

<b>Management response</b>	
<b>Evaluation title</b>	Joint Mid-term Evaluation of the Search-IPIS DGD Programme 2022-2026
<b>Program/Project</b>	United for Peace and Sustainable Development in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Settings
<b>Year of the report</b>	2025
<b>Overall response to the evaluation</b>	<p>Overall, we are satisfied with this Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE), largely agreeing with its findings and recommendations. The evaluation effectively showcases good progress towards our programme goals and highlights relevant areas for improvement in both current and future phases. We found the mixed-methods approach and outcome harvesting methodology to be valuable, and most findings align with our internal assessments. The insights into the collaboration between Search and IPIS are particularly useful for ongoing programme work and the design of potential new initiatives. While some recommendations lack specificity or feasibility within the current programme's structure and our organizational capacities, the evaluation provides a solid foundation for refining our approach. Another general comment is that the report does not clearly distinguish between the joint programme and the joint outcome (Advocacy outcome in Belgium). As a result, the Management responses to some recommendations can be confusing and cannot always be clearly assigned to one level or the other.</p> <p>Regarding the evaluation process, while there were challenges such as unforeseen staff departures, communication gaps from the consultants, and an overreliance on our organizations for interview coordination, we appreciated the opportunity to provide feedback on advanced drafts and how our input was considered. We acknowledge that the comprehensive nature of our programme, especially in Belgium, made a fully exhaustive overview challenging within the given budget. However, we feel that the consultants did not always delve deeply enough into the extensive data captured by our M&amp;E system. Additionally, the consultants sometimes lacked a rigorous understanding of the programme and did not fully account for the differences in organizational culture and ways of working between IPIS and Search. There were also some practical challenges in Burundi, where consultants assumed phone outreach would be easier for surveys and planned their data-collection phase very short-term, leading to some complications with permissions from local governments. In Tanzania, the evaluation was planned at very short notice and, for this reason among others, is based on only a few reports. The situation in the east of the DRC was difficult and prevented the planned data collection. Unfortunately, the evaluators were unable to fill this gap using other methods, meaning that the report did not clearly address the programme's concept. Finally, the varied contextual realities across countries necessitated a flexible data collection approach, leading to some inconsistencies, also in Belgium where interviewee mobilization proved difficult at times.</p>

Planned use of evaluation	This MTE will be instrumental in adapting our current programme to achieve the best possible results within remaining budget, time, and organizational capacities. It will also guide our decisions on which elements to continue or adjust for a potential next programme phase (2027-2031). Specifically, areas identified as particularly strong will be further emphasized, while areas showing less progress or relevance will either be strengthened or re-evaluated for a change in orientation. The findings will contribute to evidence-based decision-making, ensuring that our efforts remain impactful and aligned with evolving priorities.
Lessons learned from the evaluation	The evaluation process itself offered valuable lessons. It emphasised the importance of proactive and extended planning to account for unforeseen circumstances, such as organizational disruptions or funding changes, and to secure the participation of high-level stakeholders, particularly in Belgium. Establishing more regular check-in moments with consultants is also crucial. Despite operational differences and constraints, the partnership model between Search and IPIS has clearly demonstrated the benefits of a well-matched complementarity model, with the programme experience providing valuable insights for enhancing future collaboration strategies. Learnings on both successes and challenges will be actively considered for all future funding opportunities to build upon and sustain the impact realized.

Recommendations and responses					
No	Recommendation	Management response	Actions planned	Responsible org./person	Timeframe
<b>GLOBAL LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS</b>					
1	Search and IPIS should develop a comprehensive joint operational strategy for future programme phases.	<p><b>Partially Accepted:</b></p> <p>Though the MTE shows that the partnership between Search and IPIS is generally regarded as a coherent and successful collaboration with a strong degree of alignment and complementarity, achieving deeper operational synergy where the joint efforts become substantially more than the sum of its parts, has proven challenging and remains an area of untapped potential. Our initial ambition for a highly integrated model faced limitations, leading to some missed opportunities mainly due to the following aspects:</p> <p>1) The programme's structure (with field-level outcomes in DRC, Tanzania and Burundi</p>	<p>For our current programme phase, more regular planning and update meetings between Search and IPIS staff are already being organised to identify opportunities for increased collaboration.</p> <p>While complementarity is a strong asset, achieving deeper synergy likely requires programme structures intentionally designed to foster more joint implementation at multiple levels, which will be considered for a potential future DGD programme. This could include some degree of joint implementation outside of</p>	<p>Search and IPIS Directors, Programme Coordinators and Policy Teams</p> <p>Programme Coordinators, Proposal Design Teams</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>June 2026</p>

		<p>implemented separately by Search or IPIS) restricted natural opportunities for field-level integration. While this design choice logically limited such opportunities, the evaluation nonetheless noted that we were able to identify potential areas for synergies that were not included in the initial proposal;</p> <p>2) Inherent differences between both organisations, such as mandates, varying size, operational culture, internal processes and security protocols sometimes hampered opportunities for joint actions of policy positions.</p> <p>Despite these limitations, a defining characteristic of the partnership's success lies in its effective leveraging of complementarity due to the distinct strengths, networks and expertise. Therefore, we only partially accept, as we do not see the added value in comprehensive synergy, but rather in the strengthening of joint planning between our different entities.</p>	<p>only the Belgium outcome, more intentionality around integrated joint activities, shared resource allocation, more regular planning and update meetings between Search and IPIS staff at different levels, cross- organisational communication protocols and more clear roles &amp; responsibilities.</p> <p>For future programme phases, the distinctions between both organisations will be better taken into account, which will be facilitated by the fact that we now have a better understanding of each other's way of working.</p>		
2	<p>Search and IPIS should institute regular joint learning and reflection within global-level programme management.</p>	<p><b>Accepted:</b></p> <p>Adopting a more intentional approach to planning joint activities, improving internal communication flows and knowledge sharing, and fostering more informal interaction between staff were all highlighted as valuable practices or areas for improvement. And while we have organised joint annual reflection, learning and planning sessions, these have proven to not be sufficient to exploit the</p>	<p>Building on existing practices, such as the joint annual planning and reflection meetings, Search and IPIS will ensure that these joint sessions dedicate sufficient, structured time for both looking back (learning, reflection on successes and challenges, cross-country insights) and looking forward (strategic planning).</p>	<p>Search and IPIS Programme Coordinators</p>	<p>January 2026</p>

