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Looking beyond the event horizon: Understanding the ICT4dev Projects in Estonian development cooperation from the perspective of private players

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Abstract

The study aimed to investigate the rationale behind the involvement of private entities in Estonian development cooperation initiatives, as well as the challenges they encounter and the strategies employed to address these challenges. This research utilized a qualitative research methodology, employing multiple interviews that were subsequently analyzed. The interviews revealed key themes related to the motivations, obstacles, and approaches used to surmount these obstacles. From the researcher's perspective, three primary recommendations emerged: establishing a mechanism for assessing the impact of development projects and sharing results with stakeholders, striking a balance between commercial objectives and long-term development impact, and addressing inquiries regarding the role of Estonian development aid through a comprehensive document. These recommendations are intended to enhance the transparency and efficacy of development endeavors.

Content

Abbreviations

Country Programmable Aid-CPA

Development Assistance Committee- DAC

Estonian Centre for International Development-ESTDEV.

Infromation and Communication Technology for development-ICT D/ICT4dev

Infromation and Communication Technology -ICT

Ministry of Foreign Affairs-MFA

Non govermental organisations-NGOs

Organisation for Economic Co-operation

and Development- OECD

Small and medium-sized enterprises-SMEs

1   Introduction

The Second World War is one of the most significant events that the world witnessed and it led to a wide array of consequences in the world polity and how International cooperation was organized in its aftermath. It was the USA which first conceived the idea of providing international aid for European expansion and revival (Martinussen, 2003). The predecessor of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) was the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) and the first examples of international aid like the Marshall Plan coincided with these organizations' formation (Martinussen, 2003). London was the witness for the organization of the annual Development studies association conference in 2012, where the most important theme that was discussed was the developments and how the concept of development cooperation has expanded in the preceding years (Gore, 2013).

Renewed interest in the area of development cooperation is due to the expansion of South-South development cooperation , the varied nature of International relations in the globalized world and also the association of various different actors like the civil society organizations and Non Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in the foray (Martinussen, 2003). Given the new areas of research this topic brings about be it that of different management styles like the Result based Management System (Vähämäki et al, 2011) or the governance frameworks like Collaborative governance (Ansell & Gash, 2008) or adaptive governance (Folke et al., 2005, Vihima, 2022)) that can be used to see development cooperation and assess its effectiveness and performance; this is a research area that is widely acknowledged and important in the field of International relations.

Development cooperation and international aid mainly aims at empowering and providing financial sustenance to the developing nations and especially the poor and marginalized.(Martinussen, 2003). The goals of foreign aid have also been varied in the sense that countries like Japan have made business interests as one of the goals of development aid (Chandy & Kharas, 2011) and other countries like the USA have a predominant motivation from the areas of Agriculture and Industry (Chandy & Kharas, 2011). The countries both developing and developed have also considered modest measures in terms of revising or

increasing development aid. Development aid can also be considered as a public good in itself (Gore, 2013).

Given the importance of development aid keeping in mind the above mentioned aspects, it is also equally relevant that the limitations in the mechanisms, frameworks and the impact assessment of such development aid measures (Van Den Berg, 2005) be widely discussed. This research work deals with these aspects and explores the motivations of cooperation development, the main problems associated with it and also the role of private players with respect to the concept of development cooperation in Estonia.

2   Literature review:

2.1. Background of development cooperation

The concept of development cooperation can be traced back to the aftermath of World War II (Martinussen, 2003). The United States of America initiated financial aid to European nations to assist in their reconstruction efforts. Over the subsequent decades, the geographical focus of these policies shifted to encompass Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East (Martinussen, 2003). Concurrently, other developed nations, such as France and England, formulated their own development aid policies, with a particular emphasis on their former colonies. Additionally, Nordic nations also embarked on providing development aid to other countries.

It is important to note that the motivations behind providing development aid varied among the nations (Martinussen, 2003). The USA's provision of development aid was initially a strategic measure to rebuild Europe and later to counter the spread of communism. France and England were primarily motivated by their perceived moral obligation toward their former colonies, as well as their own economic interests. In contrast, Nordic nations were driven by humanitarian considerations (Martinussen, 2003)

Thus, it can be inferred that the motivations of all donors for providing development aid can be broadly categorized as: (1) Moral and Humanitarian reasons, (2) Economic and trade reasons, (3) National Security and political reasons and (4) Environmental reasons.

However, some scholars hold differing views on the motivations behind the provision of development aid. According to Gore, (2013), the motivations for development cooperation can be broadly classified into three main themes. These include the promotion of economic development in the recipient nation, the advancement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) such as poverty reduction, and the provision of public goods to ensure the stability of recipient states. The recipient states, in turn, were motivated by social, economic, developmental, and political gains.

Development cooperation, as defined by Martinussen (2003), involves providing support to recipient countries by the donor country to achieve predetermined objectives. These objectives can be set by the donor country, the recipient country, or both. The process involves implementing the necessary strategies to reach these goals, followed by an analysis of the results to determine the success of the strategies. Donors can be sovereign states or non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and organizations in the recipient country often play a crucial role in achieving these objectives. It is important to note that the objectives must be significant and meaningful to the donor.

Additionally, Gore (2013) defines financial support and the transfer of know-how as fundamental components of development cooperation. He identifies five types of actors providing development aid: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donor countries, non-DAC governmental providers, global funds, private foundations, and international Non governmental organizations (NGOs).

While there is little objective scientific data to substantiate the efficiency of [AR4] development aid programs, the global north continues to pursue this policy for various reasons (Dworkin, n.d.). Furthermore, non-DAC aid is growing fast. However, the data is not clear on the exact amount but it "contributes between $58-68 billion per year" (Kharas.2007. P.1).

2.2. Problems in development cooperation:

This part of literature review will focus on the problems in the development cooperation landscape. The main problems indicated in the literature are associated with architecture of cooperation, scaling of project results, and assessment of development.

2.2.1. From criteria-based to joint assessment

The development aid and their efficacy measurement are a complex task. The criteria-based measurement is a tedious process and messy and hence there needs to be an alternative way to measure the same. Kharas (2007) also states that the old evaluation criteria are not adequate and there is a need to replace it with a broader assessment criterion which is focused on the results. The need to strengthen the involvement of all the partner nations in evaluation of development aid (Faust, 2024) is an important aspect of this process. The criticism's regarding this approach of criteria-based measurement prompted the transition to new solutions which is towards a more joint and participatory evaluation of the development aid. One key theme that has emerged from the literature is the need to move away from current assessment criteria to an impact-based criteria. Van Den Berg (2005) argues that there is a need to move away from the current evaluation strategy which is flawed as it does not consider the societal impact of the intervention, which is a very important parameter.

There is also a trend of moving away from the traditional evaluation approach to a joint evaluation approach (OECD,2007).

Faust (2024) states that the evaluation of development cooperation has weak partner representation. He believes that strengthening partners' role in the evaluation process has normative benefit and improves the quality of the evaluation. He argues that it is easier said than done to achieve this. Thus, he created a framework for this purpose which has four parts. Partner, Intensity, Process and Capability dimension. Partner dimension indicates which partner actor for what role is to be included in the evaluation process. Intensity dimension of the framework is used to determine what is an adequate level of involvement. Process dimension is used to determine who will be involved when in the evaluation process. Capacity dimension is used to decide what are the capacity-based requirements from the partner's side. However, there is no empirical backing to this framework, as it is not a part of a published paper, but it is a policy document. Also, it can be concluded that such a framework only serves us if the flaws that were mentioned in Van Den Berg (2005) are dealt with. If they are ignored such an exercise might be futile

Van Den Berg (2005) also elucidated upon the problems regarding increasing the scope of evaluation to measure the development impact. He argues that there is a need to look at the results, not the process on how results are obtained. Furthermore, he points out that their common identified problems in conducting long term assessment is that it is too expensive and difficult to conduct. His research stated that the collection of data during the project can increase the cost of the project. Additionally, the scope of impact analysis can become big thus adding to the overall cost of the undertaking. Another key element of it is what are the impacts that one is looking for and how does one research them. Additionally, establishing the causal relationship between outcome and impact is quite difficult. He argues to solve this problem contrafactual methodology is used which is flawed as it does not allow for the researcher to see the contribution of the outcome on the impact but rather looks for the outcomes that have a causality-based relationship with it. Another criticism of the current scenario in development cooperation is the reliance on process monitoring approach which allows for monitoring if a task is being done properly but doesn't allow one to ascertain if the task being done is the right one. He argued that there is a need to move away from causation to correlation. As the outcome might contribute to an impact it might not cause it.

According to Davis, (2012) development aid has been flowing to developing nations for a long time; however the status of most of these nations remain still as developing nations. The author argues that the change in the economic status of the nations has been due to the growth in the indigenous corporate sector and not because of development aid.

All the above-mentioned difficulties create a messy situation. He criticizes the usage of the term causality as it is a concept borrowed from physics but advises that in the context of development cooperation projects must use specific causality over general causality.

The trend of DAC countries moving away from the traditional evaluation approach to a joint evaluation approach (OECD,2009) is direct evidence of such a transition of methodology in place. There are multiple benefits of mutual evaluation which are, Mutual capacity development, Harmonisation and reduced transaction costs, Objectivity, Legitimacy, Broader scope, Participation, alignment and ownership. The report also stressed upon the decimation of the results of evolution and gave the example of Denmark which publishes the summary of the

results of the evaluation. They also stated that auditing is an important part of development cooperation and some of the donors do use auditors from their national governments. However, there is a need for this to be adopted by more countries and a need for developing a more comprehensive mechanism for the same. Additionally, the chapter of the report also states that there are advisory bodies for all development cooperation and their governments, but their role is only advisory in nature. Lastly, it also expounds upon the monitoring of projects. It states that monitoring is important as they allow the project managers to make course correction. Only some of the members have formal mechanisms. For example, the USA and UK developed sophisticated strategic management systems for monitoring activities and aggregating results".

2.3. Governance of development cooperation:

Collaborative Governance is a wide term that is used to signify the network of range of state and non-state actors who are involved in the decision making process (Vihma, 2022). Collaboration is different from simple forms of cooperation in the sense that it seeks to achieve common aims and it also creates common resources for the same purpose (Vihma, 2022) Legitimacy is the key take away which collaborative governance seeks to achieve (Ansell & Gash). The aspect of collaborative governance increases knowledge and brings a varied skill set into the picture which can be used for effective decision making without any compromise on legitimacy. It is in this regard that the Governance of development cooperation has to assume a collaborative nature. Kharas (2007) states that there is a change in the landscape of development cooperation in the context of DAC. The net fund allocation has increased but it does not translate into effective development cooperation projects. The author states the case of sub-Saharan Africa as the money utilized in development projects is a fraction of the money that is allocated for development cooperation by DAC countries. This is because the definition of development funds also includes within it the forgiving debt, bad loans and emergency aid etc. Thus, according to the author, the data shows that the Country Programmable Aid (CPA) has not shown a significant increase in the last few years.

Another problem that is faced by the new development cooperation architecture is the fragmentation of aid (Kharas, 2007). As the number of the doner and doner agencies is rapidly increasing the fund allocated to each project is shrinking. Also, countries are motivated by

different agendas and thus have created specialized agencies that serve their agendas leading to further fragmentation of the development cooperation landscape.

Also, he pointed out the inefficiency of the mechanism adopted for the purpose of sharing Information, coordination and planning. Also, these mechanisms are not cheap. The main reason for this is the rapid increase in the number of players involved. This sometimes leads to duplication of work and creates a gap as no one wants to take on the responsibility of high priority efforts. Also, the fragmentation is not limited to development aid architecture but is also present within the donors. Thus, he feels there is a need to address this. The author suggests that there should be an effort to consolidate the efforts of multiple aid agencies that are involved in both bilateral and multilateral undertakings. Moreover, efforts are being made for this but they might not be enough. These need to be overcome with a constant cycle of adaptation and collaboration in the way the impact-based assessment of development aid is made.

Other key issues were the Result, effectiveness and allocation of rules. there is a lack of frameworks or mechanisms to evaluate development agencies. There is a need to create a mechanism for allocating funds to development agencies. As the number of agencies has increased and thus it has become difficult to allocate funds to the most efficient ones. He argues that there is a need to give more funds to agencies that produce a higher output rather than low output. The UK has already started this and has created a framework to examine the performance of the agencies but there is a need for such a mechanism to be created and adopted by others too. Also, there are problems with the OECD/DAC peer review mechanism which is conducted by a new agency according to the rotation policy. However, there is an issue in it as there is no mechanism which allows for the comparable treatment across agencies that were reviewed.

2.4. Scaling up and learning from projects

Issues with scaling, learning and Innovation (Kharas, 2007). Firstly, there is mixed evidence that this intervention led to broad economic growth of the partner nation. Also scaling of projects has many issues the author states that scaling could lead to achievement of narrow objectives but not of broader development objectives. An example of this would be an intervention which increases the enrolment of children in school, but this leads to the increase in the number of

students which increases the stress on the resources allocated to each student resulting in lower learning outcome. Scaling is also plagued by issues such as political capture, continuity transition in power. The author believes that private sector approaches need to be adopted by the development agency as they are good in doing small scale projects and then scaling them.

