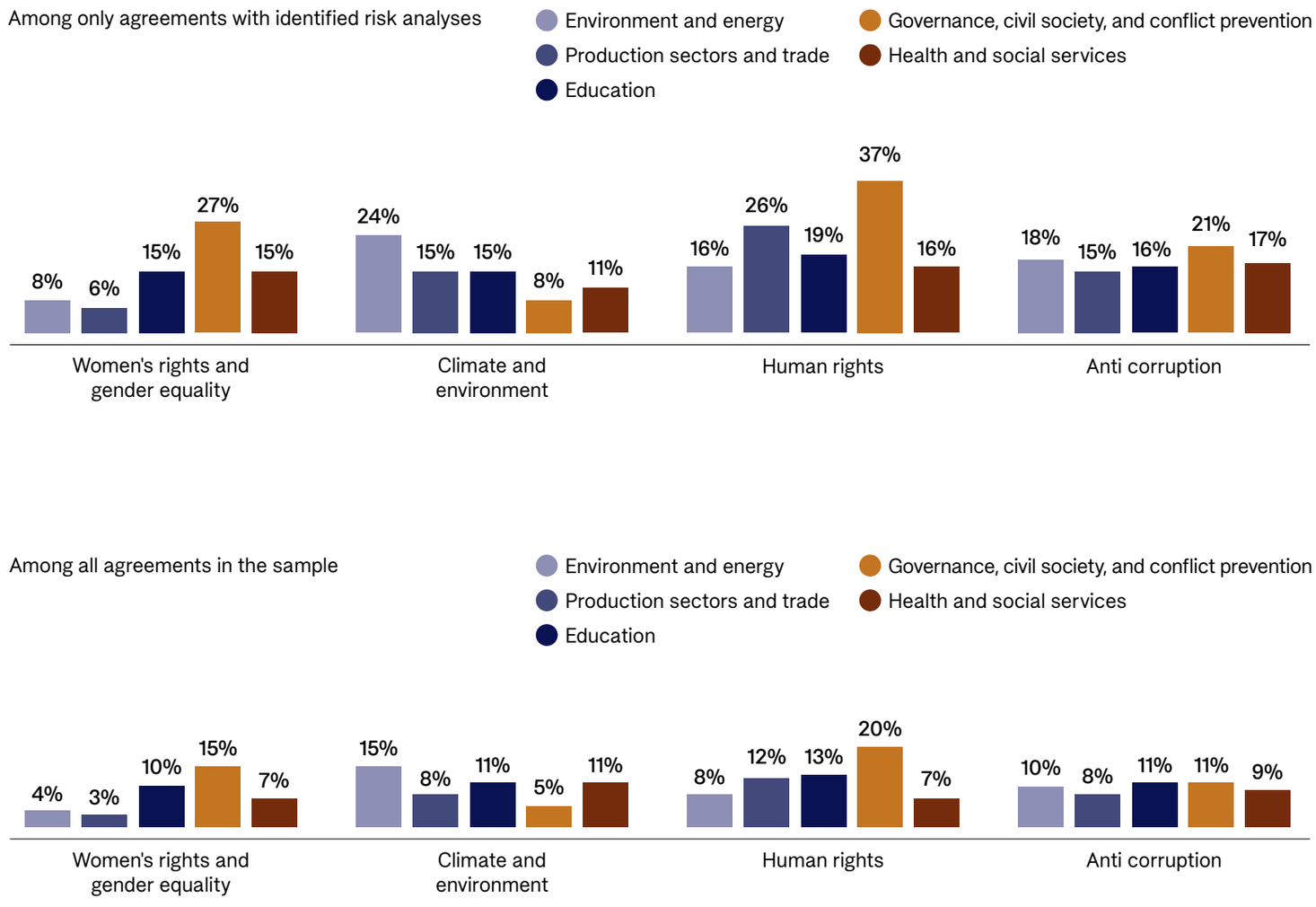


Photo: **Marte Lid** | Norad

The Extent of 'Proactive' Implementation in the Design Phase

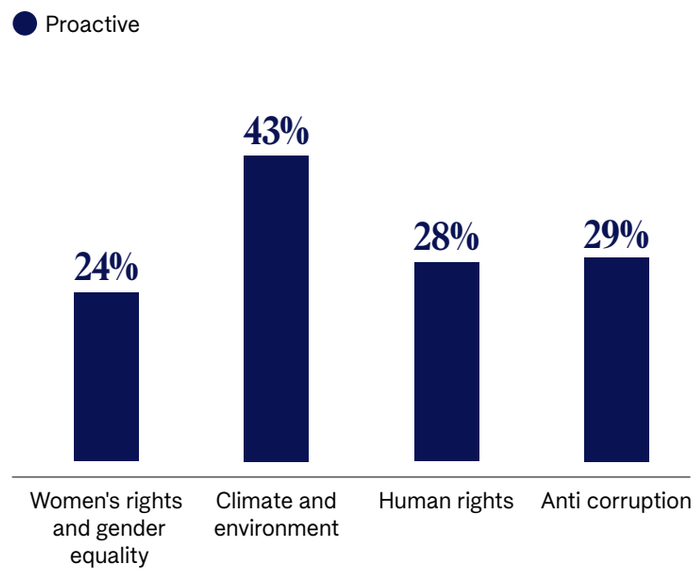
A small majority of the agreements[98] represented in the sample had design phase documents that included proactive measures to address at least one cross-cutting issue. There was evidence of proactive measures to address at least one-cross-cutting issue in 58% of all the agreements that were represented in the sample. As illustrated in Figure 5 below, climate and environment was the cross-cutting issue with the highest level, with close to half of all agreements in the sample demonstrating evidence of proactive implementation. Women's rights and gender equality was the cross-cutting issue with the lowest level, with close to a quarter of agreements in the sample demonstrating evidence of proactive implementation. In between, almost a third of the agreements represented in the sample demonstrated evidence of proactive implementation human rights, or anti-corruption.

98 Note that to reduce bias, agreements which had a cross-cutting issue as their primary cutting objective were not assessed for the 'proactive' implementation of that cross-cutting issue. Filtering was achieved using policy markers from Norway's aid statistics, which indicate whether an agreement has a cross-cutting issue as its primary objective. Policy markers are available for women's empowerment and gender equality, and climate and environment, and these were used as the basis for exclusion of agreements when assessing for proactive implementation of the corresponding cross-cutting issue. However, no equivalent policy marker is available for anti-corruption, and therefore, the results for proactive implementation of this issue may be influenced by a slight positive bias.

This implies that overall, the proactive implementation of cross-cutting issues in the design phase is more frequent than 'do no harm' implementation. This aligns with the evaluation's broader finding that there are low levels of understanding among grant mangers and agreement partners about the 'do no harm' requirement, as well as the lack of monitoring or accountability mechanisms to ensure that agreements comply with this requirement.

FIGURE 5

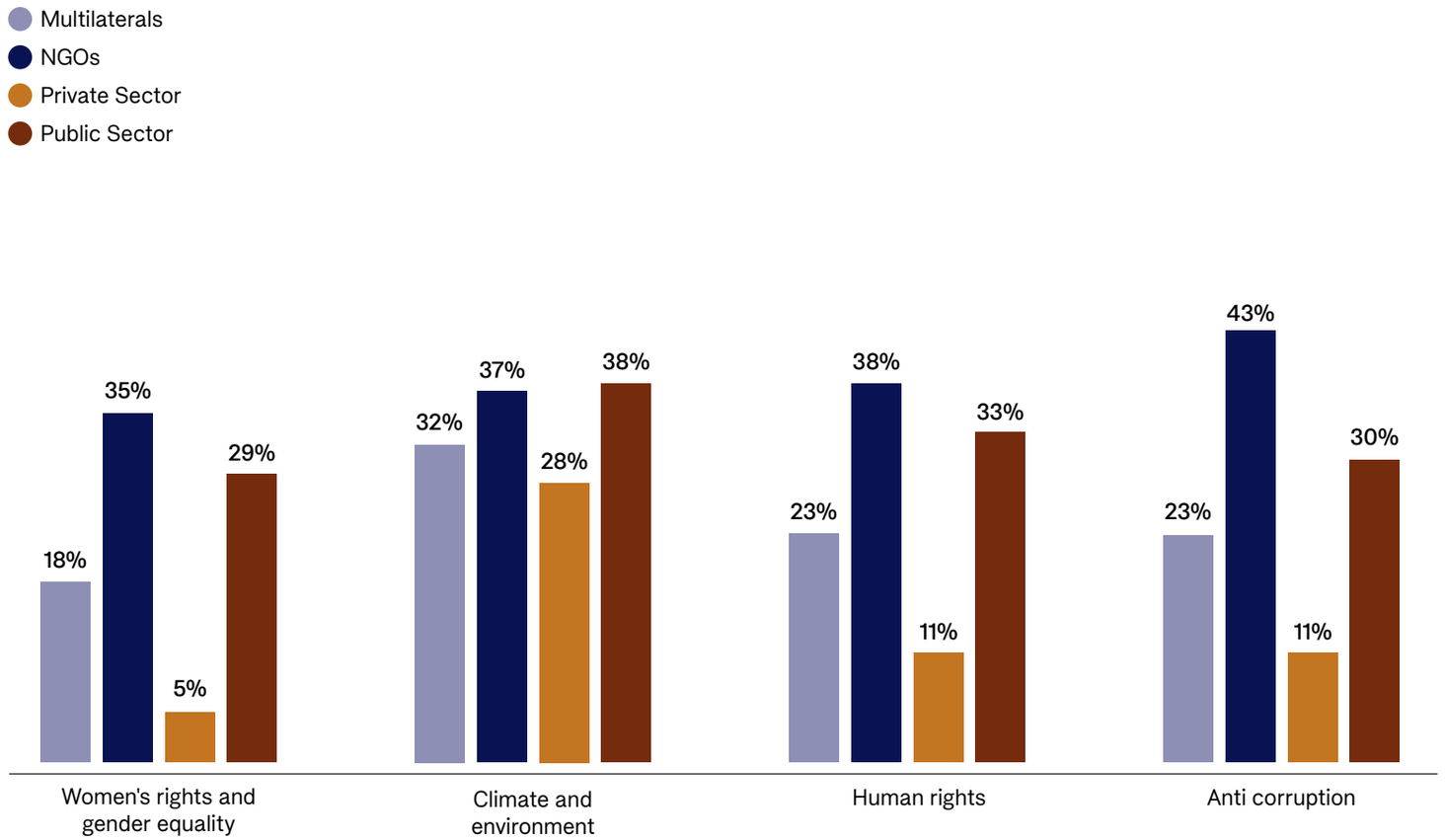
Proportion of all Agreements in Sample with Evidence of 'Proactive' Implementation of Cross-cutting Issues in Design Phase Documents



Thew extent to which agreements represented in the sample had design phase documents identifying proactive measures to address cross-cutting issues varied by agreement partner group. As with the 'do no harm' criteria, Non-Governmental Organisations were the group of agreement partner which most consistently demonstrated evidence of proactive implementation of each cross-cutting issue in design phase documentation. As illustrated by Figure 6 below, Non-Governmental Organisations were followed closely by public sector organisations. Private sector organisations performed relatively poorly with respect to proactive implementation, except for the climate and environment area, where close to a quarter of agreements in the sample demonstrated evidence of proactive implementation at the design phase.

FIGURE 6

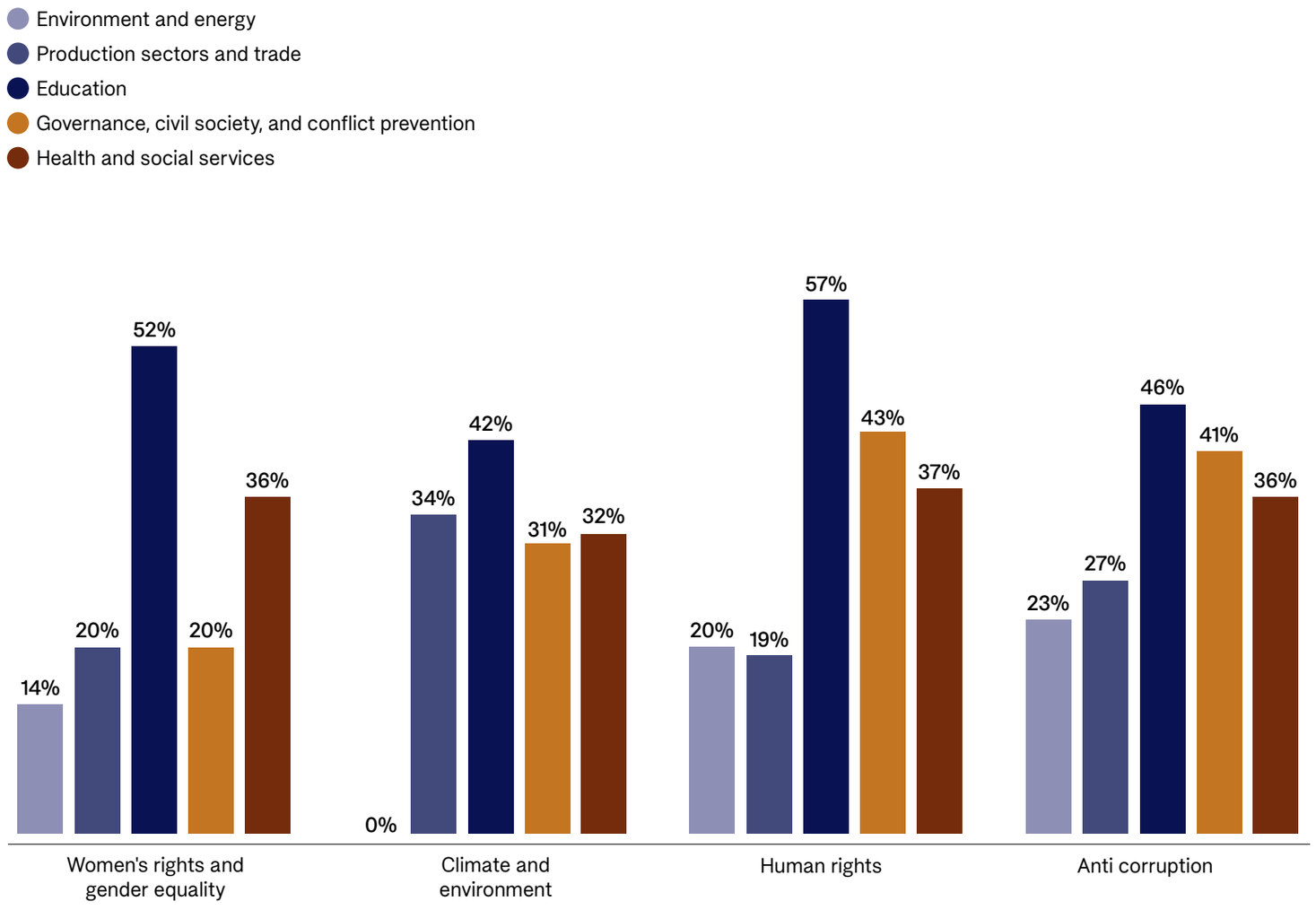
Proportion of Agreements in Sample with Evidence of 'Proactive' Implementation of Cross-cutting Issues in Design Phase Documents by Agreement Partner



There was also variation in proactive implementation at the design phase across agreement target areas. As illustrated by Figure 7 below, the education target had highest levels of proactive implementation in the design phase for all cross-cutting issues. This was particularly marked for the women's empowerment and gender equality issue, and the human rights issue. The environment and energy target area displayed the poorest performance with respect to the proactive implementation of cross-cutting issues in the design phase.[99]

FIGURE 7

Proportion of Agreements in Sample with Evidence of 'Proactive' Implementation of Cross-cutting Issues in Design Phase Documents by Target Area



99 Note that the 'environment and energy' target area was not assessed for the proactive implementation was not assessed for the proactive implementation of the 'climate and environment' cross-cutting issue, given that this target area implies a primary focus on issues relating to climate and environment.

4.3 Cross-cutting Issue Implementation at the Follow-up Phase

Overview

This section provides an overview of how cross-cutting issues were implemented at the follow-up phase of Norad's programme management cycle. The sample for this section is total of 15,757 follow-up phase documents with agreement numbers extracted from Norad's archive. Unlike the analysis for the design phase, the primary unit of analysis for the follow-up phase is the document. This is because all reports on the implementation of interventions should include reporting on risks to cross-cutting issues as well as proactive measures to address cross-cutting issues. Using the agreement as the unit of analysis for the follow-up phase would imply that the presence of a single associated follow-up report demonstrating 'do no harm' or 'proactive' implementation would be sufficient for that agreement to be classified as such. This would not reflect the requirement that all reporting should include risks and proactive measures relating to cross-cutting issues, and would hence be too generous and would result in positively biased estimates of the extent of implementation. As such, maintaining the unit of analysis at the document level provides a better picture of cross-cutting issue implementation at the follow-up phase.

Photo: **Marte Lid** | Norad

The Quality of Reporting on Risks to Cross-cutting Issues in the Follow-up Phase

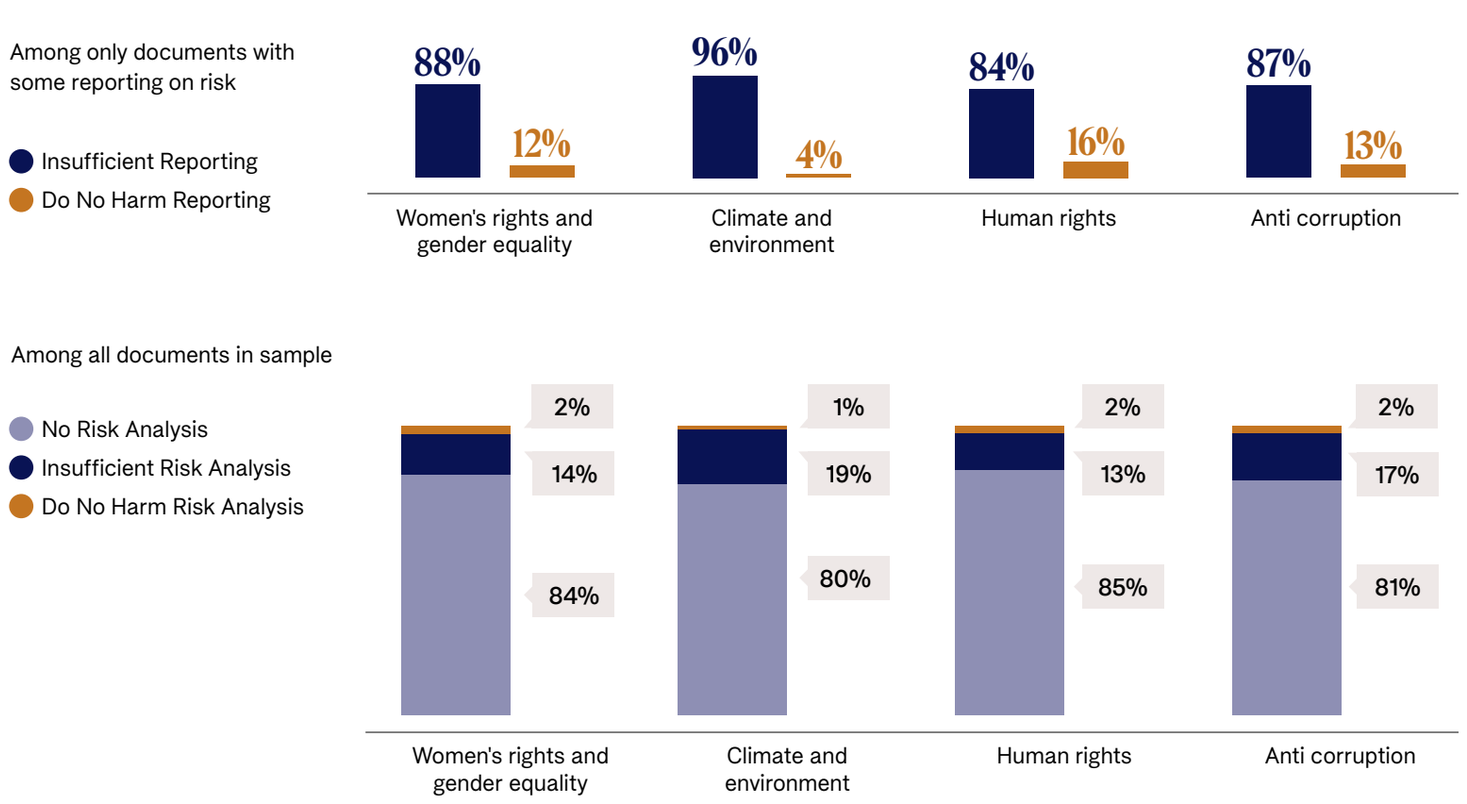
The extent of reporting on risks to cross-cutting issues in follow-up phase documentation is low. In total, just under one-third (29%) of the sampled follow-up documents were found to contain reporting on risks relating to at least one cross-cutting issue[100]. This indicates that most follow-up phase documents do not report on risks to cross-cutting issues.

Moreover, when follow-up phase documents do report on risks to cross-cutting issues, they rarely do so in a manner which satisfies the 'do no harm' criteria. Only 11% of the follow-up documents that did report on risks to cross-cutting issues were found to fully meet the 'do no harm' criteria. This proportion varied slightly between the four cross-cutting issues. As illustrated by Figure 8 below, it was highest for human rights (16%) and women's rights and genderequality (12%). As with design phase documentation, Non-Governmental Organisations were the agreement partner group with the highest levels of reporting on risks that met the 'do no harm' criteria.

Overall, however, these low levels indicate that most of the follow-up phase documents that do report on risk do not contain substantial updates on risks to cross-cutting issues associated with the implementation of interventions, or on measures undertaken to mitigate these.

FIGURE 8

Quality of Risk Reporting in Follow Up Phase



100 If the unit of analysis is aggregated to the agreement level, then evidence was found of reporting on risks to at least one cross-cutting issue for 55% of the agreements in the sample, though the limitations of using this level of analysis mean that this figure is positively biased.

As with design documentation, when the training dataset for the Natural Language Processing model was being compiled, we found multiple examples of *insubstantial* reporting on risks. These had similarities to the *insubstantial* analyses of risks identified in design documentation, insofar as they often implied a belief that the objectives of an intervention itself meant that there were no applicable risks to a given cross-cutting issues. For instance, in one document which required an update on risks to human rights, it was reported that "to avoid risks related to human rights, women's rights and gender equality, the project directly addresses land tenure and rights issues, and proposes ways to improve them". This is illustrative of a fundamental misunderstanding of the 'do no harm' requirement.

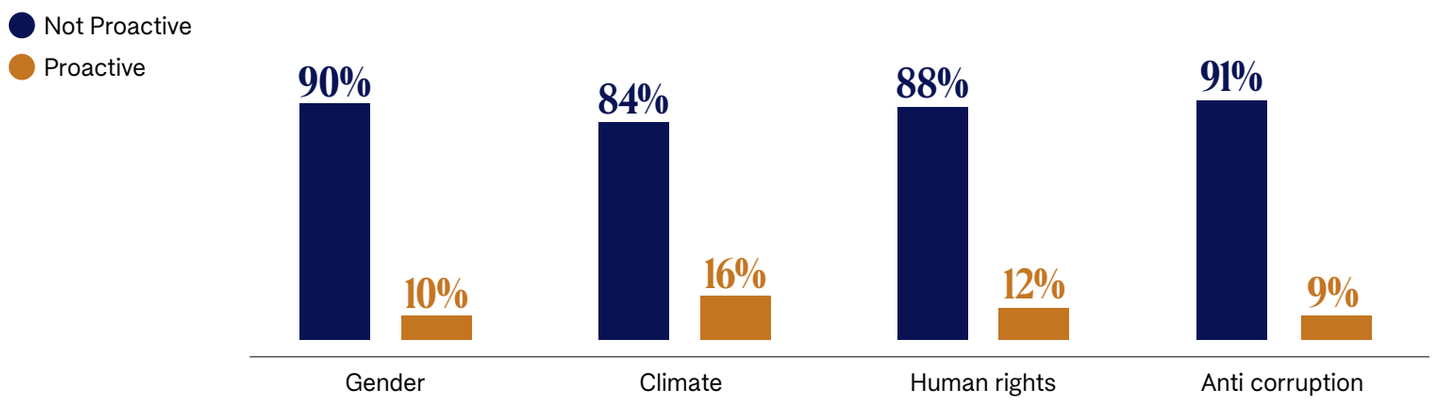
The Extent of Reporting on 'Proactive' Implementation in the Follow-up Phase

The total share of follow-up documents which reported substantially on proactive measures to address cross-cutting issues was low. When averaged across the four cross-cutting issues, evidence of substantial reporting on proactive measures was found in only 12% of the follow-up documents in the sample. The level was highest for climate and environment, which is reflective of the earlier finding that this was the cross-cutting issue with the highest level of 'proactive' implementation at the design phase. As with design documentation, the extent of reporting on proactive implementation varies by implementing partner. The pattern of variation closely resembles that for design documentation, with Non-Governmental Organisations as the group of implementing partner with the highest levels of reporting on proactive implementation. Variation was also similar to the design phase with respect to target area, with the education and governance, civil society and conflict prevention target areas displaying the highest levels of reporting on proactive implementation.

However, when analysed at the agreement level, there is evidence of reporting on proactive measures to address at least one cross-cutting issue in most (60%) of the agreements represented in the sample. This corresponds closely to the earlier observation that most (58%) agreements in the sample demonstrated evidence of proactive implementation of at least one cross-cutting issue in the design phase. As noted, however, assessing implementation in follow-up phase documentation at the agreement level is a generous approach. The large discrepancy between the document level figure and the agreement level figure may imply that progress reports and other follow-up documents do not consistently provide updates on proactive measures to address cross-cutting issues.

FIGURE 9

Share of Follow-up Documents with Reporting on Proactive Measures to Address Cross-cutting Issues



5

Enablers and Barriers to Cross-cutting Issue Implementation

This chapter looks closer at how the four cross-cutting issues are implemented in practise. The aim is to respond to evaluation question 3: What are the enablers and barriers for the successful implementation of the four cross-cutting issues in development programmes and projects? The focus is on how cross-cutting issues are implemented in project management in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Climate and Environment, Norad and partner organisations involved in the management of the eight programmes/projects presented in Table 2. The chapter starts by describing processes and practices to manage cross-cutting issues observed by the evaluation, and then analyses these processes with a view to identifying the enablers of and barriers to successful cross-cutting issue implementation.

Photo: **Marte Lid** | Norad

5.1 Processes and Practices for Implementing Cross-cutting Issues

Selected Initiatives at the Overall Level

The four issues are promoted both by targeted funding, e.g. to specific target groups and thematic areas, and by requirements to consider them as cross-cutting issues. In addition, there are efforts to increase knowledge and comprehension of the four cross-cutting issues and how to integrate them in various programmes, such as competence teams, action plans and resources on Norad's homepage.

Competence teams relating to three of the cross-cutting issues - human rights, gender equality and climate and environment - were established in Norad in 2023. The competence teams are mandated by the leadership with the purpose to build internal capacity and follow up on how to work with the four cross-cutting issues. Examples given by interviewees were to develop guidelines and internal frameworks, e-learning and platforms, and to include a human rights-based approach in internal trainings. The evaluation does not have information about the specific percentage of time spent on work relating to the cross-cutting issues, but several interviewees noted that the resources available to the competence teams are limited: the teams consist of two persons each, who have this role in addition to their 'ordinary' work as case worker. On anti-corruption, case workers can access tailored trainings and helpdesk functions from to the U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre at Chr. Michelsen Institute.[101]

Norad has an environmental management system and is certified using the ISO 14001 standard. This includes annual audits and reporting to leadership multiple times annually to follow up commitments to goals relating to both offices and development aid on climate and the environment.[102] Norad also has an environmental policy and an action plan for greening development cooperation, which presents intentions and to some extent actions. According to the Action plan, the work will start internally, but shall also include support to greening of partners.[103] There is also a network 'Greening Norad', with a specific mandate to work systematically on integrating climate and environmental issues internally in Norad and with partners, encouraging them to become more aware of climate and environment issues.

Human rights (and as part of this, women and equality) and climate, environment and natural resources are presented as thematic areas on Norad's homepage. However, the pages on both human rights and women's rights and gender equality contain missing links and were last updated several years ago. For example, the page on the rights-based approach to development was last updated in 2015.[104] It contains a link to a checklist with principles that shall be applied throughout the project cycle, from dialogue and planning to implementation and evaluation but the link does not work. Norad's webpage describing Norad's work on equality in development cooperation was last updated in February 2015 and mainly reports on the then new action plan to strengthen women's rights and on the page do not work.[105]

In terms of guidelines, there are guiding principles, e.g. Guiding principles for Norad's support to civil society[106], which include cross-cutting issues: Human rights is one of the four objectives of the support, and sustainability, inclusion and accountability are three of

101 This was noted in comments to the draft report, but not highlighted in interviews, which could indicate that this resource is not well known.
102 Information provided by Section for Nature and Climate in Norad in comment to the draft report.
103 Norad, 2021. Norad's action plan for greener development cooperation.
104 https://www.norad.no/tema/menneskerettigheter/rettighetsbasert-utvikling/
105 https://www.norad.no/tema/menneskerettigheter/kvinner-og-likestilling/dette-gjor-norad/
106 Norad, 2018, Norad's support to civil society: guiding principles.

the seven guiding principles for the support. The Grant Management Assistant contains guidelines with links to examples to support grant managers to fill out the various forms. There are also podcasts that describe how to approach the cross-cutting issues, and online trainings that must be completed by all case workers before being eligible to sign off on funds using the PTA tool[107].

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has Strategic Humanitarian Partnership Agreements with a selection of Norwegian humanitarian actors (Strategic partners), and Norad is introducing Norad Strategic Civil Society Partnership (Plusspartner) Agreements. These (will) serve as a certification that a partner has systems that are considered of high standards and can be trusted with a simplified application process for a specified number of years.

Photo: **Synnøve Aasland** | Norad

107 PTA (Plan – Tilskudd – Avtale in Norwegian, which translates to Plan – Grant – Agreement) is a tool for programme officers and managers in MFA, Norad and Embassies in their daily work, and an electronic log of grant agreements' history. The system facilitates the follow-up of commitments in agreements with grant recipients, implementation of disbursements, and planning and management of budgets. PTA is also a tool for the MFA/Norad's official OECD/DAC statistical reporting.

Implementation of Cross-cutting Issues at Grant Management Level

All agencies involved in the management of development cooperation funds are governed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' grant management system, with guidance provided in the Grant Management Assistant. The Grant Management Assistant contains templates for applications for funds, assessment of applications (decision documents), agreements, and follow-up of programmes. As part of the grant approval process, a decision document, covering various aspects of the applicant and programme needs to be completed by the responsible case worker. As stated in the introduction to the document, "The purpose of the decision document is to document the assessment made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs/Embassies/ Norad concerning a grant application. Based on this assessment, a decision is made on whether to approve or reject the application."[108]

Calls for Proposals

Review of a selection of on-going and older for calls for proposals reveal that demands regarding cross-cutting issues are included in all, with a short and standardised text describing these demands. According to one interviewee, the text has remained the same for several years. This is one of many requirements and according to interviewees, the requirement is not easy for partners, especially international partners, to understand.[109]

Norad's guide to partners on how to develop ethical guidelines include requirements these shall demand respect for human rights, e.g. that work should be carried out without discrimination; be strict regarding sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and harassment; and combat corruption and other misuse of aid funds.[110]

Assessment of Proposals

The grant manager receives the proposal and assesses whether it should be funded or not. The assessment is guided by a template in the Grant Management Assistant. The requirement in the Grant Management Assistant was referred to by all case workers interviewed and used in all programmes included in this evaluation. As part of the assessment process, case workers are expected to review the application and assess whether the information provided is sufficient and make an acceptable analysis of risks both to and of the cross-cutting issues – which requires that case workers make their own assessment of risks to the cross-cutting issues, as well as assessing the information presented in the proposal.

Interviews with case workers indicate that there is some variation in how proposals are assessed, and that not all of these are in line with the requirements in the Grant Management Assistant. Some case workers described a process where project proposals are routinely sent to relevant embassies, departments and units for commenting. Document review shows that these comments are summarised or copied into the assessment template, with a summary statement by the case worker on each question. Other interviewees described that their assessment was sometimes more of a tick-box exercise, saying that there is little time and many questions to answer in the assessment, and not always time to conduct a thorough assessment. Their assessment was then merely a check that the applicant had provided the required information, and not an independent assessment of whether the information provided was sufficient and correct. Some interviewees referred to being able to request support from thematic experts and other departments but not always having time to do so. The impression based on interviews is that Norad case workers rely on their own assessments to a larger extent.

108 MFA and Norad, 2016. Decision document, Template approved: August 2016, Guidance parts updated October 2019. p. 1. Henceforth referred to as the decision document.

109 Reviewed calls for proposals include: Support for basic local, public infrastructure required for the establishment of new private sector renewable power production facilities in developing countries (https://grants.mfa.no/#call/3481/details), Strategic Partnerships for Norwegian Humanitarian Organisations (2025-2029) (https://grants.mfa.no/#call/3581/details), Supporting Civil Society in Ukraine (https://grants.mfa.no/#call/3821/details). Information on these issues was also collected from the NICFI grant scheme rules.

