



The Finnish Foundation for Media and
Development Vikes

Programme Results Report
2022

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Cover: DJ at work, Jubilee Radio, Uganda. Photo: Markku Liukkonen



Marta Irene Sánchez is one of many Nicaraguan journalists exiled in Costa Rica. Photo: Kimmo Lehtonen.

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

CSO	Civil Society Organisation
MFA	Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PMEL	Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
PSEAH	Preventing Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
VGK	Viestintä ja Globaalikasvatus / Communications and Global Education project
Vikes	Viestintä ja kehitys -säätio / The Finnish Foundation for Media and Development
WIM	Women in Media project



In Nepal, press is relatively free, but women cannot get to the same positions as men. Project coordinator Avasna Pandey reading. Photo: Marja Salminen.

Summary

The Finnish Foundation for Media and Development (Vikes) is a journalists' solidarity organisation devoted to strengthening democracy and active civil society by supporting freedom of expression, quality journalism and pluralistic media around the world. During the period of 2022–2025, Vikes is implementing its first development cooperation programme after many years of experience in development cooperation projects. The new Vikes programme includes development cooperation projects implemented by and with partners in the global South, global education projects and activities implemented in Finland, as well as advocacy and communications of Vikes.

In 2022, Vikes operated in Myanmar, Nepal, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Somalia, Central America, and Finland. The partners in the global South include media associations, journalist unions, independent media and civil society organisations (CSOs), who produced quality journalism on diverse topics, advanced gender equality within their organisations and media houses in general, and advocated for press freedom and the rights of media workers. In Finland, Vikes reached media and students of journalism through global education and communications.

The main results are in line with the Vikes results framework, and the programme progressed towards its overall goals quite well. The supported media organisations have provided diverse and inclusive reporting and quality journalism, reaching wider audiences through various types of media. Gender

equality has been mainstreamed in the policies and practices of media houses, with increased number of media houses having gender policies in place or under review. Journalist unions, media associations and independent media have strengthened their capacity to support their members and media personnel, and successfully advocated for the freedom of expression. Media students, the general public, and duty-bearers have increased their understanding and received new perspectives on freedom of expression, sustainable development, and development cooperation.

The programme results contributed to the Finnish Development Policy, especially on the priority area 3: Education and Democratic Societies, as well as to many Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as

- SDG 16, by improving public access to information;
- SDG 4, by increasing the technical and vocational skills of media workers and students;
- SDG 5, by promoting gender equality and women's empowerment within partner organisations and media houses in general; and
- SDG 9, by supporting the new, innovative community radio portals and thus improving the access to information for all.

Also some challenges were faced during the year. Shrinking space for civil society, media and civic freedoms continue to be the main risk for Vikes operations, and in certain programme countries the situation significantly deteriorated in 2022. Other issues that affected the programme implementation include an alleged sexual harassment by former management of a partner organisation, and limited human resources and changes in management and staff, both at Vikes and its partner organisations. Despite the challenges, Vikes was able to continue the programme operations mostly according to the plans, thanks to well-planned activity strategies, reliable partners, and successful mitigation measures.

From the lessons learnt during the first year of the new programme period, Vikes already identified development needs for the future. In 2023 and onwards, Vikes will further develop its planning, monitoring, evaluation, and learning (PMEL) processes and practices, and strengthen collaboration and synergies within the partners as well as other stakeholders. Both in Finland and in programme countries in the global South, there is a need for strengthened advocacy work and disability inclusion. The experiences and expertise of Vikes staff, partners and networks will be utilized during the development processes to ensure the best practices will be identified and put into practice.



Vikes and COMNETU launched a community radio portal in Uganda. Local journalists editing radio stories to be published online. Photo: Markku Liukkonen

1. Introduction to Vikes 2022 Results Report

The Vikes 2022 Results Report describes the results of the first year of the Vikes development cooperation programme, funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (MFA). The report is structured according to the Vikes Results Framework, with the focus on the outcome level results:

- 1) Media organisations provide diverse and inclusive reporting and quality journalism that reach wider audiences, including marginalised groups;
- 2) Gender equality is mainstreamed in the policies and practices of media houses;
- 3) Partners (e.g. media organisations and journalist unions) have strengthened self-sufficiency and effectively advocate for the freedom of expression and protect the interests of their members; and
- 4) Vikes and Finnish media professionals supported by Vikes have increased the commitment of duty-bearers and the understanding among wider public on freedom of expression, sustainable development, and the issue of media representation in global and national context.

The programme includes previously started projects as well as new programme components specifically designed for the programme period, and the different programme components feed into the outcome level results as follows:

- Empowering rural communities through media, 2021–2024 (Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda)
 - Outcomes 1 and 3
- Independent Media Support Programme in Central America (phase 3), 2021–2024

- Outcomes 1, 2 and 3
- Women in the Media – Towards Gender Equality in Media and Journalism in Nepal and Tanzania 2021–2024
 - Outcomes 2 and 3
- Freedom of Expression and Democracy as a Prerequisite for Democracy: Study programme for media students, 2021–2022 (global education and communication project in Finland); followed by a new global education programme, 2023–2025
 - Outcome 4
- Cooperation with Yangon Film school in Myanmar, 2022–2025
 - Outcomes 1 and 2
- Country programme for Somalia, 2023–2025
 - Outcomes 1, 2 and 3

In addition, Vikes communications and advocacy in Finland are key elements of the programme, feeding into the Outcome 4.

