

Final Report 2025

**Development Cooperation
Programme 2018-2025
Phase II, 2022-2025**

sask'

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1. Executive Summary

This final report summarises the results, implementation experience and key learning from **SASK's Development Cooperation Programme during 2022-2025**, with specific attention to the final year of implementation in 2025. The programme was implemented in an increasingly difficult operating environment marked by shrinking civic space, political instability, employer hostility and continued pressure on trade union rights and democracy.

Despite these challenges, the programme **achieved strong results** in areas central to SASK's Theory of Change. It strengthened democratic and member-based trade unions as civil society actors capable of organising workers, defending labour rights, negotiating collective agreements and influencing laws and policies. Key achievements included expanded collective bargaining coverage, growth in union membership and dues-paying membership, stronger institutional capacity of partner unions, and progress in gender equality, non-discrimination, just transition and the changing world of work.

The programme also **contributed** to broader legal and policy change, including progress related to ILO Convention No. 190 on violence and harassment in the world of work, labour law reforms, and increased trade union participation in structural policy processes such as the African Continental Free Trade Area. In Finland, communications, advocacy, global education and the SASK Ambassador network strengthened public understanding of workers' rights as human rights.

The final **programme evaluation** confirmed the continued relevance and effectiveness of SASK's long-term, partner-owned approach. It also underlined the need to consolidate results, strengthen partner sustainability and focus future cooperation where SASK can contribute to the most durable change.

2. Introduction

This **final programme report** presents the results, implementation experience and key learning from SASK's Development Cooperation Programme during the 2022-2025 funding period. The report is submitted within the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland's programme-based support reporting framework and provides a consolidated account of how MFA support has been used to advance human rights in the world of work, strengthen democratic trade unions in the Global South, and promote decent work, equality and social justice.

The report covers both **SASK's international operations** in Africa, Asia and Latin America and its **domestic operations** in Finland. It builds on annual reports, programme's monitoring data, partners' reports, different evaluations, annual audits and internal reflections. The analysis focuses on programme-level results and learning across the full 2022-2025 period, while also giving separate attention to 2025 as the final year of implementation.

The report is structured around SASK's **Theory of Change and Results Framework**. It examines progress in strengthening partner unions' institutional capacity, organising, collective bargaining, advocacy and policy influence, as well as results related to **SASK's strategic themes**:

ILO core labour principles and rights, gender equality and non-discrimination, just transition and climate resilience, and digitalisation and new forms of work.

As the **final report** of the funding period, it also reflects on sustainability, local ownership, risk management and the implications of programme closure and funding cuts. The report concludes by identifying lessons relevant for future cooperation and by showing how these have informed the design of SASK's Development Cooperation Programme 2026–2029.

3. Programme Framework 2022–2025

SASK Programme 2022–2025 presented **a rights-based framework** for advancing decent work, labour rights, and social justice across Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Rooted in SASK's role as the development cooperation and solidarity organisation of the Finnish trade union movement, the programme combined long-term partnership, evidence-based advocacy, and institutional strengthening to contribute to sustainable reductions in poverty and inequality.

The framework was built on the conviction that **workers' rights are a prerequisite** for inclusive development. The framework emphasised that workers' rights are essential for inclusive development and that trade unions play a central role in shaping labour markets and policies.

During the 2022–2025 period, the programme responded to a **changing global environment** (see detailed analysis in section 3.3). The changing environment directly affected workers' ability to claim rights and influence decisions that shape their livelihoods. The programme therefore combined a strong normative foundation in international labour standards with adaptive, context-sensitive implementation. By the end of the 2022–2025 period, the programme aimed to ensure that partner trade unions could effectively defend workers' rights in a changing world of work, while public understanding in Finland of global labour rights and development justice was significantly strengthened. To support this, the programme focused on five closely linked and complementary areas of work: strengthening union capacity, empowering workers to claim their rights, expanding advocacy and policy influence, advancing cross-cutting priorities (gender equality, just transition, digitalisation), and strengthening public engagement in Finland.

Cross-cutting priorities were integrated throughout the programme. Gender equality and non-discrimination were addressed through both mainstreaming and targeted measures, including strengthening women's leadership and participation. Climate change and just transition were approached as labour rights issues, with support for social dialogue and policy influence. Digitalisation and new forms of work were addressed through organising innovation, policy development and capacity building.

SASK's programme **covered in total 28 countries**, nine of which were designated as long-term priority countries. The remaining countries were included through thematic, regional, or cross-border interventions, allowing the programme to address both national priorities and broader labour rights issues that extended across regions. There were some changes in programme countries compared to the programme application in 2021. The programme began under exceptional international conditions. Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 changed the political and economic context of development cooperation, increased costs in several programme

countries and created new tensions within the international trade union movement. In Myanmar, the operating environment became untenable as the military junta systematically suppressed free civil society activity, forcing SASK-supported work in the country to be discontinued. During the programme, operations in Lesotho and Zimbabwe started. In early 2025, operations in Guatemala were paused due to the passing of key project responsible.

Africa formed the largest regional portfolio, reflecting the strategic importance of labour market formalisation, continental trade integration, and just transition processes. **Asia** and **Latin America** were also important regions due to persistent labour rights violations, strong trade union partnerships, and emerging opportunities for legal and policy reforms.

The programme worked across a **broad range of sectors**, including construction and wood, domestic work, education, industry, private services, public services, transport, and cross-sectoral thematic work. This sector-based architecture allowed SASK to combine workplace-level organising with higher-level policy influence and international labour movement coordination.

SASK's **delivery model** was based on long-term partnership and local ownership, combining bilateral partnerships, global federations and regional actors:

- Bilateral partnerships ensure contextual relevance and ownership
- Global federations provide thematic expertise and international leverage
- Regional actors enable cross-border policy work
- Finnish affiliates strengthen solidarity, technical exchange, and legitimacy

Programme implementation combined multiple **complementary modalities** aligned with programme priorities (see section 4).

SASK's **domestic operation component** was fully integrated into the programme's results framework. It strengthened public support for labour rights in development cooperation through communications, advocacy, global education, and volunteer mobilisation.

A distinctive feature was the SASK Ambassador network, which translates complex global labour rights issues into accessible public engagement across Finland. This creates sustained support among union members, students, educators, and future labour movement leaders. The domestic component also contributed directly to policy dialogue, ensuring that labour rights, responsible business conduct, and just transition remain visible within Finnish development policy debates.

The programme applied a **Human Rights-Based Approach**, recognising workers as rights-holders and institutions as duty-bearers. The principle of **Leaving No One Behind** guided work with vulnerable groups, including women, youth, migrant and informal workers.

Implementation was supported by a **results-based management system** combining planning, monitoring, reporting and learning, with sustainability built primarily through institutional capacity strengthening.

Risk management remained integral throughout implementation, particularly in politically fragile environments where civic space restrictions, anti-union legislation, and safeguarding concerns may affect results.

3.1 Programme Objectives and Strategic Focus

The programme framework was built on the overall **impact objective** of the workers' rights being improved in the programme countries. More specific **outcome objectives** were defined as an improved ability of partner unions to protect these rights (outcome 1) and Finnish society and development policy acknowledging the importance of human rights in the world of work (outcome 2). **Focus areas** for the programme period were decided to be gender equality, just transition and digitalisation. These areas were given significant human resources allocating one specialist at SASK head office on each theme. Also, social security was considered as one of the most important elements of human rights in the world of work in the aftermath of Covid-19.

During the implementation, the position of the three focus areas was **sharpened**, and all the three areas were assessed through the overarching theme – in practice, how gender equality, just transition or digitalisation affects workers' rights. Further, during the programme period the focus areas were slightly redefined. By the end of the programme period the three focus areas were named to be Gender Equality and Non-Discrimination, Just Transition and Digitalisation and New Forms of Work, to better correspond to the contents of the focus areas.

During the programme the **relevance** of the focus areas of Just Transition and Digitalisation grew within the trade union movement as well as ILO. The reasons can be tracked to the increasing implications climate change and digitalisation has been bringing to workers' rights. Social security has not disappeared from the agenda of the trade union movement, but its importance slightly decreased since the acute phase of Covid-19 passed. At the same time, gender equality and non-discrimination as well as climate issues have been increasingly prioritised in the Finnish development policy, putting more weight on the results in these focus areas.

Sustainable economy and decent work, which is the goal No 8 in Sustainable Development Goals and where SASK's work is based on, lost some its importance in the Finnish development policy after the strategic changes made by the new government in 2023. On the other hand, the new government's decisions to weaken workers' rights in Finland increased the relevance to promote ILO core labour rights in SASK's communication. Over the years it became evident that due to shrinking space of civil society and increasing abuses of workers' rights globally by repressive governments, SASK's impact level objective has remained and even increased its relevance.

Finland's shift towards instrumentalism, utilising development cooperation to promote Finnish business abroad, has been a major change in the operating context during the programme period and has raised the need for SASK as grant-receiver of MFA to consider how its work can **support Finnish companies**. Coincidentally with this shift in the Finnish development policy, corporate social responsibility has increased its importance globally and especially in the European Union since the adoption of the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive by the EU – a positive step that SASK has been advocating for many years. Since the directive, the interest towards social sustainability and SASK has grown among Finnish companies. SASK has responded to this need by developing services to companies to fulfil their sustainability obligations. During the programme, SASK conducted research on the human rights risks in the

value chains of a group of Finnish companies. These studies provide a basis for meaningful stakeholder engagement of companies, which is one of the requirements of the Directive.

3.2 Theory of Change and Results Framework

SASK's programme is based on an **actor-based Theory of Change**, which is well suited to an organisation working through a wide network of partners in diverse and often volatile contexts. The programme starts from the premise that lasting improvements in labour rights and decent work are achieved through long-term social change processes shaped by political, economic and social factors that are largely beyond SASK's direct control. For this reason, the programme focuses on strengthening the agency, capacity and influence of workers and their organisations so that they can act effectively in their own contexts and drive change themselves.

SASK's Theory of Change **guided implementation** throughout the programme period and remained relevant despite increasingly challenging operating environments. Its core logic did not require adaptation during the period, as SASK's work is based on the understanding that change in societies is slow, cumulative and rarely linear. In practice, the Theory of Change served as a stable strategic anchor while allowing operational flexibility. SASK adjusted priorities, partner support and advocacy approaches in response to context-specific developments, but the overall change logic remained valid.

The core logic of change is that when trade unions and worker organisations are stronger, more inclusive and better equipped, they are able to defend workers' rights better, represent their members, negotiate with employers, engage governments and influence laws, policies and workplace practices. When workers know their rights and have channels to organise and act collectively, they are better positioned to claim those rights and improve their livelihoods. When public awareness and commitment to decent work increase in Finland, support for labour rights and responsible policymaking also grows. Together, these changes contribute to improved realisation of workers' rights and to stronger, more democratic and inclusive societies. The programme's pathways to change are interconnected and non-linear. They include capacity strengthening, advocacy, awareness raising, commitment building, and the promotion of equity and inclusion. Through its international operations, SASK supports partners with finance, technical expertise and solidarity, enabling them to strengthen organisational capacity, leadership, representativeness and strategic action. Through domestic work in Finland, SASK increases knowledge of the Decent Work Agenda among the public, stakeholders and decision-makers and builds support for global labour rights.