		<p>full potential of our comparative strengths (especially around collaborations within our Belgium outcome).</p>	<p>Since the beginning of 2025, we have also been organising dedicated monthly meetings between the policy teams of both organisations to update on upcoming plans/activities and identify potential opportunities for collaboration. The Directors of both organisations are also in more regular contact to ensure strategic alignment, intensify collaboration on high-level policy engagements and share information.</p> <p>In addition, we are exploring ways in which programme staff can meet in more informal settings to foster smoother interpersonal collaboration (e.g. teambuilding day or more regularly attending each other's events).</p>	<p>Search and IPIS Policy Teams</p> <p>Search and IPIS Directors, Programme Coordinators and Policy Teams</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>January 2026</p>
3	<p>Enhance collaborative learning and explore complementarities between Search's and IPIS's distinct MEL approaches.</p>	<p><b>Accepted:</b></p> <p>If we take this recommendation mainly relating to the joint implementation of our Belgium outcome, we do accept. We recognise that efforts should focus on ensuring consistent application across collaborative components and enhancing joint analysis of progress towards jointly agreed DGD objectives, even if the underlying data collection methods differ. Rather than aiming for full alignment, we should explore how Search's community-centred MEL insights (e.g., from outcome harvesting, field-level focus) can complement IPIS's research-based evidence, and vice-versa, to create a richer, more holistic understanding of the programme's impact.</p>	<p>As mentioned under recommendation 2. Search and IPIS commit to including more time during our annual reflection sessions for learning aspects, drawing relevant data from each organisation's respective M&amp;E systems.</p> <p>For the design of our potential next DGD programme, we also commit to aligning our respective M&amp;E approaches better from the outset, reflecting the more operational planning (or joint outputs) on outcome level.</p>	<p>Search and IPIS Programme Coordinators</p> <p>Search and IPIS Programme Coordinators and Proposal Design Teams</p>	<p>January 2026</p> <p>June 2026</p>

		<p>This has proven to be a challenge since the very beginning of the programme and though we have tried different ways in which we could align our approaches, this has not always been successful. In addition, this has to be understood in the light of each organisation's time, budget and M&amp;E staff constraints which will not always allow us to find strong complementarities and approaches that work well for both organisations. Nevertheless, we recognise that we can improve on this and commit to finding better alignment with the available resources we have.</p>	<p>For our current programme, however, it will prove difficult to make major changes to each organisation's existing M&amp;E approach for the programme as there is only a limited amount of time left, as M&amp;E resources for both organisations are limited. Together with the consultants of this mid-term evaluation, however, we will look into concrete ways in which Search and IPIS data can be used in a more complementary way to better determine impact during the final evaluation process.</p>	<p>Search and IPIS Programme Coordinators</p>	<p>December 2026</p>
4	<p>Enhance clarity and shared understanding on communication practices for joint programme elements and external representation.</p>	<p><b>Accepted:</b></p> <p>Recognising that general programme contact points are in place, the focus should be on improving the linkages and strategic alignment between the programme management, policy, and communications colleagues at both Search and IPIS. This will facilitate smoother internal sign-off processes for joint outputs and ensure a shared, timely understanding of what can be communicated externally, particularly when activities have security implications for staff and partners in the field.</p> <p>At the start of the programme, both organisations required time to create a proper understanding of the ways of working (including communication practices) of the other organisation. E.g. all Search communication on a given topic or geography needs to be approved by country teams in order to avoid any security implication in their local context. This creates difficulties knowing well in advance if and</p>	<p>Over the years of this programme, we have been able to get a better insight into these dynamics and differences which has led to a more streamlined communication as part of the programme. In addition, and as mentioned before, both organisations are and continue to be better connected through more regular update/planning meetings between Policy Teams and Directors, which will support improving linkages and strategic alignment (including on communication and external representation matters). These efforts will be continued for the remainder of this current programme and will be better considered for and built into a potential next phase.</p>	<p>Search and IPIS Directors, Programme Coordinators, Policy Teams and Communication Focal Points</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

		how to communicate on a given topic and to align with IPIS on communication efforts.			
5	To enhance the sustainability and potential for broader impact of the collaboration's achievements, Search and IPIS should consider how learnings and synergies from this DGD programme can inform future joint resource mobilisation.	<p><b>Accepted:</b></p> <p>While organisation-level funding diversification is a broader strategic concern, we can reflect on the successes and challenges of this joint DGD programme to identify particularly impactful collaborative approaches that could be attractive to other donors or inform future joint proposals. This ensures that the value created within this specific programme has a greater chance of being sustained or replicated.</p>	The learnings on successes and challenges of our collaboration identified during this mid-term evaluation, as well as those identified throughout the years of collaborating on this programme are being actively considered for future DGD funding opportunities, as well as for other donors, to further build and sustain the impact realised.	Search and IPIS Directors, Programme Coordinators and Proposal Design Teams	Ongoing
6	Future joint programmes should prioritise dedicated time and resources for initial relationship building between staff from both organisations.	<p><b>Accepted:</b></p> <p>Recognising the intent is to foster strong collaboration between two distinct organisations rather than full team integration, this involves ensuring dedicated opportunities for key personnel to connect. Building trust and rapport from the outset is crucial for effective collaboration and requires a deliberate period for relationship building, establishing mutual understanding of organisational culture, processes, etc. and developing clear operational rhythms. However, this takes time, effort and resources which were not necessarily sufficiently built into the current programme or its budget.</p>	While a potential next phase of this DGD programme will require less initial relationship and trust building since the ongoing programme has already laid a basis for this, the need nevertheless remains to foresee sufficient time and resources into the future workplan and budget to allow for initial joint planning meetings, cross-organisational briefings on priorities, methodologies and relevant topics and potentially informal moment for staff to get to know each other better (especially for those that might be new to the organisation and/or programme).	Search and IPIS Programme Coordinators and Proposal Design Teams	June 2026
7	Future programmes should be designed from the outset to facilitate joint implementation.	<p><b>Accepted:</b></p> <p>As mentioned before, achieving deeper synergy likely requires programme structures intentionally</p>	For a next phase of the programme, we are currently exploring how we could	Search & IPIS Programme	June 2026

