

# Walking the Talk (WtT)

## Shifting Power, Innovation and Enhanced Agility to Displacement

**Independent Evaluation, May 2025**

*Commissioned by Act for Peace (AfP) | Conducted by Calibrate Research and Asten Consulting*

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## Disclaimer

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The views expressed in this publication are the author's alone and are not necessarily the views of the Australian Government.

# Acronyms

AA	Anticipatory Action
AfP	Act for Peace
APNOR	Asia Pacific Network of Refugees
APRRN	Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network
CAID	Christian Aid Bangladesh
CC	Christian Care
CWS	Church World Service
CWSA	Community World Service Asia
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
DSPR	Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees
EOC-DICAC	Ethiopian Orthodox Church - Development and Inter-Church Aid Commission
GA	Graduation Approach
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GEDSI	Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion
KEQ	Key Evaluation Question
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NCCP	National Council of Churches in the Philippines
NECCDSPR	Near East Council of Churches Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees - Jordan
OfERR	Organisation for Eelam Refugees' Rehabilitation
OfERR Ceylon	Organisation for Elangai Refugees' Rehabilitation - Ceylon
RefugePoint	RefugePoint
TBC	The Border Consortium
TNCC	Tonga National Council of Churches
VCC	Vanuatu Christian Council
WtT	Walking the Talk: Shifting Power, Innovation, and Enhanced Agility to Displacement project
ZCC	Zimbabwe Council of Churches

## Executive Summary

This evaluation was commissioned to examine the *Walking the Talk (WtT): Shifting Power, Innovation, and Enhanced Agility in Displacement project*, a strategic initiative led by Act for Peace (AfP) (AfP) between July 2022 and March 2025, funded by the Australian Government under the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP). The initiative was designed to deepen AfP's commitment to locally led humanitarian action by embedding principles of power shifting, programmatic innovation, and increased agility within its partnership model.

The purpose of the evaluation was twofold. It sought, first, to take stock of what had been achieved providing a summative assessment of results across the program's four outcome areas: strengthened programmatic modalities, increased partner agility and resilience, improved financial sustainability, and meaningful participation and leadership within populations affected by displacement. At the same time, the evaluation was formative, aimed at drawing out practical insights and strategic lessons to inform a possible future iteration of the program.

The independent evaluation of the Walking the Talk (WtT) program was guided by three overarching evaluation questions:

1. Is the design relevant and effective in Walking the Talk (WtT)?
2. Has the project been effective in strengthening partner capacities and agency?
3. To what extent has the project fostered opportunities for enhanced leadership and enabled meaningful participation?

Within these questions, the evaluation set out to understand how new programming modalities combined with specific investments to support partners to strengthen capacity and agency, and contributed to change at the partner and community level. It also explored how power was perceived and negotiated within AfP's partnerships, and the extent to which shifts in decision-making, visibility, and resource control had occurred. In doing so, the evaluation paid particular attention to how partners experienced AfP's approach to innovation, flexibility, and shared learning. Ultimately, the evaluation aimed to surface not only what worked and what didn't, but also what it means for AfP to walk the talk of shifting power.

Through a mix of document review, Key Informant Interviews (KII (Key Informant Interview)s), partner surveys, and sense-making sessions, the evaluation was designed to ensure that the findings were grounded in the lived realities of partners and oriented toward practical application. The result is a body of evidence and learning that can guide AfP's strategic decision-making and strengthen its contribution to locally led leadership.

## Summary of Key Findings

The evaluation revealed a dynamic yet uneven picture of progress across its key outcome areas. The program showed moderate achievement of targets, with strong and consistent engagement from six core partners, and up to thirteen partners engaging across the program. The evaluation encountered significant challenges in synthesising findings at the program level due to inconsistent monitoring systems and limited tracking of long-term impact. Strength of evidence varied considerably, making it difficult to assess the full extent to which the Theory of Change held true across different contexts. The evaluation highlighted persistent structural and operational barriers, and high partner turnover and a lack of narrative synthesis further complicated the evaluation. Still, partners strongly valued the program's flexibility, its alignment with their goals, and the authentic relationships it fostered.

Overall, Walking the Talk (WtT) was recognised as a promising and reflective journey toward power sharing and locally led humanitarian responses, albeit one still in need of stronger articulation, and systems to track, communicate, and scale its impact.

### **Is the design relevant and effective in Walking the Talk (WtT)?**

The Walking the Talk (WtT) (WtT) initiative is broadly relevant and well aligned with AfP's localisation ambitions and sector-wide commitments to shifting power. The program's intent and adaptive approach have enabled responsiveness to diverse partner contexts. However, the design lacks a clearly articulated Theory of Change (TOC) and consistent operationalisation across and within teams including Partnerships and Programs Department (PPD), Strategic Engagement Department (SED), Technical Advisers and Partner Focal Points. This has limited shared understanding, coherence, and the ability to track impact systematically. A more intentional approach to operational planning, as well as monitoring, evaluation and learning across the program would enhance future relevance and effectiveness.

### **Has the project been effective in strengthening partner capacities and agency?**

WtT has made notable progress in strengthening the institutional and programmatic capacities of local partners, particularly in areas such as the Graduation Approach, anticipatory action, and in the pursuit of financial sustainability. Flexible funding, trust-based relationships, and technical accompaniment have enabled partners to adapt to emerging crises and build resilience. However, capacity strengthening efforts have been uneven with identified need for increased investment in long-term organizational development. Notably, while numerous workshops and trainings were delivered, using tailored approaches to content generation maximising relevance and applicability, and innovative approaches to shared and peer learning, there was limited documented evidence of how learning was applied post-intervention.

**To what extent has the project fostered opportunities for enhanced leadership and enabled meaningful participation?**

The project has supported emerging leadership, especially among local staff and those with lived experience of displacement, through increased visibility, participation in co-design processes, and leadership roles in regional advocacy. Initiatives such as coordination of the Rohingya Refugee response in Aceh and community-led assessments illustrate progress in shifting influence and decision-making. Opportunities remain to more systematically track change over time, address structural barriers to leadership, particularly for women and marginalised groups, and embed inclusive leadership in governance and accountability mechanisms.

## Summary of Recommendations

Based on the evaluation's findings, six recommendations are proposed for a potential future phase of the Walking the Talk (WtT) (WtT) program.

### **1. *Articulate and Continue to Strengthen Partnership Approach***

It is recommended that AfP work together with partners in the redesign of WtT to continue to embed and articulate partnership approach, including co-developed partnership strategies that articulate mutual expectations, values, and commitments, continuing to prioritise relational, trust-based ways of working that position partners as equal collaborators in program design, decision-making, and partnership evaluation.

### **2. *Articulate and Revise the Theory of Change – Balancing Flexibility and Structure***

It is recommended that a new phase invest in a design process which seeks to articulate the change theory and processes, unpacking relationships, pathways and assumptions, so that AfP and partners can better understand how the program works and continually improve overarching and nested approaches; holding the delicate balance in defining scope and providing structure, while also maintaining flexibility.

### **3. *Design a Cohesive MEL System with Relevant Impact Measurement***

As a follow on to the TOC work, the MEL System should be redefined in order to better document and facilitate learning and reflection, for the purposes of evidence-based decision making, and support emergent learning. The revised MEL System should be fit for purpose, while meeting grant requirements.

### **4. *Be Specific in Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI)***

If GEDSI is to remain as a focus in the next phase, use the established GEDSI analysis to define GEDSI-specific outcome/s in the revised TOC, and clearly define how shifts in gender norms, disability inclusion, and social participation will be achieved.

### **5. *Consider Identifying Program Priorities to Improve Planning and Resourcing***

Impact has been easier to identify and measure in the program areas that have received greater resourcing and more thorough planning (eg. Graduation Approach). If another phase is to go ahead, AfP may consider if it wants to identify specific program priorities in order to be more intentional in planning and resourcing these initiatives.

### **6. *Map and Consider Effective Operational Approaches within AfP***

As a part of a redesign, AfP would benefit from exploring and identifying different options for delivering the program within AfP, and specifically map out the agreed operational approaches within and across AfP teams. This will enhance shared understanding and program cohesion. Specific considerations are detailed in Evaluation Conclusions.



## Introduction

The "Walking the Talk (WtT): Shifting Power, Innovation, and Enhanced Agility to Displacement" project is an initiative aimed at supporting people affected by displacement through innovative and evidence-based programmatic approaches. The Theory of Change (TOC) documented in a visual diagram, is included on page 10.

"Walking the Talk (WtT)" (WtT) underscores Act for Peace (AfP) (AfP)'s commitment to embodying its core values—humility, courage, creativity, and integrity—in all operations. This commitment is demonstrated through transparent reporting, accountable governance, and a steadfast dedication to their mission of supporting displaced communities by enabling partners to lead. The program operates across diverse country contexts including Indonesia, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Kenya, Jordan, India, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, and Zimbabwe with the overarching goal of shifting power to local actors and enhancing their ability to respond nimbly and innovatively to protracted and sudden-onset displacement crises. The project aims to achieve this through:

*Innovation and learning:* Piloting and facilitating learnings about evidence-based ways of working, including the Graduation Approach, Community Based Protection and Anticipatory Action. An emphasis has been placed on learning alongside partners on gender equality, social inclusion and disability inclusion.

*Agility and resilience in crisis:* Piloting activities related to the climate displacement strategy and supporting and enhancing partner leadership in disaster preparedness by building resilience to disasters amongst communities.

*Resourcing local-led initiatives:* Supporting partners to seek new and diversified funding opportunities and empowering them to lead in grant proposals, for their sustainable futures.

