Inclusive decisions at local level – mid-term evaluation

Inclusive decisions at local level – mid-term evaluation

Corina Dhaene
Thomas Vervisch (University of Ghent)

with the collaboration of Ousman Sy (Mali), Jamal Atamneh (Palestinian territory), Jama Egal (Somaliland, through Kasmodev) as resource persons

Foreword

It has been a pleasure to embark on this learning journey with the IDEAL team. We hope that the image of a sailing boat can further guide the teams in designing and adapting their interventions. All our respect is going to the local teams that have to work in sometimes very difficult conditions. If the mid-term evaluation is supporting them in execution, analysis and reflection we consider our mission to be successful.

Corina Dhaene (ACE Europe) and Thomas Vervisch, Mechelen, Belgium, October, 2019

Executive summary

VNG International, with its headquarters based in The Hague, in assignment of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is implementing the 5-year program called IDEAL, Inclusive Decisions at Local level (2017-2021).This program works on the involvement of citizens in local governance in seven countries facing fragility or conflict, namely Burundi, Mali, Palestinian Territories, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan and Uganda. The drive of VNGI is to support local governments in building bridges with all their citizens - including marginalised groups. IDEAL's overall outcomes are: (i) More responsive and effective service delivery, (ii) More inclusive and participatory policy processes and (iii) The institutional and policy environment is improved. The outcomes are aimed at strengthening the social contract.

This assignment aims to conduct a mid-term evaluation of the IDEAL program. The aim was to learn as an organisation and to adapt the program where necessary. More specifically the evaluation aims to: (i) Assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability efforts of the IDEAL program to allow for local governments in the target countries to better cope with fragility and fragility risks. A major point of attention is the assessement of the ToC and design of the program. (ii) To make recommendations for improvement regarding the program's design, approach and management which can be used in the second half of the program implementation.

All evaluation activities were guided by an evaluation framework based on the evaluators' understanding of fragility, conflict-sensitivity and related concepts, the Terms of Reference for the MTE and a kick-off phase (desk-study, kick-off workshop with the The Hague team, interviews with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). The evaluation framework consisted of 4 evaluation questions (further specified by judgement criteria and points of attention). The questions were the following:

- EQ1: How does the design of the IDEAL program contribute to relevance of interventions?
- EQ2:To what extent is IDEAL gender sensitive?
- EQ3: To what extent IDEAL effectiveness can be measured and is already visible?
- EQ4: What is the sustainability of the program?

The evaluation was executed by a team of two Belgian evaluators from ACE Europe. They worked together with national ressource persons in Mali, Somaliland and Palestinian territories (in order to sufficiently contextualise the evaluation and the findings) and translators. ACE Europe organised three field missions, in Mali, Somaliland and Palestinian territories; these coincided with mid-term measurements of outcomes executed by KIT and supported by the IDEAL teams. A desk study combined with interviews for the countries that were not visited was organised after the field missions. Information from the seven cases was then processed in a similar and systematic way (through evaluation sheets), cross-case analysis was done to identify

generic findings that can be illustrated by the practice in the various countries. A strong focus was put on learning within the IDEAL team for which all country teams received a detailed evaluation sheet for their country and a discussion note with analysis at program level. A team learning event was organised during the IDEAL RPM workshop beginning of September 2019.

ACE Europe took into account the context of fragility in the execution of the evaluation: extensive communication with RPM prior to the field mission, consultation with the national IDEAL teams on the selection of the resources persons, focus on what respondents find important to share as results and comments, respecting the rules of engagement in the countries, sufficient time for all team members to comment on outputs.

Triangulation of information was ensured in different ways: cross-checking information from different sources against the evaluation framework and with available documents (from IDEAL and others), interviews with stakeholders but also with other development players where possible, comments on the evaluation sheets from the IDEAL teams, open discussion during the RPM workshop on the basis of a discussion document and comparison of findings with the results of the mid-line measurement.

Conclusions on the evaluation questions are the following:

Design and relevance - The evaluators find that the interventions of IDEAL in the various countries are based on 'good enough' analysis that take into account power relations, sources of conflict and gender. The IDEAL teams ensure constant update on changes in context. The overall ToC is based on a comprehensive and elaborated understanding of the social contract concept and literature. The country ToCs are aligned with the overall program ToC and are coherent with the country specific analysis executed during the inception phase. The evaluators identified three points for improvement: (i) the current ToCs are too abstract and are not sufficiently reflecting complexity of change processes in the specific country context. (ii) The ToCs are not sufficiently clear on the niche and added value of IDEAL/VNGI (in working with LGs and LGAs) and the limitations with regards to direct support to the capacity of CSOs/citizens/population to be actively and meaningfully engaged in local governance processes. (iii) Not having explicit assumptions about why the team thinks that change will happen impedes to valorise what is happening and to measure how and to what extent it is contributing to change.

