



ANNUAL REPORT 2021



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Driving Human Rights in the Midst of Crises

In 2021, we noticed that restrictive measures had become the new normal, and the state of human rights had clearly deteriorated in many countries. Covid-19 was used as an excuse for more permanent restrictions of political rights and oppression of minorities in several of our operating countries.

In our Asian operating countries in Nepal and Sri Lanka, the lockdowns have been severe and total. In Sri Lanka, the administration continued its corrupt policies, eventually driving the country into a full-blown crisis and to the brink of a national bankruptcy. In East Africa, the challenges piled up for the poorest groups, when markets and trading places were periodically closed, movement was restricted and in Uganda, schools were closed. Minorities living on the fringes of society have been especially cramped.

Our partners have been creative, sustainable and strong. The operation has continued in 2021 even in difficult situations and results have been obtained: for example, both BIRUDO and TLC in Uganda complained through AFDB's Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) about abuses

against the local rural population in bank-financed projects in Western Uganda, and the complaints were accepted for IRM evaluation. KIOS brought the matter up in Finland as well, and it was also covered in the media. Similar efforts have been made in Nepal by LAHURNIP, which has established dozens of local committees to promote the rights of indigenous peoples, and filed, for example, a complaint about a project financed by the European Investment Bank, which caused a follow-up project to be suspended.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland believes in the importance of human rights work, and we received a positive funding decision for the upcoming years 2022-25. Our biggest challenge is that the situation in many of our operating countries has worsened significantly. On the other hand, human rights have also become a strong topic of discussion recently, and people understand better that they need to be fought for. And we know that our grantees in the global south keep on pushing for the better no matter the circumstances.



Kim Remitz
Executive Director, KIOS



What is the KIOS Foundation?

KIOS is an independent, non-political, non-religious and non-governmental foundation. We fund the work of human rights defenders in South Asia and East Africa. Together with local civil society organisations, we are building a world where human rights belong to everyone.

At the heart of our work is realizing the rights of the marginalised and excluded groups and persons in vulnerable positions.

KIOS was founded in 1998 by 11 Finnish NGOs working for human rights, peace and development. KIOS receives financial support for its activities from the development cooperation funds of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.

Our grantees work in Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Nepal and Sri Lanka. We also support

Tibetan civil society in exile, as well as regional initiatives in East Africa and South Asia. In the strategic period 2021-2024, funding will be allocated specifically to three main themes, which are Business and Human Rights, Non-Discrimination and Gender Equality and Democracy and Rule of Law.

We identify our grantees by open calls for proposals and by field trips. The starting point for our funding is local need and local expertise. The support is given to human rights work planned and implemented by local civil society organisations.

During our 24 years of existence, we have funded around 500 projects in almost 60 countries. Many activists we support work at the grass-roots level in local communities, but some of our grantees also play a role at the pinnacle of

human rights politics, such as at the UN Human Rights Council. Our grantees have gathered information about severe human rights violations and brought them to the attention of the international community. They have helped marginalised groups to participate and defend their rights and provided legal aid for thousands of people whose rights have been trampled on. Some of our grantees have increased the human rights awareness of the authorities through training. Many have succeeded in changing the legislation in their countries to take better account of human rights.

Together with our grantees, we work for a world where dignity and human rights are recognised for all human beings, and states are committed to ensure them.



How We Work

We identify: We identify and select reliable and relevant human rights organisations and movements in South Asia and East Africa.

We fund: We give direct financial support to human rights activist groups at local, national and regional level.

We strengthen: We strengthen our grantees and their networks, including giving financial support to trainings, networking and improving safety.

We guide and mentor: We give guidance and mentoring to our grantees on project planning, management and reporting.

We communicate: We share news of our grantees' work and the human rights situation in their countries, participate in campaigns and organise human rights seminars and trainings in Helsinki and online.

We advocate: We discuss human rights issues with decision-makers, officials and other relevant actors in Finland and abroad.

The Year 2021 in Numbers

41

grants were
on-going

23

in East Africa

18

in South Asia

Some results from 12 grants that ended in 2021

24 303 PEOPLE BENEFITTED DIRECTLY FROM
KIOS-FUNDED HUMAN RIGHTS WORK

18 112

people learnt about their rights
and how to defend them.

1 799

authorities learnt about human
rights and their duties.

2 194

people received legal
aid or counselling.

14

strategic litigation cases*

10

human rights reports
were published.