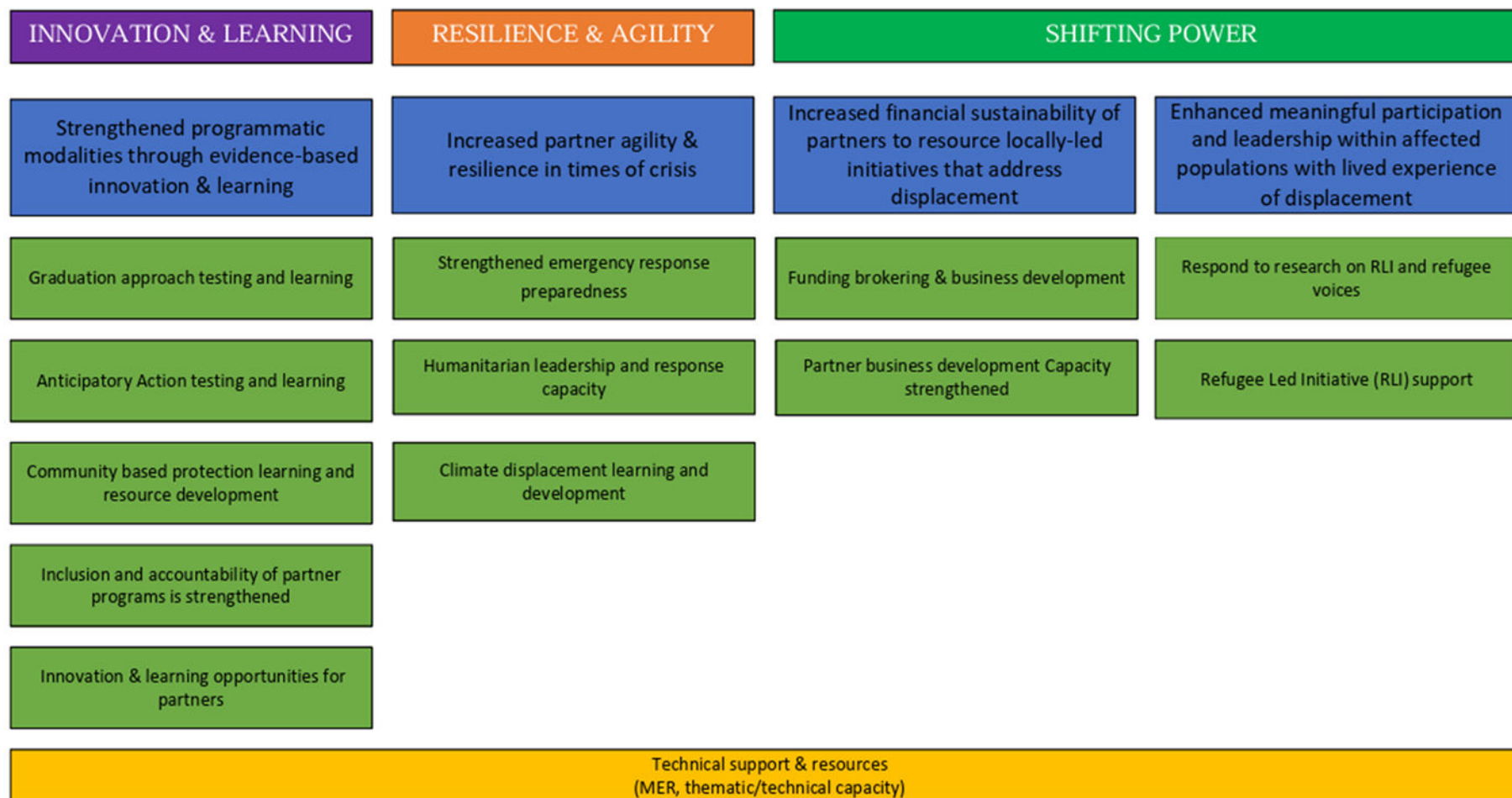
*Meaningful participation and leadership:* Conducting locally led research on meaningful participation and leadership and sharing the learnings of research to have a broader impact through global advocacy and policy.

### *Implementation Arrangements and Key Stakeholders*

Led by AfP, implementation is grounded in long standing relationships with trusted local partners who lead much of the program's design and delivery. The model is intentionally flexible and relational, not transactional, with partners taking leadership in setting priorities and designing contextualised approaches. Key stakeholders include: national and local partner organizations who co-lead initiatives; AfP staff serving as technical advisors, conveners, and co-learners; regional networks and forums for knowledge exchange; and, individuals from communities affected by displacement whose participation and feedback guide program direction.

## Walking the talk: shifting power, innovation, and enhanced agility to displacement

People affected by displacement are centred in development and humanitarian programming and leadership through strengthened and innovative programmatic modalities addressing their priorities



## Objectives of the Evaluation

The evaluation was both formative and summative in nature. Its purpose was to understand the project's achievements to date as well as challenges, to make practical recommendations for the potential redesign of the initiative. The focus of the evaluation was to assess the relevance, progress, effectiveness, and impact of the project. The evaluation provided actionable insights into the project's achievements and challenges to inform improvements and future strategic directions while providing accountability to stakeholders.

The evaluation sought to answer three key evaluation questions.

1. Was the design relevant and effective in Walking the Talk (WtT)? (35 %)
2. Has the project been effective in strengthening partner capacities and agency? (55%)
3. To what extent did the project foster opportunities for enhanced leadership and enable meaningful participation? (10%)

Additional sub-questions further guide the analysis within each of the key evaluation questions, a full list is available in Annex 2.

## Evaluation Methodology

A mixed methods evaluation was employed with both separate and combined quantitative and qualitative data. Data collection methods included internal and external document review, partner survey, modality questionnaire for Technical Leads, semi-structured Key Informant Interviews (KII (Key Informant Interview)s) (KII (Key Informant Interview)) with 6 AfP staff and 5 partners, focus group discussion with an Evaluation Reference Group, and interactive workshops based on participatory methods, as appropriate and dependent on the availability of AfP and their partners.

Data on program reach, outputs, and processes was primarily gathered through project documentation and validated with staff. This quantitative data was analysed and presented using visual methods such as charts and graphs. The results were then used in other participatory qualitative methods. Qualitative data provided further insights into program delivery, relevance, and effectiveness and assisted in triangulation of findings. Engineering prompts were used to identify initial themes, which were then cross-referenced by evaluators.

## Evaluation Approach

In alignment with the ethos of "Walking the Talk (WtT)," the evaluation was underpinned by *Interactive Evaluation Practice* (IEP). This approach capitalises on interpersonal dynamics and intentionally engaged stakeholders with consideration of their specific roles, contributions, and opportunities for learning, while recognising and protecting the independence and highly technical role of the evaluator. IEP principles influenced the methodology, structure and interactions with staff throughout the evaluation.

## *Sampling Strategy*

The sample size for KII (Key Informant Interview)s and partner survey was determined based on several considerations, including the evaluation objectives, the diversity of stakeholders, and a targeted sample to be able to answer the KEQs within resource constraints.

For this evaluation, purposive sampling was used to ensure representation across partner organizations and AfP staff, with elements of snowball sampling employed to identify additional informants through participant referrals where relevant.

## *Limitations and Mitigation Strategies*

This independent evaluation aimed to provide a comprehensive and objective assessment of the program's achievements, effectiveness, and impact. However, several limitations and constraints affected the scope, depth, and interpretation of the findings. These are outlined below to provide context for the evaluation results.

### *1. Data availability and quality*

The evaluation encountered challenges related to the availability, consistency, and completeness of data. In several instances, key program data were incomplete or inconsistent across different sources, limiting the ability to conduct robust analyses. Reliance on secondary data sources introduced potential biases that could not be fully controlled by the evaluation team.

### *2. Availability of partners and stakeholders*

Access to key informants, program beneficiaries, and other stakeholders was sometimes limited due to logistical constraints or unavailability. The timing of data collection overlapped with significant religious and public holidays, such as Eid, Easter and national holidays across March and April, which affected the availability of key informants and delayed coordination.

### *3. Attribution challenges*

As with many development interventions, it was difficult to attribute observed changes solely to the program. Broader contextual factors such as economic trends, political shifts, and collaboration with other stakeholders, all contributed to the program and its outcomes. AfP staff specifically referred to the Gaza War, dismantling of USAID and personal circumstances as factors impacting partners and the operationalisation of the program.

### *4. Potential response bias*

Survey and interview responses may have been influenced by factors such as recall limitations and the desire to present experiences in a positive light. These dynamics could have shaped how participants articulated their views, potentially affecting the

interpretation of findings related to program effectiveness and satisfaction.

#### 5. *Ethical and cultural considerations*

The evaluation had to navigate various ethical and cultural considerations, including language barriers, differing cultural norms, and sensitivities when working with displaced populations. There were risks of misinterpretation due to some differences in language and the need to ensure that all data collection upheld principles of informed consent, data protection, and cultural respect.

#### *Mitigation strategies*

To address these challenges the team employed several mitigation strategies. Data was triangulated from multiple sources to validate findings and reduce potential bias, while a mixed-methods approach was used to enhance the reliability, depth, and credibility of the analysis. The team collaborated closely with local partners to facilitate stakeholder access, improve contextual understanding, and ensure culturally sensitive engagement. This collaboration also helped the team navigate regional calendars, including accommodating leave-related availability. Flexible timelines were planned, with extensions allowed where necessary to account for reduced availability during Eid and public holidays. Finally, all assumptions and methodological limitations were documented transparently to strengthen the credibility and utility of the evaluation findings.

# Findings and Analysis

## KEQ 1: Is the design relevant and effective in Walking the Talk?

The First Key Evaluation Question examines the relevance of the Walking the Talk (WtT) initiative's design, with a focus on its underlying logic, strategic intent, and practical implementation, and its relevance to AfP, sector and partner priorities.

WtT's Theory of Change (TOC) is underpinned by the belief that displacement-affected communities are best served when local organizations lead responses that are context specific, inclusive, and adaptive. The goal of WtT is that people affected by displacement are centred in development and humanitarian programming and leadership through strengthened and innovative programmatic modalities addressing their priorities. The TOC states four end of program outcomes:

1. Strengthened programmatic modalities through evidence-based innovation and learning
2. Increased partner agility and resilience in times of crisis
3. Increased financial sustainability of partners to resource locally-led initiatives that address displacement
4. Enhanced meaningful participation and leadership within affected populations with lived experience of displacement.

Outputs include a combination of program modalities and pilots, tailored capacity strengthening, peer learning exchanges, and flexible funding, as well as direct project delivery and global advocacy.

The TOC however is only documented as a visual diagram depicting the goal, outcomes and outputs (included on page 13), there is no narrative to support it. This places emphasis on planned activities and outputs rather than clearly defining the hypotheses, intermediate and longer-term outcomes that are expected to result. Causal pathways between activities and outcomes, and assumptions are not specified and so remain implicit or untested. Revisiting and refining the TOC in collaboration with partners, in a way that addressed all of the above, would strengthen its strategic utility and enhance alignment across the program.

