

# PeaceNexus Programme Review Synthesis Report

April 2026

## Contents

Acronyms .....	1
Executive Summary .....	2
1. Introduction .....	3
1.1 Introduction to PN and the review .....	3
1.2 Methodology.....	3
1.3 Scope and limitations of the overall review process and this synthesis report.....	4
1.4 Report structure.....	5
2 Findings on PN Positioning.....	5
2.1 Overarching findings on PN’s positioning .....	5
2.2 Detail on positioning, and reference to selected outcomes, per programme .....	6
Box: PN’s role in relation to collective initiatives, peer learning and influencing .....	10
2.3 Risks / challenges / issues for consideration, in relation to PN positioning.....	12
3 Findings on PN approach .....	13
3.1 Overarching findings on PN’s approach .....	13
3.2 Risks / challenges / issues for consideration, in relation to PN’s approach .....	14
4 Conclusion .....	15
5 Recommendations.....	15

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## Acronyms

BE	Business engagement
CA	Central Asia
CAHRA	Conflict-affected and high-risk area
CS	Conflict sensitivity
CSO	Civil society organisation
IAHR	Investor Alliance for Human Rights
IP	International Programme
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OD	Organisational development
PN	PeaceNexus
SA	Southeast Asia
UN	United Nations
UNSR	UN Special Rapporteur for Myanmar
WA	West Africa

## Executive Summary

PeaceNexus is a Swiss foundation that aims to strengthen the capacities of and collaboration between organisations to increase their contribution to reducing violence and building peace.

This synthesis report brings together findings from five independent programme reviews commissioned by PN covering the period 2023 to mid-2025. The reviews examined PN's four regional programmes (Central Asia, West Africa, Southeast Asia, Western Balkans) and the International Programme. They assessed outcomes to which PN has contributed, the relevance of PN's positioning, the relevance and quality of PN's approach, and implications for the next strategy period (2027–2029).

### Overall assessment

Overall, the reviews provide a consistent and positive assessment. PN's goals have remained highly relevant in a period marked by increasing polarisation, shrinking civic space, and declining funding for peacebuilding and conflict prevention. PN's positioning and approach have enabled significant contributions to peacebuilding and conflict-sensitivity capacities and practices and helped to protect and/or strengthen wider ecosystems.

### Key cross-programme findings

Several common findings emerge across the reviews:

- **Strategic positioning:** In all programmes, PN's strategic goals remain relevant and decisions about what to focus on in each context, and which actors to engage, are aligned with contextual dynamics. PN can identify leverage points and generate multiplying effects.
- **A distinctive accompaniment model:** PN's partner-led accompaniment approach – providing deep, sustained support on organisational development and/or conflict-sensitivity - is widely valued by partners and other stakeholders and distinguishes PN from other funders.
- **Convening and influencing role:** Increased investment in collective initiatives, peer learning, and influencing has extended PN's reach beyond individual partnerships and contributed to learning, collaboration and changing mindsets and practices within a broader set of actors, including donors.
- **Flexibility and responsiveness:** PN's independent status and adaptive approach allow it to respond to changing contexts and address evolving needs.

### Key strengths

Partners and external stakeholders consistently highlight several strengths of PN's model: strong technical expertise, a relational and trust-based approach to partnership, flexibility to adapt to partners' needs and contextual shifts, and the ability to bridge actors across sectors and levels. These qualities enable PN to act as a trusted partner and ecosystem builder, including in politically sensitive environments.

### Strategic considerations

While the reviews do not recommend major changes to PN's positioning or approach, they highlight several issues for continued attention. These include balancing the expansion of PN's convening and influencing role with the depth of its partnership model and ensuring complementarities; selectively strengthening communication about PN's strategy and roles; ensuring the sustainability of changes within partner organisations; and preserving institutional knowledge given the high reliance on staff expertise.

### Looking ahead

The programme reviews validate PN's current model and suggest that the next strategy should focus on consolidating existing strengths and continued strategic deployment of PN's partnership, collective initiative and influencing approaches, as opposed to introducing major shifts. Recommended priorities include making intentional choices about how PN deploys these aspects of its model, to meet demand and opportunity while

protecting PN’s distinctive strengths and avoiding overstretch; strengthening sustainability within partnerships; and selectively documenting and communicating PN’s approach.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction to PN and the review

PeaceNexus (PN) commissions independent programme reviews every three years to assess progress towards its strategy, gain feedback on the quality and relevance of its support, and inform strategic planning. **The current review process aimed to identify and corroborate outcomes from PN’s work, generate learning about the relevance and quality of PN’s positioning and approach, and inform the development of PN’s next strategy for 2027-29. PN commissioned five programme-level reviews (one for each regional programme and one for the International Programme (IP)) plus this synthesis report.** The IP review covered the three strands of work within the IP, which relate to PN’s three service areas – business engagement (BE), Conflict Sensitivity (CS) and Organisational Development (OD).

PN is a Swiss private foundation that aims to strengthen the capacities of and collaboration between organisations to increase their contribution to reducing violence and building peace. Based across PN’s four programming regions - Central Asia (CA), West Africa (WA), Southeast Asia (SA), and the Western Balkans (WB) – PN’s team of approximately 20 staff works with local partners who are well-positioned to address specific conflict risks. PN also supports international organisations that are active in fragile states and well-positioned to contribute to social cohesion and peacebuilding, and promotes responsible business practices that reduce the risk of harm and ultimately contribute to peace.

Much of PN’s support is designed to mobilise and accompany long-term processes of organisational change in its partners. Its support is designed to address obstacles to effectiveness that require changes in practice, benefit from external accompaniment and expertise, and cannot be addressed through funding alone. This accompaniment approach is partner-led, adaptive and often long term. In addition, PN works through ‘collective initiatives’, as a way to promote to collaboration and learning and to influence the wider peacebuilding ecosystem<sup>1</sup>.

PN focuses its support and engagement in three main areas:

- supporting the organisational development of peacebuilding actors;
- strengthening the capacity of governments, civil society and businesses to integrate a conflict-sensitive approach at strategic and operational levels; and
- engaging with the private sector to develop responsible business and investment practices in fragile and conflict-affected areas.

This review covers the period 2023 – mid 2025.<sup>2</sup> Significant contextual shifts have occurred in this time, including a sharp decline in funding for peacebuilding and conflict prevention and the introduction of restrictive legislation related to the activities of civil society in many countries. The world is increasingly volatile and polarised and there are specific contextual challenges within the regions in which PN works (see programme review reports).

### 1.2 Methodology

This synthesis report is based on analysis of the five programme reviews.<sup>3</sup> The five programme reviews followed a standard methodology which is detailed in the inception report. The reviews focused on i) identifying and corroborating outcomes to which PN has contributed, ii) assessing the relevance of PN’s positioning, iii) assessing the relevance and quality of PN’s approach, and iv) developing recommendations. Data was

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<sup>1</sup> The term ‘peacebuilding ecosystem’ refers to the interconnected network of actors, institutions, processes, and tools—ranging from local to international levels—that work together to prevent conflict, manage resources sustainably, and foster long-term stability.

<sup>2</sup> The current strategy covers the period 2024-26 but the last programme review took place in 2022, which is why this review also covers 2023.