110 Norad, 2014, Ethical guidelines - Guide for Norad's grant recipients. https://www.norad.no/globalassets/filer-2015/sivsa/ethical-guidelines---guide-for-norads-grant-recipients.pdf?id=22093.

Thematic experts interviewed noted that the quality of partners' assessments and descriptions of risks to the cross-cutting issues vary, and it is common to say e.g. that as it is a gender equality project there are no risks related to gender equality. The case worker may ask for additional information from the partner organisation and several of the interviewed case workers had asked for additional information or asked the organisation to make a more thorough assessment. However, it was also noted that follow-up and feedback during the application phase is not standardised but vary in focus and content. None of the case workers interviewed had knowledge of any proposal that had been rejected because of insufficient information regarding cross-cutting issues. One of the partners interviewed, however, said that they may turn down proposals from their partners if the risk assessment is not good enough.

The assessment of the proposal is used for the decision to grant funding or not. In the Grant Management Assistant template, case workers are also expected to identify issues for follow-up during project implementation, which can, but does not have to, include cross-cutting issues. This text is included in the contract, if the decision is made to fund the project. The contract also includes the text 'The Grant Recipient shall identify, assess and mitigate any relevant risks associated with the implementation of the Project, including the risk of corruption and otherfinancial irregularities, and any potential negative effects that the Project may have on the environment and climate, gender equality and human rights.

The assessment of project proposals may be complemented by an external assessment of the application. The evaluation reviewed two assessment reports commissioned from independent consultancy firms. One contained very limited information relating to risks or cross-cutting issues, the other considered risks to the environment from constructions, the positive aspects of a gender component, corruption risks and safety concerns for construction workers.[111] [112]

The evaluation notes that there is an on-going call for proposals for organisational assessments. The tender documents include proposed terms of reference for organisational assessments, which asks if the applicant has "adequate systems in place to assess and mitigate context specific risks, including the cross-cutting issues gender equality, human rights, climate and the environment and anticorruption in projects funded by the Norwegian government". This formulation can easily be interpreted as referring to risks *from* cross-cutting issues to the project and hence it does not cover the do no harm approach.[113]

Follow-up

According to interviewed case workers and partners, regular follow-up during project implementation consists mainly of annual reports and annual meetings. Cross-cutting issues may be a topic for discussion during annual meetings, but the interviews with both case workers and partners indicate that this is not common. Some interviewees reported more frequent contacts and regular discussions between case workers and partner organisations. Annual reports are required to contain updates to the risk assessments. While most case workers and partners interviewed indicated that this is often treated as a formality, repeating the same risks as in the application rather than making an updated assessment to find new or changed risks, some reported a more active approach with regular updates to risk assessments.

Interviews and document review show that there is no requirement for partners to report on a specific format. If the required information is provided, partners do not have to prepare special reports for Norad/Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, several interviewees noted

111 LTS International, 2018. Appraisal of the Application for 'Targeted Support to the Climate and Land Use Alliance (CLUA) 2018-22 Strategy: Primary Focus on Brazil & Indonesia'.

112 SWECO, 2019. Appraisal of Nepal: Power Transmission and Distribution, Sector Strengthening Project (PTDSSP).

113 Norad, 2024. Announcement of competition published 21.03.2024. Framework agreements for organisational assessments and integrity due diligence. Annex 3a Terms of Reference Area 1: Terms of reference for organisational assessment. Accessed from https://doffin.no/notices/2024-104441.

Photo: **Fotograf** | Norad

that it was difficult to summarise large programmes on the limited number of pages allowed. One interviewee suggested that this resulted in increased reporting on global level outcomes and questioned how useful such information is. While some of the case workers stated that they sometimes provided comments or requested additional information, several of the partner respondents said they rarely get feedback on their reports and expressed that this was a loss. At least one wondered whether case workers had time to read the reports at all.

Follow-up of cross-cutting issues in evaluations is also limited. Two reviews of the quality of decentralised evaluations in Norwegian development cooperation were carried out in 2020 and 2021. Both found the attention to cross-cutting issues in evaluations and reviews to be very low. It was identified as the topic with lowest quality in the review of 2018 - 2019 reports.[114] Similarly, the average rate of inclusion of cross-cutting issues in reviews and evaluations published in 2019 - 2020 was just over 40%.[115]

114 Ternstrom Consulting AB, 2020. Quality Assessment of Decentralised Evaluations in Norwegian development cooperation (2018–2019), Norad evaluation study 6/20.

115 Ternstrom Consulting AB, 2021. Quality Assessment of Decentralised Evaluations in Norwegian development cooperation (2019-2020). Norad evaluation study 3/21.

Photo: **Synnøve Aasland** | Norad

Implementation of Cross-cutting Issues by Partners

Clearly, all projects included in this evaluation have successfully presented the information required to be approved. Although the sampled projects vary in size, all but one are managed by large and experienced agreement partners. Most of the projects included in this evaluation are not implemented by agreement partners but by their respective partners, sometimes in several steps, or via country offices – or a combination of the two.[116] This implies that there are application and reporting processes at several levels. Digni, for example, collects applications and reports from their member organisations, who in turn have collected the information from their respective partners – and, in some cases, from their partners' partners. The information about cross-cutting issues is one of many topics that is covered in reports and applications, and as in applications, information about cross-cutting issues is one of many topics to be covered.

Interviews and document review of partners covered by this evaluation indicate that these agreement partners have tools for reporting on and collecting information about cross-cutting issues. These range from formats for sharing data to extensive monitoring and learning systems. Some partners have extensive guidelines, training material, capacity development and support material to help their partners and staff both implement and report on cross-cutting issues, while others mainly pass on the requests from Norad.

Interviews and document review show that all agreement partners, and their partners, have policies, strategies or approaches that define cross-cutting issues, and that these are in line with but not identical to the four cross-cutting issues identified by the Norwegian government. Several of the partner interviewees commented that the grant managers were satisfied with knowing that they had policies or guidelines that were in line with the four cross-cutting issues and did not make specific requests to implement the four cross-cutting issues.

The section below gives an overview of how the partners included in the sample for this evaluation implement cross-cutting issues. The descriptions are based on interviews with stakeholders at different levels in the organisations, complemented by review of the organisations' documents strategies, policies, guidelines and tools relating to the implementation of cross-cutting issues. The bibliography in Annex 2 contains sections for each organisation. These include the reviewed documents. Chapter 6 presents the findings from field-level data collection for four of the projects.

Civil Society Partners

→ Development Fund (DF)

Development Fund describes that a big pillar in their work with community groups is on empowerment, that they target disadvantaged groups such as people with disabilities and women, and that they apply a rights-based approach although they do not reflect on it as such. The Development Fund project in Nepal (described in more detail in Chapter 6) approaches human rights mainly via multi-level targeting: They have targeted the less developed western parts of the country and according to interviews identified communities in particular need of support by analysing the geopolitics and local climate and development factors of the area. The targeted communities were known to be vulnerable based on ethnicity or caste and were selected by their partner.

Development Fund interviewees describe the programme in Nepal as participatory climate action which integrates gender and human rights. The approach was developed together with partners (LiBIRD) and has been applied in most of their projects. However, Development Fund interviewees also describe that they work to identify interventions that are accessible to women and respond to what they think the women need. This indicates that the approach may be less participatory than intended.

116 The exception is the project managed by Malthe Winje, selected to include a private sector partner.

It was reported that Development Fund has a standardised training on anti-corruption for partners that is based on their code of ethics. It includes both practices for sound management of funds, how to behave and consequences of different sources of corruption outside of projects. Development Fund F is working mainly via cooperatives, which is a part of their approach to anti-corruption as this requires and promotes transparency towards group members and communities. However, the focus seems to be on risks to the interventions with monitoring by controllers and follow-the-money exercises.

→ Digni - Mission Alliance (MA) - United Mission to Nepal (UMN)

Digni is an umbrella organisation for faith-based organisations and encourages their partners to work on awareness raising and integration of cross-cutting issues. However, although there are policies in place for all the cross-cutting issues, interviews with key stakeholders indicate that the practical work is still in its early phases. Women's rights and gender equality are considered when selecting beneficiaries and interventions but is an area in need of more work. It was noted that some of their partners are not used to talking about gender equality and power dynamics. There is a gender analysis tool for partners to use in applications and reporting, but the interviews indicate that this is not always filled in may not always be emphasised in Digni's review of the documents.

Digni's approach to human rights includes freedom of religious belief, religious inequalities and religious literacy. Digni also focuses on rights of people with mental illnesses and disabilities and inclusion of people living with disabilities. However, there were also indications that the religious beliefs of partners that receive support from Digni are not aligned with a respect for human rights.[117]

Digni interviewees reported that they have some partners that have expertise on climate and environment issues and for those partners, climate and environment is well integrated. For partners not having the expertise, climate and environment was said to be more of an add-on. However, the focus was said in interviews to be on adaptation and resilience to climate change, rather than on approaching it as a cross-cutting issue.

The Mission Alliance (MA) is part of the Digni umbrella and an intermediary partner for one of the four projects included in the Nepal sample of this evaluation. MAs cross-cutting issues are gender equality, inclusion of vulnerable and disabled groups, and climate justice. One interviewee described that they want to have human rights as a basic starting point for interventions, using rights-based approaches, and working with partners on the joint understanding that there are universal rights that apply to all individuals. This is operationalised in their work with local groups, aiming at enabling them to identify duty bearers and recognising their power and voice on their own terms to put pressure on duty bearers.

Interviews indicated that in some areas, there is a preference for a role more similar to service provider. In interviews with the Mission Alliance, they described that their work in Nepal had a strong focus on Chhaupadi (explained in next chapter) and that they are working on changing attitudes through education, including women in farmers groups and establishing female farmers groups. The Mission Alliance work with anti-corruption mainly by including it in partner agreements and monitoring systems.

Disabilities and women's rights were reported to be at forefront of how United Mission to Nepal, the Mission Alliance's partner in Nepal, operate. Climate is incorporated mainly via work on adaptation and resilience and although there is no specific focus on human rights, human rights is integrated in the work on inclusion and support to people living with disabilities. It is also incorporated in the focus on gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) which is at the core of United Mission to Nepal's work.

117 This is indicated in the Decision Document on Digni from 2023.

Photo: **Marte Lid** | Norad

Private Partners

→ **Malthe Winje**

Malthe Winje is a private company with project funding to support a feasibility study in preparation of application for funding from major international sources to construct hydropower projects. Interviews and review of project documents indicate that the requirements relating to cross-cutting issues in the application being prepared are considerably higher than the requirements set out by the Norwegian government, including for example extensive social and environmental assessments, resettlement action plans, and risk mitigation action plans. This is in line with data presented in Chapter 4.5, where private sector partners stand out by scoring higher than other partners on both do no harm and proactive criteria for climate change and environment issues in the analysis of design phase documents. At this stage, the project is focused on preparing plans and documentation required and was said by interviewees to have little scope for impacting the cross-cutting issues. However, as noted in interviews, if the project is successful in its application for major funding and the hydropower projects are constructed, these will contribute positively to gender equality and climate change.

Strategic Humanitarian Partners

The agreement partners of the two humanitarian projects included in this evaluation are both strategic humanitarian partners of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They come across as the partners with the most integrated approach to the four cross-cutting issues.

→ **Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)**

The Norwegian Refugee Council has a strong strategy that incorporates a human rights-based approach along with a strong focus on gender equality, climate change and environment. Interviews with staff and grant manager for the Norwegian Refugee Council confirm that there is an understanding of cross-cutting issues from both a do no harm perspective and a proactive perspective, and that there is substantial knowledge and efforts to increase knowledge among staff. The interviewees reflect a view that implementation must consider cross-cutting issues to be sustainable and effective.

The Norwegian Refugee Council incorporates the cross-cutting issues in their Safe and Inclusive Programming. The Norwegian Refugee Council interviewees described a well developed approach which includes follow-up and regular trainings, on e.g. anti-corruption and sexual exploitation. Interview data indicate that the Norwegian Refugee Council takes

an integrated approach to the cross-cutting issues, understands the interconnectedness of the four issues and recognise cross-cutting issues as key to promoting project effectiveness and sustainability, both internally and to influence other actors on the humanitarian arena. Interviews with case workers and the Norwegian Refugee Council representatives indicate that the Norwegian Refugee Council is also contributing to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' work on cross-cutting issues.

According to interviewees, all the Norwegian Refugee Council interventions shall consider the specific needs of women and it was noted that needs assessments often show that the needs of men and women in a particular area are quite different. Interviewees mentioned targeting and inclusion of women headed households, promoting safety of women and girls when fetching water and by constructing sex separated toilets, and training for women to become electricians. The Norwegian Refugee Council is taking an increased focus on including marginalised groups but notes that this is challenging as these are often excluded by leaders and communities.

The Norwegian Refugee Council has invested heavily in the Nexus Environment Assessment Tool (NEAT+) and the Nexus environment assessment tool and have roving staff that conduct trainings in these. Trainings result in reports that highlight areas of shortcomings, which are then considered in programme design.[118] There is also on-going work to reduce their carbon footprint and replace fuel for solar energy.

The Norwegian Refugee Council provided one of few concrete examples of work to decrease the scope for corruption that arises because of development cooperation. The Norwegian Refugee Council is working to remove the scope for post-distribution aid diversion and develop tools and action plans for how to deal with it when it occurs.

→ Norwegian Church Aid (NCA)

Norwegian Church Aid is a Christian faith-based organisation which operates in many Muslim countries. Norwegian Church Aid applies a human rights-based approach and explicitly strives to strengthen Human Rights. Norwegian Church Aid has Sustainability Standards that guide its work including on the cross-cutting issues. Human rights were reported to be promoted mainly via targeting and choice of activities, combined with the purpose to support human rights for the most needy. One interviewee noted that the rights-based approach is understood mainly as including people with disabilities but descriptions of Norwegian Church Aid's practical work illustrate that human rights are implemented broadly. Norwegian Church Aid applies the core humanitarian standards and ensure that these are promoted in their interventions. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) programmes are designed to promote inclusion of persons with disabilities but also to not endanger women and girls. The description of Norwegian Church Aid's work on women's right and gender equality indicate a highly integrated approach which ensures that women are included in all aspects of their programmes and include gender based violence programming.

Norwegian Church Aid was reported to have committed to a do no harm approach to the environment. This included a tool to review climate and environmental effects of both activities and running of country offices and identification and mitigation of potential harm or risks that projects may have on the environment, e.g. by replanting trees and sustainable water management. Based on information provided in interviews, the motivation to integrate cross-cutting issues did not come from demands from donors but was based on organisational understanding and commitment. It was noted by one Norwegian Church Aid interviewee that the demands from Norad were low, and the do no harm approach passive with missing areas.

Norwegian Church Aid has a zero-tolerance for corruption and a system to orient all staff, partners and government entities about this. There are tools for vendor screening, anti-terrorism screening and

118 See https://neatplus.org/

an online reporting system and hotline for reporting suspected corruption cases. The evaluation notes that these systems mainly cater to the zero-tolerance policy.

Ministry of Climate and Environment/ Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative (NICFI)

→ Climate and Land Use Alliance (CLUA)

Programmes funded by the Ministry of Climate and Environment via Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative target climate and environment and have explicit demands on their partners to integrate other cross-cutting issues. One interviewee described transparency as the sum of Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative's results-based approach and the overall cross-cutting issue of the initiative. The project and partners included in this evaluation showed a high level of understanding of the concept of cross-cutting issues and the rationale for integrating them in project planning and implementation. In interviews, both Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative and their partners expressed that the reason for addressing the cross-cutting issues was to improve the work of the partners and to meet overall goals. According to interviewees, Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative follows the climate convention and decisions made under REDD+[119] with cultural rights centralised and have extensive conversations with their partners about indigenous rights.

According to interviews with Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative, the cross-cutting issues are considered in both screening and reporting and at various stages throughout project implementation. The Climate and Land Use Alliance, the partner interviewed for this evaluation, reported having a highly inclusive and participatory approach to programming, which has brought new perspectives on e.g. reporting and proposal writing. The Climate and Land Use Alliance works with women led organisations and integrate women's rights and gender equality as part of their work on human rights, rather than as a separate issue. The Climate and Land Use Alliance interviewees also reported that when they work with national level partners, they make sure these incorporate attention to gender and race in climate and environment programmes. Interviewees in both Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative and the Climate and Land Use Alliance reported that there was much dialogue and sharing of experience between partners and Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative, including on the cross-cutting issues.

119 Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation.

Photo: **Marte Lid** | Norad

Photo: **Marte Lid** | Norad

Multilateral Partners

The cooperation between Norad and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and multilateral organisations is somewhat different than with civil society partners. This is highlighted in interviews with key stakeholders and in comments to the report and illustrated by the way the collaboration between the Norwegian Embassy in Nepal and the Asian Development Bank and the United Nations Office for Project Services is described. These partners are expected to have well developed systems policies relating to cross-cutting issues, and the Norwegian influence is intended to be done at a higher level, via e.g. Norwegian presence on the board of multilateral organisations. The findings presented in Chapter 6 indicate that the work at field level is not always reflecting the commitments of these organisations at a higher level.

→ Asian Development Bank (ADB)

Interview and document review data indicate that the Asian Development Bank is committed to gender equality and women's empowerment, as illustrated by various policy frameworks. There is a safeguard policy statement, an operational plan for accelerating progress in gender equality. The Asian Development Bank also has an environment and social safeguard policy. Tata Projects Limited, which was the contractor of the Nepal Electricity Authority substations, has its own policies, including a gender policy and a whistleblowing policy. However, neither organisation was found to have a dedicated human rights policy and action plan.

→ United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)

UNOPS stands for gender equality and women's empowerment to promote equal rights and opportunities for people to live fulfilling lives, supported by sustainable, resilient, and inclusive infrastructure, and by the efficient and transparent use of public resources in procurement and project management. UNOPS has adopted a series of policies relating to gender, including a gender mainstreaming strategy, gender parity strategy, and gender equality and social inclusion mainstreaming in projects strategy, as well as a strategy for occupational health and safety and social and environmental management. However, the team could not identify a specific human rights policy and action plan.

Summary Notes

Interviews and review of partner documents indicate that the approach to implementation of cross-cutting issues vary, both in terms of knowledge and understanding of the cross-cutting issues and requirements relating to them, and in terms of how advanced guidance, tools and support they have for ensuring that they are considered in planning, implementation and follow-up of programmes and projects. The approaches range from a focus on collecting basic information required for reporting to the grant-making agency, to clearly articulated approaches where implementation of cross-cutting issues is seen as key to successful implementation of their programmes. Figure 10 illustrates this categorisation of partners:

FIGURE 10

Partner Categories based on Approach to Cross-cutting Issues

Systems for implementation (e.g. strategies, guidance, tools)	Low	High
Advanced	Partners that have well developed policies that encompass the Norwegian cross-cutting issues, but that are not well integrated at field level.	Partners with strategies and policies that put cross-cutting issues at the centre of their activities and have incorporated cross-cutting issues in their work as a key to planning, targeting, implementation, reporting and learning, and reflect a view that programming must consider cross-cutting issues to be sustainable and effective.
Less advanced	Partners that translate or incorporate Norad/Ministry of Foreign Affairs requirements for reporting on risks relating to cross-cutting issues in their own reporting templates and demands on their partners.	Partners that adapt to requirements set by other sources of funds. This includes, in particular, private sector organisations that seek funding from international sources to infrastructure projects.
	Level of integration of cross-cutting issues into programming	

5.2 Challenges to Implementation of Cross-cutting Issues

In this section, we identify problems and success factors in the processes and practices described above. The data collection and analysis has been guided by the theory of change introduced in in Chapter 1 and presented in more detail in Annex 5a, and an unpacking of processes and mechanisms embedded in the assumptions in the theory of change. This has helped identify key aspects that affect how well the processes and practices contribute to implementing the cross-cutting issues, and to identify barriers and enablers.

Understanding of 'Cross-cutting Issues'

The Concepts 'Cross-cutting issue', 'Do No Harm' and 'Negative Effects' are poorly understood

The main challenges highlighted in discussions with all three competence teams refer to poor comprehension of the concept 'cross-cutting issues': interviewees reported that there is confusion about the term 'do no harm' and 'unexpected negative effects' as well as how to combine 'do no harm' and 'promotion' of cross-cutting issues. A frequent example from the Natural Language Processing analysis is comments similar to this: 'this is a climate project, hence there is no risk for negative effects on climate and environment', another example is 'this is a very local project, hence there are no risks to climate and environment'. One interviewee expressed it was difficult to talk about cross-cutting issues without alienating people or causing confusion. The thematic teams all stated that there need to be better support and guidelines, and that work is ongoing in this area.

The issues themselves overlap, e.g. sexual harassment and transparency are to be considered under both human rights and anti-corruption; inclusion of women is a concern both for human rights and gender equality, and rights of indigenous groups are relevant for both climate and environment issues and human rights. This is illustrated in the various commitments presented in Chapter 3 and highlighted throughout the interviews with case workers and partner stakeholders.

Some of the interviewees noted that the concept of unexpected effects – key to the do no harm approach - was not well understood by their partners. This is confirmed throughout the evaluation as evidenced in interviews, document review, the analysis in Chapter 3 and observations in Chapter 6.

Challenges relating to Human Rights as a cross-cutting Issue

Human rights are high on the political agenda, as illustrated in the Humanitarian strategy and the budget proposition. Both human rights and a human rights-based approach are promoted, but interviewees noted that there is much confusion regarding the difference between the two. The confusion was said to be partly caused by shifting policies, with the present focus being on human rights-based approach and previous focus on human rights. The three aspects of promoting human rights, applying a human rights-based approach and avoiding harm to human rights was said to contribute to the confusion and add to the challenge of creating an understanding for human rights as a cross-cutting issue.

In discussions with thematic experts/competence team, it was noted that several partners work in line with a human rights-based approach, but many do not. In the validation workshop in Oslo, the risk of being liable in court due to human rights violations was raised; this risk was not mentioned during interviews, which may indicate that this risk is not considered. There is also a difference in how the requirements are approached by grant managers and partners: The information conveyed in discussions with the Norwegian Embassy in Nepal indicate that in their support to multilateral organisations, the demand for e.g. a human rights-based approach is approached in terms of policy dialogue and in meetings, rather than explicit demands regarding implementation.

Stakeholders interviewed relating to the project managed by faith-based organisations indicated that applying a human-rights based approach is a struggle for some such partner organisations, and that there is a tendency among some of them to interpret human rights in terms of rights of religious minorities. It was also mentioned that some church-based partners prefer a service provider role (where they define the support provided) rather than a human rights-based approach (which would require more involvement by the target population in the design of the intervention).

The interviews and document review show that human rights are often approached by targeting particular beneficiary groups rather than including them by applying a human rights-based approach. This was the case especially for people living with disabilities which was often an add-on to existing programmes, with several interviewees revealing that their approach focused on number of participants rather than adaptation of activities. There were several examples of targeting based on gender, caste, ethnicity and geographic area, but fewer indications of involving the beneficiaries throughout project design and implementation.[120]

Challenges relating to women's rights and gender equality as a cross-cutting Issue

Regarding gender, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for implementing the action plan and for annual reporting on results achievement and Norad shall support embassies with thematic advice, e.g. assessments of project and programme applications and follow-up of agreements. Norad shall contribute also give thematic advice at HQ level. There is specific gender equality funding, as well as requirements and clearly expressed objectives regarding the gender marker. However, as noted by one interviewee, most of the projects with a gender marker have gender as a principal or significant goal, which is not the same as considering gender equality as a cross-cutting issue.

According to interviews with thematic experts, the gender markers and political support for the issue has helped. While historically, the focus was on following the Grant Management Assistant and calls for proposals, gender equality is now integrated in a more intelligent way. Interviewees believed the political will and support from leadership together with the long history of mainstreaming gender have contributed to a greater focus on gender. However, the analysis of Norad documents in Chapter 3 indicate that the focus is mainly on promoting gender equality and interviews indicate that the way to achieve this is often by increasing the share of female beneficiaries.

While the gender marker has contributed to an increased focus on gender equality and women's rights it has also created confusion: Interviewees noted that there is a need for more capacity to increase the understanding of what the gender marker is, what is required in terms of goals, subgoals, and reporting on indicators. Thematic experts interviewed highlight that the dual objectives of increasing the share of aid that has a positive effect on gender equality, and the cross-cutting focus on avoiding harm to gender equality and women's rights, creates confusion: Having a requirement to avoid harm does not make sense when the objective is to do good. The lack of understanding is illustrated by the several examples of project proposals that state that 'this project targets women so there are no risks relating to women's rights and gender equality'.

120 See Chapter 6 for more detail on this.

Photo: **Marte Lid** | Norad

Challenges relating to climate change and environment as a cross-cutting issue

According to interviewees, there is leadership engagement in climate change and environment issues and there is an environmental management system and audits.[121] Together with the existence of a strategy on the topic, this has helped allocate funds to climate and environment and to take work on this cross-cutting issue forward.

Projects in the climate and environment grant scheme are expected to promote climate and environment issues while contributing to reducing poverty.[122] One interviewee pointed out that climate and environment is promoted both as a sector that shall be prioritised in terms of funding and as issues that projects should avoid doing harm to. In addition, climate resilience of the project should be considered, and all climate projects shall report on the Rio makers.[123] [124] The interviewee noted that there is a struggle to create an understanding for how this shall be combined with other project goals, and a frustration in how it shall be achieved. An additional challenge regarding Climate and environment is that it involves activities both at the implementing organisations (staff flights, office heating systems, etc.) and in programme implementation (land use aspects, use of fertilisers etc.).

The understanding of and approach to climate change and environment as cross-cutting issues vary substantially within the sampled programmes. In interviews, a spectrum of views was expressed: from seeing very little scope for programme impact on Climate and Environment, to taking an all-encompassing approach to decrease negative impact on climate and environment from both offices and programmes, with policies, tools, trainings applied to assess and control impact during design, implementation and follow-up phases. Norwegian Church Aid and Norwegian Refugee Council illustrate the most far-reaching integration while partners mainly focus on adaptation and resilience, that is, dealing with risks caused by climate and environment issues. Understanding was varied, illustrated by respondents stating that their projects were too small to affect global climate change, that targeted communities follow a traditional climate calendar or that small-scale credit programmes are not very relevant for climate change and environment as a cross-cutting issue.

121 Interview with competence team on climate and environment.

122 Ministry of climate and environment, 2018, Grant scheme rule: Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative (NICFI).

123 Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Climate Change Hunger and Vulnerability Strategy – strategy for climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction and the fight against hunger, 2023, pg 12

124 Det Kongelige Utenriksdepartement, Tildelingsbrev til Direktoratet for utviklingssamarbeid - Norad for 2023, https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/82928efb0ef545cd904e03ab51b51470/tidligere-ar/tildelingsbrev-til-norad-for-20234083741.pdf, pg.4.

Challenges relating to anti-corruption as a cross-cutting issue

The zero-tolerance policy (no corruption is accepted) was said to detract attention from anti-corruption as a cross-cutting issue, by putting focus on avoiding corruption in the programme, rather than looking at unintended effects in terms of how project activities may contribute to corruption (for example by increasing opportunity for nepotism and post-distribution aid diversion). Hence, although the focus is on risk identification and mitigation, the reference is to risks to, not caused by, the project. This was illustrated by the activities mentioned by interviews with case workers, thematic experts and partner organisations – these focused on training of staff, audits and control, tools developed to identify corruption risks and cases of corruption, follow-the-money exercises, establishing complaint feedback mechanisms, and action plans for dealing with cases of corruption.

It was noted by several interviewees that the zero-tolerance policy creates a disincentive to report on corruption risks as this may result in a decision to not fund the project. Corruption risks are regularly handled by finance departments, internal audits and financial management systems, which contributes to a fragmented approach to anti-corruption as a cross-cutting issue.

Several partner interviewees reported working on transparency and conducting trainings for staff, local government and other organisations. Although the purpose may be to inform about the zero-tolerance policy and the partner's views on corruption, spreading this information would contribute to increased knowledge and awareness about anti-corruption. Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative is an exception in that transparency and anti-corruption are explicitly targeted in several of the programmes/ projects it supported.[125]

125 This does not remove the need for considering cross-cutting issues in project implementation.

Photo: **Marte Lid** | Norad

Clarity of Commitments and Expectations

Commitments and expectations are many and vague, and not fully reflected in the Grant Management Assistant. The commitments and expectations identified in Chapter 3 are made by different political and ministerial actors. It is therefore not surprising that there is some lack of coherence and variations in strength, clarity and ambition. However, without clear or coherent policy frameworks on how to implement cross-cutting issues, it is challenging to define what effective implementation 'looks like'. While the 'do no harm' approach to cross-cutting issues was introduced in 2016[126] as a pragmatic approach aiming to avoid harm at the very least (according to interviews), there is no explicit recognition that this approach is inconsistent with the more far-reaching commitments made at international and national level. The do no harm approach is reflected in the Grant Management Assistant, which was identified in interviews as the requirement for cross-cutting issue implementation. This limits the incentives for grant managers and recipients to go beyond a 'do no harm' approach to help meet the higher-level commitments made by the Norwegian government.

126 Meld. St. 24 (2016–2017)

It was also noted in interviews and document review that while the Grant Management Assistant and budget proposition refer to cross-cutting issues, this term is rarely used in policy documents making higher-level commitments. This may contribute to the confusion, by creating a gap in terminology between the presentation of commitments to integrate and avoid harm to the four issues in all aspects of development cooperation, while requirements and instructions refer to them as cross-cutting issues.

The expectation that risks to cross-cutting issues should still be assessed even when projects take a proactive approach is not clearly understood. There is a lack of clarity around how to combine expectations to take a 'proactive approach' with the 'do no harm approach' to cross-cutting issues at grant level. As noted in interviews and document review, there is a misunderstanding that if a project intends to promote e.g. gender equality, it will not, by default, pose any risk to gender equality. Work is going on within Norad/Ministry of Foreign Affairs on mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues, e.g. the Gender Action Plan to mainstream gender, and development of a framework to integrate a human rights-based approach. This should help provide clearer expectations around how to deliver on ambiguously phrased commitments, such as 'applying a gender perspective' or taking a 'climate resilient approach'. It is important that this work is aligned to the Grant Management Assistant and relates to the 'do no harm' approach.

The commitments and expectations regarding implementation of cross-cutting issues are perceived as clear to survey respondents from embassies, but less so by survey respondents from Norad and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A majority (72%) of the survey respondents found the commitments and expectations regarding cross-cutting issues to be clear to a large or very large extent, with little variation across the four cross-cutting issues.[127] However, the survey responses show that there are substantial differences in the level of understanding within the aid administration: The percentage of respondents that found the commitments and expectations regarding cross-cutting issues to be clear to a large or very large extent was over 95% among embassy respondents, while for Norad it was only 56% and for Ministry of Foreign Affairs respondents, 69%.[128]

127 Survey question: Are the commitments and expectations regarding Norway's four cross-cutting issues clear to you?

128 Note: Approximately 50% of the MFA respondents have stated that they are not involved in project management. This may affect their responses to some of the questions.

Photo: **Marte Lid** | Norad

Adherence to the instructions in the Grant Management Assistant

Agreement partners are aware of the requirement to report on risks relating to cross-cutting issues. The requirement is perceived as relating to reporting on, rather than to avoiding risks to the cross-cutting issues. In the interviews with agreement partners, when asked about Norad/Ministry of Foreign Affairs requirements regarding cross-cutting issues, the respondents consistently referred to the request for reporting, rather than requirements for avoiding risks to the cross-cutting issues – that is, the focus was on the reporting process, not on avoiding harm to or promoting cross-cutting issues.

Interviews with partner organisations indicate that the request to assess and report on risks relating to the cross-cutting issues is understood by all agreement partners. They all invest considerable resources to collect and collate the information required by Norad/ Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They encourage their partners to report on cross-cutting issues, one way or another, and have developed elaborate systems for collecting this information. Examples include developing reporting templates that include questions on cross-cutting issues for partners to fill in and send to the agreement partner, to be used as basis for reporting to Norad and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It varied across interviewees and partner organisations whether the focus was to collect information to fulfil Norad and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' demands for reporting, or whether the information was collected primarily for internal purposes. There were no indications of any support from Norad or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in terms of tools or guidelines to support partners in collecting the required information.