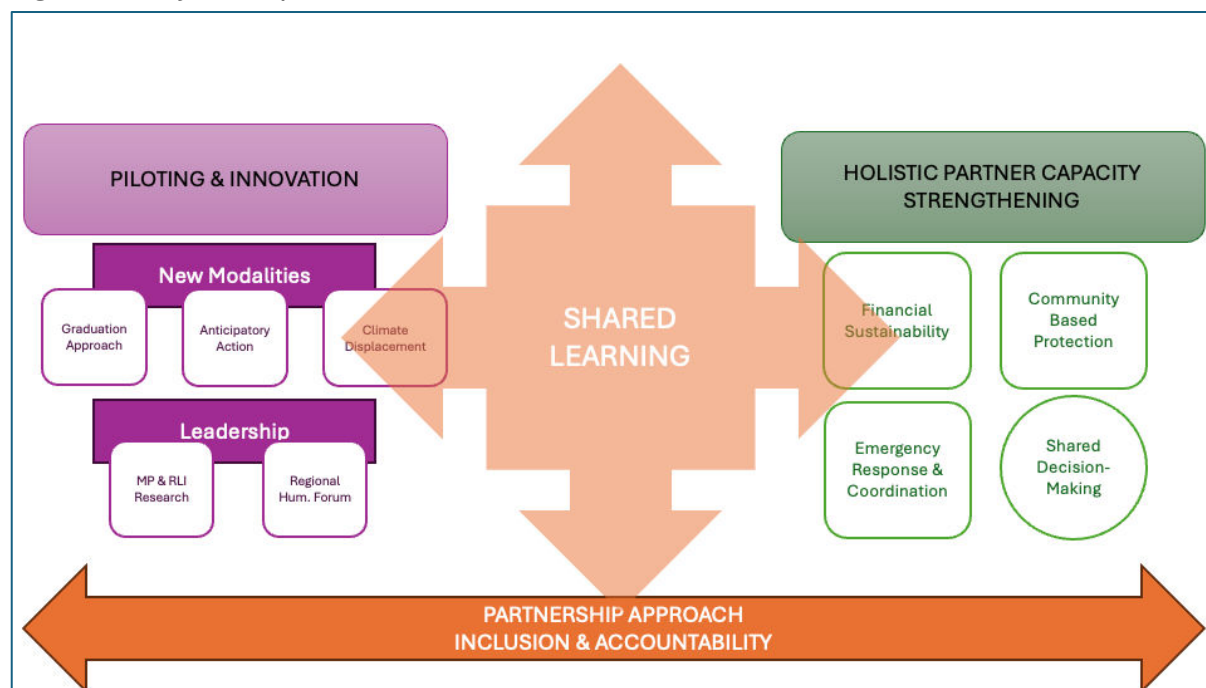
The evaluation team asked AfP and partner staff questions about the overarching and 'nested,' outcome and program specific, change theories. From these conversations, it became clear that the underlying logic of WtT's TOC is centred on shifting power, enhancing local leadership, and embedding innovation and learning. The program has dual overarching change strategies, using a combination of strategic partner inputs to



support Holistic Partner Capacity Strengthening, alongside specific deliverables to support Piloting, Innovation and Leadership; supported by strong and shared approaches to Partnership and Inclusion and Accountability approaches.

The evaluation team have drafted a project map as a visual representation of how the program is designed to operate, in its current state:

*Figure 1: Project Map – Current State*



## Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

The program's Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) system reflected a combination of donor requirements and standardised operational reporting, rather than being tailored to program design and information needs. This further hindered the ability to test the appropriateness and accuracy of the TOC, and left gaps in documentation of impact. A revised M&E system should be better tailored to the program's articulated TOC and implementation approaches, and include a balance of qualitative and quantitative indicators to provide the necessary depth and context to understand the program's contribution to locally led humanitarian action, and attempt to measure higher-order outcomes that are fundamental to the program, such as increased partner agency and agility, partnership approaches and changes in power dynamics. This would enable it to better reflect, document and celebrate its outstanding achievements as well as facilitate quality evidence-based learning.

## Relevance of Program Design

The design of the WtT program was found to be highly relevant to its goal. Its underlying logic, centred on shifting power, enhancing local leadership, and embedding innovation and learning, was affirmed by multiple sources of evidence as both strategic and contextually appropriate. The program's outcomes have strong alignment with AfP's strategic focus, particularly *Goal 1. Safety in Exile, Goal 3. Reduced Displacement, as well as Change Strategy 1. Backing Displaced People and Change Strategy 3. Transforming the System.*

Across KII (Key Informant Interview)s and partner survey, local actors consistently emphasized the fit-for-purpose nature of the initiative. Several respondents highlighted that WtT was distinct in its values-driven, non-transactional partnership model. Partners appreciated that they were treated as co-creators rather than implementers. The initiative's emphasis on inclusion, anticipatory action, community-based protection, and innovation was seen as directly aligned with the evolving needs of displacement-affected communities. According to the partner survey, 100 percent of respondents rated the program design as relevant or highly relevant to their operational

“It is one of the few programs where local priorities are truly heard and integrated. That is rare and valuable.” – Partner, KII

context.

## Strength and Authenticity of Program Approach

Document review confirmed that key components of the TOC, particularly those tied to innovation and program modalities, were implemented with intentionality. The co-development of tools, piloting of the Graduation Approach in Ethiopia and Jordan, and cross-partner learning platforms were consistently cited as examples where strategy translated effectively into practice.

KII (Key Informant Interview)s further reinforced that the underlying intention of the design held true in implementation, as many partners described the model as both responsive and grounded in mutual trust. For instance, partners referenced the flexibility of funding and adaptive timelines as critical to keeping the work locally owned and contextually responsive.

“AfP does not come with a fixed agenda. They walk with us, and our priorities shape the program.” - Partner, KII





## Spotlight: Mentorship and Real Time Data as Catalysts for Change

The implementation of the Graduation Approach in Ethiopia by the **Ethiopian Orthodox Church – Development and Inter-Church Aid Commission (EOC-DICAC)**, with support from Act for Peace, led to meaningful progress in gender equality and social inclusion (GEDSI), an unintended consequence in the program. At the outset, the program encountered some challenges navigating gender dynamics both organisationally and in program delivery. Through sustained engagement and the program’s core mentorship model—which facilitated every 2 weeks , trust-based visits to participant households—important shifts emerged. Over two years, women were recruited and moved into all three project management roles, the majority of mentors were female, and approximately 80% of program participants were female-headed households. The integration of the Impact Atlas data management platform allowed for real-time gender-disaggregated data analysis, informing program decisions and deepening awareness of gendered outcomes. Although these inclusive practices were not reflected in formal GEDSI tracking tools or reports, they illustrate how locally led, relationship-driven programming can foster meaningful organisational change and lay a foundation for more structured GEDSI mainstreaming in future programming.

However, the evaluation also surfaced several design limitations. Some partners and AfP staff noted gaps in outcome-level M&E frameworks, which made it difficult to systematically track deeper systems change or shifts in organisational behaviour. Operational challenges impacted momentum of the program in the initial years, as the program was implemented unevenly across the different outcome areas, and within the various AfP teams including Technical Leads in PPD and SED. The program also does not engage with Partner Focal Points who manage partner relationships over the longer term and therefore have a greater visibility of impact at partner and community level. There appears to be limited shared understanding of the extent to which the program was supposed to work as a cohesive whole, and awareness of intermediate and long term outcomes.

### ***Progress Toward Locally Led Action***

Overall WtT has laid a meaningful foundation for locally led humanitarian action, enabling partners to lead on design, reflect critically on power dynamics, and expand their capacity to act proactively and inclusively. Its strategic intent to shift decision-making power and build locally responsive systems was not only evident but operationalised across multiple contexts. The WtT program was found to be highly

relevant and largely effective in advancing locally led humanitarian action, with a strong design centred on shifting power, fostering local leadership, and promoting innovation.

## **KEQ 2: Has the project been effective in strengthening partner capacities and agency?**

The Second Key Evaluation Question examines the achievements of Walking the Talk (WtT), with reference to its logframe targets, modalities, GEDSI, and the extent to which it has contributed towards improved partner capacity and agency.

The evaluation reviewed all project documentation spanning the full implementation period, to collect and synthesis results against the logframe. Synthesis was difficult as it drew on inconsistent, incomplete and output oriented data, varied reporting approaches, and limited reporting on outcomes. Output-level achievements were clarified through triangulation, and some evidence of higher-level outcome changes was achieved. This allowed for the identification of preliminary signs of change and areas of contribution toward intended outcomes, despite the limited availability of quality outcome data.

### **Outcome 1: Strengthened Programmatic Modalities Through Evidence-Based Innovation and Learning**

AfP worked with partners who ‘opted in’ to pilot specific program approaches (modalities) that were new to them and they identified as relevant to their local context. Each modality was implemented in a very different way, depending on the nature of the approach, AfP Technical Lead, partner and local context.

#### ***The Graduation Approach***

The Graduation Approach itself has a firmly established evidence base as a holistic approach to supporting individuals to achieve ‘self reliance’ - covering four pillars of social protection, livelihood promotion, financial inclusion and social empowerment. AfP has designed a package of resources on the Graduation Approach which are contextualised for partners to deliver according to their context. The comprehensive package of resources include vulnerability assessments, socioeconomic assessment, market assessment, financial literacy training, savings groups guides, and highly technical monitoring and evaluation framework using the Impact Atlas platform. The AfP Technical Lead works closely with partners to build these tools, deliver training, and provides ongoing mentoring to tailor support to the needs and growing capacity of partners to deliver. A project duration is 1-2 years.

#### ***Achievements***

- Piloted in settings where the graduation approach has not been used before:
  - DSPR Jordan implemented a pilot in Gaza refugee camp in Jordan
  - EOC-DICAC implemented a pilot in urban displaced populations in Ethiopia
- Project participants far exceed 'graduation criteria' with reduced aid dependency
- Partner technical abilities dramatically expanded, in technical ability to deliver graduation approach, as well as in MEL capability and GEDSI
- AfP facilitated Peer-Learning, supporting DSPR Jordan staff to train program staff in Ethiopia

### Challenges

#### Spotlight: Supporting Pathways to Self-Reliance in Jordan

The Graduation Approach was piloted by **DSPR Jordan** as part of the Walking the Talk initiative, building on AfP's commitment to strengthening locally led and context-specific programming. The approach, grounded in global best practice, aims to support the self-reliance of vulnerable households through a sequenced package of livelihoods support, mentoring, and access to essential services. Implemented in an urban displacement context, the approach engaged vulnerable refugee and host community members, particularly women. Participants were supported to identify and pursue income-generating opportunities appropriate to their skills and circumstances. Regular mentorship visits were a defining feature of the model, enabling DSPR-Jordan mentoring staff to build trust with households and provide tailored guidance on livelihoods, protection, and wellbeing.