<sup>3</sup> The author also held a workshop with the programme review team, as part of the analysis process.

gathered via a document review, surveys completed by PN partners and key people within collective initiatives, and interviews and focus groups. Interviews and focus groups took place with PN staff, partners and initiative participants, and with people who do not belong to any of these categories and are considered independent / third party stakeholders. A total of 114 people took part in interviews or focus group discussions, including 17 third party stakeholders. For each programme (or per service area for the IP), the process included a specific (though not exclusive) focus on a sample of two or three claimed outcomes (alongside wider analysis of PN's positioning and approach). For each of these sample outcomes, the reviewer sought to corroborate, through the data sources outlined above, PN's own reporting on and description of these outcomes, their significance and how PN contributed. Each reviewer provided an assessment of whether the claims regarding the outcome and its significance, and PN's contribution, were corroborated by the data collected, particularly corroborated or not corroborated. Of the 18 sample outcomes, PN's claims were corroborated in 15 cases and partially corroborated in 3 cases<sup>4</sup> (and in these 3 cases the information provided in this synthesis report is based on the updated, evidence-based descriptions and analysis of these outcomes included in the programme review reports).

### 1.3 Scope and limitations of the overall review process and this synthesis report

- The review findings are designed to contribute to shaping the next PN strategy alongside other PN learning and decision-making processes and discussions which have been happening concurrently or which will happen as part of the strategy development process.
- The review process has not included any in-depth context or stakeholder analysis. The reviews have analysed the extent to which PN's positioning and approach have been relevant to the goals and outcomes within the current PN strategy and, as far as possible, to the evolving regional and international contexts. However, it has been beyond the scope of the reviews to consider in detail what alternative roles PN might consider for itself within the evolving regional and international context going forwards. This emphasises the importance of considering the findings and recommendations of this review alongside other internal discussions and processes (as above) and additional context analysis.
- The review process has focused on the programme level and not analysed wider organisational aspects of how PN works and is structured, such as human resources, funding, cross-organisational learning.
- Due to available resources, the programme reviews did not explore all of PN's partnerships and collective initiatives.
- The review focused on identifying and corroborating outcomes at the level which PN calls 'capacity outcomes'<sup>5</sup>. These are changes in the behaviour or capacities of partners and others with whom PN engages. PN seeks to contribute to change at this level as a means of strengthening the role and capacity of partner organisations – and other actors within the wider peacebuilding ecosystem - to effect change in line with PN's strategic goals. PN does not seek to achieve, or therefore hold itself accountable to, a direct contribution to change at the level of its strategic goals, so this review has not focused on that level.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Partial corroboration does not indicate that the outcome did not occur or is not significant but rather that the available evidence does not fully support all aspects of PN's claims regarding the outcome's significance or PN's contribution. In the case of the outcome 'GGGI spurs government agencies to integrate conflict sensitivity into green growth strategies' it was not possible to verify the Global Green Growth Institute's significance in terms of its government-facing role because of the difficulty of interacting with state actors in Burkina Faso, who could not be interviewed for the review. In the case of the outcome 'Civic Power Collective's MEL system enables them to capture its effectiveness and contributions to positive social change' the qualification is that the full operationalisation and sustainability of the new monitoring, evaluation and learning system has yet to be demonstrated. In the third case 'UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar takes a more consultative and inclusive approach', the qualification is that other factors also contributed to the UNSR developing reports in a more consultative manner (more so than is reflected in the PN outcome form, though it is recognised that the form did not provide a specific space for reporting on other contributing factors).

<sup>5</sup> The term 'outcomes' is used in this report in place of 'capacity outcomes' because the review was not restricted to identifying and corroborating the *specific* capacity outcomes stated in the PN strategy, and to avoid confusion in this regard. For detail on PN's strategy, the terminology of outcomes and capacity outcomes, and the levels at which PN holds itself accountable, see pages 4-5 of the inception report.

<sup>6</sup> Information regarding how PN partners contribute to higher-level change is provided to the Board through selected 'impact stories', which have not been a focus of this review.

- This synthesis report is deliberately concise, it cannot capture all of the detail and nuance contained in the programme-level reports. PN leadership should read this alongside the five programme-level reports, when leading the development of the next PN strategy.
- The unit of analysis for this synthesis report is the five programme-level reviews. The scope of the review at this synthesis stage has not included any additional data collection or consultation with respondents or staff to explore the extent to which the findings and recommendations from individual programme reviews are applicable to others. This synthesis review identifies trends, patterns and differences based on the programme review reports, but it is for PN itself to consider and contextualise these findings at the organisational and programme-level going into the development of the next strategy.
- To support learning at the programme level, programme reviews explored shared lines of enquiry<sup>7</sup> but also more specific sub-questions at programme level<sup>8</sup>. This means that not all lines of enquiry have been explored to the same depth, or through exactly the same lens, across the programme reviews.

## 1.4 Report structure

This synthesis report provides overarching findings emerging from the programme reviews, firstly in relation to PN's positioning and then PN's approach. It then provides a conclusion and a related set of recommendations, again drawing from the recommendations provided in the programme-level reviews.

## 2 Findings on PN Positioning

This section provides overarching findings, emerging from the programme-level reviews, regarding the relevance of PN's positioning in this period. It then provides some detail per programme regarding the relevance of PN's positioning and some examples of outcomes that PN has contributed to. This is followed by a summary of identified risks, challenges and issues for consideration going forwards. This section of the report also includes a box with additional detail and findings on PN's role in relation to collective initiatives, peer learning and influencing. This box is included because this aspect of PN's role has been significantly increased under this strategy period and PN is keen to learn about how relevant this has been and what it has achieved.

'Positioning' broadly relates to the decisions that PN has made regarding what to work on and who to work with, within each programme. The programme reviews considered how relevant these choices have been in terms of the current PN strategy and the evolving peacebuilding context. As noted in the methodology section, this review exercise has not included undertaking in-depth context or stakeholder analysis and it has been beyond the scope of this review to consider in detail what alternative positioning and roles PN might consider for itself at the global or regional levels. Instead, the review has focused on assessing the relevance of PN's strategic decisions and positioning against the current strategy goals, with consideration also given (to the extent possible without undertaking in-depth context analysis) to how relevant these goals continue to be in light of contextual changes.

### 2.1 Overarching findings on PN's positioning

- **All programme reviews find that PN has positioned itself strategically to contribute to the goals articulated in the 2024-26 strategy and that these goals remain relevant to evolving contexts at the international and regional levels.**
- **PN's programme goals remain relevant to context and the overall relevance and urgency of PN's goals and aims has increased in this period**, including in relation to context dynamics, e.g. rising polarisation, and in relation to pressures faced by civil society, e.g. shrinking civic space and funding cuts.

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<sup>7</sup> See inception report page 9.

<sup>8</sup> See programme-level review reports.

- **Within the particularly challenging global and regional contexts that have evolved during this strategy period**, and through its strategic positioning and distinctive, high quality approach (see section 3), **PN has contributed to a range of outcomes within each programme which have significance** in terms of the capacities and practices of specific stakeholders and which together make an important contribution towards strengthening peacebuilding ecosystems.
- **PN makes strategic decisions on which categories of actors (civil society, business, government, funders) and which specific organisations and institutions, to support and/or influence in each context.** These decisions take account of the context, how these actors are positioned within it, and pathways for contributing to change (as well as considering other factors such as PN’s access to these actors and their readiness to move in a direction that supports peace or conflict-sensitivity). Examples are provided below, in section 2.2, of how strategic decisions on who to work with in specific contexts enable PN to exert leverage or achieve a multiplying effect within specific contexts.
- **PN’s decision to expand its convening and influencing role in this strategy period (alongside its partnerships model) has borne fruit.** It has enabled PN to contribute to outcomes which align with its strategic goals, and the need for this type of work – and the proven ability of PN to fulfil this role – has created demand for PN to do more. See box on page 10.
- PN works within and across different sectors, themes and types of actors. **Having a ‘foot in different camps’ enables PN to establish relationships and credibility, and to generate insights and learning, in various parts of the peacebuilding ecosystem.** PN capitalises on this in a number of ways including supporting and contributing to strategic linkages between actors or sectors; utilising its learning in one space to inform its work in another; and building on its experience in other programmes to support programming pivots in response to identified need.
- **The close and strategic coordination between PN’s WA programme and the CS strand of the IP has been catalytic and demonstrated the value of linking entry-points and initiatives at different levels.**
- **PN’s ability to position itself strategically within and across spaces derives in part from its identity as an independent, privately funded Swiss foundation**, meaning that it is perceived as relatively neutral and can operate in a more flexible and adaptive way than other funders (and those they fund) with fewer accountability requirements. This, alongside the relatively broad articulation of the goals and outcomes in PN’s strategy, supports responsiveness to contextual needs and opportunities.