		<p>designed to foster joint implementation at multiple levels. While our current programme does foresee joint implementation in the Belgium outcome, it could have been better designed to facilitate joint implementation in our other outcome countries (especially DRC), though this was not done due to strategic reasons. In addition, we could improve how learnings from those countries could systematically feed into our Belgium joint advocacy initiatives.</p>	<p>potentially collaborate in other outcomes, apart from the Belgium one. In addition, for our Belgium outcome, we will look into including more deliberate and concrete activities for joint implementation, as well as consider including specific budget lines that support these collaborative initiatives.</p>	<p>Coordinators and Proposal Design Teams</p>	
<b>BELGIAN OUTCOME RECOMMENDATIONS</b>					
1	<p>Both IPIS and Search should further leverage each other's resources, including expertise, contacts, and networks, to maximise their collective impact in promoting sustainable business practices, conflict sensitivity, and peacebuilding.</p>	<p><b>Partly Accepted:</b></p> <p>As outlined under Global Level Recommendation 1., the MTE shows that the partnership between Search and IPIS is generally regarded as a coherent and successful collaboration with a strong degree of alignment and complementarity (with each organisation having their specific expertise, contacts and networks). However, achieving deeper operational synergy where the joint efforts become substantially more than the sum of its parts, has proven challenging and remains an area of untapped potential. Especially for our advocacy efforts, the evaluation highlights that while each organisation is successful in their respective areas of focus, there is at times overlap in some of our programmatic efforts. To enhance effectiveness and increase the potential for impact, we should consider planning more joint activities in areas where our work intersects, such as natural resource governance and its link to the climate-conflict nexus. However, while some of the topics that both organisations work on do indeed overlap, this does not necessarily mean that joint activities are always possible or desirable.</p>	<p>For the remainder of this current programme phase, more regular planning and update meetings between Search and IPIS staff are already being organised in order to identify opportunities for collaboration.</p> <p>Additionally we will identify in each team 'Focal Points/contact persons' for specific topics in each organisation to facilitate simple and ad hoc exchange, as implementation must sometimes happen very quickly.</p> <p>For a potential next phase of the programme, the distinctions between both organisations and our complementarity will be better taken into account to improve intentionality around jointly organised activities.</p>	<p>Search and IPIS Directors, Programme Coordinators and Policy Teams</p> <p>Search and IPIS Directors, Programme Coordinators and Policy Teams</p> <p>Programme Coordinators, Proposal Design Teams</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing (planning phase for 2026: Nov 2025 - Feb 2026)</p> <p>June 2026</p>

		<p>The inherent differences between both organisations, such as mandates, size, operational culture, internal processes, security protocols, etc. will necessarily put limitations on what we can collaborate on and how.</p> <p>Nevertheless there is room for improvement and we commit to further exploring how our respective strengths can complement each other to further increase the collective impact of our efforts.</p>			
2	<p>Refine the approach to measuring policy and practice change by consistently applying contribution tracking, particularly focusing on policy/practice alignment with programme advocacy.</p>	<p><b>Accepted:</b></p> <p>Given the difficulty of direct attribution in complex advocacy settings, we should continue our nuanced approach of using direct attribution where the programme's crucial role is clear. However, we recognise that for broader influence, systematically tracking and documenting changes in policy/practice that align with Search and IPIS policy recommendations/advocacy activities is recommended. This provides a more feasible and realistic measure of contribution rather than attempting to prove sole causality for all changes, while regular reflection on assumptions underpinning any attribution remains crucial.</p> <p>This recommendation is valid and we have recognised from the beginning of the programme that creating policy/practice change is often something we do not work on in a vacuum. Changes in policy/practice are usually the result of complementary efforts by and collaborations with several other actors (each contributing their part). In addition, contextual factors outside of our direct influence also play a critical role in creating change.</p>	<p>Within the current programme and taking into account the available time and resources, we will further explore ways in which we can track our impact on changes in policies/practices. A concrete next step could be: changing the wording of indicators 0.1, 1.3, 2.3 and 3.3 to reflect contribution instead of attribution. E.g. moving away from defining changes as a result of project activities and more looking at changes to policy/practice that are in line with our advocacy messaging / recommendations and to which we have contributed in an active/significant way.</p> <p>These learnings will also be incorporated into a potential next phase of the programme and we will further explore with the consultants of the final evaluation how they can support us with concrete and feasible ways of improving our measuring practices.</p>	<p>Programme Coordinators, Policy Teams and M&amp;E Teams</p> <p>Programme Coordinators, and Proposal Design Teams</p>	<p>June 2026</p> <p>June 2026</p>