SASK's Theory of Change rests on **several assumptions**. The most fundamental is respect for human rights in the world of work and the recognition of trade unions as legitimate legal actors by states. This includes freedom of association, freedom of expression and the possibility for unions to organise and operate freely in defence of workers' rights. It also assumes functioning rule of law and at least some willingness among governments and employers to engage in social dialogue. At global level, it further assumes that decent work, inclusive economic growth and labour rights remain on the agenda of decision-makers, businesses and multilateral

institutions, and that international norms and mechanisms continue to provide support for national-level progress.

These assumptions **remained relevant**, but some proved more fragile in practice than anticipated. In several contexts, democratic backsliding, shrinking civic space, geopolitical instability and weakened rule of law eroded the enabling conditions on which the Theory of Change is built. This did not make the Theory of Change obsolete; rather, it confirmed both its relevance and the importance of long-term support to resilient partner organisations capable of operating under pressure.

The Results Framework supported tracking progress towards intended results reasonably well, especially at the level of partner capacities, worker awareness, advocacy processes and institutional strengthening. It helped translate the Theory of Change into monitorable outcomes and provided a useful structure for assessing progress. At the same time, the programme period highlighted the limits of results measurement in complex environments where change is influenced by many external factors and may proceed unevenly or be reversed. The framework was therefore most useful when combined with contextual and qualitative analysis of contribution. Overall, it enabled SASK to track progress while retaining flexibility to respond to changing realities and support locally led pathways towards sustainable change.

3.3 Key Contextual Developments Affecting Implementation

The period 2022–2025 was characterised by a **challenging operating environment** shaped by economic fragility, expanding informality, technological change and political constraints, all of which affected programme implementation and results. High levels of informality remained a defining feature of labour markets, limiting workers’ access to rights, representation and social protection. Shrinking civic space and restrictions on freedom of association constrained union action and social dialogue in several contexts. At the same time, digitalisation and new forms of work were transforming labour relations, creating both challenges for organising and new opportunities for innovation. Political instability and broader governance challenges in several countries further affected implementation and narrowed space for policy influence.

Several risks identified in programme planning materialised during the period. Weak enforcement of labour rights, limited effectiveness of social dialogue structures and restrictions on union activity reduced opportunities for policy influence and required increased emphasis on capacity building, legal literacy and adaptive advocacy strategies. In response, the programme strengthened support for negotiation skills, leadership development and regional and international solidarity mechanisms.

The **persistence** of informality, combined with the expansion of non-standard forms of work, significantly shaped programme choices. Many workers lacked formal contracts, stable workplaces and legal protections, limiting traditional organising approaches. As a result, the programme increasingly focused on innovative organising models, inclusive social protection and policy advocacy targeting workers beyond the formal economy.

Climate change, trade dynamics and structural economic shifts also **influenced** programme priorities. Just transition and climate-related risks became more prominent, particularly in vulnerable sectors, requiring trade unions to engage more actively in industrial policy, social protection and labour market reforms. At the same time, processes such as regional economic integration created both opportunities for policy engagement and risks related to labour standards and inequality.

Internal challenges within the trade union movement, including limited financial sustainability, governance constraints and uneven representation, also affected implementation. These factors reinforced the programme's emphasis on institutional strengthening, inclusive leadership and long-term sustainability.

Despite these constraints, many programme countries demonstrated **resilience and progress**. Economic recovery trends, digital transformation and increased attention to social and environmental sustainability created opportunities for strengthening labour rights and advancing policy dialogue. These dynamics underline the importance of adaptive, partner-led approaches in achieving sustainable results in complex and changing environments.

4. Implementation of the Programme - Final Year 2025

The year 2025 was the **fourth and final** implementation year of the 2022-2025 funding period and concluded SASK's longer 2018-2025 development cooperation programme. Project partners showed strong commitment to implementing the project activities, contributing positively to a number of notable achievements across the regions. Activities were prioritised towards more institutionally embedded work, including collective bargaining negotiations, policy and legislative advocacy, structural reforms within unions, and promoting social dialogue. To **conclude the cycle**, all partners conducted facilitated self-assessments or external evaluations to systematically review the project's achievements, functionality of management processes, and to identify development needs. In addition, a programme evaluation was concluded to assess the impact and effectiveness of SASK's programme.

4.1 Overview of Implementation in 2025

SASK's international activities are particularly focused on countries in the Global South where trade union rights violations are most serious. Many of these countries are lower- and upper-middle-income countries, home to a significant proportion of the world's poor. In 2025, **47 %** of SASK's programme activities were carried out in Africa, **40 %** in Asia, **12 %** in Latin America and less than **1 %** globally. By country, **30 %** of the activities were carried out in least developed countries (LDCs), **35 %** in lower-middle-income countries and **34 %** in upper-middle-income countries. Less than **1 %** of the activities were global and regional, where no country breakdown was made. Share of SASK's programme to the work with persons with disabilities was **1,2 %**.

A total of **30 projects** and **three Quick Action Support initiatives** were implemented in international programme activities. Overall, implementation across the project portfolio progressed well. Most projects delivered the activities in accordance with the annual planning, with several exceeding annual targets in participant reach and recruitment, and only a small

number of activities cancelled for budgetary, security or logistical reasons. The project **implementation rate** was therefore as high as **108 %** compared to the budgeted amount.

Table 1. Classification of main programme countries by ODA rating, ITUC Global Rights Index rating (2022–2025), and share of funding in 2025.

Main programme countries	OECD / DAC	ITUC 2022 (1-5+)	ITUC 2023 (1-5+)	ITUC 2024 (1-5+)	ITUC 2025 (1-5+)	Funding for projects EUR	Share (%)	Number of projects
Malawi	LDC	2	2	2	2	130 977	3,0	3
Mozambique	LDC	3	3	3	3	252 340	5,8	6
Nepal	LDC	3	3	3	3	443 305	10,3	5
Total (LDC)						826 622	19,1 %	14
India	LMIC	5	5	5	5	192 697	4,5	3
The Philippines	LMIC	5	5	5	5	576 975	13,4	6
Total (LMIC)						769 672	17,9 %	9
Brazil	UMIC	5	5	4	4	252 421	5,8	3
Colombia	UMIC	5	5	5	5	188 776	4,4	3
Indonesia	UMIC	5	5	5	5	527 727	12,2	6
Total (UMIC)						968 924	22,4 %	12
Country-specific projects (total)						2 565 218	59,4 %	
Global or thematic multi-country projects (19 countries)						1 752 475	40,6 %	
GRAND TOTAL EUR						4 317 693	100 %	

High implementation rate in 2025 is partly due to project evaluations and facilitated self-assessments that are only carried out during the last year of the programme and thus slightly increases project budgets and implementation. Another reason for high implementation rate is the fact that project partners aim to efficiently implement the activities during the last year of finance period in order to use all the unused funds from previous years of the programme period. The **other components of the programme** (personnel costs, programme evaluation, regional offices, domestic operations and administration) were only implemented at **84 %** of the annual plan. In addition to some budget underruns, one of the main reasons was that the administration costs of the organisation could not be allocated to the programme as planned, as the programme budget of the domestic operations and administration was somewhat exceeded in previous years, and therefore there was no sufficient programme funding left to cover all the administration costs that would have been eligible for the programme.

Project activities in 2025 followed a **coherent pattern** across regions, even where contexts differed. Partners delivered a wide range of organising, training, advocacy and research activities aligned with programme priorities. These activities were tailored to the sectoral and thematic priorities of each project, covering ILO core labour principles and rights, gender equality, decent wage, social security, as well as more thematic focus areas like just transition and energy democracy and digitalisation and future world of work. The combination of organising, capacity-building and advocacy supported results across multiple levels (see Theory of Change section 3.2).

During 2025, a total of **1 969 activities** were implemented which represents 17 % more activities than planned. Project activities reached a total **61 416 participants**, exceeding plans by 28 %. Out of all participants **53 % were women** which is almost 22 % more than targeted. Only **0,2 % were non-binary participants** and fell short as reached only 60 % of targeted participants.

Across the portfolio, partners planned 2025 collectively and strategically, focusing activities on their priorities and fundamentals, translating that focus into tangible progress. In **Africa**, the **PSI Sub-Saharan Africa project (2611)** together the partner unions in public sector systematically planned its 2025 activities to each country's stage on ILO Convention 190: enforcement work in Uganda (ratified in 2023), ratification advocacy in Senegal, and workplace-level integration in South Africa. The project consolidated multiple small activities into one high-visibility platform, bringing government, parliamentarians, trade unions and the media together to lock in political momentum behind C190. In South Africa, the **ILRIG / CSAAWU project (2030)** alongside with partner unions in wine sector focused on grassroots organising thanks to lower-than-expected costs. This helped CSAAWU stabilise after a difficult leadership transition, elected a new national executive committee with full gender parity, and expanded into three new provinces. Women's voice expanded through concrete gains such as a first-ever annual bonus, conversion of seasonal women workers to full-time employment, and the extension of maternity leave from 3 to 4-6 months in five collective bargaining agreements.

In **Asia**, partners showed a similar pattern of focused planning. Through strategic planning, **SERBUK (BWI 4114)** in Indonesia successfully organised and recruited new members 131 % above target from 37 new local workplace-level unions (representing 154 % above target), concluding all targeted CBAs in the construction, wood, and outsourced electricians sector. These are the most difficult informal and precarious sectors, where these presented gains will strengthen their members' capacity to fight against systematic violations and repression. The **IndustriALL Indonesia metals and mining project (4357)** have successfully transitioned their focus into electric vehicles supply chains and just transition thematic, after years of collective efforts to strengthen their membership, capacity, and influence in society. The **PSI Indonesia-Philippines public-sector project (4617)** had an exceptionally strong year with 177 % of activities above target were implemented, reaching 292 % more workers than targeted. In Indonesia, energy-sector unions refined their just energy transition public-pathway paper, built alliances with NGOs and produced a public video series, laying foundations for policy influence, whereas in the Philippines, sustained engagement secured the inclusion of the public-sector chapter in the DOLE Omnibus Guidelines on the Exercise of Freedom of Association and Civil Liberties, opening real policy space for public-sector unionism.

In **Latin America**, the **PSI health-sector project (3613) in Colombia and Brazil** combined parliamentary lobbying, evidence-building and social-movement alliances that have successfully advanced the historical ILO 190 ratification in Colombia and meaningful progress towards legislation in Brazil. The **UNI Americas Colombia project (3709)** paired organising-focused approach in ICTS, finance, commerce, private security and cleaning with sustained tripartite engagement on the National Care System and C190 ratification and successfully reached 96 % of targeted growing membership while shaping public policy on care, gender and informality. The **UTRASD project (3019)** in Colombia kept its focus on grassroots organising of Afro-

descendant domestic workers, channelling workplace experiences into national policy advocacy on care work and racial justice.

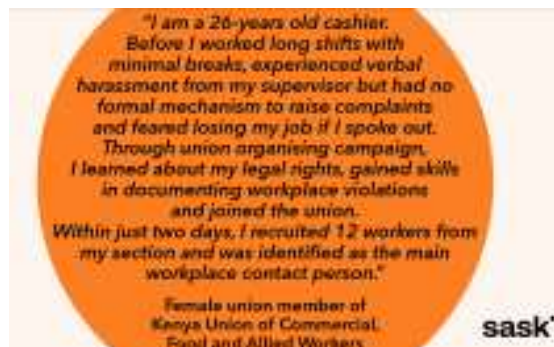
Implementation, however, was **not free of challenges**. Internally, partners faced familiar but persistent constraints: limited financial sustainability and dues collection gaps, leadership transitions, capacity gaps, and occasional internal disputes. Externally, the operating environment grew more demanding across all three regions: shrinking civic space, anti-union practices, restrictive labour legislation, political and economic shocks (including Lesotho's textile-sector tariff crisis and Mozambique's post-election unrest), climate-related disruptions (heavy rains in Kenya delayed activities, typhoon in the Philippines). Partners absorbed these challenges by adjusting some changes, such as adjusting budgets, replacing physically with online formats, and preparing a wide range of risk mitigations.

