

CMI Midterm Evaluation: The Missing Peace (2022-2025)

Final Report
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Executive Summary

This is the Report of a Mid-Term Evaluation conducted for *CMI – Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation* (CMI), assessing the organisation’s performance under the programme ‘*The Missing Peace 2022-2025*’ funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (MFA). CMI is a leading non-governmental actor in peace mediation globally, founded in the year 2000 by Nobel Peace Laureate and former President of Finland, Martti Ahtisaari.

The volatility of CMI’s operational environment, the polarisation of geo-political power, and the fragmentation of local conflicts all present significant challenges for CMI’s role and mission, while also affirming CMI’s relevance. In response to the narrowing of the official diplomatic space, the weakening of the multilateral system, and the emergence of new State-level actors offering peace-mediation and diplomatic *good offices*, CMI has adapted its activities to continue offering a trusted means through which conflict parties can discreetly resolve disputes and de-escalate hostilities.

Reporting on peace-making impact remains a challenging task, due to the difficulty of reliably measuring results, the lack of reliable baselines, and multiple intervening causes in highly dynamic multi-actor conflict settings. Despite these challenges, the evidence available during this evaluation indicates that CMI’s reported results under the *Missing Peace* programme are both valid and valuable. The evaluation found that CMI is delivering its programmatic objectives of ‘*better processes, better agency, and better practices*’ in favour of peace, and is positioned as one of the few mediation organisations able to work discreetly and effectively for peace across widening geo-political and regional divides.

CMI is achieving these goals by building multi-level networks that overlap with the official diplomatic sphere, as well as with non-government actors from the civil society in their different forms. In addition to the traditional tools of informal diplomacy, CMI employs innovative methods such as digital inclusion technology, while also offering recognised expertise regarding the inclusion of women and marginalised groups in peace-making.

At the half-way point of the *Missing Peace* programme, CMI’s work remains aligned with the ‘*Missing Peace 2022-2025*’ Programme objectives, and with the MFA’s sustainable development goals. As observed by the OECD-DAC in a recent analytical report: ‘*Without peace, humanitarian needs will not decrease, nor will development objectives be reached*’.¹

In summary, the evidence considered in this evaluation indicates that:

1. *CMI remains relevant for peace making, and aligned with the ‘Missing Peace 2022-2025’ Programme objectives.*
2. *CMI is both efficient and effective, reporting valid and valued results.*
3. *CMI produces sustainable results as an adaptive learning organisation.*

¹ OECD, *Peace and Official Development Assistance*, 2023, at p.7. Available at <https://www.oecd.org/dac/peace-official-development-assistance.pdf>

Summary of Key Findings and Recommendations

Key Findings regarding CMI's Relevance

1. CMI remains relevant for peace making, and aligned with the 'Missing Peace 2022-2025' Programme objectives.

- 1.1 In response to increasingly volatile conflict dynamics, geopolitical polarization, and localized conflict fragmentation, CMI has adapted and developed new ways of working.
- 1.2 CMI is aligned with the MFA's Programme objectives and priorities.
- 1.3 CMI remains relevant to the needs and priorities of local communities and populations.
- 1.4 CMI has rapidly adapted to engage with new mediation players and experiment with innovative technologies.

Recommendations regarding Relevance

- 1A. CMI should maintain the organisational values of independence and impartiality, and further develop internal guidance as it engages with new mediation actors.
- 1B. The strategic alignment between CMI and the MFA could be strengthened through closer communication, while protecting CMI's independence.
- 1C. Effort should be made to maintain a strategic partnership with the MFA, rather than a simple donor-recipient relationship.

Key Findings regarding Efficiency & Effectiveness

2. CMI is efficient and effective as an MFA partner, reporting valid and valued results.

- 2.1 CMI has grown rapidly in response to increasing demand, despite stagnant OECD-ODA spending on peace.
- 2.2 CMI is cost-effective and efficient at the whole-programme level, with scope for ongoing investment in adaptation, core organisational talent, quality assurance, and results reporting.
- 2.3 CMI's results reporting system is sufficiently rigorous, producing credible reporting that demonstrates valued results.
- 2.4 The MFA's programme-level funding enhances CMI efficiency and effectiveness.

Recommendations regarding Efficiency & Effectiveness

- 2A. CMI should continue to invest in internal systems and controls to maintain a healthy learning organisation, vibrant culture, and quality decision-making.
- 2B. If resources are made available, CMI could invest further in its systems supporting operational learning, adaptation, quality assurance, and results reporting.
- 2C. CMI should continue its efforts to build sufficient financial reserves.
- 2D. CMI should seek to maximise the efficiencies associated with the MFA's programme-level funding.

Key Findings regarding Sustainability and Learning

3. CMI produces sustainable results as an adaptive learning organisation.

- 3.1 CMI's strategic independence, impartiality, long term focus, trusted networks, and empowerment of local actors make its results more sustainable, helping to offset some of the challenges posed by highly volatile operational environments.
- 3.2 CMI's inclusion of women, civil society actors, and marginalised or excluded communities helps to produce more sustainable results. More systematic efforts will further strengthen CMI's contribution for peace.
- 3.3 CMI has systems in place for learning and adaptation, which could be enhanced with additional investment in reflective peer-to-peer learning based on 'live' operational challenges and lessons.
- 3.4 CMI is collaborative, communicates effectively with the MFA, and shares insights. However, more could be done to harness CMI's complementarities with the MFA, including regarding 'triple nexus' efforts in the development, trade and humanitarian sectors, and with counterparts in the Finnish peace ecosystem.

Recommendations regarding Sustainability and Learning

- 3A. Ongoing programme-level funding should be used by CMI to cultivate sustainable long-term networks for peace, and to explore collaborative engagements with peer organisations.
- 3B. CMI should continue its work on Digital Inclusion and Women in Peace-making, also considering opportunities for inclusion of youth, disabled persons, and other excluded or vulnerable groups where appropriate.
- 3C. If resources are made available, CMI could complement its action-learning approach with improved systems for reflective peer-to-peer learning, potentially including peer colleagues from trusted organisations.
- 3D. CMI should explore opportunities for enhanced communication and collaboration with other Finnish peace-making actors, including on themes where there is natural complementarity.

Objectives & Scope of Mid-Term Evaluation

This evaluation assesses CMI's work at the mid-way point of the **four-year programme of work funded by the Finnish MFA, entitled 'The Missing Peace 2022-2025'**. The evaluation considers the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of CMI's programmatic results (described by CMI as *contributions to peace*), with a particular focus on projects and activities specifically falling within the programme partnership with the Finnish MFA.

The evaluation was designed to also support CMI's forthcoming strategy review in 2024, identifying those elements of CMI's work that are functioning well, as well as things that might be done differently, or merit further critical reflection.

The **primary audience** for the evaluation is the CMI leadership team and the Finnish MFA. Secondary audiences include CMI management, consultants, and staff, and relevant stakeholders including the wider Finnish Parliament and Public. The evaluation may in the future be made public, and therefore does not contain sensitive information.

This report addresses **the lines of enquiry** outlined in the Terms of Reference, and summarised below for ease of reference:

1. **Relevance:** How has CMI adapted to ensure it continues to deliver the greatest possible value for peace?
2. **Effectiveness and Efficiency:** What is CMI's value to the MFA and the wider peace-making sector, and how cost-effective is the organisation?
3. **Sustainability & Learning:** How does CMI ensure that its contributions for peace are durable? How does the organisation learn and share its insights?

About CMI

CMI – Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation (CMI) is a leading non-governmental actor in peace mediation globally, founded in the year 2000 by Nobel Peace Laureate and former President of Finland Martti Ahtisaari. As an independent Finnish organisation, CMI works to prevent and resolve conflicts through dialogue and mediation, relying on a network covering a variety of expertise to carry out peace-making projects in the Middle East and North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, Eurasia, and Asia.

In its *Strategy 2030*, CMI's stated **vision** is that *People, societies, states, and regions envision and realise peaceful and sustainable alternatives to conflict*. The organisation's corresponding **mission** calls on CMI's team to act as peacemakers, anticipating and responding effectively to the changing character of conflict through mediation and dialogue. In its strategy and in the *Missing Peace 2022-2025* programme of work, CMI highlights two **cross-cutting themes** for particular attention, namely Women in Peace-making, and Digital Peace-making.