		<p>We have tried to reflect this in our measuring approach, though this has not always proven to be feasible, mainly due to limitations on access to relevant information, as well as limitations on the amount of time and effort our staff can put into this. Overemphasising this risks taking away valuable time and resources for actual programme implementation. Nevertheless, we aim to improve this aspect of measuring change.</p>			
3	<p>Reassess measurement approaches for private sector engagement (Result 2).</p>	<p><b>Accepted:</b></p> <p>Given the sensitivity and confidentiality that characterise the type of private sector stakeholders we target in this programme (e.g. big tech, corporate mining/oil companies, etc.), traditional methods of tracking influence, particularly around internal policy / practice change may not be effective. These companies often have no incentive to either be transparent or honest about any (internal) changes to their policies / practices (either due to the project's contributions or not) or are not willing or able to liberate sufficient time and effort to contribute to our data-collection efforts.</p> <p>It is therefore recommended to revisit how progress under Result 2 is measured in more qualitative forms of measurement instead of the current quantitative approach. Insights could be gathered through: selective in-depth case studies on specific engagement efforts, process tracing or discourse analysis of publicly available corporate communications. However, we should acknowledge that such extensive qualitative M&amp;E approaches can be very resource/time-intensive. A feasible alternative approach should be explored that does</p>	<p>We will try, to the extent possible, to find alternative qualitative ways of capturing changes in policies/practice by private sector stakeholders to which the project might have contributed that rely less on the direct inputs from these stakeholders in data-collection (proxy-indicators). E.g. in-depth case studies on or discourse analysis of specific engagement efforts could be included in the programme's final evaluation. The support of the final evaluation's external consultants will be crucial in this effort as the project team does not currently have the capacity to develop and implement an extensive new approach to this.</p> <p>For a potential next phase of the programme, these points will be taken into account and the M&amp;E framework for private sector engagement (if it is decided to keep this workstream) will be refined in order to not be too resource/time intensive, while at</p>	<p>Programme Coordinators and M&amp;E Teams</p> <p>Programme Coordinators, M&amp;E Teams and Proposal Design Teams</p>	<p>June 2026</p> <p>June 2026</p>

		not take away a disproportionate amount of time and resources from the project team and is viable within the remaining time and budget of the programme.	the same time providing a clear image of the project's influencing efforts.		
4	Revise overachieving indicator targets and refine change measurement indicators.	<p><b>Accepted:</b></p> <p>The consistent overachievement of some of the mid-term targets under Results 1, 3, and 4 suggests that current endline targets may not fully reflect the programme's potential. It is recommended to adjust these targets upward to better capture the programme's demonstrated capacity.</p> <p>Further comments on refining change measurement indicators can be found under Belgian Outcome Recommendation 2.</p>	<p>We will increase the current targets for indicators 1.1, 3.1, 4.1 and 4.2 in the ongoing programme.</p> <p>Further actions related to change measurement indicators can be found under Belgian Outcome Recommendation 2.</p>	<p>Programme Coordinators</p> <p>Programme Coordinators, Research/Policy Teams and M&amp;E Teams</p>	<p>January 2026</p> <p>June 2026</p>
5	Strengthen indicators on engagement (1.1, 2.1, 3.1) beyond quantitative reach.	<p><b>Accepted:</b></p> <p>Current indicators largely focus on the number of stakeholders 'reached', which may not sufficiently capture the depth or quality of engagement. It is recommended to define and measure "meaningful engagement", integrating both quantitative and qualitative dimensions—such as sustained interaction, stakeholder responsiveness, and application of learning. This will enhance the programme's ability to differentiate between surface-level contact and deeper, outcome-oriented engagement, providing a more accurate picture of influence and effectiveness.</p>	<p>For a potential next phase of the programme, we will adapt the way in which we measure 'reaching' our target audiences to reflect a more 'meaningful engagement' (e.g. reaching a stakeholder means: they were involved in an active way in at least 3 project activities). For the current programme, however, this might prove difficult as it would have required us to collect this specific data from the beginning of the programme, which is not the case.</p>	<p>Programme Coordinators, Policy Teams and M&amp;E Teams</p>	<p>June 2026</p>
6	Enhance M&E collaboration and mutual learning between IPIS	<b>Partly Accepted:</b>			

	and Search specifically for the Belgian Outcome.	For more detail, see Global Level Recommendation 3.	For more detail, see Global Level Recommendation 3.	For more detail, see Global Level Recommendation 3.	For more detail, see Global Level Recommendation 3.
7	Search should continue and enhance the development of tailored conflict sensitivity training modules.	<p><b>Accepted:</b></p> <p>Feedback from conflict-sensitivity training participants has consistently been very positive since the start of the programme, which has been confirmed by this mid-term evaluation. The trainings are perceived as valuable and we are noticing an increasing interest in and need for them from our target audience, especially Belgian development stakeholders. Based on participant feedback, we have regularly assessed how the training could be improved to be more effective and relevant to meet the needs of different participant profiles, leading to adaptations to the modules over the years.</p>	<p>We will continue these ongoing efforts that address the specific needs of different organisations, stakeholder groups and thematic areas in order to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of the conflict-sensitivity component. Even before the finalisation of this mid-term evaluation, we had already started creating several new modules (e.g. on practical challenges and limitations of applying conflict-sensitivity in practice) and updated others (e.g. practical integration of conflict-sensitivity in the project cycle) to fit the needs of specific stakeholders, such as DGD and Enabel. In addition, we are considering to include a more elaborate conflict-sensitivity training component in a potential future phase of the programme.</p>	<p>Programme Coordinator and Conflict-sensitivity trainers /specialists</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
8	IPIS should continue, and potentially deepen, its research into the specific operational challenges faced by private sector actors in implementing due diligence processes and managing human rights risks.	<p><b>Partially accepted</b></p> <p>This recommendation is based on the high demand among stakeholders for our evidence-based research and lessons learned in order to establish or support sustainable structures.</p> <p>Nevertheless, it should be noted here that IPIS does not have a direct consulting mandate for the benefit</p>	<p>Throughout the remaining years of this programme and also for future engagements, IPIS will continue supporting stakeholders who can contribute to an improvement with evidence and</p>	<p>Programme Management; Research/Policy Team</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