## 2.2 Detail on positioning, and reference to selected outcomes, per programme

This sub-section provides a summary of findings regarding the relevance of PN’s positioning within each programme, with reference to selected illustrative outcomes. Important detail and nuance regarding positioning, and regarding these and other outcomes, is included in the relevant programme reviews. The programme reviews also provide the analysis of how PN has contributed to these outcomes.

### West Africa

- There is strong alignment between the programme's strategic objectives (social cohesion and trust, and more inclusive natural resource management) and the evolving regional context. The relevance of strategic positioning is highlighted by PN partners and allies who note a growing lack of trust, increased control over speech, increasingly obvious stigmatisation, and the link between natural resource management and peace / conflict. This is acute in a context with a rapidly growing population and dwindling natural resources and where different socio-economic groups face varying barriers to accessing natural resources, intensifying competition and reinforcing divides between groups.
- PN has adapted its positioning within the current strategy period in response to contextual shifts, with an increased focus on coastal countries, engaging organisations with a regional or cross-border reach, and working with environmental actors. These adjustments reflect a strategic reading of regional dynamics and a deliberate positioning to enable PN to act on multiple leverage points (different sectors, different contexts with varying levels of insecurity, etc.).

- PN has deliberately built a diverse portfolio of individual partners and collective initiatives that are mutually reinforcing and complementary across civil society, government, and business, operating at local, national, and regional levels.
- The programme supports organisational development and enables collaboration between actors, with a strong focus on promoting the conceptual understanding and practical application of conflict-sensitivity. Context-relevant outcomes related to this, to which PN support has contributed, include:
  - the **Global Green Growth Institute** – a significant intergovernmental actor given its broad geographical reach and its mandate on natural resources - integrating conflict-sensitivity into its practice and strategic guidelines. PN contributed to this outcome through dual support at the global level and in Burkina Faso and this is an example of the value of collaboration between PN programmes.
  - the **Conflict-Sensitivity Community Hub** in Burkina Faso providing its members with a rare co-managed space for sharing and learning on a sensitive and political issue within a context of reducing civic space. Engaging certain organisations as both PN partners and hub members has demonstrated the catalytic effect of engaging organisations through both types of support.
  - the **Billital Maroobe Network (RBM)** – a vast network of pastoral organisations, subject to discrimination and exclusion from policy and dialogue processes - positioning itself as a key player in addressing the links between pastoralism, peace and conflict, by integrating conflict sensitivity into its internal operations and its strategy. The combination of OD and CS support provided by PN over several years made an important contribution to RBM's positioning.

## Western Balkans

- PN's positioning in the WB is widely perceived as both highly distinctive and strategically aligned with peacebuilding needs in a polarised and high-pressure environment.
- PN WB aims to contribute to the goals of increased inter-ethnic collaboration and trust within states and at the regional level, and to WB societies taking steps to deal with the past responsibly and inclusively. To contribute to these goals, PN WB adopts a locally led, partner-driven peacebuilding approach, centred on supporting brave and progressive civil society actors operating at local, national, and regional levels.
- PN WB has contributed to outcomes within partners such as strengthened strategic decision-making and governance, clearer roles and internal coordination, and more durable systems and routines that increase organisational resilience under pressure. Conflict sensitivity has become a practical lens shaping day-to-day strategy and programming choices. Importantly, these organisational shifts are described as enabling conditions for peacebuilding outcomes (e.g., protecting rare dialogue spaces, sustaining credible media reporting, and maintaining cross-community engagement), rather than simply organisational development gains.
- PN WB has both supported partners through "normal" circumstances and through acute pressure moments related to funding shocks, reputational attacks or political/ security pressure. Through its accompaniment model combining deep diagnostics, trust-based relationships, strong facilitation, and disciplined follow-through, PN WB's support helps partners to navigate and recover from difficult moments but also to strengthen internal systems and sustain organisational resilience. To respect confidentiality, specific partner examples have been removed from this public synthesis report.
- During 2024–2025 the WB programme also adapted its positioning by complementing partner accompaniment with ecosystem-facing initiatives. In response to the deterioration of the operating environment for CSOs, PN initiated and supported a process which has led to establishment of a locally-led rapid response funding mechanism – the **Civic Emergency Fund** - jointly supported by several major private foundations. PN WB has also developed a regional Leadership Development Programme and delivers highly valued peer-learning events.

## Central Asia

- PN's strategy in CA remains highly relevant to the context.
- PN works with government partners as well as civil society in order to strengthen inclusive policymaking and promote constructive cooperation and mutual trust between state and society. Bridging the growing gap between government and civil society is particularly important, but also challenging, across the region and specifically in Kyrgyzstan following the adoption of the foreign agents law. The programme also works with business associations, think tanks, and environmental organisations to promote socially and environmentally responsible practices and to strengthen cross-border cooperation.
- PN's approach and careful use of terminology de-politicizes sensitive issues, providing a safe and effective entry point for discussing and addressing peacebuilding through the lenses of social cohesion and civic identity. For instance, PN's partnership with **Mutukalim** (a faith-based NGO) has contributed to the integration of civic identity within diverse religious communities, demonstrating that civic values are not contradictory to religious ones and helping to bridge the gap between secular state policies and religious communities. This is significant given the context of increasing social polarization and rising religiosity in Kyrgyzstan.
- In another example of how the programme has identified leverage points which have relevance for the wider context and ecosystem, PN's partnership with the **International Business Council** has contributed to the creation of the **Central Asian Green Incentives Platform**. This regional platform, designed to synchronize green incentives and environmental, social and governance (ESG) standards, is significant because a major business association is incorporating conflict-sensitivity by focusing on the social and environmental well-being of local communities alongside its economic goals. This is reported to be a first within this region.
- PN played a pivotal role in creating and institutionalising the **Peacebuilding Hub** in Kyrgyzstan, a regionally significant platform for collective action bringing together civil society, government institutions, the business community, and international actors. A flagship initiative of the Hub is Yntymak (Unity) Peace Week, which PN has supported and helped expand across Central Asia. The Hub has strengthened engagement with national government institutions and produced key analytical outputs, with participants noting that it fills critical gaps in regional peacebuilding analysis and has begun to influence the programming of major donors.
- PN's work with environmental actors has also demonstrated the programme's ability to synchronize diverse national agendas. National priorities vary significantly but partners noted that PN's accompaniment enabled them to bring these issues to a 'common denominator' through the lens of environmental peacebuilding.