At a global level, two **strategic priorities** underpin all of CMI's work for 2020-2030:

1. Mastering the craft of peace, and
2. Increasing institutional resilience

CMI teams rely on five **fundamental principles** or values to guide their work:

1. Honest broker
2. Ownership
3. Inclusivity
4. Complementarity
5. Integrity

The 2022-2025 'Missing Peace' programme of work funded by the MFA aims to prevent and resolve political conflicts, recognising this as a critical pre-condition for the overall development of countries and regions affected by violence and instability. The Programme pursues its high-level objective and aims to make contributions for peace through the following **three specific objectives**:

1. **Better processes:** To increase quality and effectiveness of peace processes.
2. **Better agency:** To enhance the agency of key stakeholders who have ability to influence and contribute to sustainable peacemaking.
3. **Better practices:** To improve the ability of the peacemaking community to lead, contribute to and support peace processes and related efforts that foster more peaceful societies.

Relevance in a changing operational space

In 2020 while preparing the organisational strategy for the next decade, CMI's leadership team forecast the following key trends and attributes of its **operational context**, under the banner of '*A New, Volatile Normal*':

- New Geopolitical alignments
- Climate change
- Deepened inequalities
- New powers
- Data and connectivity
- Threats from the proliferation of new and old arms
- Changes to the architecture of global peace and security

This forecast has proven accurate, with notable shifts in CMI's operational environment since 2020, including:

- The extensive social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic around the globe in 2020-2022.
- The full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia on 24 February 2022, heightening the polarization of the international order, and the breakdown of multilateral cooperation.
- Finland's accession to NATO in April 2023

- Increasing fragmentation of conflict at the local and regional levels
- Increasing significance of non-governmental actors in conflict-affected settings
- Ongoing erosion of multilateral diplomatic structures
- The emergence of new State-level mediators, complementing well-established diplomatic actors with a reputation for impartiality.

These changes create **tensions and challenges**, outlined further below, which threaten to obstruct CMI's work. However, **the evaluation found that CMI has adapted to this 'new, volatile normal', enabling the organisation and the '2022-2025 Missing Peace' Programme to remain relevant** in the face of rapid changes and ongoing instability in conflicts at the global, regional and local levels.

The challenge of Geopolitical polarisation

The volatility of CMI's operational environment, and the underlying trend towards the polarisation of geo-political power have made CMI's role and mission more difficult, yet more relevant. In the last decade, multilateral institutions such as the UN, OSCE, WTO and others have been placed under increasing pressure by overt competition at the international scale between States espousing models of governance based on liberal democracy and the rule of law on the one hand, and States promoting autocracy and strong central control of all branches of government on the other hand.

This trend has narrowed the formal diplomatic space available for the peaceful resolution of disputes through multilateral institutions and through quiet diplomatic intervention or 'good offices' of intermediary States. The strong and predictable alignment of Western States in response to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 has prompted increasing cooperation for collective European security, but it has also tended to promote a more insular foreign policy alignment on other issues, weakening the ability of would-be 'intermediary' States to talk to all actors in every conflict.

The Russian invasion followed shortly after the high-profile joint announcement of a 'no limits' partnership by Russia and China on 04 February 2022, demonstrating starkly the rapid evolution of geo-political polarisation at a global and regional scale, and the **weakening of multilateral institutions** such as the OSCE and the UN Security Council.

The vacuum created by the weakened multilateral framework now requires States to re-negotiate international norms and institutions to reflect a new balance of power at the regional and global scale. At the same time, **Non-State Armed Groups** with regional and global reach play an increasingly relevant role in conflict dynamics, and therefore in prospects for political settlements, while remaining outside the established diplomatic system, and often standing in direct opposition to the norms underpinning a Human-Rights Based approach to development and conflict resolution.

These factors have combined to **force States to increasingly look to discreet political dialogue as a means of establishing acceptable compromises**, placing more reliance on informal diplomatic actors such as CMI, and less reliance on formal multilateral mechanisms.

With the narrowing of the official diplomatic space, including the weakening of the multilateral system, actors such as CMI become ever more relevant and valuable as a means through which all parties can discreetly resolve disputes, avoid armed conflict, and find mutually acceptable ways to de-escalate hostilities. **CMI is well-placed to continue finding innovative ways to build bridges across conflict in favour of peace and stability.**

The challenge of conflict fragmentation

The geopolitical polarisation described above has also been reflected at a smaller scale in the **fragmented and increasingly localised character of armed conflict over the last decade**. At the same time, the increasing influence and prevalence of **non-State conflict actors** creates ambiguity and operational challenges for mediation efforts seeking to engage with representative and legitimate political leaders capable of ending or de-escalating conflict. This means that in 2024 CMI is faced with an operational environment in which local, national, regional and geopolitical actors and conflict dynamics are more intertwined than ever, requiring a deft and multilevel peacemaking response.

In this complex and fluid environment, **CMI works over the medium to long-term to forge relationships of trust anchored in informal civil society networks that overlap with the official political sphere**, working with non-government contacts often referred to as civil society actors. Taking a wide definition of civil society actors to include all un-official or non-state actors, CMI aims to engage with all relevant parties, and to position itself for future political negotiations. This is a challenging task, requiring CMI to engage with a wide variety of networks, while avoiding the appearance of being one-sided in highly polarised contexts, and also seeking to avoid legitimising breaches of international humanitarian law or human rights norms.

By cultivating trusted long term relationships in these complex and ambiguous settings, **CMI addresses a critical gap in connectivity between diplomatic actors, conflict-affected populations, civil society actors, and vulnerable or excluded groups** such as women and youth, non-state armed groups, and official political or military actors.

Peace mediation is a priority for the Finnish MFA

The MFA's commitment to fostering the Finnish peace mediation tradition has been reflected in recent years through the published development cooperation objectives of 2007,² built upon in 2011 when Finland's foreign and security policy again affirmed the value of peacebuilding and peace mediation.³ This commitment was repeated in the 2019 programme announced by the Finnish government, which placed a clear emphasis on strengthening the

² Pääministeri Matti Vanhasen II hallituksen ohjelma, 2007: <http://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi-fe2023031331321>

³ Programme of Prime Minister Jyrki Katainen's Government, 2011: <http://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi-fe201704256257>

role of conflict prevention, mediation, and peacebuilding in Finnish foreign policy.⁴ The priority given by the Finnish MFA to this peace mediation role has been more recently emphasised by the creation of the *Centre for Peace Mediation* within the Political Department of the Foreign Ministry, in October 2020, and the publication of the programme of Prime Minister Peterri Orto's Government in 2023, stating amongst other things that "*If protracted crises are to be dealt with effectively, there has to be good coordination between peace mediation, humanitarian assistance, development cooperation and trade policy*".⁵

Drawing on Finland's history of impartiality, the Finnish peace mediation tradition rose to global attention thanks to the **founding of CMI as the 'Crisis Management Initiative' in 2000 by former President Martti Ahtisaari**. President Ahtisaari was awarded a Nobel Peace Prize in 2008 for his efforts to resolve international conflicts through peaceful means, including the facilitation of the Aceh-Indonesia peace process in 2005. Martti Ahtisaari's conflict resolution legacy was built in a certain time of history and in a very different geo-political context. **The adaptation and application of this legacy** in new forms of peacemaking, and in context of fragmented conflicts, will require ongoing commitment and investment by CMI as the organisation seeks to support and sustain this Finnish peace mediation tradition.

The relevance of CMI's partnership with the MFA

Given the strong commitment of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs to strengthening Finland's role in peace mediation,⁶ CMI's work remains strategically relevant, and the organisation is a valued partner for the MFA. **The longstanding relationship between CMI and the MFA delivers mutual benefits to both partners**. CMI provides a discreet channel through which the MFA can gain a broader picture of conflict dynamics and prospects for peace, while the Ministry's financial support provides CMI with the flexibility to explore new initiatives and to innovate at the forefront of peace mediation practice.

