Format Annual Plan

Contributing to Peaceful and Safe Societies 2024-2031

1. **Planned intervention strategies for country-level adaptive locally led programming to achieve thematic objectives (peacebuilding and/or mediation, or security for persons and communities):**

   a. **What are your main (updated) foreseen pathways of change related to the thematic outcomes per country?**
   NB: We are not asking for detailed country-specific activity plans (output level). Rather, partners are asked to specify their intervention strategy and corresponding types of activities per country, in relation to the planned policy influencing intervention strategy.

The overarching goal of the NEST project across all countries is to shift the focus of policy- and decision-makers across scales (from local through global) away from force protection as the primary means of understanding and practicing safety and security in violence-affected states. Instead, the project aims to foster an understanding of security that centres locally led, nonviolent, relational forms of security – including Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP) – as an effective, strategic, and powerful practice for preventing and responding to conflict and security threats. This goal is reflected in country intervention strategies and pathways of change as described below.

The main pathways of change in the **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)** centre on collaborating with communities to implement nonviolent security models, reinforcing civilian protection structures in areas affected by the withdrawal of The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), and leveraging policy influence to shape security dynamics in transitional settings. This links to broader policy conversations around protection gaps that are persistently an issue in UN peacekeeping transitions, a key thematic of this project.

While **Sudan** is also technically a context of transition, the ongoing conflict and the devastating impact this has had across the country instead demands implementation of nonviolent security approaches in a dynamic and extremely hostile environment. With government structures brought to their knees and humanitarian response almost non-existent in some areas of the country, community protection and local level solutions to violence and conflict are critical. The essential and effective civilian-led response in Sudan provides a powerful example of how UCP can work in high-intensity conflict settings where the space for external humanitarian access is limited and demonstrates the need to identify and leverage entry points for regional and international stakeholders to support this kind of work.

In **Iraq**, NP is prioritizing the expansion and safeguarding of civic space, aiming to create an environment where grassroots communities and civil society actors can actively influence national policy and decision-making processes. NP's strategy is focused on developing community-led advocacy that addresses key stabilisation issues such as healing and reconciliation, safe returns for displaced populations, and the inclusion of women in peace and security dialogues. NP is working closely and collectively with local community protection mechanisms, civil society organizations, journalists and human rights defenders (HRDs) to ensure that community-driven strategies, capacities and needs are at the forefront of advocacy efforts. By grounding the intervention in evidence-based strategies and participatory approaches, NP is laying the foundation for more inclusive, sustainable civic engagement, positioning Iraqi civil society to meaningfully influence long-term policy changes locally, nationally and regionally.

In **South Sudan**, NP seeks to integrate security of people into a development transition, while maintaining and strengthening locally and nationally driven standing capacity to mitigate relapse into

active conflict. NP will strengthen the centrality of protection and the representation of Community Protection Teams (CPTs) into local peace- and decision-making processes as well as in development projects, systems and discourse. NP will also strengthen local capacities to influence policy and decision making by enhancing advocacy capacity at the grassroots level and strengthen a nation-wide community around UCP and nonviolence that connects grassroots CPTs across ethnic and tribal fault lines, national HRD networks, national NGOs and government allies. This rainbow coalition is envisioned to act as a locally driven national peace force that constructively engages policy makers on shared security concerns, while also equipped to rapidly respond to escalation of conflict at the community level.

Outcome 1: Increase Policy Support, Recognition, and Funding for Unarmed Approaches for the Security of People and Communities

By engaging directly with local communities to strengthen community-led, nonviolent security practices and documenting lessons and outcomes, NP aims to provide tangible evidence of the impact of unarmed interventions to local, national and international policymakers. In 2025, NP will collaborate with partners such as Everyday Peace Indicators and ConnexUs (Search for Common Ground) to enhance localized Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) frameworks, ensuring that lessons and findings are effectively translated into impactful advocacy initiatives capable of shaping key policy issues, such as peacekeeping transitions as well as humanitarian and nexus models at both the national and international levels.

Robust MEAL systems, including enhanced participatory methodologies, will assess community-level protection efforts and generate reliable data, ensuring that the learning process is driven by local contexts and community voices. This evidence will be used to create policy briefs, case studies, and other advocacy materials, supporting the integration of UCP approaches within broader peacekeeping and peacebuilding frameworks. This policy influencing and learning loop will enable continuous refinement and effective articulation of UCP models and practices, promoting its adoption within peacekeeping transitions and in contexts where there are failures to address civilian protection needs.

In the first six months of the program, this approach already demonstrated some tangible outputs for the **Sudan** country program. As explicated in more detail in the first progress report, the ability to amplify community voices and translate safety information into early warning briefs at an international level has resulted in greater recognition of the role of local protection and response networks. Further, while the Protection of Civilians (PoC) agenda remains fairly high within the context of Sudan, NP will utilise the approaches mentioned above to drive the inclusion of UCP more specifically within the national coordination forums and response funding mechanisms.

In the **DRC,** NP aims to increase policy support, recognition, and funding for UCP by leveraging recent advocacy successes, including the renewal of MONUSCO's mandate, which emphasized the strengthening of unarmed protection mechanisms. With MONUSCO's ongoing withdrawal, there is both a heightened need and a unique opportunity to demonstrate the effectiveness of community-based UCP approaches, showcasing nonviolent methods as viable alternatives to militarized security models. Launching this project in early 2025, at such a critical juncture, offers NP a platform to shape broader peacekeeping policies. NP has already been invited to participate in several provincial levels workshops to present UCP approaches. Firstly, the MONUSCO Civil Affairs Retreat, the 'Atelier USAID-ONGI Protection des Civils au Sud Kivu' and most recently a three-day meeting of the Inter-Provincial Security Council in North Kivu. These workshops comprised key stakeholders involved in the transition process and have presented key opportunities to sensitise various entities on UCP and how NP intends to move forward in support of unarmed protection. The groundwork being laid in country also situates NP to engage at regional and international policy levels as the program grows into 2025 and beyond.

For **Sudan**, a partnership with the European Union will seek to compliment the work under the "Contributing to Peaceful and Safe Societies 2024-2031" grant programme and expand the scale at which UCP activities, outreach, contextual application and evidence can be documented. Similarly, in **DRC**, partnerships with organisations such as the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and MONUSCO, including through a two-year project funded by PBF expected to begin in late 2024/early 2025, will support in further mobilizing communities and expanding unarmed protection initiatives in DRC. These partnerships will be crucial in ensuring that unarmed protection approaches gain the recognition and traction necessary to be effectively integrated into the broader peacebuilding and peacekeeping frameworks as well as humanitarian response planning. To support this, NP will implement structured learning sessions with partners, including Dutch Embassies and Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), to facilitate the sharing of local-level insights and lessons learned, contributing to ongoing improvement of interventions and joint advocacy efforts. Additionally, regular reflection meetings with frontline protection officers, community representatives, and advocacy teams will be held to assess progress, identify successes, and make necessary adjustments to enhance the effectiveness of our initiatives.

In **Iraq**, NP will focus on expanding civic space and enabling grassroots communities and civil society actors to meaningfully engage in national decision-making processes. A key strategy for 2025 will be conducting comprehensive participatory protection assessments and policy analysis to better understand Iraq's evolving security and policy context. These assessments will map both physical and digital protection gaps and identify the key stakeholders and duty bearers that must be influenced to create change, at multiple scales – local, national, regional, and later international. Through this participatory process, NP will work closely with CPTs and other civil society members to collectively develop advocacy strategies on key policy issues such as healing and reconciliation, the safe return and reintegration of displaced populations, and women's inclusion in peace and security dialogues. This locally driven advocacy will be supported by capacity-sharing initiatives aimed at enhancing CPTs and civil society actors' collective ability to effectively and directly engage with policymakers and articulate their concerns at both local and national levels over the first years of the project, and then transitionally in the later years of the project.

A key pathway for change will be supporting CPTs in Ninewa to actively work and engage with other local civil society actors such as HRDs, journalists, and activists at local, provincial and then national levels. By fostering active collaboration between these actors, NP will seek to accelerate the development of a diverse and inclusive networks capable of advocating for policy changes at multiple levels, drawing off lessons learned in the development and NP's long-term support to the South Sudan Human Rights Defenders Network. This initiative will also seek to build advocacy capacity within local groups, ensuring that they are equipped to engage meaningfully with duty bearers on protection issues and influence decision-making processes. Our aim is that these efforts will lead to stronger, community-driven advocacy for inclusive, representative policies that reflect the protection needs of the most affected populations in Iraq.