VNGI paid a lot of attention to involving LGs, LGAs and other stakeholders from government in the design of the program, which supports the relevance of the interventions and allows for diversified approaches. Overall, the selection of policy areas and intervention regions and selected LGs are coherent with the contextual analysis and the suggested entry points of the baseline measurement that was executed during the inception phase. In some countries, other choices could have been made but also other and legitimate considerations have played a role (such as having built relations of trust through the previous LGCP program, opportunities provided by other programs). The relevance of intervention types (mainly capacity building through workshops, trainings and on the job coaching) was not contested by stakeholders

interviews. Activities were systematically based on needs assessment to assure relevance for the specific target groups and participants.

VNGI/IDEAL is making considerable efforts to look for collaboration, synergy and complementarity with other development players. This was done in various ways: (i) during the inception phase a lot of effort was put into aligning the IDEAL program with existing programs of other players; (ii) The use of the advisory committee has been an explicit strategy to involve the main stakeholders in a more structural way, while also assuring that the IDEAL program remains relevant in the context; (iii) local teams have invested a lot in participating in relevant fora and networking with the relevant stakeholders. Thanks to these efforts, IDEAL/VNGI did manage to develop strategic partnerships with other development players in some countries (such as in MA, UG, SL and with plans for the future in RW) albeit less than might be expected given the efforts. An important explanatory factor lies in the architecture of development aid.

Conflict sensitive execution - The IDEAL program makes great efforts to adapt to the fragile contexts in which it works, and thus displays a conflict-sensitive approach in practice. Due to their proximity to the field and their embeddedness (because of their partnerships with the LGAs) the local teams are capable of 'reading' the political situation. The evaluators acknowledge the efforts to ensure conflict-sensitive programming and execution in various ways, such as: (i) paying attention to professional and appropriate security management (SS, SL and MA), (ii) ensuring that teams are strong enough and combine various competences, experience and thematic knowledge. The evaluators found several examples of political sensitivity in the functioning of the IDEAL teams. (iii) providing IDEAL staff with instruments, tools, manuals and training. (iv) ensuring proximity of the IDEAL teams to the local stakeholders (in particular the pilot LGs and the local LGA). (v) last but not least, the IDEAL program offers substantial flexibility to adapt budget, activities and interventions when the context demands so. This flexibility is definitely an advantage and allows to grasp opportunities or to address difficulties. A particular instrument that allows to work in a more flexible way is the use of micro-grants.

The evaluators identified following points for improvement: (i) ensuring that tools are used by the team. Various tools are available, but are not used in a systematic way by staff to guide intervention design and execution. The tools are well designed and look attractive but seem to be less practical when applying them. (ii) Although there is flexibility, the execution of the program still is based on classic project execution, even at the level of the micro-grants. Working in the context of FCAS however might need even more flexibility to allow problem driven working. (iii) An important point of attention is related to the principle of 'doing no harm' and paying more deliberate attention to the risk of elite capture and the monitoring of (smaller) conflicts that arise during execution.

Gender mainstreaming - Attention for gender is generally present in the ToC and the different country programs. The gender perspective is used in IDEAL as part of the solution, more than directly addressing gender-based conflicts, which is a legitimate choice given the focus of the program on inclusive decisions. The evaluators found evidence of continuous efforts to maintain and ensure gender sensitivity.The concern for moving beyond the counting of number related to female participation and realizing more sustainable change becomes most clear in the process

that started with the design of the Transformative Agents of Change-program (TAC) as elaborated in Rwanda. Overall, the operationalisation of the ambitions on gender mainstreaming is at various stages looking a the country programs, with the weakest level obtained in the Palestinian Territorities. The evaluators identified three specific challenges: (i) Investing in empowerment of women groups. It might be beyond the capacity of the IDEAL program to invest in this kind of strategies in general. What seems relevant is the issue of empowerment of women as officials or elected persons. (ii) Monitoring of gender sensitive indicators. The evaluators find that some of the indicators (although commendable as they go beyond measuring numbers) are quite ambitious in terms of data collection. At this point it is not sufficiently clear how valid and trustworthy data will be collected. (iii) Ensuring a gender lens when developing topical issues. Gender still is too often an 'afterthought' when designing interventions.

Measuring of change and emerging changes - An M&E system was developed for IDEAL with specific attention to outcome measuring (with the support of the KIT) and an efficient upward reporting flow that takes into account local stakeholders' input (through the advisory committee) and potential risks (when sharing information). Outside of the system is a lot of informal exchange of information within the country teams and between the teams and relevant stakeholders, which is valuable and relevant. The evaluation revealed that the practice of M&E is not yet consolidated. In particular the weaker development of the system at output level is a point of attention; since this is the level where the analysis of contribution to change should start, the level that can help to interpret the results of midline measurement and the level that should feed information into a learning oriented M&E. Following challenges are important: (i) focus on what is is relevant to be monitored, (ii) how to agree with the Ministry on the most appropriate reporting format, (iii) how to document well the experiences and the process at the level of the pilot municipalities.