		<p>of a single company with a specific challenge, and will also do everything in its power to maintain its independence.</p>	<p>recommendations on the very operational level.</p> <p>Nevertheless, these investigations will have to be limited to case studies (limit of resources); however, general recommendations are distilled from the lessons learned and presented to the relevant stakeholders – beyond the individual case — at community level and at policy level.</p>		
9	<p>Search and IPIS could improve the accessibility and dissemination of its research findings by creating more user-friendly formats (e.g., infographics, policy briefs, webinars) tailored to different audiences, including policymakers, private sector actors, and CSOs.</p>	<p><b>Partially accepted:</b></p> <p>This finding was particularly relevant during the beginning of the programme, though we have since tried to improve this practice as best we could within our current resources and capacities. Especially some of our policy briefs on sustaining EU engagement in the Sahel region and research reports on environmental peacebuilding approaches in the Sahel have been widely appreciated and disseminated within Belgian and EU foreign affairs policy circles. We have also started to organise more webinars on specific topics of interest for our target audience.</p> <p>And while we do recognise that we can always do better in accessibility and dissemination efforts (despite notable improvements since the beginning of the programme), this has to be balanced with the available time and resources as part of the programme.</p>	<p>Within the time and resource constraints of the programme, we will continue to explore how we can improve the accessibility and dissemination of our research findings and policy products.</p>	<p>Directors, Policy Teams, Communication s Team, Programme Coordinators</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

10	Regularly revisiting and refining the Theory of Change (ToC) assumptions will support the continued relevance in light of shifting operational contexts and emerging challenges.	<b>Accepted:</b>  Our programme's focus has proven relevant, but given the significant shifts in the operational context, particularly with changing government priorities and the evolving funding environment, it is recommended that we periodically revisit and refine ToC assumptions to ensure they remain aligned with current realities. Currently, a slight adjustment to the wording of assumptions may be necessary to reflect new challenges in the peacebuilding landscape.	We commit to analysing our existing ToC in the first months of 2026, and refine/update it if need be given the current context. We aim to combine this exercise for the current programme with the ToC development process of a potential next phase of the programme.	Programme Coordinators, Policy Teams, M&E teams and Proposal Development Teams	June 2026
<b>TANZANIA OUTCOME RECOMMENDATIONS</b>					
1	Revise the second assumption in the ToC to better reflect the challenges surrounding civic participation in natural resource governance, particularly with regard to strategic litigation, in light of the current political climate.	<b>Accepted:</b>  We accept this recommendation. The current political environment in Tanzania presents significant constraints to strategic litigation as a form of civic participation in natural resource governance. Recognising this, we agree that the second assumption in the Theory of Change (ToC) should be revised to more accurately reflect the existing contextual and political realities.	To implement this recommendation, we will review and update the ToC in consultation with implementing partners and key stakeholders, ensuring that it captures a more realistic pathway for civic engagement under the current conditions. This may include shifting the program's focus toward alternative forms of accountability and advocacy, such as community dialogue, evidence-based policy engagement, and capacity strengthening for non-confrontational civic participation, both in the current and future programming cycles.	Programme Management; Research/Policy Team	November 2025 - February 2026
2	Strengthen gender integration in	<b>Accepted:</b>			

	<p>programme design, implementation, and evaluation.</p>	<p>We accept this recommendation. While we have made concerted efforts to integrate gender considerations throughout programme design, implementation, and monitoring, we recognise that achieving strong gender sensitivity in the context of natural resource governance remains a significant challenge due to deep-rooted structural and socio-cultural barriers.</p> <p>We recognise that further strengthening our approach is necessary to ensure that women and marginalised groups can participate more effectively and safely in governance processes.</p>	<p>To implement this recommendation, we will conduct a focused gender review of current activities in collaboration with partners in the final evaluation, with the aim of identifying practical entry points for improvement.</p> <p>To implement this recommendation, we will integrate gender considerations into the upcoming scoping studies, ensuring they capture the differentiated experiences and barriers faced by women and other marginalised groups. We will also adapt training and capacity-building activities to include gender-sensitive facilitation methods and content, and develop qualitative and context-specific gender indicators for the endline evaluation to go beyond numerical representation.</p> <p>Moving towards a new programme, we will strengthen capacity building on gender analysis and inclusive participation for both staff and partners.</p>	<p>Programme Management; Research/Policy Team</p>	<p>June 2026 and beyond</p>
3	<p>Strengthen post-training support to enhance practical application of PLE.</p>	<p><b>Partly Accepted:</b></p>	<p>To implement this recommendation, we will review and formalise existing follow-up</p>	<p>Programme Management;</p>	<p>October 2025 - Dezember 2026</p>

			<p>mechanisms to ensure that ongoing support, mentoring, and peer learning are structured and regularly monitored. We will also improve documentation and reporting of post-training engagement activities.</p> <p>For the future programme, we will also engage with the partner to investigate if additional support materials (e.g. toolkits and legal fact sheets) could further strengthen trainees' capacity to apply their learning effectively in their communities.</p>	Research/Policy Team	June 2026
4	Assess the practical benefits of translating targeted Kufuatilia tools into local vernacular languages (beyond Swahili).	<p><b>Not Accepted:</b></p> <p>We do not accept this recommendation at this stage. The Kufuatilia tool is intentionally designed for use by specific trained informants, and it is already accessible in Swahili - the primary working language for our partners and users. Expanding translation into additional local vernaculars is therefore not currently necessary and would not align with the tool's targeted use or operational scope. We recognise, however, that the suggestion raises a valuable point for consideration in the long-term evolution of the tool, particularly if its application is broadened to include wider community engagement in future programmes.</p>	To address this recommendation in the future, we will document and revisit the feasibility of multi-language integration during future programme design or scale-up phases, assessing whether broader accessibility would enhance the tool's effectiveness in different operational contexts.	Research/Policy Team; Proposal Development Teams	not applicable

