

Executive Summary

Justice Rapid Response (JRR) is an international non-profit association working to provide rapid, impartial and professional expertise to international and national partners and civil society actors, assisting them in investigating, analysing and documenting international crimes and serious human rights violations. Finland has been supporting JRR since its establishment in 2009, and currently provides both core funding and lightly earmarked funding. The latter is channelled through the Deployment Fund, a flexible instrument allowing JRR to respond to critical situations and opportunities for which no other funding may be available at the time.

The double purpose of the mid-term evaluation was to ensure accountability by providing evidence of results, and promote learning, including by creating a basis for informed decision-making on funding and adjustments. It addressed the OECD/DAC criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability and followed a utilisation-focused and theory-based approach, operationalised through three case studies and an overall portfolio mapping and analysis.

The evaluation shows that JRR's Deployment Fund, as designed and implemented, is generally **relevant** to Finland's foreign and development policy goals. It has been directly relevant to two of Finland's five development policy priorities. The focus on the rights of women is clearly reflected in the large share of expert deployments that have addressed SGBV crimes. Gender equality and non-discrimination have also been treated in an integrated manner, but this is an area where further efforts are warranted. JRR is also giving increasing attention to the environment and climate change issue, as part of an emerging multidisciplinary approach as well as from an organisational perspective.

In general, the reactive nature of JRR's work guarantees a high level of responsiveness, and procedures and criteria are in place to ensure that inquiries meet a certain standard, are aligned with JRR's mandate, and reflect the real needs of requesting entities. There is a high level of satisfaction with JRR's support among requesting entities and partners. Yet, given the resource constraints of the organisation, meeting the likely future increase in inquiries will be a challenge.

Internal **coherence** has increased as a result of the development and operationalisation of JRR's first strategic plan of its kind. The establishment of additional coordination mechanisms and the future launch of country projects involving all three JRR programmes is also deemed to enhance coherence. The evaluation indicates that the Deployment Fund has many times helped to bridge funding gaps and in other ways complement other deployments within the same programme. However, cross-programme linkages are less evident. External coherence has been strengthened through the partnerships with key international actors. There is ample evidence of JRR's value-added and good examples of how the organisation works to avoid duplication, although continued attention is needed to building linkages and synergies with other initiatives.

With regard to **effectiveness**, the evaluation shows that intended outputs and results at the immediate outcome level have been achieved in a majority of the deployments supported by Finland's contribution. The most tangible outputs are the written contributions by JRR experts to various investigations and litigation processes, and related inputs to investigation methodologies and plans. Such outputs have in turn contributed to a qualitative improvement of investigations, especially with regard to the attention paid to SGBV, gender equality and a victim-centred approach. JRR's contribution to intermediate outcomes can relatedly mainly be observed in the SGBV-focus and gender perspective applied in investigation reports. There are also examples of JRR's contribution to capacity development of national actors and CSOs, although the results in this area are less tangible. It is generally too early to expect and detect longer-term impact given that the evaluation has focused on deployments implemented since 2021 only. However, in two of the case studies, there are emerging signs of accountability.

Several different factors have influenced the effectiveness of JRR's support. The timely mobilisation of high-quality expertise has clearly had a positive influence across deployments. At the same time, the quality of outputs and the contribution to outcomes have in some cases been affected by the limited number of working days assigned to some experts. The fact that a majority of the deployments have been home-based, partly due to the Covid-19 pandemic, has also had some adverse effects. Among the external factors, political will and support, the set-up and operationalisation of international investigations, the security environment in countries, and the capacity and commitment of requesting entities and other stakeholders on the ground stand out as the most important ones. While JRR's M&E system has been strengthened in recent years, further improvements are called for.

The assessment of the **efficiency** criteria shows that JRR implements more deployments than planned, and that deployments as well as agreed outputs are generally delivered in a timely manner. Although the number of requests is deemed to increase in the future, JRR has historically been able to meet the demand for its services. The costs associated with deployments appear reasonable. While there is no evidence of efficiency losses, further gains in cost-efficiency and cost-effectiveness could possibly be made through additional investments in organisational systems.

In line with the ToR, **sustainability** has been analysed from a capacity development perspective. The evaluation shows that skills have been transferred in a majority of deployments, but that capacity development has often not been a principal objective or pursued in a planned and structured manner. It is often not clear to what extent the requesting entities have actually internalised and continued to use these methods and tools developed with JRR's support. The best prospects for sustainability are found in longer-term engagements when repeated – and inter-linked – deployments are made to the same requesting entity. Organisational sustainability is deemed to have increased with investments made in strategic planning, programming, partnerships, and the expert roster. However, financial sustainability is a major concern, especially since JRR is not able to fully cover its staff costs and programme support costs. Although the late transfer of funds from Finland is a notable obstacle, the Deployment Fund offers much needed flexibility. In general, the lack of donor coordination and harmonisation creates significant transaction costs for JRR.

Based on the finding and conclusions, the evaluation makes several **recommendations**, both to JRR and its donors, including Finland. The recommendations are summarised below with further details provided in section 6.

1. JRR should develop internal guidelines and tools to ensure that the gender perspective is consistently taken into account in the assessment of inquiries, the planning and monitoring of deployments, and the guidance given to experts. When relevant, opportunities should also be sought to integrate the environment and climate perspective in expert ToRs.
2. JRR should consider ways of enhancing synergies between the three JRR programmes, such as by pro-actively seeking opportunities for CSP engagements in combination with, or following the end of, an international investigation. Complementarities with other actors should be embedded with expert ToRs and longer-term engagements.
3. JRR should seek to strengthen the capacity development perspective across programmes. As a first step, a conceptual framework for capacity development could be prepared. The ambition should be to ensure that JRR's contributes to sustainable organisational change.
4. JRR should explore prospects for deploying experts to assist international partners in the development of standards, guidelines and training material for investigation teams.
5. JRR should carefully match the length of expert deployments with the scope of their ToRs. Ample time should be provided for preparations, analysis, the delivery of high-quality outputs, the internalisation of outputs, and reporting/experience sharing.
6. JRR should develop a Theory of Change-based and learning-oriented M&E framework with a larger set of clearly specified quantitative and qualitative indicators, improved debrief questionnaires, a data quality assurance and analysis process, and provisions for research, training and support, and learning events.
7. Donors should consider continuing and expanding their support, allowing JRR to meet the growing demand for its expertise and partners' needs. Whenever possible, donors should provide multi-year core funding or fully flexible project funding, as is being done by Finland.
8. Donors should work together to increasingly harmonise application and reporting requirements, as well as explore the possibility of pooling funds, such as to the Deployment Fund, to reduce JRR's transaction costs and further strengthen JRR's response capacity.
9. Finland should ensure that the contribution to the Deployment Fund is released as early as possible in the year to maximise the value-added of the modality in terms of responding to urgent and ad-hoc requests.