Gore (2013) also points out that there is a need for creating a flexible approach as compared to a fixed approach to global aid. As it accommodates the unique needs and practices of different undertakings and countries. He states that there is a need to improve the international system beyond aid. He suggests that this could be achieved by making international trade fairer so that developing countries can benefit from it, to reform the International financial system which can support economic growth of developing countries and increase global innovation and knowledge sharing. So that countries can develop more efficiently. Moreover, he states that there is a need for policy coherence. That there should be a coherence between the domestic policy and the development goals of the aid providers.

He also states that there is a need for the developing countries in the south to provide support to each other by creating an alignment in their policies and enhancing cooperation. Additionally, there is a need to provide support to local, community driven projects and innovation. Furthermore, bottom-up processes are important as they allow for the creation of solutions to problems that are specific to local needs. The author states that these elements should be combined to create a framework. Which can be utilized to impact the life of the people in a positive way.

To conclude, literature has pointed to issues in development cooperation regarding its nature of criteria-based assessment, the scaling issues, the need to adopt a framework which is able to assess the performance and lastly the need for a collaborative form of governance which brings in legitimacy and is participatory in nature. These problems necessitated the need to transition into more equitable and effective approaches such as collaborative and adaptive governance. The shift to impact-based assessment coupled with innovation and community engagement is the key here. These issues are only exacerbated with the increasing involvement of private actors which will be elaborated in the next chapter.

2.5. Private players in development cooperation:

There is a growing emphasis on involving the private sector in development aid, as donor countries and institutions believe in its transformative economic power (Davis, P. 2012). José Di Bella et.al (2013) states that the private sector has emerged as a key player in the development architecture. As it allows for different development agencies and countries to tap into its innovation capability, expertise and finances. There has also been a shift in the private sector's outlook as they are going beyond their business objectives and are creating business models that can achieve their business objectives while simultaneously contributing to development. However, there is a lack of a common understanding about the role of the private sector between all the different players in the development sector.

José Di Bella (et.al. 2013) defines the private sector as an organization whose motivation is to generate profit. It could be done by providing services, manufacturing, or commercialisation. He gives a broad definition of private players that includes formal and informal organizations such as financial institutions and intermediaries, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) etc. However, he excludes non-governmental organizations (NGO), Independent foundations and civil society organizations. Furthermore, he defined development cooperation actors as government departments, agencies and organizations operating at the international, national and local levels. Additionally, they are also linked by flow of aid and expertise. The author states that the definition includes International financial organization, bilateral development finance intuitions, United Nations agencies etc.

However, even after the recent hype regarding the potential of private players in the development sector they are still not a central part of the development paradigm (Davis, P. 2012). There is a need for reconsidering the approach regarding the following subject matters. A balance must be created among business and human rights principles (Davis, P. 2012). Furthermore, there is a need to utilize the corporate sector as part of the UNGC on a strategic level rather than a tactical level. Also, the cooperation sector's engagement must increase on a national and regional level. Lastly, the corporate sector must occupy more of a central space in the strategic visions of development agencies (Davis, P. 2012).

Moreover, the involvement of the private sector in development programs has been the subject of recent research by several scholars. It is important to note that most of these scholars and donors

are skeptical about the potential of private sector firms to achieve development goals (; Hooli, L. J. (n.d.). n.d.; Blowfield, M. et al., 2014; Blowfield, M. 2012; Davis, P. 2012). The recent research highlights the shortcomings of the current model and raises questions that warrants further investigation.

Furthermore, as already stated in the chapters above the presence of multiple actors with diverse objectives creates friction in development aid programs. Gore (2013) suggests that the fault line in development cooperation lies in the divergent goals and methods of these various actors. Thus, it raises the question: is it prudent to engage the private sector in development cooperation.

Furthermore, there is a lack of accountability mechanisms and commitment from private sector organizations towards development goals. Blowfield, M. et al. (2014) argues that the fundamental concepts of development are being adapted to suit business needs rather than addressing the needs of the impoverished. This re-conceptualisation of development primarily benefits private organizations, with the resulting benefits limited to specific classes of the poor who align with these businesses' needs.

Hooli (n.d.) emphasizes that the development impact of aid programs involving the private sector is notably low. His research identifies the lack of involvement of local citizens as a major reason for this low development impact. He states that the reason for involvement of the private sector in development cooperation projects is only going to increase even with all its shortcomings.

Additionally, according to André de Mello e Souza. (n.d.) large companies lack the skills to engage stakeholders and partner countries. Which can result in the failure of the development cooperation project as it is successful depends on successful involvement of the above-mentioned actors. According to the author, contextual knowledge is key to understanding the local problems and the challenges faced by the people.

Hooli (n.d) research also showed that most of the private sector engaged in development cooperation projects was targeting middle-income countries and high-income countries. The rationale behind such a move was the market potential of such countries. Furthermore, more factors such as existing collaboration partners and previous experience working in the countries also contributed to such decisions. Hooli (n.d.). states that the companies are driven by profit and

market access. Also, there is another danger where development cooperation might lose its primary meaning and metamorphosis into a profit gaining venture (André de Mello e Souza. n.d.). Furthermore, André de Mello e Souza. (n.d.) offers some recommendations in the context of the above-mentioned text. He believes that companies' profit-seeking aim must be reconciled with that of the development cooperation agenda. However, this can be achieved via the creation of a global governance institution. However, because of the lack of such institutions there is a need for self-regulation till the time they can be replaced by global governance norms. However, he states there is a need to create a global governance norm which could be done by combining the existing efforts in the same direction. Also, the discussion regarding creating a global governance must be inclusive to reach a common consensus (André de Mello e Souza. n.d.).

Hooli (n.d.) research also looked into the topic such as what kind of people were included in the project and the finding of the research indicates that the companies failed to include local communities in their projects. The companies stated that local companies were their main point of contact and after that the main point of contact were the ministries, local governments and lastly the embassy of Finland. Also, only two companies mentioned that they contacted local communities, and none of the participants of this research regarded the inclusion of local communities as important (Hooli. n.d.).

All companies participating in this research also stated that they consider development impact to be important. They stated that it is essential for their reputation and long-term strategic goals. However, it must be noted that the underlying reason for this was profit. Additionally, it was also crucial for companies because of the prospect of scaling up processes for the global market. However, none of the companies were able to define the exact development impact in the context of their respective projects. They believed the broader economic impact would have a trickling down effect. It must be noted that the employment generation by such projects was relatively low. Another area of interest was that a few of the local actors participated in the product development and most of these were local consultancies (Hooli. n.d.).

The companies failed to tap into the innovation of the local community as they collaborated with the nations' elite. Also, the company's participation in such a project was motivated by profit and not their treatment of development cooperation as an extra. Furthermore, companies

allowing local third-party developers to access their technology platform had a more substantial and more inclusive development impact than those who do not do the same (Hooli. n.d.).

Lastly, Hooli (n.d.). recommends that there is a need to develop an ecosystem of NGO, Universities etc. This collaboration could align the requirements of the local communities and the structural assistance for local governments with the expertise of international companies, thereby amplifying the corporation's influence on local employment, skill development, and empowerment.

José Di Bella (et.al. 2013) broadly provides the following three-fold classification of private players in development. -

Private sector in development

Private sector development

Private sector engagements for development

In the "private sector for development" approach the private sector contributes to development by performing its core business activities. It does so by having a positive impact on the economic front by creating jobs, carrying out investment related activities and the supply of products and services.

It must be noted that the operations of the private sector can also have a negative impact on development (José Di Bella. et.al. 2013)). The author also states that the private sector can improve their development impact while carrying out their core business activities by changing some aspects of these activities, for example reducing greenhouse emission.

Private sector development activities are carried out to create an environment for the growth and establishment of new private sectors in developing countries. This also includes activities carried out by development cooperation to increase private sector investment in developing countries.

In Private sector engagement for development private players perform activities to create development impact. They go beyond the traditional business activities carried out by them and target areas such as healthcare, education etc. These can be done via funding projects with the

specific objective of development or by including development related activities in the core business activities.

We could find similarity with the idea as mentioned above in the work of Blowfield (2012) he argues that the traditional business were treated as a tool for development. However, his work strives to identify under which conditions businesses do not act as tools but go beyond and become the agents of development. The concept of business as an agent entails the ability of it to not only create development impact but also to take the responsibility for creating such an impact or not preventing such an impact. It can be illustrated by the following example given by the author:" The development tool might make products available in poor countries. Still, the development agent makes products suited to the needs of and accessible to poor segments of the population" (Blowfield, M. P.416. 2012). However, a link between business and development issues does not necessarily guarantee a response. Rather, it depends on three key factors: the connection of development issues with risk, opportunity, and inefficiency. The author states that one of these conditions have to be met for the purpose of a business to become a development agent.

The existing literature lacks comprehensive coverage of Estonian development cooperation with respect to ICT4dev projects from the standpoint of private entities, as identified. This research endeavors to fill this gap and present a thorough overview of Estonian development cooperation, thereby enhancing the existing development cooperation model. In this context this research aims to find the answers for the following research questions:

"To investigate the motivation for the involvement of private players in Estonian development cooperation

To identify the obstacles faced by the private players in Estonia development cooperation and the mechanism employed by them for the purpose of circumventing such obstacles."

2.6. ICT D:

The next stage evolution of development cooperation was unprecedented growth in Infromation and Communication Technology (ICT) technology. Use of Information and Communication technologies for development has often been discussed in international forums (Avgerou, C.

2010) and the use of these technologies to uplift people from poverty and help marginalized people are well documented for. Infromation and Communication Technology for development (ICT D) will bring its impact through the innovation, societal impact (Avgerou, C. 2010) and would make it easier for the participatory stakeholders to connect, process a great deal of information and develop more accurate methods of analyzing, assessing and developing aid. The key point here is to not just be technocentric but also be pro poor and development (Thapa, D., & Sæbø, Ø. 2014) This new development was widely debated by all scholars, and it was discussed to what extent that the paradigm of ICT D will be beneficial. There has also been a consensus that the ICT D has not led to a great deal of development in the macro-economic terms for the developing countries (Thompson, M. 2008).. ICT D has been used by the nations as well as the development agencies and the NGOs alike. Talking about the applicability of ICT D (Information and communication devices for development) in the context of development cooperation it needs to be seen as to how they affect the socio- economic landscape, the infrastructural needs of a digital economy and finally how the challenges that arise through this digital economy is mitigated. However, it was settled recently as the Answer to the question about the applicability of ICT in development cooperation is a resounding 'YES'. The only question that now remains is what the best way is to utilize ICT technologies for the achievement of development related objectives. Lastly, it must be noted that there is no guarantee that every ICT project would be successful (Walsham, G. et.al. 2007). The success of an ICT D project has been low and has led to the wastage of resources. This makes it imperative to distinguish the benefits and the pitfalls of ICT D as the wastage of resources is a factor that can hamper the course of development aid substantially. Multiple research projects have attempted to provide solutions to this problem despite which the failure rates have remained high. The rate of diffusion of the internet, the penetration of digital technologies for the prospective country and the way development can be achieved making use of both the pillars of Information and Communication is the most important theme to be kept in mind before executing any such projects.

2.6. Estonian Perspective:

For the last decade an integral part of Estonia foreign policy is development cooperation. Development cooperation is a concept of international aid developed after the second world war.

In development cooperation a done and doner country come together for the achievement of predefined objectives. Traditionally the donor country transferred money or know-how to the done country (Degnbol-Martinussen, et.al. 2003). Estonia has partnered with 4 African nations and 7 Eastern European and Baltic nations (ESTDEV in the Eastern Partnership and the Balkan States. n.d.) (ESTDEV in Africa. n.d*.)*. The obligation of development cooperation project has been designated to the Estonian Centre for International Development (ESTDEV). Although the foreign ministry is still responsible for "the development of international development aid policies, state strategies, and action plans" (Estonian development cooperation. n.d.). The following 2 table elucidate the objectives and partners of the development cooperation projects of Estonia

Furthermore, Estonia not only provides humanitarian aid but transfers its ICT capabilities to these nations as a part of its development cooperation strategy (Estonian development cooperation. n.d.).   The current model of development cooperation adopted by Estonia in the context of development of digital capabilities comprises of three actors rather than just two the donors, the donee and the private player (ESTDEV in Africa. n.d*.)* (Blessing Oyetunde. n.d.). The private players. are the private tech organization that enable the transfer of know-how and technology. Estonia private firms have been actively involved in ICT related development cooperation projects. Trembita data exchange platform was developed by the eGA and the Estonian private sector using the example of the Estonian X-Road (Blessing Oyetunde. n.d.). Similarly, Cyberntica collaborated with Namibia to create their own version of x-road(Blessing Oyetunde. n.d.).

The objectives of Estdev in Africa are:

· Achievement of Sustainable development goals.

· Reduction of poverty.

· Reduction of inequality

Kenya	Uganda	Namibia	Botswana
boosting digital development and e-government;	digitalization of the education system and support for innovation and entrepreneurship;	development of e-government and entrepreneurship;	boosting digital development and e-solutions and creating a data-driven business environment.

Table No 1 : ESTDEV in Africa. (n.d.).

Ukraine	Georgia	Armenia	Moldova	North Macedonia	Kyrgyzstan	Belarus

supporting good governance, including the fight against corruption and the development of secure e-solutions, strengthening independent media, and promoting small businesses.	supporting good governance and the development of democracy	supporting good governance and the development of democracy	supporting good governance and the development of democracy	boosting digital development	boosting digital development	support for independent media in exile in Belarus and empowering the fight against misinformation; project activities do not support the current administration in Belarus.