5	Continue and broaden regular political context reflections to include a wider range of local CSO partners.	<p><b>Accepted:</b></p> <p>We accept this recommendation. Regular and inclusive reflection on the political context is crucial to ensure that the programme remains adaptive, relevant, and sensitive to the evolving civic space in Tanzania. We recognise the importance of broadening these discussions to include a wider range of local CSO partners to strengthen collective understanding, coordination, and risk mitigation.</p>	To implement this recommendation, we are planning with our partners to institutionalise bimonthly political context reflection sessions that engage both, us core partners and a broader network of local CSOs. These sessions will provide a structured space for joint analysis of political developments, identification of emerging risks, and sharing of adaptive strategies.	Programme Management; Research/Policy Team	Starting November 2025 and ongoing
<b>DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO OUTCOME RECOMMENDATIONS</b>					
1	Adopt outcome harvesting as an internal monitoring approach.	<p><b>Accepted:</b></p> <p>We accept this recommendation. We recognise that adopting outcome harvesting as an internal monitoring approach would strengthen our ability to capture qualitative changes and better document the programme's broader impact. This approach aligns well with our participatory monitoring objectives and would also enhance partner organisations' capacity — particularly CSOs engaged with Kufuatilia — to generate credible evidence of their contributions and leverage this for visibility and resource mobilisation.</p>	To implement this recommendation, we will plan to integrate collective reflection sessions into our regular monitoring cycle, where partners can discuss, validate, and document harvested outcomes, ensuring that this learning approach strengthens internal programme adaptation and also partners' and IPIS reporting capacities.	Programme Management; Research/Policy Team	Starting November 2025 and ongoing
2	Regarding Kufuatilia, the programme should assess the feasibility of	<p><b>Partly Accepted:</b></p>	To address this, we have already planned an internal one-to-one	Programme Management;	Ongoing

	<p>increasing the budget allocated to partners.</p>	<p>We partly accept this recommendation. We acknowledge the genuine needs and demands identified regarding partner resources for effective use of the Kufuatilia tool. However, it is important to underline that our current financial resources are limited, and this component of the programme was designed to complement and support ongoing partner activities, rather than fully fund them. It has become evident that this approach works well for some partners but presents challenges for others with more limited capacity or financial flexibility.</p>	<p>evaluation with each partner to assess their real capacities, operational needs, and financial requirements.</p> <p>Based on these findings, we will redraft accordingly the programme's partnership strategy - this could be by strengthening the networking and collaboration elements and, if necessary, reducing the number of partners to ensure that fewer partners receive stronger, more tailored support. This will allow us to improve impact, ensure more efficient resource use, and build a more sustainable foundation for the effective use of Kufuatilia across the programme.</p>	<p>Research/Policy Team</p>	<p>June 2026 (to be implemented with the new programme)</p>
3	<p>Regarding Kufuatilia, the programme could strengthen sustainability planning efforts.</p>	<p><b>Accepted:</b></p> <p>We agree that strengthening sustainability planning around Kufuatilia is essential to ensure the long-term relevance and impact of the platform beyond the current project cycle. Supporting partners to develop stronger capacities in fundraising, advocacy, and strategic partnerships will enable them to better leverage data and evidence generated through the platform for broader influence and policy engagement.</p>	<p>Based on the assessment that IPIS will implement in response to Recommendation Two, we will also investigate possible synergies and collaborations with other organisations to complement IPIS's engagement and partnerships. This will help ensure that sustainability efforts (such as capacity-building, advocacy support, and resource mobilisation) are addressed collectively and effectively.</p>	<p>Programme Management; Research/Policy Team; Proposal Development Teams</p>	<p>January 2025 - June 2026</p>

4	<p>Regarding Kufuatilia, the programme should formalise the network and clarify its vision and mission (both at the provincial and national level).</p>	<p><b>Partly Accepted:</b></p> <p>While we recognise the importance of clarifying the vision and mission of the Kufuatilia network, we would like to underline that Kufuatilia is not merely a monitoring tool, but rather a mechanism for reporting, organising, and following up on incidents through the engagement of our partner organisations. All partners already have allocated funds for reporting, follow-up, and dissemination activities to strengthen visibility and use of the tool. We therefore feel that the evaluator may not have fully captured the scope and purpose of Kufuatilia or the nature of our partnerships within this framework. Nevertheless, we acknowledge that further clarification of the network’s collective vision and mission — both internally and externally — would be beneficial to enhance understanding, ownership, and coordination.</p>	<p>To implement this recommendation, we will build on the internal evaluation process already planned in response to Recommendation Two, which will assess partner capacities, needs, and engagement levels. In parallel, IPIS is currently reviewing its own organisational vision and mission for Kufatilia (beyond the country DRC), and once this process provides greater clarity, we will broaden the discussion with partners to collectively define the shared purpose, structure, and long-term direction of the Kufuatilia network. This will ensure that the network’s vision and mission are coherent, realistic, and aligned with the operational capacities and strategic objectives of both IPIS and its partners.</p>	<p>Programme Management; Research/Policy Team; Proposal Development Teams</p>	<p>January 2025 - June 2026</p>
5	<p>The programme could explore synergies to maximise collective impacts of Kufuatilia.</p>	<p><b>Partly Accepted:</b></p> <p>Synergies - as referred to in this recommendation - have already been analysed and integrated in the design of this programme, and collaboration among in-country institutions, partners and stakeholders is a central feature of our approach. However, we agree that there is always room to further strengthen coordination and collective impact around Kufuatilia.</p>	<p>For the future, we will explore with our partners a realistic strategy to support or complement efforts to strengthen these in-country structures, identifying potential synergies with other actors as well. This will help enhance coordination, legitimacy, and the sustainability of engagement at the in-country level.</p>	<p>Programme Management; Research/Policy Team; Proposal Development Teams</p>	<p>June 2026</p>