The programme is implemented in close cooperation with local partners. Most of the partners are media organisations, independent media, and journalist unions, and they have the main responsibility of planning and implementing the project activities and collecting the monitoring data in their respective countries. Partners have a strong ownership of the projects. The role of Vikes is to support the partners with both the programmatic as well as administrative implementation of the projects. Vikes and Finnish media professionals have also provided technical expertise and peer support to journalists in the global south.

The programme activities include training, networking, and building the capacity of media professionals, students and media organisations; producing quality and inclusive content for diverse audiences; raising the awareness on sustainable development; and advocating for gender equality in media and freedom of expression as a human right. Almost all programme activities in 2022 were implemented as planned and the target numbers of beneficiaries were largely met.

The following chapters introduce the main outcomes of the programme in 2022 and describe the key actions for risk management. The final chapter provides an overall analysis of the programme results, its contribution to Sustainable Development Goals and Finnish Development Policy, and highlights the main lessons learnt and programme development needs for 2023 and onwards.



In Somalia, Vikes supports training of journalists in for example skills, safety, labour rights and women's rights, together with the Federation of Somali Journalists. Photo: Peik Johansson

2. Results of the Vikes Programme 2022

All the programme activities in 2022 aimed to contribute to the expected result of the programme at the impact level:

Journalists and media organisations have a strengthened role in civil society and have for their part improved citizen's access to editorially independent information and improved the diversity and gender-sensitivity within the media sector. This will lead to strengthened freedom of expression and a more equitable, democratic, and sustainable development.

As 2022 was the first year of the new programme period, no significant impact level changes can be identified just yet. However, there are some positive signs already visible, implicating that the programme is moving in the right direction. With Vikes support, the partners in the global South established new platforms and produced a variety of media content to reach their audiences. The scope and impact of the implemented activities are expected to grow in the coming years.

Although the operating environment in many Vikes programme countries is restricted, the supported partners have had the capacity and courage to act and continue their operations. Also, some positive changes in attitudes towards gender equality and inclusion can be seen among the partners and their organisations. It is expected that by 2025, the number and percentage of partners who have widened their sphere of influence in civil society has increased; there are demonstrated

improvements in access to editorially independent information in the programme countries; and media content will be more diverse and gender-sensitive within the media sector.

In Finland, where the work of Vikes focused on communications and collaboration with the universities of applied sciences, the impact on civil society will grow gradually. As journalists, students and teachers increase their knowledge and understanding on sustainable development and freedom of expression in Finland and abroad, it is expected that they will pay more attention to these topics also in the future and share the perspectives to wider audiences and new students.

More details on Vikes 2022 results at the outcome level are described in the following chapters.

2.1. Outcome 1: More diverse and inclusive reporting and quality journalism that reach wider audiences

In 2022, Vikes partners have produced and published diverse media content, from investigations and reportages to radio programmes and documentary films. The produced media content has emphasised various topics relevant to the programme areas and target audiences, such as human rights and environmental issues. 25 per cent of the produced media content had a specific emphasis on gender, 13 per cent on environment and climate change, and 5 per cent on disability. The results show a steady progress towards the set targets for 2024/2025¹, and on some aspects the targets have already been achieved, even exceeded. Activities planned for 2022 were mostly carried out as planned, except for the editorial radio portal user trainings in Tanzania, which were largely postponed to 2023.

Journalists and other media professionals have strengthened skills and received tailored support to produce content for diverse audiences.

In 2022, Vikes supported journalists and other media through trainings, mentoring programmes, and technical support. With the Vikes support, the partners and other programme beneficiaries improved their professional skills and were able to produce more diverse media content and quality journalism for their target audiences and improved their reporting and monitoring procedures. In many aspects, the results of 2022 were encouraging. For example, the number of trained community radio reporters and producers in Uganda already exceeds the target for the entire project period. Yet, some challenges were identified as well. Although the reach of audience through digital platforms and social media in Central America is high, further strengthening of the digital community is needed. In Kenya, the implementation of activities was slightly delayed due to Covid lockdowns in 2021 and social uprisings across the country after the 2022 general elections, but it is nevertheless expected that also the targets for Kenya will be reached by the end of the programme period.

Community radio stations in East Africa have new online radio platforms established and in use.

In Uganda, the development of a new countrywide community radio portal was completed, and first user trainings were arranged. By the end of 2022, 12 community radio stations from Western, Central

¹ As this is the first development cooperation programme of Vikes, the programme includes projects with a planned duration from 2021 to 2024, and new programme components with a duration until the end of 2025.

and Eastern Uganda were publishing and/or airing content via the newly established online radio portal. The number of Ugandan radio stations publishing and airing their content via the radio portal already exceeds the original output target made for 2024. In Tanzania, editorial radio portal user trainings were mostly postponed due to temporary interruption of the funding by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. After the required capacity assessment of the partner organisation was completed, the implementation of the project resumed at the end of 2022. For more details, see chapter 3.2. Principal risks and their mitigation.