In **South Sudan** NP will enhance the capacity of CPTs. Such efforts and opportunities have grown organically when NP brought these groups together at state and national level and drew decision makers and human rights advocates into these spaces. This convergence of actors has taken place at the exact time when the Government of South Sudan postponed the highly anticipated elections from 2024 to 2026. In addition, the upcoming national security bill is likely to impact the security of human rights advocates. A variety of other sources of insecurity that play out at the community level intersect with the national peace process. While there is more attention to formal instruments at the national level, many of the formal processes at community level (like the Tumaini agreement) as well as informal peace processes are equally important. Many CPTs already work to influence these processes and HRDs have started to mobilise CPTs in state-level advocacy. However, these advocacy efforts are not systematic or strategic. More confidence and networks need to be built for CPTs to wield collective power.

Baseline surveys in 2025 are aimed to assess existing depth and breathe of current advocacy efforts among CPTs in all country programmes. NP will also make efforts to connect CPTs to more formal processes at the grassroots level. Rather than merely inviting individual CPTs to participate in national or regional policy forums to represent the voices of communities, NP intends to strengthen collective power among CPTs at places where they are most grounded and confident, allowing them to lead efforts to influence or set agendas. In order for these efforts to be truly locally led, more effort will be undertaken in the next 18 months to support CPTs in mapping collective areas of concern and corresponding agendas, policies and systems that govern these concerns.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) in South Sudan will also be conducted in 2025 among a number of CPTs to assess areas of advocacy that communities find most meaningful and what objectives are most likely to succeed. It will also explore levels of risk that CPTs are currently taking and assess the extent in which risk levels will change if they become more visible. Furthermore, dialogue will held with development actors with the aim of raising the voices of local communities in development policy discourse, and centralise issues of security, so that development objectives are increasingly locally driven and owned.

Finally, NP aims to bolster support for UCP approaches through regional and transnational engagements. We will connect emerging protection networks in the DRC with those established in Sudan, South Sudan, and Burundi to build a stronger advocacy platform within the African Union (AU). This collaboration will seek to influence policies and programs that enhance civilian protection and secure institutional recognition and support for nonviolent security strategies. In 2025, NP will develop an AU advocacy plan, working alongside the UCP community of practice and other partners to advance these efforts.

Outcome 2: Mobilize National and Regional Networks of Practitioners, Researchers, and Supporters Around Unarmed Approaches to Security and Nonviolence

In **DRC**, NP aims to strengthen (or setup if currently absent) local CPTs, including Women Protection Teams (WPTs), Youth Protection Teams (YPTs), and Local Security and Protection Councils (LSPCs) initially established by MONUSCO, to enhance community resilience and support community-driven protection initiatives in South Kivu. Once these teams are established or strengthened, and UCP activities are underway in communities, NP will support the teams in building diverse coalitions across different identity groups (more below). We expect the work on coalition building to begin in mid to late 2025. These coalitions will be instrumental in supporting and reinforcing local protection and conflict prevention mechanisms while strengthening social cohesion and preventing division within South Kivu.

In **Sudan**, similar community protection mechanisms (established and strengthened with support of NP) have already been implementing UCP approaches for a couple of years in Zamzam IDP camp. These have operated in a less structured governance environment – creating both opportunities and challenges for this outcome. While there remains more potential for change within this specific outcome, the groups have less official mandate under which to conduct their activities. This requires heavy advocacy, sensitization and stakeholder engagement about the principles and purpose of UCP as well as of the role of the groups themselves. Within the context of conflict that rests heavily on identity politics, it is anticipated that primary networks and coalitions will be developed at a very local level, before looking to expand in reach and inclusion in later years. That said, Sudanese civil society is already very strong, particularly with regards to women's rights and participation. As such, it is not anticipated that scaling out networks of supporters will prove challenging.

In **Iraq**, NP will focus on enhancing cooperation between CPTs and other civil society members. This will facilitate collaboration among diverse actors to collectively advocate for policy changes at the national level. Such cooperation will be expanded to include practitioners, academics and researchers – as identified through the participatory mapping process outlined above. Their

involvement will offer valuable expertise in evidenced-based research to strengthen advocacy efforts. Indeed, it will enhance the CPTs and other civil society members' capacity to generate credible data and insights to promote UCP practices. At the same time, they will also contribute to the participatory research, providing insights on evidence-based findings.

In **South Sudan**, NP has already brought together CPTs, HRDs, government representatives and other actors at state and national level, across ethnic and tribal fault lines. As such it will feature as area of learning for other country programmes as they move in a similar direction. In areas such as Pibor, Walgak and Ulang CPTs have already started to work together. Baseline data will capture the current extent of this inter-ethnic collaboration. Over the coming years NP will strengthen synergy of these initiatives and foster togetherness of this community at state and national level so that it can become a force of nonviolent constructive action in the country. More efforts will also be undertaken in the coming year to strengthen partnerships with government and sections of the armed forces, including as programme implementation partners. National NGOs also remain insufficiently involved or aware of these efforts, and will be brought in as key partners. Ultimately this rainbow coalition of actors is envisioned to play a role as a collective nationally driven peace force that rapidly responds to conflict escalation.

In the longer term, NP will increasingly link local community protection initiatives with national and regional networks across the region, including in South Sudan, Sudan, and Burundi and possibly in countries where MFA partners are doing similar work or work with local partners with shared interests. By creating collaborative platforms involving practitioners, researchers, and supporters, NP seeks to scale out UCP practices, encourage knowledge exchange, and foster a broader shift toward nonviolent security solutions. This includes practical support for program implementation, as well as greater influence on regional security policies. For instance, we plan to collaborate with the Creating Safer Space Network to conduct qualitative and quantitative research on the impact of localized UCP actions in areas affected by MONUSCO's withdrawal. This research will help identify effective practices and innovative models that can be replicated. Initially, this partnership will focus on South Sudan, but there may be potential for expansion into the DRC in 2025-26. Through this and similar initiatives, NP will ensure that research findings inform regional advocacy and support the development of evidence-based, community-led approaches to security.

Outcome 3: Enhance Collective Learning and Critical Evidence, and Articulate Exemplary, Culturally Appropriate Models of Unarmed Approaches to Security

A key pathway of change is the generation of high-quality evidence to substantiate the impact of UCP approaches on community safety and security perceptions. As discussed in further detail above, in 2025, NP will focus on establishing MEAL frameworks and conducting a baseline evaluation. These frameworks place emphasis on indicators that are identified and monitored by and for communities themselves, ensuring that the learning process remains community-led and relevant. By focusing on high-quality evidence collection in partnership with communities from the outset, NP aims to produce quantitative and qualitative data that can demonstrate the relevance and effectiveness of nonviolent approaches, including in transitional settings. This evidence is not only crucial for internal learning and project adaptation but also serves as a foundation for influencing policy debates on civilian-led security and its mechanisms for sustaining protection outcomes.

For Women's Protection Networks, NP will facilitate inter-country learning between groups in **Sudan, South Sudan and Iraq**. In each of these countries, WPTs are at a different stage in their learning, development and autonomy, and will act as peer support and thought partners to each other. Joint learning initiatives will also allow NP greater insight into the differing cultural considerations that local communities put into their choices of risk mitigation and UCP implementation.

In **Sudan, South Sudan and Iraq**, partnerships with local organisations engaging in protection/UCP activities will also play a key part in understanding how different partnerships models can be utilised

to out-scale UCP practice and increase the number of practitioners at the very local level. Detailed partner capacity support and mentoring will evidence the trajectory, successes and challenges of such an approach. It is anticipated this would feed into national and international policy discussion on the funding of local partners as well as add further material for global debate over risk sharing.

Sudan in the immediate term also offers an opportunity to pilot, review and enhance the remote technical support that can be provided to teams engaging in UCP programming and how this can evolve over time. With the context in North Darfur currently allowing no access to external practitioners, NP is engaging in a pilot program of remote technical support to its team, with the further roll out to partner community groups. It is anticipated that some areas of UCP may prove more adaptable to this implementation methodology than others but all evidence and learning will be thoroughly documented. This pilot will contribute to global discussion on feasibility and technical integrity of out-scaling UCP models in countries or contexts with very low levels of access.

In **DRC**, where an entire generation has only known civilian protection as something conducted by armed actors, the proof of concept of NP's direct protection activities will prove critical to the achievement of this outcome. Detailed learning will be vital to demonstrate how an unarmed model can and potentially be replicated in such a context. It is hoped that outcomes of NP's learning process can be documented in order to inform and contribute to the transition planning for North Kivu and Uturi.