		<p>We also underline that the strengthening of CPS and CLS structures is a valuable but complex and resource-intensive process. IPIS and its partners are already working with these institutions where feasible, though their limited functionality poses significant challenges.</p>			
6	<p>For training under Result Two, the project should improve the effectiveness by increasing the level of financial and human resources.</p>	<p><b>Partly Accepted:</b></p> <p>While we acknowledge the importance of ensuring adequate financial and human resources to improve the effectiveness of trainings under Result Two, we believe that the evaluator did not fully capture the training model and intended scope of this activity. IPIS engaged an in-country research institute with specific expertise to develop, with IPIS support, a training tool and to train state agents (SAEMAPE). These trained agents, together with an IPIS partner CSO, are responsible for providing trainings to mining cooperatives.</p> <p>It is important to note that this activity was designed as a pilot project, aimed at testing an innovative approach to capacity building through national structures. The pilot has proven highly successful, and the ideas and remarks raised in this recommendation will therefore be carefully considered in the design of the next programme phase, where we plan to build on the experience and lessons learned from this pilot.</p>	<p>An evaluation mission of the trainings conducted by SAEMAPE agents is already underway in one region, while implementation in other areas has been delayed due to insecurity. The results of this evaluation, together with the recommendations provided, will inform future planning; particularly regarding the potential for refresher trainings, expanded monitoring, and stronger collaboration initiatives.</p>	<p>Research/Policy Team; Proposal Development Teams</p>	<p>May 2025; June 2026 (new programme)</p>

7	<p>The project should also improve management of expectations for training under Result Two.</p>	<p><b>Accepted:</b></p> <p>We recognise that managing expectations and ensuring transparent communication with training participants under Result Two is crucial to maintaining trust, motivation, and clarity about project objectives and limitations. We also acknowledge this as an important finding of the evaluation.</p> <p>However, it is important to note that IPIS has limited direct influence over communication with the mining cooperatives, as this is primarily the responsibility of the implementing and referring partners. IPIS is not directly involved in the communication and coordination with the cooperatives.</p>	<p>Nevertheless, we will fully take this recommendation into consideration during future planning processes, working closely with partners to strengthen their communication strategies and expectation management practices.</p>	<p>Research/Policy Team; Proposal Development Teams</p>	<p>June 2026 (new programme)</p>
8	<p>The project should explore opportunities for scaling up training under results area three.</p>	<p><b>Partly Accepted:</b></p> <p>While we recognise the importance of enhancing collaboration and expanding training opportunities, we find that the recommendation conflates distinct objectives and activities under different results areas, making full acceptance difficult.</p> <p>Under Result Two, the training component was designed as a pilot project, which has been assessed as successful and is already planned to be scaled up in the next programme phase. In contrast, Result Three focuses on research activities implemented in collaboration with partner organisations, initially with support from an in-country research institute.</p>	<p>While we cannot fully implement this recommendation as formulated, we will reflect on its underlying intent to strengthen collaboration and stakeholder engagement.</p> <p>It is important to highlight that under result 4 (directly linked to result 3) the programme had foreseen opportunities to bring together different stakeholders (including local authorities, community representatives, and other relevant actors) through roundtable discussions organised jointly by IPIS and CSO partners. These platforms aim to facilitate dialogue and identify solutions that contribute to peace and improved governance in</p>	<p>Research/Policy Team; Proposal Development Teams</p>	<p>June 2026 (new programme)</p> <p>March 2026</p>

		<p>Following the temporary suspension of that collaboration, IPIS has taken over this component. However, the escalating conflict in the two Kivu regions has limited progress on research and engagement. Despite these constraints, IPIS and its partners remain committed to continuing conflict analysis and evidence generation where possible.</p>	<p>conflict-affected mining areas. Due to the ongoing insecurity in the Kivu Regions, IPIS will organise one round table in Ituri in the first half of 2026.</p> <p>In future planning, IPIS will continue exploring context-appropriate mechanisms for inclusive dialogue and capacity building.</p>		
<b>BURUNDI OUTCOME RECOMMENDATIONS</b>					
1	<p>Assess the possibility to continue supporting and monitoring the progress of groups trained by RIM until they reach a certain maturity.</p>	<p><b>Accepted:</b></p> <p>The participants were trained and supported. To help them carry out their business plans and keep their activities going after the project ends, more support may be needed. Participants raised concerns that the groups, even those who received grants, might fall apart without proper follow-up/monitoring. The project could look into continuing support through local coaches, who can help the groups put their plans into action and connect with microfinance institutions. This includes helping them apply for loans, use the money correctly, and repay it on time.</p>	<p>Establish regular monitoring and guidance activities on the use of subsidies and conduct an impact study to assess the economic and social changes generated by the groups. All these activities will be held in collaboration to ensure consistency.</p> <p>All the trained and supported groups have opened accounts with microfinance institutions, which can help them access loans and receive guidance on how to save income from their income-generating activities, using formal banking services.</p>	Project officer	July-December 2025
2	<p>Increase efforts to strengthen the inclusion of marginalised communities, including people with disabilities, albinos and the Batwa communities.</p>	<p><b>Accepted:</b></p> <p>As the project aims to empower women, even those from marginalized groups need to be involved. These groups are among the most vulnerable and frequently excluded from national empowerment programmes. Raising awareness is essential to challenge stigma, promote their human rights, and</p>	<p>Further involve marginalized individuals in community activities organized by Search, its partners, and beneficiaries, and monitor the progress brought about by the project within these communities.</p>	Project officer	July-December 2025

		ensure that empowerment initiatives are truly inclusive.	Involve marginalized communities more into media programmes through local facilitators.	Communication officer	October 2025
3	Increase transparency and communication on the project's objectives and capacities.	<p><b>Accepted:</b></p> <p>Not only within this project, but also in other interventions aimed at empowerment, participants often have high expectations of receiving additional support. Many perceive that NGOs or project interventions have significant funding available. Therefore, it is essential to ensure that participants develop a realistic understanding of what the project can provide and what it aims to achieve. Clear communication will help manage expectations and prevent participants from engaging in activities based on assumptions of future support that may not materialize.</p>	<p>Establish a cross-cutting communication system between implementers, focal points, and beneficiaries on all aspects related to the project objectives and expected results, ensure the dissemination of project-related information to field staff, beneficiaries, and all relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>Before each activity, the team will ensure communication on the project's objectives with key stakeholders during field missions and other project-related activities. The media team organized a joint planning session for the last half of the year with focal point journalists from partner media outlets. The session also included participation from partners RIM and Dushirehamwe, as well as the Director of Media, who serves as our focal point within the Ministry of Communication. During the session, the results of the mid-term evaluation were presented, serving as a relevant response to this recommendation. This initiative not only facilitated the sharing of project progress but also strengthened the partners' understanding of and ownership over the project's objectives.</p>	<p>Project officer</p> <p>Communication officer</p>	<p>July-December 2025</p> <p>July 2025</p>