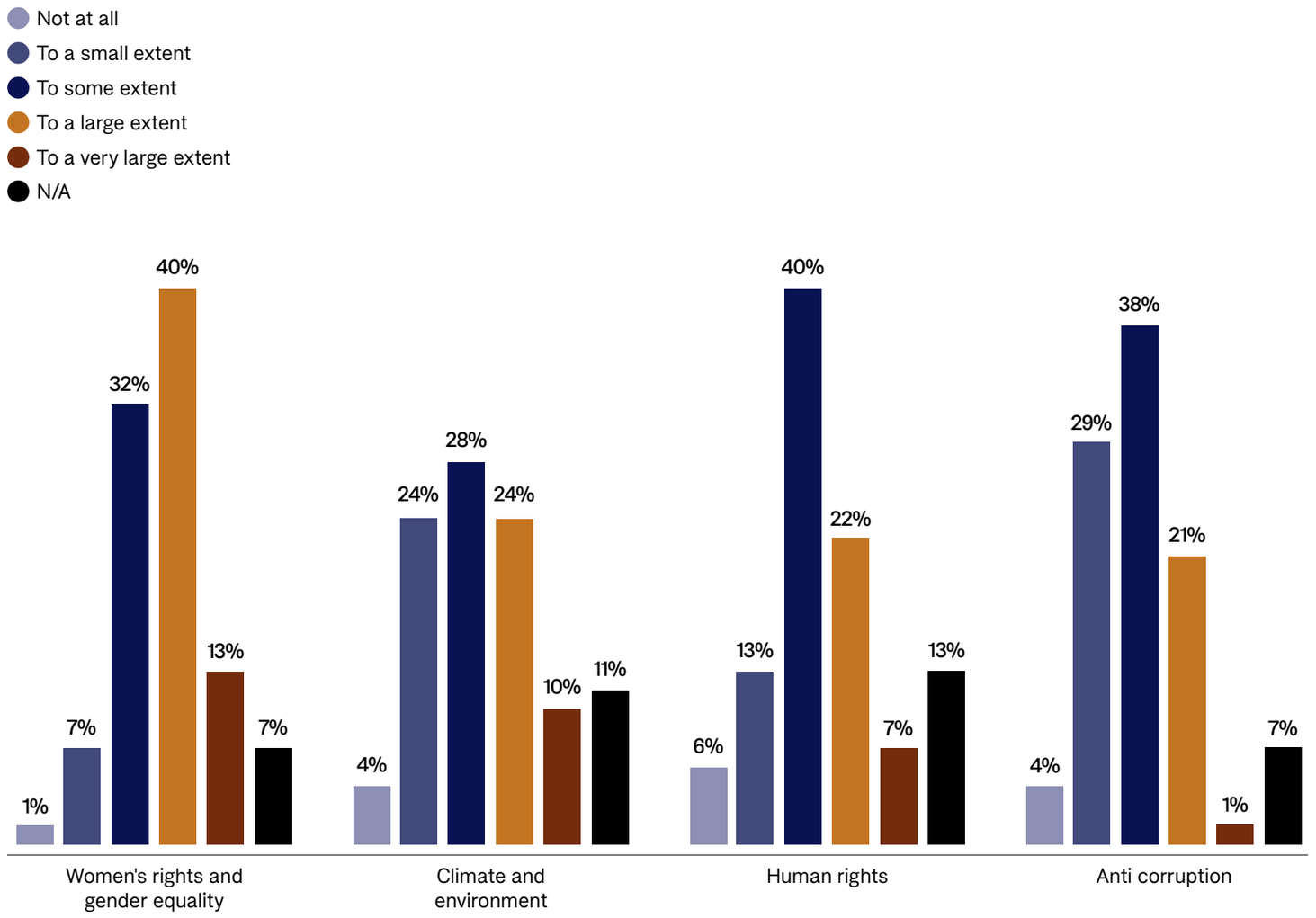
Not all applicants provide the requested information about cross-cutting issues. The survey responses indicate that project proposals do not provide sufficient information about potential negative effects that projects may have on the cross-cutting issues. Approximately one third of the respondents think partners discuss negative effects on cross-cutting issues to a large or very large extent.[129] There is some variation across the issues, with gender equality and women's rights, and climate change and environment receiving somewhat higher scores.

129 Responses to survey question: Do project proposals from downstream partners discuss how projects may negatively affect the four issues?

When asked about the extent to which partners discussed positive effects on the cross-cutting issues, the response is more varied (see Figure 11). The weighted average of responses regarding anti-corruption indicate that reports discuss negative effects to a larger extent than positive effects, while the opposite is for the other cross-cutting issues, especially women's rights and gender equality.[130]

FIGURE 11

Do Project Proposals from Downstream Partners Discuss how Projects may Positively Affect the Four Issues when these are not a Main Objective?



130 Responses to survey question: Do project proposals from downstream partners discuss how projects may positively affect the four issues when these are not a main objective?

The requirement to assess the information provided in project applications is not fulfilled by all case workers. A large proportion of the survey respondents stated that they make their own assessments of the cross-cutting issues during the project proposal and planning phase. The share of respondents who do this to a large or very large extent was 68% for gender equality and women's rights, and 60% for the other three cross-cutting issues.[131] In total, 60% of embassy respondents and 44% of Norad respondents stated that that they made their own assessment to a large or very large extent.

The results of the text analysis of Norad documents presented in Chapter 4 paints another picture. It found that only a small minority of all agreements studied contain a substantial discussion of risks to cross-cutting issues in design phase documents, indicating that shortcomings in the assessment of these documents.

Interviews with staff in Norad, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Climate and Environment gave a varying picture of the extent to which the case workers assess the information provided by applicants and if they make an independent assessment of unintended negative impact on cross-cutting issues. Examples of simplified approaches were to check that the applicant has written something but not doing additional checks, taking a tick-box approach with closer scrutiny of a sample of projects, or not commenting or asking for clarifications despite observing shortcomings in the information provided.

There is a gender difference in confidence and assessments of cross-cutting issues. The survey results indicate that female respondents are more confident in their ability to assess effects of projects on cross-cutting issues than male respondents, and that they make their own assessment of whether reporting on cross-cutting issues is reasonable to a larger extent than male respondents. However, during the design phase, male respondents make their own assessment of potential project impact on cross-cutting issues to a larger extent than female respondents.[132]

Access to Guidelines, Tools and Support

Several interviewees noted that it is difficult to do thorough assessments of all four cross-cutting issues at project level, and difficult to assess objectively if the cross-cutting issues are correctly assessed by the partner. They expressed a need for more specific helpful guidance for case workers to know what is relevant in different contexts.

There are instructions for how to implement the cross-cutting issues, but they are not easily accessible and not very clear. While the Grant Management Assistant provides the clearest expectation at grant management level on taking a 'do no harm' approach and can be categorised as compliance-related, the evaluation found limited evidence of any associated monitoring or accountability mechanism to underpin this. Beyond a list of questions at the thematic level that might support grant managers in assessing risks, there is limited guidance and tools on *how* to effectively apply this within and across different sectors and contexts. The evaluation found that basic instructions are provided to implementers, but no guidance or toolkits.

The Decision document, which is to be filled out by case workers as part of the project assessment process, contains over 40 comment boxes. The cross-cutting issues are to be treated in one of these, in the section "Risk assessment, cross-cutting issues and sustainability". The question to be responded to is:

> *Has the applicant considered risks that could have a negative impact on the four cross-cutting issues?*

131 Question: Do you make your own assessment of the four cross-cutting issues during the project proposal and planning phase?

132 There is a small difference in gender distribution across respondents: 20% of embassy respondents, 25% in the MFA and 30% in Norad are men.

Photo: **Marte Lid** | Norad

The question has a tick-box and space to write text for each cross-cutting issue, and guidance note in a comment box linked to the question which states that:

> *"All four cross-cutting issues (human rights; women's rights and gender equality; climate change and environment; and anti-corruption) are to be assessed for all projects supported by Norway [...] The grant manager has an independent responsibility to consider whether risk assessment and risk management by the grant recipient provide sufficient security that unintended negative effects will be avoided, regarding cross-cutting issues. The decision document should explain how the applicant assesses the cross-cutting issues."*[133]

Further guidance can be accessed via a link in the comment box. This leads to a document with "Useful questions" for each cross-cutting issue. Sector-specific questions and examples are available in annexes to this document.[134] Hence, it takes several steps and links to find all guidance material the case worker may need to make a proper assessment. This was confirmed in interviews with grant managers, who reported that the instructions and support were scattered, difficult to find and difficult to access.

Less than half (43%) of the survey respondents stated that they think there are clear instructions, guidelines and tools for their work on the four issues to a large or very large extent. There is a clear distinction between embassy and Norad respondents: 64% of embassy respondents, but only 26% of Norad respondents, found the guidelines and tools clear to a large or very large extent. One of the survey respondents commented that the guidelines are often not sufficiently specific for individual cases, another highlighted that although the guidelines are clear, the commitments and expectations are not well aligned to the reality, and that the focus on the negative effects of projects on cross-cutting is so narrow that it does not make sense.

There was some variation across the four cross-cutting issues, with responses indicating highest clarity on women's rights and gender equality, and lowest on climate change and environment.[135] The distribution is illustrated in Figure 12.

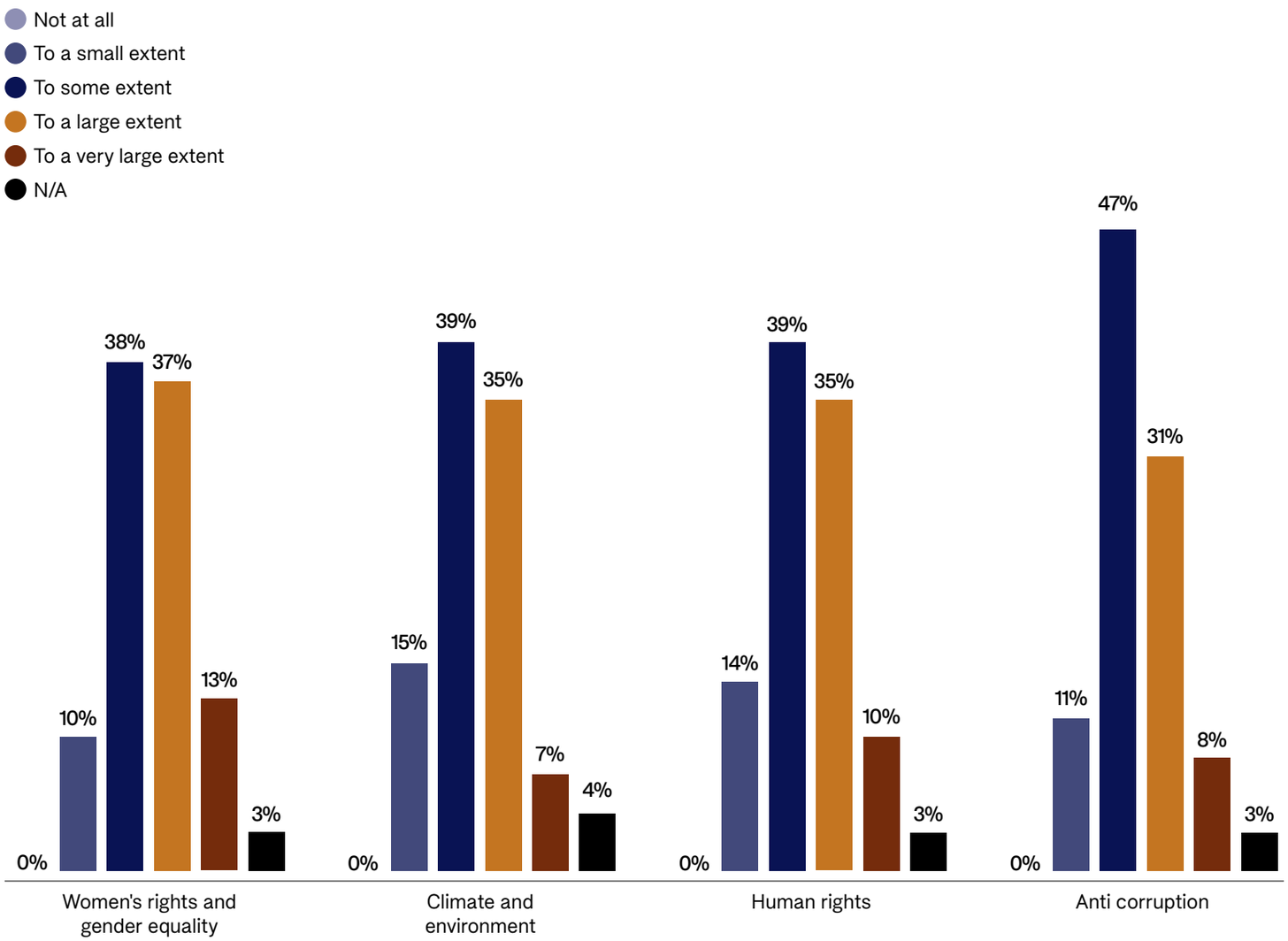
133 Decision document, p. 3.

134 Documents extracted from the Grant Management Assistance, received via email (the evaluation team could not access the Grant Manaement Assistant directly).

135 Weighted averages 3.41 and 3.35, respectively.

FIGURE 12

Are there Clear Instructions, Guidelines and Tools for your Work on the Four Issues?



There is support and competence on the cross-cutting issues, but context- and sector-specific knowledge relating to cross-cutting issues is not sufficient. The decision documents for the sampled eight agreements show that relevant embassies, sections, experts and competence teams were consulted, but not consistently, during the assessment of applications. This is verified in the interviews with case workers. Some of the decision documents refer to consultancy reports and assessments, in one case the decision document clearly stated that it relied heavily on a KPMG report, indicating that quality assurance of those reports is crucial.[136]

However, some interviewees also state that they do not always have time to go into detail or to consult colleagues.[137] One of the thematic experts interviewed noted that case workers rarely consult the competence teams and instead make a less qualified assessment on their own. One respondent mentioned that although embassies are often consulted as part of the proposal assessment process, there was a strong tendency to not address the cross-cutting issues and to say that financial management systems would cover risks to anti-corruption.

136 Development Fund decision document for 2017-2020 (1600863-26 UVF 2017 2020 BD - med sammendrag 1609907_12_1).

137 It should be noted that the grant managers that were interviewed were in most cases not the same as those preparing the decision documents.

A review of the decision documents of the sample projects indicates that many, but not all, grant managers, embassies and consultants have a good understanding of what is required in terms of assessing risks to the cross-cutting issues. There are several examples of quite detailed assessments, however, there are also examples of very short comments such as 'there is no risk of impact to human rights'.

Several interviewees, from both the aid administration and partner organisations, stated that there is a need for context- and thematic-specific knowledge about the cross-cutting issues to be able to make a good assessment of potential risks to them. This is also highlighted in free-text comments by survey respondents, one of which noted that they rely on their partners for knowledge of the local context.

The survey asked respondents if there are systems in their organisation for e.g. data collection, knowledge management and learning, that support their work on the four issues. On average 16% of the respondents stated that this was so to a large or very large extent. Embassy respondents perceived there to be more support than Norad and Ministry of Foreign Affairs respondents. These findings indicate that the extent to which cross-cutting issues are covered in training material (there is a podcast on cross-cutting issues, and cross-cutting issues are reportedly included in at least one training for case workers), is not sufficient.

Resources and Recognition for Work on the Cross-cutting Issues

Case workers do not have time to make thorough assessments of cross-cutting issues in proposals. Several interviewees stated that they do not have time to do a thorough analysis of the applicant's risk assessment. The case workers interviewed referred to lack of time as the main reason for not considering cross-cutting issues to the extent requested in the Grant Management Assistant. They also mentioned that although they have access to thematic experts and colleagues with context- or sector-specific knowledge, they do not always have time to consult them. Group discussions with thematic experts indicate that they do not have sufficient time to advise their colleagues.

One of the survey respondents commented that there is limited time for assessing whether the reported impact on the four issues is reasonable, another noted that the assessment of cross-cutting issues is often superficial. A third respondent highlighted the challenge that there are so many issues to cover in a project assessment, and a fourth stated that it is difficult to get assistance from Norad as they are often busy.

When asked to select the three things that would most improve their work on the cross-cutting issues, more time for assessing applications and follow up on cross-cutting issues gets the highest score by survey respondents.

The survey indicates that there is limited recognition of work on the four cross-cutting issues by leadership and colleagues, and less recognition in Norad than in embassies. Asked whether work on the four issues as cross-cutting issues is recognised and rewarded by the leadership in their organisation, 32% of the survey respondents respond to a large or very large extent. The corresponding percentage for the question 'is work on the four issues as cross-cutting issues recognised by your colleagues?', is 45%. This indicates on the one hand that support from leadership to implement cross-cutting issues, is lower than the support from colleagues. On the other hand, it indicates a quite low level of support overall and especially from leadership.[138] The comment by one survey respondent, saying that although there are people with knowledge, there can be a high barrier to asking e.g. a policy director for input, indicates the same thing. According to survey respondents, there is more support from leadership in embassies than in Norad: 60% in embassy respondents but only 16%

138 MFA respondents are not included in this question, as over 40% of them responded n/a on this question.

of Norad respondents stated that work on the cross-cutting issues was recognised and rewarded by the leadership in their organisation to a large or very large extent (68% and 36% respectively for recognition by colleagues). Although the survey response rate is low, this may indicate a systematic difference in the approach to cross-cutting issues in Norad and embassies.

Interviews with case workers and partner staff confirm that work on cross-cutting issues is not prioritised. Case workers commented that there are many things that need to be covered in the Grant Management Assistant and cross-cutting issues is not at the top of priorities. Several partner staff interviewed noted that they report on the cross-cutting issues but rarely get feedback, that the space for reporting (overall and on cross-cutting issues) has decreased over time, and that cross-cutting issues are not often mentioned in annual meetings with grant managers.

Photo: **Bjørnulf Remme** | Norad

5.3 Barriers and Enablers

The main problem, highlighted throughout this evaluation, is that the cross-cutting issues are not implemented as intended. There are examples of successful implementation, but examples of shortcomings in both project implementation, knowledge and comprehension are frequent. A main reason stated in interviews is that there is a lack of understanding of the concepts involved. It is clear from interviews with key stakeholders that the concepts of do no harm, unexpected effects and unintended negative impact, are not well understood nor applied.

The analysis of processes and practices and related problems highlight several conflicts inherent to the implementation of cross-cutting issues at management level:

- The conflict in both promoting and avoiding harm to the same issue
- The conflict between spending time on cross-cutting issues versus other aspects of project implementation, that may more clearly relate to project effectiveness
- The conflict for time and attention between the four cross-cutting issues
- Conflicting interpretations within each cross-cutting issue: human rights versus a human rights-based approach, gender and environment as cross-cutting issues versus the gender marker and Rio markers, and the conflict between zero-tolerance versus not contributing to corruption
- Conflict between seeing cross-cutting issues as one issue with several aspects, or as commitments that promote each cross-cutting issue separately in policies and strategies
- Conflict between reporting on the cross-cutting issues versus implementing them – both in terms of doing good and avoiding harm

These point to a challenge in understanding *why* cross-cutting issues need to be considered, as well as a lack of incentives to implement them.

Photo: **Marte Lid** | Norad

Photo: **Marte Lid** | Norad

Based on the presentation above, several barriers and some enablers to implementation of cross-cutting issues can be identified. These align well with areas for improvement identified by survey respondents when they were asked to select the three things that would most improve their work on the four cross-cutting issues:

TABLE 5

Responses to the Question – What Would Most Improve Your Work on the Cross-cutting Issues

Evaluation method	Total Responses
More time	61
a) More time to make assessments of proposals	(30)
b) More time to follow-up on reports	(31)
Tools and guidelines that I can use in my work	53
Access to training	47
Clearer objectives for the issue	42
Clearer instructions for my work	40
Improved knowledge within my organisation	33
Closer communication with partners	30
Access to support in my organisation	28
Stronger mandate relating to the four issues	26
Higher demands on reporting on the issues	23
Other	7

Clustering these, time (to assess proposals and follow-up reports); clarity (on objectives and how to work on the four issues); tools and guidelines and internal support; and knowledge (by trainings and in the organisation) come across as main contenders. These are collated in the table below, as categories that act as enablers when they are fulfilled, and barriers when they are lacking:

TABLE 6

Key Barriers/Enablers to Achieving Effective Implementation of Cross-cutting Issues

Category	Barrier	Enabler
Systems and Processes	Lack of clarity of commitments and a mismatch between commitments and requirements as presented in the Grant Management Assistant	Clear commitments by agreement and implementing partners
	Lack of guidelines, tools and support to both grant managers and partners	Existence of guidelines, tools and support in partner organisations
	Lack of monitoring and accountability mechanisms to incentivise compliance with the 'do no harm' approach.	Monitoring, accountability and learning mechanisms exist in some partner organisations
Capability and Resources	Insufficient knowledge and comprehension of cross-cutting issues among grant managers and in some partner organisations.	Some grant managers and partner organisations have extensive knowledge and comprehension of cross-cutting.
	Grant managers and some partner organisations have limited time and do not prioritise cross-cutting issues	Some partner organisations prioritise cross-cutting issues and dedicate considerable time and resources on implementing them.

TABLE 6 CONTINUED

Key Barriers/Enablers to Achieving Effective Implementation of Cross-cutting Issues

Category	Barrier	Enabler
Culture, Leadership and Norms	Lack of encouragement from leadership and colleagues, to work on cross-cutting issues (in Norad and some partner organisations)	Some partner organisations have set the implementation of cross-cutting issues at the centre of their organisational values.
		Strong commitment of many staff in grant management and partner organisations
External	Harmful social, cultural and religious norms and related beliefs and attitudes is a barrier to work on e.g. women's rights.	Strong social movements on e.g. gender equality and social inclusion facilitate project work on these issues.
	Demands from other organisations are prioritised above demands from Norwegian aid management	Demands from other organisations are prioritised above demands from Norwegian aid management

Photo: **Bjørnulf Remme** | Norad

6

Human Rights Effects for End Beneficiaries in Nepal

This chapter responds to evaluation question 4: What are human rights effects (impacts) at the country level (in Nepal) for the end beneficiaries and people affected by the projects funded by Norway? The assessment is based on data collected from four projects implemented in Nepal. The chapter starts with a brief introduction to the four projects (additional information is available in Annex 4c) and relevant aspects of human rights, then presents findings relating to knowledge and commitments to human rights in the partner organisations, the consideration of human rights during project implementation, and human rights effects from the projects' intended outcomes.

6.1 Projects and Related Human Rights Impact

The four projects considered were:

- **Badikedar Integrated Community Transformation (BICT):** BICT is a five-year project implemented by United Mission to Nepal Doti Cluster in Badikedar Rural Municipality, Doti district of Nepal in partnership with Rural Community Development Centre and with funding support from Norad via Digni and the Mission Alliance. The focus areas for outcomes are food security, inclusive education, improved access to health services and good governance practices. The team visited the projects in December 2023.

- **Livelihoods and Resilience Enhancement Programme (LREP II):** LREP II, implemented by LI-BIRD (Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, Research and Development) with funding from Norad via the Development Fund, is the second phase of a project with the goal of improving food and nutrition security and income resilience of small and marginalised farm families in Western Terai and the hills of Nepal. The approach has been threefold: empowering beneficiaries for with skills to enhance their livelihoods, empowering community institutions with cooperations and empowering local government. The team visited Bardia and Kailali districts in December 2023.

- **Post-Earthquake School reconstruction in Nepal, bridging the gaps in remote areas:** this four-year project was implemented by the United Nations Office for Project Services with funding support from the Norwegian Embassy in Nepal. The purpose of the project was the construction of resilient school buildings after the Earthquake in 2015 and includes 24 school buildings across four districts in the province of Bagmati. These schools included toilet blocks, solar backup systems and furniture. Selection of schools was conducted in coordination with Central Level Project Implementation Unit (CLPIU) of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in Nepal. The team visited three of the schools in Sindhuli in January 2024.

- **South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation Power Transmission and Distribution System Strengthening Project:** Implemented by the Asian Development Bank and Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) with funding from the Norwegian Embassy in Nepal over a 5-year period, the project's target outcome is improved access, reliability, and efficiency of power supply in Nepal. The project sought to achieve this through three key outputs:

increased power system transmission capacity, improved distribution system and consumers' awareness on energy efficiency and safety, and improvements to the distribution network and capacity of women to use electricity for energy-based enterprises development. The team visited Madhesh province in January 2024.

Regarding the thematic areas of the programmes, the team paid special attention to the following potential positive (left column) and negative (right column) effects on human rights – these issues were selected as possible positive outcomes or risks across the four projects based on initial document review and meetings with implementers. The table, together with probing questions, is also available in Annex 5f:

TABLE 7

Key Barriers/Enablers to Achieving Effective Implementation of Cross-cutting Issues

Right to Adequate Standard of Living	
Increased household income.	Gradual decrease in productivity due to environmental degradation (poor soil quality resulting from excessive chemicals for off season farming and high productivity in project's initial period).
Improved agriculture (and livestock) productivity.	
Improved household consumption (right to food security).	Increased income at household level, but women may not have power on decision making and spending.
Right to Dignity	
Increase recognition of women and marginalised community identity in the public sphere.	Women's unpaid/care work at household level and unpaid work in community may increase and hamper her wellbeing, may be exploited at home and in community, may increase gender-based violence.
Right to Clean and Healthy Environment	
Promotion of environment friendly practices (such as organic farming, agroforestry).	Deforestation by landless families for agricultural use.
	Deforestation to build pastureland / overgrazing.
	Destruction of habitat of wild species / animals due to agricultural cultivation and livestock grazing.
	Water pollution from livestock.
Right to Water	
Access to adequate irrigation for farming and livestock.	Pollution of water sources by livestock and reduction of water supply to the community due to use of water for irrigation and livestock.

Photo: **Marte Lid** | Norad

TABLE 7 CONTINUED

Key Barriers/Enablers to Achieving Effective Implementation of Cross-cutting Issues

Right to Health and Safety

Increased income contributes to improved food consumption leading to improved nutrition.

Mechanism to ensure the safety of women, children and vulnerable people from sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment.

Increased income contributes to individual health (medical treatment, safe drinking water, hygienic food, improved hygiene and sanitation).

Exposure of poor families to harmful chemicals and pesticides.

Access to market contributes to the increased sale of the production and less consumption leading to poor nutrition among children and other family members particularly girls and women.

Improved living standard/income may lead to increased consumption of junk food /unbalanced diet resulting in poor nutrition.

Sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment of the beneficiaries by the project officials.

Right to Land

Ownership of the land entitled to the freed bonded labour (Kamaiya) / landless families (indirect contribution).

Use of public land (forest, pastureland) for farming.

Unequal distribution of land.

Though women and men have joint land ownership, women may not influence decisions on how to use land, income from land etc.

Photo: **Marte Lid** | Norad

TABLE 7 CONTINUED

Key Barriers/Enablers to Achieving Effective Implementation of Cross-cutting Issues

Right to Non-discrimination in Enjoyment of Social, Economic, and Cultural Rights

Inclusion of socially excluded groups (based on gender, caste/ethnicity, disability), economically excluded families (landless, poor), geographically excluded populations (isolated, migrant), child-headed, women-headed household etc.

Access, ownership and control of public and household resources/properties by women.

Participation of women, Dalits, person with disabilities in decision making process (at household, community and institutional level).

Exclusion of the socially excluded groups (based on gender, caste/ethnicity, disability), economically excluded families (landless, poor), geographically excluded populations (isolated, migrant), (child-headed, women-headed households due to multiple forms of discrimination and barriers.

Wage disparities between men and women workers.

Right to Education

Improved standard of living, income and productivity contributes to the children's education.

School absenteeism or drop out due to increased workload (resulting from increased responsibilities in plantation/harvesting, livestock grazing, animal shed cleaning, fodder collection or taking care of siblings while parents engage in work/project work), particularly girl children.

Children may face violence, corporal punishment, bullying, peer pressure at school.

Due to the increased work burden at home children may not get sufficient time for study and eventually hamper his/her study.

School absenteeism while children are engaged in project related work.

Photo: **Marte Lid** | Norad

TABLE 7 CONTINUED

Key Barriers/Enablers to Achieving Effective Implementation of Cross-cutting Issues

Right to Livelihood

Access to resources (saving and credit, fertilizer, seeds, market, irrigation).	Falling into debt-trap due to interest rates being higher than the profit from microenterprises.
Access to subsidies and safety nets (grants, insurance).	Falling into debt-trap due to loan being for, e.g. marriage, medical treatment, house construction, migration.
	Migration/displacement due to debt-trap / failure of agriculture/livestock.
	Trapped into trafficking and transportation internally and cross border, sexual violence, end up to child labour, exploitative domestic labour, smuggling, drug users and excessive use of alcohol, expose to various crime, unsafe foreign migration/ employment etc.

Right to Information (Transparency and Accountability)

Community engagement in project cycle (mechanism to inform the stakeholders about the project scope and incorporate their voices, concerns, feedback in project design and implementation).	Repercussions because of feedback.

6.2 Knowledge and Comprehension of Human Rights as a Cross-cutting Issue

Both knowledge of human rights as a cross-cutting issue and awareness of responsibilities for applying them in practice were low among project implementers. Staff of all four implementing partners demonstrated knowledge of their own organisation's cross-cutting issues during interviews, but they were not informed about the requirements for implementing Norwegian development cooperation's cross-cutting issues. They were also unaware of their responsibility in implementing human rights as a cross-cutting issues within the projects.

During interviews, they all demonstrated limited understanding of what constituted human rights as a cross-cutting issue and how to implement this. Most of the respondents in the interviews, both partners at local and national level, evidenced limited knowledge, skills, and ability to use tools to assess human rights impacts within projects. Some field managers reported in interviews that they had received gender training, but they said that it was insufficient to enable them to mainstream gender into their projects. They also revealed that they did not know how their project intervention promotes human rights and gender equality. When interviewed, implementers within the United Nations Office for Project Services project stated that as technical partners it was not their role to consider human rights. This was confirmed during the validation meeting with the Norwegian Embassy in Nepal, where it was stated that United Nations Office for Project Services' responsibility was limited to the physical reconstruction of the schools. When interviewed, staff in another project were unable to articulate how human rights featured within their project.

Implementing organisations have policies on cross-cutting issues which cover some human rights aspects. Many project staff report that they do not fully understand these. Whilst the four implementing partners do not have specific human rights policies, action plans or monitoring frameworks, each partner has several relevant polices that express a broader commitment to gender equality and non-discrimination. All have policies or plans on gender or Gender and Social Inclusion, safeguarding, anti-corruption and environmental protection. All organisations have policies that state the importance of the protection and promotion of the right to participation in decision-making through community intervention.

It is unclear how the implementing partners are translating these policies within their projects. Interviews during field visits gave no evidence of the policies being shared with downstream partners, nor downstream partners being orientated on key human-rights related principles within these (beyond the gender training mentioned above).

There were indications that grant management was content with the organisational policies in place and therefore did not discuss the requirements for implementing the four cross-cutting issues specifically, with implementing partners in Nepal. During discussions with the evaluation team, the Norwegian Embassy in Nepal clarified that they are content with relying on their partners' policy frameworks if their cross-cutting issues and policies are in line with the Norwegian cross-cutting issues. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not ask the Asian Development Bank or United Nations Office for Project Services to adopt the Norwegian cross-cutting issues as they have various organisational policies directly or

indirectly linked with the four cross-cutting issues.[139] In interviews, these two partners reported that there was no specific discussion of the four cross-cutting issues. However, as noted in e.g. reports from review missions[140], Norway's four cross-cutting issues were reported on and discussed within the topics of e.g. social and environmental safeguards and gender and social inclusion.

Photo: **Marte Lid** | Norad

139 All stakeholders to the evaluation had the opportunity to include reservations to specific findings in the final report. The Norwegian embassy in Nepal has the following comment to this finding: "The Embassy maintains that they do ask ADB and UN partners to consider Norwegian requirements related to cross-cutting issues in the preparation and follow up of projects. The Embassy follows up during formal meetings and review missions to ensure that Norwegian development partners are adequately considering such risks. This is documented in project proposals, decision documents, the Grant Agreement, mandates for formal meetings, terms of reference for field visits, reviews etc. The multilateral organisations' own policies on CCIs are found to be overall well aligned with Norwegian requirements, but the terminologies may be different. Reference is made to MFA's Agreement with ADB for "NPL-18/0008" Section C, point 12 states that *"ADB shall administer the grant in accordance with the Agreement [..] in accordance with its own policies and procedures and: c) Identify, assess and mitigate relevant risks associated with the implementation of the project, including the risk of corruption and other financial irregularities as well as the risk of potential negative effects of the Project on climate and environment, women's rights and gender equality, and human rights, in each case in accordance with ADBs applicable policies and procedures.""*

140 E.g. ADB (2023). AIDE MEMOIRE Loan 3943/Grant 0711/TA 6526–NEP: South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation Power Transmission and Distribution System Strengthening Project ADB Review Mission 24 February–28 April 2023.

6.3 Human Rights Considerations during Project Implementation

The Evaluation found little evidence of the four implementing organisations intentionally implementing the 'do no harm' approach to human rights as a cross-cutting issue. The evaluation had access to the risk assessment for one of the implementing partners in Nepal (United Nations Office for Project Services) and this did not cover human rights risks beyond standard safeguarding risks.[141] Interviews with the implementing partners (at national and local level), indicated that assessments of potential risks and unintended consequences of project interventions on human rights had not been done, and that there was also a lack of identification of mitigating/remedial actions to risks to the human rights of the target communities.

Some management of risks was observed, e.g., health and safety equipment were provided to construction workers on the United Nations Office for Project Services projects, which helped ensure their right to a safe working environment. **However, the evaluation noted several risks that the projects had failed to *assess or mitigate*, for example:**

- The school support by both United Nations Office for Project Services and United Mission to Nepal did not appear to have identified or managed risks related to the rights of children and teachers to safety (despite the project being set up to build schools damaged by a previous earthquake). Focus group discussions revealed that there was a lack of knowledge about how to manage safety equipment provided by the project and no regular drills among schoolteachers and students to operate them or evacuate in case of emergencies. The team observed that one school built by United Nations Office for Project Services had already been damaged by a landslide (a risk that had not been anticipated).