In both Uganda and Tanzania, bureaucratic obstacles have delayed the licence procedures since the concept of online radio portals is new for the local regulatory authorities and appropriate application guidelines were not available in 2022. Nevertheless, it is estimated that millions of people are already reached in rural communities by the community radio stations and in urban settings via the new radio portals. Audience targets per country will be planned after the radio portals in Tanzania and Uganda have been officially launched and marketed.

2.2. Outcome 2: Gender equality is mainstreamed in the policies and practices of media houses

The 2022 results vary greatly between different countries due to varying emphasis and approaches to the topic. Not surprisingly, the greatest progress was made in the Women in Media (WIM) project, which had the greatest emphasis on the topic and reached the biggest number of beneficiaries. The WIM project had started already before the current programme period, and the experience and prior activities supported the achievement of the results. In Tanzania, a slight improvement in the print coverage in the context of gender equality can be seen. For example, the stories covering sexual abuse victims were following the ethical guidelines better than before. Still, men continue to dominate both as sources and reporters, and there's a need for ongoing training on gender-sensitive reporting.

The mid-term evaluation of the Women in Media project revealed that the project has been successful in sensitising and training gatekeepers on gender-equality questions, and in building a work environment which is encouraging and supporting to women journalists. However, even within the WIM project, the achieved results differ between project countries. In Tanzania, the gatekeepers (i.e., senior management and editors) showed stronger commitment to gender issues than in Nepal. In Tanzania, there are also encouraging achievements in gender policy work, as 50 per cent of the trained media outlets have already committed to adopting and incorporating gender policies in their Human Resources manuals and editorial processes.

Yet, institutionalising the usage of gender policy in a larger portion of media outlets remains a challenge, and promoting gender policy in media has not been as successful as expected. Especially in Nepal, there is no solid evidence that the project has been able to influence adoption of gender policies in media houses. This may be due to the chosen strategy and interventions used, which, contrary to Tanzania, have not included advocacy work. In Nepal, the activities focused on raising the awareness and ability of media houses to act more gender-sensitively.

Already at this point in the programme period, it seems that the target for 2025 may be too ambitious and unlikely to be reached. As the number of media houses is high, more resources and a strategic, systematic approach would be required to influence and support the wide range of media organisations in gender policy implementation. Also, the limited push from the authorities for gender policy mainstreaming in the media sector hinders the progress, thus highlighting the importance of additional advocacy work.

There is also a need to strengthen the cooperation and networking with other CSOs working on gender equality. This includes making new allies, and having a clear strategy on how to cooperate with committed media outlets as change agents who can influence other media organisations. The wider engagement with the broader civil society movement could significantly help in pushing through the gender policies and their implementation in the media sector. Further strengthening the capacity of Vikes and its partners on gender mainstreaming is needed to overcome these challenges and to enable partners to advocate and provide improved support services and training to duty-bearers. Although these findings and recommendations were for the WIM project only, they are also useful for Vikes in general, when continuing the gender mainstreaming work in other programme countries as well.

Women journalists have improved knowledge, skills, and confidence to work as journalists and act against gender discrimination and sexual harassment at work.

In 2022, majority of the women journalists who participated in the implemented activities have improved their knowledge, skills, and confidence to work as journalists. Yet, particularly in Nepal, more attention is needed to enable women to participate in and benefit from training activities, targeting especially women journalists from remote locations. To further strengthen the learning outcomes, the WIM mid-term evaluation recommends more systematic planning of training courses and provision of learning units instead of individual courses, as well as better utilization of academic research in operations and more systematic cooperation with educational institutions providing journalism training.

Less women journalists than expected were able to improve their ability to act against gender discrimination and sexual harassment. Equipping women journalists with knowledge and skills on countering harassment and unfair treatment has not progressed as planned, especially in Nepal, and strengthening this aspect is needed. However, it is important to note that the WIM mid-term evaluation did not include the women reached through the social media campaigning, which is the primary tool for raising awareness of sexual harassment, and thus the results are not fully representative. From 2023 onwards social media campaigning will be done only in Tanzania due to changes in Nepali partnerships. In all programme countries, more emphasis will be put on including PSEAH (Preventing Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment) themes in training, mentoring and follow up engagement with participants, including data collection practices.

Media houses recognize the role of gatekeepers as change agents for gender equality.

Especially the Tanzanian gatekeepers recognize their role as change agents, but the view of media houses is not clear based on the data collected. Especially the indicator 2.2.2 in the Vikes results framework ("Percentage of media houses who recognize the role of gatekeepers as important actors

for promoting gender equality”) has been identified as somewhat challenging, resulting in lack of or limited data collection in most countries. The indicator and/or its data collection plan will be reviewed and revised during the second half of 2023, to ensure more reliable data collection in the future.