## Southeast Asia

- The focus on supporting federal democracy in Myanmar remains a relevant and valuable end goal.
- In SA, PN works with civil society and with pro-democratic political stakeholders who it believes are contributing meaningfully to federal democracy discussions and/or transitional justice processes. The programme also seeks to influence interactional actors to make their support to the pro-democracy movement more conflict-sensitive, responsive to local needs and supportive of inclusive locally led processes, including through working with the UN Special Rapporteur for Myanmar (UNSR).
- Despite Myanmar's extraordinarily challenging post-coup environment, the programme has demonstrated meaningful outcomes and maintained partnerships which are highly valued by partners.
- According to context experts, the stakeholders PN currently works with some of the big names in terms of political and civil society actors within Myanmar's pro-democracy movement.
- PN has proved able to play a meaningful role during a difficult period in the country. While some outcomes sit at an organisational level, the implications thereof have the potential for wider impact, due to the relevance and influence of the grant partners PN has chosen to support in the wider pro-democracy ecosystem. For instance:

- Through its partnerships, PN has supported CSOs to build their organisational resilience and internal systems. In one example, PN contributed to the **Salween Institute** strengthening its internal operations and organisational resilience following team members suddenly being exiled from Myanmar and having to reestablish the organisation in Thailand. Having withstood attacks and threats by the Myanmar military designed to weaken civil society, Salween Institute has gone on to become one of the very few key intellectual and critical voices representing ethnic communities.
- PN has also supported **Civic Power Collective (CPC)**, an organisation building the capacity, resilience and inter-connectedness of Myanmar civil society, in developing internal systems designed to support learning and decision-making following the departure of many senior staff after the coup and to help ensure that its messaging to international actors is evidence-based.
- PN's work facilitated the **UNSR's** engagement with civil society in Myanmar, helping to ensure that the research, analysis and perspectives of local actors were reflected in international dialogue about the crisis in the country.

### International Programme - BE<sup>9</sup>

- The overarching objective of the BE strand of the IP is to promote responsible practices that reduce risks of harm and, ultimately, contribute to peace. It has pursued this goal through working with two main groups: multinational companies and investors.
- The IP BE strand has pivoted slightly away from the focus articulated in the current strategy, maintaining a focus on conflict-sensitive business practices while deprioritising support to inclusive dialogue initiatives. It has also adapted its positioning this strategy period, toward working with medium-sized companies and investors, which has improved access to decision-makers and accelerated uptake of new practices.
- Key to PN's positioning on BE, within the IP, is its ability to operate simultaneously as advisor, funder, connector, and sometimes investor.
- PN's partnerships, e.g. with **IPDEV** (Investisseur & Partenaire Développement) and **Novartis**, have strengthened internal capacities and processes in ways that align with PN's aim to contribute towards progressive companies heightening human rights due diligence in fragile states. For instance, PN support has contributed to Novartis developing a formalised, organisation-wide approach to human rights due diligence and integrating a conflict lens into corporate processes. This marks a significant change in how Novartis operates in conflict-affected and high risk settings.
- PN's partnership with the **Investor Alliance for Human Rights (IAHR)**— a collective platform for responsible investment - has influenced investor and company practices, particularly in shaping understanding of heightened human rights due diligence, localized conflict analysis, and conflict-affected and high risk area (CAHRA)-related operational risks. This initiative has also built investor capacity and generated follow-on partnerships, and demonstrates PN's role in community building and network development.

### International Programme – CS

- The CS strand of the IP works with actors outside of the peacebuilding sector, or that do not have peacebuilding as their primary mission. The underlying rationale is to expand the range of actors able to make contributions to peacebuilding from across various sectors and types of institutions.
- As per the objectives of the 2024-26 strategy, PN has maintained some partnerships in the humanitarian and development sector and reinforced and diversified its engagement with environmental and conservation actors. PN's aims and choices of who to work with have been relevant to context in both cases.
- PN's engagement with humanitarian and development actors has helped to consolidate and “protect”

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<sup>9</sup> The current strategy period has included some capacity gaps and shortages within PN on BE.

gains made in the sector over the past decade, in the face of the global context and widespread funding cuts, positioning individual organisations and collective initiatives to maintain or build on these efforts going forward, recognising that the trajectory is uncertain. For instance, PN's partnership with **Oxfam** has contributed to durable institutional change, with conflict sensitivity increasingly embedded in planning, partnerships, and learning mechanisms. This partnership has demonstrated the value of PN engaging at different levels, in this case engaging with Oxfam at the country level – in Burkina Faso and Niger – and the Confederation level.

- PN has played a catalytic role in contributing to an emerging field at the intersection of environment/ conservation and conflict. Through strategic decisions regarding who to work with and how to position PN and partners within relevant policy spaces, PN has made a highly significant contribution to shaping the environmental and conservation sector's approach to conflict sensitivity. For instance, PN has played an important role in catalysing changes within the **World Wildlife Fund for Nature**, which has moved from viewing conflict (and conflict sensitivity) as an external or political issue to recognizing it as integral to conservation work and has increasingly embedded conflict-sensitivity into its practice and strategy.
- PN's engagement with other donors, including partnerships with peer foundations, have had a significant multiplier effect. PN has encouraged peers to become more open to engaging at the intersection of conservation and conflict. This has contributed to the **Hans Wilsdorf Foundation** investing directly in conflict-sensitive conservation, and to a broader recognition among donors of the importance and feasibility of supporting conflict sensitivity in environmental/ conservation contexts.

### International Programme – OD

- The OD strand's focus on supporting international peacebuilding organisations and donors to align governance, strategy, and funding practices towards locally led and inclusive peacebuilding has remained highly relevant during this period.
- During a very challenging period for the sector, PN has contributed to partner organisations improving their governance, accountability, and learning practices and their organisational resilience in the face of unforeseen shocks and challenges. For instance, PN's partnership with **International Alert** contributed significantly to the organisation embedding gender, diversity and inclusion and establishing feedback loops between different levels of the organisation, leading to improved management practices, more inclusive organisational cultures and a clarified, strengthened partnering practice with its local partners. The work which PN has supported has also helped International Alert reposition itself to navigate ongoing funding challenges, in ways that were previously unforeseen.
- By focusing on intermediaries and local organisations, PN is helping to shift the peacebuilding system toward more sustainable, locally owned solutions. By supporting partners with legitimacy, reach, access, and influence, PN's contribution is well placed to lead to a multiplying effect. The partnership with **Peace Direct**, which has resulted in pioneering work regarding localising monitoring, evaluation, and learning practices, is one example in this regard.
- PN's engagement with donor partners (including private foundations, bilateral agencies, and the UN Peacebuilding Fund) has increased recognition of organisational development as a strategic investment, and led to tangible shifts in several instances. For example, PN's partnership with the **Bosch Foundation** contributed to Bosch centring OD support within its engagement with Ukrainian CSOs, demonstrating how foundations and bilateral donors can move beyond funding to actively engage with and support local CSOs. The two foundations are sharing learning from this engagement with other donors, as a way to contribute to international debates on localisation and aid reform.

#### Box: PN's role in relation to collective initiatives, peer learning and influencing

Since the last programme review, PN has increased its focus and investment in collective initiatives, influencing efforts, and peer learning. Across programmes and regions, there is consistent evidence that PN's convening and influencing role, and its active participation in collective initiatives, has a multiplying effect and enables PN to extend its reach into, and influence within, wider ecosystems. It has contributed to:

- Mindset and practice shifts – e.g.:
  - the Bosch Foundation centring localisation and OD concepts within its support to Ukrainian NGOs, providing a model for other funders;
  - increased interest in and appetite to operationalise OD support among other foundations involved in the PN-supported OD community of practice;
  - foundations in the WB establishing a new locally-led rapid response funding mechanism;
  - previously disconnected actors exchanging learning and emerging best practice in the field of conflict, climate and the environment;
  - investors and companies involved in the IAHR initiative having increased awareness and openness towards efforts to strengthen their approaches to CAHRA.
  