To appreciate emerging changes, delays and slow start up in several countries needs to be taken into account. The evaluation clarifies that, although working in various domains, all IDEAL programmes are in practice focusing on planning processes with the advantage of being aligned with government frameworks. This provides an opportunity to revitalise existing planning mechanisms. On the other hand, there is a risk, particularly in countries such as Rwanda and Burundi that existing mechanisms limit the objective of having inclusive debate and dialogue that includes marginalised groups and more critical voices. Together with the midline reports, the evaluators conclude that current outputs and results can lead to the realisation of the three envisaged outcomes. Various IDEAL strategies support change; the 'on the job coaching' approach is highlighted by the evaluators as particularly interesting. Expected changes under outcome 3 depend a lot on the capacity of the LGA and their investment in the development and execution of lobby strategies. Although VNGI is considered to be a 'peer', the LGAs are independent and some changes identified at the output level in the TOC are really not under the control of IDEAL and can only be influenced. Nonetheless, a number of 'quick wins' have already been realised in the capacity of LGAs for lobby and some clear lobby results can be noted in Somaliland and in Uganda. Most challenging in realising results (besides the context) is the staff retention at the level of co-implementing partners and pilot LGs.

Ownership and sustainability - Ownership has been realised at the level of people being closely and directly involved, more in particular focal points and stakeholders in LGs and at the level of LGAs. Several practices in the execution of IDEAL were found to support the development of ownership: (i) contextualisation and localizing of expertise, (ii) co-implementation of activities with LGAs (such as in SL, BU and RW), (iii) the practice of working with grants where LGs are stimulated to define their own change process/project, plan it en monitor it. The attention for transformative learning (as part of the Agents of change programme in RW and in UG) seems very promising with regards to boosting ownership of the IDEAL objectives related to gender but execution and results are to be awaited.

A variety of strategies/measures was indicated in each of the country programs' inception reports. Two types of strategies for sustainability can be distinguished: (i) ensuring sustainability of results within the pilot LGs and (ii) ensuring duplication or upscaling. For each of the types, examples of measures are provided in the report. The evaluators would like to highlight two risks for sustainability. (i) The first one is related to the finding that IDEAL did not develop a specific pathway of change or strategy for working on the capacity of the population. What is not taken into account in an explicit way is the risk of weaker claiming capacity at the level of CSO/population. Without this capacity, there is little push for LGs to ensure inclusivity and transparency beyond what is arranged in all the countries by central government mechanisms for planning, but what often appears to be a tick box exercise and does not always offer space for the desired debate with the population. Clearly, the program of IDEAL has little influence over this risk; cooperation with other organisations who target CSOs/population directly is yet to be strengthened to mitigate this risk. (ii) The second risk lies in the choices for collaboration (or not) with existing structures: in some cases there seem to be good reasons for bypassing or paying less attention to existing structures (after an analysis of risks, such as in BU); in other cases however, such as in Mali and in South Sudan, arguments to invest less or not in capacity building of the LGA or the existing water structures is not well argued.

The table below gives an overview of the recommendations. The recommendations are related to design and relevance, conflict sensitive execution and management of the program, effectiveness and sustainability (as requested in the ToR for this assignment). As this is a mid-term evaluation, the evaluators preferred to formulate recommendations that are useful within the given timeframe of program execution. Most of the recommendations have already been discussed at the IDEAL RPM workshop and have been accepted and supported by the team members.

Recommendations	
To ensure robust design and ToC that supports adaptive planning	**Recommendation 1 - Conduct a midterm review of the country ToCs with the IDEAL teams and co-implementing organisation.** The midterm evaluation and measurement offer an interesting window of opportunity to review the pathways of change that have been defined at the beginning of the program. On the basis of two years of execution the country teams should be able to produce a more detailed picture of the desired pathways of change. This should help them to identify some