The simultaneous implementation of UCP practices in the **DRC and Darfur** provides an opportunity to produce comparative lessons learned and research data on UCP effectiveness in different transitional contexts. This comparative analysis will enable NP to advance its advocacy for locally led protection approaches, offering insights into culturally appropriate and context-specific models of nonviolent security. This evidence base will be vital for articulating effective civilian-led security models, thereby enhancing the credibility and support for UCP initiatives globally.

The scale of CPTs in **South Sudan**, some of them having operated for years without the support of NP, provides an opportunity for exploring learning questions from multiple angles, including the limitations of their reach, the scope and intensity of their interventions, levels of collaboration with other CPTs across ethnic and tribal fault lines (including frequency of engagement), risk management, gender, and levels of engagement and influence with policy and decision makers. These issues will be covered both in baseline exercises as well as in Participatory Action Research (PAR) that will be carried out in 2025. The PAR will start in Pibor. Other areas of learning for NP in South Sudan are the extent to which CPTs engage with security (UNMISS) humanitarian, and development actors, how they are engaged (as recipients or agents) and to what extent locally led approaches and security issues are integrated or embedded in potential collaborations with these actors. NP is curious to understand better to what extent do NP and CPTs inspire others around them to adapt their efforts or approach and move agency to local actors.

Outcome 4: Implement Preventive and Response Actions That Enhance the Security of People and Communities Through Nonviolent Means

The pathway to change focuses on strengthening nonviolent community mechanisms that prevent and respond to conflict in a way that sustainably enhances the security of people and communities. Reflecting on the opportunities in the context of start-up, this objective, along with advocacy efforts outlined above, represents the highest level of effort in **DRC and Sudan** for 2025.

As we engage with local communities, assess existing protection strategies, and support communities in re-imagining their own nonviolent approaches to security, we anticipate the start-up or scaling out CPTs, including WPTs, YPTs, and LSPCs, to enhance community resilience and support community-driven protection initiatives in **Sudan, DRC and Iraq**. Drawing on NP's experience in Darfur, where community-led protection mechanisms are being sustained through active conflict, NP intends to

adapt and reinforce this model in the DRC in particular to strengthen community-led initiatives. In South Sudan, the scaling out process will explore different forms that NP can step back or forward to strengthen the autonomy and efficacy of the CPTs – including the mobilisation of local NGOs as intermediaries, or national NP teams or individuals closely/loosely tied to CPTs. This relates localisation to a process of transition at micro-level and explores the connection between political transition and exit or adaptation strategies.

In **DRC**, teams will work directly with communities at risk, particularly in and around internally displaced persons (IDP) camps and rural areas of South Kivu, where threats to security are most prevalent. Their work will necessarily include NP-supported engagement with security forces and other groups that may move into the vacuum left by MONUSCO's withdrawal, with the goal of deterring potentially harmful behaviour. Already communities and local authorities are reporting exacerbated protection gaps since the withdrawal of troops in June this year and so heavy focus will be on mobilising and building the capacity of local teams responsibly, yet as quickly as possible.

In **Iraq**, NP will focus on strengthening community-driven protection initiatives in Ninewa, particularly in ISIS-affected areas of Sinjar, Tel Afar, Ba'aj, South Mosul, and Mosul, where the risks of inter- and intra-communal violence are high as IDPs and returnees increasingly return to their areas of origin or displacement. To address these risks, NP will facilitate healing and reconciliation processes between returning populations and host communities, fostering trust and promoting peaceful coexistence. NP will also assist safe returns and reintegration for displaced populations by providing protective accompaniment and presence to support the return process and ensure people's safety and security after they have returned. Additionally, NP will prioritize women's inclusion in peace and security dialogues, enabling them to play a central role in decision-making processes related to security and community rebuilding.

While the activities for Tel Afar, Ba'aj, and Sinjar will be covered by the existing grant with the Embassy of the Netherlands in Iraq, NEST will complement and expand on this work, particularly through parallel advocacy efforts. NP will centre its advocacy efforts on engaging local duty bearers and civil society actors to address security needs and improve access to services, thereby reducing tensions, particularly between returnees and host communities. In addition, NP will support CPTs in collaborating with civil society actors to advocate for more responsive protection policies and activities at both the state and national levels. By fostering strong relationships between communities, civil society, and duty bearers, NP aims to ensure that protection concerns are addressed across multiple levels, from local communities to national decision-making bodies.

Additionally, the NEST project will place significant emphasis on digital protection and security, as the digital sphere has become a growing source of conflict in Iraq. Disinformation, online harassment, and hate speech can quickly escalate tensions between groups. In 2025, NP will begin implementing digital literacy and digital protection programs in Iraq, equipping communities with the tools to identify and counter harmful online behaviour, while also engaging with local authorities to advocate for stronger digital security measures.

Inclusivity is central to NP's pathway of change. NP aims to ensure that marginalized voices are represented and that protection strategies address the specific needs of different community segments. This approach not only strengthens community resilience but also challenges the exclusion of groups such as women and youth from security decisions and initiatives. NP will also promote collective security and cohesion by supporting the building of diverse coalitions across identity lines, with coalition-building work expected to begin in mid to late 2025. These coalitions will be instrumental in supporting and reinforcing local protection and conflict prevention mechanisms while strengthening social cohesion and preventing division within Iraq, Sudan, South Kivu, DRC. By fostering collaboration among diverse groups, NP enables communities to collectively address

security issues, laying the groundwork for more inclusive, community-driven security structures that are better equipped to handle threats, even in the absence of international actors.

b. How are lessons learned from the previous year(s) applied in the implementation of the upcoming year?

One key lesson from Darfur, **Sudan**, is the importance of establishing resilient community protection structures that can endure ongoing conflict. WPTs in Darfur have demonstrated remarkable resilience, driven by the strong commitment of participants and the trust and access they have earned within their communities. This resilience is essential for maintaining effective protection during periods of active conflict. With the support of the "Contributing to Peaceful and Safe Societies 2024-2031" grant programme, we intend to further investigate the factors that contribute to the resilience and effectiveness of protection mechanisms, particularly WPTs in Darfur and South Sudan. Based on these insights, in the DRC, we aim to test and replicate these successful elements to establish inclusive and trusted community-led groups, such as WPTs and YPTs.

A key lesson learned across multiple countries, and reinforced most recently in **Iraq**, is the critical importance of inclusivity and diversity within community protection structures. In Iraq, NP's experience has demonstrated that the success and long-term sustainability of community protection efforts are directly tied to how well these structures reflect the diversity of the communities they serve. When community protection groups are inclusive, ensuring that a wide range of voices—including those of women, youth, and ethnic/religious minorities—are heard, they are better able to identify and address the unique protection needs across the community. This diversity fosters greater trust and legitimacy, as more community members feel their concerns are represented. Additionally, inclusive structures create opportunities for different perspectives to be shared, which can lead to more innovative and comprehensive approaches to civilian protection. Without such inclusivity, there is a significant risk that certain groups will be overlooked or underserved, potentially undermining the effectiveness of the protection efforts and alienating key segments of the community. Therefore, NP continues to prioritize inclusivity and diversity as foundational elements in designing and implementing community protection programs, recognizing that these principles are not just beneficial but essential to the success of locally led protection initiatives.

NP's Responsible Partnership model has introduced innovative practices in the humanitarian sector in Ukraine, with far-reaching impacts beyond this crisis. By collaborating closely with local organizations, we have ensured that our interventions are rooted in local contexts and effectively address community-specific challenges. In **DRC, Sudan, South Sudan and Iraq**, we will seek to apply this Responsible Partnership approach by working alongside local civil society and community-based groups to co-design and implement UCP-type activities that align with the unique needs of each community. Within Sudan, we will also utilise this approach to help fill critical gaps in the protection response – particularly in areas that remain hard to reach or with little access for external actors. In many locations of Darfur, local communities are entirely on their own at this point. Governance structures have broken down and external assistance has been blocked and hampered by a plethora of factors. As such, being able to support pre-existing, community level partners are a vital methodology.