In **Finland**, domestic operations supported the programme's last phase through communications campaigns, the SASK Ambassador network, global education work, advocacy work, and continued cooperation with the private sector around the EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive. Twinning arrangements between Finnish affiliates and partners, peer exchanges and SASK volunteer participation in monitoring visits supported knowledge transfer and ownership.

4.2 Key Results and Achievements in 2025

Despite difficult political and economic contexts in many countries, **tangible** collective bargaining, policy and organising **gains were achieved** during 2025. Across regions, projects increasingly moved from capacity building toward concrete institutional, policy and workplace-level outcomes. The most successful interventions were those that combined organising, capacity building, collective bargaining and policy influence, and explicitly planned for institutional continuity beyond the project and programme cycle. Across Africa, Latin America and Asia, projects increasingly contributed not only to short-term wins, but to the achievement of project objectives and longer-term impact.

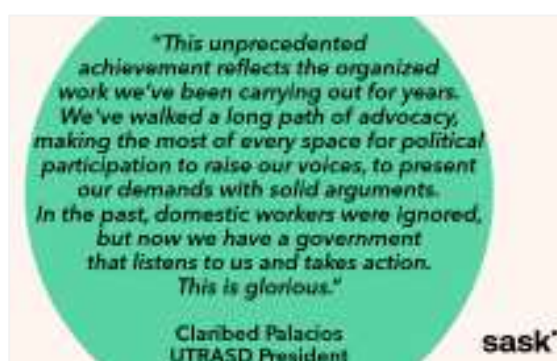
In **Africa**, projects demonstrated consolidation of union power through organising, collective bargaining, and policy engagement. Considering the size of the region in SASK's programme, Africa achieved the **widest reach**. Large-scale capacity building and strong union membership growth resulted in concrete workplace improvements, such as wage increases and



maternity protection as well as institutional strengthening such as expansion of OHS and gender committees and youth structures. After years of advocacy campaigns, 27,000 South African Community Health Workers (CHW) won formal recognition as official public health workers through their public sector union. With this recognition, they will have permanent jobs, housing allowances, and other benefits.

Organising is not only about increasing membership numbers, but about empowering workers to find their **voice** and become **agents of change** in their own workplaces. A case example from Kenya private sector project demonstrates a journey from silence to leadership.

In **Latin America**, achievements were strongly emphasised structural reforms, sector-wide recognition, and gender and racial justice. The results of the work carried out in Colombia serve as good example. Through SASK's projects in the country, such as PSI 3613 and UNI 3709, local partners played a key role in discussions on **national labour and public health reforms**, leading to achievements such the implementation of the law which reduced gradually the working hours from 47 weekly hours to 42 hours in 2026; and the approval of the National Labour Reform, which expanded social security coverage, led to significant increases in the minimum wage and additional pay for shifts outside regular working hours.



At the same time, more targeted sectoral project in Colombia, such as 3019 with UTRASD, a trade union comprising Afro-Colombian domestic workers, have succeeded for the first time in history to **establish collective bargaining in domestic work and creating a tripartite dialogue committee** whose decisions will be binding for all households in the country. These measures are aimed at implementing the domestic work labor reform adopted in 2025 and aligning Colombia's legal framework with ILO Convention 189 which was ratified in 2014. The next step is to

establish a negotiating group of domestic worker leaders, who will discuss sector-wide working conditions within the tripartite dialogue committee. The focus now is to move the new labor protections from paper to practice, so they translate into tangible improvements in the lives and working conditions of more than 700,000 domestic workers in Colombia—94% of whom are women, the vast majority racialized and from vulnerable communities.

In **Asia**, project results were marked by large-scale organising, improved Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs), and policy influence in difficult industrial relations environments. In Indonesia, the partners in mining and metal sector successfully pushed for 120 local CBAs (136 % from target) covering over 92,000 workers (411 % from target) with great improvements on welfare benefits, maternity protection, and social protection by the end of 2025. In the Philippines, the public sector unions not only impressively extending a total of around 331 local CBAs (121 % from target) covering over 95,000 workers (105 % from target), but also successfully pushed the office of the President, through Executive Order No. 97, to implement the Omnibus Guideline on the Exercise of Freedom of Association and Civil Liberties. A major victory also achieved by Filipino partners was 30 % regional wage increase compared to the average annual increase in Region X Northern Mindanao. The increase is the largest in a decade, which will directly benefit half a million minimum-wage earners in the region. In Nepal, after a 29-day long mobilisation, teachers were able to achieve an agreement with the government on extending leave benefits for 300,000 teachers, improvement on promotion and grading systems, increasing minimum salary from 6,000 NPR to 18,000 NPR, and secured additional education funding from the government for over three years.

During the last year of the programme, projects were increasingly focused on **embedding results** into union structures, laws, CBAs, and governance mechanisms, thus supporting

continuity beyond the project cycle and reducing reliance on project funding alone. Along with strengthening financial sustainability through membership growth and establishing permanent union structures, policies, committees and education programmes, the project partners were able to anchor trade unions in policy-making spaces and social dialogue frameworks at national and regional levels.

5. Programme Results and Impact 2022-2025

SASK's programme during 2022-2025 demonstrates **overall strong progress towards** its objectives, particularly at the levels where the organisation has direct influence. Across the period, the programme has been effective in strengthening trade unions, expanding collective bargaining, and delivering concrete improvements in working conditions. SASK's Result Framework (Annex 2) summarises the indicator results over the programme period.

5.1 Overall Progress Towards Programme Objectives

The programme performed strongly across most result areas and provided a solid basis for achieving outcome-level objectives. At the **output level**, performance was strong across areas, with most indicators meeting or exceeding targets. Progress was strongest where SASK's contribution was direct—capacity development, organising, training, advocacy, equality work and institutional strengthening—and more limited where results depended on longer-term systems development, particularly digitalised membership registers. Overall performance reflects the importance of long-term partnerships, local ownership, practical training and continuous technical support.

Member mobilisation was a key result. By 2025, 853,260 union members participated in campaigns or union actions and 645,521 were trained on worker rights, both exceeding targets. Women's participation surpassed targets more clearly than men's, and identification of non-binary participants improved. These results show strengthened worker capacity to understand rights, participate collectively and act through unions.

One of the clearest progress was in **strengthening the institutional capacity** of partner unions. By the end of 2025, 463 supported trade unions had adequate democratic and participatory structures, tools and systems in place, exceeding the target slightly, and more unions than planned had actively implemented strategic development plans. This indicates stronger, more accountable and member-based organisations.

Leadership, skills and financial sustainability also strengthened. A total of 107,039 trade union officials and activists reported adequate skills and confidence across key functions, slightly exceeding the target. The number of unions able to cover core operational costs exceeded targets, with 548 additional local unions gaining significant sustainability. This is critical for maintaining results beyond external support.

Advocacy performance was strong, with 641 campaigns and advocacy actions implemented against a target of 560, reflecting strengthened capacity to influence employers, authorities and policy processes. Just transition was also integrated into union work.

Gender equality and **non-discrimination** results were consistently strong. By 2025, 393 unions had gender policies, 284 had non-discrimination policies, and 463 were implementing related actions. In addition, 427 unions had incorporated gender or non-discrimination clauses into CBAs, all exceeding targets. Inclusion also improved, with 9,034 persons with disabilities, 3,136 sexual and gender minorities and 8,361 members from other oppressed groups reflected in union membership.

Quantitative indicators confirm that most targets were met or exceeded, particularly in organisational capacity, participation and collective bargaining coverage. **Qualitative evidence** from OHS and collective bargaining further shows tangible improvements for workers, including higher wages, better social protection and stronger safeguards against workplace risks and discrimination. These results demonstrate significant progress in building trade union capacity and delivering long-term outcomes.

At **outcome level**, results were particularly strong in strengthening union **effectiveness**. An additional 14,377 workplaces were covered by CBAs, and more than 2.5 million workers benefited from collective bargaining. Combined with an increase of 2.3 million union members and improved negotiation capacity, this reflects stronger ability to represent and protect workers' rights.

These results contribute to broader impact primarily through **strengthening trade unions as agents of change**. Improved capacity, negotiation skills and resilience enable unions to secure better outcomes, engage effectively in social dialogue and influence policies. Workers benefit through improved livelihoods, stronger rights awareness and increased ability to influence their conditions. Supported unions are better positioned to advocate for reforms and contribute to structural changes in the world of work.

At **impact level**, progress is visible but uneven. The programme contributed to expanded **social protection** for 1.39 million workers, **minimum wage** gains for 2.11 million workers, and qualitative **OHS improvements** across 24 countries. Supported unions also influenced ratification of ILO conventions. However, broader labour rights indicators showed mixed change due to strong external political and economic factors.

Progress was **strongest in areas closely aligned with the Theory of Change**, particularly union capacity and collective bargaining. Improvements in membership, organisational development and financial sustainability strengthened worker representation, while **collective bargaining** delivered gains in wages, working hours, social benefits, gender equality, non-discrimination, workplace safety, and union practices. Qualitative improvements in OHS, including maternity protection and measures addressing workplace violence, further demonstrate the programme's ability to achieve meaningful workplace-level change.

Progress was more limited in areas dependent on external conditions or systemic change. Improvements in national labour rights environments and ITUC ratings were modest, reflecting **shrinking civic space, economic instability and persistent informality**. While just transition and digitalisation advanced, their integration remained uneven and required further contextual adaptation.

These reflect both **enabling and constraining** factors. Strong local ownership, long-term engagement and partnership-based approaches supported results, alongside training and continuous support. At the same time, political instability, restrictions on labour rights and economic pressures constrained systemic change.

Many results can be **directly attributed to SASK's contribution** through funding, technical support and strategic guidance, delivered through a flexible, partnership-based approach emphasising local ownership and sustainability. SASK's role in promoting ILO core labour standards, strengthening leadership and fostering mutual trust and collaboration between partners has enhanced partners' ability to effectively improve working conditions and advocate for workers' rights.

SASK operates within a **broader ecosystem** supporting trade unions, including Global Union Federations, which provide political and technical expertise and play a major role in implementation, and other Trade Union Solidarity Support Organisations working toward similar objectives. Cooperation has generated synergies in areas such as just transition and regional projects, with growing potential for coordination, joint programming, joint funding initiatives, shared advocacy, and stronger international-level cooperation. Finnish trade unions remain key partners, contributing both funding and expertise.

The programme has been **highly effective in progressing towards the programme objectives and achieving expected results**. Outcome-level achievements are particularly strong, demonstrating improved union representation and bargaining capacity, while impact-level progress is evident but more gradual, shows clear contribution despite external constraints. The programme has established a strong foundation for long-term change while highlighting the need to further scale impact and address systemic barriers.