	'grey zones' where steps in the change process are not clear or should be supported by more explicit assumptions about why the team thinks that change will happen. When reviewing the country ToCs the evaluation advises to take the following aspects into account: − Sphere of control and influence: make a clearer distinction between what the IDEAL program can actually control and therefore can be held accountable for, and what is only in its sphere of influence. − Interaction between pathways (and the outcomes as envisaged by the overall program ToC): make more explicit the relationships between the three outcomes, how they interact, how they can be mutually reinforcing (or not) in the particular context. It is possible that some pathways receive more weight than others. − Clarify to what extent IDEAL can strengthen capacity of CSOs/citizens/population: working on both LGs and CSO capacity is easier said than done and will require means both in terms of finances and expertise). The current ToC raises too much expectations on what the program can do. The extent to which IDEAL works on the 'other' side of the equation is necessarily limited and probably different from country to country. After reviewing, it is recommended that all IDEAL teams continue to use the ToC in a dynamic way, meaning that the ToC would be used at least every six months to support critical reflection within the team on the execution of IDEAL. This approach calls for monitoring that is less based on indicators and is more looking at progress markers, observation and frequent analysis (based on outcome mapping approaches)
	Recommendation 2 – Better define the niche of IDEAL/VNGI. In most of the countries (if not all), IDEAL is the only program that is well equipped to address typical capacity challenges of LGs and this should appear clearer from the ToC and the execution of the program. To ensure that this added value is sufficiently clear, it requires appropriate identification of indicators and monitoring (see also recommendations 9 and 11). Better communicating about this added value and being able to demonstrate through monitoring this added value is also considered to be key in developing strategic partnering with other development players.
To strengthen conflict sensitive execution	**Recommendation 3 –Eelaborate a more systematic conflict-sensitive programming, with a specific focus on Doing No Harm**. This approach should pay more attention to monitoring conflicts, elite capture, and potential unintended negative effects of the program more in general. To further strengthen the capacity of IDEAL, the following steps could be taken into account: − Extend the Gender and Conflict Assessments (GCAs) to all countries and review yearly. This is an important step because good contextual knowledge of the

potential for conflict is a first and crucial step. Currently GCA studies have already been conducted in 4 countries (MA, BU, SS, UG) and they have provided detailed information about the situation in the particular communities.

- Integrate a Do No Harm assessment in the GCA that specifically focuses on the potential risk of doing harm.

- Elaborate a Do No Harm plan per country that explains how teams act to prevent negative impact or will respond when negative impact is observed (e.g. exit strategy).

Recommendation 4 – Experiment with PDIA. The IDEAL program is strongly oriented towards long-term structural and systemic change. This is a crucial added value, certainly in contexts where many other development actors intervene with short-term (humanitarian) programs. However, working in FCAS also demands so-called peace dividends, not least because local authorities are in urgent need to 'prove' and recover their legitimacy towards the local population. Therefore, it is important to initiate long-term change through a rapid cycle of short-term quick win projects that are problem-driven. The PDIA approach might be more appropriate. This is not an easy recommendation given the current way of operating within IDEAL which focuses on one partner (LGA/implementing partner/LG), whereas PDIA requires much more management of multi-stakeholder involvement.

Recommendation 5 – Create more space for 'messy' tools to support implementation and learning towards really effective manuals. The evaluators would urge IDEAL management to identify and valorise how the IDEAL country teams are working and to learn from this, rather than to (always) answer a need with a good quality document written by an external consultant. The answer is not always in fancy tools but in providing necessary support to try out things. The evaluators understand that IDEAL is already trying to stimulate the teams to share their own tools. The evaluators would support this initiative and recommend that efforts are done to come up with more robust manuals and guides by the end of the program, based on what is working and what not.

Recommendation 6 - Strengthen the donor-VNGI dialogue. The evaluators invite both MFA and VNGI to have a dialogue on what it means to work in FCAS and what it requires both from implementors and from their donors in terms of space given and accepting that planned results are not easy to realise. This should also include a discussion about appropriate reporting formats. The evaluator acknowledges and supports the initiatives of EKN Nairobi to look into the challenges for donors and implementors and to consider more space for experimentation. This might also include an evaluation to learn from experiences of different programs (as they all seem to struggle with similar issues and evaluators do not always have clear advices).

To strengthen gender mainstreaming	**Recommendation 7 - Strengthen the IDEAL way of working**: the evaluators recommend to apply better the existing gender mainstreaming guide, more in particular for programming and designing interventions. It is useful when designing topical interventions such as LED, PPP, TALD, lobby and advocacy to ensure always having a gender lens when defining the issue and the solution. The IDEAL team already conducted an additional training (with attention for scenario planning and is planning to interview members of team to understand how they implement (gender and conflict sensitivity analysis) and what difficulties they encounter. The evaluators suggest that the gender guide is used to structure the interviews. It is recommended that members of team (The Hague and in the field) identify particular and concrete issues that are difficult for them and develop a personal learning path to address these (modelled along the TAC framework developed for the country program in Rwanda as to experience themselves what transformative learning could mean). The results of the learning path should be part of the performance interview/dialogue with team members (being accountable highly contributes to efforts for change and change in attitude and behaviour). Specific attention should ensure that gender receives particular attention in the conflict sensitive approaches.
	Recommendation 8 - Further develop interventions with high potential: The evaluators support the approach of 'Transformative Agents of Change' and would recommend the IDEAL team to see what elements could be useful in other countries. The evaluators recommend to review the activities related to women empowerment in order to manage expectations. If empowerment remains on the agenda, the evaluators suggest that the focus is much more on women aspiring or executing LA functions (both elected and nominated).
To strengthen effectiveness and ensure more effective monitoring (of what is relevant)	**Recommendation 9 – Improve documentation of informal monitoring**: the evaluators recommend to review the format of the monthly RPM format. The format should require the RPM to (i) share observations of changes at the level of the main stakeholders at municipal level (focal points to start with). This is connected to the review of the ToC and the identification of intermediate changes; observations should not necessarily be related to predicted or expected changes and their indicators. (ii) To document issues related to conflict that are related to the execution of the IDEAL program, what was done to solve them and with what results. Especially in volatile context, it is important to monitor small changes/emerging dynamics and resolution of conflicts as the chances of realizing predicted changes might be limited.
	Recommendation 10 - Continue to apply the on-the-job-coaching or support by proximity: pilot municipalities are understood as laboratories where experimentation and learning can take place in order to feed lobby and advocacy and to duplicate/replicate good practices (for e.g. in government programs). This supposes sufficient support on the ground for execution and learning. Working through focal points at municipal level is a good idea (and might be considered for all the countries), but is not sufficient to ensure systematic analysis and processing of experiences with view to replication and lobby. The evaluators suggest that the IDEAL team analyses what support by proximity is needed: how often should