Another critical lesson we are still learning—and that the project will help us further explore across all four country programmes—is how to scale the impact of community-based protection mechanisms from the hyperlocal level to the state and national levels, thereby influencing broader programming and policy initiatives. From our work in **South Sudan and Iraq**, we have learned that fostering trust and collaboration between local protection teams, both horizontally and vertically—including with government structures—is essential to their success and the broader scaling of these mechanisms. This requires establishing clear communication channels, demonstrating the effectiveness of community-led approaches through tangible results, and building strong advocacy

skills among community members to enable effective engagement with authorities. In **Sudan**, this will be particularly pertinent throughout any peace discussions. At the national level, there have been some attempts to include civil society on the fringes of peace negotiations. Yet wide inclusion or inclusion in local level peace initiatives remains elusive.

In **South Sudan**, we have taken initial steps by connecting local protection teams with provincial- and national-level authorities and broader networks, which has demonstrated how local practices can be adapted and scaled to higher levels. However, translating these community-based successes into recognized and adopted state and national policies demands persistent advocacy, robust evidence of impact, and continuous capacity sharing. Our work in the **DRC** will be crucial in further developing our understanding of how to bridge this gap effectively, ensuring that the voices of local communities contribute meaningfully to shaping national policies for civilian protection.

In **Iraq**, NP has recognized that grassroots advocacy efforts are significantly strengthened when community protection mechanisms can effectively influence and work with broader civil society structures and organisations that operate beyond the local level. These actors bring added value through their wider networks and connections, amplifying the reach and impact of local voices. In 2025, NP will begin facilitating this integration, ensuring that CPTs are increasingly connected with civil society to create a more inclusive and diverse advocacy platform that reflects the needs of all segments of society.

2. **Planned initiatives for evidence-based policy influencing to achieve thematic objectives as established in the MEL strategy (peacebuilding and/or mediation, or security for persons and communities):**

    a. **Which agendas and policies, and which main events will be targeted (including intended target groups) – and with what purpose (to which foreseen policy change will the initiatives contribute)?**

Our policy advocacy efforts are centred around three key themes: the utility and power of civilian-led nonviolent protection efforts; gender and the role of marginalised communities in responses; and protection in the context of peacekeeping transitions. These themes cross-cut the country-specific programming and connect on the ground protection work to broader scale policy influencing. Shaping policy to better reflect the power and support civilian-led UCP efforts means amplifying civilian voices. In the coming year, NP will continue to build on existing momentum by pursuing this in key regional and international policy fora, including Geneva Peace Week, European Humanitarian Forum, Protection of Civilians Week at UN Headquarters in New York, and through the Global Protection Cluster. In the past we have pushed hard to have civilians centred at these events, and we will build on this momentum. We aim to have conflict-impacted representatives attend these events in person, noting the ongoing challenges we face in securing visas for people from project locations. By taking a 'nothing about us without us' approach to influencing protection policies, we want to see decisions and policies better reflect the priorities and actions of civilians themselves.

Our approach to gender and integration of marginalised identity groups in policy influencing seeks to be integrative – through the above listed events and policy entry points, pushing for gender to be a throughline rather than a silo. This also pushes back against recent research/data agendas on protection (e.g. the global protection index) that, in seeking broad claims about protection impacts and risks, have overlooked the need to disaggregate data and provide depth of analysis about how protection risks impact different groups.

In terms of peacekeeping transitions, all four country programmes have experiences that are instructive in terms of better understanding protection gaps and impacts. At the international level, we will focus on UN mission mandate renewals as a key entry point for engagement. We also seek to influence ongoing debates about a potential new peace operation in Sudan. We are deeply

concerned about the way that debates about peacekeeping operations are often conflated with debates about civilian protection as a whole – evident currently in the debate on Sudan in particular – and our priority is reminding key decision makers that they are not one and the same, with a view to understanding and resourcing other pathways for protection response.

b. Which main steps will you take to influence these agendas and policies?

Key steps that we will take in 2025 to influence the above agendas and policies include:

- A focus on developing advocacy and storytelling training with our national staff teams and community-based protection teams and working with our communications staff to uplift in public media and events.
- As far as possible, pre-plan visas and logistics for key NP staff who are also conflict-affected persons to enable them to attend key international and regional policy events in person.
- Finalise MOUs and contracts with key partners – e.g. Creating Safer Space, ODI and NORCAP – to increase research capacity across themes (ODI) and to provide an avenue to training and capacity work with protection staff in the humanitarian sector writ large (PROCAP roster via NORCAP).
- Continue to attend and work with key membership groups, including Protection and Prevention Working Group, Alliance for Peacebuilding, Global Protection Cluster, European Peacebuilding Liaison Office, as a core means of working in coalition for policy influencing, and influencing other humanitarian and peacebuilding organisations toward civilian-led approaches.
- Roll out NP presence at AU and Middle East and North Africa (MENA) levels, beginning with finalising hiring representatives, mapping and strategy exercises to identify key stakeholders at the AU and MENA regional levels, and begin engagement with key membership groups, organising bodies, and stakeholders at the AU and MENA levels.
- Hire media adviser, and begin deepening of our communications work with a spotlight on the risks faced by CPTs, and their civilian-led responses, as a way of storytelling around civilian-led protection and the differential risks faced by marginalised groups, particularly women and girls.

c. Where do you foresee opportunities to strategically align with the MFA and with other stakeholders? Where relevant, reflect on alignment with other grant partners as well

NP already has a strong working relationship with the MFA and colleagues in country and UN missions and we will continue to build on this momentum. Where possible we will, as we have in the past, seek to collaborate with the MFA and other Dutch Government partners on co-sponsorship of events and side-events. This begins in the new period with a co-hosted side event featuring NP and NP partner organisations from Sudan, South Sudan, Iraq and Ukraine on the sidelines of Geneva Peace Week (October 2024). We anticipate replicating this approach into the new year at events such as Protection of Civilians week and European Humanitarian Forum. This is also an opportunity to work alongside other grant partners, as we have in the past – Protection Week 2024 is an emblematic example of this (co-hosted by NP, KNL-UN, Pax, CIVIC among others), and rolling out a similar model across other above-mentioned events is the goal.

This collaboration on events exists alongside other non-event co-engagement, such as providing feedback to the MFA on their submissions to the Peacebuilding Architecture Review (PBAR) impact and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) reviews.

Coordinating our approach with KNL and CIVIC on mandate renewals in the UN context will also be critical. Though NP has influenced above our small size in previous renewal processes, our impact will be significantly amplified through frank and proactive engagement with these partners who have

greater capacity at the UN level. This compliments efforts of country teams to collaborate with Dutch country representation in advocacy directly toward peacekeeping operations on the ground.

On disaggregation of data for protection and protection risk analysis, we also see scope for collaboration with PAX and Search for Common Ground. We are already working on integrating our own data with their sets, and this will add a compelling layer of evidence to the stories we are able to work on with CPT members, and hopefully prompt strong media and public engagement.

d. How are insights coming out of the learning loop applied in the implementation of the policy influencing in the upcoming year?

In this first year of the project, we will focus on better eliciting, understanding and articulating what is happening at the field level so that we can accelerate our capacity to share this with policy and decision makers. This process has begun with the recruitment of national level policy and advocacy staff in each country programme. These critical interconnections between country programmes and the global policy and advocacy teams are essential to facilitating the learning loop in multiple directions. As we are at the beginning of the project, we do not yet have insights emerging from the learning loop, however, embedding the structure to facilitate the loop is a core goal of the coming year so that we are well placed to act and integrate insights.

3. Planned activities to continuously develop your working methods (with attention for inclusivity (including gender- and youth responsiveness), conflict sensitivity (including MHPSS), and alignment and coordination):

a. What are the main steps you foresee to take to further develop your adaptive programming approach?

The primary steps to further NP's adaptive programming are research, learning and experimentation. By comparing experiences of establishing and supporting CPTs across countries and stages of conflict, for example, we will get a better sense of underlying assumptions, processes that may work in a certain context, but less so elsewhere. By exploring different models of partnerships with CPTs and other local groups, we will be better able to adapt our operational model or learn when to pivot, how and when to exit certain aspects of our work, what the right time is to step back or move in, or how much scaling out is possible for NP to absorb. By better understanding risk of our partners and our responsibility in that, we will be in a better position to adjust our organisational model. Exploring the intersection of protection and development (South Sudan), digital and physical protection (Iraq) or physical security and mental health, and more intentional pairing of direct protection programming and advocacy are other key areas of learning that are likely to adjust our approach to enhancing security of people.