2.3. Outcome 3: Vikes partners have strengthened self-sufficiency, effectively advocate for freedom of expression and protect the interests of their members

In 2022, almost 40% of the partners in East Africa and Central America improved their financial sustainability. This is a very positive result especially in Central America, where the general conditions for media actors are very restricted and many partners have struggled with weakened financial situation. Despite the challenging conditions, all Central American partners were able to keep their previous sources of income in 2022, and two of them secured higher revenues or diversified their sources of income. In the post-Covid context and due to attacks on press freedom, the audience/memberships fees and commercial revenues have in many cases lost their significance over diverse grants. While the scalability of commercial products, such as corporate subscription service, has been a challenge, there are also successful examples. As one partner offered live broadcast services and audiovisual production services from exile, they managed to gain back the previously lost income levels. In East Africa, the improved financial reporting procedures allowed the partners’ financial audits to be conducted locally for the first time. Yet, the own fundraising of partners in East Africa is still quite weak, partly due to the general funding challenges in the post-Covid environment in the area.

Almost all partners advocated for freedom of expression and the interests of their members, but the scope and efficiency of the advocacy differs among the partners. In Central America, the regional journalism forum ForoCAP had a substantially greater impact than in previous years, including the creation and launch of the Central American Journalists Network, which aims to promote press freedom and coordinate legal defence processes for journalists who need it. This was due to the success of reorganizing the forum in a single venue, allowing a true articulation among the over 150 journalists participating the event.

Strengthened capacity of partners.

In 2022, Vikes supported the partners’ institutional and organisational capacity building especially in Central America, where the partners had to carry out their operations from exile while maintaining certain activities still in Nicaragua. Increased capacity on fundraising and income generation, and support for institutional formalisation, legal functioning, and administration in exile allowed the partners to provide adequate support services for their staff and other journalists, who faced legal, security or health threats during the year. It is noteworthy that in the current political situation in Nicaragua and El Salvador, neither the business community nor other stakeholders can openly support independent media for fear of government sanctions.

With their strengthened capacity, some partners were able to secure funding from other donors, implicating that they are viewed as efficient and reliable organisations for receiving funds. Vikes

partners in other countries also increased their capacity on gender issues, website and radio portal management, and reporting and monitoring. With the strengthened capacity, the partners in East Africa and Nepal can implement the project activities more efficiently, monitor and report the progress and the results achieved. In East Africa, it is expected that by 2024 all partners will be able to carry out their core advocacy work more effectively, as the project interventions and tailored programme support will further strengthen their administrative capacities.

Strengthened networking of partners and collaboration with duty-bearers.

In addition to the above-mentioned regional forum for Central American journalists, networking events with other journalists in exile and a Vikes partner meeting have been important sources of inspiration and peer support for the partners, who work in challenging conditions or address sensitive topics in their work. Due to the current political situation e.g. in Central America, there are no conditions to make actions to bring state actors together with CSOs or media organisations at the moment. On the other hand, in countries where the political situation has allowed some more freedom for media and public speech, the partners have been actively collaborating with the duty-bearers, including advocacy, trainings and meetings, resulting in more duty-bearers acknowledging the value and expertise of their work.

Systematized planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning processes and pilots enhance sharing and mutual learning among the programme partners at regional and global levels.

An essential part of the new Vikes programme is to develop its planning, monitoring, evaluation, and learning (PMEL) processes. As the recruitment of the new Quality and Learning Specialist was postponed to 2023, the development of processes, practices, and tools will yield more concrete results later during the programme period. The already identified development needs are further discussed in chapter 4.3. Lessons learnt and future development needs.

2.4. Outcome 4: Increased commitment of duty-bearers and understanding among wider public on freedom of expression, sustainable development, and the issue of media representation

During the first year of the programme period, Vikes was not yet able to collect the data on the outcome level indicators as planned. Yet, the communications and global education activities in 2022 were implemented mainly according to the plans and most output level targets were reached, some greatly exceeding the set annual targets. These are all very positive signs, implicating the work in Finland is also going in the right direction and supporting the overall achievement of the Vikes programme goals. During the programme period, a broader development communication perspective will be taken for communication and the voice of the South will be brought more strongly into domestic global education work.

Journalists, media professionals and media students have increased understanding on sustainable development, freedom of expression in Finland and globally, and the importance of diverse and inclusive media.

During the final year of the Communications and Global Education (VGK) project, a training series targeting the students of three universities of applied sciences in Finland was organised, and the collaboration was found to be extremely successful. At the end of the training series, a final seminar was organised, targeting both students and media professionals. The overall feedback was very positive, with 92 per cent of the training participants and 66 per cent of the final seminar participants estimating that the events increased their knowledge on freedom of expression and democracy. The training series did not quite reach its targeted number of participants, most likely due to its timing during the summer season, and thus the number of articles made by the students and the total number of readers were about 85 percent of the target. Similarly, the final seminar only attracted 50 per cent of the targeted audience, at least partly because of the overlapping timing with the Autumn holiday week.