	somebody pass by in the municipality, to do what with whom, who should pass by, how much time does it take, what does this mean for time management, …? Only after this analysis, it can be decided if work packages should be rearranged and/or if additional staff should be hired or if the LGA should be supported to hire more staff and build their capacity. The answer can be different from one country to the other.
	Recommendation 11 - Strengthen appropriateness of monitoring by introducing more specific focus on change *processes*. The evaluators recommend more focus on: (i) the (change) process at the level of focal points (to start with in the countries where they are: UG, RW, PT, MA): clarify what is expected of them as drivers of a change process, and support them in executing. (ii) changes in soft competences of politicians and officials that are required to interact in a different way with the population. More in particular this is about the following issues: how to relate to citizens and how to deal with criticism, what posture to adopt, how to effectively invite for input, how to process input, how to translate this into planning, how to manage official-politicians interaction, how to go back to population and closing the feedback loop, … These issues should be part of on-the-job-coaching and effects related to changes in soft competencies should be monitored more closely. (iii) Specific attention should go to the installation and functioning of grievance mechanisms (formal and those during interaction with the population).
To strengthen sustainability	**Recommendation 12 – Accept to work with structures that have no or limited capacity**. This means also accepting that there might not be any clear results to be upscaled. Because it is not sure that the work with the municipalities through weaker existing structures will be fully successful or lead to changes, it is important to document well the processes as argued under recommendation 9 and 11. This recommendation is in line with the importance to stay focused on longer term changes while at the same time keeping a balance with the short-term cycles (proposed under PDIA approach).

Abbreviations

BU	Burundi
FCAS	Fragile and Conflict Affected States
GCA	Gender and Conflict Analysis
LGA	Local Government Association
LG	Local government
MA	Mali
MTE	Mid-term Evaluation
IWRM	Integrated Water Resource Management
PT	Palestinian Territories
RPM	Resident Program Manager
RPO	Resident program officer
RW	Rwanda
SL	Somaliland
SS	South-Sudan
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
ToT	Training of Trainers
UG	Uganda

Table of content

Overview of tables

Overview of boxes

1 Introduction

1.1 FOCUS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

[3] VNG International, with its headquarters based in The Hague, in assignment of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is implementing the 5-year program called IDEAL (2017-2021).

[4] VNG International is the international cooperation agency of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities.VNG International supports decentralisation processes and facilitates decentralised cooperation. The organisation provides capacity building services to strengthen local governments, their associations, training institutes and decentralisation task forces both in developing countries and countries in transition.

[5] IDEAL is a program by VNG International that works on the involvement of citizens in local governance in seven countries facing fragility or conflict, namely Burundi, Mali, Palestinian Territories, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan and Uganda. The participation of citizens contributes to inclusive decision-making. It improves local governance and the delivery of basic services. It makes local governance more sustainable and increases welfare and stability. The drive of VNGI is to support local governments in building bridges with all their citizens - including marginalised groups.

[6] IDEAL's overall outcomes are: (i) More responsive and effective service delivery, (ii) More inclusive and participatory policy processes and (iii) The institutional and policy environment is improved. The outcomes are aimed at strengthening the social contract. The table below gives an overview of the overall program and is followed by a brief description of the Theory of Change (ToC) of the program.