Table No 2: ESTDEV in the Eastern Partnership and the Balkan States. (n.d.).

3   Methodology:

3.1. Objectives of the research.

The objective of the research is to discover the motivation behind the participation of the companies in development cooperation projects. How do they go about finishing such projects, what are the challenges faced by them and also how they overcome such challenges. Lastly, to gain understanding about development cooperation from their perspective. For this purpose, the

researcher decided to use qualitative research methodology as it is suitable for the researcher objective of this study. As it allows for the researcher to gain an understanding of the phenomena from the perspective of the private players.. The following part of the literature would expound on the reasoning of such a decision and also explain about qualitative research in depth.

3.2. Qualitative research :

The researcher's decision to utilize qualitative research methodology over quantitative data will be justified in the following text, along with an explanation of the advantages and disadvantages of employing qualitative data. Qualitative research, as Denzin & Lincoln (1998) assert, is multifaceted and entails an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. It is a study of a phenomenon in its natural setting with the objective of interpreting phenomena according to the information obtained from the participant (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Additionally, Halfpenny (1979) uses terms such as "soft," "idiographic," "holistic," "interpretivist," "exposes actors' meanings," and "phenomenological" to elucidate qualitative data analysis.

Flick (2017) provides another unique definition, stating that qualitative data analysis involves the classification and interpretation of linguistic (or visual) material to make statements about implicit and explicit dimensions and structures of meaning-making in the material. Furthermore, qualitative data analysis aims to gain a deeper and richer understanding of the phenomena under study, identify the variables that result in differences, and create a theory about the observed phenomenon. Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people attribute to them.

The researcher's choice to use the qualitative method over the quantitative approach is based on the opportunity it provides for gaining a deeper understanding of the research topic, as qualitative data produces a vivid description of the issues and allows for insights into the different experiences and viewpoints of the participants (Flick, 2017). On the other hand, quantitative methods offer a more superficial understanding of the phenomena being studied (Rahman, 2016). Additionally, qualitative data allows for the discovery of variables and explanations that cause variance in the groups.

However, it is important to note that the qualitative method has its shortcomings, as it may yield objective results compared to quantitative methods. Furthermore, quantitative methods are faster and require less skill to employ in research (Choy, 2014; Rahman, 2016). Nevertheless, for the objectives of this research, a superficial and generalized understanding is insufficient. Therefore, the researcher has chosen to proceed with the qualitative data analysis methods.

3.3. Interviews:

The decision to utilize interviews as a method of data collection was based on the understanding that interviews offer a realistic and unstructured approach for gathering data, thereby enhancing the depth and breadth of knowledge on the topics being studied (Alshenqeeti, 2014). In the field of social sciences, in-depth interviews are often employed as a flexible method for gathering qualitative data, providing individuals with the opportunity to articulate their perceptions and understanding of the world in their own words. This conversational approach facilitates a familiar social interaction wherein individuals engage in dialogue by asking and responding to questions (Knott et al., 2022). It is important to note, however, that no single interview method is universally suitable for all situations or responses. To mitigate the potential impact of interviewer biases, subjectivities, and lack of interviewing skills, careful attention must be given to ensuring the validity and reliability of the interview data. Furthermore, interviewers themselves become active participants in the interview process, shaping the data through their questions, responses, and occasional sharing of experiences with the interviewees. Regardless of their commitment to maintaining the integrity of the interview data as the product of the respondent, interviewers are involved in selecting, interpreting, describing, and analyzing the data (Hofisi et al., 2014). Additionally, interviews present methodological, analytical, and ethical challenges, particularly for inexperienced researchers (Knott et al., 2022).

The researcher opted for semi structured interviews as it allows him to strike a balance between keeping a structure of the interview but also allowing the interviewee the freedom to express himself. Which is necessary for the fulfillment of the objective of this research as it allows for the companies to share their perspective and experience. Semi-structured interviews are exploratory interviews that are most frequently used in the social sciences to collect data for qualitative research projects or clinical purposes. In addition to offering a general structure

through a pre-planned guide or procedure that centers around a central topic, a semi-structured interview facilitates exploration. It allows for the exploration of topical paths as the discussion progresses (Magaldi, D., & Berler, M. 2020). Semi- structured interviews allow the investigator to be focused and also the freedom to explore relevant ideas that may come up during the interview is one of them. (Adeoye‑Olatunde, O. A., & Olenik, N. L. 2021).

3.4. Selection of Interviewees:

The methodology for selecting interviews relied on purposeful sampling (Palinkas 2015) The aims was to involve people from the companies and organizations that had interviews were carefully selected by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs(MFA) to ensure a diverse representation of private players. who have actively participated in various Estonian development cooperation projects involving ICT. The complete list of interviewees is presented in Appendix 1. Each interviewee brought a wealth of experience and insight into the challenges and successes encountered in their respective projects, providing valuable perspectives on international development efforts.

3.4.1. Interview process:

All the interviews were conducted online via video conferencing. Also, the question bank was not fixed and was altered after every interview. All the interviews were video recorded with the consent of the interviewees and simultaneously transcription was done using services provided by the video hosting platforms and ai (although it was only utilized once). After the generation of the transcript the researcher checked each transcript by reading and listening to the audio recording of the video. The researcher did his best to correct all the mistakes that could be identified.

3.5. Coding and analysis of Interviews:

The analysis of interviews combined inductive and deductive principles (Vila-Henninger, 2022). Using this method, the researcher is sensitized to concepts and themes deriving from the literature and theories while finding new insights and perspectives directly from the data.

The researcher opted to employ coding as the primary method for analyzing the qualitative data in the present study. Given the researcher's extensive familiarity with this method, it was deemed conducive for achieving the study's objectives while facilitating the construction of meaning from the data.After the interviews were transcribed, coding was used to abduct topics in the interviews. In the realm of qualitative research, coding entails the application of procedures that enable the compilation, categorization, and organization of data based on identifiable themes, thereby furnishing a structured framework for the interpretation process (Williams, M., & Moser, T. 2019). The utilization of coding systems in qualitative research serves to unveil thematic patterns within the data, thereby establishing a clear direction for the classification of data, and subsequently allowing for the extraction, articulation, and documentation of meaningful insights (Williams, M., & Moser, T. 2019). It is imperative to underscore that in qualitative research, coding assumes a pivotal structural role, rendering data analysis and related procedures feasible in meeting the study's objectives (Williams, M., & Moser, T. 2019). As Gibbs (2007) states coding in qualitative research involves the systematic application of procedures to compile, categorize, and organize data according to discernible themes, thereby providing a structured framework for the interpretation process. The processes facilitated by coding systems in revealing thematic patterns within the data establish a clear trajectory for data classification, enabling the extraction, articulation, and documentation of meaningful insights. Thus, coding emerges as an indispensable structural function in qualitative research, enabling the realization of data analysis and related procedures to fulfill the study's objectives.

In the first step the researcher used an open-source coding software called Taguette. After each interview the transcript file was uploaded and was coded by the researcher. The researcher employed inductive and line-by-line coding for the purpose of this research, aligning with the qualitative research approach, particularly grounded theory methods. Inductive coding focuses on deriving hypotheses from collected data, while deductive coding emphasizes causality and theory testing (Williams, M., & Moser, T. 2019). This technique aims to liberate research findings from structured methodologies, allowing them to emerge from prevalent or significant themes present in raw data (Thomas, D. R. 2003). On the other hand, line-by-line coding, as described by Gibbs (2007), facilitates analytical thinking while keeping close to the data. A potential risk in qualitative research, including coding, is the unintentional inclusion of personal biases into the analytical framework. Line-by-line coding helps to mitigate this risk by focusing

on the respondents' perspectives rather than the researcher's or any theoretical preconceptions. However, it is essential to critically evaluate the worldview of the interviewee rather than unquestionably adopting it (Gibbs, 2007). After the completion of coding every single line the codes are refined. Codes are re-read in the text to see if they should be coded some other way, or should paragraphs fall under one code etc(Gibbs, 2007).

The researcher did multiple iterations of coding. After completing coding of a new interview, the codes were refined. Additionally, all the interviews' transcripts were re-read without the old codes to improve the efficacy of coding. After this step was completed, the new codes were analyzed with the old codes. The codes were either merged or kept or deleted.

After the completion of all the steps mentioned above the research ran a last iteration of coding while re-reading all the interview transcript with all the codes. After this the interview reread all the coded material to find themes and refine the codes if necessary.

Following this the researcher created a word document and made a table of all codes and themes identified. This was a messy process and required multiple iterations and changes. A miscellaneous category was created for codes that could not be grouped together under a theme. In this step a lot more codes were deleted or merged, renamed.

The next step was writing the results. The writing process streamlined and brought new themes and cross-sectional relationships of old themes to light. After completing the first draft the researcher continued to examine the codes, themes and the text. Which lead to multiple changes in the themes and the text. This step had multiple iterations.Lastly, the researcher examined the results in light of the literature review that he did and wrote the discussion part of this paper.

3.6 Use of grammarly software:

It is also quite pertinent to mention here that the software "Grammarly" has been extensively utilized to enhance writing capabilities and double checking grammatical sentence formations. However, it is imperative to note that the utilization of this software is strictly limited to improving writing and does not extend to research or the composition of entire papers for any individual. Its functionality is solely confined to enhancing existing writing material.

4   Results:

4.1. Motivation for participating in development cooperation project:

According to the interviews one of the most significant factors motivating private sector entries to participate in the development cooperation. is the opportunity to explore new markets (Interview 1,6).

"Yeah, like my again, my my personal opinion is that these these projects actually help a lot in terms of like opening new countries"

As stated by a participant in the study, most of the companies participating in the Estonian development cooperation projects are too small and are really affected by the financial risk associated with directly dealing with foreign governments. Additionally, the development cooperation infrastructure provides the private player with ground support which is very critical for them for successfully completing the undertaking.

Another motivation for private players. to participate in development cooperation projects is the opportunity to generate new business leads, which can potentially result in future profits (Interview-6,7). Although most development cooperation projects are initially non-commercial, companies try to convert them into commercial contracts after their conclusion (Interview-6). Some companies explicitly participate in such projects with the goal of making a profit. It must be noted that at all the projects of the Estonian development cooperation are not big thus limiting the scope of profit (Interview-4). However, profit is not the only motivation, only participants stated that they are also motivated to help developing countries by using the knowledge and experience of Estonia development story (Interview-7). Additionally, another participant stated that the motivation to participate in such undertaking is the work itself but not the profit (Interview-1).

"I mean, I think before striving as forward is not first thing is not profit, it's actually very honestly, it's doing I mean, considering all most of our background, it's really something we like to do."

Furthermore, companies that are already working in a particular market see development cooperation projects as a means to increase their presence in such countries (Interview-1). In addition, the projects allow private players. to assess whether there is alignment between their services or products and the market they wish to explore (Interview-6).

"That helps us to establish some pilot projects do market like actually test the markets in the sense like is there a product market fit and try to understand the the like business perspective?"

Finally, the motivation for team members to participate in development cooperation projects stems from three factors: gaining experience, interesting work and exposure to new cultures (Interview-5). The interest that is generated by a project has a direct correlation with the motivation of an organization to pursue it. Team members of such organizations also look forward to working in complex work environments to acquire new skills and improve on existing skill sets (Interview-2,3).

Overall, development cooperation projects provide an opportunity for private players. to access new markets, generate new business leads, increase their presence in existing markets, assess market alignment, and gain experience while working in complex work environments. The researcher would like to point out that none of the private players. except one was motivated by development goals of the projects. Thus, it is recommended by the researcher for the Estonian authorities to look for private players. that also pay attention to the development goals along with their own self-interest. Lastly, it is recommended for future researchers to investigate this recommendation.

4.2. Strategic Alignment:

According to the data, strategic alignment is crucial for private players.. One of the most important mechanisms as revealed by one of the private players. is that they only choose projects that align with their own goals, and tend to avoid pursuing projects that are not a strong strategic fit for them (Interview -6).

"there's a match in terms of target markets that we have been looking at as a company and also in, yeah, it has been a an opportunity to uh, kind of get some help and also some funding for those projects."

It's important to note that organizations may have different aspirations compared to donors and recipients, a topic that will be explored in more detail later on.

One of the interviewees conduct pre-project assessments or research to ensure strategic alignment, and leverage their existing connections and networks to gain a better understanding of the working context (Interview – 2).

" just in like an assessment, some workshops in order to get to understand the culture get you understand the people who are involved. And then we decide whether we go into a bigger project or or not"

However, the data also sheds light on the unequal power dynamics present in development cooperation, as private players. sometimes lack insight into the aspirations of the beneficiaries, hindering their ability to establish strategic alignment among all three key players (Interview -2). One interviewee highlighted that multiple donor projects are also affected by strategic alignment issues and communication challenges (Interview-1).

Furthermore, one participant contradicted the approach of finding the right strategic fit by stating that they use negotiations as an tool to gain strategic alignment after on boarding the project (Interview – 7).

"Try to understand what the donors want, what the, what the organizations want, what kind of technological……..And then yeah, basically this is how you formulate a common interest."

In conclusion, strategic alignment is a key aspect that must be addressed in development cooperation projects. private players. must conduct pre-project assessments and leverage their connections to ensure alignment, and organizations must be aware of the power dynamics that can hinder alignment among all actors involved. Ultimately, the goal should be to ensure that all parties involved have their aspirations aligned to achieve the desired outcomes.