- The United Mission to Nepal project has not adequately assessed the risks relating to child protection and gender-based violence. For example, a male teacher oversees the girls' hostel rooms at the school and resides in the same block. Despite having a safeguarding children policy in place, the evaluation found no evidence of United Mission to Nepal putting this in practice and mitigating the risk of harassment and abuse.

- In the United Mission to Nepal project, the evaluation team observed that an incinerator was constructed next to the toilets. Without a proper chimney it risks emitting potentially hazardous emission. Project stakeholders interviewed were unaware of this risk, and no mitigation measures were in place.

In terms of reporting, there is some evidence from document review that project staff (within the lead implementing organisation) are reporting on human rights risks, for example, in human rights sections of the annual reports. However, data collected from interviews with field staff suggested that this reporting did not reflect the situation on the ground and there was no evidence of field staff being asked to monitor/capture risks or impacts on the ground (human rights related or otherwise) to feed into reporting.

141 See note in limitations section regarding access to documents.

Application of a Human Rights-based Approach

There was limited evidence of implementing organisations applying a human rights-based approach and putting effective processes in place to support participation, accountability and non-discrimination. Applying a human rights-based approach includes respecting target groups by having mechanisms in place that consistently ensure participation in project design, accountability and non-discrimination. The evaluation focused on the extent to which such mechanisms were in place for end beneficiaries at field level (e.g. potential participants in project activities and end users of school reconstruction projects).

There was some limited participation of target groups in the design of programmes: for the most part, target groups were informed, rather than consulted, about the programmes. In some programmes, more opportunities to input were available during programme implementation. During meetings with staff from the four lead implementing partners they all stated that they have strategies, approaches, or operational guidelines in place to promote stakeholder participation in project design and implementation. These documents[142] emphasise that stakeholder participation is a fundamental aspect of their programme design and implementation approach. The evaluation found few examples of this occurring. In the Enterprise Development activity of the Asian Development Bank project, both end beneficiaries and project officers (in separate focus group discussions and interviews) reported that the participants were consulted about their interests, existing skills, and experiences, and that this informed the identification of suitable sectors for skills training.

In the LI-BIRD project there was regular communication from project staff about various events such as training sessions and (as reported in focus group discussions) project staff engaged with community members to select beneficiaries in the implementation phase. However, according to focus group discussions with farmers groups, there was limited direct involvement of project beneficiaries in project design, planning, and budgeting. The project design did not fully consider the right to participation by both women and men – focus group discussion participants noted that it is perceived that females are responsible for household chores, whereas men handle work outside the home. Similarly, men have for the freedom to participate in informal discussions and decisions in communities, whereas women are restricted from participating in such discussions and responsibilities are focused on household chores and taking care of elders and children at home. Consequently, while male participants in trainings could stay and participate in discussions after the training ended, female participants were excluded from these informal discussions as they had to return home immediately.

Both United Mission to Nepal staff and the project proposal[143] highlighted efforts to engage the most marginalised communities, including persons with disabilities and women, to identify their needs and priorities. However, community members reported not having been adequately informed about the detailed budget breakdown for infrastructure schemes in the United Mission to Nepal project, even though they were expected to contribute their labour.

In the United Nations Office for Project Services project, there was no active consultation with the school stakeholders during the design phase (according to focus group discussions) and United Nations Office for Project Services agreed that the design process was 'top down' with little scope for school stakeholders to influence the standard design presented. A monthly progress sharing mechanism

142 LI-BIRD (2023). Operational Guidelines for Projects and Programmes 2022 (amended in 2023); UMN (2022). Management Guidelines: UMN Feedback and Response Mechanism; UNOPS (2020). Memorandum of Understanding Between Districts Project Implementation Unit, Municipality and UNOPS; ADB (2019). Strategy 2030 Operational Plans Overview.

143 UMN (2020). Badikedar Integrated Community Transformation Project: Project Proposal 2020-2024.

was established but as indicated by minutes from these meetings, the communication was mainly one-way (from implementer to community). According to the final report for the project, there were also bi-weekly meetings with School Management Committees to meet their needs and requirements.

The evaluation identified some good practices to support accountability but also missed opportunities, especially at the community level. The evaluation observed varied levels of engagement between project implementers and local authorities, groups or Non-Governmental Organisations to support accountability. For example, both local LI-BIRD staff and representatives of local authorities reported in interviews that municipalities and the Agricultural Knowledge Centre[144] of the Provincial Government were invited to periodic review and reflection meetings. Similarly, municipality officials were well informed about United Mission to Nepal project activities. At the community level, the evaluation observed that LI-BIRD recently introduced a feedback mechanism to enable reporting, response, and resolution of complaints (although this has not yet been extended to the broader community). Whilst the projects held regular beneficiary meetings where frontline staff participated, it is questionable how effectively they support accountability as focus group discussion participants reported that they were hesitant to provide feedback due to fears of damaging relationships. LI-BIRD previously held social audits, but they were discontinued during the COVID-19 outbreak.

In the United Nations Office for Project Services project, communities could attend monthly update meetings but there were no formal complaints or feedback mechanism. Within the United Mission to Nepal project, direct beneficiaries reported in focus group discussions there was a lack of accountability and transparency around the benefits of the project. Within the Asian Development Bank projects, community members living near the construction sites of substations expressed (in focus group discussions) concerns about potential risks associated with heavy machinery, wire disturbances and electromagnetic field due to the high voltage power lines. The implementing partner (Tata Projects Limited) reported that there were no risks, but this had not been communicated to the communities to reassure them.

All four projects included a focus on addressing the needs of the most marginalised members within the community but reports of some groups being excluded suggest that projects had not thoroughly assessed how to ensure non-discrimination and equality. LI-BIRD's beneficiaries included and specifically targeted marginalised groups, e.g., freed bonded labourers, landless families, families affected by earthquakes, Dalits, and women. However, gender roles were not adequately considered in the project design - social norms hindered women's participation and opportunities to challenge them were not taken as these norms were enforced and practised by project representatives. For example, the Chhaupadi system, a tradition that forces girls and women to stay isolated during menstruation, was discussed in several focus group discussions. The information gathered indicate that the projects adapted to the practise rather than challenge it.

It was observed by the evaluation team and highlighted in multiple focus group discussions that school buildings constructed by United Nations Office for Project Services were equipped with separate toilets for boys, girls, and persons with disabilities and there were wheelchair ramps and tactile paving for the visually impaired. However, due to the lack of wheelchair-accessible school compounds and roads or hostels for children with disabilities, these provisions are unlikely to be utilised. Similarly, hand-rails and tactile paving were placed on opposite sides of staircases, making them less useful. Interviews and focus group discussions indicated that schools in remote areas were less likely to be supported due to challenges in transporting materials. Hence, non-discrimination was only partly considered during project planning.

While the United Mission to Nepal project targeted marginalised communities such as women, Dalits, and Janajati, concerns arose in a focus group discussion

144 Agricultural Knowledge Centre is government office at district level (in some district this office is responsible for more than one district) under Directorate of Agricultural Development, Ministry of provincial level Ministry of Land Management, Agriculture and Cooperatives.

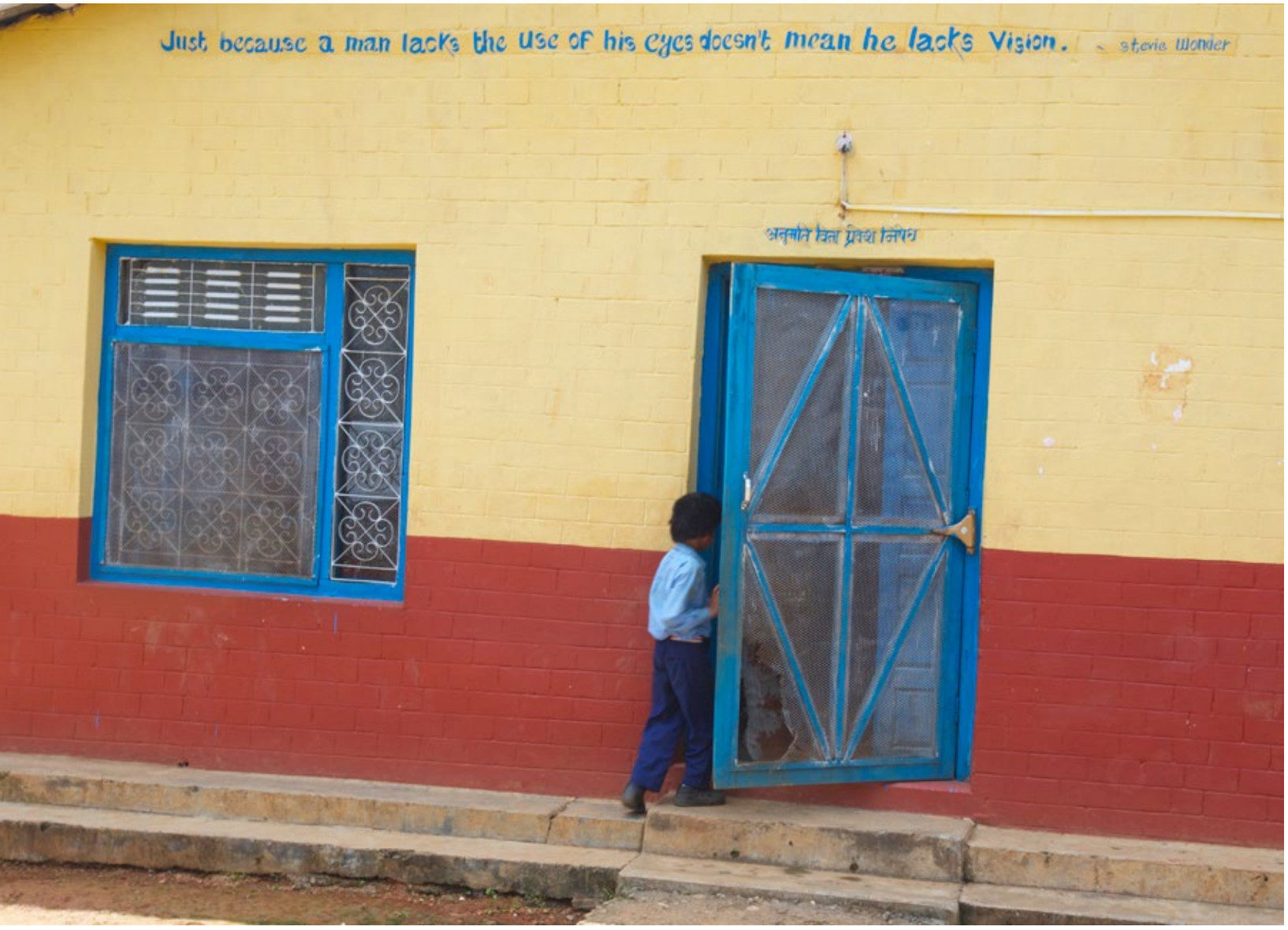


Photo: **Bjørnulf Remme** | Norad

regarding the exclusion of specific groups, particularly persons with disabilities, despite being referred to as a target group in reporting. Although participants received Disability ID cards facilitating access to government allowances, there was a lack of tailored project activities catering to their needs. Concerns were also raised by some of the participants in a female focus group discussion regarding the repetitive selection of the same beneficiaries and the exclusion of certain members from group trainings, indicating a need for a more inclusive and transparent approach.

In the Asian Development Bank project, despite targeting the neediest area (according to the Nepal Electricity Authority), focus group discussion participants commented that the entrepreneurship training was mostly provided to men and women who were already engaged in similar businesses in the same sectors. This excluded those who have yet to start their own businesses. Likewise, according to a focus group discussion, the Asian Development Bank project involved only those women who were able to get consent from family members (husband and in-laws) to engage in project interventions related to entrepreneurship. Although the purpose may have been to ensure that the women had family support which may increase the chances of success, it also suggests adherence to prevailing gender norms, ultimately hindering the strengthening of women's agency.

6.4 Human Rights Effects of Project Outcomes

All four projects contributed to human rights through their selection of activities and target groups. However, there is also evidence that activities in some areas failed to contribute to the realisation of some human rights or failed to address inequality or discrimination. Through support to different projects, Norwegian development cooperation has contributed to conditions where communities and individuals have better access to resources and opportunities, potentially leading to a better quality of life and a stronger ability to claim their human rights (as per several human rights effects identified in table 8). For instance, a significant number of schools and academic institutions were destroyed across the country in the earthquake of 2015, which hampered the fundamental right to education of many children. By supporting the reconstruction of schools, the United Nations Office for Project Services project has contributed to realizing the right to education by ensuring access to schooling.

According to focus group discussions with the school management committees of the three schools visited, United Nations Office for Project Services added value to fulfilling the human rights of girls: people with disabilities, and other marginalised communities through the construction of gender- and disability-responsive school infrastructure and the improvement of services and the material condition of the schools' environment, i.e., clean drinking water, sanitation facilities, gender- and disability-responsive toilets etc. The evaluation notes that availability of the school buildings in the local area may have reduced school drop as students did not have to migrate to access urban schools in urban areas.

Focus group discussions with girls and parents in all three schools stated that the improved material conditions of schools i.e. separate toilets and availability of sanitary pads (supported by local government) helped in reducing the absenteeism of girls during menstruation. Conversely, as noted above, the disability-friendly construction had not considered the local context which limited the extent to which these were useful. Poor accessibility inadvertently provided a source of discrimination. In Doti district the project potentially reinforced the Chhaupadi system[145] which is detrimental to the human rights of menstruating girls and women.[146] The team observed that the school hostel has a separate room for girls to stay in during menstruation. Girls mentioned in focus group discussions that while there is no restriction to attend class and interact with other students, they were not allowed to touch food and water in the school during the menstruation period. Although promoting human rights was not a main purpose of the project, this is an example of an unintended negative consequence that might have been avoided if the assessment of potential harm to human rights from the project had been more thorough.

The pre-defined plan for the school construction was not adapted to local needs – the standard building had 8 classrooms, while the school had 11 grades. The evaluation team noted that this produced a new source of discrimination as lower grade students were still

145 The Chhaupadi system prevents women and girls from undertaking normal activity during menstruation as they are considered impure.

146 All stakeholders to the evaluation had the opportunity to include reservations to specific findings in the final report. The Norwegian embassy in Nepal has the following comment to this finding: "After local authorities took over the management of schools after reconstruction it was beyond the scope of the project to define how the school and its rooms were used. The Embassy acknowledges that a more comprehensive risk assessment could have identified the risk of Chhaupadi-like practices, although avoiding this would have required a focused intervention with additional objectives and additional resources."

using the temporary structure without proper roofing, windows and doors and which are vulnerable to disasters. Students of all three schools visited by the team shared in the focus group discussions that they have difficulty studying in the temporary structures during rain and extreme temperatures. If the project had repaired the existing school buildings to meet minimum standards, all students at the school would have benefited.

Asian Development Bank's interventions helped create conditions where individuals can live with greater dignity and respect through access to essential resources. This was achieved through, e.g., the installation of new substations and electrification of rural areas, thereby bringing reliable power to previously underserved communities. The Asian Development Bank complemented these efforts by providing support for alternative livelihoods, specifically targeting marginalised groups. In focus group discussions, participants stated that these interventions helped the community to increase access to basic needs, such as food, water, sanitation, livelihood, health, markets etc.

The LI-BIRD and United Mission to Nepal projects positively impacted the realization of human rights for women, girls, and individuals from marginalised communities, particularly Dalit, landless, and freed Kamaiya[147] from rural areas. As per interviews and focus group discussions, the interventions contributed to enhancing rights to mobility, employment, food, nutrition, access to government services, and to participation in decision-making at the local level.

However, these projects also contributed to increased inequality of household burden. According to focus group discussions with male and female participants of the LI-BIRD and United Mission to Nepal projects, the projects had not considered the domestic and unpaid workload of women. Whilst the projects helped empower the women to work outside the home and to improve their family livelihoods, this has ultimately increased women's workload as gender roles within the home had not changed.

The projects contributed to ensuring the right to employment through supporting self-employment. For example, one focus group discussion with women's groups and members of the cooperatives stated that the livelihood support provided by LI-BIRD to the freed Kamaiya (targeting women) has increased their mobility and participation in training activities, group/cooperative meetings and the market. The participants in the focus group discussions shared that the shift towards vegetable farming has had a positive impact on children's health and nutrition. This, in turn, strengthens their right to a basic standard of living, which includes access to nutritious food.[148] Irrigation facilities and the adoption of new technology such as polyhouses also contributed to increase vegetable production, helping to improve nutritional standards, and growing surplus vegetables has given farmers a new source of income, according to focus group discussion participants. This additional income has allowed some to cover expenses like school fees and books. However, women farmers in Doti raised concerns in the focus group discussions that due to the lack of supply chains for the agricultural production, despite the engagement of rural women in agricultural work, they are unable to convert their production into market value.

The evaluation observed examples of designing activities around existing gender roles/norms, for example, through labelling of 'female-friendly technology and tools' in the LI-BIRD project, and due to the nature/type entrepreneurship training provided by the Asian Development Bank project in Madhesh province. Whilst the evaluation was unable to assess if this caused harm, it represents a missed opportunity to address and challenge gender norms.

147 Kamaiya was a traditional system of bonded labour in Western Terai in Nepal which was abolished in 2000 following protests.

148 The evaluation has not been able to verify to what extent this is due to the project activities.

7

Analysis and Discussion: Is the Implementation of Cross-cutting Issues Effective?

In this chapter, the findings from the identification of commitments and expectations in Chapter 3, the assessment of Norad documents in Chapter 4, the study of processes and practices in Chapter 5, and the collection of field-level data in Chapter 6 are combined to assess the validity of the theory of change presented in Chapter 1. The reader should consider that the discussion below relies on findings from a limited sample of programmes, review of Norad documentation, and a survey with relatively low response rates. However, the findings are consistent across programmes and levels of implementation, and the evaluation assesses that the evidence is strong enough to draw conclusions regarding implementation at management level. The evidence on implementation at field level relies on the assessment of four programmes only and should be taken as indicative.

Photo: **Marte Lid** | Norad

The diagram below, which is based on the theory of change presented in Chapter 1, illustrates the key theorised steps at different management levels required for the successful implementation of cross-cutting issues in Norwegian development cooperation. In addition to outlining the major steps at different management levels, it also details the various assumptions and processes that are considered necessary for each step to be fulfilled. This diagram provides the basis for the forthcoming discussion.

The overall finding is that the hypothesised results chain has not been realised. The chain is broken at several levels and in several ways. The text below identifies these.

FIGURE 13

Theorised Steps of Theory of Change

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
Clear commitments and expectations on implementation of cross-cutting issues	Norad/MFA case workers' work on cross-cutting issues is in line with commitments and expectations	Agreement partners implement cross-cutting issues as required	Implementing partners integrate cross-cutting issues in project planning and implementation
• Commitments and expectations regarding cross-cutting issues are clear • Commitments and expectations regarding cross-cutting issues are accessible • Commitments and expectations are translated into cleaar and accessible requirements for implementation of cross-cutting • Requirements reflect commitments and expectations	• Case workers are informed about the requirements • Case workers understand the requirements • Case workers have access to knowledge, tools, guidelines, knowledge and support to implement the requirements • Case workers have resources and/or prioritise implementation of the cross-cutting issues	• Agreement partners are informed about requirements • Agreement partners understand the requirements • Agreement partners have access to knowledge, tools, guidelines and support to implement the requirements, and to support their partners • Agreement partners have resources and/or prioritise implementation of the cross-cutting issues	• Implementing partners are informed about requirements • Implementing partners understand the requirements • Implementing partners have access to knowledge, tools, guidelines and support to implement the requirements • Implementing partners have resources and/or prioritise implementation of the cross-cutting issues • Cross-cutting issues are considered in project planning and implementation

7.1 Implementation of Cross-cutting Issues at Management Level

Commitments and Expectations

As evidenced in Chapter 3, there are many commitments and expectations regarding the four cross-cutting issues. These were not easily identified, and it took the evaluation substantial effort to locate them (others may exist). As noted, commitments to cross-cutting issues vary in terms of strength, clarity and level of ambition. In Meld. St. 24, the minimum requirement is the 'do no harm' approach, which is set out under 'risk management' in the Grant Management Assistant. This is inconsistent with the level of ambition in commitments made by Norway at the international and national level. Commitments to take a proactive approach to cross-cutting issues are only hinted at in other parts of the Grant Management Assistant.

While the Grant Management Assistant can be categorised as compliance-related and provides a reasonably clear explanation on what is implied by the 'do no harm' approach, there is some confusion regarding terminology, e.g. mainstreaming, unintended effects and 'do no harm', do good and 'proactive approach'. Expectations to implement a proactive approach to cross-cutting issues are unclear and the evaluation found limited evidence of any associated monitoring or accountability mechanism to ensure its implementation. As commitments/expectations for each thematic issue are not brought together in clear policy frameworks, there is no coherent sense of the totality of obligations.

In summary, there are many expectations and commitments relating to the cross-cutting issues, but they vary in clarity, strength and ambition, and are not fully reflected in the expectations provided to grant managers through the Grant Management Assistant technical tool. Thus, the first step in the diagram above is only partly supported by evidence.

Work on cross-cutting issues in Norad, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Embassies

The requirements expressed in the Grant Management Assistant, although not fully aligned with commitments made by the Norwegian government, are referred to by grant managers as the instructions on how cross-cutting issues shall be implemented. The instructions in the Grant Management Assistant requires description and reporting on potential negative effects that projects may have on cross-cutting issues.

However, several findings in Chapters 4 and 5 reveal that there is a widespread lack of understanding of what this means.

A main finding in Chapter 4 is that a sizeable majority of risk analyses identified in the Norad documentation that was processed did not contain a substantial discussion of risks to cross-cutting issues, and therefore did not satisfy the criteria for 'do no harm'. This finding is supported by survey responses and key informant interviews (reported in Chapter 5).

Evidence presented in Chapters 1, 3 and 5 show that there is a lack of guidance and tools on how to respond to the demands in the Grant Management Assistant. There is additional guidance in the Grant Management Assistant, but this is perceived as not sufficiently clear, detailed, nor easily accessible. There is also a lack of follow-up and monitoring of grant managers' assessments and no clear accountability mechanisms in place to help incentivise compliance.

Several findings in Chapter 5 indicate that there is knowledge about the four cross-cutting issues, and that thematical experts are available for advice on how to assess how well they are considered and reported

Photo: **Marte Lid** | Norad

on in project documentation. However, there is a need for context- and sector-specific knowledge relating to the cross-cutting issues to be able to fully assess potential risks to the cross-cutting issues from projects.

A key factor, identified in Chapter 5, that limits the attention paid to cross-cutting issues is lack of time to make thorough assessments, to ask for advice and for thematical experts to respond to questions. This was indicated in survey responses as well as in interviews with grant managers and partners. This indicates a lack of prioritisation of cross-cutting issues – possibly explained by low levels of support and encouragement from leadership to work on cross-cutting issues, especially in Norad. This reflects the 'flexible' approach to compliance found in the recent evaluation on disability (see Annex 4a). It also suggests a lack of feedback loops or two-way communication on cross-cutting issues, i.e., leadership simply 'instruct' staff to comply and assume this takes place.

The evaluation finds that the implementation of cross-cutting issues at grant management level is not fully aligned with commitments and expectations set out by the Norwegian Government. The requirements in the Grant Management Assistant are frequently referred to and it is well known that they must be followed, but their practical application is not well understood, deprioritised, and incorrectly implemented in a large share of grant agreements.

Agreement Partners

All agreement partners covered by the evaluation referred to the requirement to report on cross-cutting issues when asked about requirements from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs/Norad/the Ministry of Climate and Environment relating to cross-cutting issues. However, the Natural Language Processing analysis of follow-up documents shows that this is not consistently done. Interviews with agreement and implementing partner employees revealed a varying level of understanding of what the concept of cross-cutting issue implies and what the reporting requirement refers to. Data from both documents and interviews contain references to planned positive impact on the cross-cutting issues, risks to the project from a cross-cutting issue, or a simple statement that there is no risk that the project affects a cross-cutting issue.

Commitments made by the Norwegian Government are reflected to a certain extent in the sampled partner strategies and policies. All agreement partners covered by the evaluation had policies, strategies, guidelines or similar that encompass the four cross-cutting issues. These vary in scope and approach: some focus on collecting the information required by the grant management system, some were adapted to other donors' requirements, and some were integral aspects of the organisation's approach to ensure quality, sustainability and effectiveness. In most cases, the agreement partners' policies and guidelines to cross-cutting issues was more far-reaching and specific than those expressed in the Grant Management Assistant.

The agreement partners in the sample for this evaluation implement programmes via country offices or other partners, sometimes in links consisting of several organisations between the agreement partner and implementing partner. The extent to which the agreement partners included in this evaluation have guidelines and tools to support their partners to implement the cross-cutting issues, and the focus and level of detail of these varies. Some pass the request for reporting on with little change, and others have elaborate monitoring and learning systems.

When the link from agreement partner to field-level implementation consist of different organisations, each of these have their own policies, strategies and guidelines regarding cross-cutting issues. Findings from agreement partner interviews and documents indicate that agreement partners assess their partners' approach to cross-cutting issues, and support or suggest improvements when needed.

All agreement partners included in the evaluation are aware of the request to report on cross-cutting issues, but assessment found that actual compliance rates are low. The request is interpreted as a general request to report on cross-cutting issues, rather than a demand on the extent to which and how cross-cutting issues shall be implemented. The agreement partners have their own policies and strategies for implementing cross-cutting issues and these are aligned with the cross-cutting issues decided by the Norwegian Government. The agreement partners assess their partners' policies on these issues, and to a varying extent provide support on them. Hence, although the request to report on the four cross-cutting issues is acknowledged and forwarded by agreement partners, the commitments/expectations made by the Norwegian Government are not – unless they are integrated in the agreement partner's own policies and strategies.

Implementing Partners

As reported in Chapters 5 and 6, all implementing partners included in the sample have policies, strategies or guidelines that encompass the Norwegian cross-cutting issues. However, findings in Chapter 6 indicate that there is limited knowledge of these and how to implement them among field-level staff. There was limited comprehension of the concept of cross-cutting issues, and lack of information about the Norwegian cross-cutting issues and that these should be implemented. Findings from the field visits indicate that unanticipated risks to the cross-cutting issues did materialise (to a certain extent) and that there were missed opportunities to mitigate risks.

Findings from the field visits also suggest that there are discrepancies between reporting and perceptions of beneficiaries in terms of implementation of measures to support participation, non-discrimination, accountability and transparency.

The main indication of consideration of human rights in the four projects visited in Nepal was in terms of the selected project locations and beneficiaries, which targeted vulnerable groups and thus contributes to reducing discrimination and inequality. Beyond this, the evaluation did not observe intentional implementation of the Norwegian cross-cutting issues as such in the projects. Although partners' and implementing partners' policies and guidelines were in line with the Norwegian cross-cutting issues, field-level staff were not knowledgeable of these and did not know how to implement them. Field-level findings do show that targeting in terms of geographical areas and beneficiaries aimed at including the most vulnerable.

In conclusion, the pathway in the diagram above is broken in several places. While the funding flowed from the Norwegian development cooperation through to agreement partners and implementing partners to deliver some positive effects on human rights for end-beneficiaries, this was not a result of the implementation of human rights as a cross-cutting issue. There was limited evidence of implementation of cross-cutting issues at the management level as the evaluation observed this was deprioritised and/or poorly understood compared to other project management issues at different parts of the management chain. There was also limited evidence that human rights were considered as a cross-cutting issue in project planning and implementation. A revised contribution story and theory of change would need to consider how to build in prioritisation of cross-cutting issues within this management chain and alongside other project management aspects that are more effectively implemented.

Differences between the Four Thematic Issues

A limited number of differences between the implementation of the four cross-cutting issues at grant management level has emerged from the Natural Language Processing analysis of Norad documents. Sufficient implementation of the 'do no harm' requirement within documentation was found (in evaluation question 2) to be higher for human rights (16%) and women's rights and gender equality (13%) than for anti-corruption (9%) and climate change and environment (7%). Sufficient implementation of a proactive approach was found to be higher for climate change and environment (19%) than for human rights (12%), anti-corruption (11%) and women's rights and gender equality (9%). Whilst the differences are relatively small it is surprising that the rates of sufficient implementation of the proactive approach for women's rights and gender equality are so low given the more ambitious commitments in this area.

The evaluation was unable to collect sufficient evidence to assess with confidence if different barriers and enablers exist across the thematic issues to refine the thematic theories of change. However, some respondents interviewed suggested that there are more staff within Norad and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with stronger knowledge about gender equality and human rights issues as compared to climate change and environment and anti-corruption. Some interviewed also commented that anti-corruption is often only seen through the lens of fraud/financial management and with stronger guidance on and more resource focused on financial monitoring, and other aspects of anti-corruption (especially in terms of having a positive impact) get lost in the messaging from leadership.

7.2 Can human rights impact for end beneficiaries be linked to Norwegian development cooperation?

The reporting link on human rights from implementing partner across intermediary partners to agreement partners and finally to Norad/Ministry of Foreign Affairs seems to be mainly an administrative construct. Field-level findings indicate that information specifically relating to the Norwegian cross-cutting issues was not collected at field level, and there were severe shortcomings in the application of a 'do no harm' or human rights-based approach. This limits the extent to which implementation of the Norwegian cross-cutting issues as *cross-cutting issues* can be assumed to have had a positive impact or helped avoid negative effects on end beneficiaries' human rights. Findings on missed opportunities to contribute to human rights suggest that the lack of knowledge and application of a 'do no harm' and human rights-based approach may have undermined project effectiveness and sustainability, e.g., better feedback/accountability mechanisms could have generated learning to help adapt projects to deliver improved outcomes.

Targeting and choice of activities did contribute to improving the human rights situation of end beneficiaries. Findings from the field visits indicate that the selection of project locations and participants were guided by aspirations to reach disadvantaged groups. The selection of project activities that were supported by Norwegian funds also aimed at improving the situation for disadvantaged groups. This targeting can be interpreted as contributing to improve human rights for end beneficiaries.

However, this was not a result of human rights being implemented as a cross-cutting issue, but rather an intended, expected effect of planned project outcomes. Hence, although Norwegian development cooperation has to some extent contributed to improve human rights for end beneficiaries in Nepal, human rights as a cross-cutting issue have not.

Photo: **Marte Lid** | Norad

8

Conclusions

The evidence collected in this evaluation indicates that the present approach to implementing cross-cutting issues in the Norwegian development cooperation is not effective. The findings are in line with the results of previous studies, which indicate that earlier problems persist. There is little evidence of a trickle-down effect from grant management to implementation on the ground. In effect, implementation of cross-cutting issues relies on agreement partners and is dependent on their capacity and interest in implementing the cross-cutting issues, and on their support to and monitoring of their respective partners.

Photo: **Marte Lid** | Norad

Evaluation question 1: What are the documented expectations and commitments to implementing cross-cutting issues in Norwegian development cooperation?

The Norwegian government has made an extensive number of commitments relating to the four cross-cutting issues.

A large number of commitments have been made by the Norwegian government, to the four cross-cutting issues. These illustrate a wide range of objectives that go beyond the commitment to do no harm. The commitments are often not very specific in terms of targets and objectives, and they are not fully aligned with each other.

The expectation regarding cross-cutting issues at grant management level is not aligned with commitments and expectations made by the Norwegian government. Several commitments and expectations relating to human rights, gender equality and women's rights, climate change and environment, and anti-corruption are made by the Norwegian government or at lower levels, e.g. sectoral, in the aid administration. These vary in level of ambition, clarity, and strength.

The instructions provided in the grant management system and grant management assistant prescribes a 'do no harm' approach to cross-cutting issues. This does not fully reflect the level of ambition of other commitments and expectations made by the Norwegian government.

Evaluation question 2: How is the Norwegian development administration implementing the four cross-cutting issues into the management of its programmes and projects? And to what extent is this implementation successful?

Cross-cutting issues are not well implemented in Norad project documents. Overall, Non-Governmental Organisations are the agreement partner group with the highest proportion of design documentation meeting the 'do no harm' criteria for project documentation (within the Natural Language Processing analysis). There were some small differences in compliance between thematic areas, and the cross-cutting issue with the highest proportion of design phase documents meeting the 'do no harm' criteria was human rights.

When risks relating to cross-cutting issues are discussed in Norad project documents management documentation, this is rarely done in a manner that meets the 'do no harm' requirements. While nearly two thirds (64%) of the sampled agreements had associated design phase documentation containing at least some analysis of risks relating to cross-cutting issues, only a small share of these agreements (17% on average) assessed risks in a way that met the 'do no harm' requirements set out in the Grant Management Assistant. Reporting on risks to cross-cutting issues in the follow-up phase was also low, with just under a third of sampled documents demonstrating evidence of reporting on risks. Only 11% of these, however, were found to be reporting on risks in a manner that met the 'do no harm' criteria.

A small majority (58%) of the sampled agreements include proactive measures to address at least one cross-cutting issues in design phase documents. Climate and environment was the cross-cutting issue with the highest level, with close to half of all sampled agreements demonstrating evidence of planned proactive measures to address the issue. However, on average only 12% of the follow-up documents analysed contained evidence of substantial reporting on measures to proactively address cross-cutting issues.