In 2025, NP will further integrate MHPSS into its protection activities to ensure that communities receive both physical security and support for emotional and mental resilience. This will include equipping NP teams and local partners with MHPSS training, such as psychosocial first aid, delivered alongside UCP activities. NP will work with partners to map areas where NP can enhance the integration of MHPSS and trauma prevention/response. For example, in Sudan, where many individuals experience severe emotional trauma due to active conflict, NP will partner with local mental health practitioners and international experts to provide ongoing psychosocial support to CPTs and civilians. Additionally, NP will focus on incorporating MHPSS considerations into its advocacy efforts, ensuring policymakers understand the critical role of mental health in long-term peacebuilding and protection. By advocating for psychosocial support as part of protection frameworks, NP can influence broader humanitarian and development programs to adopt more holistic approaches to security that integrate mental well-being.

Conflict sensitivity is central to NP's adaptive programming. In 2025, NP will further refine its conflict sensitivity analysis by enhancing context-specific conflict assessments that guide its interventions

across all programming locations. These assessments will inform how NP designs and implements activities to avoid exacerbating tensions or creating unintended harm. NP will also continue to conduct frequent conflict mapping to understand the evolving power dynamics and potential flashpoints, especially in communities where CPTs and partners operate. By ensuring that NP's programming accounts for the complexities of conflict and tensions, NP can better support communities in diffusing conflicts before they escalate.

NP will deepen its understanding of the intersectionality of issues like gender, age, and ethnicity, which often shape vulnerability in conflict settings. Using gender-disaggregated data and participatory research methods, NP will ensure that programming explicitly responds to the unique needs of women and youth, particularly in marginalized or underrepresented communities. For example, in Iraq, NP will continue mapping out both physical and digital protection gaps among different population groups, ensuring that marginalized voices are represented and their security concerns are addressed. Additionally, NP's PAR in South Sudan will focus on the role that women and youth want to play in their communities' protection, and using this research to refine gender- and youth-responsive approaches. By involving communities in the design of protection and advocacy activities, NP ensures that gender and youth inclusivity are not tokenistic but fully integrated into the program.

b. What are the main steps you foresee to take to further develop your locally led development approach?

NP will enhance its approach to ensure that local communities, particularly women and youth, play a central role in identifying priorities and shaping programming. By incorporating PAR and community-driven decision-making processes throughout the project areas in 2025, NP aims to align its strategies with the needs and goals of the people it serves. This inclusive decision-making ensures that diverse voices are actively involved in shaping interventions, which enhances the relevance and effectiveness of NP's work.

Building on this, NP will further strengthen its locally driven MEAL systems, ensuring that local actors are not only participants but also leaders in collecting, analysing, and interpreting data. This approach will seek to promote local ownership by enabling communities to lead in refining interventions based on real-time feedback, ensuring both sustainability and accountability. By combining inclusive decision-making with locally led monitoring and learning, NP ensures that its programs are continuously adapted to meet the evolving needs of communities while fostering long-term local capacity and empowerment.

With national level policy and advocacy staff in place, we can also be more specific and intentional about how we work with field staff and communities on strengthening advocacy approaches to increase confidence and opportunity to engage in local, national, regional and international policy dialogues. As we scale out these skillsets, more people will be strongly placed to confidently engage in advocacy, whether that be public or private strategies depending on context. As we engage in these trainings, we will also learn more about what impacted communities want to prioritise themselves, and use that to shape our own advocacy priorities and the entry points that we seek to create.

c. How are lessons learned from the previous year(s) applied in the implementation of the upcoming year?

The answer to this question can be found in detail above.

4. Update of your risk assessment and mitigation strategy.

To effectively navigate and mitigate risks during program implementation, Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) will leverage its extensive expertise in conducting context and security analyses. This approach is rooted in a deep and ongoing understanding of the local political, social, and economic landscape, which enables NP to anticipate and address potential risks proactively. By taking a holistic and context-sensitive approach to risk management, NP can ensure that its programs are implemented safely and effectively

NP's strategy for risk management is founded on a comprehensive and continuous monitoring system. This system involves detailed context and security assessments that draw on NP's extensive experience and nuanced understanding of local communities and conflict dynamics. However, this process is not limited to internal expertise alone. NP actively collaborates with local partners, stakeholders, and community leaders, whose on-the-ground perspectives and insights enrich the analysis and ensure that the information is current and relevant. Through this holistic approach, NP can stay informed, adaptable, and responsive to changes on the ground, and effectively mitigate risks.

NP recognizes that contextual risks are dynamic and require a flexible and adaptive response. Therefore, NP teams engage in ongoing risk management strategy reviews, adjusting plans and tactics as needed to address evolving situations. This may involve revising program objectives, reallocating resources, or modifying operational approaches to align with the current context. Safety and effectiveness are always at the heart of NP's activities. To that end, robust communication channels are established for swift information sharing and decision-making. Regular strategy meetings at local and national levels will be held to discuss emerging trends, potential threats, and responsive measures. These meetings will be instrumental in fostering a cohesive and coordinated approach across all levels of NP's operations.

In addition to ongoing risk management strategy reviews, NP will also engage in continuous capacity-enhancing efforts, equipping staff and partners with the necessary skills and knowledge to operate effectively in complex environments. Training in risk analysis and assessment, crisis management, conflict resolution, cultural sensitivity, and negotiation techniques will be critical in enhancing the collective ability of NP and its partners to respond to contextual challenges. By prioritizing capacity-enhancement, NP will ensure that its staff and partners are prepared to navigate complex and rapidly evolving environments, and effectively mitigate risks.

Risk	**Argumentation /Evidence base**	**Risk assessment (Low/Medium/High) + reasons**	**Influence on outcomes of activity**	**Risk-sharing:** please explain which stakeholders will be affected by the mentioned risk and how your organisation will approach risk-sharing with these stakeholders	**Mitigating measures and residual risk**

Staff or partners killed or injured/ assets lost as a result of the ongoing conflict and instability	Programme implemented in conflict affected locations, some is ongoing with disregard for civilian casualties Indirect threats can be hard to predict Periodic indiscriminate violence, periodic targeting of humanitarians The highest risk assets are the vehicles for which there will be a cost incurred if considerable damage incurred.	High – rating applied to consider the worst-case scenarios across 4 implementation locations	• Delays to programming or reduced access to some areas of implementation or communities • Project staff and partners face violent attacks and forced evacuations. • Constant insecurity and population movements make retention in the project activities challenging and minimise outcomes due to high participant turnover. • Reputational impact if staff are injured or killed • Legal compliance/duty of care exposure • Budgetary impact of asset loss/replacement	• Programme staff risk awareness at recruitment, training, policies, practice, equipment, enforcement • Unique identity groups, e.g. Human Rights Defenders, women, girls, persons with disabilities, persons from specific ethnic identities – risk assessment and mitigations strategies co-created within programming • Affected Populations impacted if programming is suspended or limited, share – early warning/early response planning to reduce collective impact in the event of hibernation or evacuation • Donors could have reputational impact – regular reporting of risk assessment and mitigation approaches, compliance with donor policies	• Acceptance strategies for mutual protection in programme implementation locations • Budgeting for safety and security provisioning • Context, conflict, and early warning analysis • Ensure networks and information sources are comprehensive to allow for early warning/early response • Safety and security training adapted for context specific risk exposure • Asset tagging and tracking • Use technology and remote communication tools to minimise risks. • Regular coordination and communication, including rumour control, with NP security advisors, UN security, humanitarian agencies and communities. • Hibernation and evacuation protocols • Insurance coverage for personnel and assets **Residual Risk** Medium
Political Instability	• Fragile political landscape with ongoing disputes and sectarian tensions.	High – rating applied to consider the worst-	• Difficulty in securing necessary approvals and permits for programme implementation.	• Certain identity groups, particularly HRDs can be seen as political agents and targeted specifically. Risk sharing through clear	• Conduct regular political risk assessments and scenario planning. • Maintain strong communication channels with government officials,