4.3. Criterium for project selection:

The selection process for project private players. is a complex and multi-faceted endeavour that requires navigating a web of criteria, each with its own importance and nuances. Language stands out as a fundamental factor, as private players. prioritize countries where a language which they are familiarity is is widely spoken(Interview-1).

"*we don't have like sort of list of Priority countries or favorable countries, it's more like looking at countries where English be in, which are rather in English, because it's easier. Also French speak in somewhat because we have a lot of people who speak French.*"

This linguistic alignment facilitates seamless communication with locals, examination of government documents, and dissemination of project information without the burden of translation costs. Moreover, prior engagement in beneficiary nations streamlines the process of initiating new projects, reducing logistical hurdles and enhancing operational efficiency.

Expertise emerges as another cornerstone in project selection. private players. gravitate towards projects where their teams possess existing expertise or can develop new competencies in (Interview-2,3,5).

"*First of all that is is the topic. What is proposed is it at all relevant for us? Do we have expertise for it or or do we have apathy to to have it because we wanna develop expertise for it.*"

"*needs to be interesting also in terms of that, that we see that we develop through the project ourselves as well. So we are not afraid to take maybe even some some new angles*"

"*I would say and we we find out the problem, we try to validate the problem, then figure out whether we have the skills and capacity to provide the solution for the problem*"

Decisions in this regard are often guided by consultations within the team, ensuring alignment between project goals and team capabilities. Additionally, the interest levels of team members influence project selection, underscoring the importance of internal motivation and engagement (Interview -2).

The nature of the contract assumes significant importance in the selection process, with private players. weighing the merits of working with development organizations versus direct engagement with beneficiaries. Some opt for the former to mitigate project risks, particularly pertinent for smaller companies with limited financial resources (Interview-2).

"we have had project with different development organisations, then I would say, it's more risk free to go through a development aid organisation, then having a procurement straight to the country"

 Conversely, others prefer direct engagement, citing concerns about the intermediary role of development organizations potentially overshadowing the needs of beneficiaries also of higher beneficiary interest (Interview- 1). Furthermore, some of the private players. prefer the projects to be result oriented rather than work time oriented. As they are of the opinion that the nature of development cooperation projects is to provide some value to the beneficiary (Interview- 2). Additionally, another criterion of project selection is if the project would result in creating something of value for the beneficiary (Interview -5). Some interviewees mentioned that the end result is a motivating factor for them and they are not just participating in development projects for the funds. On the contrary, other interviewees mentioned that they are motivated by market access and long-term commercial gains (Interview-6). Lastly, the contract modality is also important to the private player they prefer to engage in contracts which offers favourable conditions to them (Interview-3).

Funding plays another crucial role in project selection as the funding must be adequate enough for the private player to cover the whole cost of the project (Interview-2).

"We really want to do if maybe not then we we try to get off of course our our financials. Good. So, yeah, it really depends. I don't want to get though like smaller projects than like 5000 euros. So if some somebody says that Oh, come and talk about something that we pay 1000 And I, I really feel that this overhead of that project is too too high and the context switch and so on. So up from 10,000 and then up to up to whatever"

The private player does not want to pay from their own pocket if the cost of the project exceeds that of the budget. Which was the case for one of the interviewees (Interview-6). Additionally,

the source of funding is an important part of the project and is also important for the private players. (Interview-1,3).

"if you ask, like how we are picking the project, and then I would, yeah, this this also depends, like, who is the who is the donor"

A crucial aspect that influences private players.' willingness to engage in development cooperation projects is the level of interest exhibited by the beneficiaries (Interview-2,3).

"we are not going to project is that you don't see somebody on the ground who is actually interested in the project"

Recognizing that successful outcomes hinge on active participation from beneficiaries, private players. may be deterred if such enthusiasm is lacking. Moreover, a lack of beneficiary engagement not only jeopardizes project success but also dampens team morale, underscoring the interconnectedness of stakeholder involvement and project efficacy. This theme of beneficiary engagement will be further explored in subsequent discussions, delving into its implications for project sustainability and impact.

Another crucial aspect of criteria is who the beneficiary is (Interview-1,3).

"Secondly, also that who who is financing it and who is the beneficiary country?"

private player preference is influenced by the political allegiance of the beneficiary nations and the human rights record of the nations. For example, some private players. do not want to work in nations that are allied to Russia (Interview-1).

"we have decided that we don't work there that go directly that are very pro Russian countries,"

Prior engagement in the market is also another criterion for project selection. Some private players. have already gained an understanding of those markets, making it easier for them to execute the projects. Additionally, it allows them to expand their presence in the market (Interview-5).

"but where there's like a match where we have seen that that our company has had some kind of an engagement there already. And then if there is some movement from the Estonian Government side, then we would kind of pursue this opportunity"

These engagements can be currently, working in these beneficiary countries, or having long-term Memorandum of Understandings (Interview-4).

"Smart Africa. We have an MOU with them since 2000.2018 already I we just renewed it last year.So whenever there's a an availability to do any kind of project that's with them, I we're happy to do that because we have this long term cooperation already or if there is"

Thus, they only choose projects that are based on their market of interest. This allows them to access these markets without much financial risk, as mentioned below.

It is also important to understand the criteria established by the unique group of private players. who act as a platform between private companies, donors, and donors. Their criteria for project selection are based on two approaches: bottom-up and top-down approach. As such platforms are aware of the expertise provided by the private player that it is representing, thus it selects the project based on this expertise and then invites the companies to participate in the project. The bottom-up approach is when the private company identifies an opportunity themselves and asks the private player to make the necessary arrangements(Interview-4).

"another another criteria definitely is when let's say uh an organization turns to us and says OK, we would like to organize this.I don't know series of trainings. Umm, we would like to involve the Estonian expertise, but there we cannot turn to the companies directly. So we would like the umbrella organization to to implement it. So that's where we say, yeah, of course we we can be this like neutral body that is talking to the the organization that donor beneficiary"

Technology is another important theme for project selection. private players. also analyse the capabilities and infrastructure of the beneficiary to ascertain if it prudent to execute such a project. As without the adequate support the projects are bound to fail (Interview-7).

"Necessarily go into any developing country.UM, we try to understand what are the institutions there? What's the development curve past that? They're on and then basically try to try to see whether it makes makes sense for us to go in there or not."

Additionally, one of the Interviewee stated that there is also a gap between the technological capability of their company and the project objectives. They analyse the project in light of this and then decide if they can execute the project, if they believe that they cannot achieve the objectives of the undertaking then then do not move forward with it(Interview -7).

"So we have to certain technologies and technological capabilities and we match these into into. We match match these on to uh estev uh"

As can be seen in the above-mentioned literature, the data portrays a vivid yet diverse landscape of the criteria used by the companies to select projects. However, one thing which stands out is the careful consideration given to each criterion before making decisions, highlighting the importance of a comprehensive and thoughtful approach to project facilitation.

4.4. Indicators of a Successful Undertaking

Development cooperation is a crucial aspect of international relations that has been around for many decades. It involves various stakeholders, including governments, non-profit organizations, private companies, and international organizations. The aim of development cooperation is to promote economic growth, reduce poverty, and improve the living standards of people in developing countries.

However, one of the biggest challenges that development cooperation faces is the lack of a definitive definition of success that all actors agree on.This has resulted in different private players. having varied definitions of success, which has made it difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of development cooperation projects.

The literature on development cooperation extensively examined the various definitions of success according to different private players.. None of the interviews defined that they ever had an unsuccessful undertaking (Interview-1,2,3,4,5,6,7). Also, one of the private players. stated that they measured the success of the project at the end of a project.

One of the most commonly agreed-upon indicators of success is the completion of deliverables (Interview-1,2,4,5). For most private players., completion of deliverables is what defines a successful project.

"*project went as we planned in sense of the deliverable.*"

"*So what you said it's basically depends on the deliverables, right?If you guys are deliverables*"

Private companies, in particular, are focused on this aspect, as they consider themselves businesses and are primarily concerned with meeting their obligations to their clients (Interview-6).

Another, participants stated that they measure the success of the undertaking by the number of the users that start using the digital service developed by them (Interview-6). Moreover, another participant stated that the utilization of their system by the targeted group of customer proves is the yardstick used to measure success (Interview-6). Furthermore, the utilization of recommendation after the conclusion of the project is also indictor of a successful undertaking (Interview-6).

"*So it's successful project would mean that, uh, we see that there is activity from users within our system. So if we provide the system to the school that they are attending the trainings, meaning the teachers attending the trainings, they afterwards like basically log into the system and and and try to use the system and and try to input some information. So this is for us like the kind of uh, well indicator that that, that the project is running successfully, but the schools are actually using our platform*"

Majority of the private players. of the project consider timely delivery of the assigned tasks within the budget as the key indicators of a successful project (Interiview-2,5).

"*Usually what we assess is, did we actually stay in the budget in terms of well, of course in terms of project documentation, we always stay in budget, but where there are excessive cost as we need to put in into actually meet the demands of the project*"

However, some of the experts interviewed hold a contrasting view, stating that predicting the outcome of such projects is difficult and there should be flexibility in the budget and timeline.

One of the interviewees pointed out that the strict timeline provided by Est dev mandates the use of all the allocated funds, even if it is not required.

This may not be a wise decision, and the private players. should be allowed to return the unused funding. The private players. also suggest that development cooperation should be more flexible regarding timelines. One interviewee praised Est dev for its accommodating approach in this regard. Therefore, the data reveals different perspectives on the timeline provided by Est dev and the flexibility it offers. Additionally, the way proposals are written can also affect the level of flexibility provided by Est dev.

Some private players. have also emphasized the importance of transparency in all their processes (Interview-2). Additionally, one of other indicators of a successful undertaking is trust established with the beneficiary. (Interview-2)

 "like a trusted relations"

This new dimension of success serves the financial objectives of the private players., as it enhances their reputation and increases their chances of securing future business.

However, few private players. go beyond the above-mentioned variables of success and take into consideration the value that the project creates for the beneficiary. They argue that the deliverables should create something for the beneficiary, and that is the purpose of the undertaking (Interview-3). Although they agree that they are companies and the monetary aspect of the project cannot be completely overlooked (Interview-2,3). One of the private players. believe that leaving the beneficiary nation with an understanding of the nature of the future the project is equally important (Interview-2).

"when after the project I am doing the retro or the or the project manager is doing the retro with with a client and they say that, okay, we hope to get this one, we hope to get it in good quality, but you also got us some understanding that we need to I don't know, take the other direction or this wasn't the right or, or we we understood that we have to do this, this thing differently or, or we didn't expect that good result. And this is some this is something when we say we have been successful in delivering the project."

Additionally, satisfaction of the client with the project is another indicator of a successful undertaking (Interview-2).

"and also very important for us if that client is, is happy, satisfied"

Furthermore, some private players. believe that one of the indicators that could be used to define a successful project is one where the beneficiary shows an appropriate level of engagement in the project (Interview-3). Beneficiary engagement is important for the private players. to establish long-term commercial interest in the beneficiary nations. Interestingly, one of the criteria for project selection is ascertaining the interest of the beneficiary in the project.

One of the most crucial among them is the level of cooperation received from the beneficiary. It is imperative to have the appropriate level of cooperation from the beneficiary to achieve the objectives of the project (Interview-3).

"I think the successful project is first of all that you have good beneficiary who is interested to cooperate with you."

A lack of cooperation can limit the private player's ability to generate new business leads in the market, making it extremely important to have the beneficiary's cooperation. The level of cooperation can be determined by factors such as communication, feedback, and collaboration between the beneficiary and the private player.

Political support from the beneficiary is another significant factor that stands out in the collected data (Interview-3). Political support from top-level government officials ensures that all other government officials fall in line and do what is required (Interview-3). It also ensures data sharing, which is often a bottleneck faced by the private player in beneficiary nations (Interview-3).

"political support from high level because. Usually if you implement some digital solutions or planning digital solution, you need to change the existing system, whatever it is business processes organization, change the regulations so so for it you need the high level political support, so also high level like a minister."

The level of political support can be determined by factors such as the engagement of high-level officials in the project, the allocation of resources, and the importance given to the project by the government. Obtaining new follow-up projects after completing the current development cooperation projects is another indicator of success (Interview-1).

"yet, at least, to measure like, how successful we were? I mean, one of the measurement of the success. I mean, if we talk about businesses, it's always Do we have another? Another work coming from it?"

Commercial projects are the primary motivation for engaging in development cooperation projects for the private player. Therefore, securing new follow-up projects indicates the success of the current project. The ability to secure new projects can be determined by factors such as the quality of the work done, the reputation of the private player, and the level of satisfaction of the beneficiary.

Lastly, one private player expressed that creating new organizations with the capacity to deliver the desired results of the beneficiary nation is one of the main indicators of a successful project for them. However, it is important to note that this indicator was unique to that particular private player. The creation of new organizations can be determined by factors such as the level of innovation, the ability to meet the needs of the beneficiary, and the sustainability of the organization.