	# LGs selected as pilots[1]	Co-implementor	Topic	National IDEAL team
PT	5 leading LGs + 10 in an introductory program on LED	MDLF, Municipal development Lending Fund (central government structure)	LED	RPM RPO Governance advisor
SL	3	LGA (ALGASL)	Economic opportunities	RPM LED advisor
UG	6	2 LGAs (ULGA and UAAU)	Discretionary space and	RPM + part-time advisor/consultant

---

[1] Here only the LGs selected as pilots are identified, yet in several countries the program also executed activities that addressed more than the selected pilots through the LGAs or through trainings offered by the program in collaboration with the LGAs..

			territorial development	
MA	5	LGA (AMM)	Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM)	RPM RPO
RW	6	LGA (RALGA)	Urban planning (and links with country side)	RPM
SS	3 (counties)	/	WASH	RPM RPO Senior trainer
BU	8	LGA (ABELO)	Human Security	RPM Field officer

Table 1: overview of IDEAL program

7   The concept 'social contract' is not explicitly defined by VNGI. The program ToC identifies better service delivery (outcome 1 – output legitimacy), inclusive and participatory policy processes (outcome 2 – input legitimacy) and an improved institutional and policy environment (outcome 3 – enabling environment) as the three main building blocks (sub pathways) to achieve a stronger social contract. In order to achieve these outcomes, the program will respectively strengthen three core capabilities of local governments: (i) the capability to generate development results, (ii) the capability to self-organize and act, and (iii) the capability to establish supportive relations with key stakeholders.
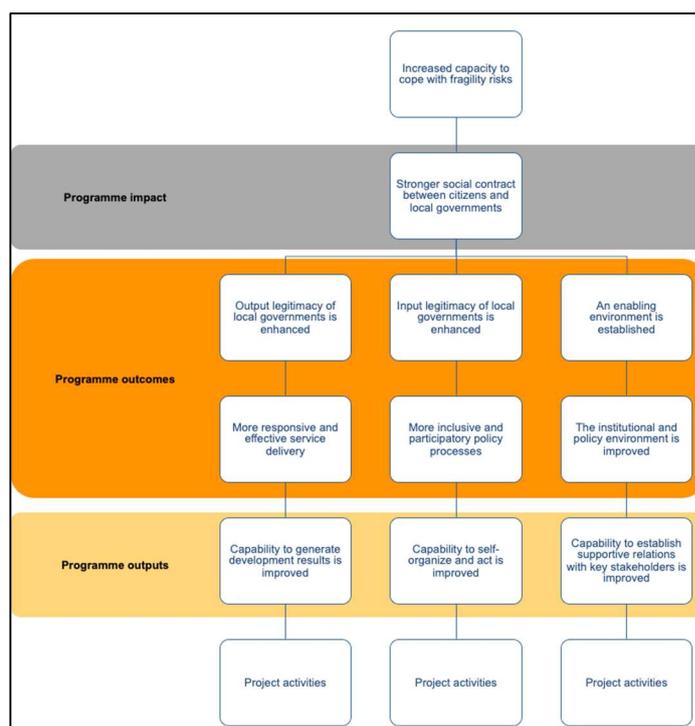
8   The IDEAL ToC rightly states that not only access to and quality of the service delivery is important but that one should also look at input and procedural legitimacy. Therefore, outcome 2 focuses on inclusive and participatory decision-making. Also the social cohesion approach – focusing on society-society relations – is integrated in the IDEAL program formulation (see inception report).

9   The ToC assumptions between the outcome and impact level are exemplary: for all three outcomes the assumptions refer to the need to foster bridging relations (as opposed to in-group

bonding relations), to break power-holding dynamics, to tackle social divisiveness, to support a more cohesive society, and so on.[2]

10   This assignment aims to conduct a mid-term evaluation of the IDEAL program. The mid-term evaluation should assess the program's progress towards achievement of its planned objective and results and should provide recommendations for improvement. Given the size of the IDEAL Program, a selection of 3 countries was made for the mid-term evaluation for a field visit, namely Mali, the Palestinian Territories, and Somaliland. As VNG International is both the contracting and the implementing organisation, an external opinion is sought for to reflect on the results achieved so far and approach taken. The aim was to learn as an organisation and to adapt the program where necessary.

11   More specifically the evaluation aims to: (i) Assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability efforts of the IDEAL program to allow for local governments in the target countries to better cope with fragility and fragility risks. A major point of attention is the assessement of the ToC and design of the program. (ii) To make recommendations for improvement regarding the program's design, approach and management which can be used in the second half of the program implementation.

1.2   CONCEPTS AND FRAMEWORKS THAT HAVE INFORMED THE EVALUATORS

12   **Legitimate stability** - The ToC[3] of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Security and Rule of Law has been guiding for the IDEAL program, more in particular the part on legitimate political governance and peace processes. Together with 'security for people' and 'strengthening the Rule of Law', the interventions to support legitimate political governance need to contribute to Legitimate stability (Dutch government), defined as 'stability that is grounded on inclusiveness of policies and service delivery, inclusive political processes and a social contract between the state and its people, and horizontal social cohesion between groups'.

13   The ToC pays attention to the above-mentioned processes at national and local level. It is stated that these processes take time, that change often emerges through 'windows of opportunity' and that many obstacles for effective change are more political than technical (related to distribution of power rather than a lack of institutional competencies), which calls for specific attention for mechanisms for accountability (for e.g. by local governments). The ToC points at the need to pay attention to support for civil society actors (and their capacity to participate in the debate, more in particular women and youth), media and informal governance processes/institutions. The ToC also calls for a gender transformative approach and adaptive programming.