The whole VGK project was planned in cooperation with the universities of applied sciences, and the teachers in charge brought up various educational needs from students' point of view and the sustainable development strategies of the institutions. As the collaboration with the Finnish educational institutions has proved to be successful and fruitful to all parties, similar training series are planned to be continued also in the future, and main responsibilities will be given to the educational institutions. In 2022, Vikes and the University of Tampere negotiated a 3-year cooperation on Sustainable Journalism Studies. Successful negotiations on future cooperation confirms that Vikes is seen as a partner to be considered when it comes to studies focusing on journalism and sustainable development.

Also, the self-evaluation of the VGK project shows that Vikes is seen as a valuable partner for the universities of applied sciences, who stated that sustainable development is a cross-cutting theme in the schools' activities, but these themes have not been brought up to the level of studies so far. The subject is of interest to students, and the lectures by guest speakers followed by workshops brought practical aspects to the studies. The concrete journalistic content that was produced as a result of the workshops will remain a good reference for the students for the future and encourage them to continue with these topics in their own journalistic work in the future. The training series was also found to be repeatable, but without external funding the universities of applied sciences are unable to organise additional activities, such as visiting experts or workshops.

Finnish journalists and media professionals utilize the communication material and participation opportunities provided by Vikes and are inspired to create media content on global development issues in a diverse way.

Finnish journalists and media professionals have quite actively utilised the communication material of Vikes, and mid-sized articles on press freedom in developing countries and media plurality in Finland were covered in several publications on journalism and development. No travel grants were given in 2022. According to the plan, the grant programme was planned and finalised, and the first grants are given out in 2023/2024.

Media professionals, students, development actors and the general public have received high-quality information about Vikes programme, its results, and partners.

In 2022, Vikes communications reached huge audience, particularly through social media channels but also through Vikes website. The number of reached audience is partly explained by the EU-funded 'I am European' project, which was highly active in social media during the final year, and the content attracted a lot of audience. Through the published online articles and social media posts, media professionals, students, development actors and the public have received high-quality information about Vikes work, results, and partners. Based on the remarkable success in exceeding the targets in this regard, Vikes staff and partners have been successful in providing relevant, timely and informative material for communications and attracting the target audience. As the new programme gave the communications staff a bit more freedom to do general development communications and to take part in the discussions in the field, several general articles were produced, and the set targets were exceeded in this regard as well.

In 2022, a new website of Vikes was planned and prepared. The new website, highlighting the new Vikes programme and results, and including more material also in English, was launched in January 2023. In the same update, more thorough monitoring tools for web traffic and social media were introduced, and these are expected to provide more useful indicator data in 2023 onwards.

Although not included in the Vikes results matrix per se, it is noteworthy to mention that also in Central America the social media has proved to be an effective method to reach larger audiences, and the partners reported their social media campaigns reaching bigger audiences than ever before. In the future, Vikes shall consider also including this data into the results matrix.

Duty-bearers' knowledge to enhance freedom of expression, representation and importance of media plurality is strengthened.

Although the creation of the Vikes advocacy strategy was postponed to 2023, Vikes was able to exceed the targeted number of duty-bearers already in 2022, strengthening their knowledge to enhance freedom of expression, representation, and importance of media plurality. It may be that the set target levels were too careful.

As a general note, it seems that Vikes communications and global education is giving new viewpoints and ideas to the target audiences, but more analysis is needed in the coming years. Some themes and countries are more visible in the communications than others, and more emphasis should be given to a more balanced representation of Vikes work.

2.5. Other results: Finalising the previous project in Somalia

In addition to the above-mentioned results, the previously started long-term project in Somalia was finalised in 2022. The goal of the project was to improve the professional skills of Somali journalists and the quality of Somali programmes, promote professional organisation and the status of female journalists in the workplace, and support the Somali governmental radio and TV channels to become editorially independent public channels. In 2022, the project promoted the activities of Somali journalists' association as a national trade union of media workers. As a result, negotiations with employers on written employment contracts, better working conditions and living wages began at over 20 workplaces in the media sector. In addition, the production team of the children and youth

programmes at the Somali National TV participated in trainings and developed the programme's own social media channels.

In 2022, Vikes also applied funding from European Union together with the Dutch Free Press Unlimited and the British BBC Media Action. With the new EU support granted for the consortium for 2023–2025, Vikes will continue and expand the cooperation with the Federation of Somali Journalists.



In Nepal and Tanzania, Vikes is supporting the women in media houses. Female journalists are often assigned “soft” topics such as culture, while men write about economics and politics. Photo: Marja Salminen

3. Risk management

Vikes operates primarily in countries and regions where freedom of speech requires defenders the most. In addition to restricted environment for media and civil society, corruption and impunity persist, and discrimination based on gender, sexuality, race, class, religion, and ethnicity is common in all programme countries. Access to decision-making, basic services and economic opportunities continue to be unequal. Most of the programme countries belong to the countries that are most likely to be affected by climate change and with low coping capacity.

In 2022, most of the identified risks did not materialise, and the programme implementation progressed mainly as planned. Yet, as outlined below, the Vikes operational environments are quite different, and the associated risks vary accordingly. Especially in Central America, the materialised risks had a significant impact on the project and the operating conditions of the partners. In many countries, the media, especially conventional media, has not been fully able to recover from the effects of COVID-19 and struggles to cope with new digital media and the multidimensional development of the media sector. As mobile technology is changing ways of communication and media consumption, the use of social media continues to grow and requires media outlets to keep up with the developments.