While the above-mentioned indicators provide an overview of what is used to determine the success of a project, there are a few observations that stand out. Firstly, no one indicator was used to define the success of a project in isolation except the delivery of deliverables. They must be considered together to determine the overall success of the project. Secondly, financial gain or the possibility of financial gains in the future is a major driving force behind many definitions of success. Lastly, the nature of the organization has a direct correlation with how they define success. Private enterprises mainly use indicators that serve their commercial aspirations, whereas organizations created through the effort of international organizations or nations use a more diverse set of indicators to define successful projects that cannot be limited to commercial aspirations.

In conclusion, the success of a project is determined by multiple indicators that must be considered together. The level of cooperation from the beneficiary, political support, the ability to secure new follow-up projects, and the creation of new organizations etc are some of the crucial indicators of success. While financial gain is an important factor, it cannot be the sole determinant of success. The nature of the organization and its overall objectives also play a significant role in defining what success means for them.

4.5. Indicators of a Project failure:

The literature discusses the various indicators used to determine if a project has failed. While some argue that the same indicators used to determine success can be used to define failure, the researcher sought to gain more clarity on this aspect of development cooperation in order to understand what truly indicates a failed project. Unlike success, multiple indicators are not needed to conclude if a project was a failure. In fact, if just one of the below-mentioned scenarios materializes, the project will be considered a failure, regardless of the presence of any indicators that define success.

As highlighted in the text above, the inability to meet targets or produce desired deliverables is a clear indication of project failure. This sentiment is echoed by almost all private players. interviewed, underscoring the importance of this indicator in determining the success or failure of a project.

Moreover, financial indicators play a crucial role in determining the success of a project. A low return on investment, clients refusing to honour contracts or pay private players., and heavy contracts that strain the private player's resources are all signals of a unsuccessful project. (Interview-2)

"*then I feel that we have decided to go because of maybe the financial situation, to get the project. And, and then we like later on, we understand that, okay, there is too small return on investment, let's, let's say, um, yeah.*"

"the biggest failure is then when the client is not paying, but we have been successful enough."

"those very small projects, this is not a successful one, because the contents which is too, too heavy for for us"

In certain cases, private players. may realize that the financial gains from a project were not as expected, leading to the conclusion that the project was a failure. It is important to note, however, that this only applies to the financial gains associated with development cooperation projects and not future commercial leads.

Additionally, a project is deemed a failure if the beneficiary country fails to utilize the recommendations provided by the private player. In projects where systems were developed for adoption or utilization by the beneficiaries, the failure is determined by a lack of use or the inability to achieve the minimum threshold of users ascertained in the project (Interview-6)

"Yeah, we see that. If the if our customers, our ------- are are not becoming attractive, then that's clear indicator that the project is not working."

Overall, these indicators provide a comprehensive framework for assessing the success or failure of a project.

The indicators for project failure outlined by the private players. fail to encompass the lack of development impact. This necessitates further investigation and should be considered in conjunction with the reasons outlined in the literature assessment, which will be elaborated on subsequently for a more comprehensive understanding. Nevertheless, this omission suggests a lack of concern among the private players. regarding the development impact of the projects.

4.6. Project assessment and development impact:

The issue of development impact assessment is a crucial aspect of development cooperation project management. It is necessary to evaluate the impact of a project on the beneficiary to determine if the project has achieved its objectives. However, according to the data collected via the interview, development impact is not a priority for most private players.. This lack of priority is the reason why there is a lack of mechanisms or processes in place to ascertain the development impact of a project.

Interestingly, some private players. believe that creating something of value for the beneficiary is one of the indicators of a successful project. However, without measuring the development impact, it is difficult to determine if something of value has been created for the beneficiary. This presents a challenge for project managers who need to determine the success of their projects.

To address this issue, doner organizations hire third-party evaluators to assess the development impact of a project after its completion. However, most of the findings of these assessments are not made available to the private players. (Interview-3). This lack of information can make it difficult for private players. to improve their project management skills and ensure that their future projects are successful.

"*Then it's done, and then after three years, Swedish Swedish government hires another company who measures the impact of this process.*"

"*It's it's sometimes we hear about it, sometimes we don't hear even about it, so depends on donor because we don't do it.*"

There are several reasons why private players. do not prioritize development impact assessment. Firstly, one of them stated that he believes that appropriate development impact assessment can only be done a few years after a project has been concluded (Interview-3). This delay can be problematic because some part of the funding is only released after the completion of the project. Furthermore, no organization would like to keep a project open for multiple years(Interview-3).

"*But the long term impact is is just measurable after a couple of years and and usually it's out of scope of our project because.*"

However, one interviewee argues that private players. can ascertain the development impact if they are engaged in the same market for multiple years. This way, they can track the progress of the beneficiary and determine if their project has achieved its objectives (Interview-1).

"*I mean, for example, if you take a strategic roadmap, of course, if we continue working in this country, later on, yes, we can go back and see if something has been implemented from our, our, for example, strategy roadmap, we have proposed for them, what are really the actions that stemmed from our work? So this is really the impact we can see*"

Another factor that impedes development impact assessment is the volume of the project. The interviewee suggests that the volume of the project has to be above a certain threshold to carry out the assessment. Additionally, the same participant stated that the they don't believe that third parties would offer anything of value and this would be futile exercises with some financial cost (Interview-6).

"give us some recommendations, that would probably be a big another like layer of cost added to the project"

"maybe the value that we would get would be rather small."

In conclusion, there is a need to create better mechanisms in the development cooperation architecture to ensure the proper assessment of projects and to share the results of older project assessments. In the context of Estonia development cooperation, there is a lack of mechanisms to measure development impact. This points out an architectural flaw that must be remedied because an organization cannot improve if it cannot pinpoint its own flaws. It is crucial to prioritize development impact assessment to improve project management skills and ensure that future projects are successful.

4.7. Recommendation:

In this section of the literature, we will delve into the recommendation that has been put forth by the private player for the development cooperation architecture as a whole. During the interview, several questions were raised regarding the recommendation, but it is worth noting that a majority of the data on the topic was recommended by the interviewees themselves.

One of the key recommendations made by multiple private players. is the need to diversify the funding of Estonian development cooperation (Interview-3). Given that Estonia is a relatively small country, it may not be able to provide the desired amount of funding for various projects. Therefore, it is suggested that funds be obtained from other nations or international organizations to meet the funding needs (Interview-3).

"So so I think that the Estonian development cooperation in general should search for more opportunities to be financed over from European Union or US or other sources."

Additionally, some private players. believe that the scope of Estonian development cooperation should expand beyond the digital realm (Interview-3). To achieve this, there is a need to create more EGAs for different fields. The interviewees argued that the success of Estonia's digital transformation story is not a result of one or two variables, but rather it is because of multiple conditions that exist in Estonia. Thus, it is necessary to analyse and replicate such conditions in beneficiary countries to achieve similar results (Interview-3).

Some private players. argued that it is crucial to reassess the Estonian development cooperation strategy. They opined that Estonia should not focus on countries that are already overloaded with support for development cooperation from other nations. Rather, the focus should be on countries that have little or no support and can provide something of strategic value to Estonia.Furthermore, there is a need for a coherent and clear Estonian strategy with respect to development cooperation and export projects (Interview-2).

"I think Estonian government doesn't have a very good overview of what is like the x. Now, I think they did the first time, but what is take the export revenue on ICT related projects, where Estonian ICT companies are exporting? And then mirroring this to our like, general export strategy?"

There is a lot of confusion among private players. regarding who is doing what and what the overall goal of the projects is. Therefore, creating an overall strategy would ensure cooperation among the players within the Estonian government (Interview-2). This could lead to the reduction of duplicate work and the removal of redundant roles. In addition, the private players. believed that there is a need for better deployment of human resources and critical analysis to improve efficiency (Interview-2). As one interviewee stated, Estonia lacks the manpower for such projects; thus, there is a need to optimize the use of human resources. As mentioned earlier, there are a lot of roles that could be removed.

"So, I think that could be like one of the recommendations to think of the big picture but but also not on the strategic level what we do, but also to go deeper into understanding how many in

which people and what kind of resources are we putting in those different different countries. So, if we are doing export strategy for Philippines then actually what kinds of people and how many people we are also putting as resources on top and would like is their return on investment makes does it make sense or not?"

The private players. also argued that the beneficiary should have more say in the development cooperation projects. Currently, Estdev conceives a project topic and then looks for a beneficiary. However, many private players. suggest that the order should be reversed, with Estdev and the beneficiary should decide the projects to be pursue (Interview-1). Additionally, before commencing the project, Estdev should ascertain that the beneficiary is interested in the project (Interview-3).

"Solution so so. So why don't we search for countries who are looking after our our support rather and trying to provide support for the countries who are who might be not that much interested"

As low levels of interest from the beneficiary would eventually lead to the failure of the project. Furthermore, the private players. believe that Estdev should strive to create long-term relationships with the beneficiaries as it improves the trust level that the beneficiary has in the donor, private player, and development cooperation as a whole. Trust is a major factor in the successful completion of projects.

private players. believe that Estdev needs to focus on developing more expertise for development cooperation projects. They recommend that personnel should be trained for specific roles in development cooperation management (Interview-3)

"like, understand the logic of development cooperation for for, for two other ones, I think it's also valuable to build their capacity not as experts, but also as organizations who are capable and knowledgeable about the development cooperation. Principles and operations."

There is also a group of recommendations that focus on the approach of the MFA and Estdev when dealing with the beneficiary. private players. believe that a bottom-up approach would be more beneficial for development cooperation projects rather than a top-down approach (Interview-1). This means that Estdev should not be the only one making all the major decisions

in such projects. Instead, decisions should be based on the input provided by the beneficiaries or stakeholders who will be impacted by such projects. Estdev and MFA have to stop imposing and making decisions for the beneficiary and allow them to make their own choices. Thus, if these recommendations are taken into account, along with those mentioned earlier, it can be concluded that the whole development cooperation architecture has to shift from being driven by the donor to being driven by the beneficiary.

One interviewee also argued that there is a need to move away from the approach where Estonia sells its own success story but hides away the failure. The interviewee believes that if the failures are properly analysed, they offer great insights that could be valuable to the beneficiary (Interview-1).

"So I think it also comes from there that sometimes we need to admit, also what we did wrong, also, not only what we did well, often I think that people have more to learn from your mistakes, they're also then then success stories."

private players. also recommend that the private players. should take a recommendation approach instead of a resolute approach to avoid conflicts (Interview-1). They believe that the necessary soft skills should be developed by the private players. to put forth their ideas without coming across as if they are being imposed on the beneficiary. This requires a lot of tact and diplomacy, which can be developed over time with practice.

Lastly, a private player shared an insightful perspective on development cooperation projects, emphasizing the importance of provisions for project support after their completion. Many projects involve the creation of systems that require ongoing support to function optimally, but often beneficiaries lack the necessary funds or are unwilling to pay for such support. This can result in system failures and a lack of sustained impact from the project (Interview-7). Therefore, it is crucial to include provisions in the contract that allocate funds for ongoing support, ensuring that the outputs of development cooperation projects continue to deliver long-term benefits.

Another key point to consider is that the Estonian development objectives should encompass the goals of the organizations involved. Additionally, it is preferable by the private player to minimize bureaucracy in the project processes (Interview-7). Also, it is important to uphold fair

competition in the public sector, while avoiding the pitfalls of government capitalism. The competitive landscape should be balanced and not skewed in favour of any particular entity (Interview-3)

In conclusion, the recommendations put forth by the private players. regarding the Estonian development cooperation architecture highlight the need for diversifying the funding, expanding the scope, reassessing the strategy, optimizing the use of human resources, focusing on beneficiary input, taking a recommendation approach, and developing more expertise for development cooperation projects. The success of the Estonian digital transformation story is not just a result of one or two variables, but rather a combination of multiple conditions. Therefore, it is essential to analyze and replicate such conditions in beneficiary countries to achieve similar results. Furthermore, developing long-term relationships with beneficiaries, shifting from being driven by the donor to being driven by the beneficiary, and analyzing failures for valuable insights are also critical factors that need to be considered. If these recommendations are taken into account, along with those mentioned earlier, it can lead to a more coherent and clear Estonian strategy for development cooperation and export projects, reducing duplicate work and redundant roles, and ultimately improving the efficiency and success of development cooperation projects.

4.8. Stakeholder

This part of the literature deals with how stakeholders are selected and how they are involved in different kinds of projects. Stakeholder involvement is a crucial part of development cooperation, as pointed out by the research of Hooli (n.d.). Sometimes, stakeholder involvement is superficial or the correct stakeholders are not involved which according to Hooli (n.d.) is one of the major reasons for development project failures. However, it must be noted that the definition of a stakeholder varies according to the private players. and the nature of the project.

Multiple private players. agreed that there is a need for an appropriate level of stakeholder involvement, as the execution of the project would be impossible without it. One interviewee mentioned that without involving the stakeholders, the private player could not do justice to the

project. Additionally, the interviewee mentioned that they try to include all the stakeholders in the project. However, they do agree that there is a possibility that they would miss out on some of the important stakeholders, although it would be a result of an error on their part. (Interview-5).

"Of course there might be this case, but this is then this is an honest mistake and we following our procedures that we do in in such kind of projects then we have missed them."

Stakeholders might withhold data if their needs are not complied with, and they might not cooperate if their interests are not being served (Interview-5).

"So they don't care as I, as I said before, if you kind of doing your own thing, they don't care, they don't let you in.They don't give you information, so you need to like think like what's the best for them."