The establishment of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs **Centre for Peace Mediation in October 2020 provides a significant opportunity for a deepening of CMI's collaboration with the MFA**. With this development also comes a heightened need for clear coordination and communication so that in each engagement, it is clear what role CMI is playing, what role the Centre for Peace Mediation is playing, and how this aligns to serve the MFA's objectives and protect CMI's independence. If in any given context the MFA is intending to function directly as an intermediary to convene other State and non-State actors, then additional coordination will be required to ensure complementarity of roles and strategies. **Both partners are strongly committed to pursuing strategic complementarity**. With sufficient communication,

⁴ Programme of Prime Minister Sanna Marin's Government 2019, p. 64: <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-287-811-3>

⁵ Programme of Prime Minister Peterri Orto's Government 2023, p.176: <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-383-818-5>

⁶ For further information see Joenniemi, P. (2014). Peace mediation and conflict resolution: The policies pursued by four Nordic countries. In M. Lehti (Ed.), *Nordic approaches to peace mediation: Research, practices and policies* (pp. 93–150), Tampere Peace Research Institute; Rantanen, T. (2014). Suomi rauhanvälityksen aktiivisena edistäjänä [Finland as an active promoter of peace mediation]. In P. Nissinen, & A. Doty (Eds.), *Rauhanvälitys – suomalaisia näkökulmia [Peace Mediation—Finnish viewpoints]* (pp. 27–39). Kansalaisjärjestöjen konfliktinehkäisyverkosto

it is reasonable to expect that this collaboration will continue to sustain and strengthen the Finnish peace mediation tradition, affirming Finland as an influential leader in peace diplomacy.

The strong collaboration between CMI and the MFA also **demonstrates to other State actors that Finland remains committed to dialogue as a means of resolving disputes**, and is not solely reliant on recourse to force as a guarantee of security. By investing in peace mediation, the MFA sends a strong signal that the national security of any State is not based on military strength alone, but on a network of trusted relationships, and on a willingness to engage in dialogue for peace.

The Programme funding from the MFA provides an anchor for the sustainability and growth of CMI's impact in the field of international peace-making. It provides CMI with scope to launch new projects and to investigate peace-making engagement in settings where it may not yet be possible to propose fully-formulated projects on a geographic basis. The Programme funding represented 28 per cent of CMI's total budget in 2024. Without this programme funding from the MFA, CMI's early 'groundbreaking' work would not be possible.

The evaluation found that **CMI's collaboration with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs is working well**, thanks to the flexible engagement and ongoing commitment of both partners.

Future collaboration could be enhanced by improving informal communication channels, while maintaining a light reporting burden. CMI will need to find ways to communicate its value in terms that will resonate for MFA colleagues overseeing development programming, as well as for those engaged in diplomatic and security policy.

CMI's value for local communities and populations

Because CMI maintains multiple networks of relationships at the community, national, regional and international levels, it is well placed to ensure that otherwise vulnerable and disempowered sections of the community are able to engage meaningfully in dialogue towards peaceful settlements. This includes those often marginalised or excluded from political negotiations such as civil society actors and women's groups. Given the informal nature of CMI's work, the organisation is able to combine multiple levels of engagement, working simultaneously with local beneficiaries and communities, engaging at the elite political or diplomatic level, while also influencing wider international policy discourse.

Acknowledging that inclusive dialogue produces more sustainable agreements, the evaluation found that **CMI creates opportunities for otherwise excluded and vulnerable civil society actors to participate in unofficial dialogues for peace**, in a way that is not possible in formal diplomatic meetings. Local actors and civil society actors are empowered where CMI's work allows those actors to create trusted channels of communication and relationships through which peaceful resolution of conflict can be explored.

In volatile political situations, investing in strong relationships with civil society actors and other ‘non-state’ actors also helps guarantee the sustainability of CMI’s work by connecting CMI with the next generation of political leaders and decision-makers. The evaluation observed that by working with civil society actors representing local communities, CMI gains additional insight into how the fabric of society functions in a conflict-affected context, supporting better political analysis, but also allowing CMI to anticipate future scenarios that might not be foreseeable if viewed only from the vantage point of established decision-makers. This multitrack approach allows CMI to combine elite political networks with civil society actor insights, ultimately providing additional opportunities for dialogue in support of peace.

In 2022-2023, CMI was able to draw on a longstanding network of civil society actor partners in Country X, creating **enhanced capacity for local communities and their leaders to respond to new political and security realities** after two years of full-scale conflict. While the bulk of domestic and international attention remained focused on the short-term questions of responding militarily to the demands of the conflict, CMI facilitated discourse concerning medium-term objectives and needs, helping civil society actors prepare for their possible future roles in a post conflict political environment, and anticipating various scenarios which might confront them. This **early engagement by CMI helped to enhance the resilience of civil society actors and local communities**, ensuring that local communities and their leaders are positioned in the best possible way to deal with the after-effects of conflict, and with the implications of any future military/political settlement.

(Details removed to protect sensitive operations)

Adaptation: Foresight / Cyber / Digital Inclusion

As both armed conflict, diplomacy, and grassroots mobilisation move further towards the digital- and cyber-spaces, so too **CMI has adapted and remained relevant by conducting innovative work linking digital technology, foresight tools, and participatory inclusion** with the traditional practise of peace mediation.

CMI has identified a niche for the organisation working on the theme of **digital inclusion**, rather than competing for a role in the relatively crowded ‘cyber-conflict’ and ‘social-media’ arenas. Digital inclusion is understood to include efforts to engage and access communities and population groups who might otherwise be excluded from dialogue processes for peace. **This innovative work also requires CMI to consider significant risks and impediments**, including the likelihood that certain populations or actors might be excluded from participating in digital exchanges due to challenges with infrastructure, security risks, barriers caused by disabilities, or gaps in the adoption of new technology.

Since 2020 the **digital peace-making theme has become an integral part of the CMI project portfolio**, thanks to strong partnerships with Finnish organisations working at the intersection of technology, cyber conflict, cyber mediation, and innovation.

Adaptation: Emerging new players in mediation

The recent emergence of new State-level mediation actors is a significant development requiring nuanced adaptation by more established peace mediation actors. Third party states such as China, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Turkey have each provided good offices or mediation in multiple significant armed conflicts in the past five years. These new State actors represent alternative and contested viewpoints regarding the rules-based international order, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

In 2022-2023, these new mediation actors have positioned themselves assertively as third party intermediaries, in some cases seeking to displace the incumbent mediator States, and disrupting the ‘mediation market’ for State actors with a longer history of providing diplomatic intervention and good offices to conflict-affected settings.

Given the significant divergence of these States on foreign policy and security policy themes such as human rights, liberal democracy, and the rule of law, Western diplomatic actors have been obliged to carefully formulate a balanced policy response. **In this complex setting, CMI’s agility, discretion, and rapid adaptation has proven valuable.** CMI anticipated the rise of these new mediation actors and its significance, and moved early to engage with them, ensuring that CMI’s efforts to promote peace are well-adapted to the changing realities of the international system.

In settings where conflict parties prefer to work with one of these new mediation actors as an intermediary, CMI has chosen to impartially embrace the new reality, rather than attempt to deny or obstruct it. **The challenge in this setting is how CMI and other Western mediation actors can maintain their own principles** while also engaging with new actors whose principles and normative frameworks are significantly different, including on the basic definition of what constitutes ‘peace’.

If it is able to guide these new mediation actors towards a principled approach to conflict mediation and negotiation, CMI can help to influence the next 25 years of conflict mediation practice towards approaches which respect universally accepted fundamental norms regarding International Humanitarian Law, self-determination, peaceful settlement of disputes, and accountability to local populations. **This will require CMI to cultivate trust and influence with these new mediation actors, without compromising its own values and principles.** If successful, this long term investment will help these new intermediaries to pursue political settlements that are more likely to be sustainable, because they will more adequately address the legitimate and long-term needs and interests of local communities, minority groups, and future generations.

CMI's Efficiency & Effectiveness

Increasing demand for CMI creates organisational growth

Demand for CMI's work has significantly increased over the past seven years, driven by requests for CMI's facilitation or advice, and supported by the organisation's strong reputation for impartiality and independence. In keeping with this trend, **support from the MFA's four-year programme funding has increased from EUR 12 million in 2018-2021 to EUR 18.5 million in 2022-2025**. New donor partners have also committed to support CMI's mission during this time, including State-level funders such as Germany and the UK, and regional funders such as the European Union.

As a result of this increasing demand, and increasing support from funding partners, **CMI has doubled in size over the past seven years, from a budget of EUR 7 million in 2017, to around EUR16 million in 2024**. The organisation's growth is a sign of strong health, but also signals expansion at a level that will test the limits of the organisation's ability to rapidly hire and on-board new staff, while retaining its distinctive culture and values.