Non-Governmental Organisations are the Agreement Partner Group with the Highest Proportion of Design Documentation Meeting the 'Do No Harm' Criteria within Norad Project Documentation (within the Natural Language Processing analysis) Non-Governmental Organisations were more likely to meet the 'do no harm' criteria for all thematic issues, except for climate, where private sectors partners scored highest. Non-Governmental Organisations were also the agreement partner group with the highest proportion of design documentation meeting the 'proactive' criteria overall, and across all the issues (except for climate and environment). The samples for evaluation questions 3 and 4 were too small to explore the reasons behind this difference with a sufficient level of evidence.

There were some differences across the thematic issues. Slightly higher levels of reaching the 'do no harm' criteria were found for human rights as a cross-cutting issue. Highest levels for the 'proactive approach' were found for climate change and environment, and lowest levels for gender equality. The overall differences are relatively small and there is insufficient evidence within the evaluation to understand any differences to how grant managers and partners approach the different issues in practice. However, given that stronger and more ambitious commitments were identified for gender it is surprising that this cross-cutting issue scored lowest on the 'proactive approach'.

Evaluation question 3: What are the enablers and barriers for the successful implementation of the four cross-cutting issues in the development programmes and projects?

Key barriers to implementing cross-cutting issues within grant management included lack of time, resource (including advisory capacity), and unclear monitoring and accountability mechanisms. There is also a lack of recognition from leadership on their importance, as reported by survey respondents especially in Norad. The requirement relating to cross-cutting issues expressed in the grant management system is perceived as the valid instruction but findings suggest that grant managers often do not know how to implement well and often fail to implement it. There is a demand for increased knowledge, guidance and tools to support the implementation of cross-cutting issues in the aid administration and in partner organisations.

There are several conceptual challenges relating to the implementation of cross-cutting issues. Throughout the evaluation, difficulties in understanding, combining and implementing the different concepts and terms relating to cross-cutting issues have been highlighted. The concept of 'do no harm' was reported to be difficult to grasp and 'unexpected negative effects' even more so. Assessing risks to the cross-cutting issues, from project activities, rather than the opposite, was also a challenge, and the need for assessing risks that projects do harm also in areas they intend to promote was not well understood. Each cross-cutting issue have additional conceptual challenges.

There is a lack of clarity around expectations to take a 'proactive approach' to cross-cutting issues at grant level. The expectation that risks to cross-cutting issues should still be used even when projects take proactive approach is not clearly stated. This can lead to confusion among grant managers and implementers.

The requirement relating to cross-cutting issues expressed in the grant management system is perceived as the valid instruction, but findings suggest that this is not fully implemented. The requirement to assess and report on risks to cross-cutting issues is well known by both grant managers and agreement partners. However, findings from the Natural Language Processing analysis suggest that efforts to proactively address cross-cutting issues are more frequently reflected in design and follow-up phase documentation than substantial analyses and reporting on risks to cross-cutting issues. Similarly, the quality of risk assessments was often missing of poor quality. Additionally, interviews indicate that the perceived requirement is to report on, rather than promote or avoid harm to the cross-cutting issues.

There are systems for reporting, but they are not applied in a way that ensures implementation or accountability.

Key barriers to implementing cross-cutting issues within Norad and Ministry of Foreign Affairs included poor understanding, lack of time, lack of guidelines, tools and support (including advisory capacity), and lack of recognition to motivate work on the four cross-cutting issues was also noted, especially in Norad. Norad and Ministry of Foreign Affairs staff interviewed reported that they often lacked the time to consider cross-cutting issues effectively alongside other grant management priorities. Whilst competency teams exist, both staff within these teams and working on grants often lack time to devote to obtaining/giving advice on integration of cross-cutting issues. It is unclear how current processes, e.g. audits of policy makers can support implementation of the 'do no harm' approach. Survey respondents from embassies had greater support from colleagues and leadership on cross-cutting issues than Norad respondents, but overall, the evaluation found limited evidence of strong and consistent messaging on their importance across both organisations. This is likely to contribute to their de-prioritisation alongside other project management issues.

There is need and demand for increased knowledge, guidance and tools to support the implementation of cross-cutting issues in the aid administration and for partner organisations. Survey and interview responses indicate a strong demand for training, guidance, tools and access to expert support that can help grant managers and partners understand and implement cross-cutting issues. The existing guidance in the Grant Management Assistant was found to be insufficient and difficult to access by several respondents, and partner interviewees reported that they needed more guidance from the grant management. The availability of competence teams and thematic experts was appreciated but not often used due to lack of time. The need for contextualised and sector-specific knowledge to assess combining of promoting and do no harm to cross-cutting issues to be able to fully identify risks to cross-cutting issues was evident.

Evaluation question 4: What are human rights effects (impacts) at the country level (in Nepal) for the end beneficiaries and people affected by the projects funded by Norway?

There are positive effects on human rights for end beneficiaries in Nepal via the main objectives of the studied projects, but not from consideration of human rights as a cross-cutting issue. There were shortcomings in the application of a human rights-based approach in project implementation.

Implementing partners in Nepal were not consistently informed about the specific requirements relating to the Norwegian cross-cutting issues. Staff, especially at field level, had limited knowledge about their own or lead organisation's policies and of how to apply a do no harm or human rights-based approach. Findings indicate that these approaches are poorly understood among field-level project staff. Similarly, field-level staff were not knowledgeable of their respective or lead partners organisations' policies and guidelines on issues relating to the Norway's cross-cutting issues.

Implementing partners were not informed of the Norwegian cross-cutting issues, and there was poor understanding among field-level staff of the implementing partners' own guidelines and policies relating to these issues. Knowledge about how to implement a do no harm or human rights-based approach was lacking or low. Beneficiaries attested to a lack of participation in project planning, lack of contextualisation and transparency.

Positive impact on human rights for end beneficiaries in Nepal could not be traced back to implementation of human rights as a cross-cutting issue in Norwegian development cooperation. The projects included in the field-level data collection in Nepal contributed to (or had potential to do so) positive effects on human rights for end beneficiaries via the planned, intended main outcomes. Examples include

improved access to education because of school construction, or increased access to food as result of income generating activities. Such effects can be traced back to Norwegian development cooperation via funding streams and partner selection. However, these materialise as a result of the intended outcomes of projects, not from paying attention to human rights during project implementation.

There were some examples of 'missed opportunities' to avoid potential harm to human rights, or to positively impact human rights for end beneficiaries in Nepal. The evaluation observed missed opportunities to identify risks to human rights of the projects visited. For example, potential risks around safeguarding appear not to have been assessed or mitigated in at least one project which in turn could prevent end beneficiaries' rights to e.g. safety, a healthy environment etc. In other projects, as there was no observed consideration of certain social norms or traditional gender roles, and it appears that projects may have reinforced harmful practices or inequalities.

Photo: **Synnøve Aasland** | Norad

Overall Conclusions

There are substantial challenges relating to the implementation of cross-cutting issues. The combination of being abstract and hard-to-grasp issues, that require substantial contextual as well as thematic knowledge to fully assess, and the lack of time, resources and guidelines available to case workers, contribute to explaining why the demands regarding cross-cutting issues are poorly fulfilled in Norad documentation.

There are examples of partners that overcome these challenges, but others that are struggling. The partner organisations included in this evaluation that have incorporated cross-cutting issues the most into programming, have invested heavily in developing policies, guidelines, tools and trainings to support implementation. Other partners studied have policies but not as well developed tools to support implementation. Local partners implementing the projects studied in Nepal did have policies or guidelines that incorporated the four cross-cutting issues, but these were poorly implemented at field level.

How to deal with cross-cutting issues is to a large extent outsourced to agreement partners and project implementers, generally without clear guidance, oversight or accountability. There is little evidence of successful implementation of cross-cutting issues because of requirements relating to their management or information and support to partners on commitments or how to implement them. Agreement partners are left to find ways to implement the cross-cutting issues based on their own interests and demands from other donors and actors. Some partners do so successfully while other struggle. Several noted that they would like more support from Norad and Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The level of ambition and implementation of cross-cutting issues in Norwegian development cooperation depends on the level of ambition, knowledge and resources of agreement partners – and on their control over implementing partners. All agreement partners covered by the evaluation had policies, strategies, guidelines or similar that encompassed the four cross-cutting issues. These vary in scope and approach: some focus on collecting the information required by the grant management, some were adapted to other donors of financiers' requirements, and some were integral aspects of the organisation's approach to ensure quality, sustainability and effectiveness. In most cases, the agreement partners' policies and guidelines to cross-cutting issues were more ambitious and more specific than those expressed in the Grant Management Assistant.

9

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been drafted for further discussion and refinement with key stakeholders. They are based on what the evaluation team think would support realisation of the theory of change within the Norwegian development context.

1. **Knowledge and understanding:** Norad, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Climate and Environment should work together to increase the knowledge and understanding of the concepts and terminology, as well as motivation for implementing cross-cutting issues. Partners with advanced levels of implementation should be asked to contribute. The competence teams in Norad should be strengthened and provided with more resources dedicated to supporting case workers and partner organisations.

2. **Alignment and interpretation:** The text in Meld. St. 24 should be reviewed and alignment to other commitments made by the Norwegian government assessed and discussed, and revisions of the overall policy towards cross-cutting issues should be considered. The English translation of the Meld. St. 24 should be revised to better reflect the original text in order to ensure that all partners have the correct information. The requirements and instructions in the Grant management Assistant should be, where possible, aligned with the commitments made by the Norwegian government or be explicit on where and why alignment is not possible. The requirements should include clearer guidance on when it is appropriate to promote positive impact. Calls for proposals and instructions to applicants and partners should clearly reflect expectations regarding cross-cutting issues.

3. **Clarity:** Norad and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should develop a clearer policy/position on how the requirement to implement the 'do no harm' approach to cross-cutting issues within the Grant Management Assistant sit alongside efforts to mainstream cross-cutting issues (a 'proactive approach'). This should support monitoring of adherence to commitments made within the four thematic issues. This could also help leverage work underway to develop guidance, tools and frameworks on mainstreaming issues such as gender, climate and human rights. Action plans/ frameworks on cross-cutting issues should clearly set out how the 'do no harm' approach relates to requirements in the Grant Management Assistant.

4. **Guidance, tools and support:** Existing guidance in the Grant Management Assistant should be revised and tools developed to support effective assessment and mitigation of risks to and from cross-cutting issues at grant level (commonly available tools could be considered rather than developing new tools). These should be developed and shared across the four cross-cutting issues (to ensure consistency and support efficiencies) both within Norad and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and with implementing partners. The guidance should include examples of good practice and risk assessments, and include tailored orientation, e-tutorials, resource materials, and analytical tools to apply to different contexts/ sectors. Dissemination and organisational learning should accommodate interaction between experts, grant managers and project management, e.g. webinars where staff and implementers can ask questions on guidance and approach. Dissemination should target all levels of partners, i.e., from national to local level partners, along with field-level staff. The existing competence teams should be strengthened and provided more resources, and a competence team for anti-corruption should be created.

5. **Sharing of good practice:** Informal and formal learning and sharing of good practice should be supported through, e.g. development of a community of practice on cross-cutting issues across Norad and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Given time and resource pressures, at the minimum it could operate virtually through, e.g. a Teams site (with a clear but simple terms of references)

used to share resources, examples, ask questions. Staff champions can be identified and work with competency teams to support this. Showcasing good practice within implementers could also support better implementation of cross-cutting issues across all partner groups. The enablers identified within agreement and implementing partners within Chapter 5, e.g. good toolkits, strong monitoring, accountability and learning mechanisms, should be considered when sharing good practice or refining guidance for agreement partners.

6. **Prioritisation:** Stronger messaging on cross-cutting issues by senior leadership within Norad and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs could incentivise staff to prioritise cross-cutting issues more at grant level alongside other priorities. This should be underpinned by a simple communication plan (including use of communication tools such as the intranet etc). It could also support greater allocation of resources (e.g. within competency teams) to help effective implementation. A senior champion could be identified to drive clearer messaging (also to strategic partners) and ensure integration within, e.g. thematic work and strategies. The senior champion could provide a central point for convergence of reporting/ accountability lines on cross-cutting issues to support accountability.

7. **Follow-up:** Clearer monitoring and accountability systems for effective follow-up of compliance with requirements in the Grant Management Assistant and more consistent application across departments, sections organisations are required. Reporting systems that are being implemented, e.g. using policy markers could also be used to identify capability gaps on and incentivise implementation of cross-cutting issues. Spot checks on implementation across the four thematic issues could be integrated into any programme, partner or portfolio reviews. An annual reporting commitment on progress in implementing cross-cutting issues to a specified senior leader/ champion could be put in place. The routine of aid management reviews could be revived with greater emphasis on cross-cutting issues.

8. **Partner capacity:** In the present approach to cross-cutting issues, the quality of implementation relies to a large extent on the partner organisations' systems, views and capacity relating to cross-cutting issues. It also depends on the agreement partners' ability to guide and steer their respective partners in the area of cross-cutting issues. If this approach is continued, these aspects should be prioritised in the assessment of partners and projects.

9. **Mainstreaming within contracts:** To ensure implementation of cross-cutting issues among all partners' interventions, the Norwegian development cooperation should have a substantive clause in the contractual framework that defines the contractual role and responsibilities of partners to address cross-cutting issues through programme and project design, implementation, monitoring, and reporting.

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Evaluation of cross-cutting issues in Norwegian development cooperation

1. Background

Cross-cutting issues in Norwegian development cooperation

Cross-cutting issues in development cooperation refer to themes or topics that are relevant and expected to be integrated into multiple sectors or areas of development. These issues are important because they may have a significant impact on the effectiveness and sustainability of development efforts. In the management of Norwegian development cooperation, four cross-cutting issues are considered fundamental for achieving sustainable development: Human rights, Women's rights and gender equality, Climate change and environment, and Anti-Corruption. There are several targeted programmes addressing these four themes, but such targeted programmes will not be the subject of this evaluation.

In Norwegian development cooperation, the four cross-cutting issues are addressed across several policies, white papers, action plans, strategies, programmes, and projects where the main purposes may be other objectives. There are thus various degrees and types of expectations to include in the four cross-cutting issues of development cooperation. For example, there is a general objective that all aid should contribute to strengthening the Paris agreement on climate change. Another example is in the field of gender equality, where the objective behind the "gender marker" is that half of bilateral aid shall contribute to gender equality.

At the project management level, all recipients are expected to assess and document if development projects will influence or be influenced by these four issues. At a minimum, the four issues shall be implemented in the projects' risk management process in order to mitigate and minimise unintended negative effects within the four cross-cutting issues.[1] Some grant schemes may, in addition, require proactive components to achieve targets regarding one or more of the cross-cutting issues.

In sum, there are various levels and types of commitments when implementing cross-cutting issues in Norwegian development cooperation.

1 Grant Management Assistant, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ref also Note to Parliament no 24, 2016-2017, page 29.

→ Human rights as a cross-cutting issue in development aid

This evaluation will look at how the four cross-cutting issues are implemented in Norwegian development aid and explore deeper into how human rights as a cross-cutting issue are implemented in one country (Nepal). Human rights are a cross-cutting issue in development cooperation because they are considered essential for ensuring that development efforts are inclusive, equitable, and sustainable, and that development actors are held accountable for their actions.

Human rights have been central to Norwegian development and foreign policy for a long time. A comprehensive outline of the Norwegian policy on human rights in Norwegian development policy was presented in the White paper *Opportunities for all: Human Rights in Norway's Foreign Policy and Development Cooperation.*[2] In the report, human rights are constituted as both goals in themselves and a means to achieve development goals. Recently,

2 Report to the Storting (white paper). Meld. St. 10 (2014–2015) - regjeringen.no.

Norway launched a strategy to promote the work for freedom of expression in foreign and development policy, signalling that this topic is a key priority.[3]

The commitment to promote, protect and respect human rights in Norwegian development cooperation is well reflected in several policy documents concerning development aid, as well as in documents such as the Budget Proposal for 2023, the present Government's political platform, and the annual Letter of Allocation to Norad.

→ **Evaluations of cross-cutting issues in Norwegian development assistance**

The OECD DAC peer review of Norwegian development cooperation in 2019 states that the do-no-harm approach to cross-cutting issues was poorly understood by the aid administration and recommended Norway further develop its approach and leave room to go beyond do no harm and pursue positive development outcomes as well.[4]

A recent evaluation analysed anti-corruption in Norwegian development cooperation, and one of the recommendations in the report was that Norway reintroduce the dual approach to anti-corruption, which includes proactive elements and does not limit its engagement to negative effects alone.[5] An internal review by Norad in 2022[6] looked at the extent to which it delivered on specific administrative demands linked to considerations of climate change and environment but did not include effects.

Evaluations of human rights have previously indicated weaknesses and challenges in implementing practices that respect and promote human rights in Norwegian development cooperation. For example, women in the front-line advocating for change on the ground in conflict-affected countries are exposed to multiple risks. A recent evaluation of Norway's efforts for women's peace and security[7] found weaknesses in how the aid administration protects and safeguards women human rights defenders. A central recommendation in the report is to strengthen risk assessments in both funding proposals and budget lines, as well as follow-up periodic meetings. Another example is from a recent evaluation report which found that disability rights are not yet well integrated into the norms and practices of Norwegian development cooperation despite political commitments and formation of more relevant policies.[8]

2. Purpose and users

The purpose of this evaluation is to provide evaluative evidence about how cross-cutting issues are implemented in the Norwegian aid administration and ultimately contribute to better results on the ground.[9] The evaluation is primarily intended to be a tool for practical lessons and learning. To encourage learning, the evaluation shall strive to identify successful implementation of the cross-cutting issues as well as areas that can be improved.

The users of this evaluation are staff involved in the management of development aid projects and programmes, both in the Norwegian aid administration and among its partners. It is also expected that the findings may be relevant for top management in Norad, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Climate and Environment.

The findings may also be of interest to the general public.

3. Evaluation questions

- **Evaluation question 1.** What are the documented expectations and commitments to implementing cross-cutting issues in Norwegian development cooperation?

3 International strategy for freedom of expression - regjeringen.no
4 OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews: Norway 2019, OECD)
5 Evaluation of Norway's Anti-Corruption Efforts as part of its Development Policy and Assistance (norad.no) (2022)
6 Norad internal report, not published online.
7 Evaluation of Norwegian efforts for women peace and security (norad.no) (2022)
8 Evaluation of Norway's inclusion of persons with disabilities in development cooperation (norad.no) (2022)
9 See section 4 for more on how to understand "implementation" in this evaluation.

- **Evaluation question 2.** How is the Norwegian development administration implementing the four cross-cutting issues into the management of its programmes and projects? And to what extent is this implementation successful?
- **Evaluation question 3.** What are the enablers and barriers for the successful implementation of the four cross-cutting issues in the development programmes and projects?
- **Evaluation question 4.** What are human rights effects (impacts) at the country level (in Nepal) for the end beneficiaries and people affected by the projects funded by Norway?

4. Evaluation object, scope and definitions

The evaluation object is the implementation of cross-cutting issues in Norwegian development cooperation. The first three evaluation questions will consider the implementation of the four cross-cutting issues, while the last evaluation question is delimited to human rights as a cross-cutting issue.

Scope

In this evaluation, the "implementation" of cross-cutting issues includes how cross-cutting issues are understood, considered, assessed, followed up, mitigated, remedied, and included in project reviews and evaluations. The implementation of such issues may have implications for how programmes and projects are carried out, and at a minimum, should not cause harm to end beneficiaries and affected persons.

Since the commitments to, and practices of, implementing cross-cutting issues are not only confined to the minimum requirement of do no harm, the scope of this evaluation will also include possible benefits of the implementation.[10] This is to ensure relevance, use and learning from the evaluation.

Understanding effectiveness involves analysing the achievement (or lack of achievement) concerning the objectives and results of an intervention/instrument/system;[11] in this evaluation, the instrument we analyse is the implementation of cross-cutting issues in Norwegian development cooperation. This means that effectiveness should be assessed on two levels: the management level and the level of end-beneficiaries and affected persons.

It is also expected that the evaluators assess the unintended effects of the implementation of cross-cutting issues. Norwegian development cooperation is mainly executed through partners. The main categories of partners are civil society organisations, private sector partners, the public sector, and multilateral organisations. It is expected that the evaluation includes an analysis of the role of partners in implementing cross-cutting issues. How to frame this analysis should thus be elaborated on in the proposal and inception report.

Scope per evaluation question

The scope of evaluation question one is to include an assessment of rules, regulations and guidance concerning the administrative grant management obligations in order to implement cross-cutting issues; the policies and strategies that include commitments to implementing the four cross-cutting issues; and other relevant commitments and expectations.

For evaluation question two, an analysis of both prevalence and quality with respect to how cross-cutting issues' implementation is recorded in the archive documents is expected and limited to a sample of Norad's and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' programmes and projects for the period 2018-2022. The archive documents selected should cover the whole project cycle.

The requirements to check and manage cross-cutting issues are mandatory for all grants. However, the main scope of this evaluation is the management of project support (so-called regime 1 grants in the Grant Management Assistant). The final criteria for the sampling, and the selection of the projects, should be determined in the inception report.

10 Targeted development cooperation within the four cross-cutting issues, where such issues are the main objective, are outside of the scope.

11 Executive summary | Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully | OECD iLibrary (oecd-ilibrary.org)

For evaluation question three, an analysis of the enablers and barriers of implementation regarding the cross-cutting issues should explore processes and practices within the administration and its partners. Further, the team is expected to assess whether roles, regulations, training, guidelines, policy and practices within the aid management and its partners are well suited in securing the successful implementation of cross-cutting issues. The relevant administration is Norad, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the embassies (in this case Nepal), and the relevant categories of partners are civil society organisations, private sector partners, and multilateral organisations. For this analysis, the evaluation team can propose a small selection of projects for a thorough analysis. The criteria for the selection of the projects, and the selection of the projects, should be determined in the inception report.

Evaluation question four aims to perform a deep-dive analysis of human rights impacts for end beneficiaries and affected persons in a recipient country, in this case, Nepal. The selection prioritised a country where the Norwegian aid engagement is significant and distributed across several different partners and sectors. The evaluation team will assess how human rights are implemented in one or several projects that

have clear risks for violations of human rights issues. The complete criteria for the selection of the projects, and the selection of the projects, should be suggested at the inception of the report, and the decision should be approved by the Department for Evaluation.

5. Methodology and Approach

All parts of the evaluation shall adhere to recognised evaluation principles and the OECD Development Assistance Committee's quality standards for development evaluation, as well as relevant guidelines from the Department for Evaluation.[12]

It is expected that the Evaluation Team propose an approach to evaluating the implementation of cross-cutting issues that assesses effectiveness on two levels and includes the following approaches:

Theory-based evaluation

The team should employ a theory-based evaluation approach to this evaluation. The evaluative process in this method entails an appraisal of the implementation of cross-cutting issues through an examination of the underlying logic behind the implementation. This underlying logic may be expressed in theories of change.

The evaluation team may therefore identify/reconstruct and describe the theories of change (ToC) used to implement the cross-cutting issues. The theories of change can be used to generate more detailed questions to be explored by the evaluation team within the framework of the research questions referenced in this document.

Relevant academic literature, evaluations of the implementation of cross-cutting issues in development aid in general, and human rights in particular, should be used to develop the inception report, inform the ToCs and triangulate findings in the main evaluation report.

Participatory methods and a human rights-based approach to evaluation

The evaluation should reflect a human rights-based approach to evaluation and thereby include the principles of non-discrimination, participation, accountability and transparency, and interdependence of human rights into the assessment process. This entails that it is expected that the investigation process and outcome are designed in a way that is conducive for active and real participation from stakeholders within the aid management, partner organisations, end beneficiaries and affected people.

Method for evaluation question 1

The consultants may respond to this question with desk reviews of relevant policy documents, referenced more in detail under section 4. The desk review may be validated with interviews with stakeholders.

12 Available at norad.no/evaluation guidelines

Photo: **Marte Lid** | Norad

The archive documents made accessible comprise a data dump consisting of all documents filed during a year (approx. 40 000 documents per year). The documents are usually pdfs with text but could also be in the format of excel files, pictures or word files. A data dump may include some meta data (metadata is linked to both files and documents). Thus, the evaluation team needs to include methods to sort and extract relevant project documentation from the data dump.

Method for evaluation question 3

The team is expected to propose a process evaluation approach (with an emphasis on implementation aspects) to analyse processes and practices within the administration and its partners in order to identify enablers and barriers to the successful implementation of cross-cutting issues. One possibility may be to apply theories of boundary spanning.[14] The team may also suggest identifying common items in the management of the successful implementation of cross-cutting issues, identified as a response to evaluation question 2. This can be achieved by comparing the cases of successful implementation with those cases that were unsuccessful. This may give the consultant an understanding of the enablers and barriers to the implementation of cross-cutting issues. Participatory methods involving management in the aid administration may also be proposed by the team in order to dig deeper into where in practice enablers and barriers are met.

14 See, for example: Full article: Boundary-spanning strategies for aligning institutional logics: a typology (tandfonline.com).

Method for evaluation question 4: Approach to assessing human-rights effects/impacts

The focus in evaluation question 4 is about effects within one country (Nepal), and the consultants are expected to propose a design to respond to this question.

It is expected that the proposed methodology for assessing human rights effects/impacts builds on internationally recognised methods for assessing such effects (such as Human Rights Impact Assessments (see, for example, DIHR 2021), or human rights monitoring frameworks (such as OHCHR 2012), etc. (see Deval 2022)). For a sampling of the project for review regarding human rights effects, see section 4.

The evaluation team are encouraged to describe how their proposal for analysing effectiveness accounts for external validity and counterfactuals. For example, accounting for external validity entails showing how their analysis of some selected programmes and projects will be relevant for other programmes and projects, and for Norwegian development cooperation in general. Accounting for counterfactuals involves an approach that understands the effects in relation to the difference if cross-cutting issues were not implemented.[15]

15 See for example Reichardt, Charles S. (2022) "The Counterfactual Definition of a Program Effect." American Journal of Evaluation, v43 n2 p158-174 Jun 2022.

The evaluation may include the following data sources:

- Desk review of steering documents, guidance material, programme documents (including theories of change and knowledge plans) and grant management documents.
- Survey, or semi-structured interviews with staff, partners, end beneficiaries or other people affected by programmes within selected countries can be considered.
- Individual in-depth interviews and/or focus group discussions with key staff and stakeholders (all interviews should be recorded, subject to the informed consent of interviewees), either transcribed or summarised, which upon request should be handed over to the Department for Evaluation.
- The observation of arenas where collective practices unfold (discussions/decision making practices in the unit, dialogue meetings with partners, etc.) can be considered.

Other suggestions:

The evaluation team may suggest other methods, and such methods should be strongly underpinned with argumentation, evidence of use, and do-ability/feasibility. The argumentation should address what the approach/methods include and why it is believed to be fruitful and lead to growth of knowledge in this evaluation.

6.Ethics

The analysis shall adhere to recognised evaluation principles and the OECD DAC's quality standards for the development evaluation, as well as relevant guidelines from the Department for Evaluation. The analysis shall be utilisation-focused, laying out a process that secures the engagement of the primary intended users and increases the likelihood of the findings being used. The team is expected to document their ethical assessments.

The evaluation process should show sensitivity and respect to all stakeholders. The evaluation shall be undertaken with integrity and honesty and ensure inclusiveness of views. The rights, dignity and security of participants in the evaluation should be protected. The anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants should be protected.

7. Organisation of the evaluation

The analysis will be managed by the Department for Evaluation in Norad. The Department for Evaluation is governed under a separate mandate for evaluating the Norwegian aid administration and reports directly to the secretary generals of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Climate and Development.[16]

The evaluation team will report to the Department for Evaluation through the team leader. The contractor will keep in regular contact with the Department for Evaluation throughout the process to discuss progress - including any problems that may jeopardise the assignment - and adjust the research design when required, as well as shed light on actions to be taken to guarantee the high quality of the deliverables. Such regular communication will be especially important in the early stages of the assignment to iron out the details of the approach. In some evaluations, the Department for Evaluation participates in parts of the fieldwork as an observer in order to gain a better understanding of the context of the evaluation. This may be the case for this evaluation and will be agreed upon during the inception phase.

16 For more information, see https://www.norad.no/en/evaluation

Photo: **G.N.B. Akash**

Stakeholders will be asked to comment on the draft inception report and the draft final report. In addition, experts or other relevant parties may be invited to comment on reports or specific issues during the process. The evaluation team shall take note of all comments received from stakeholders and integrate them into the report as appropriate. Where there are significant divergences of views between the evaluation team and stakeholders, this shall be reflected in the final report. Quality assurance shall be provided by the institution delivering the consultancy services prior to the submission of all deliverables. Access to archives and statistics will be facilitated by NORAD and stakeholders. The team is responsible forall data collection, including archival search.

Datasets, training protocols, training sets, interview transcripts and other underlying data should be handed over to the department for evaluation by request.

All decisions concerning the interpretation of these Terms of Reference, and all deliverables, are subject to approval by the Department for Evaluation.

8. Phases and Deliverables

All reports shall be prepared in accordance with the Department for Evaluation's guidelines (norad.no/evaluation guidelines) and shall be submitted in electronic form in accordance with the progress plan specified in the tender document or later revisions.

The deliverables consist of the following outputs:

- Inception report describing the approach, a maximum of 10 pages (excluding figures, graphs and annexes). The report will outline the methodology and timeline for the review. The inception report needs to be approved by the Department for Evaluation before proceeding further.
- Workshop(s) for validating data collection with relevant stakeholders.
- Draft evaluation report. The data science analysis of archive documents should be included as a separate annex, while central findings are included in the main report.
- Workshop(s) on draft findings and conclusions facilitated by the Department for Evaluation.
- Final evaluation report not exceeding 15,000 words (approx. 30 pages) excluding summary and annexes.
- Easy access summary of the report.
- Policy brief.
- Presentation of the report at a public seminar in Oslo.
- Contribution to other dissemination such as a podcast-interview.

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Part II 6.3.3 Global Risk Analysis

Undertegnet avtale

Part II 6.0 Global Program Main Application

Part II 6.2.1 Global Partner LVC

Part II 6.2.1 Global partner MaB

Part II Attachment 1 Global Policy result framework

Part II Attachment 2 Global Program Budget

Annual Plan 2019 – Annex 1.1-1.5 Narrative Programme Plans

Annual Plan 2019 – Annex 2.1 Main Agreement Budget 2019

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Annex 2.2 Nepal Risk Analysis Revidert November 2018

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Application – Part II 4.0 Nepal Main Application

Application – Part II 4.2.1 Nepal Partner CBODC

Application – Part II 4.2.1 Nepal Partner DWO

Application – Part II 4.2.1 Nepal Partner ECCA

Application – Part II 4.2.1 Nepal Partner JJS

Application – Part II 4.2.1 Nepal Partner LI-BIRD

Application – Part II 4.2.1 Nepal Partner NCDC

Application – Part II 4.2.1 Nepal Partner SS

Application – Part II 4.2.1 Nepal Partner YES

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Annex A – Special Report on Projects ended 2021

Annex B – Evaluations in 2021

Annex C – Risk Analysis Utdrag fra Dignis risikoanalyse

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LI-BIRD Project Completion Report LREP 2017 to 2020

LI-BIRD Annual Report of LREP 2019 Draft

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App 8 – QA Environmental and management system

App 28 – job creation Norad Application Item 4

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Mission Alliance Gender Policy

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8.1.2(A) NCA Sustainability Standard on RBA in programming

8.1.3(A) NCA Sustainability Standard on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

8.1.4(A) NCA Environmental Sustainability Standard

8.2(C) GBV SRHR Guidance Note

NCA Programme Framework 2020-2023

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NRC, Anti-corruption Handbook

NRC, Climate and Environment Strategy 2030

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NRC, Nigeria Maiduguri ENV Screening Report

NRC Child Safeguarding Policy

NRC Environmental Minimum Standards

NRC Protection from Violence Global Development Strategy 2022-2025

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SPA NRC Application

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United Mission to Nepal (UMN)

UMN, RCDC Beneficiary Selection Guideline

UMN, Revised proposal project document 2020-2024

UMN, Environment and Climate Change policy

UMN, FRM Management Guidelines

UMN, Gender Policy

UMN, Policy and guidelines for prevention of corruption and fraud

UMN Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults policy and guidelines

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UNOPS (2019), Copy of Norway Schools Monthly Report

UNOPS (2019), Tripartite MOU between NRA, Norway and UNOPS (signed)

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UNOPS, Annex G – Environmental Requirements

UNOPS, Copy of COVID-19 Health and Safety Guidelines

UNOPS Gender Action Plan for Projects

UNOPS Gender Mainstreaming in Projects

UNOPS General Conditions of Contract

UNOPS (2019) Copy of Sindhuli Field Visit Report June 2019

UNOPS, Norway Schools Proposal Live

UNOPS (2020), Copy of NRA Monitoring Visit Report December

Annex 3: Interviewees and Focus Group Participants

Details are not presented for ethical reasons. Please see Table 3 in Chapter 2 for a summary of the number of interviews, focus group discussions and persons met.