Thus, it can be concluded from the literature above that stakeholder involvement is a necessity for a successful undertaking. However, the data is unclear about the minimum threshold for stakeholder involvement. Nor does it shed any light on a mechanism employed by the private player for stakeholder involvement.

For the purpose of this analysis, the researcher would create a bifurcation in the type of development cooperation projects. The first type of projects would be citizen-centric projects, and the second would be non-citizen-centric projects. The data reveals that citizen-centric projects require a deeper level of stakeholder engagement (Interview-1). One interviewee stated that if a technology is being deployed to be utilized by the citizen, then the technology should be deployed in such a way so that it captures the last user or the people who would have the most difficulty in using it (Interview-3).

"You actually need to consider as an end user not like. IPhone 15 Pro, whatever size tablet or mobile phone city chick from university, but rather go to countryside and look what kind of gadgets grandmothers are using."

Another interviewee stated that for a citizen-centric service, the developers or deployers of a technology should adopt a bottom-up approach for stakeholder selection. They should approach

the citizens to understand their needs and then look for the appropriate technology to be deployed or developed (Interview-3).

"but not only it's designed from top down, but rather engaging various citizens group groups to to the design process."

This part of the result will now focus on how the stakeholders are selected. As stated in the literature above, the majority of the beneficiaries believe that stakeholder involvement is important for a successful undertaking. Thus, now we shall discuss how the stakeholders are selected.

Most of the interviewees pointed out that they believe that beneficiaries should select the stakeholders that are involved in the project. As one of the interviewees stated, the beneficiaries are the ones that will reap the benefit of the project; thus, they should select the stakeholders (Interview-4).

"I think definitely it is better when the beneficiary gets to decide because they know the ground situation better than us, better than any donor organization.They know what they need, so we we trust their their decision."

In multiple projects, the stakeholders are preselected by the donor and the donee. The private players. have no say in it (Interview-3). One interviewee stated that they can make the necessary recommendations, but the final say is always of the donee (Interview-5). However, in some citizen-centric projects, the private players. do interact on their own with the citizen; however, it must be noted that this is an exception according to the data collected (Interview-3).

Furthermore, there are other factors involved in the selection of the stakeholders. The nature of the technology deployed has a bearing on the stakeholders that are involved in the project (Interview-7). One interviewee stated that only stakeholders that have the ability to use the technology are taken on board, and the rest are rejected (Interview-6). However, it should be noted that the stakeholders were not citizens but institutions that would be utilizing the technology deployed (Interview-6).

The private players. use past connections or individuals already working in the beneficiary nations to identify and select stakeholders. These past connections could be colleagues or people they have met in conferences, etc. The private players. will leverage their professional networks for the same purpose.(Interview-2).

"but people on the ground who can support you and whom they have worked together before. So then they are providing the contacts and help and this is really encouraging and this really needs to be their their role."

Furthermore, some private players. would even hire individuals for the purpose of identifying new stakeholders (Interview-1,5). Lastly, this part of the literature should be read with the assessment and feedback part of the literature, as these two parts deal with the feedback provided by the stakeholders and how it is reflected upon.

4.9. Feedback:

It is crucial to recognize the significance of feedback in any collaborative endeavor involving multiple stakeholders, as it provides an avenue for stakeholders to offer suggestions and reflect on those provided to them. This, in turn, contributes to enhancing future collaborations[AR24] . However, the absence of formal mechanisms for giving and receiving feedback among the donor, donee, and private player presents a significant challenge.

In the context of donors, there is a lack of structured mechanisms for providing feedback to them. An interviewee mentioned that, in the case of Est dev, feedback is communicated through unofficial channels (Interview-6).

"Well, it's not like a formal thing. I mean, like we know that the people we communicate with them on a regular basis."

However, this assertion is contradicted by another interviewee who claims that Est dev does conduct retrospectives. During these retrospectives, all private players. involved in the project convene to discuss the projects for a few hours (Interview-1). Furthermore, Estdev does not provide feedback to the private player (Interview-5).

Conversely, beneficiaries do provide feedback on the performance of the private player through a performance evaluation letter presented to the private player at the conclusion of the project (Interview-5). One interviewee expressed that they do not require feedback from the donor, as they believe that if the beneficiary is satisfied, the donor should also be content (Interview-7).

"So if the funder is all, if the customer is happy, the funder is usually happy as well. But there is no I haven't seen any kind of like, say, official assessments to our work being done well. We don't see that.

It's usually like if if the customers happy the funder is also happy and they expect to see that as a as a success to the project."

A recurring theme among all private players. is the belief that Est dev and MFA are open to feedback from the private players.(Interview-4).

"Interviewer

But when you give the feedback, do you think estev and like MFA do consider it?
Are they open?

Interviewee

Yes, I think they do.
So I I have had only positive experience".

Nevertheless, some interviewees noted that it is easier to provide feedback to MFA than to Est dev, possibly due to Est dev being a relatively newer organization. private players. also resist the imposition of bureaucratic paperwork-based feedback policies, arguing that such measures would increase their workload and render development cooperation projects unattractive (Interview-6). However, one interviewee emphasized the importance of feedback from the beneficiary (Interview-6).

"the actual valuable feedback for us is from our customers, from our ------, from our -------, and that's how we measure or understand like what we could have done better or what we should do better next time"

From the aforementioned literature, it can be inferred that there is a lack of feedback mechanisms between donors and private players.. While there is a mechanism for obtaining feedback from the donee, this study does not predict its effectiveness, as it falls beyond the scope of the research.

4.10. Coordination:

The literature highlights a notable issue within the development cooperation sector, indicating significant coordination challenges. Consequently, this section aims to expound on the research findings in this regard.

Initial findings from multiple interviews revealed various coordination challenges. One interviewee noted the absence of a formal coordination mechanism within the Estonian development cooperation landscape, leading to a lack of established processes and guidelines (Interview-7). Another interviewee attributed these coordination issues to the relative youth of Estdev as an organization (Interview-4).

"So that we do see some, uh, some, let's say some issues between the two.But I think that they are at the moment mainly due to, like very early years of estdev.It is really the they have been there for two or even now, three years I thinkFurthermore, a different interviewee emphasized the lack of coordination among the entities involved in the Estonian development cooperation landscape."

Subsequently, this paper delves into the facilitation mechanism employed to enhance coordination in ICT4dev projects. The private players. refrain from unilateral decision-making or exerting influence on the decision-making process. Instead, they solely provide essential information to both the donor and the recipients, leaving the final decision-making in the hands of these parties. Additionally, the private players. regularly engage in monthly discussions with the beneficiaries (Interview-4).

"even when we already do the proposal, then we put into like, the section where we talk about like feedback we take, we really put, like, a special disclaimer that we expect from the client to, to find the consensus for the feedback, and then we can incorporate it, we are ready to discuss among different stakeholders, the different opinions, but there needs to be some youth who needs

to decide that, okay, this is the direction we are we are going because we as project partners can't do those decisions, we have, we can give really, as I said, the different angles pros and cons, but that decision needs to be done very often, you then have to protocol the decision"

When collaborating with local stakeholders, the private players. consult the recipients and consider their perspectives. Finally, the private players. and the donors coordinate internally before communicating with the beneficiaries to mitigate confusion and avoid duplicate communication (Interview- 4).

"for us as donors, or let's say, not donors, but the implementers and donors and the mix, so that we would be on one page about what, how we talk to the Egyptian, so not not to confuse the Egyptians, let's say let's put it that way"

Regarding the private players. acting as intermediaries between private companies and development cooperation bodies, they assume the responsibility of coordinating between the donor, recipients, and private organizations (Interview-4).

4.11. Communication:

Communication stands as a pivotal component within any significant endeavour. Hence, this discourse will elaborate on the outcomes of the research pertaining to this subject matter. The study commences by deliberating on the significance of communication in Estonian development cooperation projects, as inferred from interview findings. Effective communication fosters adaptability during project implementation, enabling entities to navigate unforeseen circumstances. Furthermore, adequate communication with the beneficiary is crucial for contextualizing the project.

Regarding Est dev, the private player conveyed no issues concerning communication (Interview-6). However, private players. expressed concerns about communication and strategic challenges in projects with multiple donors (Interview-4).

"We have tried to meet other donors as well and and and we have seen experience, this lack of communication and maybe strategic coordination between the donors.We have seen several

times that different activities are being financed from different like let's say wallets and and yeah it has been and quite difficult to understand."

They also indicated a perception that there is no need to communicate with Est dv during project execution(5).

"So we tried to communicate with them as little as possible, because for us it's there is usually no value.

We get the value with people talking to the people outside, not our project partners, not to them.

They are just, you know, we need to comply with some rules."

Conversely, another interviewee reported communicating with Est dev through regular reports (Interview-6). Notably, no specific communication mechanism aside from periodic reports was identified during the interviews.

Another peculiar case was that when one of the participants mentioned that the after utilizing the funding provided to them Est dev, they utilized their own funds(Interview-6). This portrays a very big flaw in the communication strategy of Est dev and the company.

The data signifies that private players. recognize the vital role of communication in such projects; however, a uniform communication mechanism among private players. appears lacking. It is imperative to note that each private player harbors distinct perspectives and approaches toward communication. Some interviewees exhibited a deficiency in comprehending the communication processes during project implementation, representing a limitation of this research. Subsequent research should aim to assess the varied mechanisms adopted by private players. and evaluate their effectiveness.

4.12. Contextualization:

As part of the development cooperation apparatus, gaining an in-depth understanding of the problems is crucial. This segment of results aims to delve into the interview findings within the aforementioned context. The discussion will commence with an overview of the current

situation, followed by an exploration of the various approaches adopted by the private players., and will conclude with the researcher's observations.

The contextualization of the problem by private players. encompasses a diverse range of mechanisms. The interview findings reveal that there is no singular approach universally employed by all private players.. One interviewee mentioned remotely discerning the context without physically visiting the country. In contrast, other interviewees indicated their familiarity with the context due to their extensive engagement in the beneficiary nations.

private players. have developed unique mechanisms to contextualize problems for development cooperation projects. Pre-project assessment emerges as a pivotal tool for acquiring contextual knowledge about the beneficiary nation where the project is to be executed (Interview-2). Additionally, private players. leverage local human resources to gain a deeper understanding of the context, such as local individuals, organizations, or foreign individuals with experience in the beneficiary nations(Interview-7).

"but we also always have a local partner when we deploy into different jurisdictions, that gives us an understanding, a better understanding of what is happening locally, yeah"

Furthermore, engaging in informal discussions with the beneficiaries serves as a valuable tool for gaining contextual knowledge (Interview-1).

"So mostly, it works the way that we need to have a lot of discussions with them, of course, also to see what has been done there before what is available as information about entry and so on, so on. But it mostly just a lot of discussion with a partner"

Lastly, market research is another instrumental tool used for this purpose(Interview-6).

It is worth noting that most interviewees employ a combination of the aforementioned strategies. Therefore, the researcher recommends that private players. explore alternative mechanisms that they may not have utilized and consider employing multiple mechanisms simultaneously. Furthermore, future research should scrutinize the efficacy of each individual mechanism, as well as the effectiveness of various combinations of such mechanisms.

4.13. Conflict Avoidance:

The data presented indicates an absence of conflict between the private player and other involved parties. One interviewee stated that they have yet to experience conflict(Interview-7).

"I wouldn't necessarily say that we have had conflicts. You know, we've had tough situations."

While the data highlights various recommendations and strategies employed by different private players. to mitigate conflicts, it is important to note that there is no universally recognized standard strategy in the industry.

One prevalent strategy utilized by private players. is the reliance on soft skills to avoid conflicts.

"we also very often try to do is not to, to more have the recommendations approach than to say resolutely that well, you need to do this, this and that. It's more to provide them options that they can choose from."

Diplomacy and experience also play crucial roles in conflict avoidance. The experience garnered from involvement in multiple projects equips the private player with the knowledge of

"what to say, what to write, what to do, how to change things," thereby enabling them to prevent conflicts.

Furthermore, one private player devised an innovative strategy to avert conflicts among multiple stakeholders and the client. They incorporated a section in the proposal that necessitates the client and various stakeholders to independently reach a decision. The private player's role is limited to providing essential information without making any decisions for them. This method ensures that the private players. can circumvent unnecessary conflicts.

4.14. Conflicts:

The data suggests that multiple private players. interviewed for this study reported a lack of conflict in their experiences. However, one interviewee emphasized the importance of understanding the origins and underlying factors of any conflicts that may arise. They stressed

the need to identify the key elements of the conflicts and navigate through them via negotiations (Interview-7).

"I'm underlying key things in this conflict and and try to find a way through them through negotiations."

The researcher views this approach as a strategic method that considers the perspectives of all involved parties and holds the potential to lead to mutually agreed-upon solutions.

Furthermore, the private players. highlighted that they encountered more conflict with the individuals they hired for project work rather than with the beneficiaries. They attributed this to misrepresentations by the locally hired individuals, leading to their dismissal from the projects (Interview-6).

"but there have been changes in in, in terms of our employees that we locally kind of hire and then we realize that for example, they have not been honest during the interview process."

4.15. Problems with Estonian development cooperation apparatus:

This section of the result presents the outcomes of the interviews, which are categorized into the previously mentioned themes. It delves into sub-themes such as issues with the Modus Operandi and structural problems highlighted during the interviews. The confusion among private players. regarding the role of Estdev is a notable concern. They are uncertain whether Estdev is an implementer or a sponsor of development cooperation projects(Interview-3).