- Learning and solidarity – civil society organisations sharing knowledge, ideas and challenges in contexts in which civic space is shrinking, civil society ecosystems are often fragmented and competitive, and peer learning and collaboration spaces are highly valued by those involved (e.g. via Peer Learning Events in the WB, Conflict-Sensitivity Hubs in WA, the Peacebuilding Hub in CA, and peer learning groups within the IP OD service area).
  
- Coherence and coordination – e.g.:
  - pro-democracy actors in Myanmar convening, building trust, identifying shared interests and developing collective strategies and influencing messages;
  - experts from Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Afghanistan engaging in dialogue via the PN-supported Peacebuilding Hub and producing a regional conflict systems map;
  - CSOs having a ‘safe and legitimate’ space for engaging with state institutions, again via the Peacebuilding Hub in CA.

PN’s comparative advantage regarding collective initiatives and influencing is linked to several factors:

- **The credibility derived from PN’s deep accompaniment role.** PN’s ecosystem-facing influence derives legitimacy from its long-term partner-level work. This enables it to convene actors, broker dialogue, and influence funders based on practical experience rather than abstract norms.
- **The interplay between partnerships and collective initiatives,** which can further PN’s aims, for instance where partners or investors share new practices within collective spaces.
- **PN’s independence (as a Swiss private foundation) and the trust that it has earned.** PN is seen as a trusted and relatively neutral actor in most contexts, which supports its facilitation and convening role including on sensitive issues. (However, in Myanmar PN’s Swiss identity means that the SA programme needs to be particularly careful in how it presents itself)<sup>10</sup>.
- **PN’s status as an investor,** which enables PN to be part of platforms / forums and peer to peer discussions that are only accessible to investors / asset owners.
- **PN’s ability to translate practice into strategy:** PN’s experience and technical expertise enables it to ‘translate’ – and support others to translate - contextual and organisational learning into practicable guidance and next steps.
- **The flexibility built into PN’s model,** which provides scope to respond to needs and opportunities identified.
- **PN’s relational approach** (see Findings on PN Approach section below) and non-project based structure.

<sup>10</sup> This is because the Swiss government is considered by opposition actors as a key supporter of past/present peace process, which are perceived as siding with the military.

PN's success and strengths in this regard have contributed to rising interest in and demand for PN further expanding its convening, peer learning and influencing roles. This is further explored in the recommendations section of this report.

## 2.3 Risks / challenges / issues for consideration, in relation to PN positioning

This sub-section summarises some risks, challenges and issues for consideration raised within the programme reviews, which are returned to in the recommendations section.

- **Striking an appropriate balance between, and ensuring the complementarity of, partnerships and collective / influencing initiatives:** There is significant demand and contextual need and opportunity for PN to expand its convening and influencing functions. PN needs to give careful consideration, within each programme and its specific context, to how – and how far – to do so, ensuring that such work complements PN's core partnership accompaniment role. As this point relates to both PN's positioning and its approach, it is explored further under 'Risks, challenges and issue for consideration' section in the Approach section of this report, see page 14, as well as in the recommendations section.
- **Communicating PN's strategy, roles and outcomes:** All programme reviews identified some risks, missed opportunities and / or factors to consider related to limited external awareness of PN's strategy, roles and the outcomes to which it contributes, though the specifics varied per review. There are several reasons why PN opts to limit the visibility of its strategy and its work in general, including: its partner-led approach meaning that PN does not require or want partners to have to adjust their own strategies to directly match PN's strategy (as long as PN itself is clear on the alignment); managing context-specific risks for itself and its partners; enabling the tailoring of its positioning, approach and terminology to suit specific contexts and stakeholders; and not wishing to claim credit for partner-led work (which often relies on trust and sensitivity). However, the reviews noted that stakeholders' limited understanding of PN's strategy, and of the different roles that PN plays, risks some negative consequences in terms of:
  - The focus of PN support not always being clear to partners and other donors, who are unclear about what types of needs or ideas they can approach PN about (SA).
  - Prospective or current partners not being aware of PN's strategic goals, which may risk some missed opportunities. For example, PN WB's OD support and its integration of conflict-sensitivity is intentionally designed to help organisations navigate polarisation and contribute to peacebuilding, but there is a risk that valuable prospective partners might not approach PN for support if they are not aware of this strategic logic and perceive PN WB to be providing a more generalised form of OD support. Or lack of awareness of PN's overarching goals may mean that partners do not fully appreciate their own significance within the wider regional peacebuilding ecosystem, whereas this awareness might help to further strengthen collective synergy among those PN supports (CA).
  - Partners and other stakeholders lacking full clarity regarding the different roles PN plays, including with regard to how partnerships and collective initiatives are intended to complement each other and whether the appetite for collective initiatives means that partnerships are winding down (WA) and regarding which role(s) (e.g. funder, expert, convenor and/or investor) PN is wearing in a given partnership/engagement at any one time and how these roles can best be leveraged to advance the partnership (BE);
  - Missing out on the potential demonstration effect related to progress achieved by PN partners (SA, CA);
  - Some partners voicing unease that they do not know who else PN is supporting in the politically sensitive Myanmar context. This is due to not wanting to be grouped with organisations or groups they might not be comfortable being associated with. At the same time, some partners

have suggested that PN may be missing opportunities for the civil society groups it funds to connect and exchange experiences with each other (SA).

### 3 Findings on PN approach

This section of the report provides overarching findings emerging from the programme reviews in relation to PN's approach. It then sets out some risks, challenges and issues for consideration going forwards. There was, overall, strong convergence in findings related to approach across the programme reviews, but much more detail and nuance can be found within each of the programme reviews.

'Approach' relates to the ways in which PN works, and how it seeks to engage with and support those partners and collective initiatives it works within in each programme. This synthesis report does not attempt to provide a detailed description of what PN's partnership model entails, overall or in terms of how the approach is tailored to specific programmes and partnerships, and nor does it attempt to detail the role that PN plays within specific collective initiatives. Detail on this can be found within the programme reviews and within PN documentation including recently developed 'approach papers', though – as outlined elsewhere in this report – PN itself has so far articulated and documented its overall approach, and approach per programme, to a relatively limited extent.<sup>11</sup>

#### 3.1 Overarching findings on PN's approach

- **All of the programme reviews converge on the overall finding that PN's approach has been relevant, responsive and of a high quality.** This finding reflects evidence that PN's approach has contributed to relevant outcomes across its programmes, and is based on the perceptions and experiences shared by partners and other stakeholders with knowledge of PN's approach.
- **Technical rigour and credibility** – PN teams have strong technical expertise, including in relation to conflict-sensitivity, organisational diagnostics and organisational development, conflict and systems analysis, and facilitation skills. And PN's accompaniment model contributes to strengthening such capacities within its partners.
- **Relational approach** – An important aspect of PN's approach is that it combines technical expertise with a distinctive relational posture based on trust, horizontality and co-creation. PN's partner-led accompaniment model, and its approach to facilitating and convening, emphasises trust-building, empathy and sensitivity, while also supporting the development of structures, guidelines etc which are important for sustainability.
- **Flexibility** – Another distinctive aspect of PN's approach is the flexible nature of the model which prioritises responsiveness to partners needs and enables adaptation based on contextual or organisational challenges and opportunities. The programme reviews noted that this sets PN apart from other donors and highlighted PN staff's strong contextual awareness as an important enabling factor. Flexibility and adaptation have occurred at different levels:
  - Flexibility to partner needs, and to partner-specific challenges and opportunities, is an inherent part of PN's partnership model.
  - In this period, this has included adaptations aimed at supporting partners' resilience, and their ability to engage with and benefit from PN support, during crises periods related to funding cuts and/or shrinking civic space (e.g. increased flexibility regarding timelines (IP OD), use of overheads for reserves (WB)).
  - Trialling new ways of supporting and influencing the peacebuilding ecosystem, e.g. the WB complementing its partner-facing work with a new focus on supporting the sector at large (though initiating and supporting the process that led to the Civic Emergency Fund), and the IP

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<sup>11</sup> Concurrent to this review process, a separate process has been underway within PN to review the specifics of PN's approach per programme and identify commonalities and differences, with the aim of supporting consistent practice with room for contextual adaptation. The findings of that process should be considered by PN alongside the findings of this review exercise.