			M&E team will take part in programmatic activities and ensure that all participants are aware of the project's objectives.	M&E Manager	September-October 2025
4	Continue to raise awareness on barriers to women's economic and social participation.	<p><b>Accepted:</b></p> <p>In countries with patriarchal systems like Burundi, interventions that target social norms and cultural barriers need continuous awareness-raising. Since these are deeply rooted social issues, change does not happen automatically. However, it is encouraging to see some positive progress.</p> <p>This mid-term evaluation identified several ongoing barriers to women's economic participation including fear of backlash, religious restrictions, and limits on women's freedom of expression, such as speaking freely on the radio. These findings show that more awareness-raising efforts are needed to address these challenges.</p>	<p>The media team will continue to address themes related to the economic and social participation of women in media productions.</p> <p>As the media tool is a flagship instrument of Search Burundi, our fundraising efforts for other initiatives will also cover this important aspect given the country's context.</p>	Communication team	August 2025 to January 2026
5	Address remaining needs of media professionals to further improve their ability to produce content that supports the transformation of discriminatory social norms and cultural barriers for women.	<p><b>Partially Accepted:</b></p> <p>Of course, the needs of media professionals will always be challenging. Training helps improve their ability to create content that supports changing discriminatory social norms and cultural barriers against women. These trainings have been organized, and the indicators show good progress.</p> <p>However, staff turnover causes problems. When the project starts, focal points are trained, but after some time, they move to other sectors. To address this, the team understands the need to train media professionals who are likely to stay longer, such as</p>	The project will conduct a Training of Trainers (ToT) aimed at media executives and heads of programme departments to enhance their skills in gender-sensitive journalism and economic reporting. This initiative seeks to address the remaining needs of media professionals and further improve their capacity to produce content that supports the transformation of discriminatory social norms and cultural barriers against women.	Communication team and Country Director	December 2025

		<p>programme directors. This way, they can share their knowledge with others more easily.</p> <p>It is important to note that these challenges are closely linked to the broader issue of limited resource mobilization, which remains one of the major structural constraints affecting the Burundian media landscape. High staff turnover and weak institutional capacity are direct consequences of underfunding. While the project addresses some of these gaps, it cannot tackle the systemic problem alone. Strengthening the media sector in a sustainable way will require broader and coordinated efforts beyond the scope of this intervention.</p>	<p>Furthermore, a capitalization session will be organized to specifically address this issue, providing a platform to collectively explore how media outlets can sustain and advance these efforts beyond the scope of the project. This session will also serve as a key opportunity to inform our ongoing advocacy and resource mobilization efforts, recognizing that overcoming these challenges is crucial for the future resilience and impact of the media sector.</p>		
6	Enhance capacity-strengthening of partners and affiliated staff.	<p><b>Accepted:</b></p> <p>As highlighted in the MTE, we know that finance and M&amp;E capacities are complex and require specific technical skills. Many local organizations may face gaps in these areas, and it's important to acknowledge and raise this issue. Another challenge is retaining skilled staff due to insufficient salary levels. Often, employees prefer working with international NGOs rather than local organizations, and the local labor market tends to demand highly skilled professionals in finance and M&amp;E.</p>	<p>Organize two coaching sessions on M&amp;E with RIM and Dushirehamwe, focusing on evaluation study processes, data analysis reporting, and documentation.</p>	M&E Manager	Aug-September 2025
7	Improve indicators to better capture impacts.	<p><b>Not Accepted:</b></p> <p>Based on what was planned and approved in the start of the project, these indicators were well designed to respond to the requirements, priorities of the donor and Search. We estimate that the</p>	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable

		impact can be measured without having to revise them.			
8	Build synergies with other international organisations intervening in the target localities to achieve greater collective impact.	<p><b>Partially accepted:</b></p> <p>Despite the challenging funding context, where most organizations have scaled back or completely halted their interventions in the targeted areas, limiting their presence on the ground, we will pursue opportunities to strengthen synergies and complementarities wherever possible. This approach has already been implemented with other ACNG partners, such as KIYO and Médecins Sans Vacances, whom Search has supported to enhance gender integration in their activities and within their monitoring and evaluation systems.</p>	Continue to seek opportunities to strengthen synergies and complementarities where possible.	Programme manager	December 2026
9	Develop mitigation measures and explore alternative forms of financial support to avoid the risk of market distortion.	<p><b>Accepted:</b></p> <p>This issue was indeed considered during the implementation phase, as the national market had become increasingly unstable, putting beneficiaries at risk of economic distortion. In response, the team organized community awareness activities, including town hall meetings, to inform beneficiaries about the situation and equip them with strategies to adapt. One practical initiative was launched in Muyinga Province, where participants engaged in cross-border trade by selling their products in Tanzania, earning Tanzanian shillings, and importing goods to be resold in Burundi.</p>	Two town-hall sessions will be organized between October and November to build on the project's achievements and promote women's economic participation. The sessions will also explore how women can sustain this momentum after the project ends, with a particular focus on the border localities of Rumonge and Muyinga.	Project officer	October- November 2025