	• Limited government support for protection initiatives. • International political efforts stall, with conflict parties viewing the demands of the other as untenable. • Vacuums in governance forms. Areas of control indicate the risk of a 'split state'. • Sanctions are put in place and expanded over time. • Political rallies and demonstrations in key project locations that turn violent. • Tensions and instability erupt as a result of extension of elections and Revitalized Transitional Government of Unity in South Sudan.	case scenarios across 4 implementation locations	• Increased vulnerability to funding or resource allocation. • Potential for programme activities to be misinterpreted or seen as partisan puts particular individuals/groups at risk. • Overarching political conditions make discussions of peace and protection difficult to gain traction. • Fear of armed groups in control discourages people from transparent participation in advocacy and dialogue. • Change in country-level political leadership with minimal support to project activities. • Attempts to co-opt programme for political purposes • Civil strife and political tensions disrupts the project implementation.	communications, boundaries, expectations management, information sharing, rumour control, adapting protection strategies to changing context • Host country authorities and allies may be impacted, potentially loosing positions in political changes – open communication, information sharing, clarity around roles and boundaries essential • Diplomatic/donor community can lose or gain influence in these spaces, can face withdrawal of consent, as above key is sharing, real-time context analysis, joint risk and consequent risk assessment for the programme	joint forces, tribal leadership and other stakeholders. • Strengthen and implement contingency plans and safety and security protocols to be shared with all project staff and other stakeholder in all locations to allow continuity of project activities. • Community relationships and coordination with partners will be strengthened to ensure accurate information about political activities will be shared in real-time. • Maintain operational flexibility, pooling resources, and collaborative training with partners to enhance the ability to navigate political uncertainties. **Residual Risk** Medium
Lack of political goodwill of local, state or	• Government or other authorities (traditional, opposition authorities holding territorial	Medium: Contexts vary therefore	• Impeded access causes implementation delays	• Affected populations can be most affected by this risk as governments or other authorities may use	• NP prioritises the development of trust and strong support from local and national leadership in all project locations.

national government leaders	control) officials interfere with program implementation through too many demands • Government refuses to engage in the project • Government or officials harasses project staff and/or refuses to allow operations or access.	applying a medium risk as an average	• Deterioration in security conditions, acceptance diminishes • Impact on trust and wellbeing of stakeholders, including affected populations	their needs as leverage for specific action. Open planning, analysis and information sharing with APs is essential to share risk and ensure NP's responses are informed by their preferences • Humanitarian community and their efforts can be broadly impacted by this risk. Shared analysis is important and to recognize relative value in various actors approaches for e.g. some will maintain access, some will loose	• In areas where leadership structures have shifted, NP will utilise its expertise to present NP and its activities in a transparent manner and build good working relationships with a variety of stakeholders. • NP will ensure that it abides by all stipulated regulations enacted by the Government • NP works closely with stakeholders such as NGO Forums and Protection Clusters in the event of challenges in operational space. **Residual Risk:** Low
Socio-economic challenges	• High unemployment rates, particularly among marginalised groups. • Social inequalities based on ethnicity, religion and gender. • Limited access to essential services like health care, education and sanitation. • Limited infrastructure make communication challenging.	Medium – all contexts in project are impacted by this risk however its likelihood of significant negative	• Programme activities may not be relevant or accessible to specific communities. • Greater difficulty in addressing root causes of the conflict due to socioeconomic factors. • Increased vulnerability of marginalised groups to conflict and violence. • Immediate needs could be the predominant focus of many community members. Finding entry points or engaging specific stakeholders can be	• Primary impact will be to affected populations, socio economic challenges are contributory to instability and pervasive violence. UCP programming is sensitive to this and while not providing material aid, NP coordinates closely with other service providers through both formal referral pathways and extra-system collaborations to contribute to whole of society needs responses	• Conduct needs assessment and consultations with diverse communities to ensure relevant, responsive, and conflict-sensitive programme interventions. • Advocate for policies and investments that address systemic issues -like poverty and inequality- and complement humanitarian response with nexus investment. • Monitor and evaluate programme impact to ensure it reaches and benefits at risk groups.

		impact is not high	difficult without in-kind support. More time and effort are required to surmount this. • Challenges in tech-based lesson sharing due to unreliable signal and bandwidth.	• NP operating in complex, weak infrastructure environments can be impactful to the efficiency of programming however with 20+ years of experience, mitigation strategies are well developed	• Where possible, ensure referral mechanisms are in place and actively refer those at-risk. • Work with national and international NGOs and armed groups to ensure a conflict-sensitive approach to humanitarian assistance provision. **Residual Risk:** Low
Economic instability	• Economic downturn results in a shortage in supply of goods and services including food, medicines, water and fuel in specific affected locations, leading to an increase in prices and triggering economic stress, crime and violence among communities. • Increase in violence incidences, criminality, robbery attacks and looting as negative coping mechanisms.	Medium – all locations are economically challenged however this risk is most impactful when there are sudden and dramatic changes to the economy, averaging	• An economic downturn leading to shortages and higher prices can result in deceased access to communities, delayed implementation and necessitate budget adjustments due to increased costs and resource scarcity. • It may require adapting strategies to meet changing needs, including scaling up emergency and conflict resolution efforts. • Monitoring and evaluation metrics may also need revising to reflect these new challenges. • Level of competition among households or communities for scarce resources may	• Engage in joint planning sessions with partners and stakeholders (staff, CPTs, WPTs, HRDs, UCP practitioners, researchers, academic institutions, etc) to develop strategies that address potential shortages and price hikes. This collaboration ensures that all parties are equally involved in preparing for and mitigating these risks.	• NP will pre-position required project support items and supplies that can cover longer periods to prevent shortages and obstruction to the program delivery. • NP logistics and finance department will monitor prices and expenditures regularly to adjust budgets accordingly and inform the donor in time. • Continuously analyse situations and share information on potential violence triggers to relevant stakeholders. • Close coordination, referral, and information sharing with communities, partners and service providers, including humanitarian cluster leads. • Collaborate with partners to identify and establish alternative supply chains.

		out at medium	undermine conflict mitigation strategies		**Residual Risk:** Low
Cultural sensitivities	• Diverse and complex cultural landscape with various religious, ethnic and tribal identities. • Potential for misunderstandings or offence due to cultural differences. • Importance of respecting local traditions and customs.	Medium- in highly diverse contexts, at a minimum low impact issues will arise, averaging at medium for averaging across 4 countries	• Programme activities may be ineffective or counterproductive if they are not culturally sensitive. • Difficulty in building trust and rapport with communities. • Potential for conflict or tension between different cultural groups.	• NP and other humanitarian orgs are consistently impacted by this risk, and need to be proactive in addresses intercultural competency development • Minority Identity groups are quite at risk in this space. Risk burden sharing should be focused being affected person informed, moving at speed of trust, data confidentiality • Local partner organizations can also be impacted by perceived associations with outsiders, out-group identities or foreigners- collective analysis and mitigation planning is essential	• Conduct regular monitoring and evaluation to assess the cultural impact of programme activities. • Adapt and modify the programme approaches based on feedback from communities. • Promote intercultural dialogue and understanding through community-based initiatives. • Recruit staff with cultural awareness and expertise in working with diverse communities. • Conduct intercultural competency training for all programme staff. • Develop programme materials and activities that are inclusive and respectful of different cultures. **Residual risk** Low
Stigma and Social Exclusion of HRDs and community members	• HRDs are sometimes marginalised by their communities due to their work. • HRDs and community members may face social isolation and discrimination.	Low	• HRDs and community members may lack the support and encouragement needed to continue their work. • Programme activities may be met with resistance from communities.	• Partner with local NGOs and community-based organisations to build understanding and support for HRDs. • Promote dialogue and understanding between HRDs and communities.	• Train HRDs and community members on effective communication and community engagement strategies. • Develop culturally sensitive programme materials and activities. • Build trust and partnerships with community leaders and religious figures.

	• Difficulty in challenging deeply rooted social norms and prejudices. • Limited government protection for HRDs and a culture of impunity for perpetrators.		• Difficulty in creating sustainable change without addressing underlying social issues.		**Residual Risk:** Low
Environmental issues	• Climate change and extreme weather events can exacerbate the existing vulnerabilities. • Environmental degradation can contribute to resource scarcity and conflict over land use. • Floods during the rainy season render the field locations inaccessible, including access to communities and delivery of project supplies. • Water scarcity exacerbates inter/intra-community conflict dynamics and underlying community vulnerabilities, including through reduced public health outcomes and	Medium – across contexts there are a variety of risk levels, overall, we apply a medium rating	• Programme activities may inadvertently contribute to environmental degradation. • Programme activities may be unsustainable if they don't address environmental issues. • Communities may be more vulnerable due to conflict environmental challenges. • Roads become impassable, and targeted communities are hard to access due to floods. • Communities get displaced due to floods and other severe weather events, disrupting their attention to the project. • Environmental issues impact conflict dynamics to the point that they undermine key project outcomes.	• All stakeholders will be impacted by environmental issues, most notable those experiencing multiple vulnerabilities. To share risk, we need to be sure that impacted or potentially impacted people and communities are aware of the risk and build it into risk reduction mitigation strategies, including proactive collaboration with communities who may have to relocate. • Host government, local authorities and donors will be impacted in the event of significant climate events requiring emergency response or dramatic shifts in resource allocation. We can share this risk through shared analysis and planning	• Advocate for policies and investments that address environmental challenges. • NP includes flooding in the contingency planning to ensure that program delivery continues even during the rainy season. • Integrate environmental sustainability principles into programme design and implementation. • NP is a member of the Carbon Action Accelerator (CAA) programme, committed to concretely reducing NP's carbon footprint by 50% by 2030 • Advance planning, climate context analysis and proactive programme planning to consider adaptations for climate related impacts • Conduct joint environmental impact assessment with partners, where possible, before starting programme activities, identifying key risks to exacerbated tensions. • Partner with environmental organisations and communities to

	productive person-hours. • Environmental degradation contributes to reduced soil quality in agricultural areas – further exacerbating household-level and community-level vulnerabilities.		• Certain communities may be unable to participate in project activities at certain times of the year.	and most notably NP leading on embedding UCP approaches and civilian protection and violence reduction considerations into response planning and preparedness	address local environmental challenges that exacerbate conflict. • Discuss shared responsibility for resource protection with communities. **Residual risk** Low