This chapter outlines the main changes in Vikes operational environments and describes the principal risks and mitigations measures taken in 2022. The risk management practices of Vikes and all partners will be further developed during the programme period.

3.1. Changes in the operational contexts

In **Central America**, the democratic governance crises in El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras, and Guatemala have continued, and fundamental rights such as political participation, access to information, and freedom of expression have been deeply violated and are rapidly deteriorating. The use of disinformation and propaganda is being normalised and becoming an integral part of political leaders' strategy, especially in Nicaragua. Independent justice operators, human rights defenders, and journalists, whose voices have been critical of power, have faced criminal charges, attacks, and persecution. During the year there was a third wave of exile of journalists, mainly to Costa Rica. In 2022, the Nicaraguan partners were not immune to attacks and censorship. One of the partners lost their legal status in Nicaragua, leading to the total closure of the organisation and its activities. Yet, the work was reactivated through the partner's regional association, and most of the staff are still located in Nicaragua. On the positive side, the recent study by Free Press Unlimited highlights that the independent media in Nicaragua continue to enjoy trust and credibility. In a context in which traditional media have been censored, almost 70 per cent of the people consulted use independent digital media for information. The work of the independent media is more relevant than ever for guaranteeing citizens' access to information, the control of public power and the denunciation of human rights violations.

Also in El Salvador the civic space has narrowed since the interim government became a permanent one and wrote a series of laws and reforms to the penal code that limit press freedom. The ambiguousness of the laws force media to rethink their coverage strategies or implement security measures such as evacuations of journalists. Since one Vikes partner realized their team members were being spied on, allegedly by the government, with the Pegasus software in 2020 and 2021, they have strengthened their digital security and information storage protocols. After the Vikes partner denounced the fabrication of a tax evasion case by the government in 2021, the government has continued to fabricate accusations of evasion and fiscal harassment against the partner.

In **Myanmar**, the situation in the country remains volatile after the military coup in 2021. The operating environment for media has deteriorated dramatically and the situation is forcing media workers into exile or underground. The new registration law has caused difficulties for many development organisations, and some CSOs and NGOs have relocated to nearby countries like Thailand for security reasons. The current situation is also marked by challenges with a defunct banking system, daily power cuts and limited access to the internet. Nevertheless, the Vikes partner is committed to remaining in the country, and the programme activities in 2022 were implemented as planned. After the travel restrictions caused by the pandemic were lifted, international tutors were able to re-enter Myanmar in 2022. Ever mindful of the security situation in the country, the partner has continued to carefully strengthen local ownership and the capacity of the students and alumni to work independently in the future, also as local trainers.

In **Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya**, there were no major changes in the operating environment. In Tanzania, the operating environment for the media has slightly improved during president Samia's regime, with improved relations and dialogue between CSOs and the government. But challenges still exist, as the necessary policy and legal reforms have not been made. Despite the more open public debate and even critics against the government are tolerated, there is no guarantee for

sustainable change before the legal framework is reformed. In Uganda, critical journalists continue to face intimidation and violence, and are regularly targeted by the security services. In Kenya, media operations were restricted in many ways during riots that took place across the country after the 2022 general elections, which a large section of the society still believes were heavily rigged.

In **Nepal**, there were no significant changes in the operating environment affecting the programme implementation. The lack of qualitative data and research on the status and experiences of women journalists in Nepali newsrooms became evident during the WIM mid-term evaluation, and more local surveys about working conditions of female journalists would be important to strengthen the programme results in the country.

In **Somalia**, there were no significant changes in the operating environment affecting the finalisation of the previous project or the planning of the new country programme. The operating environment continues to be high risk, and careful risk assessments are continuously conducted and security protocols followed throughout the implementation of the country programme.

3.2. *Principal risks and their mitigation*

Despite the above-mentioned challenges, Vikes was able to continue the programme operations mainly as planned, thanks to well-planned activity strategies and reliable partners. Majority of the risks did not materialise, or they were successfully mitigated during the year.

The shrinking space for civil society, media and civic freedoms was the main risk that dramatically limited the operating capacity of the partners especially in Central America. The government restrictions and increased threats towards journalists and media personnel made the working conditions increasingly difficult, even dangerous, as journalists and communication officers participating in the project faced security risks while doing investigative reporting. Since there are no means to directly control the situation, the impact of these risks was mitigated through regular safety and risk assessments and a variety of practical measures, such as using mobile phones instead of cameras in the field, displacement or evacuation of journalists or collaborators when needed, management of emergency funds for journalists in exile, and legal advice for journalists facing state persecution. Continuous monitoring of the operating environment and updating the partners' contingency plans and security protocols are crucial methods to mitigating the risks also in the future. In addition, the Central American partners have faced a new risk of digital security. As mitigation measures, the partners have strengthened their digital security and information storage protocols and guidelines, and updated digital security measures and operational model, including training on digital security for their staff. Similar risks may arise also in other programme countries, and the topic will be addressed together with Vikes and all global partners during the programme period.