Field visit details

Project	Location	Date
LI-BIRD	Kalika, Badhaiyatal	25 Dec 23
LI-BIRD	Mahammadpur	25 Dec 23
LI-BIRD	Gularia (SK Seeds)	25 Dec 23
LI-BIRD	Sorhawa, Badhaiyatal	26 Dec 23
LI-BIRD	Bansgadhi	26 Dec 23
LI-BIRD	Gauriganga	27 Dec 23
LI-BIRD	Jhir sibir	27 Dec 23
LI-BIRD	Aambogiya Sibir	27 Dec 23
LI-BIRD	Dhangadhi	28 Dec 23
UMN	BP Nagar	29 Dec 23
UMN	Kola	29 Dec 23
UMN	Deuli	29 Dec 23
UMN	Barchen	29 Dec 23
UMN	Bastola	29 Dec 23
UMN	Sunnada	29 Dec 23
UMN	Juni Chautara	30 Dec 23
UMN	Mannakapadi Ballejudi	30 Dec 23
UMN	Baneri	30 Dec 23
UMN	Risadi	30 Dec 23
UNOPS	Phikkal	9 Jan 23
UNOPS	Phikkal	10 Jan 23
UNOPS	Basbote, Dudhauli	11 Jan 23
UNOPS	Basbote, Dudhauli	12 Jan 23
UNOPS	Hariharpurgadhi	12 Jan 23
Asian Development Bank	Hariharpurgadhi	16 Jan 23
Asian Development Bank	Golbazaar	16 Jan 23
Asian Development Bank	Lahan	16 Jan 23
Asian Development Bank	Lahan	17 Jan 23
Asian Development Bank	Bardibas	17 Jan 23
UMN	Bardibas	27 Feb 23

Annex 4: Data

Annex 4a, Part 1: Relevant Learning from Previous Research and Evaluations

During the inception phase, the evaluation team reviewed literature including relevant evaluations of Norwegian development cooperation's approach to some of the issues considered as cross-cutting issues (or aspects thereof). A range of approaches to addressing cross-cutting issues at the management level were identified, ranging from the development of policies and strategies for mainstreaming to establishment of dedicated roles and teams for implementing these, along with relevant tools and guidance for staff. A key overall finding is that cross-cutting issue implementation requires, at the very least, sufficient guidelines and tools to support analysis, planning, monitoring, and evaluation[17]. Within the literature, very few studies or evaluations were found that traced the effect of different approaches to cross-cutting issue implementation on end beneficiaries. Key learning identified in this review informed the theory of change outlined in the previous section, and some is presented below as it provides context and background to the present evaluation.

17 See e.g. OECD DAC (2014).

Human Rights

Development agencies have taken different approaches to mainstreaming human rights and human rights-based approaches. The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development developed a binding human rights policy adopted in 2011, including mainstreaming human rights throughout all sectors and priority areas of cooperation.[18] The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency has focused on mainstreaming child rights within all aid interventions, and the New Zealand Agency for International Development has focused on supporting implementation at management level, applying screening questions throughout the programme cycle and evaluation process.[19] UN agencies have possibly implemented human rights as a cross-cutting issue most comprehensively, adopting a human rights-based approach in their programming with deliberate good programming practices, such as, fostering participation and ensuring accountability to all stakeholders.[20] A recent evaluation found that Norway has been largely unable to implement its commitment towards disability inclusion due to several factors. These include a lack of systems to support and ensure compliance, limited strategic clarity and operational and monitoring framework or budget. The evaluation also noted an organisational culture that was accepting of 'flexibility' in complying with policy commitments and the challenge presented by levels of sub-granting in maintaining strategic direction.[21]

18 Oberleitner, 2008.

19 E.g. addressing aspects such as potential rights impacts, risks, participatory methodologies, accountability mechanisms, inclusivity, and data collection.

20 This entails evaluating human rights claims, empowering both rights-holders and duty-bearers, monitoring outcomes and processes based on human rights standards, adhering to international human rights principles.

21 Watkins, 2022.

Women's Rights and Gender Equality

Regarding gender equality, the literature notes that well-evidenced links with economic growth[22] have driven some organisations to devote significant resources to mainstreaming gender equality as a cross-cutting issue.[23] Increasingly, donors are focusing on intersectionality between climate change and gender, noting that women and girls are often more adversely affected by climate change. Norway's National Action Plans (NAPs) for women, peace, and security have included a focus on implementing gender as a cross-cutting issue in peace processes, humanitarian efforts, and in addressing conflict-related sexual violence. The evaluation of the Norwegian-funded Women, Peace and Security efforts points out significant flaws related to projects using the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) gender marker, including misapplications and under-reporting, It found this led to distorted representations of Norway's efforts, and the inadequate support system and weak protection measures for women peacebuilders and human rights defenders in Women, Peace and Security projects, resulting in a reactive rather than proactive approach to protection efforts.[24]

22 Østebø & Haukanes, 2016.

23 There are examples of where development agencies have taken a comprehensive approach to developing and implementing gender mainstreaming strategies and tools to support implementation, e.g. within the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Danish Aid Administration.

24 Fabra-Mata, 2022.

Climate Change and Environment

Climate mainstreaming has moved up the agenda of development agencies in recent years. In 2021, Members of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) issued a joint Declaration committing to aligning official development assistance with the goals of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.[25] However, to-date there is limited progress across the OECD DAC in implementing this. Key challenges in implementation identified include overlooking some climate risks, inadequate consideration of long-term perspectives, lack of awareness of climate change within the development community and limitations on resources for implementation.[26] To support operationalisation of climate change as a cross-cutting issue, some agencies have worked on making climate information more accessible and relevant, developing climate risk screening tools, and promoting transboundary and regional coordination. This should include enabling staff and implementers to effectively assess risks and opportunities within both climatemitigation and adaptation, and to identify and deal with trade-offs with other national or developmental objectives.[27]

25 OECD, 2021.

26 Agrawala and Van Aalst, 2008.

27 Gupta, 2009.

Anti-Corruption

There has been an increasing focus on addressing and preventing corruption within development cooperations in the last 20 years, including as a cross-cutting issue. The approach within Norway's development cooperation focuses on implementing a zero-tolerance policy. One evaluation found that aspects of this approach, e.g., partner assessment, contractual arrangements, financial management, and enforcement has led to enhanced risk management practices among Non-Governmental Organisations and multilateral agencies. However, overall, this approach has suffered implementation challenges due to low levels of staff capacity, guidance and limited understanding.[28] This reflects wider learning from other donors – root causes and specifics of corruption in different contexts are often not well understood and donors often have an improvised, inappropriate or inconsistent response (regardless of the issue or context) when corruption arises within programming.[29]

28 Vaillant, et al., 2020.

29 Dávid-Barrett and Fazekas, 2020 and Mason, 2021.

Annex 4a, Part 2: Evaluation question 1 Data Annex - List of Documents with Commitments/Expectations Identified

International Level

Document Identified	Type of Document/Comment
Overall Cross-cutting Issues (2)	
OECD (2005), Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness	International declaration on how to make aid more effective, endorsed/agreed by Norway.
OECD (2014), Mainstreaming cross-cutting issues: 7 lessons from peer reviews'	Report/lessons by OECD. As OECD member state, Norway can be seen as implicitly supporting these principles/lessons.
Human Rights (13)	
United Nations (2011), Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights	Guidance for how businesses (which may include private sector development partners) should approach human rights. As an UN member state, Norway can be seen as implicitly supporting these principles.
United Nations (2003), The Human Rights Based Approach to Development Cooperation Towards a Common Understanding among UN agencies	A UN policy document setting out how UN agencies should approach human rights. Norway is UN member state.
United Nations (2007), UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities	International convention, Norway signed in 2007 and ratified in 2013. Norway states its policies are consistent with the principles set out in the convention.
United Nations (1993), The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action	Outcome of international conference – common plan to strengthen human rights 25 years after the International Conference on human rights in 1968. As plan, did not require ratification.
United Nations (2015), The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 4.5, 4.8) (2 x commitments)	Norway has signed up to SDGs and has an implementation monitoring framework in place at national level. SDGs are central to Norwegian development cooperation (e.g. Norad's strategy).
The High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People (1993), Convention on Biological Diversity	International legal instrument for conservation of biological diversity, ratified by Norway in 1993.

Document Identified	Type of Document/Comment
Human Rights (continues)	
United Nations (1994), The Convention to Combat Desertification	The only legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management. Norway signed in 1994, ratified in 1996.
United Nations (2010), The United Nations Framework on Climate Change (Part 2, 2010) (2 x commitments)	The basic legal framework and principles for international climate change cooperation, aiming to stabilise accumulations of greenhouse gases. Norway ratified original framework in 1993.
Co-Chairs of Global Disability Summit, Global Disability Summit 2022 - Co-Chairs' Summary, 2022, pg2	International pledge affirming commitment to human rights-based approach. Summary of pledges made at international summit. Summit co-hosted by Norwegian government.
The Global Disability Summit 2018, Charter for Change, 2018, pg1	Non-legally binding charter as outcome of international summit co-hosted by Norwegian government. Affirming commitment to disability rights within all humanitarian and disaster risk reduction work.
Leaders' Pledge for Nature (2020), United to Reverse Biodiversity Loss by 2030 for Sustainable Development	International pledge, endorsed by Norway.
Climate Change and Environment (5)	
The High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People (1993), Convention on Biological Diversity	International legal instrument for conservation of biological diversity, ratified by Norway in 1993.
United Nations (2010), The United Nations Framework on Climate Change (Part 2, 2010) (2 x commitments)	The basic legal framework and principles for international climate change cooperation, aiming to stabilise accumulations of greenhouse gases. Norway ratified original framework in 1993.
Leaders' Pledge for Nature (2020), United to Reverse Biodiversity Loss by 2030 for Sustainable Development	International pledge, endorsed by Norway.
OECD (2005), Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness	International declaration on how to make aid more effective, endorsed/agreed by Norway.
Gender Equality (20)	
United Nations (2015), The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 4.1, 4.2, 4.3) (3 x commitments)	Norway signed up to SDGs and has an implementation monitoring framework in place at national level.
UN (2015), Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Beijing +5 Political Declaration and Outcome (2 x commitments)	Outcome document – adopted by UN as reference point for governmental commitments to gender equality.

Document Identified	Type of Document/Comment
Gender Equality (continues)	
United Nations (1993), The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (2 x commitments)	Outcome of international conference – common plan to strengthen human rights 25 years after the International Conference on human rights in 1968. As plan, did not require ratification.
United Nations (1994), The Convention to Combat Desertification	The only legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management. Norway signed in 1994, ratified in 1996.
United Nations (2016), New Urban Agenda	Endorsed by UN General Assembly in 2016. Sets out standards and principles. Norway implicitly supports as UN member state.
UN (1979), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	Legally binding document for Norway.
Anti-corruption (7)	
International Anti-corruption Conference (2018), Anti-corruption conference statement (2 x commitments)	Explicitly endorsed by Norway as attending state.
OECD (2016), OECD's Recommendation of the Council on Development Cooperation Actors on managing risk and corruption (2 x commitments)	Implicitly supported by Norway as OECD member state.
OECD (2018), Rapid Reactions to corruption: coordinating donor responses	Guidance implicitly supported by Norway as OECD member state.
United Nations (2016), New Urban Agenda	Endorsed by UN General Assembly in 2016. Sets out standards and principles. Norway implicitly supports as UN member state.
OECD, (2007) OECD Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile	Guidance/principles implicitly supported by Norway as OECD member state.

National Level

Document Identified	Type of Document/Comment
Overall Cross-cutting Issues (3)	
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2016-17), The Place of Oceans in Norway's Development and Foreign Policy, Meld. St. (2016-17) Report to the Storting (White Paper)	Official government policy – white paper – recommendation from MFA approved by Council of State.
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2023), Investing in a Common Future	Commissioned by Norwegian government but not official government policy.
Human Rights (20)	
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2021), International Strategy for Freedom of Expression (2 x commitments)	Official government policy/strategy.
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2014-15), Opportunities for All: Human Rights in Norway's Foreign Policy and Development Cooperation, Meld. St. 10 (2014-15) Report to the Storting (White Paper)	Official government policy – white paper – recommendation from MFA approved by Council of State. Predates evaluation timeframe but deemed relevant given broad treatment of human rights (e.g. covers wider human rights issues).
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2021), Strategy for Norway's efforts in the Sahel	Official government strategy. Sampled due to accessibility (other regional strategies exist but have not been reviewed).
Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs (2023), Climate Change Hunger and Vulnerability Strategy – strategy for climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction and the fight against hunger	Official government strategy - to will the framework for climate adaptation measures in view of COP26 commitments.
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2016-17), The Place of Oceans in Norway's Development and Foreign Policy, Meld. St. (2016-17) Report to the Storting (White Paper)	White paper – official government policy. Approved by the Council of State.
Norwegian Ministries (2019), Food People and the Environment, The Government's Plan for Sustainable Food Systems in the context of Norwegian Foreign and Development Policy, 2019-2023	Official government action plan, signed by ministers.
Norwegian Ministry of Culture and Equality (2023), The Norwegian Government's Action Plan on Gender and Sexual Diversity (2023-26), Action Plan	Official government action plan, signed by ministers.
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2024), Norway's Humanitarian Policy, 2024-2029	Official government policy.
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2022), Equality for all, Norway's Strategy for disability-inclusive development (2022-25) (11 x commitments)	Official government policy.

Document Identified	Type of Document/Comment
Gender Equality (27)	
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2016), Freedom, Empowerment and Opportunities - Action Plan for Women's Rights and Gender Equality in Foreign and Development Policy 2016-2020 (2 x commitments)	Official government policy signed by Minister for Foreign Affairs.
Norwegian Ministry of Culture and Equality (2023), The Norwegian Government's Action Plan on Gender and Sexual Diversity (2023-26), Action Plan, 2023 (3 x commitments)	Official government action plan, signed by ministers.
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2021), International Strategy for Freedom of Expression, (2 x commitments)	Official government policy/strategy.
Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research (2021), Freedom from Negative Social Control and Honour Based Violence, Action Plan, 2021-24	Official government action plan, signed by ministers and prime minister.
Norwegian Ministries, Food People and the Environment (2019), The Government's Plan for Sustainable Food Systems in the context of Norwegian Foreign and Development Policy, 2019-2023	Official government action plan, signed by ministers.
The Royal Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion (2015-16), Gender Equality in Practice – Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, Report to the Storting - White Paper Meld. St. 7, 2015-16	Official government white paper.
Norwegian Ministries (2023), Women, Peace and Security (2023-30) – Norway's National Action Plan, (10 x commitments)	Official action plan, signed by Ministers.
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2020), The Security Council: Norway's Priorities (2 x commitments)	Official government policy priorities.
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2014-15), Opportunities for All: Human Rights in Norway's Foreign Policy and Development Cooperation, Meld. St. 10 (2014-15) Report to the Storting (White Paper)	Official government policy – white paper – recommendation from MFA approved by Council of State. Predates evaluation timeframe but deemed relevant given broad treatment of human rights (e.g. covers wider human rights issues).
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2021), Strategy for Norway's efforts in the Sahel	Official government strategy. Sampled due to accessibility (other regional strategies exist but have not been reviewed).
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2013), (Meld St. 25 (2013-14) Report to the Storting (White Paper) Education for Development, (pg17)	Official government policy. Before evaluation timeframe but no other education policy found.
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2018), Norway's Humanitarian Policy, 2018	Official government policy.
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2023), A Just World is an Equal World, Action Plan for Women's Rights and Gender Equality in Norway's Foreign and Development Policy (2023–2030) (2 x commitments)	Official government policy.

Document Identified	Type of Document/Comment
Climate and Environment (7)	
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2018), Norway's Humanitarian Policy, 2018	Official government policy.
Norad (2021), Norad's Strategy towards 2030	Official departmental strategy.
Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Climate Change Hunger and Vulnerability Strategy – strategy for climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction and the fight against hunger, 2023	Official government strategy - to will the framework for climate adaptation measures in view of COP26 commitments.
Norwegian Ministry of Climate and Environment (2020/21), Norway's Climate Action Plan 2021-30 (Meld St.13 (2020-21) Report to the Storting White Paper	White paper – official government policy, approved by the Council of State.
UN Environment Programme (2019), Norwegian Implementation Plan for the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants	Official government policy, approved by Ministry of the Environment.
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2021), Strategy for Norway's efforts in the Sahel	Official government strategy. Sampled due to accessibility (other regional strategies exist but have not been reviewed).
Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs (2016-17), Common Responsibility for a Common Future (Meld. St. 24 (2016-17) Report to the Storting (white paper), (English summary)	Official government white paper.
Anti-corruption (7)	
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Investing in a Common Future, 2023	The report is an independent contribution to both Norwegian and international policy development but does not represent government policy.
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2018), Guidelines for dealing with suspected financial regularities in the Foreign Service. (3 x commitments)	Guidelines for MFA and Norad.
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2014-15), Opportunities for All: Human Rights in Norway's Foreign Policy and Development Cooperation, Meld. St. 10 (2014-15) Report to the Storting (White Paper)	Official government policy – white paper – recommendation from MFA approved by Council of State. Predates evaluation timeframe but deemed relevant given broad treatment of human rights (e.g. covers wider human rights issues).

Instructions to MFA/Norad Staff

Document Identified	Type of Document/Comment
Det Kongelige Utenriksdepartement (2023), Tildelingsbrev til Direktoratet for utviklingssamarbeid - Norad for 2023, (1 x commitment on cross-cutting issues, 2 x commitments on gender, 2 x commitments on human rights)	Budget instructions to Norad (official and published document).
Det Kongelige Utenriksdepartement (2024), Tildelingsbrev til Direktoratet for utviklingssamarbeid - Norad for 2024 (2 x commitments on gender)	Budget instructions to Norad (official and published document).
Grant Management Agreement (2023), Complied Version 230323	Document governing grant management by civil servants managing official development assistance funds in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norad and Ministry of Climate and Environment. Compliance-related, not publicly available.
Kommunal-og moderniseringsdepartment (2017), Etiske retningslinjer for statstjenesten, revised 2017	(Ethics Guidelines for civil servants). N.b., translated from Norwegian. Publicly available thus official civil service policy.
Norwegian MFA (2023), Template for 'Grant scheme rules'.	Template for staff with limited guidance.
Ministry of Foreign Affairs/Norad (2019), Decision Document	Template for documenting the assessment made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs/Embassies/Norad concerning a grant application. Includes reference to cross-cutting issues.
Ministry of Foreign Affairs/Norad, Template for project and field visit	Template with basic guidance for staff conducting project and field visits, with reference to cross-cutting issues. Staff are not obliged to follow this template.
Ministry of Foreign Affairs/Norad, Template, mandate for formal meetings	Template with basic guidance for staff conducting formal project meetings, with reference to cross-cutting issues. Staff are not obliged to follow this template.
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2011), Final report for grants from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) S81 – Final report form for project/programme support.	Template with basic guidance for completion of final project reports, with reference to cross-cutting issues. No obligation to follow this template.
Ministry of Foreign Affairs /Norad (2021), Terms of Reference for Partner Assessment	Template for terms of reference for staff commissioning partner assessments. Includes reference to cross-cutting issues.
Norad (2014), Ethical guidelines – Guide for Norad's grant recipients.	Official departmental policy for grant recipients. Publicly available.

Document Identified	Type of Document/Comment
A sample of grant scheme rules were sampled, e.g.: Ministry of Foreign Affairs /Norad (2020), Grant Scheme Rules (Civil Society). Ministry of Foreign Affairs /Norad (2020), Grant Scheme Rules (Support for cooperation on framework conditions for private sector development in developing countries) Ministry of Foreign Affairs /Norad, Grant Scheme Rules (2020) (Sustainable Oceans and Measures to Combat Marine Litter)	Sample grant scheme rules written by civil servants setting out requirements (including on cross-cutting issues) to grant applicants.
Ministry of Foreign Affairs/Norad (2022), Template: Agreement with UN Organizations whom Norway does not have a framework agreement with.	Template with guidance in for civil service working with UN organisations on official development assistance.

Photo: **Fotograf** | Norad

Annex 4b: Survey Questions and Responses

Q1: Which organisation do you presently work in?

Answer Choices	Responses	
N/A	0.0%	0
Norad Department for Partnerships and shared prosperity	9.72%	7
Norad Department for Climate and Environment	13.89%	10
Norad Department for Human Development	25.0%	18
Norad Department for the Nansen Support Programme for Ukraine	5.56%	4
MFA Department for Regional Affairs	1.39%	1
MFA Department for Multilateral Affairs	5.56%	4
MFA Department of Sustainable Development	4.17%	3
Ministry for Climate and Environment	0.0%	0
Embassy (please add country in the comment box)	34.72%	25
Other (please explain in the comment box)	0.0%	0
Comment		26
Answered		72
Skipped		0

Q2: What is your role? (Multiple responses are possible)

Answer Choices	Responses	
N/A	0.0%	0
Project management	20.83%	15
Department head	2.78%	2
Unit head	13.89%	10
Advisor	9.72%	7
Senior advisor	58.33%	42
Thematic expert on a cross-cutting issue (Please specify area of expertise in comment box)	5.56%	4
Other (Please specify in comment box)	0.0%	0
Other (please specify in comment box)	18.06%	13
Answered		72
Skipped		0

Q3: How many years of experience do you have working with development cooperation?

Answer Choices	Responses	
N/A	0.0%	0
None	0.0%	0
Less than two years	6.94%	5
2 – 4 years	8.33%	6
5-10 years	23.61%	17
More than 10 years	61.11%	44
Answered		72
Skipped		0

Q4: Gender

Answer Choices	Responses	
N/A	0.0%	0
Female	72.22%	52
Male	27.78%	20
Non-binary/other	0.0%	0
Answered		72
Skipped		0

Q5: Do project proposals and reports from your downstream partner organisations make realistic assessments relating to the four cross-cutting issues?

Answer Choices	Not at all	To a small extent	To some extent	To a large extent	To a very large extent	N/A	Total	Weighted Average
Human Rights	0	6	31	26	5	4	72	3.44
Gender equality and women's rights	0	4	19	35	11	3	72	3.77
Climate and Environment	1	9	29	20	8	5	72	3.37
Anti-corruption	1	6	33	24	4	4	72	3.35
Comment							12	
Answered							72	
Skipped							0	

Q6: Do project proposals from downstream partners discuss how projects may negatively affect the four issues?

Answer Choices	Not at all	To a small extent	To some extent	To a large extent	To a very large extent	N/A	Total	Weighted Average
Human Rights	2	16	32	16	2	4	72	3.0
Gender equality and women's rights	2	11	29	19	7	4	72	3.26
Climate and Environment	1	15	30	15	5	6	72	3.12
Anti-corruption	1	16	32	17	2	4	72	3.04
Comment							14	
Answered							72	
Skipped							0	

Q7: Do project proposals from downstream partners discuss how projects may positively affect the four issues when these are not a main objective?

Answer Choices	Not at all	To a small extent	To some extent	To a large extent	To a very large extent	N/A	Total	Weighted Average
Human Rights	4	10	29	16	5	8	72	3.13
Gender equality and women's rights	1	6	23	29	8	5	72	3.55
Climate and Environment	2	18	20	17	7	8	72	3.14
Anti-corruption	3	22	27	14	1	5	72	2.82
Comment							8	
Answered							72	
Skipped							0	

Q8: Do you make your own assessment of the four cross-cutting issues during the project proposal and planning phase?

Answer Choices	Not at all	To a small extent	To some extent	To a large extent	To a very large extent	N/A	Total	Weighted Average
Human Rights	1	1	17	24	20	9	72	3.97
Gender equality and women's rights	1	1	13	24	24	9	72	4.1
Climate and Environment	1	4	11	26	19	11	72	3.95
Anti-corruption	1	1	16	25	20	9	72	3.98
Comment							13	
Answered							72	
Skipped							0	

Q9: Do you feel confident that you can make a correct assessment of how a project may affect the four issues?

Answer Choices	Not at all	To a small extent	To some extent	To a large extent	To a very large extent	N/A	Total	Weighted Average
Human Rights	0	6	31	24	7	4	72	3.47
Gender equality and women's rights	0	4	22	34	8	4	72	3.68
Climate and Environment	0	10	25	26	6	5	72	3.42
Anti-corruption	0	8	29	23	7	4	71	3.43
Comment							15	
Answered							72	
Skipped							0	

Q10: Do progress reports from downstream partners provide adequate updates on project impacts on cross-cutting issues?

Answer Choices	Not at all	To a small extent	To some extent	To a large extent	To a very large extent	N/A	Total	Weighted Average
Human Rights	0	20	29	17	1	4	71	2.99
Gender equality and women's rights	0	10	26	31	1	4	72	3.34
Climate and Environment	0	17	31	15	3	6	72	3.06
Anti-corruption	1	24	27	14	0	5	71	2.82

Comment	10
Answered	72
Skipped	0

Q11: Do you make your own assessment of whether the reported impact on the four issues is reasonable?

Answer Choices	Not at all	To a small extent	To some extent	To a large extent	To a very large extent	N/A	Total	Weighted Average
Human Rights	1	3	23	28	11	6	72	3.68
Gender equality and women's rights	1	2	23	30	11	5	72	3.72
Climate and Environment	2	4	24	25	11	6	72	3.59
Anti-corruption	1	6	21	29	9	6	72	3.59

Comment	6
Answered	72
Skipped	0

Q12: Do you maintain an active dialogue with partners on the four issues during project implementation?

Answer Choices	Not at all	To a small extent	To some extent	To a large extent	To a very large extent	N/A	Total	Weighted Average
Human Rights	0	6	26	23	9	8	72	3.55
Gender equality and women's rights	0	4	16	33	11	8	72	3.8
Climate and Environment	0	8	23	24	9	8	72	3.53
Anti-corruption	0	7	17	34	6	8	72	3.61
Comment							14	
Answered							72	
Skipped							0	

Q13: Do you support your downstream partners in their work relating to the four cross-cutting issues?

Answer Choices	Not at all	To a small extent	To some extent	To a large extent	To a very large extent	N/A	Total	Weighted Average
Human Rights	2	11	28	14	9	7	71	3.27
Gender equality and women's rights	2	10	24	22	7	6	71	3.34
Climate and Environment	5	14	21	14	10	7	71	3.16
Anti-corruption	2	11	28	18	6	6	71	3.23
Comment							14	
Answered							71	
Skipped							1	

Q14: Are the commitments and expectations regarding Norway's four cross-cutting issues clear to you?

Answer Choices	Not at all	To a small extent	To some extent	To a large extent	To a very large extent	N/A	Total	Weighted Average
Human Rights	0	4	18	35	14	1	72	3.83
Gender equality and women's rights	0	3	12	38	18	1	72	4.0
Climate and Environment	0	7	14	33	16	2	72	3.83
Anti-corruption	0	5	12	36	18	1	72	3.94
Comment							2	
Answered							72	
Skipped							0	

Q15: Are there clear instructions, guidelines and tools for your work on the four issues?

Answer Choices	Not at all	To a small extent	To some extent	To a large extent	To a very large extent	N/A	Total	Weighted Average
Human Rights	1	10	28	25	6	2	72	3.36
Gender equality and women's rights	1	7	27	26	9	2	72	3.5
Climate and Environment	1	11	28	25	4	3	72	3.29
Anti-corruption	1	8	33	22	6	2	72	3.34
Comment							13	
Answered							72	
Skipped							0	

Q16: Is there support (thematical experts, helpdesk, senior advisors, etc.) within your organisation that you can access for advice regarding the four issues?

Answer Choices	Not at all	To a small extent	To some extent	To a large extent	To a very large extent	N/A	Total	Weighted Average
Human Rights	2	10	30	17	9	3	71	3.31
Gender equality and women's rights	2	8	26	22	10	3	71	3.44
Climate and Environment	3	11	24	18	10	5	71	3.32
Anti-corruption	3	10	29	17	9	3	71	3.28

Comment	12
Answered	71
Skipped	1

Q17: Are there systems in your organisation for e.g. data collection, knowledge management and learning, that support your work on the four issues?

Answer Choices	Not at all	To a small extent	To some extent	To a large extent	To a very large extent	N/A	Total	Weighted Average
Human Rights	4	23	29	8	1	6	71	2.68
Gender equality and women's rights	4	21	26	13	2	5	71	2.82
Climate and Environment	5	21	25	9	2	9	71	2.71
Anti-corruption	6	20	29	9	1	6	71	2.68

Comment	15
Answered	71
Skipped	0

Q18: Is work on the four issues as cross-cutting issues recognised and rewarded by the leadership in your organisation?

Answer Choices	Not at all	To a small extent	To some extent	To a large extent	To a very large extent	N/A	Total	Weighted Average
Human Rights	5	16	23	14	8	6	72	3.06
Gender equality and women's rights	4	14	21	20	7	6	72	3.18
Climate and Environment	5	10	23	17	7	8	70	3.18
Anti-corruption	4	16	24	13	7	7	71	3.05
Comment							5	
Answered							72	
Skipped							0	

Q19. Is work on the four issues as cross-cutting issues recognised by your colleagues?

Answer Choices	Not at all	To a small extent	To some extent	To a large extent	To a very large extent	N/A	Total	Weighted Average
Human Rights	2	7	25	22	9	7	72	3.45
Gender equality and women's rights	2	6	23	23	11	7	72	3.54
Climate and Environment	1	9	22	22	10	8	72	3.48
Anti-corruption	1	8	25	21	9	8	72	3.45
Comment							7	
Answered							72	
Skipped							0	

Q20: What would most improve your work on the four issues?
(Please select the top three for each issue. Please note that this question has a column for each issue, not a row)

Answer Choices	Human Rights	Gender equality and women's rights	Climate and Environment	Anti-corruption	Total Respondents
Clearer objectives for the issue	33	23	27	24	42
Clearer instructions for my work	25	20	29	26	40
Tools and guidelines that I can use in my work	43	36	45	43	53
Improved knowledge within my organisation	22	18	18	23	33
Access to training	35	32	39	41	47
More time to make assessments of proposals	23	21	24	20	30
More time to follow-up on reports	24	23	18	22	31
Access to support in my organisation	21	21	20	22	28
Higher demands on reporting on the issues	16	22	14	15	23
Stronger mandate relating to the four issues	21	16	17	17	26
Closer communication with partners	21	26	24	24	30
Other (please explain in comments box	6	6	6	6	7.0

Comment	17
Answered	70
Skipped	2

Q21. Any other relevant comments?

Answered	10
Skipped	62

Q22. Any examples of good or bad practice of implementing the four cross-cutting issues?

Answered	14
Skipped	58

Q23. Any suggestions on how work on the four cross-cutting issues could be improved?

Answered	20
Skipped	52

Annex 4c: Nepal Project Summaries and Context

#	Project Name	Location	Budget (USD)	Period	Target Groups	Approach	Goal
1	**Badikedar Integrated Community Transformation (BICT)** Implemented by United Mission to Nepal (UMN) Doti Cluster in partnership with Rural Community Development Centre (RCDC) and support from Mission Alliance (MA)	Badikedar Rural Municipality (RM), Sudurpaschim (Far-West) Province, Doti district of Nepal	311,400	January 2020 – December 2024	Women, minorities, people with disabilities, people living in disaster prone areas	Sense, analyse and respond: the rights-holders and duty-bearers to go through a process of reflection and active discussion. Probe, sense and respond: utilizing technical analysis to identify issues related to food security, health, and education, and implementing tailor-made actions contextualized to the specific situation.	"Fullness of life for all women, men, children and those with disabilities in a transformed Badikedar RM"
2	**Livelihoods and Resilience Enhancement Programme (LREP II)** Implemented by Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, Research and Development (LI-BIRD)	Bardiya: Gulariya, Bansgadhi, Barbardiya, Badhaiyatal Rural and Thakurbaba Rural Municipalities (5) Kailali: Gauriganga and oshipur Rural Municipalities (2) Humla: Kharpunath Rural and Sarkegad Rural Municipalities (2)	n/a	2017 – 2020 (Phase I) 2021 – 2025 (Phase II)	Rural women, youth and marginal groups Estimated number of target households for 5-year program is 7006	1. Empowering beneficiaries for irreversible change 2. Empowering community institutions 3. Empowering local government	To improve food and nutrition security, income and resilience of small and marginal farm families in western terai and hills of Nepal

#	Project Name	Location	Budget (USD)	Period	Target Groups	Approach	Goal
3	**Post-Earthquake School reconstruction in Nepal, bridging the gaps in remote areas** Implemented by United Nations Office for Project Services	Ramechhap, Sindhuli, Kathmandu, and Bhaktapur districts within the Bagmati Province	8,626,685 (contribution: 8,496,157 + interest: USD 130,528)	December 2018 – December 2022	Schools in Bagmati Province	The project followed a rigorous process for selecting schools in coordination with the CLPIU. It adopted a cluster approach to select contractors who would provide materials and labour for construction	144 rooms in 24 school buildings in 4 districts
4	**South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation Power Transmission and Distribution System Strengthening Project** Implemented by the Asian Development Bank and Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA)	Kathmandu and Bagmati province, and Madhesh Province (Province 2)	Concessional ordinary capital resources loan equivalent to $200.0 million and Norwegian grant of NOK315.0 million (approximately $35.0 million)	November 2020 – June 2026	Rural people in Bagmati province and Madhesh province who do not have sustained access to electricity	The Asian Development Bank TA will support Nepal Electricity Authority in implementing the project. It will also help Nepal Electricity Authority in implementing the gender action plan (GAP) and fill the gaps in Nepal Electricity Authority's capacity for mainstreaming gender in its operations	1.Power system transmission capacity increased 2. Distribution system in Kathmandu Valley, Bharatpur and Pokhara, and consumers' awareness on energy efficiency and safety improved 3. Distribution network and capacity of women to use electricity for energy-based enterprises development in Province 2 improved

Human Rights Situation in the Country and at Local Level

Nepal is party to several international and regional human rights laws including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), 1947; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966; the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, 1966; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1979; the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), 1984; the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC), 1989; and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

As a signatory to these international instruments, Nepal is obligated to uphold treaty obligations domestically in policy and legal frameworks. According to Nepal's treaty law, if the domestic law is inconsistent with international treaties to which Nepal is a party, it will be void for the purpose of that treaty, and the provisions of the treaty shall be enforceable.[30]

The Constitution of Nepal has adhered 31 fundamental rights with constitutional remedies.[31] It has also introduced various specialized legislations to respond to the fundamental rights empresses by the Constitution of Nepal.[32]

Nepal is committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. While aiming to graduate from Least Developed Country (LDC) status by 2026, Nepal has already met key Human Assets Index (HAI) and economic and environmental benchmarks.[33] Progress is evident in social programs, infrastructure, income generation, and remittances. Nepal has been implementing the Fifth Human Rights Action Plan, 2020–2025, which has targeted economic and social rights. Despite progress, discriminatory legal provisions and uneven implementation hinder full rights realisation.