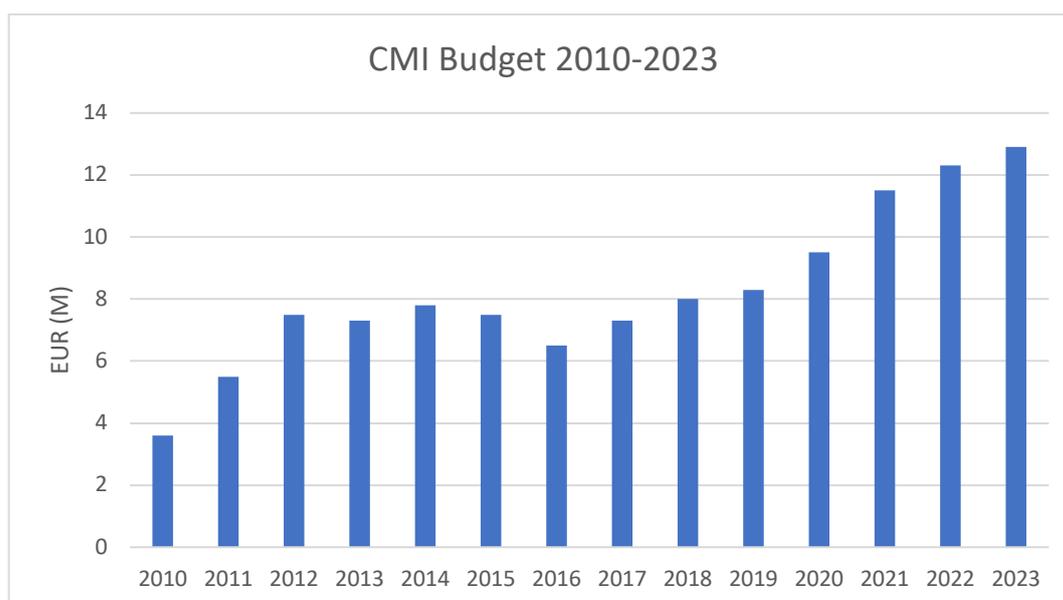


Chart: CMI has experienced increasing demand for its work over the last decade

Efficiency

Stable funding from the Finnish MFA

Despite CMI's growth, and the increasing programme-level funding from the MFA as noted above, the **total funding burden carried by the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs remains stable at around EUR6.5 million in 2024**, a slight reduction from the peak funding of EUR 7 million in 2023 (counting all funding modes and direct project funding from regional

department projects and collaborations with the Centre for Peace Mediation, not only the programme funding instrument).

CMI's rapid growth is therefore being financed by likeminded States and regional donors, including an expanding commitment from the European Union, which is supporting projects worth EUR5.8 million in 2024. While outside the scope of this evaluation, some evidence indicated that CMI may benefit from reviewing **risks associated with increased EU funding**, including the risk of funding fluctuations, possibly divergent areas of strategic focus, and associated reputational effects for CMI over the medium to long term.

Development of organisational controls and administrative systems

Given this rapid pace of growth, **CMI has accelerated its recruitment rate, bringing new staff on board in just 2.75 months on average in 2023** (from opening of an advertisement to the start date of the new recruit), providing a strong signal of the organisation's appeal as an employer of choice. According to the information provided by CMI's Human Resources team, new staff are joining the organisation largely because of its reputation, rather than because of salary conditions, which remain competitive in comparison with similar organisations based in Finland, but relatively low compared to employment conditions in EU or UN organisations.

The current rate of recruitment for CMI will be sustainable if it can benchmark its salary scales over the next 12 to 24 months against compatible organisations, and continue to deliver sound staff induction and learning processes to **ensure a healthy retention of staff**. This would impose additional costs on the organisation and therefore on donors, which should be anticipated.

Organisational growth also requires expansion in the controls and systems required to ensure organisational health. At present two financial controllers oversee 26 projects, which would appear to be at or beyond the limit of feasibility, given the demands imposed by sanctions obligations, remote supervision of projects, and complex operating environments. In the next 12 to 24 months, CMI should anticipate expanding the resources dedicated to financial and human resources quality assurance, with appropriate additional donor support.

In 2022 CMI already began taking steps to minimise the administrative burden imposed by this season of rapid growth, organising a public tender for financial management services and engaging an external financial management service provider. This has allowed the organisation to streamline its operations and free up resources from basic financial processes to address more targeted and context-specific support. In 2024-2025, CMI should take steps to determine whether or not the financial management contract is performing as expected, so that adjustments can be made where necessary to enhance its effectiveness and lessen the burden on CMI core staff.

As the organisation continues to grow, ongoing investment will be required to sustain solid core institutional functions such as human resources, financial management, risk management, policies, learning, monitoring and evaluation, communications, and fund raising.

Ensuring adequate financial reserves

The organisation, like many others in the sector, has limited reserves to draw upon in the event of a funding gap, or the unexpected withdrawal of a project donor. While this is a rare event, this kind of funding gap has been experienced in the sector during times of crisis such as public health emergencies or rapidly escalating security risks, forcing donors to reallocate previously committed funds to address matters of national interest. The creation of the **Martti Ahtisaari Peace Fund** is a watershed moment for CMI, holding the promise of a future reserve of funding that could be allocated to operational needs when required.

Ideally **CMI should aim to have a minimum of three months operating expenses as a reserve, preferably six months**, to ensure that the organisation is not obliged to take a crisis management response to any unforeseen contractions in donor funding.

MFA Programme Funding enables organisational efficiency

The programme funding received from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs directly supports the efficiency of CMI's business model, by on the one hand financing the incubation of new and as yet unfunded projects, and on the other hand allowing the organisation to strengthen its internal controls and quality assurance systems to ensure effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability. This combination of funding allows the Ministry to support CMI's flexible and discreet interventions, while also **providing the means to ensure sound management oversight in the use of these public funds**.

The programme funding therefore **provides a long term and flexible scope for CMI to engage in difficult operating environments where a formal project proposal might not be possible** as a first step. For example, in 2022-2023, the MFA's programme funding enabled the continuity of CMI's regional work on conflict dynamics crossing the Sahel - Maghreb region, building on seed funding from the Centre for Peace Mediation. CMI advised that it would not have been possible to maintain this work without the MFA's flexible programme funding, as cross-regional work does not easily fit within typical project funding categories, and no other donor was in a position to sponsor this innovative work due to geographically defined responsibilities.

Once a situation has been fully assessed, CMI is in a position to decide whether to engage further. If the organisation decides to pursue its work in the context, it can build on its initial assessment to propose a viable project addressing the needs and priorities of the conflict actors and wider stakeholders. This project-level work may then be funded by donors including the EU, or likeminded States, thus spreading the cost of the Finnish mediation ecosystem across multiple partners.

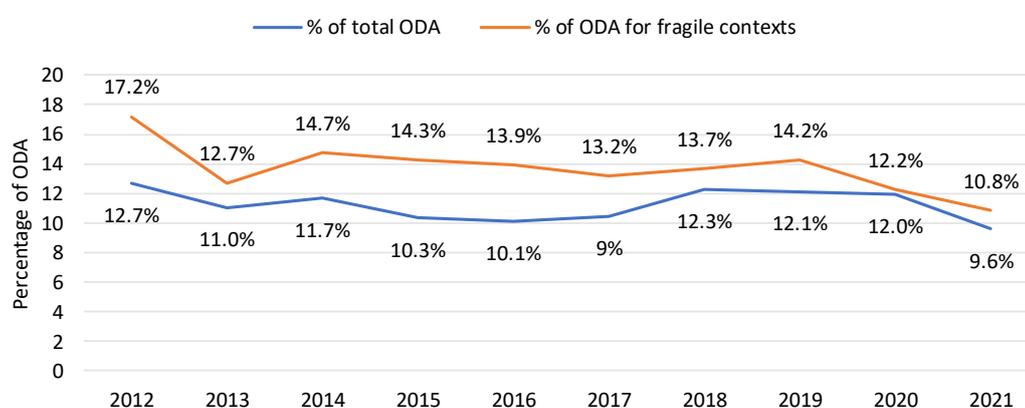
CMI continues to grow despite declining OECD ODA expenditure on peace

CMI's growth over the last decade is a significant success, given that the overall funding trend in OECD-DAC countries runs in the opposite direction. CMI has managed to consolidate

and expand its peace mediation work since 2014, despite the budgetary constraints faced by OECD-DAC donors over the same timeframe.