* Strategic litigation involves selecting and bringing a case to the courtroom with the goal of creating broader changes in society. This means that strategic litigation cases are as much concerned with the effects that they will have on larger populations and governments as they are with the end result of the cases themselves. When it is successfully used, strategic litigation can bring groundbreaking results. It can spring a government into action to provide basic care for its citizens, guarantee the equal rights of minorities, or halt an environmentally damaging activity.

KIOS Funding in 2021

KIOS grants in total: 839 549 €

**Funding in
South Asia:
263 161 €**

**Nepal
155 231 €**

**Sri Lanka
107 930 €**

**Regional and
NGOs in exile
129 100 €**

**Funding in
East Africa:
447 288 €**

**Uganda
239 510 €**

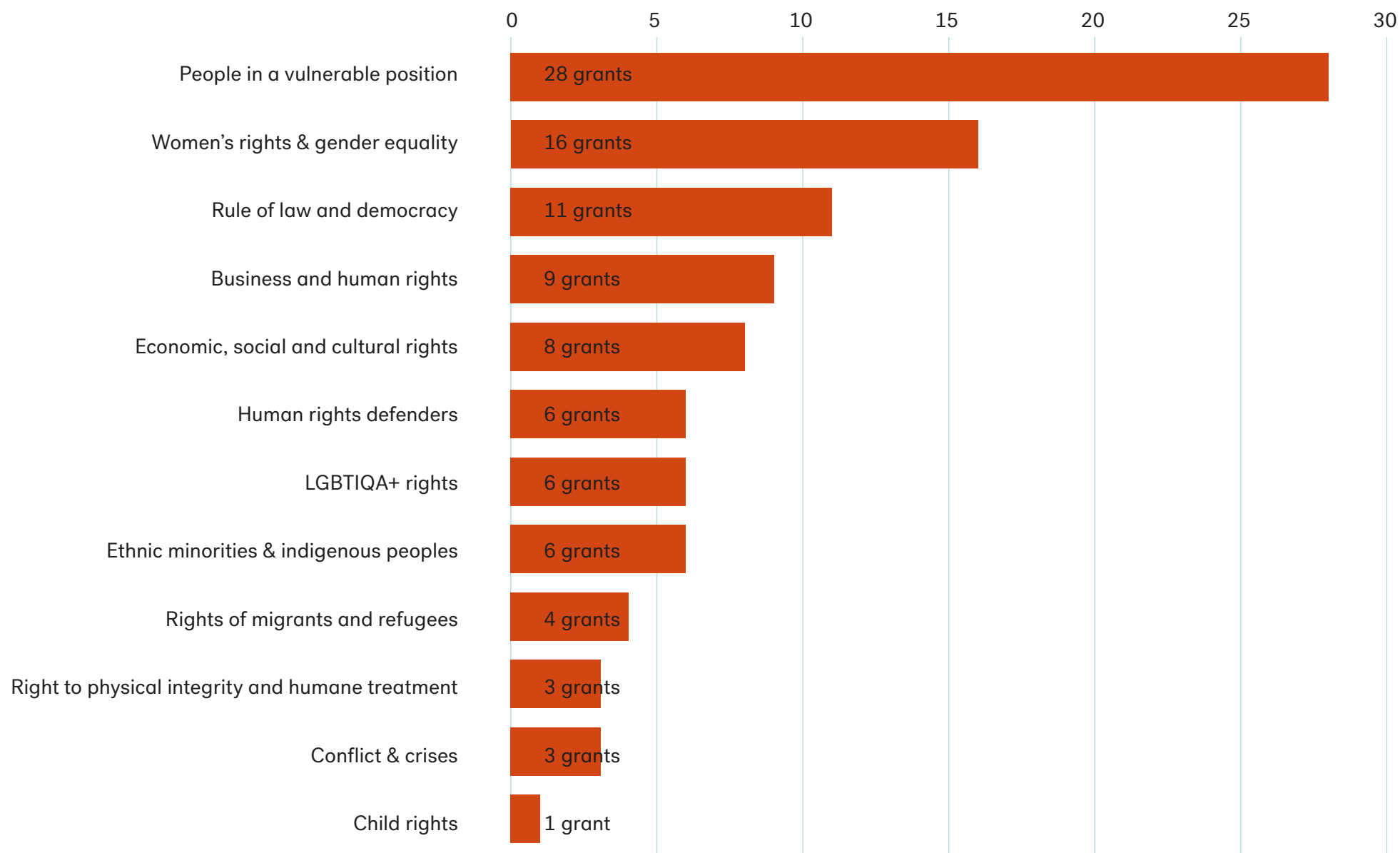
**Rwanda
24 150 €**

**Burundi
22 062 €**

**Kenya
161 566 €**

*The distribution of funds in 2021 does not directly relate to the scope of operations in a specific country.