The literacy rate in United Nations Office for Project Services program intervention area particularly in Sindhuli district of Bagmati Province is 73%, with 80% of males and 66% of females being literate signalling significant levels of gender inequality. The largest proportion (33%) of the total literate population have completed primary level of education. [34] [35]

There are several challenges on promoting gender equality and non-discrimination in Madhese and Sudurpachim, where Asian Development Bank, LI-BIRD and UNM have been working. Regarding household leadership, the Madhesh Province of Nepal, out of a total of 1,156,715 households, 78% are headed by males, while 22% are headed by females. In the Sudurpaschim Province of Nepal, out of a total of 577,102 households, 65% are headed by males, while 35% are headed by females.

The data underscores a notable discrepancy in ownership patterns on land and housing. For instance, only 2.7% of females possess sole ownership of housing units, whereas the percentage of females owning land exclusively stands higher at 10.6% in Madhese province. Only 0.7% of females possess sole ownership of housing units, whereas the percentage of females owning land exclusively stands at 4.7%.[36]

30 Sec. 9 (1), Treaty Act, 1990.

31 Fundamental Right Section, The Constitution of Nepal, lawcommission.gov.np/np, [Accessed on 24 Feb 2024].

32 Act relating to Compulsory and Free Education, 2018, Act Relating to Housing Rights, 2018, Act Relating to Food, 2018, Employment Act, 2018, Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health Rights Act, 2018, Public Health Act, 2018, Social Protection Act, 2018, The Act Relating to the Rights of Person with Disabilities, 2018, The Caste Based Discrimination and Untouchability (Offence and Punishment Act, 2011 (First amendment 2019), The Act Relating to the Rights of Person with Disabilities, 2017. Labor Act, 2017, Education Act, 1971 (2028 B.S) are the some of the key legislations

33 Nepal Need Assessment, Costing and Financing Strategies for Sustainable Development Goals, Government of Nepal, Nepal Planning Commission, Kathmandu.

34 Preliminary Report on National Census, 2021, National Statistics Office. 2021. National Population and Housing Census 2021 (National Report). Government of Nepal, https://censusnepal.cbs.gov.np/Home/Details?tpid=5&dcid=3479c092-7749-4ba6-9369-45486cd67f30&tfsid=17, [Accessed on 28 Feb 2024].

35 Preliminary Report on National Census, 2021, National Statistics Office. 2021. National Population and Housing Census 2021 (National Report). Government of Nepal, https://censusnepal.cbs.gov.np/Home/Details?tpid=5&dcid=3479c092-7749-4ba6-9369-45486cd67f30&tfsid=17, [Accessed on 28 Feb 2024].

36 Ibid

In Madhesh and Sudurpachim provinces, motivation for migration includes work, studying, natural disasters, dependency and marriage.[37] The provided data presents various reasons for individuals' migration, categorized by sex. Overall, out of a total of 1,182,458 individuals, 5.9% migrate due to work or employment, 1.1% due to trade or business, 2.2% for study or training purposes, and a significant majority of 75.4% due to marriage. Additionally, 8.4% are categorized as dependents, while 0.5% are absent due to natural calamities, 2.0% due to involvement in agriculture, 1.4% returning home, and 2.7% for other reasons. Breaking down the data by sex, among males (totalling 195,626), the reasons for migration include work or employment (29.0%), trade or business (4.9%), study or training (9.6%), marriage (4.8%), dependency (27.1%), natural calamities (1.9%), agriculture (8.8%), returning home (3.5%), and other reasons (9.3%). On the other hand, among females (totalling 986,832), a smaller proportion is absent due to work or employment (1.9%), trade or business (0.4%).[38]

With regards to decision-making, in Sudurpachim and Madhesh provinces, among males a high percentage participate in decision regarding their own healthcare, with 97.5% and 76.6% respectively engaging in such decision-making. Similarly, most males at over 60% in each province are involved in making major household purchases. In contrast, among females in Sudurpachim and Madhesh provinces, participation in decision-making shows lower percentages across all categories compared to males. Specifically, 75.3% and 55.3% respectively of females are involved in decisions about their own healthcare, while 55.9% and 49.5% participate in making major household purchases. However, it's noteworthy that a considerable percentage of females, at 43.5%, reported being involved in both decisions listed, suggesting a potential improvement in decision-making autonomy between genders. [39]

In Madhesh province, over a third of women, 36.5% experience physical violence from any perpetrator, with nearly 39% enduring it from intimate partners. Emotional violence affects 24.8% of women, with 10% experiencing violence during pregnancy. Sexual violence affects around 10.6% of women from any perpetrator and over 11.6% from intimate partners. In Sudurpaschim province 16.1% of women experience physical violence from any perpetrator, with nearly 17.2% enduring it from intimate partners. Emotional violence affects 7.3% of women, with 4.1% experiencing violence during pregnancy. Sexual violence affects around 4.4% of women from any perpetrator and over 4.3% from intimate partners.

37 Ibid
38 Ibid

39 Nepal Demographics and Health Survey Report 2022, chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR379/FR379.pdf, [Accessed on 1st March 2024].

Annex 5: Methodology and Tools

Annex 5a: Theories of Change

The results chain in the centre articulates the hypothesised pathway from commitments and expectations, via activities and outcomes, to impact for end-beneficiaries. At the top, the yellow boxes set out the management level processes that should take place to help ensure realisation of the results chain. This also depends on various assumptions holding. In this evaluation, both the processes at management level (yellow boxes) and human rights impact for end-beneficiaries in Nepal are to be tested. The assumptions, articulated in boxes at the bottom of the diagram, illustrate what the evaluation team hypothesised was needed for implementation to be successful.

Photo: **Ken Opprann**

FIGURE 14

Theory of Change Overview

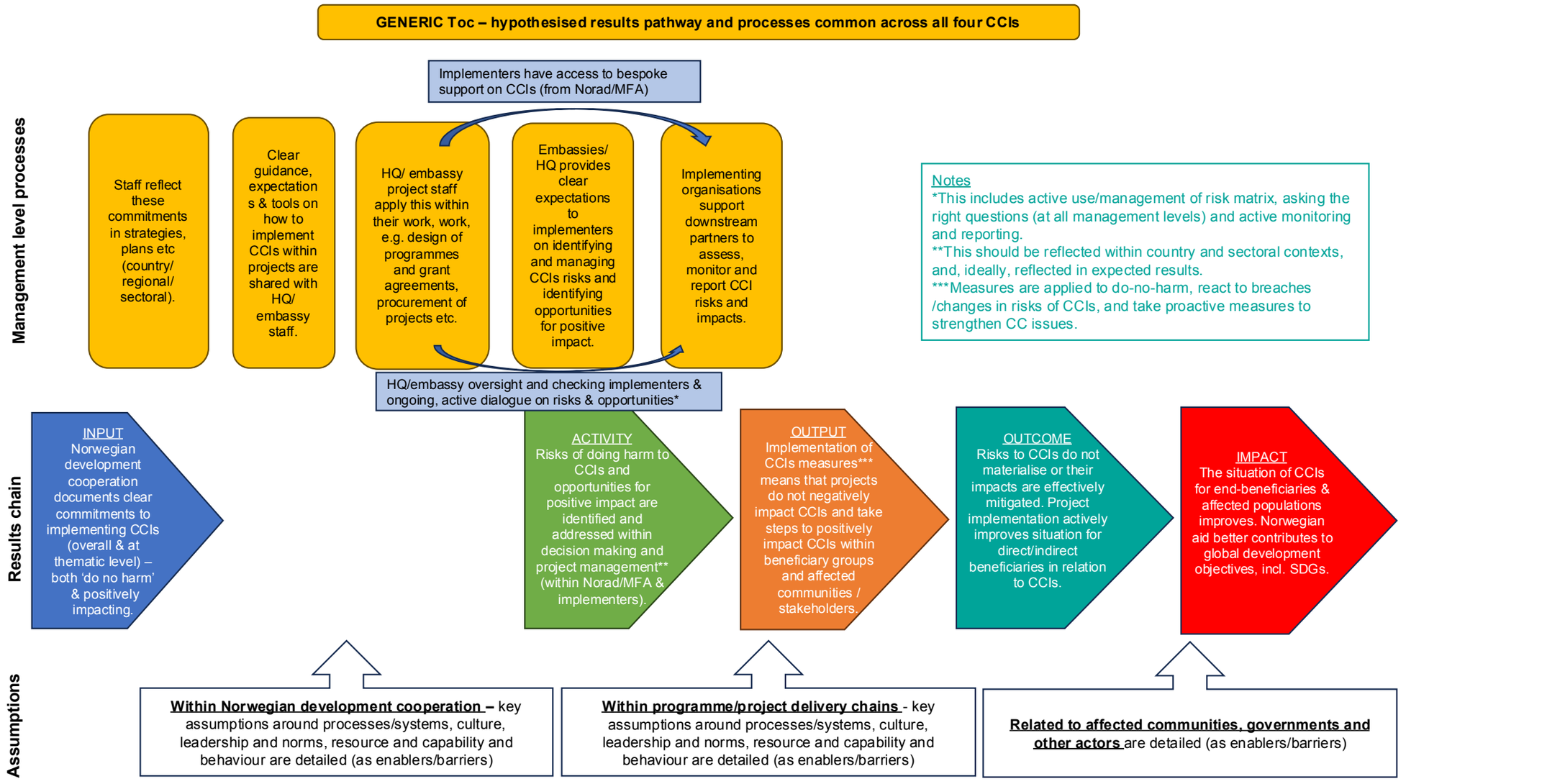


FIGURE 15

Human Rights Theory of Change

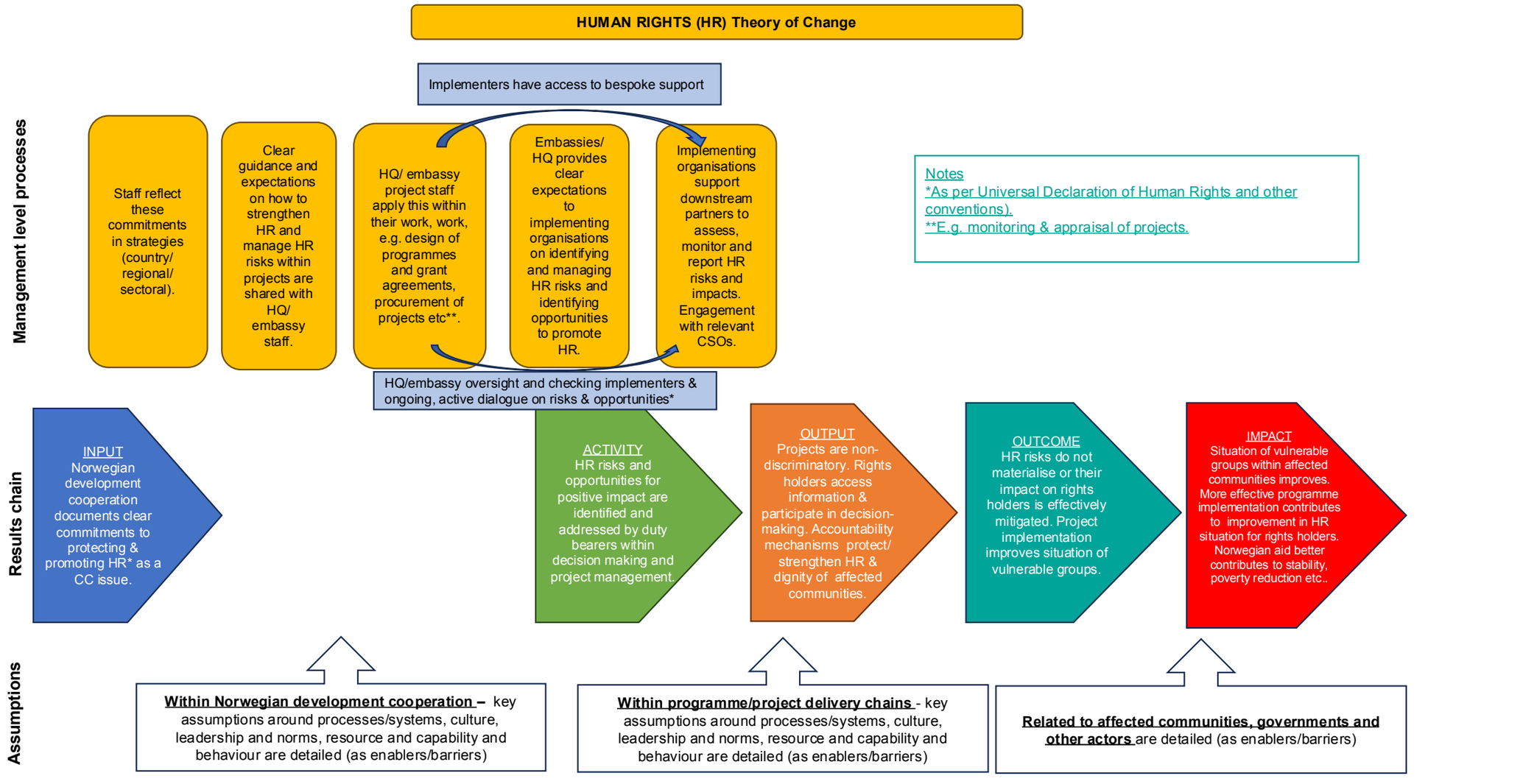


FIGURE 16

Climate Change and Environment Theory of Change

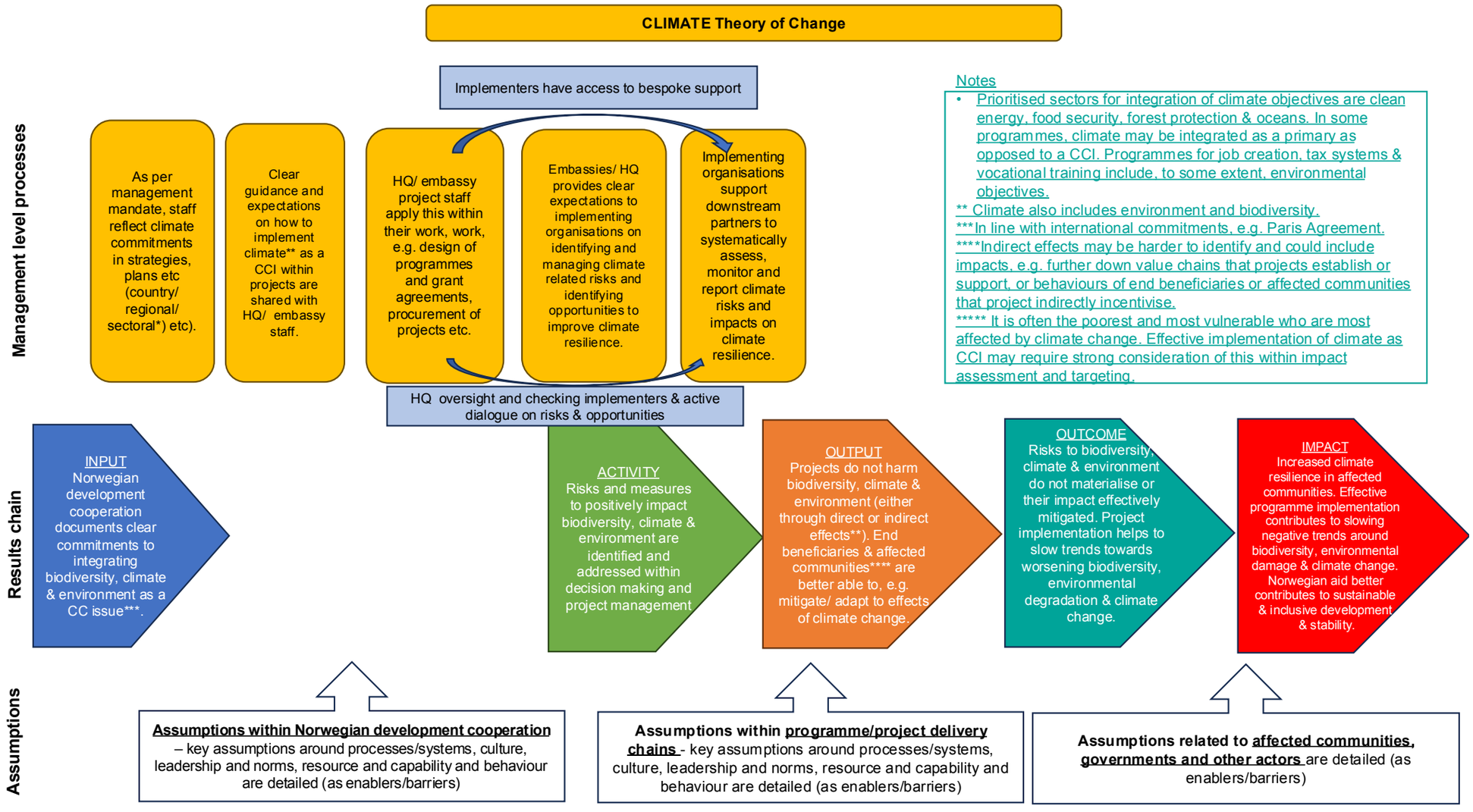


FIGURE 17

Women's Rights and Gender Equality Theory of Change

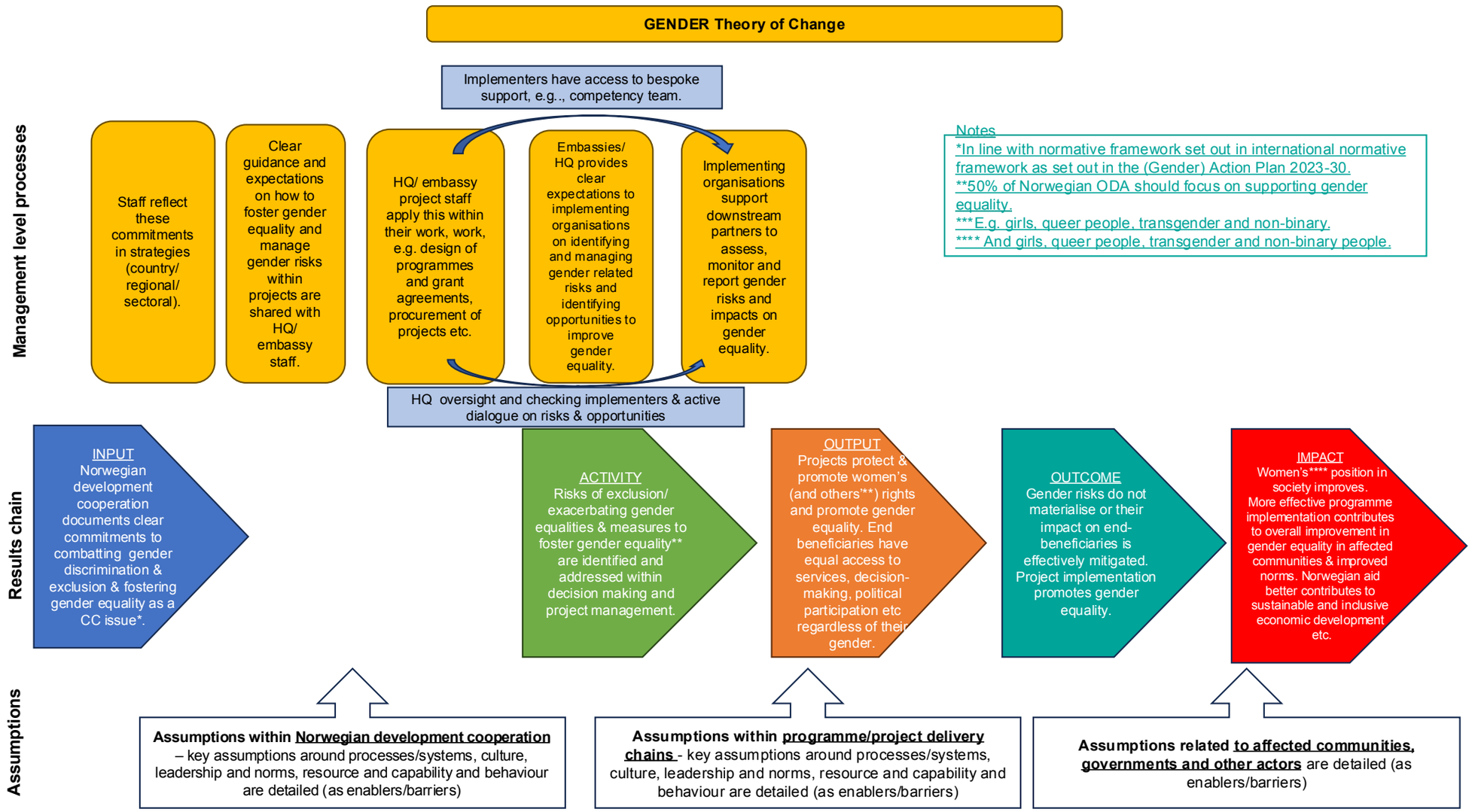
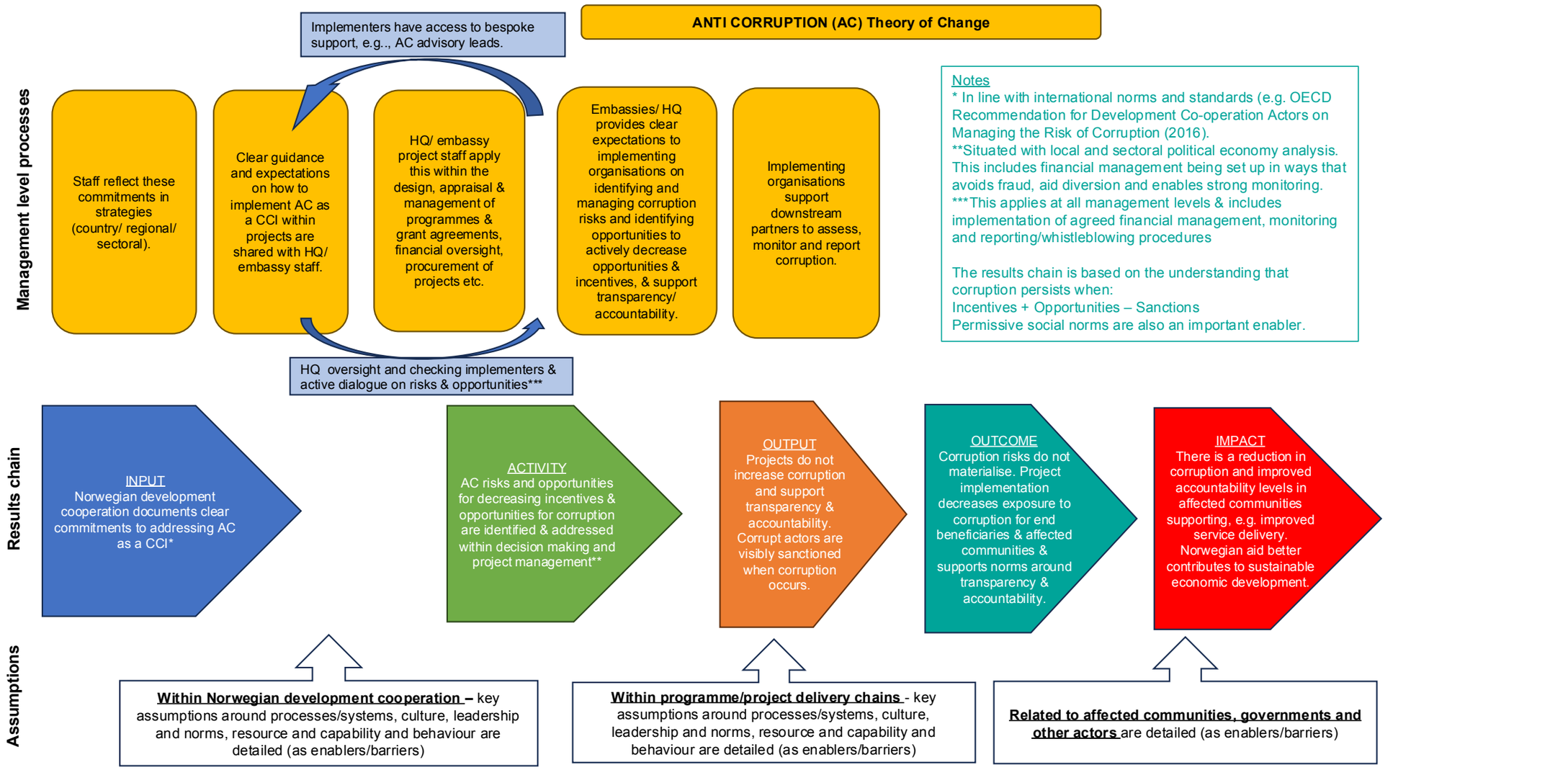


FIGURE 18

Anti-Corruption Theory of Change



Annex 5b: Summary of Natural Language Processing Methodology

Overview

To answer this evaluation question, we adopted a machine learning approach that involved the development of a Natural Language Processing (NLP) model to analyse relevant project design and follow-up documentation drawn from Norad's digital archive. Natural language processing is a machine-learning approach to text analysis, which can be used to apply text analysis techniques that are laborious for humans at scale, such as identifying language, sentiment analysis, translating documents, finding terms that commonly appear together, and extracting keywords, content, form, and meaning from text passages.

This model was designed to automatically examine the content of sampled documents and categorise them against a three-point ordinal scale that was developed to capture the quality of cross-cutting issue implementation. Where possible, documents were also matched to their corresponding agreements to enable an assessment of relationships between cross-cutting issue implementation and agreement characteristics, such as implementing partner group and sector.

Sample

The universe of information for this exercise was a data dump containing Norad's complete digital archives, which comprised 750GBs of data. The key sampling challenge involved identifying and extracting relevant documentation[40] from this extremely large data-dump, which was structured in a way which did not facilitate straightforward identification of its contents[41]. Relevant documentation was defined as key documentation associated with the design and follow-up of agreements, as detailed in Norad's Grant Management Assistant and was identified and extracted from the data dump using both templates provided by Norad and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and key word searches of document titles. The specific document categories that we aimed to capture in the sample included:

- **Design phase documents:**
  - Agreement documents for different types of implementing partner. Note that in addition to formal legal commitments, agreement document templates require annexes including the approved results framework for the proposed project, a description of the proposed project, its theory of change etc. In practice, however, we found that many agreement documents in the archive did not contain such annexes.
  - Decision documents.
  - Monitoring, evaluation and learning plans and results frameworks.
  - Risk management documents, where available.
  - Extended partner assessments.
- **Follow-up phase documents:**
  - Progress reports (both template-based and non-template based).
  - Field visit reports.
  - Final reports.

40 The data dump comprised the entirety of Norad's digital archives, and therefore contained a wealth of documentation that was not relevant to the task at hand.

41 For example, there was no straightforward naming convention for the files included within the data dump; files were not sorted by agreement number, but rather by case number, which bore little relation to agreement numbers; and the metadata associated with the files in the data dump did not contain information that was useful for categorising them or inferring their content.

Once key documents were identified using the templates and through key word searches, these were also searched for agreement numbers. Agreement numbers were considered both a very strong indicator of a document's relevance and were necessary for the process of matching documents to their associated agreements so that analysis could be undertaken of any relationships between cross-cutting issue implementation and agreement characteristics. The resulting sample, which includes all documents that were identified as belonging to one of the categories outlined above comprised total of 61,193 files, of which 20,384 (~33%) were found to contain agreement numbers.

Categorisation Scheme (Ordinal Scale)

As noted, the aim of the model was to categorise sampled documents according to the quality of cross-cutting issue implementation. This was measured using a 3-point ordinal scale designed to capture levels of cross-cutting issue implementation, derived in part from Norad's own requirements as set out in the Grant Management Assistant and elsewhere. The levels of the scale are set out in Table 8 below.

TABLE 8

Levels of Scale Categorisation

Level	Definition
Insufficiently Implemented	**In design phase documentation:** the documentation either contains no analysis of risks to cross-cutting issues associated with project delivery or contains an inadequate analysis of such risks. **In follow-up phase documentation:** the documentation either contains no reporting on risks to cross-cutting issues associated with project delivery or contains inadequate reporting of such risks.
Do No Harm[42]	**In design phase documentation:** the documentation contains a substantial analysis of risks to cross-cutting issues associated with project delivery.[43] **In follow-up phase documentation:** the document contains reporting on risks to cross-cutting issues associated with project delivery.
Proactive	**In design phase documentation:** the document demonstrates the integration of cross-cutting issue-specific objectives[44] into a project/programme results chain. **In follow-up phase documentation:** the document demonstrates reporting on cross-cutting issue-specific objectives articulated in a project/programme's results chain.

42 Note that the 'do no harm' level corresponds to the minimum requirements for cross-cutting issue implementation in management documentation, as set out by the Grant Management Assistant.

43 N.B. Briefly, the analysis of risk is only considered substantial if: a) clearly identifies at least one risk factor which may result in a negative impact on the relevant cross-cutting issue; b) the identified risk factor relates specifically to potential unintended negative effects resulting from project implementation (as opposed to risks to project delivery posed by operating context); and c) identifies a mitigating measure for responding to the identified risk. Importantly, e do not assess whether a document analyses the right risks, or whether it identifies all potential risks. This would require subjective judgement, informed by an in-depth understanding of the operating context and the project, and is beyond the scope of this exercise.

44 Note that project's which have cross-cutting issue as a primary focus are not assessed for 'proactive' integration of that cross-cutting issue but are assessed for 'proactive' integration of other cross-cutting issues and for 'do no harm' implementation across all cross-cutting issues.

Model Development and Training

The first step in developing an Natural Language Processing model to analyse the sampled documents involved compiling a dataset of text representing examples of each level of the ordinal scale outlined above. Initially, the evaluation team had planned to seek guidance from Norad staff in identifying examples of agreements that demonstrated strong cross-cutting issue implementation to focus efforts to identify sample text. During the inception phase of the evaluation, however, it became clear that this approach was not viable, as staff did not feel able to point towards such examples.

As such, the evaluation team developed an alternative approach to compiling the training dataset. This initially involved the development of key word lists for each cross-cutting issue, developed by the various domain experts in the evaluation team. A search for these key words was then run on the entire document sample. The results were used to identify a sub-sample of documents for the manual identification of examples of criteria fulfilment by the evaluation team. Documents which had high key word count were considered more likely to contain text examples of cross-cutting issue implementation and were therefore prioritised for review.

To guide the manual identification of text examples for the training dataset, the evaluation team developed a set of assessment guidelines. These contained a set of empirical indicators that would be used to identify examples of text for each level of the ordinal scale for both design and follow up documentation. The team then used these guidelines to search the prioritised documents for text examples at each level, for each cross-cutting issue. The ambition at the start of the process was to identify three examples for each criterion, for each cross-cutting issue. This ambition was exceeded. In total, the team was able to identify 175 text examples, which comprised; i) 43 text examples for women's rights and gender equality; ii) 43 text examples for climate change and environment; iii) 49 text examples for human rights; and iv) 40 text examples for anti-corruption. These text examples made up the 'training dataset', which is available in the supplementary materials accompanying this evaluation.

These examples were first used to define a set of logical, linguistic rules that would be constitute the foundation for the Natural Language Processing model. This means that the model would be designed to apply these rules to identify and categorise instances of criteria satisfaction within the sampled documents. Table with the 15 rules that were developed. The result was 15 logical rules that the model would use as its primary basis for categorising either design or follow up documents against the ordinal scale, following appraisal of their content. These rules were associated with a corpus of key words and phrases for each cross-cutting issue, use to identify whether a rule was being met within the text. The rules and associated keywords are available as supplementary materials to this evaluation.

The model was developed in Python, using its suite of widely used Natural Language Processing packages. Model development involved translating the 15 logical rules into machine-readable rules, using the corpus of subject-specific keywords in combination with Natural Language Processing techniques[45]. In simple terms, the model was designed to scan documents, and automatically determine which, if any, of the 15 logical rules were met, and use this as a basis for categorising the document for each cross-cutting issue using the ordinal scale outlined above. During implementation, the model was also designed to iteratively improve itself based on categorisations that it had already made. This was done through automatic additions to the keyword lists and refinements to the logical rules, based on commonalities in the language and structure appearing in passages leading to each categorisation.

45 Rules were constructed in English and run first on English documents, with document language identified using NLP methods. After completing our analysis of English documents, including the identification of automatic model rules, we then translated the terms used in the model into Norwegian with the assistance of native speakers and subject matters experts. The translated model was run on documents identified as Norwegian by the NLP language software.