CS and OD strand trialling forms of collaborating and partnering with other private foundations as a way to share learning and extend PN's reach.

- **Strategic use of PN's model** – PN complements its work with specific partners with intentional decisions and initiatives aimed at catalysing further change and having a wider influence on context and ecosystems. The box on page 10 highlights the value of PN's convening and influencing roles.
- **Linking initiatives and programmes:** In addition, the WA and IP programme reviews in particular report that a catalytic and multiplying effect has been achieved through establishing 'webs' which enable progress achieved through a certain partnership or initiative to have a ripple or bolstering effect elsewhere. This has been achieved through PN partners also being active members of collective initiatives, through supporting specific organisations at both the global and country levels, and through establishing and linking regional and country-level conflict-sensitivity hubs.

### 3.2 Risks / challenges / issues for consideration, in relation to PN's approach

- **Meeting need, demand and opportunity while retaining value, distinctiveness and capacity** - the programme reviews highlighted the need for PN to be very intentional going forwards in the decisions it makes about which aspects of its model (partnerships, collective initiatives, influencing) to utilise when and where, and in which combination. There is significant demand, need and opportunity related to all these aspects of PN's work. While overall this reflects the value, strategic relevance and quality of PN's work, and presents further strategic opportunities, there are risks to consider, which include:
  - PN spreading itself too thin and potentially diluting the value and distinctive nature of its work and accompaniment model.
  - Overstretching staff workload and capacity.  
Lack of clarity among some stakeholder regarding the various roles that PN plays within a specific context.
- **Sustainability** – All reviews raised, in various ways, the need to continue focusing on sustainability, i.e. taking intentional steps to maximise the likelihood that the effects of PN's efforts are sustained beyond its direct engagement. The specific points raised on this topic varied across the reviews. They included:
  - Contextual risks, e.g. partners not being able to maximise their new capacities or shifting their priorities due to funding cuts, or (specific to SA) shifting political contexts undermining progress achieved in support to political actors.
  - A risk of limited integration and uptake of new practices, e.g. due to capacity limitations, changes in staff within partner organisations / institutions (particularly state actors worked with in CA, but also CSOs and NGOs) or other blockages related to organisational priorities and dynamics.

The recommendations section outlines proposed approaches to addressing these risks, put forward by the programme reviews.

- **Partner expectations** – Partners are not always clear at the outset of their partnership with PN about the level of time and commitment required to realise the benefits (SA, IP, CA, WB).
- **Strengths but also vulnerabilities related to the 'personalisation' of the approach** – Most programme reviews include findings related to how PN's value and success draws heavily on the expertise and intuition of its staff members, which represents both a strength and vulnerability. PN has opted not to extensively document or codify its approach. This provides room for staff to interpret PN's overall model in a way suited to the context and PN (and its staff members')'s strengths and helps to avoid a heavy internal bureaucracy. However, this carries the risk of the potential loss of knowledge and expert intuition if staff members leave PN.

## 4 Conclusion

**Overall, the programme reviews are consistent in their finding that no major changes are required to PN's positioning or approach. The recommendations put forward in the programme reviews provide PN with proposals to consider going into the next strategy period which are focused on preserving, consolidating and protecting the value, relevance and quality of PN's model.**

The goals set out in PN's strategy remain relevant to the programming contexts and teams have made strategic decisions about who to work with (both in terms of categories of actors and specific organisations and other stakeholders). PN's approach is found to be relevant and of a high quality and is highly valued by partners. Third party stakeholders interviewed for the review process, including donors and context experts, invite PN to expand its role, particularly in relation to collective initiatives and influencing efforts. Through its strategic positioning and distinctive, high-quality approach, PN has contributed to a range of outcomes across its programmes, which have significance in terms of the capacities and practices of specific stakeholders and which together make an important contribution towards strengthening peacebuilding ecosystems.

The programme reviews have converged around some aspects of PN's positioning and approach which PN needs to pay careful attention to when developing and implementing its next strategy. These are issues and dilemmas which PN is already aware of, including how to best deploy and combine the different aspects of its role so that they reinforce (and do not dilute) each other; the appropriate amount of visibility to bring to PN's work, outcomes and strategic aims; and the extent to which to codify and document key aspects of PN's approach. While such issues are not new to PN, the independently conducted programme reviews emphasise the need for ongoing consideration of these factors and provide further insight and specific recommendations which should help PN in making decisions on these and other issues as it moves forward and into the next strategy. The reviews also highlight specific areas to pay continued attention to regarding PN's accompaniment model, including sustainability and partner expectations. Overall, the reviews validate PN's positioning and approach and PN should treat the recommendations provided in the next section as proposals for how to protect and build on achievements under the current strategy.

Going into the next strategy, alongside the recommendations outlined in the section below, PN is encouraged to consider whether and how to seek to strengthen coordination between its various programmes.

Recommendations related to this are included in the WA review and the CS part of the IP review. These two reviews included a specific focus on assessing the value of the coordination that takes place between these programmes and found it to catalyse change and have multiplier effects. Both reviews propose discussions around whether and how PN might seek to further coordination between programmes under the next strategy. This is not included as full recommendation within this synthesis review because the topic of coordination between programmes was not explored by other programme reviews as it was not a core line of enquiry. In terms of key points from the two reviews that did consider this, the WA review notes that the apparent key to the success of the WA-CS coordination has been clear conceptual alignment around PN's understanding of and approach to conflict-sensitivity, rather than project management mechanisms. Meanwhile the IP review notes that each of the IP service areas approaches country and regional engagement differently and that there may be benefits to greater consistency.

Some reflections and recommendations have also been developed by the team of review consultants regarding PN's approach to monitoring, evaluation and learning and on how PN could usefully structure its next strategy. As this topic sits outside of the scope of this review process, these reflections will be shared with PN separately.

## 5 Recommendations

The recommendations section summarises the recommendations from the programme-level reviews. It presents three clusters of recommendations, on the following topics: making intentional choices about how to respond to and influence contexts and ecosystems; documenting and communicating aspects of PN's

approach; and sustainability. Overall, the recommendations from the programme reviews converge clearly around these clusters, with variations which are specified below.

These recommendations should be read alongside the section on the scope and limitations of this review process, set out in the introduction to this synthesis report. It should also be noted that the scope of this review has not included analysis of PN's financial position and available resources going into the next strategy period, which will have a bearing on how to take forward the proposals set out below.