The Main Themes of KIOS Grants



There were 41 KIOS grants on-going in 2021. Some grants may have several themes.



Examples of Our Grantees' Work

Business and Human Rights

Driving Corporate Responsibility in Uganda

TLC is an organisation that seeks to ensure that human rights are respected in for example development projects. In Western Uganda, the discovery of oil has attracted parties that need to be reminded of their duties.

The Twerwaneho Listeners Club (TLC) is an organisation that was originally born around a radio programme. Founder Gerald Kankya noticed while studying in Kampala, the capital of Uganda, that there were radio programme that talked about equality and human rights. These things were not talked about in his home region of rural Western Uganda.

Today, TLC focuses on land rights and corporate responsibility, civic space and access to information. The discovery of oil and the business opportunities it brings have attracted investors and other interested parties to Western Uganda. TLC reminds companies that they must act responsibly. Supported by KIOS, TLC improves the good governance and accountability of the private sector, for example in the

extractive sector in the Rwenzori region. TLC also seeks to ensure that Development Finance Institutions, such as the World Bank and African Development Bank, respect human rights throughout big development projects. The goal of the work is that the human rights of the communities in the region are respected.

Often, human rights defenders working in remote rural areas are at greater risk than, for example, those working in the capital, because they are less well-known and have fewer support networks and international contacts. Human rights defenders who speak about corruption or the use of natural resources are also in particular danger.

With support from KIOS, TLC has managed 6 litigation cases against corporate entities involved in human rights abuses. TLC has pro-

vided legal support to over 600 members of the public who cannot afford paid legal services. They have also started providing psychosocial support counselling services to victims of human rights abuses who in their assessment need emotional and mental healing.

“Corporate responsibility involves the fact that the company must respect human rights, community affairs and the environment. One must also ask what the company gives back to the communities.”

– Gerald Kankya, Coordinator, TLC



Photo: TLC

Photo: Nicola Zolin

Courtesy "Women For Freedom"

Knowledge is Power

Examples of Our Grantees' Work

Non-Discrimination and Gender Equality



Rights for the Disadvantaged

In Nepal casteless women are often in an extremely marginalised position. FEDO Nepal has helped many women to take their place in the society and claim their rights.

In Nepal, the casteless of the Hindu caste system, Dalits, and Dalit women in particular, are often outside society. They remain unable to attain healthcare, education, decent employment, justice and most human rights. They face discrimination on multiple grounds, because they are marginalised in the society due to their gender, lack of caste and poverty.

Dalits are considered socially untouchables in Nepal. Dirty and dangerous tasks and jobs have been and still are mostly done by Dalits. Discrimination based on caste is not legal, but it still happens in practice. Dalits are amongst those groups of individuals who are most often the victims of human rights abuses and violations, and Dalit women amongst those who are over-represented among the victims of gender-based violence (by intimate partners and others) and femicides, forced marriages and forced prostitution. Police may refuse to register the case if the victim is Dalit, without any consequences, adding to the rampant impunity on crimes against Dalits. According to research, 78% of Dalits live in an extremely difficult situation because of their caste. For Dalit women the situation is even worse.

FEDO Nepal (Feminist Dalit Organization) advocates for the rights of non-caste women in Nepal. FEDO's goal is for women to begin to understand and demand their own rights. FEDO organises leadership training for women so that they dare to take their place in the society. FEDO also wants to educate men so that they understand the rights of women. FEDO works to tackle all grounds of discrimination that Dalit women face, and attempts to change the social structures and attitudes that maintain the discriminatory systems, institutions and practices towards Dalit women.

The organisation was founded by a group of Dalit women in 1994 to push for their rights. Currently, FEDO operates in 56 districts and all seven states of Nepal. The project supported by KIOS aimed to increase Dalit women's livelihood and financial independence and their access to justice through human rights monitoring, documentation and advocacy work.