The model's output was a CSV excel document, with each row corresponding to a document processed by the model. Numerous variables are included in the dataset, including whether the document was a design or follow up document, whether it contained an agreement number (and if so, which agreement number(s), which rules were met, and how the document was categorised on the ordinal scale above for each of the cross-cutting issues. The dataset was then analysed using R statistical software along the lines proposed in the evaluation's inception report.

Photo: **Marte Lid** | Norad

Annex 5c: Details on Methodology for Evaluation question 3

The purpose of evaluation question 3 is to identify enablers and barriers to the successful implementation of cross-cutting issues in Norwegian development cooperation. This includes looking closer at the assumptions in the Theory of Change and the mechanisms for change behind them, within the Norwegian aid administration as well as its partners. The evaluation question aims to contribute to learning about both what the enablers and barriers are, when in the project cycle, where in the theories of change causal pathway and at what organisational level they occur (noting they may feature at multiple stages), and if there are differences across agencies, partners, cross-cutting issues and thematical areas. An additional purpose is to capture unexpected effects of, and explanations for, implementation of cross-cutting issues.

The scope for this question is the Norwegian aid administration, i.e., Norad, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Climate and Environment, as well as selected partners. We will incorporate as many parts of the aid administration as feasible but will restrict the number of programmes and partners included in the assessment. To maximise utility, we aim to include at least one partner from each partner category (civil society organisations, private sector partners, the public sector, and multilateral organisations). The final sample will be decided in the early stages of the data collection phase, taking preliminary findings from the Natural Language Processing analysis and thematic theories of change into consideration. We propose a sample of 8 projects for closer examination, including the following:

- 4 Ministry of Foreign Affairs-funded, of which 2 implemented via the Norwegian Embassy to Nepal.
- 4 Norad-managed, of which 1 funded by the Ministry of Climate and Environment (Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative) and 2 with projects in Nepal.
- All four partner types represented.
- Inclusion of as many as possible of the prioritised sectors for Norwegian aid, and all the prioritised sectors in Norway's development cooperation with Nepal (energy sector, good governance (incl. civil society strengthening) and education.
- The selection will be guided by size of funding, to ensure relevance and usefulness of evaluation findings.

The analysis will depart from the Theory of Change (overall and thematic) developed early in the data collection phase, and initial findings from the Natural Language Processing analysis in evaluation question 2. In line with Contribution analysis, we will analyse existing evidence, and collect additional data, to verify if there is support for the assumptions that underpin the theories of change.

Referring to the Meld. 24, the way to implement cross-cutting issues at the management level is that "All development efforts are to be assessed on the basis of how they affect or are affected by these cross-cutting issues." This is captured by requirements in the Grant Management Assistant to include cross-cutting issues in risk assessments. One assumption that must be fulfilled for the theory of change to hold is thus that aid managers using the Grant Management Assistant ensure that risks relating to cross-cutting issues are assessed in programme documents.

However, the evaluation question asks for more detail than whether an assumption is supported by data or not – we also need to identify why implementation is, or is not, according to assumptions – i.e. what are the actual barriers and enablers to implementation

of cross-cutting issues. For this reason, we will also apply Process tracing to unpack assumptions into more detailed mechanisms for how change occurs. For example, the staff assigned to assessing whether cross-cutting issues are sufficiently covered in risk assessments in the Grant Management Assistant need to have guidance, knowledge and time to assess programme documents. In accordance with Process Tracing, key assumptions from the theories of change will be developed into testable hypotheses. Below are examples of some such hypotheses. These examples capture enablers of successful implementation if they are supported by data, but barriers if they are not (e.g. if aid managers do not understand commitments, this is a barrier)., such as:

- Aid managers understand the commitments to cross-cutting issues.
- Aid managers have sufficient knowledge to assess if risk assessments are reasonable.
- Aid managers have time to make the required assessments.
- There is an organisational culture that promotes attention to cross-cutting issues.
- There are guidelines for how to assess if programme documents fulfil the demands in, for example, the Grant Management Assistant.

By testing such hypotheses, we will gain an understanding of what the barriers and enablers to implementation of cross-cutting issues are, and where in the organisational hierarchy they are located. By formulating and testing counterhypotheses and hypotheses that consider external factors that may affect the implementation of cross-cutting issues, and by asking open-ended questions in survey and key informant interviews, we will be able to identify other contributing factors and alternative explanations for positive or negative impact.

Data collection will target evidence needed to test the hypotheses – for the examples above, the evaluation will use data from the Natural Language Processing analysis to assess the assumption that instructions in the Grant Management Assistant manual is followed. A survey will be tailored to collect evidence on the mechanisms behind this assumption (e.g. aid managers' understanding, competence and resources available for making the assessments required in the Grant Management Assistant). Interviews or group discussions with a selection of individuals in the sampled programmes, or identified based on Natural Language Processing data, will provide more nuanced data and scope for identifying additional, unexpected or unintended results, barriers and enablers, as well as for discussing the findings of the analysis.

To ensure data is collected from a broad range of individuals and stakeholders, the online survey will aim to target all staff that manage programmes within the aid administration. Respondents will include individuals with roles relevant for assessing, reporting and follow-up, within the aid administration (departments and sections in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Climate and Environment and Norad). It will be targeted, short and have clear questions and answer options. The survey (slightly adapted) will also be sent to individuals in similar positions in partner organisations managing the 8 programmes selected for closer analysis. The survey will consist of mainly multiple-choice questions but will also include a few open-ended questions to capture unanticipated enablers and barriers, and unintended effects of cross-cutting issue implementation.

A sample of eight projects will be studied in more detail. Implementation of cross-cutting issues will be traced throughout the different organisational entities and levels, with data collected via document review and interviews (individual and/or in group). This will also provide opportunity to capture barriers and enablers that were not included in the theories of change. The processes and practices involved in the implementation of cross-cutting issues will be traced across organisational entities and levels, and along programme cycles, to identify where the

implementation process is interrupted and where it runs smoothly. This will allow us to identify the 'location' of shifts in the level of implementation of cross-cutting issues (e.g., from a do-no-harm approach to ignoring cross-cutting issues as we move from a Norwegian CSO to a local implementing partner, or from including cross-cutting issues in the risk analysis in a programme proposal document to ignoring it in annual reporting). Key processes, enablers and barriers identified in the theories of change and Natural Language Processing findings will guide the analysis and the selection of key informants and provide entry points for discussion.

The analysis of programme documents in the sample will include computer-supported analysis of programme documents at various organisational entities/levels. Documentary content analysis will enable a systematic approach to collecting data for testing assumptions and hypotheses and facilitate e.g. identification of organisational attitudes and cultures that support or undermine effective implementation of cross-cutting issues (e.g., focusing on how these concepts are communicated). This will enable focus on 'how' expectations and commitments identified through evaluation question 1 are implemented or not and what helps or hinders this.

Photo: **Marte Lid** | Norad

Annex 5d: Sampling and Samples for Evaluation question 3 and 4

Sampling Criteria

The table below summarises the sampling criteria suggested in the inception report:

Criteria	Natural Language Processing Sample	Programme Sample	Nepal Sample	Implications for Sampling
Time period 2018-2023	Documents archived 2018-2023 relating to agreements under implementation during 2018-2023	Programmes/projects being implemented 2018-2023 and still ongoing		Exclude agreements with no documents archived in 2021 or 2022
Aid management agency	Norad (due to availability of documents in data dump)	Norad, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Climate and Environment	Norad and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Embassy)	All three agencies should be represented
Aid management department/ section	All Norad departments	Mix of effective and ineffective at implementing cross-cutting issues (selection based on Natural Language Processing findings) Relative to size of funding and number of agreements		The Natural Language Processing sample is limited to Norad documents. Ministry of Foreign Affairs projects: no implication. Norad projects: only projects with documents in the Natural Language Processing data included (potential bias: poorly documented projects not included).

Criteria	Natural Language Processing Sample	Programme Sample	Nepal Sample	Implications for Sampling
Sector	All Norad-funded sectors	Relative to size of funding and number of agreements Education, energy, environment, good governance, TBD	Education, energy (Ministry of Foreign Affairs-funded) Environment, TBD (Norad-funded)	**MFA Nepal:** 1) Education 2) Energy **MFA other:** 3) Emergency assistance 4) Multilateral **Norad Nepal:** 5) Environment 6) Governance, civil society and conflict prevention **Norad other:** 7) Education 8) Ministry of Climate and Environment-funded
Partners	All Norad partners	All four partner types: civil society organisations, private sector partners, public sector partners and multilateral organisations	Civil society organisations and local public sector partners	There should be a variety of partner types included
Cross-cutting issue	All	All	High risk for negative impact on HR	Policy marker for HR: not = 2

Sampling Process

Data was extracted for the years 2018-2022 from www.aidresults.no

Agreements with entries in 2021 or 2022 were identified (to ensure access to key informants and memory).

Selection Process for Projects Implemented in Nepal

- Projects with policy marker 2 for human rights were removed (unless project description indicated the focus was not on human rights). Similarly, projects with target areas and policy markers closely linked to human rights were excluded (target areas 'disability' and 'mental health', policy marker 'inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities').
- Agreements within the prioritised sectors according to sampling criteria (above) were identified (energy, education, environment, emergency assistance).
- Agreements within the priority areas for development cooperation with Nepal were prioritised.
- Projects with limited scope for impact on human rights were excluded based on project descriptions (e.g., technical assistance to financial management team, research and post-secondary education).
- The remaining Ministry of Foreign Affairs-funded projects were assessed based on the potential for negative impact on human rights and likelihood that Norwegian impact could be traced, and whether the project was implemented via the embassy or not.
- The number of Norad-funded agreements was considerably higher. To complement the Ministry of Foreign Affairs-funded projects, the sampling was not targeting energy or education projects. The target area health was excluded as this is not a priority area for Nepal.
- The total size of funding per agreement was calculated (by adding all entries and sub-agreement entries for each main agreement). Based on a combination of size of funding per agreement; Norwegian and implementing partner; the potential for negative impact on human rights; and likelihood that Norwegian impact could be traced: a shortlist of seven projects were identified.
- The final selection of projects for the Nepal sample was made with consideration of logistics for data collection and to give a broad selection of projects.

Selection Process for Remaining Four Projects

Based on the criteria presented in the Inception report, the remaining sample should include:

- Project funded by Ministry of Climate and Environment.
- Project with private partner.
- Project in emergency sector.

→ Ministry of Climate and Environment-funded

The Ministry of Climate and Environment-funded and Norad-managed Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative agreement was selected as it is funded by the Ministry of Climate and Environment but managed by Norad. There are several agreements within this project. The selection process among these included:

- Exclusion of research project.
- Exclusion of projects with no data entries before 2020.
- Exclusion of support to establishment of secretariats.
- Support to journalists.
- Support to strengthen law enforcement agencies.
- Projects with gender equality as a main objective (to avoid having two cross-cutting issues as main objectives in the same project).

- Size of funding – the three remaining projects with largest total funding were selected for final review. Among these, two projects were rejected based on relevance: procurement of high-resolution satellite images and Results based payment for verified emission reductions in Ecuador.

→ Emergency Assistance

Most emergency assistance agreements are funded via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Oslo. The largest recipients of funds include one UN organisation and several Norwegian Non-Governmental Organisation's. As a UN organisation is included in the Nepal sample, a Norwegian Non-Governmental Organisation was selected. The Norwegian Refugee Council was selected based on being one of the two largest Norwegian Non-Governmental Organisation recipients of funds for emergency assistance, while also not being part of an international organisation (Norcross).

The selection of project within Norwegian Refugee Council is based on years of funding, size of funding, and to contribute to the geographical spread of data. Projects relating to secondments or core support were excluded.

→ Private Sector

To identify a project with a private-sector partner, the main partners (based on funds received 2018 – 2022, and 2020 – 2022) were identified on https://resultater.norad.no. Starting from the largest recipients of funds, their projects were identified in data from www.aidresults.no. The largest recipient with projects relevant for the study was selected. Feasibility studies for solar plants, embassy-funded projects (covered in the Nepal sample) and short-term consultancies for OfD were excluded.

→ Second UD-Oslo-funded Project

For this project, we suggest Norwegian Church Aid or Norwegian People's Aid, as they are among the largest recipients of funds within the sector public governance and civil society (democracy and civil society). Norwegian People's Aid projects funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs focus on mine action but are largely also implementing other types of programmes funded by Norad. Both organisations fit the sampling criteria well, and we would like to keep the selection of project until we have some initial results from the Natural Language Processing analysis.

Annex 5e: Interview Guides and Focus Group Discussion Guides

Evaluation question 3: Interviews with Norwegian Aid Administration and Partners

1. **What is your department/unit/organisation's role in the project? What is your role in the project?**

2. **Please describe the project briefly:**

   a. What is the goal of the project, as you understand it? Any major changes to the project as compared to the project proposal?

   b. Who are the beneficiaries?

3. **Your department/unit/organisation's cross-cutting issues**

   a. Does your department/unit/organisation have an organisational policy framework and guidance regarding cross-cutting issues? Which are the cross-cutting issues covered?

   b. What is your understanding of what it means that something is a 'cross-cutting issues'? How are your organisation's cross-cutting issues integrated in your work?

   c. Is there anything within your organisational/departmental/unit's culture that motivates you or demotivates you to work on cross-cutting issues? E.g. messaging from senior management, attitudes of colleagues *(Culture, attitudes, incentives, practices)*

4. **Communication of Norway's cross-cutting issues:** In projects that receive Norwegian funding, Norway's four cross-cutting issues (human rights, women's rights and gender equality, climate and environment, anti-corruption) should be considered. How are they communicated?

   a. What are the terms and conditions or guidance from your upstream partners/Norad/Ministry of Foreign Affairs/Norwegian embassy/Norwegian government addressing these specific cross-cutting issues? *(Rules and regulations, external)*

   b. Where and how are they expressed (e.g. in project or framework agreement)? *(Rules and regulations, external) – Ask for copies if not already received*

   c. Are they specific/clear enough to ensure that you know what is required? *(clarity of expectations)*

   d. How do you ensure that your downstream partners and staff in the project are informed about the requirements? *(Ask for copies if written) (systems and processes)*

   e. When in the project cycle have you discussed integrating cross-cutting issues with upstream or downstream partners? What did these discussions entail? Did they lead to any changes in project? What?

   f. Have you received any technical support to strengthen your work on Norway's cross-cutting issues? Did your institutional and technical capacity increase because of that support? If yes, which capacities were developed? Do you believe that the increased capacity is sustainable? Why, or why not?

Questions regarding each of the four issues:
(These may need to be asked to different persons, depending on areas of responsibility). For local implementing partners at field level in Nepal, the focus should be on human rights (additional questions regarding HR impact are included in the interview guides for Nepal field work).

5. Human rights issues

a. What has been your objective when working to integrate Human rights issues in the project? Please provide examples (Prompt on level of commitment – promote/do no harm/avoid risk to project/ignore) *(level of commitment)*

b. How have human rights issues been integrated in the different phases of the project (guide the respondent through the project cycle, ask for concrete examples, probe for both avoiding adverse effects, and promoting positive effects). *(processes and practices)*

- Design phase
- Planning and implementation (Consider how the organisation may have integrated activities to protect and promote accountability, (non) discrimination, participation and equality)
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Reporting and results assessment

c. Is the work more challenging or easier in any particular phase of the project cycle? Why? *(Location of enablers and barriers in the project cycle)*

d. What are the main factors facilitating or hindering the integration of human rights issues in this project? Can you give concrete examples? *(Identification of barriers).* Probe for things relating to:

- Knowledge and support
- Guidance and tools
- Processes and systems for systems for monitoring, learning, accountability
- Resources (time, human, financial)
- Personal motivation, encouragement from leadership etc.
- External factors
- Other causes

6. Women's rights and gender equality issues

a. What has been your objective when working to integrate WR&GE issues in the project? Please provide examples (Prompt on level of commitment – promote/do no harm/avoid risk to project/ignore) *(level of commitment)*

b. How have WR&GE issues been integrated in the different phases of the project (guide the respondent through the project cycle, ask for concrete examples, probe for both avoiding adverse effects, and promoting positive effects). *(processes and practices)*

- Design phase
- Planning and implementation (Consider how the organisation may have integrated activities to protect and promote accountability, (non) discrimination, participation and equality)
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Reporting and results assessment

c. Is the work more challenging or easier in any particular phase of the project cycle? Why? *(Location of enablers and barriers in the project cycle)*

d. What are the main factors facilitating or hindering the integration of human rights issues in this project? Can you give concrete examples? *(Identification of barriers).* Probe for things relating to:

- Knowledge and support
- Guidance and tools
- Processes and systems for systems for monitoring, learning, accountability

- Resources (time, human, financial)
- Personal motivation, encouragement from leadership etc.
- External factors
- Other causes

7. Climate and environment issues

a. What has been your objective when working to integrate Climate and environment issues in the project? Please provide examples (Prompt on level of commitment – promote/do no harm/avoid risk to project/ignore) *(level of commitment)*

b. How have climate and environment issues been integrated in the different phases of the project (guide the respondent through the project cycle, ask for concrete examples, probe for both avoiding adverse effects, and promoting positive effects). *(processes and practices)*

- Design phase
- Planning and implementation (Consider how the organisation may have integrated activities to protect and promote accountability, (non) discrimination, participation and equality)
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Reporting and results assessment

c. Is the work more challenging or easier in any particular phase of the project cycle? Why? *(Location of enablers and barriers in the project cycle)*

d. What are the main factors facilitating or hindering the integration of human rights issues in this project? Can you give concrete examples? *(Identification of barriers).* Probe for things relating to:

- Knowledge and support
- Guidance and tools
- Processes and systems for systems for monitoring, learning, accountability
- Resources (time, human, financial)
- Personal motivation, encouragement from leadership etc.
- External factors
- Other causes

8. Anti-corruption issues

a. What has been your objective when working to integrate Human rights issues in the project? Please provide examples (Prompt on level of commitment – promote/do no harm/avoid risk to project/ignore) *(level of commitment)*

b. How have anti-corruption issues been integrated in the different phases of the project (guide the respondent through the project cycle, ask for concrete examples, probe for both avoiding adverse effects, and promoting positive effects). *(processes and practices)*

- Design phase
- Planning and implementation (Consider how the organisation may have integrated activities to protect and promote accountability, (non) discrimination, participation and equality)
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Reporting and results assessment

c. Is the work more challenging or easier in any particular phase of the project cycle? Why? *(Location of enablers and barriers in the project cycle)*

d. What are the main factors facilitating or hindering the integration of human rights issues in this project? Can you give concrete examples? *(Identification of barriers).* Probe for things relating to:

- Knowledge and support
- Guidance and tools

- Processes and systems for systems for monitoring, learning, accountability
- Resources (time, human, financial)
- Personal motivation, encouragement from leadership etc.
- External factors
- Other causes

9. What have been the **main positive or negative effects** of integrating the Norwegian cross-cutting issues? Do you have concrete examples? Why did these effects occur (Probe for differences across cross-cutting issues) *(Evidence of positive or negative impact)*

   a. Positive/negative effects for your organisation

   b. Positive/negative effects for the project (e.g. increased effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability)

   c. Positive/negative effects for end beneficiaries or other affected populations? Same effect for all?

   d. Any unexpected positive or negative effects?

   e. Were there any potential negative effects that the project managed to avoid?

Evaluation question 4 – Example Guides for Nepal Fieldwork

Introduction and informed consent

Namaste. Thank you for your agreeing to participate in the discussion. [please read out the consent form and ask them to sign if they agree to participate in the discussion. And complete the information in below text].

Group:
Freed Kamaiya / Dalit / Persons with Disabilities

Sex:
Women / Men / Adult mix / Girls / Boys / Children mix

Place: **Date:**

Start time: **End time:**

Name of the facilitator:

Name of the person recording discussion:

No. of participants: _____ Male _____ Female

[After the consent form is signed]. Thank you again for agreeing to participate in this discussion. Before getting into details, let us introduce ourselves so that we know each other [introduce facilitator and note taker and then ask participants to share their name.

1. Can you please tell us about the Livelihoods and Resilience Enhancement Programme (LREP). What do you know about it?

2. (a) Have you received information about the project? Probe - What? When? How was it useful (or not)?

   (b) Have you been consulted about the project? How? When?

3. How have you participated in this project?

Probes:

- How did you come to participate in the project?
- How long did you participate in the project? If you stopped, why?
- Have other groups participated in these activities?
- What challenges have you faced in participating in or benefitting from this project?

4. Can you please tell us what positive changes there has been in community since the project started? We are especially interested in any changes that have improved your lives, rights or wellbeing.

If respondents identify positive (non-HR) effects/ outcomes, e.g. increased income, increased food and food security etc, probe on:

- Who has benefitted most from this in the community? Who has benefitted least?
- Have these changes had other effects on you or others in the community? *Consider probing on potential effects identified in checklist, e.g. if project has improved access to, e.g. irrigation for vulnerable groups, has this had other positive effects, e.g. on their access to livelihoods/income? Or negative follow-on effects, e.g., if project has supported establishment of microenterprises, have children started working in these?*
- What do you think caused this? Prompt: Anything else? Link to project?

If respondents identify positive HR effects/ outcomes, probe:

- How many people have this affected? Who are these people?
- When did this happen? Has the effect continued/been sustained?
- What has been the long-term effect of this on you/different groups in the community?
- What do you think caused this? Why? Prompt: Anything else?

(If required) – Probe on potential positive HR impacts as per checklist. Can you please tell us what any negative changes there has been in that community since the project started? We are interested in any changes that have worsened parts of your lives, rights or wellbeing.

If respondents identify negative (non-HR) effects/ outcomes, e.g. caused pollution etc, probe on HR aspects – e.g. in terms of discrimination, equality, e.g.

- Who has this affected most in the community?
- Has it had different effects on different groups? How?
- How has it affected them? In the long-term?

If respondents identify negative HR effects/ outcomes, probe:

- How many people have this affected? Who are these people?
- When did this happen? Has the effect continued/been sustained?
- What has been the long-term effect of this on you/different groups in the community?
- What do you think caused this? Why? *Prompt: Anything else?* **Probe for links to project.**
- How do you think the project caused this? Could anything else have contributed? (Probe on other factors identified in checklist)
- How could this negative effect have been prevented?

(If required) – Probe on potential negative HR impacts as per checklist. E.g. increased school absenteeism, impact on wellbeing of certain groups, e.g. women.

- E.g. Has the project affected children in this community?

5. (a) Are you aware if the project has/had mechanisms for community members to access project information, raise complaints, issues or concerns? If yes, what were they?

(b) Have you had any issues, concerns, or complaints about the project? What? Did you raise them? If not, why?

(c) If yes, what happened as a result? Why?

6. If there anything else you would like to share about the project and its effects on you and your community?

Key informant internview (example from project 1)

Purpose

1. Understand positive and negative and intended and non-intended effect on human rights situation of end beneficiaries and people affected by the project.

2. Understand severity (scale, scope) of human rights effects and avoidance of harm to human rights situation of the end beneficiaries and people affected by the project.

Introduction and Informed Consent

Namaste. Thank you for your agreeing to participate in the discussion. [please read out the consent form and ask them to sign if they agree to participate in the discussion. And complete the information in below text].

Interview Details		Key Informant Details
Date of Interview:		Name, Title:
Time Start:	Time End:	Affiliation:
Team:		Sex: Male / Female (circle one)
Interviewer(s):		Caste/ethnicity/disadvantaged group:
Note taker:		Location:

[After the consent form is signed]. Thank you again for agreeing to participate in this discussion. Before getting into details, let us introduce ourselves so that we know each other [introduce facilitator and note taker and then ask participants to share their name.

1. **Introduction and Project Scope**

- Could you please describe your organization and its partnership with LI-BIRD and Norad?
- How would you describe the LREP project, its program approach, and project stakeholders?

2. **Human Rights Context** *(only for local government officials and human rights activists)*

- As a human rights activist please describe the major human rights issues in your community/ municipality/district?
- To what extent the local government has been successful in developing and implementing policies/ legislatives and programmatic intervention to promote, protect and fulfil human rights?

3. **Cross-cutting Issues** (Human Rights, Women's Rights and Gender Equality, Climate and Environment, and Anti-corruption) *(only for project offical and partner staff)*

- What is your understanding of these four cross-cutting issues? How do you describe the commitments relating to these issues among partner organizations, including LI-BIRD, TCDF, and other stakeholders?
- To what extent are clear instructions, guidelines, and tools on the four issues cascaded to you from LI-BIRD/Norad? How has the partnership model contributed to strengthening the capacity to integrate these issues into the project cycle?

- Does your organization have a policy framework or guidelines on each of the four cross-cutting issues?
- To what extent are your organization's policies and plans clear or sufficient to ensure these cross-cutting issues?
- How has the project adopted cross-cutting issues, and what experiences and practices have emerged?
- How does your organization monitor these cross-cutting issues? How does your program design ensure these issues are addressed, taking adequate measures to avoid adverse effects on the rights of targeted beneficiaries?
- Which activities have been the most effective from each of the four cross-cutting perspectives, and why? Conversely, which activities have been the least effective, and why?
- What are the main factors facilitating or hindering the integration of crosscutting issues in the project cycle?

4. **Effect on Human Rights for End Beneficiaries and People Affected by the Project** (Probe for equality, discrimination, accountability and transparency)

- How has the project contributed to realizing human rights (protecting, promoting, fulfilling) for beneficiaries and those affected by the project? What concrete examples and contributions has the project made in terms of equality/discrimination and severity of impact?
- Were there any unintended negative impacts or violations of rights for end beneficiaries and those affected by the project? Please provide examples and discuss the severity.
- How has the project prevented or avoided negative impacts on the rights of end beneficiaries and those affected by the project?

5. **Accountability**

- How has the project engaged end-beneficiaries and other stakeholders in the project cycle? What mechanisms ensure the participation of the most marginalized communities?
- What mechanisms exist in the project for beneficiaries and affected individuals to access project information, raise complaints, issues, or concerns? How effective are these mechanisms, and why?

6. **Additional Insights**

- Is there anything else you would like to share about the project's effect on individuals, families, and the community?

Annex 5f: Probing Questions and Human Rights Indicators

Probing Questions for Potential Indicators of Positive and Negative Human Rights Impact

Rights	Impact (Positive)	Impact (Adverse)	Probing Questions
Right to Adequate Standard of Living	Increased household income Improved agriculture (and livestock) productivity Improved household consumption (right to food security)	Gradual decrease in productivity due to environmental degradation (poor soil quality resulting from excessive chemicals for off season farming and high productivity in project's initial period) Increase income at household level, but women may not have decision making right and spent the money for her own need independently	What is your primary occupation or main source of income? Do you have a secondary source of income, and if so, what is it? How reliable do you consider your sources of income to be? What factors contribute to this reliability or instability? Reflecting on the past three years, have you noticed any significant changes in your income from these sources? Could you elaborate on any increases or decreases you've experienced? Can you share examples of specific projects or initiatives you've been involved in that have contributed to increasing or improving your income? Could you describe any groups or individuals within the community who might not have benefited from these projects? What were the reasons for their exclusion? Can you estimate the proportion of the total population these excluded groups or families represent within the community? Have there been any negative consequences or unintended drawbacks resulting from the projects or initiatives you've been involved in?

Rights	Impact (Positive)	Impact (Adverse)	Probing Questions
Right to Dignity	Increase recognition of women and marginalized community identity in the public sphere	Women's unpaid and care work at household level and unpaid voluntarily work in public sphere may increase and eventually its hamper her own wellbeing, may be exploited at domestic and public sectors, may increase violence both private and public spheres.	Have you observed changes in the quality and quantity of your agricultural or livestock production over the last three years? How about the market linkage and consumption of these products? Can you share examples of specific projects or initiatives you have been involved in that have contributed for the changes?
Right to Clean and Healthy Environment	Promotion of environment friendly practices (such as organic farming, agroforestry)	Deforestation by landless families to use for agriculture cultivation. Deforestation to build pastureland / overgrazing. Destruction of habitat of wild species / animals due to agricultural cultivation and livestock grazing. Water pollution from livestock in water sources.	Do you have enough land for cultivation, and if not, how do you manage? Where do you collect fodder for the livestock, and where do they graze? Do you have sufficient access to water for household use and for animals? Have you noticed any changes in water sources and quantities in the last three years? What were the reasons for these changes?
Right to Water	Access to adequate irrigation for farming and livestock	Pollution of water sources by livestock and reduction of water supply to the community due to use of water for irrigation and livestock	Do you have sufficient access to water for household use, for animals and for your farming? Have you noticed any changes in water sources and quantities in the last three years? What were the reasons for these changes? Are there any disruptions in the water source that supplies water to benefit this community and others?

Rights	Impact (Positive)	Impact (Adverse)	Probing Questions
Right to Health and Safety	Increased income contributes to improved food consumption leading to improved nutrition. Mechanism to ensure the safety of women, children and vulnerable people from sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. Increased income contributes to the individual health (medical treatment, safe drinking water, hygienic food, improved hygiene and sanitation).	Exposure of poor families to the harmful chemicals and pesticides. Access to market contributes to the increased sale of the production and less consumption leading to poor nutrition among children and other family members particularly girls and women. Improved living standard/income may lead to increased consumption of junk food/unbalanced food resulting poor nutrition. Sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment of the beneficiaries by the project officials.	Have you seen any changes in the types or quality of food items consumed by your household due to improved living standards or increased income? How do you think participation in the project has impacted the health and education of children within households? Have there been any instances or reports within the community regarding misbehavior or exploitation from project officials or representatives involved in implementing the projects or initiatives?
Right to Land	Ownership of the land entitled to the freed bonded labour (Kamaiya) / landless families (indirect contribution).	Use of public land (forest, pastureland) for farming. Unequal distribution of land. Though women and men have joint land ownership; women may not be able to make decision to use of land, income from land and so forth.	Has there been an increase or decrease in the amount of land you've used for farming in the last 3 years? Why? Are you the owner of all the land you have been using for farming? If not, why?
Right to Mon-discrimination in Enjoyment of Social, Economic, and Cultural Rights	Inclusion of the socially excluded groups (based on gender, caste/ethnicity, disability), economically excluded families (landless, poor), geographically excluded populations (isolated, migrant), as well as other groups (child-headed, women-headed households) in the project benefits. Access, ownership and control of public and household resources/properties by women. Participation of women, Dalits, person with disabilities in decision making process (at household, community and institutional level).	Exclusion of the socially excluded groups (based on gender, caste/ethnicity, disability), economically excluded families (landless, poor), geographically excluded populations (isolated, migrant), as well as other groups (child-headed, women-headed households) in the project benefits due to multiple forms of discrimination and barriers. Wage disparities between women and women workers.	Have there been any shifts in workload within your household following project support, such as engaging in home gardening, seed production, or livestock rearing? Who shares the workload within the family? Could you describe any groups or individuals within the community who might not have benefited from these projects? What were the reasons for their exclusion? Do you engage others to support you in farming, or do you work for others in farming? Are you paid for your work, and is there equal pay for both men and women doing the same tasks?

Rights	Impact (Positive)	Impact (Adverse)	Probing Questions
Right to Education	Improved standard of living, income and productivity contributes to the children's education.	School absenteeism or drop out due to increased workload (resulting from increased responsibilities in plantation/harvesting, livestock grazing, animal shed cleaning, fodder collection or taking care of siblings while parents engage in work/project work), particularly girl child. Children may face violence, corporal punishment, bullying, peer pressure at school. Due to the increased work burden at home children may not get sufficient time for study and eventually hamper his/her study. Children may not get involved in extracurricular activities. School absenteeism while children are engaged in project related work.	How do you think participation in the project has impacted the health and education of children within households? Has the impact been the same for boys and girls? Have there been any shifts in workload for the children within your household following project support? Has the impact been the same for boys and girls? Has there been any change in school attendance for boys and girls in the household? Younger and older children?
Right to Livelihood	Access to resources (saving and credit, fertilizer, seeds, market, irrigation). Access to subsidies and safety nets (grants, insurance).	Falling into debt-trap due to interest rates being higher than the profit from microenterprises, livestock farming. Falling debt-trap due to loan being used in unproductive sectors such as marriage, medical treatment, house construction, migration. Migration/displacement due to debt-trap / failure of the agri/livestock. Trap in trafficking and transportation internally and cross border, sexual violence, end up to child labour, exploitative domestic labour, smuggling, drug users and excessive use of alcohol, expose to various crime, unsafe foreign migration/ employment etc.	Do you have savings or investments in a cooperative or any community-based financial institution? Have you ever taken a loan from a cooperative? What did you use the loan for? With the increased income or profits from agricultural or livestock businesses, do you find it adequate for interest payment and loan repayment, if applicable? Have there been any negative consequences resulting from the loans taken from the cooperative or other financial institutions?

Rights	Impact (Positive)	Impact (Adverse)	Probing Questions
Right to Information (Transparency and Accountability)	Community engagement in project cycle (mechanism to inform the stakeholders about the project scope and incorporate their voices, concerns, feedback in project design and implementation)	Repercussion as a result of feedback	How do you perceive the level of community engagement in the projects or initiatives implemented in your area? Is there adequate mechanism for community members to access project-related information, provide feedback, or raise grievances or complaints? What challenges have you faced in participating in or benefiting from this project?

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