---

[2] IDEAL, Inception report, p. 7.
[3] see ToC,
https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/ontwikkelingssamenwerking/documenten/publicaties/2018/11/08/theory-of-change-ontwikkelingssamenwerking

14 DSH department within the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs expects the IDEAL program to take into account the above ToC and points of attention and to contribute to the goal of legitimate stability. The Ministry expects that the IDEAL results framework also provides information for the resultsframework of DSH and in particular on the following indicators:

3. Peace processes & political, governance, States, regional and local authorities and, societies at large are able to effectively, prevent and resolve conflict in a non-violent, and inclusive manner.
3.2. Political Governance, National and local level governance is more inclusive and accountable, by strengthening political parties and parliament and promoting democratic space and inclusive political decision making. More in particular, the indicators under 3.2. should be addressed, see the table below.
Process indicators 3.2. No. of dialogue processes to strengthen the political/public debate 3.2. No. of people who participated in training activities for political participation (disaggregated for women and youth)

15 Further to this, the Ministry expresses a clear expectation in the interviews conducted that IDEAL would be conflict-sensitive both in design and execution of the program. This means that evaluators are expected to pay attention to the extent to which emergence, mitigation and resolution of conflicts in program execution is taken into account in the analysis, planning, execution and monitoring of the IDEAL program.

16 **Fragility -** Fragility as a concept has been central in the design of the program IDEAL since it is explicitly mentioned on the highest level of program impact. The program ToC uses a two-tiered program impact approach, which highlights the main assumption on which the program is build, i.e. the assumption that '*because the social contract between local governments and citizens is stronger, local government's capacity to cope with fragility risks is enhanced*'.[4]

17 There is no single and shared definition of fragility in literature. The evaluators will use the concept, as defined and used in the OECD States of Fragility Reports. This focuses on the context in which these state-society and society-society relations take place. Fragility is then defined as '*the combination of exposure to risk and insufficient coping capacity of the state, system, and/or communities to manage, absorb or mitigate those risks*'.[5] One of the main features of this definition is its multi-dimensionality, which highlights that each fragile context is a unique combination of interdependent security, societal, economic, political and environmental risks and insufficient coping capacity. It underscores that fragility is a wicked problem, which

---

[4] IDEAL, inception report, p. 8.
[5] OECD. (2018). States of fragility report. p. 82.

demands a comprehensive, holistic and systematic approach, and does not allow to name and tame fragility into a set of isolated sub-problems to work on.[6]

18 **Fragility and conflict sensitivity -** Because of the importance of attention to conflict and conflict management in fragile settings, the evaluators have looked into literature related to integrating conflict-sensitivity into design, programming and M&E of a program and have used the IDEAL conflict sensitivity guide (February 2018). This guide defines conflict as follows (page 4): 'a natural multidimensional phenomenon that is typically indicative of change within society. As such the importance of conflict sensitive within the IDEAL program is obvious as the program aims for more inclusive decision making at local level and therefore will cause changes in the societies of the targeted communities.[7]

19 A study for DFID of 2013[8] on M&E related to conflict sensitivity aims to contribute to a set of products intended to support DFID country offices and their partners to develop better measures of program results in difficult conflict and fragile environments. The DFID document calls for a (good enough) conflict analysis at country level, sector level and program level/micro-level to identify what divides and what connects people in a context and in relation to a certain intervention.

20 Finally the study of Kleinfeld (2015) who is linking M&E to programs in which politics play a major role has been a source for the evaluators. From this study it is clear that knowledge-based approaches often do not work in complex political environments. Trying to strengthen the social contract will need to take into account that interventions for change will meet resistance and opponents and that results obtained might be turned back with the next elections: 'The presence of opposition actors means that reforms are frequently followed by counter reforms. Change swings back and forth.' (Kleinfeld, page 1). The study provides interesting points to take into account in the evaluation framework to understand to what extent IDEAL was designed to take into account influence of politics in the work and how this is put into practice. For e.g. in relation to planning and M&E, the author points at the need for analysis of underlying rules of politics and space for change (including analysis of how divergent opinions are punished), flexible planning and budgets (and approaches such as scenario planning, PDIA), space for experiments that are safe to fail (try an intervention, assess and decide whether to continue), investment in building solutions/proposals in order to be ready when there are windows of opportunities (even without a guarantee that they will be used in the course of the program), to use the approach of working with a TOC to test assumptions and not to define a static results framework, to pay attention in

---

[6] Derick W. Brinkerhoff (2014) State fragility and failure as wicked problems: beyond naming and taming, Third World Quarterly, 35:2, 333-344,