In 2021, OECD-DAC member State ODA allocated to peace projects in fragile contexts amounted to 10.8% of total ODA (or USD 5.27 billion), a fifteen-year low.⁷ This decline has taken place despite the fact that 2022 witnessed the largest number of violent conflicts since 1946.⁸ In 2021, the quantum of OECD investment in the prevention and de-escalation of violent conflict was around **seven times less than the amount spent by OECD member states on the humanitarian and displacement symptoms of conflicts** and crises in developing countries (USD 35.8 billion of humanitarian assistance and in-donor refugee costs).⁹ There is arguably a strong case for increasing the share of OECD-ODA spent on peace-making in line with the 2019 OECD-DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus and the clear priority it affords to conflict prevention.¹⁰

Figure 2.1. DAC members peace expenditure as a percentage of their total ODA (2012-2021)



Source: ODA is based on (OECD, 2022_[19]), OECD Creditor Reporting System, <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=crs1>

Figure: OECD¹¹

Finland has followed a similar trend to its peers in the OECD-ODA data referred to above. Despite a marked increase in ODA from 2015-2022, investment in peace has declined, with peace-oriented ODA diminishing over the same period.¹²

CMI's growth during this period of declining OECD-ODA budget allocations towards peace affirms that the organisation is regarded by donors as offering both effectiveness and efficiency in the 'peacemaking market', allowing CMI to expand its work even while the overall funding for the sector declines.

⁷ As above

⁸ OECD, *Peace and Official Development Assistance*, 2023, at p.7. Available at <https://www.oecd.org/dac/peace-official-development-assistance.pdf>

⁹ As above

¹⁰ OECD, *Peace and Official Development Assistance*, 2023, at p.7. Available at <https://www.oecd.org/dac/peace-official-development-assistance.pdf>

¹¹ Figure: OECD, *Peace and Official Development Assistance*, 2023, at p.15. Available at <https://www.oecd.org/dac/peace-official-development-assistance.pdf>

¹² See Finnish Official data published by OpenAid.fi: <https://openaid.fi/en/viz/oda?years=2015,2024> ; and <https://openaid.fi/en/viz/oda?sector.code=15220&years=2015,2024>

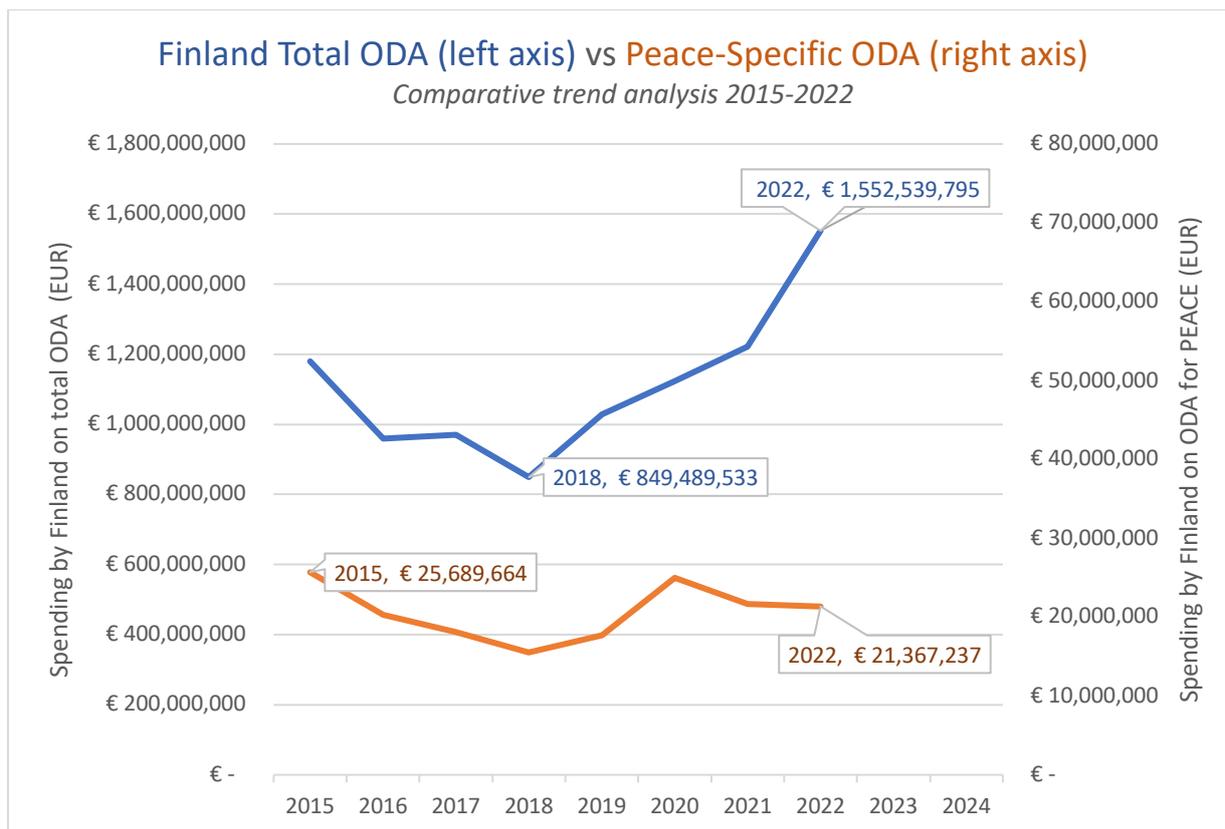


Chart: Finland’s spending on peace-related ODA has declined over the past decade, while Finland’s spending on total ODA has significantly increased. The chart is intended to provide a trend comparison, and for ease of illustration the scale of the left and right axes differs.

Source: OpenAid.fi¹³

Effectiveness – CMI’s results for peace

Demonstrating value through Programme Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation

CMI has developed a Programme Planning, Monitoring & Evaluation (PME) system, which enables the organisation to track and report on its contributions for peace. This is of course a challenging task, as **CMI’s peace-making work is not amenable to simplistic quantitative reporting formats, and the diversity of the organisation’s portfolio means that aggregation of results remains difficult.**

Given that **CMI’s projects are highly context-specific and frequently not directly comparable, reporting at the whole-programme level is particularly challenging.** What appears to be a relatively ‘minor’ result in one context (such as an initial introduction to a

¹³ Data for 2023 is being compiled by OpenAid and is therefore omitted. Source: Finnish Official Development Assistance data published by OpenAid.fi: <https://openaid.fi/en/viz/oda?years=2015,2024> ; and <https://openaid.fi/en/viz/oda?sector.code=15220&years=2015,2024>

relevant interlocutor) may in fact represent a major breakthrough, while the same kind of result may be commonplace and relatively insignificant in another setting. In one localised setting, a CMI project might achieve a mosaic of small contributions for peace at a district level, while in another setting CMI helps to enable national or regional-level dialogue, filling a gap in the absence of functional diplomatic mechanisms. Both kinds of contribution may be equally valuable, depending on the specific conflict dynamics in each case.

As the geopolitical environment becomes more contested, and local fragmentation increases, CMI should expect to observe fewer landmark ‘peace agreements’ in the coming years, and an increasing number of engagements in which **discreet de-escalation, conflict mitigation, or increased humanitarian access may be the highest possible contribution** a mediator might achieve for peace. This requires a pragmatic and modest assessment regarding the scope for ‘ultimate impact’ in each case.