Partners noted that the Graduation Approach created space for deeper conversations at the household level surfacing barriers related to gender, inclusion, and access to decision-making. These insights were shared by DSPR during regional learning forums and contributed to broader reflection across the partnership about how livelihoods programming can also drive social change. The experience of implementing the Graduation Approach in Jordan informed a cross-partner learning exchange, in which **DSPR-Jordan Program Manager supported DICAC in Ethiopia** to adapt the model to their own context. This partner to partner collaboration reflects the ethos of Walking the Talk partner-led innovation, mutual learning, and locally grounded solutions.

- Resource intensive for AfP
- Complex contextual factors made it difficult to meet overall AfP targets, not project-related targets

## ***Anticipatory Action***

Anticipatory Action is described as bridging the gap between disaster risk reduction and emergency response, where humanitarian occurs ‘in the window’ after an imminent disaster is identified as likely to occur and before it takes place. Anticipatory Action can take many forms but is centred on supporting communities to minimise the impacts of that disaster. AfP identified that, together with partners, they had already been implementing this relatively new concept within DRR/DRM, and so felt they were in a good place to formally program the modality. Given that Anticipatory Action requires a supporting local context, AfP’s approach was to support partners who had identified a feasible pilot in their country context. AfP’s support includes reviewing and contributing technical input to strengthen funding proposals, and at times funding pilots. Identification of learning tools and process are partner-led and supported by AfP as needed. A project duration is approximately 1 year in design, approval and preparatory planning phase.

### ***Achievements***

- AfP exceeded the number of pilots they had hoped to achieve, including:
  - CAID piloted Cyclone Forecast Based Assessments in Bangladesh
  - Church World Service International piloted CLEAR Project in Indonesia establishing early warning systems for El-Nino related flooding
- Partners have strong agency in their implementation of this work and AfP recognise local partners as leaders in this modality, and have facilitated peer learning forums to support partners to share their piloting experience with one another.

### ***Challenges***

- Underdeveloped MEL system and difficulty tracking partner impact across AfP teams
- The short ‘window’ of response makes it difficult to address partner capacity and create reflective spaces to improve

## ***Community Based Protection***

Community based protection is about empowering communities to take ownership of, assess and respond to, specific protection needs. AfP takes a very holistic and ‘open-ended’ approach to protection, addressing what it sees as a gap within the humanitarian sector, of building authentic capacity locally to identify and address practical protection needs. Building on their organizational expertise, AfP’s approach is to work with a partner over a short period of time to develop and deliver a practical and flexible workshop with highly contextualised tools and resources; designed to develop a

core set of analytical skills and practical responses to locally identified protection needs. A multi-day flexible workshop is then held for locally identified participants including partner staff, local stakeholders, community leaders, protection actors, representatives from specific interest groups; to develop action plans which AfP may support to varying levels as requested. Detailed evaluations at the end of workshops with partners would help assess effectiveness and there have been attempts to conduct Most Significant Change.

### *Achievements*

- Achieved WtT target of four partners with improved access to tools
- Highlight contextualised and practical content developed with partners
- Strong local representation during workshops and action planning

### *Challenges*

- Limited MEL beyond workshops and difficulty following up workshop attendees
- Difficulty measuring impact as the work is focused on changes in mindset.

### ***Innovation & Learning and Inclusion & Accountability***

Rather than specific program modalities, these two initiatives of WtT are all about shared and mutual learning, across programs and cross cutting areas. This was one of the most highly regarded aspects of the program among both partners and AfP but a MEL system to capture impact does not yet exist beyond shorter, post workshop surveys.

*Partner Peer Learning:* Over the three years AfP facilitated a number of opportunities for partners to share their technical experience and learn from one another:

- DSPR Jordan, EOTC-DICAC Ethiopia: Graduation Approach peer learning exchange
- Partner Anticipatory Action Learning Forum: Partners CAID, CWSI and VCC presented on their AA pilots alongside technical input from a climate change and disaster researcher
- Partner presentations and attendance at Regional Humanitarian Forums
- Development of Climate Displacement Strategy

*Mutual Learning Forums for AfP and Partners on cross cutting issues:*

- 2023 – Gender Focus: Transformative Safeguarding for 13 partners, 2 AfP staff
- 2024 – Disability Focus: CBM Assessment and Training for 23 partner and AfP staff
- 2025 – Accountability to Affected Populations Focus: Assessment and interactive learning event, 32 participants present across 12 partners and AfP staff

## DASHBOARD FOR OUTCOME 1 – INNOVATION & LEARNING

Indicator	Target	Estimated / Achieved	Status
<b>Graduation Approach</b>			
Partners with increased knowledge & capacity / improved access to learnings, tools and templates	5	2	Partial
<b>Anticipatory Action</b>			
Partners reporting increased knowledge and programmatic capacity modalities available to bridge the gap between DRR & ER	6	4+	Partial
Partners testing AA as program pilot	1	3-5	Met
People in Southern Bangladesh able to access social/cash transfer through AA	600	951	Met
<b>Community Based Protection</b>			
Partners with increased knowledge and programmatic capacity of CBP	4	4	Met
<b>Inclusion &amp; Accountability</b>			
% of partners mainstreamed GEDSI programming	100%	38%	Unknown
Project personnel and stakeholders participating in training on gender issues and women's equal rights	100	Unknown	Not Met
<b>Innovation &amp; Learning with Partners</b>			
Host & facilitate learning opportunities / platforms in prioritised areas for learning, including all the piloted initiatives	Undefined	8+	Met

Table 1: Summary of Challenges & Weaknesses Across Modalities Reported by Partners

	<i>Graduation Approach</i>	<i>Anticipatory Action</i>	<i>Community Based Protection</i>	<i>Inclusion &amp; Accountability</i>
<i>MEL System</i>		●	●	●
<i>Partner &amp; AfP Capacity Constraints</i>	●	●		
<i>Conceptual Complexity</i>		●	●	
<i>Local &amp; Contextual Barriers</i>	●	●		
<i>Risks to Sustainability</i>		●	●	

The table above outlines the key weaknesses and challenges identified across four program modalities: Graduation Approach, Anticipatory Action, Community-Based Protection, and Inclusion & Accountability. Each dot represents a challenge or weakness identified within that modality. A shared challenge across all four modalities is the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) system, indicating widespread issues with data collection, analysis, and learning processes. This analysis illustrates that while some challenges are modality-specific, others are systemic and span multiple approaches, requiring coordinated and context-sensitive solutions. The information presented in the table was gathered through Key Informant Interviews and the partner capacity survey conducted as part of the evaluation. These sources provided firsthand insights into operational challenges and systemic weaknesses experienced across the different modalities.

## Outcome 2: Increased Partner Agility and Resilience in Times of Crisis

WtT contributed to increased partner agility and resilience by strengthening internal systems and building core humanitarian capacities. Eight partners were trained across key areas including Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), Emergency Response (ER), and Humanitarian Essentials — laying the foundation for responsive, more coordinated crisis responses. Reflection, learning, and planning sessions, particularly with the Tonga National Council of Churches (TNCC), Vanuatu Christian Council (VCC), and the ACT Alliance, enabled context-specific strategies to be developed and embedded within partner operations.

A notable example of this enhanced agility was Church World Service (CWS) Indonesia's central role in coordinating the response to the arrival of Rohingya refugees in Aceh, demonstrating increased confidence and leadership in a real-time crisis setting. Engagement in humanitarian forums further facilitated peer learning, networking, and the sharing of adaptive practices. The development of a Climate Displacement Strategy reflected a forward-looking approach to resilience, linking climate adaptation with humanitarian readiness.



However, the absence of a clear theory of change or program logic within Outcome 2, combined with limited MEL and reporting on activities and participants, made it difficult for the evaluation team to assess effectiveness and impact. High staff turnover within some partner organisations also disrupted momentum and continuity. Despite these challenges, the investments in preparedness, internal coordination, and cross-partner learning marked significant examples of steps toward more resilient and agile local humanitarian leadership.

## DASHBOARD FOR OUTCOME 2 – PARTNER AGILITY AND RESILIENCE

Indicator	Target	Estimated / Achieved	Status
Partners with greater emergency response preparedness knowledge	14	6 partners trained in DRR & Humanitarian Essentials	⦿ Partial
Partners engaged in humanitarian training & organisational planning	8		
Partners with greater preparedness to respond to emergencies	10		
Partners supported to engage in coordination mechanisms	Unknown	1	⦿ Met
People trained on climate-related hazards and natural disasters	600	< 50	⦿ Not Met
People engaged in local DRR/climate plan development	600	< 50	⦿ Not Met
Partners in Climate Displacement Strategy consultation (AfP + HAG)	5+	5+	⦿ Met
Increased local participation (not tracked)	N/A	Described qualitatively	⦿ Partial

## Spotlight: Building Agility and Resilience Through Adaptive Crisis Response

When Cyclone Remal loomed off the coast of southern **Bangladesh**, **Christian Aid Bangladesh (CAID)** was no stranger to the cycles of disaster response. Yet, the approach adopted in December 2024 marked a turning point. For the first time, with support from Act for Peace under the Walking the Talk initiative, they implemented an anticipatory action strategy to proactively respond. This pivot in operational mindset and practice exemplifies the growing agility and crisis resilience among AfP's local partners. According to a senior staff member interviewed CAID's ability "*put into place anticipatory actions before [Cyclone] Remal hit,*" reducing potential damage and enabling a faster, more organised humanitarian response. These actions were not isolated. CAID shared their learnings at a regional humanitarian conference, reflecting how AA became a learning catalyst across contexts (KII with Christian Aid Bangladesh, April 2025).

*"Before, we only acted when things happened. Now, we try to think ahead—even if resources are limited"* (KII with EOC-DICAC, April 2025).

### Outcome 3: Increased Financial Sustainability of Partners to Resource Locally Led Initiatives that Address Displacement

WtT contributed to a visible shift in partner ownership over resource mobilization and donor engagement. Across six partners, nine funding opportunities were pursued, with three resulting in successful grants.