Below picture highlights the **key results for 2022-2025**, and detailed examples of different achievements can be found in the continuing sub-chapters.

sask Highlights Summary 2022-2025 Progress in Numbers

37 projects
in **28** countries
with **227** local partner unions
among **nine** sectors.
Total **273 140** participants in
activities with **20,9 million**
euros in total expenditure.



Workers' Rights & Legal Frameworks

6,5 million direct beneficiaries in SASK programme countries.
ILO Convention 190 ratified in **seven** programme countries.
Clear shift from basic protections to systemic labour reforms.
Collective bargaining and tripartite dialogue committee for
domestic work sector in Colombia.
Annulment of the Omnibus Law on Job Creation in Indonesia.
Representation in African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)
National Implementation Committees in **three** countries, and
policy dialogue on national implementation in **seven** countries.



Coverage & Representation

2,1 million more
workers are covered by minimum
wage agreements.
in **24** countries workers
benefitted from improved OHS
measures.
14 377 more workplaces
are covered by CBAs.
2,5 million more
workers are protected by CBAs.

423 campaigns and
advocacy actions.

2,3 million

workers joined unions.

2 million more

dues paying members.

In **17** countries,

improved parental leaves.

In **18** countries, 5% - 35%
increased wages.

Equality & Non-Discrimination



Gender equality and non-discrimination **improvements**
recorded in **20** countries, evolving
from maternity protections to
comprehensive measures
including anti-harassment policies,
SRI 3, equal pay, and gender
responsive workplace systems.
393 trade unions now have a
gender strategy or policy.
196 more unions now have gender
equality or non-discrimination
clauses in their CBAs.
6 691 more members identified as
Persons with Disabilities.
Gender-sensitive labour
conditions and gender-responsive
organisational developments.

Climate Resilience & Just Transition



102 more unions developed just transition strategies.
COP30 breakthrough, formally recognising workers' rights, social
protection, and participation as central to climate action.
Expanded workplace protections and access to training and reskilling,
inclusion in climate processes and representation in policy spaces.

Communications & Advocacy in Finland

Five national policy initiatives were influenced.
Cooperation resulted from new **CSR strategy**.
280 new SASK Ambassadors were trained and nearly
10 000 people reached by global education activities.
Successful **Cost of the Game** campaign.



Digitalisation



452 unions now have
digitalised membership registers.
New practices in digital
organisational forms, worker
representation and collective
bargaining on technology.
Strengthened sectoral and policy
responses to automation, AI and
new forms of work.
More visibility for data and digital
governance in workplaces.

5.2 ILO Core Labour Principles and Rights

During 2022-2025, the programme achieved meaningful progress in relation to **freedom of association, collective bargaining and non-discrimination at work**, while also making a significant contribution to the promotion, ratification, domestication and implementation of key **ILO conventions**. Across regions, work on international labour standards became an increasingly important pathway through which SASK's partners defended workers' rights, strengthened social dialogue and translated global norms into national legislation, collective agreements and workplace practice. This was particularly visible in relation to ILO Conventions 87, 98, 151, 176, 183 and 190¹.

Programme contributed to strengthened union capacity that translated into broader collective bargaining coverage, stronger workplace protections, improved wage outcomes, more inclusive union practices and better safeguards against discrimination, harassment and occupational risks. The strongest results were seen where SASK's contribution was the most direct: capacity development, organising, training, advocacy, equality work and institutional strengthening.

Programme helped unions use ILO standards as tools for advocacy, social dialogue and collective bargaining, even in contexts where legal reform was slow or incomplete. This shows that strengthened union capacity contributed to making international labour standards more operational: through national institutions, workplace agreements and mechanisms that can protect workers in practice.

In the **Philippines**, Convention No. 190 was ratified in 2024, after which unions focused on implementation by strengthening local affiliates' capacity to address gender-based violence through documentation systems and referral pathways. At the same time, public-sector unions continued advocacy related to Convention No. 151, while local unions and federations were already able to negotiate better benefits and working conditions by drawing on the provisions and principles of both conventions, even in the absence of full enabling legislation. In **Indonesia**, where ratification has been slowed by a complex political and legislative environment, unions continued campaigning and capacity building around Conventions Nos. 176, 183 and 190. Although ratification remained difficult, Convention No. 176 was returned to parliament's priority agenda for 2026, showing that unions had succeeded in keeping occupational safety and health and wider labour protections on the political agenda.

In **Brazil** and **Colombia**, given the political landscape in recent years, advancing the ratification and implementation of ILO conventions became a top priority for SASK partners during the 2022-2025 cycle. In Colombia, trade unions in the public and private sectors, particularly in health, worked together with labour federations, social organisations and feminist movements to advance implementation and follow-up of Convention No. 190. This culminated in ratification in 2025. In Brazil, SASK-supported unions, especially in the public and education sectors, helped keep international labour standards on the political agenda through training, policy dialogue and advocacy, including a public hearing in the House of Representatives in support of

¹The conventions referred to are ILO Convention No. 87 on freedom of association and protection of the right to organise; No. 98 on the right to organise and collective bargaining; No. 151 on labour relations in the public service; No. 176 on safety and health in mines; No. 183 on maternity protection and No. 190 on violence and harassment in the world of work.

Convention No. 190. Although ratification remained pending, the programme contributed to maintaining pressure on the issue and to reinforcing the role of trade unions as legitimate policy actors. These examples show that progress in labour rights is often non-linear: in some contexts, it results in formal legal milestones, while in others it is reflected in stronger policy engagement, greater union legitimacy and improved readiness for future reform.

In **Africa**, results were visible both in institutional change and in the practical application of international standards. **Mozambique's** ratification of Convention No. 190 in 2025 was one important legal milestone. At the same time, the programme helped unions translate international standards into national and workplace-level mechanisms. In **Namibia**, unions contributed through high-level social dialogue to the establishment of a Tripartite Occupational Health and Safety Commission, creating a new institutional platform for embedding labour standards in national governance. In **Zambia** and **Mozambique**, unions integrated gender-based violence reporting mechanisms and anti-harassment clauses into collective bargaining agreements, helping turn Convention No. 190 into practical workplace protection. More broadly, the programme's support to regional trade union work on AfCFTA strengthened unions' participation in trade policy processes and widened their role in defending workers' rights beyond traditional labour issues alone. This is significant because it positioned unions not only as workplace negotiators, but also as actors shaping the broader policy frameworks that affect employment, rights and social justice.

Results were typically **achieved together** with Global Union Federations, national labour federations, civil society coalitions and other trade union actors. In many cases, these wider alliances were essential for achieving legal or policy change, while SASK's role was to strengthen the agency, coordination capacity and strategic role of its partners within these broader processes. The programme also benefited from **synergies** with other trade union solidarity support organisations and from coordination within regional and international trade union structures. This wider ecosystem of support was particularly important in areas such as convention advocacy, public policy dialogue, just transition and regional trade-related work.

The constrained operational environment conditions limited social dialogue, slowed legal reform and weakened enforcement even where formal commitments existed. Progress was strongest in areas aligned with **SASK's direct contribution**, while broader changes in national labour rights environments were more uneven and depended heavily on external political and economic conditions.

5.3 Gender Equality and Non-Discrimination

Gender equality and non-discrimination **strengthened progressively** over the programme period, shifting from merely ensuring participation to embedding durable, structural changes within trade unions.

5.3.1 Equal Participation and Leadership

Efforts initially focused on balanced participation and increasing women's visibility, with women forming a slight majority of participants and a new non-binary category broadening inclusion. As parity neared, the **focus shifted to influence and leadership**. Supported by the programme

and Global Union Federation partners, leadership training, constitutional reforms, quota systems, and mentoring helped women and young workers access decision-making roles. This participation translated into growing visibility within governance and policy discussions, while gender training for men fostered a more supportive environment.

Despite barriers in male-dominated industries, participation remained balanced across regions. **Gains became institutionalized** over time, such as in the Asia-Pacific region, including Nepal's education sector, where unions transitioned from quota-based approaches to broader parity targets. In these contexts, women increasingly served as facilitators, negotiators, and policy actors beyond gender-specific issues. Many unions formalized gender and youth representation structures within their constitutions to ensure continuity beyond the programme period. In traditionally male-dominated sectors, targeted organizing enabled women to enter occupational safety, technical work, collective bargaining, and leadership positions after long periods without representation. Parallel youth initiatives established leadership pathways and networks for younger workers to support generational renewal. Meanwhile, in female-dominated sectors like domestic and care work, the emphasis shifted to ownership, with worker organizations assuming full responsibility for training, organizing, and advocacy to strengthen long-term autonomy.

5.3.2 World of Work Free from Violence and Harassment

Work on violence and harassment developed progressively from awareness-raising to **policy engagement and early institutionalization**, centered on the promotion of ILO Convention 190 (C190). Initial training and advocacy with national centres, civil society, and women's rights groups established these issues as core labour rights and positioned unions as key actors in policy debates.

Sustained advocacy led to **legal progress**, notably the Philippines' and Colombia's ratification of C190. Attention then shifted toward implementation, with unions translating international standards into national regulations and workplace practices by drafting implementing rules, strengthening grievance mechanisms, and negotiating collective agreements. These agreements introduced explicit workplace policies, complaint procedures, and support mechanisms. Unions also established permanent institutional structures, including focal points, committees, and survivor-centred response systems. By the end of the programme, violence and harassment were integrated into broader union agendas like occupational health and safety and gender equality, driven by women leaders to ensure a sustainable approach. The overall contribution lies in strengthening union capacity, supporting policy development, and improving workplace-level protection.

5.3.3 Occupational Health and Safety and Maternity Protection

Occupational health and safety (OHS) and maternity or parental protection remained a **consistent priority and became integrated** into wider labour rights and equality agendas. Early collective bargaining secured tangible workplace improvements, including access to protective equipment, better sanitation, safer working arrangements, and stronger maternity provisions in demanding sectors.

As the programme evolved, unions linked OHS to broader challenges like climate change, violence, and decent work. **Systematic, preventive approaches** emerged over time. In the health sector, unions contributed to monitoring systems addressing working conditions, psychosocial risks, and post-pandemic impacts. In industrial and construction sectors, OHS was integrated into national policy and social dialogue to shape labour standards. Climate-related risks, including heat exposure and environmental hazards, gained prominence in workplace agreements and policy discussions within sectors undergoing transformation. Progress in maternity and parental protection followed a similar trajectory, as unions negotiated expanded paternity leave, enhanced maternity provisions, and caregiving support that protected income and career progression. These outcomes relied on cooperation among trade unions, Global Union Federations, employers, and governments, strengthening unions' capacity to implement lasting worker benefits.

5.3.4 Inclusion and Rights of Minorities and Other Vulnerable Groups (MFA Cross-Cutting Objective)

The programme expanded its focus on inclusion by adopting an **intersectional approach** that recognises how vulnerability is shaped by overlapping factors like gender, migration status, informality, and age. From the outset, domestic, community health, and informal workers gained improved representation, social protection, and union access. Over time, migrant, platform, and precarious workers became central to union activities, expanding membership, improving grievance handling, and increasing participation in decision-making. Work on migration combined direct legal assistance and case handling with policy engagement to improve governance frameworks.

Youth inclusion strengthened through targeted training, networks, and new youth structures that secured leadership pathways and organisational renewal. Attention to persons with disabilities increased through data collection and research to identify barriers like inaccessibility and discrimination, while collaboration with disability organisations led to the gradual inclusion of these considerations in union policies, training, and advocacy. Work regarding sexual and gender minorities followed a similar trajectory, where awareness training improved LGBTQIA+ recognition within unions and influenced collective agreements. A dedicated global initiative further built union capacity to address violence against LGBTQIA+ workers and supported internal action plans. Ultimately, the programme equipped trade unions to become more representative of workforce diversity and better structured to protect a broader range of human rights.