With KIOS's support FEDO trained more than 500 right-holders, Dalit women and persons in vulnerable positions, on how to claim and exercise their rights and hold all the duty-bearers accountable.



Photo: Timo Kuronen

In 2021 FEDO documented more than 80 cases of human rights violations against Dalit women in one district like discrimination of Dalit local representatives at decision making arenas, rape cases, forced early marriages and domestic violence.

“

When it comes to Dalits, justice and equality are either delayed or denied.”

**- Sarita Barma Shakha,
Project Coordinator, FEDO**



Examples of Our Grantees' Work

Democracy and Rule of Law

Fighting Against Torture

In Kenya, unfortunately, torture is still commonplace, especially in police custody. The Kenyan non-governmental organisation IMLU wants to ensure that the victims of torture get justice.

The Independent Medico-Legal Unit (IMLU) is a Kenyan organisation founded in 1995 that does anti-torture work. The organisation's activities are focused on documenting torture cases, rehabilitating victims, legal aid, and education, information and advocacy work.

In Kenya, torture for political reasons occurs especially in police custody and prisons. The victims of torture are often poor or unemployed, and because of their status, they are unable to claim their rights effectively. IMLU, supported by KIOS, has been working successfully for years to help victims of torture, identify torture and raise public awareness.

The positive effects of IMLU's work can be seen concretely. Many victims of torture have received the physical and psychological help

they need and a channel to demand justice for themselves. The monitoring carried out by IMLU has improved the treatment of people in police custody. In addition, awareness of human rights has increased among the general public.

KIOS has supported IMLU in a project whose goal was to promote and protect the human rights of people in a vulnerable or marginalised position, women, young people, small traders and remand prisoners.

In 2021, for example, with the support of KIOS, IMLU trained doctors to work in prisons in accordance with international standards. The standards emphasise the state's responsibility in providing healthcare. The relationship between healthcare professionals and prisoners is governed by the same ethical and professional standards as other patients. The

medical workers were selected from different institutions around the country, including Nairobi Remand Prison, Lang'ata Women's Prison, Kisumu Main Prison and Garissa Prison. A total of 25 medical professionals participated in the training.

Through the KIOS grant, IMLU also supported a total number of 21 victim cases through legal, medical and psychological services. A total of 19 autopsies were conducted during the grant period 2018-2021.

“

“We need to reform our police from a force to a service.”

- Peter Kiama, Executive Director, IMLU





Working for Dignity and Equality

The Informal Sector Service Centre, INSEC, of Nepal has sensitised local communities by producing radio programmes about economic, social and cultural (ESC) rights and government policies and provisions, and by distributing flyers. INSEC's Radio Team produced 26 episodes of radio programmes related to ESC rights. Radio programmes were broadcasted through Radio Nepal and online media.

Queer Youth Uganda has trained 16 human rights defenders who now have improved awareness and understanding of human rights. The trained human rights defenders assist LGBTIQA+ community members to claim and access their rights for example through documenting human rights violations and monitoring the human rights situation.

Sri Lankan Children's Rights Organisation ECPAT's lawyer took part in 59 hearings on behalf of 32 victims of sexual exploitation in travel and tourism or sexual exploitation of children online. During the lockdown for Covid-19, ECPAT engaged in social media campaigns that advised and made families aware of online child safety.



Snapshots from KIOS Activities

TOIMI
KOSKA
VOIT

”

En halua olla sulkemassa tehtaita,
mutta kyse oli elämästä ja
kuolemasta.

Phyllis Omido
Ihmisoikeuspuolustaja



Talk about Pakwach

KIOS brought up abuses in a large development cooperation project in Pakwach, Uganda. Two KIOS grantees and the executive director were interviewed for the news in Finland. This coverage brought a large number of new followers to KIOS's social media channels, among other things, and increased visibility of the organisation.

Campaign about Civic Engagement

The Toimi, koska voit (Act because you can) campaign celebrated the importance of civic engagement in building a better future and defending human rights. At the same time, the campaign reminded that civic space is increasingly restricted. The campaign highlighted the stories of six activists from different parts of the world.

From KIOS's point of view the campaign was a success as Phyllis Omido, the founder and director of the grantee organisation CJGEA, gained large visibility in the Finnish media.

Human Rights in a Post-Pandemic World

Former UN Special Rapporteur and KIOS's partner Mr. Maina Kiai talked about the future of human rights in a post-pandemic world at the World Village Festival. Kiai is a long-time human rights activist from Kenya. He was interviewed by KIOS's staff member Saara Frestadius and the event could be followed online.