Programme risks

In the table below, we outline a proactive and collaborative approach for tracking and managing identified risks during the implementation of our program. We will continuously monitor specific indicators, gathering both quantitative and qualitative data from project teams, beneficiaries, and stakeholders. This will allow us to detect and understand risks as they evolve in real-time. We will foster open communication and joint problem-solving with partners and stakeholders, promoting a collaborative approach to effectively address risks. Adaptability is crucial; we are prepared to adjust strategies, reallocate resources, or even redesign program components as needed. We will also provide training to our staff and partners in risk management to enhance their capability in identifying and responding to potential challenges. Through this comprehensive approach, we aim to ensure a responsive and effective handling of risks, maintaining the integrity and success of our programming.

Risk	**Argumentation /Evidence base**	**Risk assessment (Low/Medium/High) + reasons**	**Influence on outcomes of activity**	**Risk-sharing:** please explain which stakeholders will be affected by the mentioned risk and how your organisation will approach risk-sharing with these stakeholders	**Mitigating measures and residual risk**
Failure to obtain community	• Project involves sensitive topics – such as gender and civil society -	Low: NP has 20+ years of	• Programme activities may be met with resistance from communities and authorities.	• Partner with local NGOs and community-based organisations to build	• Comprehensive local-level analysis, relationship building, and long-term

buy-in and acceptance of project activities and objectives	politicised and not widely accepted as part of society. • Precedent has long been set in DRC that any participation in voluntary activities is incentivised	experiencing developing community acceptance in the most sensitive of contexts.	• Low attendance during project activities, lack of engagement of community members with the project, mistrust and disagreements with community leaders. • Inaccurate reporting and understanding of the project's progress and impact of activities.	understanding and support for the project. • Extensive community relationship-building and participation.	engagement will increase buy-in at all levels of society. • Build understanding and support through engagement with local leaders and influencers. • Adapt the project to align with local cultural norms and values. • All activities will involve high participation in planning and implementation to ensure community ownership. • Train staff in handling sensitive topics and effective communication. • Prepare for potential risks with a clear communication strategy. • Monitor tensions and have plans ready for immediate response to negative reactions. **Residual Risk:** Low
In-depth monitoring and evaluation fail to capture project outcomes	• Continuous surveys can lead to fatigue, resulting in a lack of incentive to complete the survey accurately. • Discrepancies between feedback from project communities or field staff contrasts significantly with MEL reports	Medium – measuring the absence of violence and behavioural change is challengin	• Inaccurate reporting and understanding of the project's progress and impact of activities. • Inaccurate adjustments are made to programming based on failure to capture accurate data on outcomes.	• Stakeholders such as donors and policy leaders invested in this approach, interested to use the evidence in policy development and to inform future development and humanitarian investments	• The MEL implementation will be closely monitored by the MEL team, who will ensure that beneficiary communities aren't over-surveyed and are properly incentivised to do so. • Other means of collecting more engaging and participatory data help overcome difficulties commonly related to survey responses.

	• MEL reports that provide only surface-level information without in-depth analysis or fail to explain the impact on specific project goals can be a sign of ineffective capture. • Fluctuations or inconsistencies in data over time that cannot be logically explained may suggest issues in the M&E process. • The project consistently fails to meet its objectives without a clear understanding or explanation of why as a result of MEL processes not effectively identifying and analysing shortcomings.	g, further exacerbated in dynamic contexts		will be impacted if the MEAL is not effective. Coinvesting sufficient resources (money, time, personnel and expertise) will be essential to burden sharing this risk. • Affected Populations and local response efforts are also key stakeholders potentially impacted by ineffective MEAL. If impact is positive but cannot be shown/proven, resourcing may be removed and effective MEAL points to opportunities for improvements and adaptations that could be missed if this risk is realized. Embedding MEAL as a core function of the programme and raising awareness of its function as not a "final grade" or "tick box exercise for donor compliance" rather as a mutual learning process will help with risk sharing.	• Further, communities are engaged in EPI methods, and NP utilises external evaluators to minimise biases. • Work with partners and stakeholders to develop MEL plans and EPIs. • Regularly share updates and results from MEL with all partners and ask for their opinions. • Set up ways for partners to give their thoughts on how M&E processes and findings. • Analyse data together with partners where possible. • Involve external experts or third parties in the M&E process to bring in unbiased perspectives. **Residual Risk:** Low

Activists and HRDs are unwilling or unable to participate in project activities	• Activists and HRDs may be unwilling or unable to participate due to safety concerns, lack of trust, or feeling their needs are unaddressed. • Signs include low attendance, limited engagement, or direct refusal to participate.	Medium	• HRD insights and experiences are crucial in shaping effective protection strategies. Without their input, the project may lack in addressing the real and nuanced needs of those at risk, reducing the overall effectiveness and relevance of the project. • Moreover, it might fail to gain the necessary support and advocacy that these groups can provide.	• Engage with HRDs and activists in secure settings and build trusting, long-term relationships with them. • Risk shared through defined roles and responsibilities across the engagement partners/stakeholders. • Maintain open lines of communication with HRDs including regular discussions about the challenges in involving activists and HRDs, and working collaboratively to identify and implement solutions.	• NP specialises in protection cases; therefore, all security measures will be taken to ensure HRDs are effectively able to participate without risk or harm. • Conduct an assessment of the risks of engaging with HRDs in the project's first year to understand all project risks comprehensively. • Continuously engage and build capacity on personal safety and operating environment awareness for all program stakeholders involved in policy engagement and advocacy. • Identification and continued engagement of primary gatekeepers and relevant power bearers to support the advocacy drive and, in the end, avoid the attacks. • Adapt project activities and strategies to align with the needs, constraints, and contexts of HRDs and activists. • Provide referrals to services such as legal assistance, counselling, and other resources, to address their concerns. • Develop contingency plans for different scenarios where HRD and activist participation is compromised. **Residual Risk:** Medium
Women and girls (including WPTs) are	• WPTs curtailed from engaging local authorities	Low: While	• The project might not fully address the needs of the	• Women and girls most impacted by this potential risk. Lessons learned have	• Continuous engagement of local authorities on gender equality, addressing social and cultural norms

unwilling or unable to participate in activities	due to community cultural biases against women. • Fewer women and girls are participating in activities than expected or have trouble accessing project activities. • Increase in feedback or complaints about gender-based exclusion. • Increase in negative community attitudes towards women and girls being involved in the project, and their involvement in decision-making processes.	gender considerations are relevant in all programme locations, track record indicates that the risk of non-participation is low.	entire community, leading to less effective outcomes. • Without their input, we might miss important viewpoints and ideas that women and girls can offer. • The project could unintentionally widen gender gaps. • Overall community engagement in the project might decrease, as women and girls often influence family and community participation. • Specific needs and challenges faced by women and girls might not be identified or addressed. • Less long-term impact and sustainability.	indicated that the most useful way to burden share is to move at the speed and form that the women and girls involved indicate is appropriate. It varies country to country, and needs to be adapted to context. • Men and boys can be impacted by this risk if feeling threatened or excluded. Operating with transparency (while respecting confidentiality) and with opportunities for participation have proven to be an effective approach to risk sharing.	that disadvantage women and allowing discourses that support further women's participation in the program through research, policy engagement and advocacy. • Mainstream protection across all activities, particularly by creating a safe environment for women and girls. • Build confidence and community ownership in engaging these target groups in project activities. • Engage with families of women participants to raise awareness of the scope and methodology of the activities. • Work with partners to engage community leaders and members in discussions about gender equality and the value of women's participation. **Residual Risk**: Low
Spoilers negatively influence the effectiveness of programming	• Spoilers may resist change due to vested interests, fear of losing power, or distrust in the program. • Signs include active opposition, spreading misinformation, and mobilizing community resistance.	Medium	• Activity impact will be limited and curtailed.	• Communicate openly with partners about spoiler risks, collaborate on identifying potential spoilers, and jointly develop strategies to address their influence.	• NP will ensure positive and productive relationships with representatives of local and state authorities to avoid the feeling of changes being imposed on them. This will enlist their support as essential agents of change. • Engage in dialogue with spoilers to address concerns • Strengthen community engagement to build grassroots support