5.4 Climate Resilience and Just Transition (MFA Cross-Cutting Objective)

Between 2022 and 2025, SASK progressively strengthened the integration of just transition and climate resilience into trade union work, evolving from strategic positioning to tangible policy influence and workplace implementation.

In 2022, SASK established just transition and climate resilience as core priorities, focusing on **amplifying workers' voices** in global climate discussions. Through engagement in COP negotiations, alignment with ILO guidelines, and participation in advocacy coalitions, SASK ensured labour perspectives were increasingly reflected in climate policy debates.

In 2023, efforts expanded significantly. Trade unions exceeded programme targets, deepening work on **worker participation, social protection, and labour market transitions**. A key achievement was influencing the COP28 Just Transition Work Programme. Unions also strengthened their role in national climate bodies, contributed to industrial and energy policy discussions, and advanced research on inequality and gender impacts. Capacity building and global networking intensified.

By 2024, the focus shifted toward implementation. Unions translated just transition principles into practice through **collective bargaining, especially addressing climate-related workplace risks** such as heat stress. This resulted in concrete improvements in occupational safety and working conditions. Progress was also seen in energy transition advocacy, reskilling initiatives, and disaster preparedness. Although union participation in transition processes increased, challenges remained in securing consistent influence.

In 2025, SASK and its partners achieved notable policy impact. Just transition principles were integrated into **national climate commitments, and new collective agreement clauses were introduced across sectors**. The COP30 “Belém Action Mechanism for Just Transition” marked a major breakthrough, formally recognizing workers’ rights, social protection, and participation as central to climate action.

The 2022-2025 programme produced positive outcomes: **improved workplace protections, stronger inclusion of workers’ rights in climate processes, expanded access to training and reskilling, and increased union representation in policy spaces**. In some cases, workers also experienced broader socio-economic benefits such as wage improvements and enhanced livelihood security. SASK programme indicators (OPI 1.4.1 and 1.4.2) on just transition show that the programme reached and even exceeded the expected targets. Throughout the programme 102 new unions have developed **new strategies and policy proposals on just transition**, whereas 79 new unions are **implementing just transition-related actions**. These represent 109 % and 100 % respectively, of the programme target.

Overall, across the programme, integration of just transition occurred through four main channels: collective bargaining, policy advocacy, capacity development, and sector-specific actions. **At the workplace level**, unions embedded just transition principles into collective agreements, introducing provisions on job security, reskilling, social protection, and environmental health and safety. In climate-exposed sectors, this led to tangible improvements, such as heat protection measures in Southern Africa. Early steps to standardize just transition clauses in countries like Indonesia and the Philippines supported institutionalization within industrial relations.

At the policy level, unions strengthened engagement in climate governance at national, regional, and global levels. They participated in dialogue with governments and employers, contributed to national frameworks such as NDCs, and engaged in international forums. Unions promoted worker-centred approaches linking decarbonization with social justice, job protection, and industrial policy. Examples include Brazilian union proposals connecting clean energy investments with reindustrialization, and advocacy efforts in Africa and Asia to integrate just transition into trade policy processes.

Capacity building was central throughout, enabling unions to better understand the intersection of climate change, labour rights, and economic transformation. Training, workshops, and knowledge-sharing platforms supported the development of tools such as just transition roadmaps and policy briefs and facilitated a shift from awareness-raising to concrete advocacy and bargaining strategies.

Sector-specific approaches ensured relevance across industries. In energy, mining, and manufacturing, unions addressed employment impacts of decarbonization and technological change. In public services, climate change was reframed as a core issue affecting service delivery and working conditions. Health unions highlighted increased risks from climate-related disease burdens, while education unions addressed disruptions from extreme weather. In more informal sectors, progress remained limited to awareness and adaptation measures.

In Finland, SASK strengthened its role as an **advocate for a worker-centered just transition** by actively engaging in national civil society and trade union networks. It contributed labour perspectives to key platforms such as Fingo's climate finance and justice working group and other CSO coalitions, while participating in joint advocacy efforts like the "Just Transition Now!" campaign ahead of the 2023 parliamentary elections. SASK deepened collaboration with Finnish unions, international partners, and global union federations, and built expertise through joint learning, communication, and events. By 2025, just transition has become an important theme in SASK's communications and stakeholder engagement, with continued emphasis on influencing policy, fostering dialogue across sectors, and integrating workers' rights into climate and development discussions.

Overall, the programme marked a **clear shift** from initial awareness to more strategic and coordinated action. Just transition and climate resilience became increasingly **embedded** in union strategies, strengthening their ability to advocate for workers in the context of climate change. While challenges remain, the programme laid a strong foundation for a more equitable, worker-centred transition to sustainable economies.

5.5 Digitalisation and New Forms of Work

SASK's digitalisation work from 2022 to 2025 evolved from groundwork to capacity building and a recognised expert role.

In 2022, the focus was on **establishing a foundation**. SASK contributed to a national report on digitalisation in Finnish development policy, emphasising workers' perspectives, human rights, and ethical use of technology. Its approach was guided by ILO frameworks on the future of work, highlighting lifelong learning, social protection, and algorithmic accountability. Dialogue with partners on digitalisation was initiated, laying the basis for future work.

In 2023, SASK strengthened its role by **building networks and expertise**. It focused on key themes such as automation, data rights, and platform work, while expanding cooperation with global unions, researchers, and civil society. SASK contributed to a global AI manifesto and participated in international discussions. At project level, digitalisation became more visible, with partners organising workshops and addressing its impacts, especially job loss risks.

Progress included organising platform workers, introducing digitalisation-related clauses in collective agreements, and increasing union involvement in technological change.

In 2024, the emphasis shifted to capacity building and deeper implementation. SASK defined core subthemes—**artificial intelligence, automation, data rights, and platform work**—and increased training and seminars across projects. Digitalisation impacts became more evident globally, prompting stronger union responses. Key results included expansion of platform worker federations, improved collective bargaining provisions on technology, growing digitalisation of union operations, and advocacy on AI's role in work and education.

By 2025, SASK had consolidated its **expert role**. It focused on supporting partners through dialogue and project work, strengthening understanding of digitalisation's effects on workers. SASK contributed expertise in events and studies, continued collaboration through thematic networks, and promoted international cooperation, including initiating a global digitalisation network.

During the whole programme period, SASK supported trade unions in responding to digitalisation and emerging forms of work by combining **capacity building, digital transformation, organising innovation and policy engagement**. Across regions, unions moved from initial awareness to actively **integrating digital tools and future-of-work strategies** into their operations. For instance, unions in Africa introduced digital training manuals, online platforms and membership databases to improve communication, organising and service delivery, while construction unions in Namibia, Mozambique and Zambia replaced manual systems with electronic membership management and used tools like Zoom and WhatsApp to reach workers in remote areas.

New union practices emerged particularly in **digital organising, platform worker representation and collective bargaining on technology**. In transport, unions organised app-based drivers (e.g. Yango drivers in Mozambique), marking a shift towards representing gig workers. In Nepal and India, unions introduced online membership systems and social media organising, while in India's Amazon warehouses workers collectively challenged algorithmic management, digital monitoring and unrealistic productivity targets linked to AI-driven systems. In the Philippines food sector, unions negotiated pioneering collective agreement clauses on automation, later replicated across multiple companies.

The programme also strengthened **sectoral and policy responses to automation, AI and new forms of work**. In Brazil, unions developed sector-specific agendas addressing Industry 4.0, outsourcing and job insecurity, proposing retraining, job guarantees and limits on subcontracting. In health sector in Latin America, unions addressed telemedicine, digital skills and the right to disconnect, highlighting inequalities linked to digital access. At regional level in Africa, unions engaged in debates on digital trade and economic transformation, advocating for regulation of technological change and investment in skills and infrastructure.

Issues of **data and digital governance** also became more visible. While unions strengthened their own data systems for planning and organising, cases like Amazon highlighted risks related to employer control of worker data, surveillance and algorithmic decision-making, prompting demands for transparency and fair treatment.

Overall, these efforts contributed to decent work by expanding union representation to gig and digitally managed workers, strengthening bargaining power over automation and AI, embedding technology issues into collective agreements, and linking innovation with social protection, skills development and labour rights.

5.6 Results per Regions, Contexts, and Sectors

During the 2022-2025 programme period, SASK achieved tangible results across regions and sectors, contributing to a **better standard of living** for millions of workers around the world, despite an increasingly challenging global context marked by economic instability, rising informality, shrinking multilateralism and democratic civic spaces.

In **Africa**, despite state repression, large informal sector, low dues and other funding constraints, strong pan-African solidarity boosted the programme initiatives which was visible in for example the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) projects. The regional projects helped unions analyse trade and investment agreements, formulate workers' priorities and demand participation in policy dialogue processes. As a result, unions became recognised stakeholders in AfCFTA-related processes, also included in National Implementation Committees in countries



such as **Rwanda, Ghana, Namibia and Nigeria**. It showed that unions were moving from reacting to trade policy impacts towards shaping implementation processes that affect employment, industrial development, public services and workers' rights. This is significant because it gives workers' organisations a voice in decisions on trade, foreign direct investment, industrial development and employment, with clear impact on workers livelihoods.

Although union repression was significant, important organising gains were made, for example, in the aviation and education sectors. Also, policy and wage wins were achieved: for example, in **Nigeria**, an average of 50 % wage increase was adopted in the transport sector. Notable innovations as the male-only gender workshops, and successful collaboration with LGBTIQIA+ organisation in an exceptionally oppressive country, **Eswatini**, demonstrate resilience and creativity in adapting and making progress on human rights trainings, even under unfavourable circumstances.

Asia stands out as the region where global supply chains set the scene also for trade union work and strategic wins were gained under restrictive regimes. In **Nepal**, the community health workers (CHWs) unions continuous organizing, lobbying, and advocacy efforts have positively pushed their recognition as workers, especially in Bansgadi Municipality, Bhimphe Municipality, and Phedikhola Municipality, where CHWs registered as workers and enrolled in the Social Security Fund. The resilience shown by CHWs was internationally recognized with WHO South Asia award. Meanwhile, in neighbouring **India**, union partners have been increasingly recognised as key stakeholders in migration governance. An MoU signed in Uttar Pradesh between union and recruitment agency will expand the union role in migration

preparation phase and improve safe migration practices in the area, which approximately will positively impact 18,4 million registered constructions workers in Uttar Pradesh.

Latin America differs from the other regions by a relatively wider formal bargaining coverage but shares the high political volatility and severe anti-union violence. During the four-year programme in key countries of **Brazil** and **Colombia**, local partners seized the window of opportunity within the national governments to advance agendas critical to the labour movement and increase their advocacy in national policy making debates. During this period, real increases in the minimum wage were achieved, the number of workers covered by collective agreements rose, and gender protection clauses approved in CBAs were widely adopted.