Unlike a typical development actor delivering results such as ‘hospitals constructed’, or ‘children educated’, or ‘drinking water provided’, **CMI does not deliver outputs and outcomes that can be easily or meaningfully counted**. Rather than pursuing these kinds of tangible outputs, the organisation cultivates valuable networks and relationships, while taking steps to maximise influence in favour of peace, sometimes through discreet and relatively long-term engagements. For these reasons, **standard ‘off the shelf’ monitoring and evaluation systems that may prove useful in development projects are not capable of adequately describing the value created by CMI, or any peace mediation actor.**¹⁴ Instead, CMI uses its tailored PME system to measure and report on three elements which comprise its contribution for peace in any context:

1. **Better processes:** *Increasing the quality and effectiveness of peace processes.* For example, in one confidential engagement during 2022-2023, CMI was the only actor able to provide a trusted and discreet channel linking a State, a secessionist province, neighbouring States, and concerned regional actors.
2. **Better agency:** *Enhancing the agency of key stakeholders who have ability to influence and contribute to sustainable peace-making.* For example, during a confidential engagement in 2022-2023, CMI provided a means for local civil society actors to connect with diplomatic representatives through post-conflict scenario building, helping to prepare the next generation of political leaders for their potential roles in a post-conflict setting, and enhancing continuity in good governance and institutional resilience.
3. **Better practices:** *Improving the ability of the peace-making community to lead, contribute to and support peace processes and related efforts that foster more peaceful societies.* For example, in 2022-2023 CMI has continued to influence the peace mediation field in its work regarding *Women in Peace-making*, convening high-level events that help to shape the design and conduct of inclusive initiatives by multiple other mediation actors.

¹⁴ See a full discussion on this theme in Wadley, Ian, *Valuing Peace: Delivering and Demonstrating Mediation Results*, Mediation Practice Series, 2017, available at <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/valuing-peace-delivering-and-demonstrating-mediation-results>

CMI's results **contribute towards the Ministry for Foreign Affairs' Development Policy objectives** related to more peaceful and democratic societies, the empowerment and protection of women and girls in conflict settings, and in particular the MFA's objective related to more inclusive peace processes and peace processes,¹⁵ in turn supporting the attainment of **UN Sustainable Development Goals 5 & 16**.¹⁶

CMI's approach to assessing and reporting on these valuable results is sufficiently rigorous, and produces reporting which this evaluation considered to be credible. The contributions of CMI projects are assessed in-house against five key criteria:

- 1) Relevance to the identified problem,
- 2) Extent of change,
- 3) Depth of change,
- 4) Sustainability, and
- 5) Availability of outside indicators.

Internal assessments are made first by project teams, then validated by the responsible Regional/Thematic Heads and the Chief Programme Officer, and aggregated at the portfolio level by CMI's PME team. **By distributing the responsibility for assessing results across these different teams and functions, CMI is in a good position to make credible claims** regarding the respective value and sustainability of the contributions reported by the organisation.

Where necessary, CMI engages external independent evaluators to validate claimed project-level results. However, it is not always feasible to do this, and **in some cases it is not appropriate to conduct field-evaluations or to provide extensive written reports** on specific projects, due to the sensitive nature of CMI's work. Traditional external evaluation methods typically risk drawing attention to the identity and influence of trusted interlocutors, potentially placing their lives at risk, and diminishing their ability to continue participating in peace-making efforts. At the same time, evaluation evidence collected in conflict settings is typically very difficult to corroborate, and there is usually no opportunity for an external evaluator to conduct empirical analyses or longitudinal impact assessments against a discernible benchmark.

This evaluation found that **CMI's in-house Programme Planning Monitoring and Evaluation approach is fit for purpose**, and represents an example of good practice in the peace mediation sector.

¹⁵ See Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 'Theories of Change and Aggregate Indicators for Finland's Development Policy', Updated December 2023, available at https://um.fi/publications/-/asset_publisher/TVOLgBmLyZvu/content/suomen-kehityspolitiikan-tuloskartat-ja-indikaattorit-2020

¹⁶ See <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5>; <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal16>

CMI's current system of internal project reviews could potentially be enhanced by expanding its coverage and scope, and by including the participation of trusted peers from outside the organisation. This may help cultivate a more authentically critical conversation, while temporarily suspending managerial decision-making or evaluation to allow alternative strategies and risks be considered.

To address the risk of cognitive biases in decision-making, **CMI may wish to consider employing a low-burden critical method such as collegial peer review to supplement the current system of internal reviews.** These could build on the 'critical friend' model applied by CMI in 2017,¹⁷ but should arguably employ a lighter model without the need to engage an external evaluator. This will impose the least possible documentary and time burden on operational teams, while maximising the opportunity for rapid learning and project adaptation in complex environments.¹⁸

Additional benefit might also be gained from CMI's PME system reports if the organisation were to provide a simplified dashboard or one-page view of its contributions for peace, highlighting those results that CMI considers to be the organisation's most valuable or distinctive. By presenting a summary narrative of this kind, CMI might provide stakeholders with a headline statement, a short summary text, and a longer explanation, catering to various audiences with an interest in CMI's results.

The evaluation noted that CMI's PME team remains at the same scale as it was in 2019, despite the significant growth in the organisation over the past five years. With additional resources for PME and learning, CMI would be able to deliver more critical analysis, faster adaptation, higher assurance of quality, better articulation of results, and enhanced decision-support for the Executive leadership team and the MFA.

Valued Results

This evaluation was able to readily validate a selection of results ('contributions for peace') claimed by CMI in its reporting, some of which are noted in this report and its confidential case study annexes. The evaluation did not attempt to validate or recite CMI's claimed results across the whole portfolio, which have been comprehensively reported by the organisation. Further investment may be required to allow the organisation to report effectively on the results of new methodologies and innovative approaches such as digital inclusion.

The evidence available during this evaluation indicates that CMI's results reporting is both reliable and credible. The reported results demonstrate that **CMI continues to deliver better processes, better agency, and better practices in favour of peace,** and is positioned as one of the few actors able to mediate discreetly across geo-political and regional divides.

¹⁷ <https://cmi.fi/2018/06/27/new-publication-series-sheds-light-on-cmis-focus-on-policy-and-learning/>

¹⁸ For an example of a critical peer review method applied by multiple actors in the peace and humanitarian sector, see Wadley, Ian, *Valuing Peace: Delivering and Demonstrating Mediation Results*, Mediation Practice Series, 2017, available at <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/valuing-peace-delivering-and-demonstrating-mediation-results>

Sustainability, Learning, Adaptation

Sustainability

Assessing the sustainability of results in peace mediation is a subject which should be approached with care, due to the inevitable presence of multiple intervening causes, the complexity of the conflict setting, and the volatility of conflict drivers and factors supporting ongoing peace. However, despite this complexity, it remains possible to advance strong and defensible arguments based on persuasive evidence. The evaluation found that **CMI's results for peace are made more sustainable by the organisation's long term networks of trusted relationships, strategic connection to formal diplomatic processes, medium- to long-term operational focus, and reputation for impartiality.**

Sustainability through long-term networks and relationships

The evaluation found that **CMI's field work is based on the patient cultivation of trusted networks and relationships over many years, which tends to make the organisation's influence more sustainable** as an institutional asset for the long term. Many counterpart organisations or peace mediation actors experience more temporary or fragile networks, sometimes due to the rapid rotation of diplomatic or humanitarian staff, or due to inconsistent short-term project funding. **The programme funding from the Finnish MFA is therefore an anchor helping CMI to ensure the sustainability of its impact for peace, enabling the organisation to maintain networks and relationships for the long term,** even outside the rhythms of typical project cycles and project funding.

Sustainability through capacity building

CMI contributes to more sustainable peace by focusing on the agency of local stakeholders, and their capacity to exert influence for peace in the conflict affected context. By deliberately working with civil society actors and politically marginalised actors such as women's groups, youth groups, and (to some extent) disabled persons, CMI helps create a social fabric which will outlast volatile political changes, and rapid reversals in policies caused by conflict outcomes beyond the control of any individual actor. By working with networks of local stakeholders to enhance their ability to engage effectively in peace negotiations, CMI demonstrates itself to be a trusted partner, but also allows the local stakeholders to achieve a higher level of agency and influence than would be possible without CMI's involvement.

Sustainability through inclusion of women and youth

Acknowledging the research demonstrating that inclusive peace processes produce more sustainable outcomes for peace,¹⁹ the evaluation found that **CMI delivers a strong contribution for more sustainable results by strategically engaging with women and women's groups.** In addition, CMI helps to enhance the sustainability of peace-making efforts across the entire sector, by influencing fellow practitioners to adopt more effective methods

¹⁹ See, for example, <https://wps.unwomen.org/participation/>; Stone, Laurel, *Women Transforming Conflict: A Quantitative Analysis of Female Peace-making* (May 13, 2014). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2485242> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2485242>

of inclusion. By demonstrating methods of better integrating women's perspectives into conflict analysis and project delivery, CMI enhances the strategic value of women's inclusion in peace processes, and avoids tokenistic inclusion practices.