In Tanzania, former management of a partner organisation was accused of sexual harassment, and the funding for the organisation was interrupted by the MFA for six months. After reconciliation process and an external capacity assessment of the partner, the project funding was resumed at the end of 2022. To prevent such incidents in the future, Vikes and all global partners are reviewing and updating their PSEAH guidelines. Zero tolerance against sexual harassment is already stated in all

agreements but the revised PSEAH guidelines will also cover prevention measures, awareness raising, and training on the policy implementation with more practical approach.

Other risks that were affecting the programme implementation in 2022 include limited human resources and changes in management and staff, both at Vikes and its partner organisations. At Vikes, the new Executive Director started at the beginning of 2022, and some development tasks had to be postponed due to the time required for the familiarisation with the new work. Partly because of this, the recruitment of the new Quality and Learning Specialist was also postponed, causing delays in development of programme implementation processes and practices.

Similar issues were encountered with partners in the South as well as in Finland, where there were some staff changes during the year. Especially in Tanzania, a high turnover of staff at one partner organisation affected their capacity to implement project activities as planned. The changes created challenges in transmitting the project information to the new staff members, causing delays in the project implementation. Yet, as Vikes programme and projects are implemented by multiple partners, the challenges faced with one of them did not affect the programme results too much. However, ensuring the smooth transfer of knowledge is something that Vikes and all its partners shall pay more attention to in the future. This is particularly important in Finland, where the core Vikes team is quite small, and thus sharing and managing programme and project related information efficiently is crucial.



In Finland, Vikes organizes events and cooperates with training institutions to highlight the importance of free press. Photo: Esa Salminen

4. Overall assessment of the year 2022

The first programme period can be seen as a transition phase as Vikes is moving from a project-based approach towards a stronger programmatic approach. During its first year as a programme support organisation, Vikes progressed towards the set goals but also faced some challenges that required adjusting the plans and even postponing some planned activities on to 2023.

4.1. An analysis of the achieved results within the programme

As 2022 was the first year of the Vikes programme, we cannot draw any significant conclusions from the initial results. Also, as the projects and partners in different programme countries have different approaches and often focus on certain types of media only, making comparisons between different programme components difficult and rarely practical. However, some tendencies can be seen from the data available.

When it comes to the level of achieving results, there are no significant differences between outcome areas of the programme. In all outcome areas, the programme has steadily progressed towards the set targets. Especially regarding outcome area 1 there has been a substantial progress, as the supported media organisations have provided more diverse and inclusive reporting for wider

audiences, often exceeding their annual targets or even the targets for the entire programme period. Regarding outcome area 2 (Gender mainstreaming in the policies and practices of media houses), the chosen strategies particularly in Tanzania have proved to be successful, and the level of achieved results is also highest in Tanzania. On the programme level, the level of achievement in outcome area 2 is slightly weaker than in other outcome areas. This is mainly because the outcome area 2 is in the core of the Women in Media (WIM) project, while the work in Central America and Myanmar focuses on gender mainstreaming within the partner organisations rather than media houses of a country in general. Thus, the selected indicators are not fully compatible with projects other than WIM, and it is needed to review the structure and feasibility of the Vikes results matrix. This will be done during the second half of 2023. Quite similarly, outcome area 3 (strengthened self-sufficiency and effective advocacy of the partners) was not particularly emphasised in the WIM project. Despite of that, some progress was still achieved, but due to the limited emphasis and implemented activities, also the achieved results were limited.

Quite naturally the outcome areas that achieved the biggest advancements are also the areas that Vikes was able to reach the most target beneficiaries or audience. In addition, it is encouraging to see that there are no significant differences in the level of achieved results when comparing the different contexts of the programme. Even in very oppressive contexts, such as Nicaragua and Myanmar, majority of the targets were met or even exceeded. In addition to effective risk management in general, having experienced partners who understand and know how to operate in their contexts is essential in ensuring this.

4.2. Contribution to Sustainable Development Goals and Finnish Development Policy

The Vikes programme supports media and journalists in some of the least developed countries. By enabling the media to keep the decision-makers accountable to the people, to produce quality reporting on social, economic, and environmental sustainability and by giving voice to marginalised groups, the programme contributes to more equal societies.

In 2022, the programme results contributed to many Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with the main progress in the following:

- **SDG 16:** Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.
 - **Target 16.10: Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements:** Vikes support to partners is directed towards enhancing freedom of press and freedom of speech, thereby contributing to the general public's access to information. Selected approaches vary by country and partners: support to investigative journalism and documentarists in the most difficult working environments (Central America and Myanmar); support to the workers' rights of journalists in Somalia; support to raise the voice of the rural population in East Africa; and support to media gender equality in Tanzania and Nepal.

- SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
 - **Target 4.4: By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship:** Vikes operations in East Africa and Somalia focused on the on-the-job training of journalists, boosting their skills to do ethical quality journalism. In Myanmar, documentarists were trained in a vocational school.
 - **Target 4.7: By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development:** In Finland, Vikes provided Finnish journalists and students of journalism knowledge on sustainable development, with a special focus on the role of media, freedom of speech and freedom of press in the state of democracy and respect of human rights in a global context.
- SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
 - **Target 5.1: End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere:** This is a general cross-cutting target of Vikes' programme. In 2022, especially in Tanzania the gender work has yielded encouraging results, with 50 per cent of the involved media outlets already committed to adopting and incorporating gender policies in their organisational manuals and processes.
 - **Target 5.5: Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life:** In 2022, 54% of all direct beneficiaries of the Vikes operations were women, and women are increasingly represented among the management and staff of the partner organisations.
- SDG 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.
 - **Target 9.c: Significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020:** The community radio portals in East Africa contribute to this as local radio stations are taking ownership of the new platforms, produce more diverse media content and reach wider audiences.

Regarding the Finnish Development Policy, the programme contribution in 2022 focused on the MFA priority area 3: Education and Democratic Societies. The Vikes development cooperation programme is human rights progressive. Vikes supports media development in several countries that have very poor human rights situation. In oppressive contexts such as Central America, Somalia, and Myanmar, journalists are de facto human rights defenders, risking their lives to produce independent coverage of sensitive issues not always favourable to those in power. As media is considered a watch dog for the duty-bearers, and is therefore a precondition for a working democracy, Vikes sees that media development is an essential part of all Finland's country programmes. The Vikes results matrix feeds

indicator data into three Finnish Development Policy aggregate indicators, and in 2022 the main progress was made in the following aspects:

- **Priority area 3, Outcome 4:** The enabling environment for and capacity of the civil society and persons in vulnerable positions to influence and participate in decision-making has improved.
 - **Output 4.2.** Increased capacity of an independent, vibrant and pluralistic civil society to organize, advocate and participate in political decision-making.
 - **Output 4.4.** Enhanced protection of independent media, whistle blowers and human rights defenders.
- **Priority area 3, Outcome 1:** Access to quality primary and secondary education has improved, especially for girls and for those in most vulnerable positions.
 - **Output 1.1.** Inclusiveness of the education system strengthened.

4.3. Lessons learnt and future development needs

During the first year of the new programme period, a few good practices and development needs were identified. Some of the faced challenges and identified development needs have already been discussed in the previous chapters. The main lessons learnt and the subsequent plans to develop the Vikes programme are summarised below.

Development of Vikes PMEL system

After the first programme year, more detailed needs for the development of the PMEL system have been identified. While the Vikes theory of change has proved to be valid, the results matrix, indicators, and data collection practices need some further reviewing to ensure feasible data collection, the availability of all needed data, and more efficient analysis of the results. In 2022, the data collection practices of different partners varied quite a lot, making it difficult to compare the results between different countries and resulting in lack of or limited disaggregation of data in some cases. During the transition period, as Vikes is moving from project approach to programme approach, it is particularly important to ensure that the data collected from different programme components is relevant to the project component in question and the indicators are defined in the same way in different contexts. The capacity of Vikes partners on data collection and results-based management will be assessed as part of the partner capacity assessments in the second half of 2023, and further capacity-building on the topic will be organised to both Vikes staff and partner organisations. More systematic data collection and on-going monitoring and reporting practices will be emphasised with all Vikes partners to improve the programme results reporting in the following years.

Strengthening collaboration and synergies

The mid-term evaluation of the Women in Media (WIM) project raised some issues relevant to the overall programme implementation as well, such as the need to strengthen the cooperation and networking with other CSOs working on the same topics. Achieving sustainable results requires making allies with CSOs also outside the media sector. In addition to gender issues, the importance of networking and creating synergies between the Vikes partners as well as other stakeholders was already identified in the planning phase of the Vikes programme. The programme includes a specific

element for sharing and learning at regional and global level, especially on project management and cross-cutting objectives. In 2022, initial planning was made and the first global training for all Vikes partners was organised in early 2023. More collaboration and finding synergies between partners will be emphasised later during the programme period. For example, the experiences and good practices of the global education project (see chapter 2.4.) could be utilised as an example for the global partners as well, considering not only how Vikes and its partners can benefit from others but how the expertise of Vikes and its partners can provide good tools, contacts and information to other stakeholders as well.

Strengthening advocacy

Both in Finland and in programme countries in the global South, there is a need for strengthened advocacy work. It is extremely important especially when targeting changes in the policy level, as highlighted in the WIM mid-term evaluation. The initial results in gender mainstreaming in Tanzania are encouraging, but more emphasis is needed to achieve wider and more sustainable results. As the partners' capacity and willingness to do advocacy work varies, the role of Vikes in coordination and capacity-building increases. Reorganising the roles of partners and their focus areas may be needed to ensure effective use of resources and achievement of the overall programme goals.

Strengthening disability inclusion

Reaching out to journalists with disabilities, especially women with disabilities, and accessibility issues remain a challenge in many programme countries, which require special attention and planning together with all partners. In East Africa, some partners are already collaborating with local organisations of persons with disabilities and journalists with disabilities, and their experiences as well as collaborating with Finnish disability actors will be utilised when strengthening the disability inclusion in all Vikes operations.