Strategy and Administration

Number of employees

10

(some of the posts were part-time)

Total programme

1 512 361 €

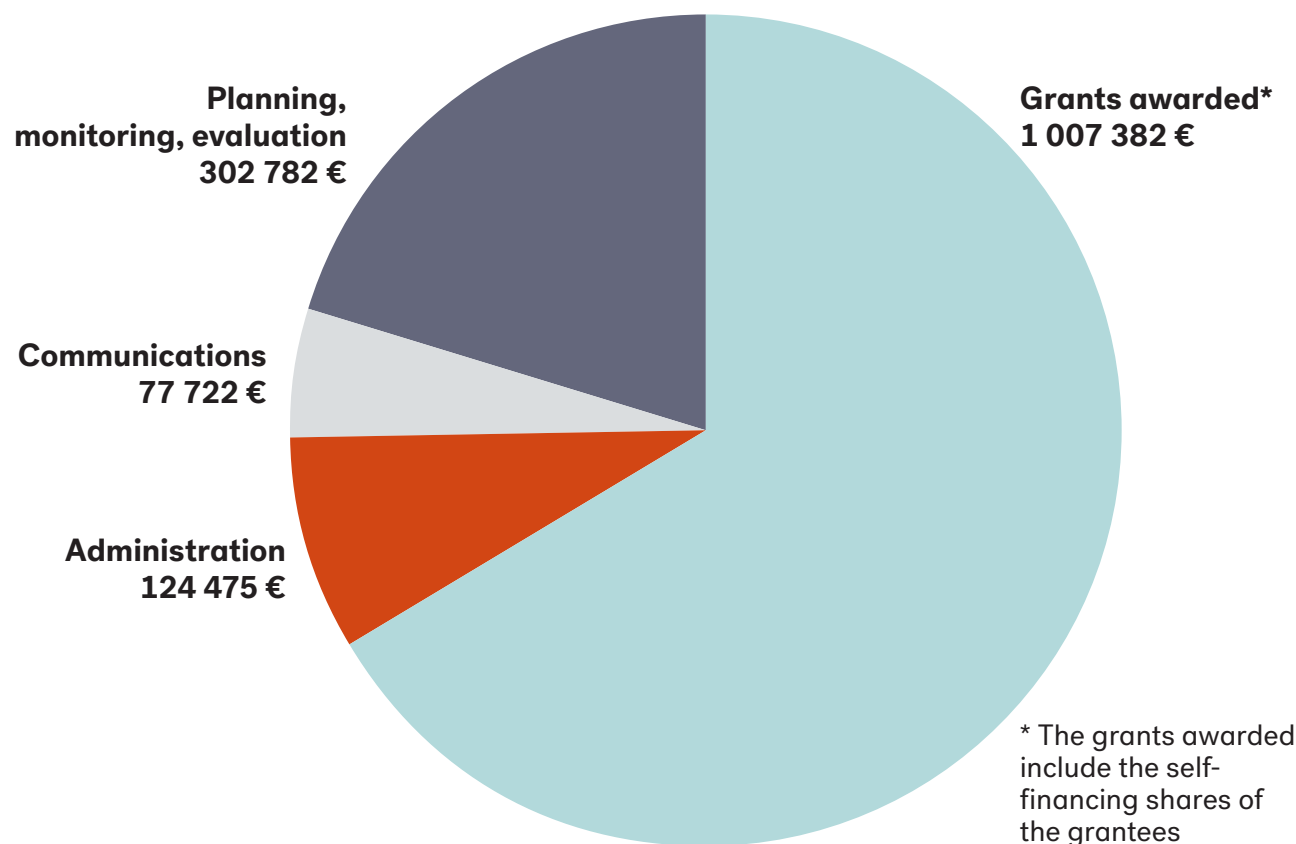
A New, Smaller Board

The KIOS board was reduced in size from the beginning of the year 2021 to facilitate strategic planning and to enhance the board's familiarity with KIOS's operations. In addition to the chairperson, the board now has five regular members and one deputy member.

Renewed Results Framework

In the spring of 2021, KIOS renewed its result framework and clarified the internal guidelines. The purpose of renewing the results framework is to clarify the goals and the monitoring of results at different levels.

Financial Year Breakdown





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