Most significantly, **EOC-DICAC in Ethiopia** secured funding from the Embassy of the Netherlands for a scaling of the Tesfa project, where for the first time, they have subcontracted Act for Peace (AfP) (AfP), an intentional reversal of roles to empower the partner to lead externally facing donor relationships and lead on contractual responsibility for program quality and delivery.

The **Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees (DSPR) in Jordan** successfully attracted new funding from the Canadian Embassy. This was attributed to the credibility they had built by implementing innovative approaches like the Graduation Approach in camp settings. Their work was also featured by UNHCR, which further boosted their visibility. This success was directly linked to AfP's encouragement for DSPR to act as the lead applicant and maintain the primary relationship with the donor, while AfP took a background role.

In **Indonesia**, **Church World Service (YCWS)** noted that they had begun developing a pipeline of proposals and strengthening internal business development capacity. However, they also described the challenge of balancing this work with emergency

response demands, given limited staff time and intense competition for donor attention.

**Christian Care in Zimbabwe** shared that they felt increasingly confident in approaching donors directly. They credited AfP's support in documentation and narrative development, though they acknowledged that AfP still handled most of the technical design and compliance-focused elements of proposal development.

Similarly, **Christian Aid in Bangladesh** reflected on ongoing support received by AFP through their participation in regional humanitarian learning events where donor engagement could take place.

Overall, Outcome 3 demonstrated meaningful but uneven progress toward more sustainable and partner-led approaches to resource mobilization. Continued support will be required to build proposal-writing capacity, reduce financial risk exposure for AfP, and establish tracking systems to ensure inclusive access to funding across the partnership.

### DASHBOARD FOR OUTCOME 3 – FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Indicator	Target	Estimated / Achieved	Status
Partners with increased knowledge of funding opportunities from diverse sources	4	6	● Met
Partners have business development plans that identify alternative funding streams	6	2	○ Partial
% partners with (part) successful implementation of business development plan	60%	30% (3/9)	○ Partial
Partners supported to undertake donor stewardship with new/existing donors	4	4	● Met
Partners supported to submit proposals as lead agencies	3	2	○ Partial

Table 2: Identified Barriers and Constraints

AfP's Internal Capacity	External Resourcing Constraints
AfP's internal resources were stretched—unable to support all business development leads.	Partners faced external pressures, including the war in Gaza and cuts to USAID funding.
Unequal Risk Distribution	Lack of Tracking System
AfP still carried much of the risk and workload in proposal development.	No system was in place to track financial diversification or ensure inclusion of smaller partners.

Table 2 highlights internal and external challenges that have influenced AfP's efforts to strengthen financial sustainability. Internally, limited capacity has made it difficult for AfP to consistently support financial sustainability initiatives across the partnership. This was echoed in KII (Key Informant Interview)s with AfP staff, who noted competing demands and overstretched resources. Externally, partners are facing pressures such as the war in Gaza and reductions in donor funding, including USAID. These constraints have made long-term planning and resource mobilization more difficult.

KII (Key Informant Interview)s with AfP also noted that the organization continues to carry a significant share of the risk and workload in proposal development, which can limit opportunities for more balanced collaboration. Additionally, the absence of a system to track financial diversification or ensure inclusion of smaller partners was identified as a gap in current processes.

### Spotlight: Laying the Foundations for Financial Sustainability

For local humanitarian actors, financial sustainability represents more than just access to stable funding. It is about autonomy, credibility, and the ability to drive locally led responses in contexts affected by displacement. Through the WtT initiative, AfP partners began to strengthen the core systems that support financial independence while piloting innovative strategies to diversify resources and build long-term resilience.

In **Zimbabwe, Christian Care** described their evolving capacity to independently manage and attract funding. During a key informant interview, staff explained that the program's support and practical tools, particularly those focusing on risk-informed planning and financial reporting, enabled them to become more competitive in donor engagement. One participant shared that their budgeting and risk assessments are now better aligned, which has helped build credibility in funding conversations. This improvement was reflected in the survey results, where 67 percent of partners reported that their internal financial systems had improved as a result of participating in the initiative .

In **Ethiopia, EOC-DICAC** illustrated another pathway to financial sustainability by leveraging visibility and cross-country collaboration. After hosting a Graduation Approach pilot and presenting their learnings to regional partners from Jordan and the Philippines, EOC-DICAC gained reputational capital that attracted attention from additional funders. One staff member explained that they are no longer seen only as implementers but also as leaders who share innovations. This shift in perception has improved how donors view their work.

**OfERR Ceylon** also reflected on the importance of flexible funding. In the survey, the organization reported that support from AfP allowed them to address urgent community needs without waiting for rigid donor cycles. This flexibility enabled

them to support displacement-affected families more effectively while building trust within the communities they serve, which is a critical component of long-term sustainability.

#### Outcome 4: meaningful participation and leadership within populations with lived experience of displacement.

Act for Peace (AfP)'s (AfP) global refugee advocacy work under the Meaningful Participation and Leadership (MP&L) outcome stream of the WtT initiative has played a catalytic role in advancing the inclusion of refugees in global decision-making processes. Rooted in the 2017/18 development of the Global Compact for Refugees, AfP, in partnership with the Caldor Centre, APNOR, and APRRN, championed the concepts of Meaningful Participation and the Whole of Society Approach, both of which underpin AfP's strategy '*Backing Displaced People*'. Through joint pledges and sustained engagement, AfP has directly contributed to the establishment of refugee advisory committees by at least six governments, including Australia, and supported momentum for the participation of over 300 refugee delegates at the 2023 Global Refugee Forum.

AfP's approach emphasises co-leadership, with activities such as co-produced research led by refugee and non-refugee researchers, and the establishment of annual research and advocacy agendas shaped through inclusive consultations. Despite limited resourcing, AfP has leveraged strong partnerships to advance impactful law and policy reform work, including advocacy for a refugee seat on the UNHCR Executive Committee. While systemic and structural barriers continue to constrain refugee leadership, particularly in contexts such as Bangladesh, AfP's flexible, partner-led model enables sustained momentum and locally rooted advocacy. The work continues to evolve based on context and opportunity, demonstrating AfP's commitment to co-ownership, adaptability, and transformative change in refugee participation and leadership.

## DASHBOARD FOR OUTCOME 4 – MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION & LEADERSHIP

Output	Description	Timeframe	Source / Status
Case Study 1: Enhanced visibility and recognition of Refugee-Led Initiatives (RLIs)	Consultations with RLIs culminated in the development of the <i>Guidelines for Co-produced Research with Refugees and Other People with Lived Experience of Displacement</i> . Country-level case studies in Indonesia and Bangladesh illustrate increased recognition of RLI contributions.	2022–2024	Finalised guidelines, country case studies
Case Study 2: Policy and practice change among displacement actors	UNHCR, in response to advocacy and research from this program, agreed to cease using the term "persons of concern" when referring to displaced populations. Reflected changes in public discourse and agency documentation.	2022	Public statement from UNHCR, policy documentation
Ongoing Policy Reform: Participation Rights	A draft declaration affirming the right of refugees and displaced persons to participate in decisions that affect their rights is under development. Includes legal commentaries and guidance.	2025 (in progress)	Draft declaration currently under review. Noted as a 2025 reform initiative.
Output 4.1: RLI Mapping and Recommendations	Mapping of RLIs across four countries completed. Recommendations developed to improve donor and policy support. Research assessed both contributions and constraints experienced by RLIs.	Completed 2023	RLI mapping report
Stakeholder Engagement and Dissemination	Research findings and recommendations disseminated to over 100 key stakeholders, including donors, NGOs and multilateral institutions, in the lead-up to and follow-up from the December 2023 Global Refugee Forum.	Late 2023– Early 2024	Global Refugee Forum engagement records, dissemination tracking
Alignment with Global Commitments	The work aligns with the <i>Meaningful Participation Pledge</i> launched during the Global Refugee Forum, reinforcing	2023– ongoing	Global Refugee Forum documentation,

## Spotlight: Shifting the Centre, Advancing Displaced Leadership in Program Design and Delivery

Across the Walking the Talk initiative, a central ambition was to promote leadership and participation of people with lived experience of displacement. While levels of inclusion varied across contexts, several partner examples illustrate meaningful steps toward shifting power and enabling displaced communities to shape the systems that affect them.

In **Jordan, the Graduation Approach** created space for displaced women to take on mentorship roles, providing one-on-one support to participants and surfacing protection risks and household dynamics during weekly visits. According to key informant interviews with program staff, these women were not just delivering a program. They were shaping how it was received and adapted in each household. This relational engagement fostered trust and built informal community leadership structures that extended beyond the project.

In **Bangladesh, Christian Aid** reported similar momentum. Local program staff noted that involving Rohingya volunteers in anticipatory action activities, including simulation exercises and community planning meetings, improved the cultural relevance and uptake of early warning systems. As one staff member explained, people are more likely to listen when someone from their own community is helping lead the discussion.

Some partners took steps to institutionalise change. In **Sri Lanka, OfERR Ceylon** initiated community feedback groups composed of refugee representatives and began incorporating their input into protection and service delivery planning. This was viewed as a first step toward formal inclusion. One partner staff member reflected that they are beginning to understand that displaced leadership is not just about being present at a meeting. It is about shifting how decisions get made.

The program also catalysed broader sectoral dialogue on leadership with lived experience of displacement. The consultation process and dissemination of the Guidelines for Co-produced Research with Refugees and Other People with Lived Experience of Displacement [insert year 20XX?] provided practical frameworks for ethical inclusion and power-sharing in research. Several partners reported adapting these guidelines in their own program evaluations and design processes.





### KEQ 3: To what extent has the project fostered opportunities for enhanced leadership and enabled meaningful participation?

The Third Key Evaluation Question sought to identify if instances of change and meaningful participation had emerged, as signposts towards systems change

WtT has made notable strides in fostering opportunities for enhanced leadership and enabling meaningful participation, particularly among those with lived experience of displacement. This is visible across the program and is discussed with regards to Leadership and Participation in Displaced Contexts across the WtT Initiative as well as within the Outcome 4 area relating to Meaningful Participation and Leadership among Refugee Populations.