The evaluation identified **potential for further engagement of youth representatives in CMI's peace-making projects**, assuming that suitable human resources or collaboration partners are available for this work. Acknowledging that this is not appropriate for every context, a focus on youth inclusion or any other thematic should be driven by the CMI team's own conflict analysis, rather than by a normative compliance 'checklist' approach.

Sustainability through trusted independence

Despite being well connected to the Finnish MFA and the diplomatic priorities of likeminded States, and having a close relationship with regional organisations such as the OSCE and EU, the evaluation found that **CMI is seen by stakeholders as independent and impartial**, maintaining an appropriate distance from Finnish, EU and OSCE foreign policy objectives.

The evaluation found that **CMI's ongoing independence helps to guarantee the sustainability of the organisation's influence and results, by preserving trust**. A key ingredient of the ongoing access and influence afforded to CMI is the organisation's reputation for remaining independent and impartial, rather than being controlled by Finnish or European foreign policy. Thanks to the programme funding from the MFA, CMI is less dependent on project funding, and can therefore make a strong claim regarding financial and policy independence. This provides reassurance to stakeholders in conflict affected settings that CMI is able to offer impartial good offices and facilitation as well as trusted advice free from external influence.

The four-year programme level funding also frees CMI from the typical 12-month project horizon, allowing for cultivation of **longer term relationships** with stakeholders and avoiding the interruption of uncertain project funding timelines. It also enables CMI to be **more genuinely collaborative with its partners over the long term**, which is particularly distinctive in a sector often marked by strong competition between non-government mediation actors for scarce project funding.

Learning & Adaptation

CMI as a learning organisation

Thanks to the reflective methods integrated within CMI's programme monitoring and evaluation system, **the organisation is well positioned with a strong commitment to critical reflection, organisational learning, and adaptation**. This is a natural consequence of the organisation's mode of operating, which requires flexibility, critical thinking, and the capacity to rapidly adapt in the face of changing circumstances. The evaluation found that this **action-**

learning approach is embedded within CMI, and should be sustained by ongoing investment in the organisation's PME and learning functions.

The evaluation found that CMI has played an active role in sharing insights with colleagues in the MFA, including with Finnish Embassies in conflict-affected regions around the globe.

In-house learning at CMI could be strengthened by improving mechanisms for structured learning at the individual and organisational level, such as an annual learning workshop for selected staff to join either in-person or online to share lessons drawn from different operational contexts. There is a significant and unmet appetite for additional structured learning on technical themes such as process design and facilitation, applied to both peace process and advisory / trusted-partner work.

As the organisation grows, CMI requires additional resources to ensure that organisational learning remains embedded within the annual cycle of strategy, implementation, learning, and adaptation. Additional resourcing, if feasible, would help to ensure that CMI continues to use pursue organisational learning and adaptation, in addition to the requirements of evaluation and reporting.

Learning could potentially be further enhanced by convening learning events to bring together all of the actors in the Finnish peace-making ecosystem, including colleagues from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finn Church Aid, and the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission. Where relevant this could also include other significant partners from other diplomatic circles, potentially creating prospects for deeper collaboration on specific peace-making initiatives.

Learning through strategic collaboration with partners

Ultimately CMI's collaboration is driven by the support that the organisation receives from the Finnish public and Parliament, specifically through the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The Ministry is, of course, not a monolithic entity, and CMI's counterparts in the Ministry come not only from the MFA's Centre for Peace Mediation but also among colleagues working on development cooperation, with the regional desks, with Finnish Embassies and country offices around the globe, and with staff from the Office of the Foreign Minister.

The evaluation found a **strong relationship between CMI and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs**, with potential for deepening collaboration and communication, affirming independence, and clarifying roles in specific contexts.

CMI's programme funding arrangements with the Ministry are a result of the clear strategic alignment between the Ministry's objectives and CMI's independent role. To outside

observers, it may appear unusual that CMI enjoys such a close relationship with the MFA given that it is an independent non-government organisation. However, this kind of arm's-length partnership is exactly what is needed for CMI's peace mediation work to be fully effective.

To strengthen CMI's partnership with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, several key questions merit attention in the second half of this 2022-2025 programme period:

- How can the MFA and CMI best exploit the **complementarity** between the Ministry's objectives and scope of action, and CMI's peace mediation mission and trusted networks?
- How could the MFA and CMI approach to **risk assessment and risk mitigation** be harmonised? Given the uncertainties and risks involved in launching new peace mediation initiatives, what is the Foreign Ministry's tolerance for testing new ground in the event that these efforts do not produce reportable outcomes?
- How can CMI best maintain its **independence** from Finnish foreign policy while working in close collaboration with Ministry for Foreign Affairs?
- How can CMI best harmonise **reporting** so that multiple colleagues across the MFA have a clear picture of the organisation work, at the project and programme level?
- Is there scope for future staff **secondments** or field placements between CMI and MFA, to enhance coordination and understanding, and to better develop opportunities for collaboration?

CMI's collaborative approach also provides a good foundation for effective coordination with other peace mediation actors. There is a clear complementarity between CMI's peace mediation and advisory work and the work carried out by counterpart organisations Finn Church Aid and Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission to connect with grassroots networks, religious actors, and local communities. The bi-annual conference regarding national dialogues was noted as an instance of effective collaboration to share lessons and insights, chaired on a rotational basis by one of the three NGO organisations in the Finnish peace mediation ecosystem. This platform demonstrates the potential of cross organisation exchanges, and the ability of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs to draw together organisations to collaborate.

The evaluation found **potential for greater collaboration across the various actors in the Finnish peace mediation ecosystem**, to take advantage of the variety of access points and opportunities for influence held by the different organisations.

CMI works effectively at multiple levels, both with elite decision-makers as well as with community groups. However, in some instances a comprehensive community engagement or liaison with religious leaders may require a different team profile or access strategy. In those instances CMI could benefit from working in a collaborative and context specific way with Finn Church Aid and the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission.

By occasionally working in a collaborative joint venture approach, CMI and the other Finnish peace organisations may also find it easier to report collectively against all themes relevant to the Foreign Ministry's development objectives, such as benefit to disabled persons,

environment, women, youth, marginalised groups, religious minorities, and other local beneficiaries and communities in conflict-affected environments. Collectively, CMI, Finn Church Aid, and the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission arguably cover all of the themes relevant to the MFA, from the high political level through to the grassroots level.

The Ministry’s programme level funding to CMI allows CMI not only to be independent and impartial, but also to be strongly collaborative with counterpart organisations, rather than competitive. Organisations which rely only on project level funding tend to take a more competitive approach to each new funding opportunity, avoiding collaborative ventures. This collaborative mindset is a strong asset for the Finnish peace mediation ecosystem, and for CMI as an organisation. Peace mediation typically requires a consortium of actors able to handle different aspects of the analysis, access, engagement, and influence required for peace mediation processes to succeed.

In order for collaboration to work effectively, a clear understanding of complementarity is required, both between CMI and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and also with other counterpart organisations in the Finnish peace ecosystem, such as Finn Church Aid and the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission.

Communicating CMI’s insights and achievements to the MFA

The evaluation found that **CMI communicates effectively with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs regarding insights and observations from the field,** and is frequently relied on to deliver unique contextual observations based on its considerable field networks and relationships cultivated over multiple years. This shared learning is particularly valuable, given that as it fills a gap created by the frequent rotation of Foreign Ministry staff through embassy and country office posts.

At the institutional level, **MFA stakeholders noted the clear and concise ‘dashboard’ format of CMI’s public annual report, an English version of which is available on the internet.**²⁰ The format of this document was noted by MFA stakeholders as being clear and providing an easy point of engagement with the organisation and its actions. To avoid duplication and unnecessary costs, stakeholders advised CMI to maintain a single annual report and use this for reporting towards all donors.

Additional steps could be taken to improve institutional level reporting, provided that resources are available to support this work:

- **A one-page presentation of the whole portfolio** in terms of geography and themes would be relevant to the MFA and to public audiences.
- **A one-page UNDP-style dashboard style report** might be helpful, showing key performance indicators or traffic lights highlighting progress, obstacles, or adaptations, and the ultimate impact on groups of beneficiaries.