## Recommendations cluster 1: Making intentional choices about how to respond to and influence contexts and ecosystems

**PN should continue making intentional choices about how to respond to and influence contexts and ecosystems, through a combination of deep partnership accompaniment, possible shorter term or lighter-touch partnerships, convening, and influencing. While these choices will look different within each context, priority should be placed on ensuring a clear purpose for each type of engagement, on considering how different types of engagement complement each other, and on what PN's specific added value is in each context (also taking account of what other actors are engaging on). In making these choices, PN leadership and programme staff should take account of the findings of this review including with regard to:**

- **The multiplying and catalysing effect of engaging in both partnerships and collective / influencing initiatives, and that of taking a 'web-weaving' approach which creates connections between different levels, actors, countries, themes, and / or PN programmes.**
- **The need to protect, and not dilute, the value of deep accompaniment work.**
- **The need to recognise and avoid the risk of overstressing staff workload and capacity, particularly given the finding that much of PN's value resides in the expertise, intuition and approach of its staff. Considerations around resource and staffing at the programme level will need to inform decisions on how to implement the recommendations under this cluster.**

The specific recommendations below are drawn from the programme reviews and clustered in relation to PN's engagement with different types of stakeholders (who represent different entry points for responding to and influencing contexts and ecosystems) – civil society organisations; other donors and the funding ecosystem; state and political actors; and companies, investors and commercial advisory services.

### Civil society organisations

Programme reviews provided various recommendations relating to the nature of support to, and engagement with, CSOs and NGOs:

- The SA and IP OD reviews proposed **refining the partnership model in response to particularly challenging contextual realities, including funding cuts**. The SA review finds that many civil society members are struggling to survive in the face of ongoing fighting and insecurity and massive funding cuts. The SA review encourages PN to consider offering short-term support modules that respond to partners' immediate survival needs while building towards longer-term resilience, and to emphasise financial sustainability and resource mobilisation as core OD priorities. The IP OD review invites the OD service area to consider formalising its emerging offer of support (directly and through collective or peer-to-peer initiatives) in relation to mergers, acquisitions, and different forms of partnership, hand-over, and organisational sustainability in light of ongoing funding cuts.
- The CA programme recommends considering the **option of extended, longer term partnerships** to ensure that institutional shifts are fully embedded, particularly within the state agencies that the CA programme has partnerships with.
- The IP CS review proposes that PN considers replicating the modality of partnering with **country-level partner offices on conflict, climate and the environment** (as has already been done in the case of one environmental and one humanitarian partner) and proposes providing support to partners organisations and / or local CSOs working in this field to pilot locally-led initiatives. The review also

suggests that **light touch support** may be a useful model to incorporate within existing partnerships, either to broaden engagement across country offices and organisational units or to support sustainability towards the end of the partnership.

- Some reviews propose that PN **explore opportunities for deepening or expanding its support for peer learning collective initiatives involving CSOs / NGOs**. The CA review recommends leveraging PN's regional networks to facilitate peer-to-peer support, for instance by establishing virtual mentoring platforms and peer-to-peer support mechanisms where experienced partners can support newer ones. The IP CS review finds value in existing initiatives and invites the CS team to consider further expanding and deepening opportunities for cross-organisational and cross-partner exchange and learning, to involve a wider range of staff (beyond focal points) and partners, and to address practical coordination challenges such as time zones and translation needs. Meanwhile the OD review does not propose further deepening or expanding support for CSO/NGO-focused peer learning or collective initiatives, but does identify a need to clarify and prioritise what kind of initiatives to support going forward, given that the current strategy period has been one of experimentation in this regard. The WB review finds that the new NGO Leadership Development Programme is a strategic addition to the programme and that the programme's Annual Peer Learning Event should be continued with light refinements, with consideration given to extending it into year-long light touch learning and exchange processes.
- Related to the above, some reviews recommend **creating a stronger role for PN past partners / alumni**. The WB review proposes inviting selected alumni to share learning from their own experience, help new partners to understand the nature of PN's support (and the 'pay-off curve of accompaniment'<sup>12</sup>), share updates on what happened after PN's support, and / or to act as critical friends. The SA review proposes leveraging alumni more systematically to support current partners and to contribute to learning and peer exchange among current and former partners.

## Other donors and the funding ecosystem

**All of the programme reviews proposed that PN continue and expand the role it has carved for itself in influencing donor practices and the funding ecosystem**, as a complement to its engagement with civil society and other actors and alongside the continued partner accompaniment from which this work derives much of its legitimacy. Specific recommendations from each programme are listed below:

- SA: Consider allocating more dedicated time and funding to **influencing donors to stay engaged in Myanmar, to make funding cuts in the least harmful way**, to make informed and conflict-sensitive decisions regarding ongoing funding, and to transmit insights and voices about the situation in Myanmar back to their capitals.
- WB: Consider an increasing focus on influencing the funding ecosystem, but only if further investment can enable PN to play this role without diluting its partner accompaniment role. PN could promote more coherent and conflict-sensitive funding practices. A relatively light-touch model for doing so could be a 'knowledge to influence' approach whereby learning and anonymised case studies are shared which serve as examples and inspiration to **influence peer funders to adjust how they fund and accompany civil society actors**.
- WA: Continue and consider deepening strategic collaboration with other funders in the region, which could have catalytic effects within the peacebuilding sector, **encouraging funders to invest in peace and conflict and to support local organisations in a more equitable manner**. This could take the form of co-funding partners through an innovative combination of types and amounts of support, developing complementary visions of support to CSOs, and / or exchanges of experience and learning.
- CA: Consider strengthening the role of the Peacebuilding Hub, in **influencing peacebuilding and donors strategies to become more conflict-sensitive**. This is important because major donors often struggle to navigate the region's political fragility and lack a deep, nuanced understanding of how to

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<sup>12</sup> Whereby the level of intensity and time commitment required towards the beginning of the partnership pays dividends later.

operate effectively in this complex context. This could include providing guidance on how to undertake conflict- and systems-analysis and sharing learning on what works and does not in the region.

- IP: Continue investing in efforts to influence donors and consider developing a partnership strategy outlining the objectives and parameters for **further engagement with peer foundations**.

### State and political actors

- The SA programme includes a focus on working with political actors in the pro-democracy movement and the CA programme includes work with state actors. The respective programme reviews support the strategic relevance of working with these actors, and note relevant outcomes from this work, while highlighting specific challenges.
- The SA review finds that experience working with the National Unity Consultative Council shows that despite key people's buy in and an excellent consultant/support offer, political processes can sabotage the process/progress made when working with political actors. Given this risk in relation to long-term accompaniment support, the review finds that it may be most strategic for PN to focus currently on strengthening its convening and influencing role in Myanmar, to strengthen the pro-democracy ecosystem's coherence and coordination and to convince other donors to do the same, rather than providing long-term accompaniment for political actors. It also notes that the PN SA team has considered adapting the OD accompaniment model to include building political actors' convening capacity, which would also be an appropriate adaptation to the context.
- The CA review finds that state actors sometimes collaborate in a more passive way than other actors and finds that there is a particularly strong need to focus on institutionalising and documenting processes and progress for sustainability purposes and to reduce the risk that relationships and outcomes are reliant on individuals on either the PN or partner side. As above, the review also proposes considering extended partnership durations.

### Companies, investors and commercial advisory services

- The 2024-26 IP BE strategy included a shift towards working more with investors, including in collective initiatives. It has been beyond the scope of the IP review to examine PN's role as an investor in a comprehensive manner, but it notes that some stakeholders included in the review process encouraged PN to more actively position itself as an investor as a way of signalling to other investors support or engagement in a particular initiative, or as a way of demonstrating commitment (and consistency) to "practice what is preached". While noting that PN is a very small asset owner, the review recommends that PN consider opportunities to further leverage its identity as an investor, in order to a) generate entry points for engaging with investor counterparts and b) leverage this aspect of the PN's identity and experience in existing partnerships and collective initiatives (such as IAHR).