					• Monitor spoiler activities and adapt program strategies to mitigate their impact. **Residual Risk**: Low
Advocacy efforts lead to a backlash against the programme and NP as an organisation	• The project involves sensitive topics that represent access to and control of power and resources as well as cultural touchstones such as gender, sexuality, religion • Backlash may occur if advocacy efforts are perceived as threatening to local norms or power structures. • Signs include increased criticism, hostility from community members or leaders, negative media attention or staff and partners reporting violence and attacks.	Medium	• Spoiler influence can undermine the proposal's credibility and effectiveness, leading to reduced community trust and support, and hampering the implementation of protection strategies. • Such backlash can erode trust in NP, hinder community cooperation, and potentially endanger staff and beneficiaries, affecting the overall effectiveness of the protection proposal.	• NP will conduct advocacy on behalf of HRDs if the risk level is too high. • NP will equip partners and stakeholders with the advocacy tools to conduct advocacy effectively. • Keep partners and stakeholders informed about potential backlash, discuss shared concerns, and collaboratively develop response strategies.	• NP will ensure positive and productive relationships with representatives of local and state authorities. • NP will conduct analyses on the issues that require advocacy and stakeholder mapping on who to target. • NP will train civil society on how to conduct advocacy. • Tailor advocacy to be culturally sensitive • Prepare contingency plans for potential negative reactions. **Residual Risk:** Medium
Failure to meet grant compliance guidelines for finance and	• Discrepancies in financial reports, audit flags, or procurement process irregularities.	Low	Non-compliance can lead to funding withdrawal or penalties, undermining the financial stability needed to execute the project effectively. It may also damage	Communicate openly with partners and stakeholders about compliance requirements. Collaboratively develop and adhere to transparent financial and	• Grant inception documents and meetings will ensure every department is aware of the compliance requirements of the grant, funds not disbursed until all procedures are

procurement.			the NP's credibility and ability to secure future funding.	procurement processes. Regularly review and update each other on compliance status.	properly met and documentation provided. • Implement robust training programs on compliance for all relevant staff. • Communicate clear, documented procedures for finance and procurement that align with grant guidelines. • Conduct regular internal audits and reviews. • Foster a culture of transparency and accountability. **Residual Risk:** Low
Difficulties in hiring and maintaining qualified staff	• Difficulties in hiring and retaining qualified staff can arise from uncompetitive salaries, challenging work conditions, or a limited talent pool. For DRC, the necessity to have UCP skills as well as French language is likely to prove challenging. • • Signs of this risk include high turnover rates, vacant positions, and a decrease in staff performance and morale.	Medium	This can lead to delays in project implementation, reduced quality of services, and an inability to meet project goals effectively. It can also strain existing staff, leading to burnout and further turnover.	• Communicate openly with partners and stakeholders about staffing challenges. • Collaborate on solutions like staff sharing, joint training programs, and co-developing attractive employment packages. • Be strategic in recruitment and prepared to invest in mentoring	• NP offers all International staff a competitive package of R&R, leave days and psychological support through KonTerra. • NP also invests in improving the living conditions of staff in the field. • In addition to hiring qualified staff, NP invests in in-house training of all staff to make sure they have the required skills • Provide opportunities for staff growth and development to enhance job satisfaction and retention. • Foster a supportive and positive work environment to boost staff morale. • Increase outreach to potential candidates through networking, partnerships with educational

					institutions, and engaging with professional groups. • Develop plans to handle critical roles in case of staff shortages, such as temporary hires or consultant support. **Residual Risk:** Low
Safeguarding Violations	• Sexual harassment/assault may occur due to inadequate policies, lack of awareness, or a permissive environment. • Saturation of policy and procedure awareness raising, building trust that it is safe to report and de-stigmatizing topics (I.e. sexual misconduct related) within safeguarding are highly challenging • In protracted conflict, violence is "normalized" and significant power asymmetries are entrenched	High – the risk of safeguarding violations is high aggregated across geographically disparate, highly diverse and fragile contexts	This can lead to a loss of trust in the program, harm to the reputation of the organization, and legal liabilities. It can also affect the mental health and safety of personnel and participants, hindering program effectiveness.	Stakeholders within the affected populations are most at risk as they, in general, are exposed to the highest combination of vulnerabilities. To alleviate and share this risk, it is essential that NP is transparent about policies and procedures, Code of Conduct – what APs can expect in terms of behaviour form NP personnel, what is not accepted and how they can report if there is a problem. NP personnel are also impacted by this risk as intra-organizational safeguarding issues. Risk sharing from recruitment through offboarding, awareness raising, training, policy enforcement, investigations, disciplinary action.	• NP Board of Directors has a Safeguarding and Accountability Committee (SAC), convenor of committee sits on the Board's Executive Committee. All cases reported and reviewed by the SAC. • NP is a member of the Core Humanitarian Standards (has completed self-assessment) • NP is a member of the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme • Clear and functional reporting lines for staff and community for safe and confidential complaints mechanisms. • All staff to complete mandatory and regular safeguarding and PSEA training. • Conduct regular training for staff and participants on recognizing, preventing, and reporting sexual harassment and assault.

				Other stakeholders impacted could be donors facing reputational risk for supporting a programme that is reported to have safeguarding violations. Clear expectations, due diligence, reporting of incidents to donors are essential to risk sharing. Trust from any stakeholder can be impacted by this risk in the event of safeguarding cases. Although it can be uncomfortable, for risk sharing, we must have normalized, open communications and awareness about these topics to reduce hiding and stigmatization, and to engender a shared understanding of what is not acceptable regardless of what might appear in cultural practices.	• Provide confidential and safe channels for reporting incidents without fear of retaliation. • Continually assess and update policies and training to ensure they are effective and relevant. **Residual Risk:** Medium
Data breaches	• Data breaches can occur due to weak cybersecurity	High	Breaches can compromise the confidentiality and safety of beneficiaries, erode trust in the	• Inform partners and stakeholders about potential	• Share confidential data only through secure media and messaging software with password protection.

	measures, human error, or targeted attacks. • Indicators include unauthorized access alerts, unusual system activity, and reports of leaked information.		program, and lead to legal consequences. They can also disrupt program operations and data integrity.	cybersecurity risks. Collaborate on developing unified data protection standards and protocols.	• Implement robust cybersecurity measures like firewalls, encryption, and secure password policies. • Educate staff about data security best practices and the importance of protecting sensitive information. • Limit access to sensitive data to only those who need it for their work. • Conduct periodic audits to identify and address vulnerabilities in the IT infrastructure. • A clear plan in place for responding to data breaches, including steps to mitigate damage and notify affected parties. • Regularly back up data to prevent loss in case of a breach.

5. Overview, when applicable, of proposed adaptations to implementation strategy in the form of decision points.

For Sudan, we are hopeful about the success of a proposal recently submitted to the EU. If secured, this funding would enable us to reallocate a portion of the operational and direct programming costs that were previously planned for the next 18 months. This adjustment would allow us to maintain critical programming as outlined in this plan, while focusing more on enhancing the advocacy, evidencing and learning processes around them. As a result, we would be able to accelerate progress towards certain outcomes, particularly that of Outcome 2. With greater spread of resources between donors, this portfolio under the "Contributing to Peaceful and Safe Societies 2024-2031" can be utilised for earlier and more in depth focus on partnerships and enhancement/setup of networks between civil society, volunteer groups and other supporters of the UCP approach. Additionally, we hope that this would increase the funding allocation for Sudan over a longer period, providing greater stability and allowing for more depth and breadth in our work in the country. At the time of writing, the prospective funding remains just that and is critical to the presence of NP in country.

6. Overview, when applicable, of proposed adaptations to the budget (in any case those changes above 15% in the budget lines) as shown in the annual financial reporting format.

Not applicable.