#### *Leadership and Participation Among Partners in Displaced Contexts*

The evaluation asked partners in other displaced contexts their experience with the program and found that while inclusive leadership and participation were valued across partnerships, the extent to which populations with lived experience of displacement were meaningfully engaged in leadership roles varied across contexts. Partners consistently highlighted the importance of involving affected communities in shaping program responses but also acknowledged gaps in structural inclusion and decision-making power.

KII (Key Informant Interview)s revealed examples where displaced persons contributed significantly to program delivery, often serving as volunteers, peer facilitators, or community focal points. For instance, in Jordan, displaced women were engaged as mentors in the Graduation Approach, supporting fellow participants through regular household visits and offering feedback to implementing teams. This created pathways for informal leadership and strengthened community trust. However, it was observed that these roles were often advisory or facilitative rather than strategic or decision-making, indicating that leadership was emerging and being nurtured but not yet fully institutionalised. Survey responses supported this view. While most of the partners agreed that program design had been informed by displaced community voices, a few indicated that displaced persons were represented in governance or decision-making forums. One partner noted that while consultations are strong, they are still working towards embedding displaced leadership at the organisational level. This highlights an important distinction between participation as input and participation as influence, with the latter still emerging.

Encouragingly, some partners began taking steps to formalise participation mechanisms. In Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, there were efforts to include displaced

persons in project steering committees and monitoring visits. These practices contributed to a more accountable and responsive program environment, though partners acknowledged that ensuring safe, dignified, and sustained engagement remained a challenge, especially in politically sensitive or resource-constrained contexts. Overall, the initiative catalysed a shift in discourse toward recognising the expertise and leadership potential of displaced populations.

### *Meaningful Participation and Leadership Among Refugee Populations*

Through its Meaningful Participation and Leadership work, the project has supported both formal and informal mechanisms that elevate the voices and agency of displaced communities. At a global level, AfP has played a key role in co-developing and promoting joint advocacy efforts, such as the Global Refugee Forum pledge, which led to tangible outcomes including the formation of refugee advisory committees in at least six countries, including Australia. These forums have increased the visibility of refugee leadership in high-level decision-making spaces, with refugee-led sessions and co-produced research featured prominently at the 2023 Global Refugee Forum. Importantly, AfP's model goes beyond symbolic inclusion by embedding displaced leadership within research teams, shaping policy agendas through inclusive consultations, and advocating for structural reforms such as a refugee seat on the UNHCR Executive Committee.

At the programmatic level, the project's approach to shared planning, knowledge and content generation, research and policy development, has consistently centred the expertise of those with lived experience. Co-produced research guidelines, developed by teams including refugee researchers, exemplify how WtT has integrated displaced leadership into both the process and substance of its work. However, systemic barriers remain—such as restricted mobility and limited access to decision-making structures in host countries like Bangladesh, where refugee representatives are often excluded from coordination mechanisms beyond the camp level. Despite these challenges, WtT has succeeded in shifting power in practice by generating spaces for refugee-led advocacy, promoting inclusive decision-making models, and reinforcing the normative and legal relevance of participation within the global refugee architecture. The initiative demonstrates that meaningful participation is not just a stated value but a practical, evolving commitment embedded in the way AfP works with and for displaced communities.

## Cross-Cutting Themes and Considerations

### ***Gender Equality, Disability & Social Inclusion (GEDSI)***

WtT took a twin-track approach to GEDSI – supporting partner specific initiatives as well as facilitating mutual learning and accountability initiatives across gender, disability and accountability to affected populations as discussed under KEQ2.

Christian Aid Bangladesh integrated gender and disability considerations into anticipatory action, ensuring that early warning and preparedness reached marginalised groups. These actions were context-driven, locally owned, and responsive to community needs. These initiatives appear to be partner-identified and led, rather than a direct result of the WtT talk, although they were often supported by flexible funding and adaptive timelines.

It is yet to be seen how the WtT's approach to mutual-learning and mutual-accountability will impact. As discussed earlier, AfP's approach evolved over the three years of the project, and staff feel they have achieved the best approach in the final year. Given that gender was undertaken in the first year of the project and it does not appear to have influenced project activities, AfP may need to revisit gender in their new approach to mutual-learning and mutual-accountability with partners. Specific challenges which surfaced during the evaluations include:

- Assumptions related to partner capacity, enabling environments, and power dynamics are not established at a program level
- Inclusion was often understood but not formalised. During KII (Key Informant Interview)s partners reported they lack the technical tools or institutional mandates to engage in a sustained way
- The absence of GEDSI feedback loops in the ToC meant that emerging lessons from inclusive practice were not captured or integrated into program adaptation
- The MEL system did not meet GEDSI standards. Most baseline and progress indicators were quantitative and focused on output-level achievements. While some gender disaggregation was present, indicators rarely tracked participation, leadership, or empowerment of marginalised groups. Several partners noted that monitoring systems were not designed to assess shifts in agency, power, or access, which are core elements of GEDSI transformation.

### ***Funding Landscape and External Context***

The *Walking the Talk (WtT)* program was implemented within an increasingly volatile and fragmented funding landscape, shaped by global crises, shifting donor priorities, and structural changes in the international aid system. Conflicts such as the Gaza war and the ongoing war in Ukraine have created new humanitarian demands while diverting resources away from protracted or less visible crises where AfP and its partners also operate. At the same time, significant reductions in institutional funding, including cuts from USAID, have impacted partners' financial resources and sustainability, limiting their ability to retain staff, sustain programs, and invest in long-term systems strengthening.

At a broader level, the global aid architecture has become highly complex, fragmented, and competitive. Over the past two decades, the proliferation of official finance providers has forced some recipient countries to manage relationships with more than

200 donor agencies<sup>i</sup>. These trends, driven by shifting political priorities and preferences in donor countries, have placed particular strain on low-capacity environments affected by natural disaster and/or humanitarian emergencies. They create inefficiencies and inconsistencies for recipient governments and civil society actors, who must navigate parallel systems, overlapping reporting requirements, and projects that often bypass government-led coordination and accountability mechanisms. Civil society actors face a range of constraints in the spaces where we work, particularly in contexts where governance is fragmented or politically sensitive. In locations such as Gaza and Myanmar, complex governance arrangements create significant challenges for coordination, access, and operational legitimacy. These environments often restrict the ability of civil society organizations to engage openly, advocate for community needs, or implement programs without political interference. The role of government coordination in such contexts is critical its absence or inconsistency can hinder effective response, delay service delivery, and limit the potential for inclusive and sustainable impact. Recognising these constraints is essential to understanding the operational realities our partners face and the support required to navigate them.

Within this challenging environment, partners consistently identified AfP's flexible and values-driven funding as a critical enabler of adaptive, locally led responses. DFAT, through ANCP continues to play an important role in resourcing community-based and locally led initiatives. However, partners noted that even ANCP funding, while comparatively more flexible than other bilateral streams, requires further adaptation to better support long-term, systems-focused change. Without a shift in the overall funding architecture toward equity, trust-based partnerships, and sustained capacity development, efforts to shift power and build resilient, locally led systems risk stalling. The WtT experience offers compelling, practice-based evidence for the effectiveness of alternative funding approaches that invest in local leadership, strategic learning, and shared accountability.

## Evaluation Conclusions

The Walking the Talk (WtT) program is authentic in its posture and approach to shifting power, in the way that it supports partners to identify and lead new and innovative programming approaches, support holistic partner capacity strengthening, as well as establishing platforms for shared and mutual learning. This programmatic approach underpinned by a strong partnership ethos, has supported partners to excel in their capacity and leadership of impactful initiatives within their local context. Early instances of change are evident, reflecting that this is a successful first phase of a systems change initiative. The WtT initiative provides compelling practice-based evidence for piloting alternative approaches that invest in local leadership, strategic learning and shared accountability.

Mutually reinforcing strengths have worked together to foster an environment in which partners are entrusted and resourced in ways unique to other established programs. Strengths of the program include:

### Piloting and Innovation

The WtT program is full of examples of partners identifying innovation opportunities and being supported by AfP, to deliver with success. While AfP is intentional in facilitating an environment in which it is ‘safe to fail,’ the majority of pilots are so well considered that they are delivered to a high standard. AfP’s support to pilot programs varies according to need, from technical tool development and mentoring through Graduation Approach pilots, to highly contextualised protection training with a diverse range of locally identified stakeholders, and technical support and funding to get an anticipatory action pilot off the ground; partners are consistently supported by AfP to pursue new and unique opportunities that they want to pursue, within their local context. Further, the use of peer-led learning models and relational engagement such as mentorship in the Graduation Approach in Jordan and community-led anticipatory action in Bangladesh enabled high-trust, culturally relevant, and community-embedded responses. These approaches fostered not only better program outcomes but also surfaced local leadership and contextual innovation.

*“I like the idea of getting resources and funding to partners to do what they want to do ... giving [partners] that creative freedom to be able to design a project and we’re providing the funding because that’s how the aid sector should essentially work.” – AfP Staff, KII*

## Facilitating Shared and Mutual Learning

While originally designated as Output 1.5, shared and mutual learning is woven throughout Walking the Talk (WtT) and is an aspect of delivery that receives high praise across partner and AfP staff. Partner peer learning exchanges and forums as used in the Graduation Approach and Anticipatory Action facilitate valuable connection and peer learning, and are highly valued among partners. Combined AfP and partner mutual learning approaches have evolved over the duration of the project. While resources for independent evaluations have not been available, post-workshop surveys and anecdotal evidence suggest they are well received, while also being strongly aligned with partnership and localisation principles of mutual benefit, reciprocity and complementarity.

*“We’re on a journey, us and our partners ... as a shared learning experience.” – AfP Staff, KII*

## Partnership Posture and Intent

As an organization AfP is passionate about ‘backing displaced people’ and supporting partners to take the lead. This sentiment was reflected across all AfP interviews where staff shared examples of supporting partners to take the lead, and that AfP’s role was primarily as broker and facilitator, to ‘support from behind’ as required. AfP staff were also pleasantly surprised when they began to see some ‘fruit’ of this approach, such as partners taking initiative and leadership in funding approaches, or coming to AfP with programmatic observations based on reading through highly technical MEL data. Partners expressed the importance of finding sustainable methods to meeting operational costs, which enables them to be able to respond to disasters.