"And it is that it haven't been decided or Estdev has dual roads, it's providing financing and it's implementing projects himself.

And and this is not defined, at least I don't know how it's defined. Where is the limit and in May 1st years they they they mostly implemented everything by themselves, so there should be clear strategy. Either you getting money from the government and implementing yourself or you are giving money out."

Furthermore, the analysis reveals a critical issue. Firstly, private players. express dissatisfaction with Estdev claiming intellectual property rights over their work, failing to comprehend the

rationale behind this and the need for it. Secondly, private players. are concerned about the storage and protection of information by Estdev and the accessibility of such data (Interview-3). Another challenge is the lack of understanding among private players. regarding the Estonian development cooperation, attributed to the Estonian government's failure to share the rationale behind its decisions or provide comprehensive documentation (Interview-1,2). Additionally, private players. believe that the top-down approach adopted by Estonia is not conducive to development cooperation projects (Interview-1).

"feel that we very often estonia it that's not only like donor part, but also in the companies also we slip sometimes in our company, we tend to have a sort of top down, like approach to things sometimes like like not our way or no way or the Estonian way is the best way. And it also trickles down a bit from from also the From from the from the government side from the foreign affairs and Estdev side, also from the other companies."

The research also highlights the significant issue of aid seeking out beneficiaries instead of the beneficiaries seeking aid. Interviewees argue that this dynamic should be reversed (Interview-3). Furthermore, the validation of project outcomes by Estdev before the beneficiaries, according to an interviewee, should be conducted by the beneficiaries as they are the primary recipients of the project(Interview-3).

"If the works are done, first of all, the beneficiaries should save it. This is OK and when we say OK."

The researcher suggests that Estdev should provide rationale for its decisions to private players. and clarify its role, as well as how project-related information is managed. Additionally, a comprehensive strategy document should outline the Estonian strategy and the roles of different Estonian entities. Lastly, transparency and communication regarding Estonian development cooperation are essential.

4.16. Limitation:

The analysis of the interview yielded an unexpected finding regarding the limitations of Estonian development cooperation. The results indicate that the Estonian development cooperation landscape suffers from inadequate manpower compared to other development cooperation organizations in different countries (Interview-1)

."Is the lack of personnel on the ground, which I understand for the for the limitations, but this is I think, very tricky for a Estonia development operation. They rely a lot about on on people in in other development, operational organizations or utilizations and so on and so on."

Additionally, the analysis revealed a lack of adequate funding in Estonian development cooperation, restricting its reach and impact in contrast to other nations' development cooperation efforts(Interview-4). One interviewee suggested that these limitations may stem from Estonia's geographical size; however, this assertion cannot be confirmed within the scope of this research and should be explored by future researchers(Interview-4).

It is worth noting that the Estonian development cooperation apparatus collaborates with other organizations, such as Smart Africa, to address its manpower limitations. Surprisingly, the analysis also uncovered a limitation in the Estonian development apparatus's understanding of the appropriate application of technology, leading to unrealistic expectations that are challenging to fulfill. Therefore, it is recommended that the Estonian development cooperation apparatus devise a solution to address this issue, as it has the potential to undermine the entire endeavor. This limitation may also be linked to the proper contextualization of projects, which is a key theme to be explored further in this literature.

4.17. Implementation barriers:

The following text discusses the barriers to successful implementation of a project within the context of development cooperation. Firstly, it is noted that a private player may encounter unforeseen obstacles while executing a project, as it is impossible to predict all variables that could impact the development cooperation project. Culture also plays a significant role in development cooperation projects, with coordination becoming a challenge in regions such as Africa due to differing work cultures (Interview-5).

"Of course, of course, and especially in Africa, because Africa is quite new to us.Umm, the culture is really different"

"I think it's not the content that is the problematic, but it's it's meeting the cultures the you know, building the trust, finding the right people."

This necessitates a mindful approach to cultural differences when executing projects. However, it is important to emphasize that these cultural barriers are specific to projects implemented in Africa and may not be applicable to European partner countries.Furthermore, erroneous assessment of beneficiary capacity poses a significant barrier to successful project implementation. Donors may fail to accurately assess the capacity of the beneficiaries, and in some cases, beneficiaries themselves may misrepresent their capacity. This can lead to project execution issues, especially if the beneficiary lacks the required capacity, which may only be discovered during the execution stage, leading to project abandonment (Interview-7).

"Meaning also that, uh, you know, the the beneficiary, not the beneficial the founder has also funder has also had wrong assessment of the country for example you know the availability of IT infrastructure servers et cetera and sometimes we go into a country and seeing that you know it doesn't exist so we have to kind of throw in a glove or or or say that yeah we cannot deliver because you don't have servers you don't have network blah blah blah umm"

Therefore, it is crucial for donors to develop mechanisms or processes to accurately ascertain the actual capacity of the beneficiary for future projects.

Finally, the interviewees identified political instability and the unavailability of critical data as common barriers to the successful implementation of such projects (Interview-3).

Additionally, the reluctance of many government departments to share sensitive data poses a challenge, as data is fundamental for the successful implementation of certain development cooperation projects. (Interview-3,7)

"How government institutions share the data for one or another service, and this is the main bottleneck. They don't want to share the data. Data is power. Also you can manipulate with the

data. Sometimes it's like a corruption issues related to it. So the main energy at the beginning of each and every project.

However, political support from higher levels can ensure that necessary data is made available to private players. based on their requirements."

Trust is a crucial element in development cooperation, as evidenced in the aforementioned barriers. Low trust can create multiple issues in project implementation, highlighting the need to bolster the trust that beneficiaries have in development cooperation projects(Interview-5). One recommendation to enhance trust is to cultivate long-term associations with the same beneficiaries, as mentioned in the recommendation part of the literature.

4.18. Learning curves of companies:

The theme of this discussion is the learning curve of companies based on the results of interviews. One interviewee mentioned that they improve their processes based on the experiences gained during or after a project. They specifically mentioned enhancing their risk management processes based on their experiences (Interview-5).

"*So we definitely uh develop or enhance our processes based on on the on the experience one, one of the latest was risk management that we actually really look looked over and did like a new not a new but but improved version of our our risk.*"

Another interviewee mentioned that their organization learns from their experiences but declined to comment on the actual changes, citing them as trade secrets. They emphasized that their learning and evolution over the years have been crucial in working with different donors and international organizations (Interview-7).

"*Of course, we have learned a lot. Uhm, and UM. And what do we have learned? Is our business secrets? Uh umm? Uh, so I'm. I'm not. I'm not gonna give these away easily. But this is been a year this been 10 years of evolution that we have working with different donors and and international organizations.*"

The same interviewee highlighted the existence of an accountability mechanism within organizations, which holds individuals accountable and helps improve processes related to projects. They mentioned that the project manager is responsible for the project and the accountability mechanism involves personal review (Intervew-5).

"*Well, the project manager is responsible for the project, right? So this is done one on one with uh PMO and the project and the current project manager and it's it's looked at kind of like a personal reviewer or in that in that sense.*"

Finally, another interviewee confirmed that they do conduct analysis to improve their performance when asked (Interview-6,)

4.19. Project Preferences:

This theme will delve into the type of preferences regarding development cooperation projects favored by the private player as indicated in the interviews. According to one interviewee, there are two ways to participate in development cooperation projects. The first is when Est dev calls for rounds to find the beneficiaries themselves, or Estdev does that for them(Interview-3).

"*I mean, if we talk about development operation projects, there are two ways to participate in those. It's either we find a project when Estdev has the Project rounds or the funding calls.*"

Furthermore, the same interviewee mentioned that working with the beneficiaries selected by Est dev is quite tricky, as they have to trust the analyses of Est dev regarding the needs of the beneficiaries (Interview-3).

"*Development operation, that's also why I said why we actually prefer to have a direct track with the government themselves. So to know that this is really something in their needs, what they want to do.*"

Another interviewee agreed with the viewpoints mentioned above. However, they distinguished themselves from others by stating that they prefer to have direct contracts with the beneficiary government rather than development cooperation. (Interview-1)

"*We always prefer to have direct contracts than development operations contracts.*"

Additionally, another reason highlighted is that the level of interest from beneficiaries is much higher when directly contracted with the beneficiary government as compared to when they are contracted with a development cooperation. (Interview-1)

"*the strategy actually to the first one is to see whether it's possible to partner directly with the with the partner countries because because we what we have also seen is that sometimes when you we use donor money, in countries the interest from the partner countries or buying is weaker than with contracted directly with them.*"

One interviewee expressed a preference for results-based contracts over time-based contracts, emphasizing the desire to deliver tangible value to the beneficiary(Interview-3). However, the interviewee did not elaborate on the specific impact of the contract nature on the outcome, suggesting a potential area for future research.

"I don't like those time and material contracts. So, I really want to bring in some result."

This perspective contrasts with another interviewee's preference for working through a development authority, citing reduced project risk and improved beneficiary cooperation.(Interview-2,7).

"*So through development aid, through development aid organisations, there are always some people on the ground who can be like the project managers, helping you to get contacts. So that's why you're having this either in a partnership format or with a development aid partnership formed with some other private sector companies or development organisation always gives us the second safeguard.*"

Additionally, a participant highlighted a preference for increased intermediary layers between themselves and the beneficiaries to facilitate project execution(Interview-2).

"*And it needs to and usually what I want to have is like some layer in between before, like not having a straight contract with the with the government, but something in between.*"

Finally, one interviewee asserted that larger-scale projects with greater financial viability make more sense for the private player to engage with(Interview-7).

"Have been with agencies like USAID, with European Commission, uh with EBRD, which have been bigger technology deployment contracts.Uh, and and we do that in phases and these are usually, yeah, make economic sense for -------- definitely."

After reviewing the literature, it can be inferred that the beneficiaries show greater interest when they are directly involved in the contracts. This can be connected to another discovery about the challenges arising from beneficiaries' lack of accountability when they are not utilizing their own funds. Therefore, it is advisable for future research to delve deeper into this issue, and it should also serve as a point of consideration for those involved in managing Estonian development cooperation.

Furthermore, Estonian development and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should take into consideration the preferences of the private players. and conduct further investigation into the reasons behind these preferences. They should reflect on these preferences and make the necessary adjustments.

4.20. Variables to Success:

This theme needs to be explored as it represents an important part of the development cooperation. The above-mentioned literature discusses a theme that defines success according to the private player but does not elaborate on how they achieve that success. Therefore, we will reflect on the results of the interview on the same topic.

An interviewer emphasized that the key to success lies in selecting competent teams and partners.

"all European countries probably and the key to a successful project is the best team and best partners and how do you do it. You just need to find the right people. And it's it's the matter of connection"

Additionally, as stated in the literature above the existing infrastructure of the beneficiary nations plays a critical part in the success of the project.Lastly, another private player optimal communication is required for a successful undertaking (Interview-7).

5 Discussion:

5.1. Motivation

The motivation for private sector participation in development projects is primarily commercial. Private players may seek to enter a new market, expand their operations, or test product and market compatibility. Additionally, factors such as risk aversion, access to funds, and relevant support also drive private sector involvement in development cooperation projects. Small companies, especially those in Estonia, face challenges related to financial resources and market access. However, participating in development cooperation projects provides them with opportunities to access new markets and reduce associated risks. It should be noted that these reasons are secondary to the commercial goals of private players.

Furthermore, private players are motivated by factors such as engaging work, encountering new cultural experiences, and developing expertise. Exposure to different cultures broadens their perspectives and fosters a global mindset, leading to a deeper understanding of the conditions for commercial success and guiding future business strategies.

In some cases, factors such as the nature of the work and contributing to the development of countries are also important to companies, but these factors must align with the enterprises' commercial objectives.

Notably, none of the private players mentioned development impact, highlighting a gap between the objectives of development cooperation projects and the commercial motivations of companies. This finding resonates with the research of Hooli (n.d.), which indicates that Finnish companies target middle-income countries for potential market exploitation. Moreover, there is a concern that development cooperation could become a profit-driven endeavor, as highlighted by André de Mello e Souza (n.d.).

However, one private player did express motivation to contribute to the beneficiary nation, although the specific nature of this contribution was not clarified. This could signify a focus on economic growth without considering development impact. Therefore, as suggested by André de Mello e Souza. (n.d.), Estonian development authorities should strive to strike a balance between

companies' commercial goals and the objectives of development cooperation. All of the private players in this context fall under the framework of private sector engagement for development, as defined by José Di Bella (et al., 2013).

5.2 Development impact assessment

The importance of development impact assessment in project management cannot be overstated. It is crucial to evaluate a project's impact on its beneficiaries to ascertain whether it has met its objectives. However, based on interviews conducted, it seems that development impact is not a top priority for most project private players.. This lack of priority is likely the reason behind the absence of proper mechanisms to assess the development impact of projects.

The findings reveal that there are no established mechanisms for measuring development impact, and even when evaluations are conducted, the results are not shared with private stakeholders. These evaluations are often carried out by third parties, and at times, private stakeholders are not even aware that such assessments have taken place. The reasons for not prioritizing development impact assessment include the belief that it can only be accurately done many years after the project's completion and the need for long-term engagement in the same market. Concerns about the cost and value of third-party assessments are also noted. Additionally, the research uncovers a unique perspective not found in existing literature – the notion that the value of development impact can only be accurately assessed when a certain threshold of activities has been reached. The research supports this view, as valid results in scientific research often require a substantial volume of data. Furthermore, the findings align with previous literature about the challenges posed by extended time horizons and costs in development impact evaluation (Van Den Berg .2005). However, another finding points to a gap in the existing literature, with a participant suggesting that time horizon issues can be overcome if private stakeholders continue operating in a country for an extended period. This presents an area for future research.