²⁰ See https://cmi.fi/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/AR2022_web_spreads-1.pdf

- **Additional informal or technical-level meetings between the MFA and CMI** could also help to strengthen shared learning and adaptation, and to communicate what CMI is achieving. At present CMI provides one annual briefing to the MFA, and the evaluation found potential for more frequent briefings or informal operational updates.

CMI's multi-channel communications approach

CMI maintains a multi-channel communications approach including events, newsletters, media publications, and an active social media and online presence to communicate to the global public. 2023 was an exceptionally active year for CMI's communications team following the passing of Founder Martti Ahtisaari, with around **40 items published on the CMI website in 2023** in both Finnish and English (a frequency around one publication per week, excluding holidays). The relatively high intensity of publication relates directly to CMI's efforts to attract private financial contributions to the **Martti Ahtisaari Peace Fund**.

Targeted communication is part of the 'craft of peace' that forms a key pillar of CMI's strategy, and this aspect of CMI's work should therefore remain a key part of the organisation's priorities. **Key audiences** for CMI include the Finnish public and Parliament, but also diplomats, experts and stakeholders, in Europe and beyond. The complexity of these diverse audiences, and the need for confidentiality in the majority of CMI's work, means that **CMI must continue to carefully balance the strategic requirement of discretion with the public interest in knowing more about CMI's work.**

Given that **some of CMI's most valuable work is sensitive and not suitable for publication**, interested audiences will necessarily gain only part of the story when reading CMI's publications, and may therefore under-value the organisation's work. CMI must therefore continue to complement its public communication and formal reporting with informal and discreet communication to key stakeholders in the MFA.

Updating learning objectives from 2020-2030 Strategic Plan

The strategy document prepared by CMI in 2020 sets out the organisation's objectives for the following decade, including specific objectives related to learning. The midpoint of the 'Missing Peace' programme funding cycle may be **an appropriate moment to review the organisation's strategic learning objectives** and update them to reflect the organisation's current priorities and activities.

For example the objectives stated in 2020 included projects such as a CMI Academy, a CMI annual strategic forum, and a CMI forum in Brussels. Several of these objectives have been superseded, adapted, or implemented in a different form, and the Strategy could perhaps be updated to reflect this fact.

Conclusion

The changing global landscape of conflict requires CMI to rapidly learn and adapt, to cultivate a healthy organisational culture while growing, and to maintain a strong institutional

reputation for impartiality and independence in the face of **challenging operational constraints**. At the midpoint of the 2022-2025 *'Missing Peace' Programme*, CMI should therefore consider **additional investment in core organisational systems**, to ensure that its rapid expansion and entrepreneurial culture does not threaten its long-term sustainability. This should include investment in organisational capability for learning, results assessment/reporting, quality assurance, and the ability to attract and retain top talent.

Part of CMI's value derives from the organisation's **willingness to contribute to collaborative and multilateral solutions**, even in settings where CMI cannot contribute directly on its own. This stance enables CMI to support forward steps in multilateral processes without seeking the limelight, giving priority to the needs of the stakeholders and the dialogue process. Opportunities exist for greater collaboration with peer organisations, maintaining CMI's independence while building on the flexibility provided by the MFA's programme funding.

By **focusing on the medium to long-term prospects for peace**, CMI is well-positioned to help conflict actors address the underlying drivers of violence, and build consensus to enable positive change. The organisation remains a **trusted source of independent analysis** regarding conflict situations and possible options for movement towards away from violence and towards peace. CMI should continue to use the MFA's flexible programme funding to maintain this long-term focus, building trusted networks to enable further peace-making efforts.

CMI's ongoing relevance in peace diplomacy, and the organisation's enduring value is directly linked to its **reputation for impartiality and independence**, built on the organisation's practice of allowing stakeholders to retain ownership of the dialogues which CMI helps to facilitate. CMI's strategic relationship with the MFA must therefore be carefully calibrated to ensure the right balance of both independence and collaboration, helping **CMI to continue to deliver value for peace as a key pillar in the Finnish peace-making ecosystem**.

Annexes

Annex: Methodology

The evaluation was conducted in three phases, using an **iterative evaluation approach** modelled on standard parliamentary performance audit practice.

In the **preliminary enquiry phase**, objectives and lines of enquiry were refined in consultation with CMI, and then elaborated through interviews and focus group discussions with CMI colleagues engaged in different themes or geographies. An Inception Report in the first month of the evaluation provided a first opportunity to validate the focus and direction of the evaluation, helping ensure that the exercise corresponded with the organisation's needs, while also addressing key priorities for the donor and stakeholders.

The second phase of the assignment combined further **desk study, interviews and focus group discussions** (organised partially in person) developed in consultation with the CMI steering committee. Interviews were conducted in-person in Helsinki and online, with a total of 40 interviewees providing the evaluation with more than 45 scheduled interview sessions. Two confidential case studies were used to provide an intensive grounding of the evaluation in CMI's field practice reality. All interviews and focus group discussions were guided by the lines of enquiry to ensure continuity and focus, while also allowing for context-specific adaptation.

The final stage of the evaluation involved **feedback on a draft report, and finalisation of a report** suitable for CMI's reporting obligations.

The **final report** aims to present a balanced and evidence-based view of the value delivered by the organisation under the '*Missing Peace*' programme of work during 2022-2023.

The evaluator, Dr Ian Wadley, is an independent consultant helping leading organisations and donors in the mediation, diplomacy and humanitarian sectors deliver and demonstrate valued results in complex environments. He has more than 25 years of professional experience including numerous evaluations and reviews, work with the ICRC as a Protection Delegate, legal advisory and litigation roles, and the design and conduct of parliamentary performance audits. Ian led strategy, evaluation and learning at the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue in Geneva from 2013-2019, before launching his independent consulting practice. He is a lawyer and an accredited mediator, with degrees from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Geneva's Graduate Institute, and UC Berkeley's Boalt Hall School of Law. He has been a research fellow at the Harvard Program on Negotiation, and was an advisory member of the Board of *Médecins sans Frontières Suisse* from 2020 to 2023.

Annex: Workplan

The mid-term evaluation was conducted between December 2023 and April 2024, with the majority of the work falling in January and March 2024. Work was carried out according to the plan outlined below:

TASK	DATE	# DAYS (ESTIM.)
Assessment of CMI's programme	December-April	30 days
1.1: Kick-off meeting & desk study of documentation Documentation supplied by CMI Additional document requests if needed	December-January	6
1.2 Inception report & debrief session An inception report and index of final report: a short plan on how the evaluator interprets the assignment and plans to conduct it and how it will be presented A debrief session with invitation determined by CMI. We anticipate participation by all members of the leadership team and the head of the Brussels office to provide a global view and include linkages between country-projects and EU engagement.	January Inception report: 12 January Debrief Session: January	2
2.1: Interviews / workshops / focus group discussions with key CMI team. Logistics for field interviews may be subject in some cases to the availability of translators and permit issuance. First round of Interviews: Around 15 CMI team members: 15-25 January Second round of interviews in HKI 5-6 February: Overview with all CMI staff in HKI Selected Leadership Team In-depth Case Study 1 Team In-depth Case Study 2 Team Thematic programmes Introductory interviews with MFA contacts in HKI 5-6 February In-person with MFA contacts Online where MFA contacts are not available	January-February 15-25 Jan 5-6 February 5-6 February Ongoing as required	10
2.2 Interviews with external stakeholders and partners: Contacts nominated by CMI Case Study team 1 Contacts nominated by CMI Case Study team 2	Late January-March	2

Contacts nominated by CMI among partners, as required Emphasis on validation and nuance rather than detailed fact-finding	Ongoing as required	
3.1: Draft final report & presentation A draft final report: a collection of findings and recommendations on CMI's programme; A presentation of the findings and recommendations of the evaluation to be used as a basis for the roundtable discussion with CMI	Submission of Draft Final Report: Week of 25 March	6
3.2: Roundtable on conclusions and recommendations with CMI A presentation of the findings and recommendations of the evaluation to be used as a basis for the roundtable discussion with CMI	Presentation: 25 March	2
3.3: CMI's written comments provided to the draft report	Comments by 12 April	N/A
3.2: Finalization of report and Submission The final report: finalised collection of findings and recommendations on CMI's programme.	Final Report: By 30 April	2