It is clear that partners highly value AfP’s approach, reporting that their partnership with AfP has a strong degree of trust, is collaborative and impactful and that AfP demonstrates accountability. Many partners appreciated AfP’s flexible and context-responsive support, particularly in relation to piloting new approaches, protection, and anticipatory action. This was evident in key moments such as both anticipatory action pilots, the rapid response to Cyclone Remal in Bangladesh and the development of participatory protection workshops in the Philippines. The relational and iterative nature of support contributed to partner confidence and agility.

## Responsive and Flexible Funding

A prominent feature of the WtT program is that it is flexible and adaptive. Some AfP staff valued the opportunity to be less prescriptive in this grant arrangement, and that flexible

funding enabled resourcing of valuable but more ad hoc activities such as travel and attendance at learning initiatives. Others spoke of the ability to be responsive to program needs, such as providing funding for anticipatory action – which often is not included in DRR programming. Others expressed appreciation that program pilots were not pressured to perform; instead, learning was valued and encouraged, particularly when local contexts or partner circumstances presented specific challenges and barriers.

Alongside these strengths, several challenges hindered the programs overall achievements, stunted its potential, and should be addressed for the program to deliver more impact in the next phase. Challenges can be conceptualised in two broad categories.

## Operational Challenges & Resourcing

The WtT program was slow to gain momentum due to a range of factors including implementation of strategic processes, reduced staffing and funding for both AfP and partners, and competing operational demands. This was reflected in both survey results and KII (Key Informant Interview)s, with several partners noting the challenge of sustaining momentum without long-term investment or dedicated staff. Multiple KII (Key Informant Interview)s also noted concerns regarding sustainability and cost recovery for AfP staff, considering the many hours spent on the program beyond the budgeted resourcing. Another possible risk is the extent of flexibility and inconsistencies in delivery approach across AfP teams and staff, including Technical Leads in PPD and SED, as well as limited engagement across Partner Focal Points. This has made it difficult to track activities and attribution across multiple funding sources. For example, in the current model, there is no organised mechanism for AfP Technical Lead to be able to engage with other AfP Staff who hold partner relationships to track program impact and sustained changes to partner capacities.

*“Cost recovery is difficult because of the nature of our role as facilitator” – AfP Staff , KII*

## Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) System

The WtT MEL system was light touch and not fit for purpose, and in its current form, it does not capture significant program achievements. On the one hand, WtT adopted ANCP Reporting indicators and formats which were output and activity driven, limiting depth program insights. On the other hand, a small number of quality assured evaluations, publications and some completion reports were delivered for specific deliverables in other programmatic areas within AfP. Overall, this resulted in an uneven



approach to MEL, lack of visibility at program level, and gaps in evidence on progress towards outcomes and the ultimate program goals.

This, combined with an underdeveloped TOC had the unfortunate implication that there was limited capturing of the true impact of this program, such as shifts in organizational mindset and power dynamics; growth in partner leadership, agency, and capacity; and changes in partnership dynamics. Across the KII (Key Informant Interview)s and partner survey the need for MEL systems that better reflect complexity, including learning loops, participatory tracking, and qualitative indicators of change. In both KIIs and through Collaborative Sense Making AfP staff identified limitations in outcome definition and measurement, as well as issues in the cohesiveness of the TOC. An enhanced MEL system would enable AfP and partners to better reflect, document and celebrate its achievements as well as facilitate quality evidence-based learning.



## Recommendations

Based on these conclusions regarding both strengths and challenges, the evaluation makes the following recommendations for a possible future phase of the project.

### 1. Articulate and Continue to Strengthen Partnership Approach

AfP's partnering approach is key to the successful elements of the WtT program, but it is not well documented, tracked or measured. It is recommended that AfP work together with partners in the redesign of WtT to continue embedding and articulate a suitable MEL systems which align with partner learning needs. If they do not yet exist, co-develop partnership strategies that articulate mutual expectations, values, and commitments, continuing to prioritise relational, trust-based ways of working which position partners as equal collaborators in program design, decision-making, and donor engagement. Increase investment in organization-wide capacity strengthening for partners, beyond project-specific support, to enable sustainable leadership and influence. Embed localisation objectives more explicitly across program design, implementation, and monitoring frameworks to ensure progress can be tracked and adapted over time, with an emphasis on mutual accountability rather than compliance. AfP would benefit from considering how partnership management interacts with and is impacted by the WtT program, vis-a-vis other AfP engagements and teams, to improve harmonisation and impact visibility.

### 2. Revise and Articulate the Theory of Change – Balancing Flexibility and Structure

There is merit to the underlying logic and hypotheses of the program approach but its theory and operationalisation could be strengthened to build upon program successes. It is recommended that a new phase invest in a design process which seeks to articulate the change theory and processes, unpacking relationships, pathways and assumptions, so that AfP and partners can better understand how the program works and continually improve overarching and nested approaches. A revised TOC would be able to hold the delicate balance in defining scope and providing structure, while also maintaining flexibility. Consideration should be given to scope and operationalisation of the program across different teams within AfP, to support shared understanding and vision as well as support MEL. AfP may wish to consider a design which achieves both direct program deliverables while also supporting relevant partner capacity strengthening, as indicated in a draft project visual on page 10.

### 3. Design a Cohesive MEL System with Relevant Impact Measurement

The MEL System could be redefined in order to better document and facilitate learning and reflection, for the purposes of evidence-based decision making, and support emergent learning. The revised MEL System should be fit for purpose, and while meeting grant requirements, seek also to gather program evidence with respect to core aspects of the program, drawing from available monitoring resources regarding partnerships, localisation, emergent learning, power shifting and systems change. Some examples have been included in Annex 1.

MEL frameworks should place greater emphasis on outcomes that fall within the sphere of control and influence of both AfP and its partners. Mixed-methods, story-based tracking, and participatory reflection tools are well suited to the complex qualitative insights needed and will ensure that learning is owned by both partners and communities. Resourcing will be a major consideration, and AfP will need to consider ways to resource and effectively gather insights across different program teams and partners, without an overburdened overengineered system.

### 4. Measure progress in GEDSI

If GEDSI is to remain as a focus in the next phase, use the established GEDSI analysis to define GEDSI-specific outcome/s in the revised TOC aligned with WtT commitment to measure progress, and clearly define how shifts in gender norms, disability inclusion, and social participation will be achieved in each context with the relevant partner. Articulate key GEDSI-related assumptions and risks to inform strategic planning, program design, and partner capacity strengthening. Strengthen monitoring systems with indicators that move beyond gender disaggregation to track participation, leadership, influence, and changes in power and agency.

### 5. Consider Program Priorities to Improve Planning and Resourcing

Impact has been easier to identify and measure in the program areas that have received greater resourcing and more thorough planning (eg. Graduation Approach). If another phase is to go ahead, AfP may consider if it wants to identify specific program priorities in order to be more intentional in planning and resourcing of these initiatives.

### 6. Map and Consider Effective Operational Approaches within AfP

As a part of a redesign, AfP would benefit from exploring and identifying different options for delivering the program within AfP, and specifically map out the agreed operational approaches within and across AfP teams. This will enhance shared understanding and program cohesion. Some considerations include:

- If continuing to use model with short-term and on-demand technical inputs (eg. anticipatory action, proposal support), how will AfP ensure that change and impact are monitored at the partner level?
- Is there opportunity to harmonise and/or revise partner monitoring with broader AfP partner assessment?
- Does the delivery approach differ across different teams such as PPD and SED, if so, what are the implications of this and is there need for harmonisation?

## Annex 1: Relevant Monitoring Approaches for Consideration

### Partnership

Many institutions use partnership health measures in a variety of ways. Common key indicators across a range of tools include: trust, shared decision making, resourcing autonomy, and reciprocity of assessment.

The [Partnership Brokers Association](#) has great tools and training and is good at distilling complex ideas into accessible concepts. They define partnership effectiveness principles into five categories: Diversity, Equity, Openness, Mutual Benefit and Courage.

Other resources include: this validated and tested [Partnership Self-Assessment Tool](#), this detailed [Partnership Healthcheck](#), this [Partnership Health Check Report](#) from Australia's Closing the Gap Partnership 2021.

### Localisation Monitoring and Evaluation

[HAG's Measuring Localisation Framework](#) continues to be a useful guide, here is an example of how it was used to establish a baseline in [Ukraine](#) which informed the Partner Survey for this evaluation.

### Monitoring and Evaluating Systems Change

Finding ways to measure systems change initiatives is currently very topical within the evaluation community in Australia and globally, given its importance to responding to complex global problems. Some simple MEL considerations are to monitor root causes, measure small steps while working toward the long term, enable and foster emergent insights and learning. The [Waters of Systems Change](#) is a useful resource for understanding systems change.

### Place Based Approaches

These are a subset of Systems Change initiatives, an approach which emphasize drawing on local strengths to find contextually relevant solutions to locally defined problems. MEL considerations include:

- Collect data at local level using locally relevant indicators, while waiting for population level indicators to demonstrate the long term change.
- Capture 'instances of impact' (eg. stories of change) which indicate change is occurring in places, before it occurs across all of society.

## Annex 2: Evaluation Questions & Sub-Questions

### KEQ 1: Is the design relevant and effective in Walking the Talk?

1.1 Does the program design adequately/accurately capture the theory of change and associated hypotheses, and is its scope appropriate/achievable? To what extent have change pathways/hypotheses proved/held true? Have new assumptions or gaps in change pathways been identified?

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1.2 Is the project relevant to AfP and sector and partner priorities? Has the project remained relevant by adapting to changes when required (eg. changes in context circumstances, feedback from partners & communities)

### KEQ 2: Has the project been effective in strengthening partner capacities and agency?

2.1 What are the results against the project log frame? What have been the additional GEDSI findings?

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2.2 How effective are the modalities (the newly tested approaches) in the building capacity of partners?

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2.3 To what extent and through which mechanisms have the project improved/impacted the agency of partners?

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2.4 To what extent and in what ways has the project improved partner capacities?

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2.5 To what extent have partners increased the financial sustainability to resource locally led initiatives?

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2.6 What has worked well in fostering mutual learning and accountability, what have been the barriers and enablers? What are specific examples of AfP being responsive and demonstrating accountability to partners?

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2.7 What has worked well, major achievements, challenges, barriers & enablers to the project achieving the overarching objective?

### KEQ 3: To what extent has the project fostered opportunities for enhanced leadership and enabled meaningful participation?