An interesting point that emerges from the results is an opinion from a participant that third-party assessments do not offer anything of value to private stakeholders. It is important to note that this

participant also mentioned that their organization's focus is solely on profit, which could indicate a lack of concern for development impact.

Notably, within the success indicators category, some private players believe that creating value for the beneficiary is a key aspect of a successful project. However, without measuring development impact, it becomes challenging to determine if value has indeed been created for the beneficiaries. This poses a significant challenge for project managers aiming to assess the success of their projects.

In conclusion, there is a pressing need for improved mechanisms within the development cooperation architecture to ensure comprehensive project assessments and the sharing of older project evaluation results. The findings also highlight a deficiency within Estonia's development cooperation framework, underscoring the importance of addressing architectural flaws to facilitate organizational improvement. It is imperative to prioritize development impact assessment to enhance project management capabilities and ensure the success of future projects.

5.3 Shortcoming of Estonian development cooperation apparatus

The findings of the research on Estonian development cooperation apparatus highlight several key issues and limitations. The interviews revealed confusion among private players. regarding the role of Estdev, particularly in terms of whether it operates as an implementer or a sponsor of development cooperation projects. Additionally, there were concerns about Estdev claiming intellectual property rights over the work of private players., as well as challenges related to the storage and protection of information by Estdev and the accessibility of such data. The researcher is of the opinion that this could be a point of contention between the private players. and the doners. Thus, it is something that must be looked into.private players. also expressed a lack of understanding regarding the Estonian development cooperation, attributed to the government's failure to share the rationale behind its decisions or provide comprehensive documentation. Furthermore, the top-down approach adopted by Estonia was seen as a hindrance to development cooperation projects. This is in direct contradiction to the recommendation made by Gore(2013) as he argues for an bottom up approach.

The research also identified a critical issue of aid seeking out beneficiaries instead of the beneficiaries seeking aid. This dynamic was deemed in need of reversal. There were also concerns about the validation of project outcomes by Estdev before the beneficiaries, with interviewees suggesting that beneficiaries should have a more prominent role in this process. The focus of Estonian development cooperation project need to move away from being doner focused to partner focused.

To address these challenges, the researcher recommends that Estdev provide rationale for its decisions to private players., clarify its role, and the management of project-related information. It is also suggested that a comprehensive strategy document outlining the Estonian strategy and the roles of different Estonian entities be developed, and that transparency and communication regarding Estonian development cooperation be improved.

The analysis of the interview yielded an unexpected finding regarding the limitations of Estonian development cooperation. The results indicate that the Estonian development cooperation landscape suffers from inadequate manpower compared to other development cooperation organizations in different countries. Additionally, there is a lack of adequate funding in Estonian development cooperation, restricting its reach and impact in contrast to other nations' development cooperation efforts. The research also revealed a limitation in the Estonian development apparatus's understanding of the appropriate application of technology, leading to unrealistic expectations that are challenging to fulfil. Thus, there is a need for the creation of a department or a designation for the purpose of this as it really important to provide the right support to the private players if they are to succeed. The cost of each failed is the money that could have been used for other projects.

It is recommended that the Estonian development cooperation apparatus devise a solution to address the issue of inadequate manpower and funding. Collaboration with other organizations, such as Smart Africa, to address manpower limitations is noted as a positive step. The limitation in the understanding of the appropriate application of technology should also be addressed, as it has the potential to undermine the entire endeavour. The researcher believes that the Estonian development authorities are on the right path as they are already engaging with other partners to overcome its man power issues.

In conclusion, the research findings highlight various issues and limitations within the Estonian development cooperation apparatus. It is recommended that steps be taken to address these challenges, including the clarification of Estdev's role, improved transparency and communication, and the development of strategies to overcome manpower and funding limitations.

5.4 Stakeholder Involvement

As stated by Hooli (n.d) the adequate stakeholder involvement of is important for the success of a project. All the private players. agree with this view. Also involving the right kind of stakeholders has a close relationship with development impact, as when the involvement is limited to the elite then the targeted beneficiaries do not gain the benefit of such undertaking.

The results emphasize the need for appropriate stakeholder engagement and highlights the potential consequences of not involving stakeholders, such as the withholding of data and lack of cooperation. This is should be an area of future research as the existing literature doesn't mention this perspective.

The data suggests that stakeholder involvement is essential but lacks clarity on the minimum threshold and the mechanisms employed for stakeholder engagement. The researcher further categorize development cooperation projects into citizen-centric and non-citizen-centric projects, noting that citizen-centric projects require deeper stakeholder engagement, particularly emphasizing a bottom-up approach for stakeholder selection. The importance of involving beneficiaries in selecting stakeholders is also highlighted, as they are believed to have a better understanding of ground situations and their needs.

Additionally, the selection of stakeholders, with the majority of interviewees advocating for beneficiaries to be involved in the selection process. However, it is mentioned that in some cases, stakeholders are preselected by donors and donees, with private players having limited influence. The nature of the technology deployed is also noted to influence stakeholder selection, with only

stakeholders capable of using the technology being considered. Furthermore, the use of professional networks and past connections by private players to identify and select stakeholders, as well as the potential hiring of individuals for this purpose. It is opinion of the researcher that there should be a balance between the beneficiary and the private players opinion on the selection of the stakeholders.

In summary, the significance of stakeholder involvement and the potential challenges and strategies associated with stakeholder selection in development cooperation projects. It emphasizes the need to consider the specific project type, the role of beneficiaries, and the nature of the technology deployed when engaging stakeholders.

5.5. Coordination, Communication and Contextualization

The development cooperation sector faces significant coordination challenges, with no formal mechanism in place and coordination differing with every project and actor. Private players have developed unique mechanisms to create optimal coordination conditions, including providing relevant information to donor and partner countries, consulting partner countries when adding new local partners, and coordinating with each other before communicating with the partner country. Communication is really important for coordination as it without adequate communication there can be no coordination. Communication should be considered as an subset of coordination.

Communication is crucial for project implementation, but there are no official mechanisms or guidelines for communication during projects, leading to unofficial channels of communication. Additionally, some participants feel Est dev have no role to play during the project, raising questions about how Estonian development (Est dev) monitors projects. Private players recognize the vital role of communication but lack a uniform communication mechanism among private players..

Understanding the needs of the local population is very important as discussed in the stakeholder part of the discussion (Hooli. nd.). Contextualization of problems by private players. involves a diverse range of mechanisms, with no singular approach universally employed. The private

players employ pre-project assessments, informal discussions with beneficiaries, hiring local individuals, and market research to gain contextual knowledge, but there are doubts about their ability to gain adequate contextual knowledge on their own. As it can be seen in the results that sometimes the doners cannot judge the ability of the partners thus how does an organization which has meager resources compared to them successful do so. In conclusion the researcher recommends that private players. explore alternative mechanisms and consider employing multiple mechanisms simultaneously, with future research focusing on evaluating their effectiveness. Also, the Estonian development authorities should develop guidelines or processes which act as guiding principles for the private players to follow.

5.6. Recommendation by the researcher.

The three most important recommendation form the researcher's perspective are the following.

Firstly, there is a need to create a strong mechanism to measure development impact of the projects, using those mechanism regularly and then sharing the result with the private players.. As this can be substantiated by the following quote

"Uh, in this aspect that actually no one checks in three or five or seven years. No one checks what has happened to this. Uh, how has this project deliverable evolved or how have they been put into use or something like that?"

Additionally, even if the assessment is done, they are not shared with the private player as this could be substantiated by the following quote

"It's it's sometimes we hear about it, sometimes we don't hear even about it, so depends on donor because we don't do it".

The absence of such a mechanism and not sharing its result with the private player raises legitimate concern about the real purpose of the development aid program. As if one could not ascertain the real development impact then the whole undertaking is redundant.

Secondly, there is a need to achieve a balance between the commercial goals of companies and the long-term development impact of the projects. It would be recommended that the projects shall be done in cooperation with the companies that try to achieve a balance between these two or are driven by other factors rather than by commercial gains. As it became evidently clear from the research that most companies are driven by profit and rarely concerned by development impact which could be susbtainted by the following quote

"And we are looking at this only from business perspective. There's no no other perspective for us"

This can also be seen in the literature which elucidates the indicators of success, as no private player stated that long term development impact as an indicator of success. Also, there might be a need to redefine how success looks like and need for it to move away from commercial and other definition and focus on development impact.

Lastly, a lot of companies have questions regarding the role of Est dev, how is the data stored there, why one country was selected in Africa, what is the whole strategic objective, how are the players working in the development aid. This could be substantiated by the following quotes.

"been decided or Estdev has dual roads, it's providing financing and it's implementing projects himself"

"Estonian development aid is putting like 200,000 to build X Road in Kenya, then it raised a lot of questions. Also among like, my my friends or acquaintances who said like why are we putting our like our development money as we have it so little to country like that. So I think in terms of explore explaining, also to general public, why we do that, it's very important"

"And also, like, not only like what is this digit vision and direction, but also what are the resources we are putting into? And what is the return on investment?"

Thus, it would be recommended that there is a need to create clarity regarding such questions and a comprehensive document should be drafted to answer all such questions. Additionally, this process of creating such a document about the inner workings of the Estonia development cooperation apparatus could also bring to light any overlooked insufficienct.

6. Conclusion:

The focus of this thesis was to understand Estonian development cooperation from the perspective of private players in order to explore their views and experiences. This area of research was largely unexplored, and was chosen to provide a fresh perspective that could contribute to the field's theory and enable future researchers to gain a deeper understanding.

The results section of this paper presents multiple findings that cannot be summarized in the thesis conclusion. However, it is important for the reader to consider the various research avenues highlighted in the recommendations and discussion. The discussion contains relevant themes, and the most important takeaway from this research is the three recommendations provided by the researcher. These recommendations, according to the researcher, are of utmost importance and should be prioritized by Estonian development authorities. The three important recommended actions are: establishing a mechanism to measure and share the development impact of projects with private players; promoting a balance between commercial goals and long-term development impact in company projects; and addressing questions and concerns about the role and operations of Estonian development aid through a comprehensive document to provide clarity and address any overlooked issues.

For future research avenues, the researcher recommends determining the efficacy of the mechanisms adopted and their applicability in various contexts. Creating a framework that can be used for future research and as a guiding principle for private players is also recommended.Also, the author also suggests conducting a longitudinal study over a few years, dividing it into multiple iterations, analyzing the findings after each iteration, and making subsequent changes accordingly. An observation-based study should also be conducted to observe changes, which can then be compared with the research findings to gain a better understanding.

The limitations of this research include the small sample size of people interviewed. It is also important to interview individuals working at different levels in the internal hierarchy of private players involved in development cooperation projects. The researcher used

qualitative methodology and coding as tools for analyzing the data, methods that heavily depend on the researcher's skill set. Therefore, it is essential for future research to be conducted on the same topic using other methodologies to validate this research. Furthermore, future researchers should use qualitative and quantitative methods together to construct a stronger narrative.

Additionally, this research only referred to literature closely related to development cooperation, which is a limitation. Future researchers should consider adopting a wider scope of literature to increase the validity of their results. There is also a need to examine the findings from the perspective of all other actors to gain a comprehensive understanding. The author also suggests conducting a longitudinal study over a few years, dividing it into multiple iterations, analyzing the findings after each iteration, and making subsequent changes accordingly. An observation-based study should also be conducted to observe changes, which can then be compared with the research findings to gain a better understanding.

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Appendix

A   Subsection of Appendix

Interviewee Number	Description of Interview Participant	Description of company	When was the interview conducted	How the interview conducted	Length of the Interview
1	Experienced director with a strong background in digital project management and government work	The company's main strength is in the digital domain	14-Mar-2024	Video conferencing.	60 Min
2	CEO of the company with a background in law.	The company's main strength is in the digital domain	15-Mar-2024	Video conferencing.	60 Min

3	Executive Director and Chairman of the Management Board of a company, with a wealth of experience working as a consultant for numerous countries.	The company excels in digital domain expertise, boasting extensive experience working with multiple governments.	22-Mar-2024	Video conferencing.	60 Min
4	Leader of Global Expansion	The company is a network of numerous IT companies.	27-Mar-2024	Video conferencing.	60 Min
5	CEO.	The company's primary expertise lies in the development and training of ICT skills	27-Mar-2024	Video conferencing.	60 Min

6	CEO.	The company's main strength is in developing educational platforms.	9-Apr-2024	Video conferencing.	60 Min
7	CEO with a wealth of experience and a background in innovation	The company's main strength is in the digital domain.	22-Apr-2024	Video conferencing.	45 Min

Declaration of Authorship

I hereby declare that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this Master Thesis titled "Looking beyond the event horizon: Understanding the ICT4dev Projects in Estonian development cooperation from the perspective of private players " is my own work. I confirm that each significant contribution to and quotation in this thesis that originates from the work or works of others is indicated by proper use of citation and references.

Tallinn, 07 June 2024

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TALLINN, 07,June 2024

Amogh Raizada