Despite the positive results achieved, navigating the current erratic international landscape requires increasingly **more coordination and cooperation** between SASK and other Trade Union Solidarity Support Organisations (TUSSOs), NGOs and academic institutions, such as Global Labour University. Shrinking budgets for international cooperation, constant attacks on democracy and the trade union movement, increasingly bellicose and less cooperative rhetoric results that combining activities, strategies and maintaining constant communication with other peer organisations is essential. Of particular significance were just transition project in Indonesia, Nepal and Philippines with APHEDA (Australia) and the programme synergies with Union to Union (Sweden), Mondiaal FNV (the Netherlands) and LO (Norway). It is also noteworthy that SASK participates in the regular TUSSOs dialogues organised by the ITUC in all regions, and through these forums, SASK expect to expand cooperation with other TUSSOs, particularly from the EU, in its work in the Global South in the next programme.

5.7 Contribution to Workers' Rights and Broader Societal Change

The programme's results contributed to broader societal change through three pathways. First, **defending space for trade union action**. Against a global backdrop of shrinking civic space, anti-union practices and democratic backsliding, the ITUC Global Rights Index ratings in programme countries remained largely stable over 2022-2025, with isolated improvements in Africa and Latin America. In an operating environment where labour rights were under sustained pressure, this stability can be read as a major achievement, as partner unions held their ground rather than being pushed back.

Second, **scaling concrete improvements for workers**. Programme-supported partners contributed to substantial wage increases in 18 operating countries, expanded CBA coverage, ratifications of ILO Convention 190 in seven countries, and a measurable shift toward gender-neutral parental protection covering e.g., both birthing and non-birthing parents. Workplace harassment was addressed both through ratifications and through anti-harassment clauses negotiated into collective agreements, translating international standards into enforceable workplace protections.

Third, **widening the policy footprint of trade unions beyond traditional labour issues**. The programme's longer-term impact is broader than the SASK's Result Framework captures. Concrete impact-level examples include the successful modification of Indonesia's Omnibus Law on Job Creation, the adoption of the Omnibus Guideline in the Philippines, the formation

of a social dialogue mechanism in Nepal's education sector, Lesotho's improved labour legislation, and the two African regional projects on AfCFTA implementation that brought trade unions into continental trade governance for the first time. Trade unions are now positioned not only to conduct social dialogue and advocate for ILO conventions, but increasingly to engage in structural dialogue on industrial development, trade and just transition. Long-term SASK support, sustained union presence and continuity in organising, education and rights advocacy enabled these shifts; hindering factors lie mostly in the operating context.

While demonstrating direct attribution is often challenging due to the complexity of change processes and multiple influencing factors, the programme provides substantial evidence of contribution through documented results, partner reporting and concrete examples of change. Still, change in labour relations is slow, non-linear and shaped by many actors. and SASK is rarely the sole contributor, as its added value lies in strengthening partners' capacity to act within broader processes of change alongside Global Union Federations, civil society and feminist movements. Many gains remain vulnerable to reversal, particularly where implementation depends on enforcement capacity beyond unions' reach

The programme contributed directly to several **Sustainable Development Goals: SDG 8** (decent work) and **SDG 1** (no poverty) through wage gains, expanded social protection and stronger collective bargaining; **SDG 5** (gender equality) through women's leadership, C190 implementation and gender-responsive bargaining; **SDG 10** (reduced inequalities) through inclusion of informal, migrant, disabled and LGBTIQIA+ workers; **SDG 13** (climate action) through just transition work; and **SDG 16** (peace, justice and strong institutions) through democratic, accountable trade unions and inclusive social dialogue.

5.8 Communications, Global Education and Advocacy

Communications

Communications **evolved significantly** during the programme period from awareness-raising to more strategic, campaign-driven and results-oriented approaches. Early communications focused on introducing SASK and its partners, while later communications highlighted concrete results achieved by workers and unions, making global labour rights more relatable to Finnish audiences and strengthening SASK's advocacy, fundraising and expert role.

Each year had a thematic focus. In 2022, **the Cost of the Game campaign** highlighted labour rights violations linked to major sporting events and global supply chains, gaining visibility and reinforcing SASK's expert role through media engagement and the YLE launch event. In 2023, communications focused on the right to organise, emphasising the global decline in trade union rights and the importance of freedom of association and collective bargaining. The ITUC Global Rights Index remained a key advocacy tool, and the Red Nose Day campaign broadened outreach beyond traditional union audiences.

In 2024, communications **focused** on just transition, linking climate change, labour rights and social justice, and positioning SASK in climate policy discussions. In 2025, disability inclusion was highlighted, focusing on workplace challenges and positive changes achieved by partners.

Towards the end of the period, communications also addressed cuts to development cooperation funding, including a campaign launched in December 2025.

SASK strengthened its **visual identity and digital communications**, improving accessibility (readability, colour contrast, usability) and renewing its website to better present results, partner stories and advocacy content. Social media, newsletters and web content were increasingly aligned to support campaigns and programme visibility.

Across the programme period 2022–2025, SASK’s communications reached a cumulative total of 203 communications activities, 403 media hits and 2,628 social media hits. These figures reflect a **sustained effort** to keep human rights in the world of work visible in Finnish public discussion through regular content production, growing media engagement, and expanding reach across digital channels.

Global education

Global education and volunteer activities became **more structured and strategic**. Activities were mainly implemented through SASK ambassadors, who raised awareness of labour rights and international solidarity in Finland. To strengthen their capacity, SASK organised two to three basic trainings and thematic training annually, with content aligned with key communications themes. The average feedback on the activities remained high (4,65 out of 5).

The volunteer network **grew beyond** expectations. By the end of the programme, there were a total of 730 trained SASK ambassadors (target: 610), representing an increase of 280 people over four years. This growth can be explained by increased training cooperation with member organisations, which enabled us to train more ambassadors for the network during the four-year period.

During the programme, the focus of Ambassador activities shifted **towards quality, sustainability and long-term engagement**. A regional ambassador model was introduced and piloted to improve coordination and outreach. In 2025, the model was further refined to establish functional ambassador networks aligned with SASK’s strategic goals, including advocacy, fundraising, and visibility.

At the end of 2025, we decided to begin **assessing** the level of activity and engagement within the volunteer network together with the volunteers. As a result, the total number of ambassadors will decrease at the start of the new programme period, as some of them no longer wish to remain part of the network. At the same time, some volunteers have expressed a desire to become more actively involved. The assessment was only initiated towards the end of the programme period, and results are therefore not yet available for this programme report.

During the programme period, SASK Ambassadors **organised** regional events linked to SASK’s core themes and annual focus areas. These events created space to raise awareness, build a sense of belonging, and strengthen local engagement. The events included, for example, film screenings related to SASK themes followed by discussions, joint learning sessions, and the planning of regional activities.

International learning was strengthened through study tours to Nepal, Colombia and Malawi, twinning activities between Finnish and Nepalese teachers, participation in the Global Labour University Engage programme, and an expert exchange pilot with the Finnish Industrial Union. The twinning pilots generated important learning, but also revealed challenges, particularly related to facilitation needs and language barriers. We weren't able to grow the amount of twinning partnerships due to lack of resources, as it seemed to need more facilitating as we had planned.

Overall, **global education strengthened awareness, competence and engagement** on labour rights and international solidarity. Volunteers expanded reach and sustainability, with consistently positive feedback on training quality (feedback and partner contributions. Events supported this work, notably Solidarity Days in 2024 with over 300 participants and seminars on Cost of the Game in 2022 and Corporate Social Responsibility in 2025.

Advocacy

Advocacy became **more systematic, targeted and results oriented**. SASK focused on key themes: development financing, labour rights in Finnish development policy and corporate responsibility, particularly ILO core labour standards. Its position as a labour-rights-focused civil society actor strengthened, linking global labour rights to Finnish policy debates.

Advocacy targeted **decision-makers and key platforms**. Around elections, SASK promoted workers' rights in political agendas. In 2022, SASK contributed expert input to the Parliamentary Working Life and Equality Committee and engaged in corporate responsibility discussions, including events with FIBS.

In 2024, advocacy **expanded** to multiple parliamentary committees on foreign, security and development policy, bringing labour rights into new policy processes. SASK influenced five policy initiatives, demonstrating concrete impact. Overall, advocacy strengthened the visibility and legitimacy of labour rights in Finnish policy frameworks.

SASK has been an **active member** of the Development Policy Committee throughout the programme period. As an expert member of the Development Policy Committee, SASK has highlighted the human rights theme of working life as part of the development policy debate and participated in the development policy activities, such as a field trip to Zambia in 2025.

Corporate social responsibility

Corporate social responsibility and business and human rights became increasingly important. SASK **promoted responsible business conduct** through research, advocacy, training and private sector cooperation, focusing on ILO standards, decent work and living wages.

In 2022, SASK **cooperated** with Finnwatch on a study of labour rights in Luhta, Fazer and Ahlström, and engaged with S Group on value chains. In 2023, SASK strengthened capacity-building through due diligence training with Eetti ry.

In 2024, SASK **developed a strategy** for systematic private sector engagement, promoting labour standards in company operations and value chains and supporting implementation of

the EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive. SASK provided training to Finnfund and joined FIBS and UN Global Compact networks.

In 2025, SASK **implemented** pilot cooperation with two companies applying labour rights and due diligence principles, while continuing collaboration with Finnpartnership with one consultancy assignment, and Finnfund. Overall, the more systematic CSR work, driven by the corporate social responsibility strategy of SASK strengthened awareness, expertise and practical engagement, laying a foundation for expanded company-level cooperation.

6. Sustainability and Local Ownership

SASK's programme has **strengthened partner unions** by building their organisational capacity, improving institutional and financial sustainability, and enhancing their ability to represent workers effectively. Unions report stronger skills, greater negotiating power, growing membership, improved digital systems and more inclusive policies. Many have increased their own financial contributions, taken greater ownership of activities, and gained access to national policy forums. SASK has also improved partners' data collection and reporting practices through training and continuous technical support.

Sustainability has improved through membership growth, better dues collection, increased union assets and revenues, internal policies, committees and quotas. **Local ownership** was assessed as strong and is supported by SASK's participatory approach. Partners share a strong interest in the results, which further reinforces ownership. Across Africa, Latin America and Asia, sustainability and local ownership have become central considerations in project design and implementation. This has meant a shift towards approaches where national and sectoral unions are placed at the centre of planning, implementation and follow-up.

Concrete examples show how this ownership has developed. In **South African** wine farms, CSAAWU's leadership, organisers, members and activists were closely involved in planning, conceptualising, monitoring and implementing the project. The project was highly participatory and based on workers' control. Members who participated in workshops also carried out follow-up activities, contributing to gains such as clean water for workers and their families, improved housing and better workplace health and safety. CSAAWU has the capacity to continue parts of the work, including women's power and workplace health and safety workshops, and organising task teams will continue initiatives started under the project.

In **Brazil** and **Colombia**, the participation of public sector union leaders and members in project activities, congresses, advocacy for the ratification of Convention 190, and the union mission supporting health reform demonstrates commitment to continuing work on the project's themes. Established processes and PSI's (public sector GUF) support have strengthened campaigning, advocacy and bargaining capacity. The integration of gender and diversity issues has also contributed to longer-term changes in organisational capacity and working methods.

In the domestic workers sector in **Indonesia** and the **Philippines**, the project laid important foundations for sustainability. JALA PRT exceeded its dues-payment target in two focus unions, reaching 65 % of dues-paying members from original 50 %, and introduced digital e-form registration. UNITED adopted new finance policies, clarified committee and council roles, and

developed cooperative stores and livelihood projects that generate additional income. Second-tier leadership structures, including UNITED's apprenticeship programme and JALA PRT's Team 10 and new facilitators, strengthened leadership succession.