## Recommendations cluster 2: Documenting and communicating aspects of PN's approach<sup>13</sup>

**Programme reviews converged on a need for PN to strengthen certain aspects of how it documents and communicates its approach and its work, though the specific needs and proposals put forward vary. As per recommendation cluster 1 above, decisions on how to implement these proposals should be intentional and purpose-driven. The reviews find that there is a need to carefully and selectively increase some types of documentation and communication not to standardise or market PN's work, or to take credit for partner-led work, but rather to:**

- **Protect and preserve key aspects of how PN works.**
- **Shape partners' expectations at the outset of partnerships and their understanding of PN and its various 'hats'.**
- **Further strengthen PN and partners' influence with donors and in the wider ecosystem.**

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<sup>13</sup> As per a previous footnote, concurrent to this review exercise a separate process has been underway within PN to review the specifics of PN's approach per programme and identify commonalities and differences, with the aim of supporting consistent practice with room for contextual adaptation. Further codification and documentation of PN's approach (as per recommendation cluster 2 in this report) should take account of the findings of this review process and build on the documentation and discussion of PN's approach is already taking place as part of that separate process.

There are two tensions to be considered here:

- The benefits of carefully increasing PN's visibility need to be considered against any political or security risks for partners, the importance of sensitivity and discretion as part of PN's way of working, the sometimes tactical benefits of working behind the scenes, and the importance of not taking too much credit for partner-led change processes.
- Further codifying and documenting aspects of how PN works should be taken forward carefully such that it protects and sustains valuable aspects of how PN works, rather than detracting from PN's distinctive character including its flexibility and responsiveness to contexts and partner needs. The reviews consistently emphasise that documentation should be light and developed to serve a clear purpose, avoiding documentation for the sake of it or the production of checklists or manuals.

The programme reviews' recommendations under this cluster focus on three main audiences: PN staff, current and prospective partners, and donors and the wider ecosystem.

### PN staff

The reviews recognise that PN's approach is successful precisely because it is flexible, partner-led and adaptive both to context and learning. However, almost all reviews (WB, WA, CA, SA) highlight high reliance on individual staff expertise and intuition, creating risks for continuity and institutional memory. Recommendations are included in relation to **preserving key aspects of how PN works**. Proposals include:

- The **light codification of core principles and minimum practices** (e.g. in relation to partner ownership and PN's understanding of and approach to conflict-sensitivity). PN has recently taken a significant step in this direction, through developing programme approach papers.
- **Case-based "learning narratives"** which provide current and particularly future new staff with examples of how PN has navigated particular contexts, partnerships and decisions, in order to develop institutional memory on PN's ways of working without suggesting a 'one size fits all' approach.

Some reviews also propose a need to ensure that certain selection and decision-making processes are sufficiently clear and documented, to protect PN's ability to make fair and strategic decisions, including when staff members change. Proposals include:

- Ensuring a **well-documented and agreed approach to the partner selection process** (which has likely already been strengthened in relation to recent calls for proposals issued by programmes<sup>14</sup>) (SA, WA, CA).
- Ensuring that **internal recruitment processes** are clearly documented as a way to maximise the likelihood that future staffing decisions enable PN to retain the calibre of the current teams. (WA)

### Current and prospective partners

Recommendations related to **PN's communications with its current and prospective partners** include (and again may have begun to be addressed already within recent calls for proposals):

- **Clarifying PN's peacebuilding logic and offer for prospective and current partners**, in order to: make it even clearer how PN's OD and CS work to improve internal systems and approaches can meaningfully shape partners' ability to sustain and strengthen their contribution to peace (WB), help potential partners understand how their work aligns with PN's priorities and how they could contribute to PN's overarching peacebuilding aims (SA), and encourage partners to maximise the benefits of PN support based on an awareness of their significance within a wider ecosystem (CA).
- **Transparent communication on partner selection criteria** (SA).
- Increased emphasis on communication and **orientation / onboarding materials** at the outset of a partnerships, to help to clarify expectations (including regarding the time commitment required,

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<sup>14</sup> Several calls for proposals have been issued since the data collection phase of this review. Due to the timing, it has unfortunately not been possible for the programme reviews to include consideration of these calls for proposals as part of their evidence base for the reviews, nor has it been possible for the findings of the reviews to contribute to shaping these calls.

particularly in the early stages, in order to benefit fully), and to build understanding of what the accompaniment model entails (WB).

- More clearly articulating and **communicating PN's multiple roles** to make sure that partners have a clear understanding of the different 'hats' that PN wears in relation to partnerships and specific collective initiatives (IP, WA) and to avoid partner anxiety that the partnership model is being replaced by collective engagements (WA).

### The wider ecosystem including other funders

A majority of reviews (WB, CA, SA) see scope for PN to **document and communicate more of its learning, expertise and analysis with external stakeholders including other funders, as a means of extending its influence on the wider ecosystem.**

Recommendations include:

- Short explainers and learning briefs on the accompaniment model, and anonymised mini-case studies focused on mechanisms of change and trade-offs in sensitive contexts, specifically aimed at peer funders (WB).
- Selectively communicating PN's approach within professional and donor networks, to encourage the adoption of conflict-sensitive practices by other international actors (CA).
- Sharing information on successful methodologies and outcomes which may have a 'demonstration effect' on the wider sector, e.g.:
  - the CA review proposes that sharing information on successful partnerships and outcomes such as the work with Mutukalim and the International Business Council can demonstrate to the NGO sector that impactful work is still possible in an environment of shrinking civic space and to help counter feelings of isolation and demoralization among local actors.
  - the SA reviews notes that other donors have suggested PN should communicate its work, for instance with the Karenni on land policy, to demonstrate the effect of good enough governance outside of regime control, to other pro-democracy actors.

### Recommendations cluster 3: Sustainability in relation to partnerships

All programme reviews identified the need to keep focusing on sustainability, i.e. the extent to which the outcomes and benefits generated through PN's support to partners and initiatives are sustained once PN steps back. This cluster of recommendations focuses on protecting and building sustainability within PN partnerships. However, some of the points raised under Recommendations cluster 1 above also relate to sustainability, in terms of the need to consider sustainability when making strategic decisions about who to engage with and how (e.g. the recommendations from the SA review to ensure that the partnership approach builds partner resilience and to consider a stronger focus on convening in relation to pro-democracy actors).

Programme review recommendations related to sustainability within partnerships fall into the sub-clusters listed below.

- **Placing even more emphasis on embedding change in organisations rather than individuals**
  - Encourage partner organisations to ensure that multiple staff receive training on new systems or practices; designate backup process owners; create small internal working groups; and have new approaches trialled by different teams (SA).
  - Encourage and support partners to embed new practices in organisational policies, structures and commitments and enlist organisational leadership in monitoring implementation (SA).
  - Support the institutionalisation of processes as much as possible when working with state actors (CA).
- **Supporting knowledge capture and institutional memory**
  - Introduce light-touch tools such as learning logs or joint reflection journals to help capture key insights, preserve the history of relationships, and ensure the continuity of knowledge when key personnel change within partner organisations (CA).

- Provide additional support to partners on taking stock of progress and being able to explain, internally and externally, what has changed and how PN contributed (WA).
- Encourage partner focal points to develop handover notes and facilitate peer learning sessions and support partners to develop internal knowledge repositories and documentation hubs (SA).
- **Focusing on sustainability throughout the partnership cycle**
  - Prioritise usability and organisational fit of tools and systems from the outset and integrate measures that will enhance the likelihood of it becoming a sustainable change to the organisation's way of working (SA).
  - Consider incorporating "light touch" support as part of partnership exit or phase-out strategies. (IP CS).
  - Always be intentional about PN's level of hands on support, including through consciously choosing when to step in and support PN-funded consultants and partners (and when not to), so as to ensure that PN's support is always strengthening partners' ownership and long-term capability (WB).