3.1 Are there identifiable instances of change in leadership and meaningful participation?

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## Annex 3: Detailed Methodology & Data Collection Tools

### Question Bank for Key Informant Interviews

#### *Organisational/General Questions*

##### Warm-Up Questions

- Can you tell me a little about your role and the organization you represent?
- How long have you been working in this field/with this organization?

##### Intro Questions

- How long has your organization partnered with AfP? [Provide year categories]
- In what other ways, besides this project, does your organization partner with AfP? [Could give categories such as: long-standing partnership/relationship other projects, AfP provides holistic support to our organisation (eg. organisational development, capacity building etc.)]
- Thinking now about the WtT project, what is your specific role in this project?

##### General Question Bank

1. How has your organization's experience with the Walking the Talk (WtT) program influenced the way you set goals?
2. Having worked with Act for Peace (AfP) for several years, what stood out to you about Walking the Talk (WtT) program?
3. How, if at all, has your organization's capacity changed over the past three years?
4. How would you describe The Walking the Talk (WtT)?
5. How would you describe the communication and overall structure of collaboration between your organization and Act for Peace (AfP), and how has it influenced the way you work together?
6. How would you describe the communication and collaboration between your organization and Act for Peace (AfP)?
7. What has been helpful in fostering effective partnerships, and what areas could be improved?
8. What additional support or resources would help strengthen your organization's ability to implement programs effectively?
9. What recommendations would you give for improving [specific program/initiative]?
10. Is there anything else you'd like to add that we haven't discussed?
11. In what ways, if any, has attending conferences influenced your work?

#### *Outcome 1: Strengthened Programmatic Modalities Through Evidence-Based Innovation & Learning*

1. Can you describe how your organization's knowledge and programmatic capacity have evolved in relation to the **graduation approach**? In what ways, if any, has evidence-based innovation and learning influenced the way you implement programs?
2. Can you describe any changes in how your organization approaches **community-based protection** as a result of engaging in the program?

#### *Leadership*

##### Meaningful participation and leadership

*Outcome 2: Increased partner agility and resilience in times of crisis.*

1. What tools, resources, or learning opportunities have been most useful in strengthening your approach to bridging disaster risk reduction (DRR) and emergency response?
1. How has the program contributed to your organization's preparedness for emergency response?
2. In what ways has your organization become more agile or resilient in responding to climate-related hazards or crises?
3. Can you share a specific example of how evidence-based learning has influenced your approach to climate displacement programming?
4. What additional resources or support would help your organization further strengthen its local humanitarian leadership?

*Outcome 3: Increased Financial Sustainability of Partners*

1. How has participation in this program influenced your ability to identify and pursue diverse funding opportunities?
2. What changes, if any, has your organization made to its business development planning as a result of program involvement?
3. Can you share an example of a successful funding opportunity or donor engagement that resulted from program activities?
4. What support or training would be most beneficial in helping your organization achieve long-term financial sustainability?

*Cross-Cutting Themes: Innovation, Learning, Inclusion & Accountability (GEDSI)*

**Community Engagement and Decision-Making:**

1. How does your organization ensure that diverse community members, including women, youth, and people with disabilities, have opportunities to participate in decision-making processes?

**Capacity Building and Training:**

1. What approaches has your organization taken to strengthen staff and partner capacity in integrating GEDSI principles into programs and operations?
2. What strategies or approaches have been most effective in promoting gender equality, disability inclusion, and social inclusion within your programs?

**Policy Development and Implementation:**

1. In what ways has your organization worked with stakeholders, such as government agencies and community groups, to incorporate GEDSI considerations into policies and programs?

**Monitoring and Evaluation:**

1. How does your organization assess the impact of GEDSI mainstreaming efforts, and what methods do you use to track progress over time?



2. Can you describe an example where GEDSI analysis led to changes in program design or implementation?

*Challenges and Lessons Learned:*

1. What barriers, if any, have you observed that prevent certain groups from fully participating in programs and interventions?
2. How does your organization address power imbalances and systemic discrimination that may affect participation and outcomes?
3. What have been some key challenges in applying GEDSI principles in your work, and what insights or strategies have emerged from addressing these challenges?
4. What are some of the biggest challenges your organization has faced in advancing GEDSI goals, and how have you addressed them?
5. Can you share a key lesson learned from working on GEDSI mainstreaming that could benefit other organizations or practitioners?
6. Looking ahead, what opportunities do you see for further strengthening GEDSI integration in your work?

**Partnership & Capacity Survey**

1. What organization do you represent?
2. What is your role in that organization?
3. How long has your organization partnered with AfP?
4. In what other ways, besides the project Walking the Talk (WtT), does your organization partner with AfP?
5. Thinking specifically about Walking the Talk (WtT) project, how has your organization been involved?

The next set of questions were answered using a Likert scale.

6. Is there a strong degree of trust in your partnership?
7. Do you feel that AfP has been accountable to your organization?
8. Do you provide feedback to AfP on your partnership?
9. Do you provide feedback to AfP on their performance?
10. If you provide feedback, how responsive is AfP to your feedback?
  - Values & Principles
  - Funding
  - Contracts & Agreements
  - Mutual Goals
11. How do you think your partnership with Act for Peace (AfP) could be improved?
12. What do you value most about your partnership with Act for Peace (AfP)?
13. Do you feel that your partnership with AfP and participating in this project helps you to achieve your organizational goals?
14. Do you feel that you can openly share your ideas and views with regard to the project?
15. Are your organization's ideas and views considered by AfP?
16. In your words, what are the main goals of your organization?
17. How has AfP and the Walking the Talk (WtT) project supported your organization to achieve these goals?
18. Relevant and sufficient information to make an informed decision
19. Open and transparent discussion about the related issue/s

20. An environment of trust where we can openly discuss without fear
21. Time to be able to consider the decision
22. Clear process to resolve differences of opinion and escalate decisions if required
23. Is there a process in place for assessing capacity needs to deliver this project?
24. Who leads or initiates this process?
25. Are you satisfied with the capacity building/support that AfP provides to your organization?
26. Do you feel that your organizational capacity has been strengthened by the WtT project?
27. Please provide examples/evidence

## **List of stakeholders consulted**

### ***Evaluation Reference Group***

- Fares Swais: Executive Director at DSPR, Jordan
- Alaa Alsumhat: Graduation Project Manager, DSPR, Jordan
- Suvo Roy: MEAL Officer, Christian Aid, Bangladesh
- Wardhana Dipa: Program manager, Church World Service / YCWS, Indonesia

### ***The following Key Informant Interviews (KII (Key Informant Interview)) were conducted:***

- Bangladesh: CAID
- Indonesia: YCWS
- Jordan: DSPR
- Zimbabwe: Council of Churches
- Zimbabwe: Christian Care
- Aletia Dundas, International Partnerships and Programs Manager
- Sarah Doyle, International Programs and MEAL Coordinator
- Geoff Robinson, Head of Partnerships and Programs
- James Thomson, Senior Policy and Protection Advisor and Head of the Strategic Engagement Department
- Brian Barbour, Senior Refugee Protection Adviser
- Trish Manley, Program Manager, Development and Impact
- Rahul Mitra, Technical Advisor, Partnership & Programs Department

A focus group with the Evaluation Reference Group was also conducted

### ***Partnership, Agency & Capacity Survey Respondents***

The Border Consortium (TBC)

Christian Aid

National Council of Churches in the Philippines

OfERR Ceylon

Yayasan Cita Wadah Swadaya (YCWS) x 2

Organisation for Eelam Refugee's Rehabilitation (OfERR) x 2

Department of Services to Palestinian Refugees (DSPR) x 2  
Vanuatu Christian Council (VCC)  
Ethiopian Orthodox Church - Development and Inter-Church Aid Commission (EOC-DICAC)

## Annex 4: Sense-Making Session with Act for Peace (AfP) Staff

A participatory sense-making session was convened with Act for Peace (AfP) (AfP) staff as a core step in the independent evaluation of the Walking the Talk (WtT) (WtT) initiative. This 90-minute workshop aimed to engage staff in collectively interpreting the evaluation findings, deepening shared understanding, and informing future program directions. The session activated collaborative learning and critical reflection across AfP teams.

### Structure and Purpose

The session began with a warm-up activity, prompting staff to reflect on what they valued most and found most challenging in the WtT program. This was followed by a review of the evaluation's key questions (KEQs), methodology, and sample. The central focus was on making meaning of both the high-level achievements and underlying dynamics revealed by the evaluation, including effectiveness of design, partner capacity, leadership, and participation.

### Key Discussion Areas

Findings were presented across core program components — Graduation Approach, Anticipatory Action, Community-Based Protection, Emergency Response Capacity, Financial Sustainability, and Leadership. Participants explored which areas were delivering strong outcomes and which required rethinking. The session highlighted consistent cross-cutting themes: the strength of AfP's partnering model, the adaptability of the project, and the growing leadership of partners — especially those with lived experience of displacement.

### Insights from the Poll Survey

The accompanying poll conducted during the session provided further insight into staff perspectives:

- **Theory of Change:** The 50% agreement on the Theory of Change accurately reflecting program logic is based on 4 out of 8 respondents selecting “Agree,” with the rest indicating “Neutral,” “Disagree,” or “Strongly Disagree”
- **Program Achievement:** 75% believed the program mostly achieved its objectives, crediting adaptive approaches and strong partner engagement despite staffing and contextual challenges.
- **MEL System:** Ratings were lower here — 88% rated MEL as moderate or weak in generating useful insights. While some appreciated the clarity of outcomes and partner-led indicator development, others pointed to fragmented systems, limited capacity, and a lack of real-time usability. Only 1 respondent rated MEL effectiveness as a 4, while majority (7 out of 8) rated it as a 2 or 3.

- **Strength of Evidence:** Most staff (63%) rated the strength of evidence as moderate, and suggested improvements such as decentralising MEL, strengthening documentation practices, and tracking nuanced changes like shifts in power and leadership over time.

### Concluding Reflections

The evaluation team took into consideration both the results of the polls, along with the overall discussion in particular when synthesizing recommendations. The sense-making session reinforced the importance of AfP's relational and adaptive approach while surfacing areas for improvement, particularly in MEL system development, evidence use, and strategic planning. It provided an interactive forum for staff to align on learnings, challenge assumptions, and co-create ideas for a potential second phase.

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<sup>ii</sup> World Bank. (2024, May 13). *IDA's role in an increasingly complex global aid architecture*. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2024/05/13/ida-s-role-in-an-increasingly-complex-global-aid-architecture>