However, important **capacity gaps remain**. Partner unions still need support in advocacy and communication, organisational and project management, RBM, risk management, financial planning, thematic expertise, digital systems and data capacity. Funding cuts and the ending of projects therefore create a risk that progress may slow, especially where financial autonomy, staffing and systems are still fragile. Long-term impact will require continued investment in institutional capacity, financial autonomy and member-driven approaches.

7. Financial Overview and Programme Management 2022-2025

During 2022-2025, financial resources were mainly used as planned and in line with programme objectives. As all financial outlooks planned in 2022 did not realise accordingly, and the organisation experienced multiple changes in personnel, this required strong focus and risk mitigation in programme management.

7.1 Financial Performance

The **total costs** of the four-year programme were 20,9 million Euro, **99 %** of the original plan. The project work (including non-allocated funding) fell 2 % short of the original plan, while other programme elements exceeded the plan by 1 %. The **unused programme support** at the end of programme period was **60 thousand Euro**. Based on this, it can be said that the programme implementation rate was very high. Only in 2022 was the implementation rate lower than in the plan, but this gap was almost closed during the last three years of the programme period.

The **funding plan** in Programme Phase II 2022-2025 document totalled 21,2 million Euro with 16,1 million Euro (76 %) of programme support and 5,1 million Euro (24 %) of self-funding from membership organisations, affiliates outside Finland, donations and other income. The self-funding plan exceeded the Ministry for Foreign Affairs requirement by 9 %. In addition, the plan was to increase the share of own contribution every year during the Phase II cycle, and moreover, to increase income of each element of own contribution every year.

The **revenue from donations did not realise** nearly as planned mostly due to cessation of the Red Nose Day. This also meant that the projects funded by the Red Nose Day revenues ended at the end of 2025. According to the donor promise, all the revenues collected in previous years also had to be spent on these projects. While there was somewhat small revenue from the Red Nose Day during the programme period (285 thousand Euro), spending that all the rest of the funding from previous years on the projects was much higher (787 thousand Euro). The difference had to be taken from the equity, which meant big deficits for SASK during the last two years of the programme period.

Funding from membership organisations comes partly from the affiliates' own contribution to the project work and partly from the membership fees for other programme components. Affiliates' own contributions are fixed to four-year project financial agreements and remain quite constant throughout the programme period. As the funding from membership organisations

was also set to increase during the programme period, but the membership fee revenue did not, this also resulted in increasing deficit during the last two years of the programme period, as the funding needed to be taken from the equity of SASK.

7.2 Audits and Use of Recommendations

Project audit reports at the GUF and local level typically contain several **auditors' observations** each year. Most of them are categorised as of low significance and already addressed in the management response of the same report and taken care of by the partner by following year's reporting. In some cases, SASK or SASK auditors request a more detailed explanation of an observation. If there is an observation where an urgent fix is needed, SASK will contact the partner directly in order to address the issue. The vast majority of the observations in the reports are not significant internal control deficiencies in terms of project funding.

A good example of the **interaction** between SASK and local level auditors can be found in the project with SINED in Mozambique. The meetings with their auditors were considered as important in a way that SASK had the opportunity to explain the nature of the project cooperation between two non-profit organisations and also the importance of complying with the deadlines for the audit reports. Auditors were able to ask for technical clarifications on the ISRS4400 guidelines required in SASK project work. They also expressed their availability to provide more services to SINED and have thus been providing them technical assistance in drafting the SINED financial handbook.

Another example would be in Malawi, where the inflation rate has been very high in recent times. As a result, some of SASK partners have submitted reports containing figures that were difficult to interpret. SASK therefore **advised** the auditors that it would be important for the audit report to explain the significant variation in inflation. Therefore, the auditors included a reference to this issue in their reports. For projects in Asia, SASK regional representative **meets regularly** local auditors especially in Indonesia and Philippines. It is also agreed to change the local auditor every two years, as a mitigation plan to prevent any misconduct.

There are some **observations** in these local audit reports recorded by SASK auditors during annual report inspection that are repeated year after year. One of the most common is the observation about lack of dedicated bank account for a project, although this is not a requirement if transferred funds can just be separated from other funds in the accounting. Another recurring observation is that the project employees do not fill timesheets, but their wage costs are allocated to the project according to the approved project budget. This is also an **accepted practice** as long as the action can be proven when requested. These observations are not signs of a lack of internal control, but according to the international auditing standards, SASK auditors have an obligation to report the observations from project audit reports. When the obligation comes directly from the standards, there is also a liability issue if the control deficiency would have enabled abuse and the deficiency would not have been reported, even if it had been detected.

The **CSO review** carried out by KPMG in 2024 identified a total of 10 minor or moderate risks, but no significant or critical risks. The continued implementation of the measures recommended

in the review is reported separately in Annex 7. The monitoring and implementation of certain measures will still continue in 2026.

7.3 Programme Management and Monitoring Systems

SASK's organisational structure has remained the same but **major changes in personnel and programme management tools** have been affecting the organisation throughout the period.

In the beginning of the programme cycle, SASK had four **regional offices** in Jakarta, Indonesia (Southeast Asia); in Maputo, Mozambique (Southern Africa); in New Delhi, India (South Asia) and in Quito, Ecuador (Latin America). In the end of programme cycle, SASK had one regional office less as India regional representative's position was not fulfilled. Also, Quito regional representative position was changed to São Paulo, Brazil. Additional regional support was considered in Africa during the programme period, but it did not realise into new position. Additional support in Southeast Asia was in place during short period in 2025.

Several **staff changes** occurred in the Helsinki head office. Three long-term staff retired during 2022-2024 and SASK's Executive Director changed in 2024. The Administration Unit experienced the most personnel changes and during the programme period, entire unit structure was renewed with new staff in place. In total, it can be said that half of the personnel have changed within short period of time. Job descriptions and responsibilities have been also adjusted accordingly. This has shown the importance of exit and entry processes and also required additional resources in terms of securing the performance and progress of programme implementation.

The resources put in **developing** SASK's programme management systems and tools have proven to be valuable and bringing efficiencies to the organisation. SASK's Theory of Change, RBM system, Results Framework, project management tools, and several internal processes have been developed or reinforced during the period. In 2022, SASK took a new programme management system into use. Further design and implementation of different functionalities have continued actively along with internal competence building. Training of partners in SASK project management has been also ongoing continuously. It can be assessed that the 2025 annual reporting was done more effectively than earlier years which gives confidence in further improvements in the coming years.

8. Risk Management, Compliance and Accountability

During 2022-2025, the programme operated in a **highly volatile and constrained operating environment**, with key risks emerging primarily from **contextual and financial factors**, alongside recurring operational and programmatic risks. Many major risks were not isolated instances, but persistent trends interlinked with each other. Updated Risk Management Action Matrix includes the recent periodic risk assessment process during December 2025 – February 2026 (Annex 3).

8.1 Key Risks During the Programme Period

Risks were **identified** through SASK's periodic and dynamic risk management processes, documented annually in the updated risk matrices, and monitored through continuous partner

dialogue, regional reporting, financial follow-up, and organisational risk reviews. Risk mitigation actions emphasised **flexibility, preparedness, and adaptive planning**, including the use of contingency arrangements, reallocation of resources, adjusted implementation modalities, intensified advocacy, and strengthened internal controls.

The most significant contextual risks throughout the period were **political instability and conflict, shrinking civic space, and threats against trade union activists**. These risks were present across the programme, with variations in intensity by region. While improvements were noted in some countries, deterioration in others meant that risk levels largely remained high but stable. Political instability and violence continued to affect partners' operational environments, requiring constant security monitoring and flexible approaches to implementation. Similarly, restrictions on civil society organisations persisted and, by 2025, were recognised as increasingly relevant also to operations in Finland, reflecting a broader global trend of constrained civic space.

A major shift during the programme period concerned **financial risks**, especially the **decrease in state aid**. Despite the fact that such financial risks were already identified prior to programme period and assessed as a moderate risk in 2022, the risk levels of reduced public funding increased year by year, culminating in 2025 as one of the programme's most critical risks. This reflected changes in political priorities, pressures on public finances, and increased competition for limited development funding. In parallel, the **cessation of Red Nose Day funding** moved from a monitored programmatic risk to a realised funding loss in early 2024. The evolution of the financial risks during 2022-2025 also presented the fact to strengthen financial base.

Several operational and institutional risks—such as organisational resources, high volume of programme and partnerships, and partner capacity or transparency issues—were **partially realised but largely contained**, without escalating into major disruptions. In early 2025, multi-country public sector project implemented in Latin America, fully paused operations in Guatemala due to the passing of the key project responsible. Project operations remained in Brazil and Colombia without affecting project objectives.

8.2 Adaptive Programming and Crisis Response

The programme demonstrated a strong capacity for **adaptive programming** in response to changing political, social, economic, and operational circumstances. Risk management was embedded in programme implementation through **annual risk assessments, continuous partner engagement, and proactive planning**, enabling timely adjustments when risks were seen to be materialised. In addition, continuous political and partner-level monitoring and identification of vulnerable contexts and partners were generally **limiting negative consequences**. While some risks could not be prevented fully, their impacts were contained, and programme continuity was largely maintained, avoiding major disruptions to implementation and finally to programme results and programme impact.

Funding-related risks triggered adaptive financial and programmatic responses. In the case of Red Nose Day funding, prior anticipation and contingency planning enabled the programme to secure ongoing activities through existing balances and agreed exit plans, thereby avoiding

abrupt interruptions. Similarly, the escalation of state aid-related risks led to intensified advocacy, funding diversification efforts, and preparation for alternative scenarios.

Across the period, the programme relied heavily on **flexibility within approved modalities**, including the long-term collaboration and trust within SASK's partnerships, the reallocation of resources, adjustment of activity schedules, and modification of implementation methods. Accountability was ensured through structured processes, adherence to the MFA guidelines, and regular internal follow-up, allowing adaptation without compromising governance or transparency.

8.3 Safeguarding, Misconduct and Internal Controls

Safeguarding and ethical risks were explicitly integrated into risk management across the programme period. **Risks related to harassment, misconduct, and violence**—both within programme contexts and organisational operations—were recognised and addressed through several preventive and corrective measures.

Human rights considerations were central to the management of risks affecting trade union activists. Preventive actions emphasised safety, partner consultation, capacity building on risk awareness, and visibility of violations. Where risks materialised, activities were adjusted to prioritise human security and avoid exacerbating harm.

Safeguarding against sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse was supported through the implementation of **ethical principles, safe space guidelines, grievance mechanisms, and designated contact persons**. These measures were assessed as functioning, although implementation among partners varied and required continued follow-up.

Internal controls addressed risks related to unilateral responsibilities, transparency of partner finances, and organisational resources. While challenges persisted—particularly regarding uneven workload and incomplete competence planning—they placed sustained pressure on staff and systems and required ongoing corrective action. Also, they highlighted areas for further development, such as clearer role and responsibilities, improved handover processes, and strengthened capacity and work planning.

During 2022-2025 period, SASK received in total nine **whistleblowing incident reports**. Most of them were mainly related to individual work-related disputes in Finland or feedback of SASK's operations that did not result into any corrective actions. Incidents that required actions are in total three. All of the three incidents are closed and have been reported to MFA accordingly.

9. Key Findings from the Final Programme Evaluation (2025)

The final evaluation of SASK's Development Cooperation Programme 2018-2025 (Annex 4a), with a specific focus on the 2022-2025 phase, confirms that the programme has remained **highly relevant** in an increasingly difficult global labour rights context. The evaluation highlights that trade unions in the Global South have operated amid growing economic fragility, expanding informal employment, inequality, youth unemployment, skills gaps, authoritarian tendencies, pressure on the ILO system, climate impacts and shrinking development

cooperation funding. These developments have directly affected workers' ability to organise, bargain collectively and defend their rights, making SASK's focus on strengthening democratic trade unions and ILO Core Labour Standards both timely and necessary.

The evaluation found that SASK-supported unions **achieved significant results** during the programme period. The most important outcomes relate to strengthened trade union capacity, increased union membership and density, improved collective bargaining capacity, and the wider use of digital tools in union work. These results analysed in the evaluation indicate not only organisational growth, but also stronger capacity among partner unions to negotiate, advocate and represent workers more effectively.

The evaluation also concluded that SASK's programme has **contributed to longer-term changes** in workers' rights and institutional practices, while recognising the limits of direct attribution in complex political and labour market environments. SASK-supported unions have become better positioned to engage in social dialogue, advocate for the ratification and implementation of ILO conventions, influence labour law reforms, and participate in broader sectoral and industrial policy debates. In Africa, for example, trade unions supported through regional projects have gained a stronger role in discussions on the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), including participation in national implementation processes. The evaluation notes that these **impacts are broader** than what the programme's Results Framework fully captures.

The programme's **Theory of Change was broadly validated**: long-term support to trade unions, combined with capacity building, organising, advocacy, leadership development and international solidarity, can strengthen unions' ability to defend workers' rights. The evaluation identified long-term SASK support, strong union presence, continuity in organising and education, and partner ownership as key enabling factors. At the same time, several assumptions were challenged by external realities, including shrinking civic space, employer hostility, volatile political contexts, funding cuts and weak enforcement of labour rights. These factors underline that progress is often non-linear and that maintaining existing rights can itself be a significant result in hostile environments.

SASK's **strategic themes were assessed as relevant**, but unevenly integrated. ILO Core Labour Standards are clearly embedded in SASK's strategy and remain the cornerstone of the programme. Gender Equality and Non-discrimination have been widely integrated and have produced concrete results, including stronger participation of women and youth, gender and inclusion policies, and workplace-level protections. Just Transition and Digitalisation and New Forms of Work were considered relevant, especially in sectors such as industry, energy and construction, but their application has been less universal and requires more time and capacity. The evaluation also cautioned that in some African regional projects, thematic priorities may have overshadowed foundational union work such as organising, membership growth, advocacy and social dialogue.

The evaluation assessed **partner ownership positively**. Local partners have been actively involved in designing and implementing projects, and several Global Union Federations have moved project coordination closer to regional structures. This supports localisation and strengthens the likelihood that results will endure beyond external funding. However, sustainability is not yet assured. Partner unions still face capacity gaps in advocacy and

communication, project management, results-based management, financial planning, digital systems, data management and core trade union functions. Continued mentoring and targeted technical support will therefore remain necessary in the next programme phase.

The programme evaluation congratulated SASK for its commitment to **constantly learn and improve**. The evaluation recognised that SASK has developed its programme and working methods during the programme period. The updated programme for phase II introduced several reforms designed to respond to global megatrends and societal challenges affecting workers' rights, while also drawing on lessons learned and recommendations from the mid-term review conducted in 2021. These include strategic renewal and programme focus, strengthened domestic operations, adoption of new operating models (Quick Action Support, twinning, SASK volunteers participating in project monitoring visits), and new strategy for private sector cooperation.

The evaluation's **recommendations** point clearly towards the 2026–2029 programme period. SASK should sharpen programme focus, align activities more firmly with available financial and human resources, strengthen fundraising, improve communication flows from the field, clarify Quick Action Support tool and process, rebalance staff responsibilities, strengthen RBM practices and deepen collaboration with like-minded trade union solidarity support organisations. Overall, the evaluation confirms that **SASK is a valued and relevant actor** with a distinctive role in Finland's development cooperation landscape. The main lesson is that SASK's strongest contribution lies in long-term, partner-owned support to trade unions' core capacities, combined with carefully selected strategic themes that respond to the changing world of work.

The management response (Annex 4b) to the recommendations of the most recent programme evaluation was conducted with several action points to improve the organisation and collaboration with its partners and other stakeholders.

10. Successes, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

Despite an even challenging operating environment globally, the 2022–2025 programme achieved strong overall results. Experiences from the full eight-year programme period 2018–2025 confirms that SASK's cooperation model is most effective when it combines long-term partnerships, local ownership and adaptability. Its added value lies in trust-based collaboration and flexibility. Going forward, stronger prioritisation, realistic resourcing and continued investment in partner capacity will be essential.

10.1 Major Achievements

Five broad achievements stand out from SASK's programme period 2022–2025.

Collective bargaining **expanded and improved** across several countries, delivering concrete gains such as higher wages, better social benefits, and inclusive protections. Beyond workplace improvements, agreements increasingly drove broader rights-based change in contexts where national systems were weak. These results were supported by stronger unions, with investments

in leadership, negotiation skills, and membership growth enhancing both institutional and financial sustainability.

The programme also showed that the rights for gender equality and non-discrimination are becoming increasingly **institutionalised**. Gender equality, anti-harassment policies and non-discrimination principles became more embedded in union structures, strategies and agreements. Progress was strongest where approaches were inclusive and engaged men as allies. Work on gender-based violence, disability inclusion and LGBTIQIA+ rights demonstrates a broader shift towards intersectional labour rights and cultural change within unions.

Partner unions strengthened their **ability to shape** laws and policies. A key achievement was the ratification of ILO Convention 190 in seven programme countries. Additional progress included advocacy in labour law reforms, improvements in occupational safety and health, and strengthened protections for freedom of association. Unions also gained greater recognition as policy actors, engaging in national and regional processes such as African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and influencing debates on trade, industrial policy and employment.

Unions **increasingly engaged** with structural issues such as just transition, digitalisation and platform work. They developed new policy proposals, negotiated protections linked to climate and technology, and expanded organising to new groups of workers. Cross-union cooperation improved bargaining power, particularly in supply chains and multi-employer contexts.

SASK **reinforced** its position as an expert on labour rights through advocacy, communications and global education. Campaigns, parliamentary engagement and a growing volunteer network increased public awareness and strengthened links between Finnish unions and international solidarity work.

Overall, these achievements reflect the **effectiveness** of SASK's long-term, partnership-based model, combining funding, technical support and international solidarity.

10.2 Key Challenges and Constrains

The challenges that limited progress during the 2022-2025 programme can be grouped into **three main categories**.

Across regions, partners worked amid economic instability, shrinking civic space, and political uncertainty. Trade shocks, conflicts, authoritarian trends and climate impacts affected employment, union membership and advocacy space. In several contexts, **maintaining existing** rights or organising space was itself a significant achievement.

Variation in partner capacity limited effectiveness in areas such as advocacy, communication, results-based management, and financial planning. Many partners lacked strong data systems and evidence-based advocacy approaches, reducing their ability to document and communicate impact. Systematic technical guidance, more effective reflection moments, and capturing of qualitative evidence alongside quantitative data are continuously needed still for learning and adaptation.

Limited human resources constrained organisational capacity and programme instruments. Thematic priorities require clearer focus and space for advocacy and implementation. Rapid growth of the ambassador network has outpaced available support capacity. In addition, tools such as Quick Action Support need clearer processes and faster decision-making. While reporting systems improved comparability and accountability, they still need to better balance quantitative tracking with qualitative learning.

10.3 Lessons for Future Programming

Several **core lessons** emerge from SASK's programme analysis, formal reports and evaluations, discussions held during different meetings, and insights gathered through exchanges with partners.

The most relevant lessons for future cooperation relate to the need to **combine growth with consolidation**. Membership expansion must be matched with strong organisational systems, financial sustainability and active member engagement.

Another key lesson is that **sustainable results require broad-based ownership**. Lasting results depend on participation across membership, including women, youth and leadership at different levels. Intergenerational renewal and grassroots engagement strengthen resilience.

Future cooperation should also continue to **build strategic alliances**. Partnerships with civil society, media and other actors increase influence. Stronger communication and digital skills are essential for shaping public narratives and supporting advocacy.

Several lessons concern the **institutionalisation of results**. Sustainable change requires embedding key issues—such as gender equality, climate and workers' rights—into agreements, policies and organisational practices.

A further lesson is that **policy adoption alone is not enough**. Legal and policy gains must be followed by enforcement and workplace-level change, supported by continued organising and bargaining.

The programme 2022-2025 confirmed that **SASK's cooperation model works best when long-term partnership, local ownership and adaptability are combined**. SASK's added value lies in trust-based cooperation, flexibility and local ownership. Future programmes need sharper prioritisation, realistic resourcing and continued investment in partner capacity.

Overall, the **2026-2029 programme builds on these lessons** by emphasising strong, member-driven unions, institutional capacity, adaptable programming and a clearer focus on systemic change and sustainability.

11. Conclusions and Way Forward

Despite an increasingly challenging global context, the 2022-2025 programme **delivered strong overall performance**. It succeeded in strengthening democratic trade unions, expanding collective bargaining, supporting organising, and advancing equality and labour rights.

The programme's **main legacy** is stronger, more resilient unions capable of defending workers' rights in difficult environments. This is reflected in SASK's Theory of Change: improved organisational capacity and membership, stronger bargaining outcomes, institutionalised gains in laws, policies and agreements, and increased union participation in policy processes.

The programme reached over **6.5 million direct beneficiaries** and an estimated over **28 million indirect beneficiaries**, with wider societal effects through improved working conditions, income distribution and social protections.

Beneficiaries of SASK programme 2022-2025	
Direct	Annual change 2022-2025
Participants to all project activities	273 140
Number of trade union members	2 315 306
Number of workers covered by CBAs	2 555 603
Number of workers accessing social security schemes	1 390 526
TOTAL	6 534 575
Indirect	
Family members of workers (average 4,4)	28 752 130
Total employment (from ILOSTAT 2021)	660 842 000

The second legacy is thematic renewal, with unions increasingly engaging in emerging issues such as gender equality and non-discrimination, disability inclusion, climate transition, digital rights and platform work. These themes were not equally mature across all countries or sectors, and in some contexts core union work remained the main priority.

The third legacy is SASK's strengthened role in Finland, where advocacy, communications and public engagement increased awareness and support for labour rights as part of development policy. This work in Finland supported the international operations by building awareness, legitimacy and political support for workers' rights as a development issue.

The next phase should focus on consolidation under constrained resources, prioritising approaches that have proven most effective. These are long-term partnerships, strong local ownership, organising and leadership development, and collective bargaining and policy advocacy.

Flexibility during 2026-2029 programme **will remain essential**, as progress in labour rights is often non-linear and setbacks are common. Maintaining space for trade union activity is, in many contexts, a key achievement in itself. SASK's **continued added value** lies in combining international solidarity, technical expertise, trusted partnerships, and alignment with the global trade union movement. In an environment of increasing polarisation and shrinking civic space, the programme **confirms** that strong, democratic trade unions are essential not only for workers' rights, but for inclusive and stable societies.

June 11, 2026

In Helsinki on June 11, 2026

Trade Union Solidarity Centre of Finland (SASK)



With support from
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