[7] The guide continues: 'In this sense, the issue of prevention will focus primarily on the prevention of violent conflict, or the need to strengthen structures, processes and mechanisms within society that enable the peaceful and constructive management of differences. Conflict occurs when two or more parties believe that their interests are incompatible, express hostile attitudes or take action that damages other parties' ability to pursue their interests. It becomes violent when parties no longer seek to attain their goals peacefully, but resort instead to violence in one form or another. Violent conflicts are thus not inevitable, nor do they happen overnight; conflict is a dynamic process, which may take differing forms and run through various stages of escalation and de-escalation, resulting from the complex combination and overlap of the various causes of conflict'

[8] Goldwyn, R. (CARE) and Chigas, D. (CDA) (2013) *Monitoring and evaluating conflict sensitivity. Methodological challenges and practical solutions*

monitoring to some key, generic changes (emergence of coalitions, changes in relations, development of elite influencers/leaders), the functioning of feedback mechanisms for complaints from citizens, … This is a real challenge for donor funded programs that are often required to maintain their resultsframework with specific indicators to ensure comparibility between baseline, midterm and endterm measurement.

1.3 APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

21   The evaluation was executed by a team of two Belgian evaluators with access to ressource persons in Mali, Somaliland and Palestinian territories (in order to sufficiently contextualise the evaluation and the findings) and translators. ACE Europe presented its general approach in its technical offer. A strong focus was put on learning within the IDEAL team.

22   The MTE is a program evaluation. The main orientations were the following: ACE Europe organised 3 field missions in Mali, Somaliland and Palestinian territories and a desk study combined with interviews for the countries that were not visited. Information from the seven cases was processed in a similar and systematic way (through evaluation sheets), cross-case analysis was done to identify generic findings that can be illustrated by the practice in the various countries.

23   All evaluation activities were guided by an evaluation framework based on the evaluators' understanding of fragility, conflict-sensitivity and related concepts, the Terms of Reference for the MTE and a kick-off phase (desk-study, kick-off workshop with the The Hague team, interviews with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). In the ToR for this assignment, VNGI underlined that IDEAL is a program that works on the involvement of citizens in local governance in seven countries facing fragility or conflict.

24   The overview of evaluation questions (see further below) was validated by the IDEAL team in The Hague during a briefing session, May 2nd 2019. The framework was used to collect data and to execute a cross-case analysis.

Evaluation questions	Judgement criteria (sub questions) and points of attention
EQ1: How does the design of the IDEAL program contribute to relevance of interventions?	JC 1 : ToCs (overall and at country level) are based on good enough analysis of context, can be validated and are reviewed when needed
	JC 2: local governments and local government associations and other relevant actors appreciate the relevance of the IDEAL program

	JC 3: specific added value of IDEAL in comparison to other players can be identified (in approaches, choice of sector, choice of main beneficiaries, type of activities, …)
	JC 4: Program management demonstrates conflict sensitivity
EQ2:To what extent is IDEAL gender sensitive?	JC 5: incorporation of gender in strategy
	JC 6: incorporation of gender in execution and management
EQ3: To what extent IDEAL effectiveness can be measured and is already visible?	JC 7: appropriateness of M&E for measuring effectiveness
	JC 8: Likeliness of outputs/outcomes to be realised
EQ4: What is the sustainability of the program?	JC 9: There are signs of growing local ownership over the objectives and expected results and emerging capacity to nurture changes/new ideas over a longer period of time
	JC 10: Strategies defined/put in place by the IDEAL program

Table 2: overview of evaluation questions for the MTE

25 **Field missions in 3 countries** – Each mission was preceded by a skype call with the RPM to understand the expectations of the evaluation, to prepare the program and to understand the current state of affairs. The main respondents to the evaluation questions were members of the IDEAL team, staff and politicians in local governments that take part in the program, staff and board of local government associations and the Embassy of the Netherlands. To a lesser extent, other development players were interviewed but in every country representatives of CSO have been interviewed. The main evaluation tools were: semi-structured interviews, desk-study, analysis of Theory of Efficiency[9], timeline exercise and focus group discussions. Participants for interviews were suggested by the evaluators (and meetings were organised by the IDEAL team).

---

[9] Theory of efficiency is an approach that was developed in the Netherlands for the evaluation of the MFS funding (MFS II joint evaluation of the International Lobbying and Advocacy, commissioned by Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, April 2015). Within the context of this MTE, the evaluators looked at three aspects: gender, fragility and M&E. For each of the topics, the leading questions are: (i) what has been put in place by the program/country to ensure gender sensitivity/attention for fragility/appropriate M&E, how did this work out, what factors have influence on that and what has been learned (and adapted)?

Each field mission was closed with a debriefing session during which main findings were shared and country-specific recommendations were discussed based on a powerpoint.

26 **Desk-study of IDEAL program in 4 other countries** – Desk study was executed on the documents related to the program. This was the basis for an interview guideline and the interviews. Two interviews were organised with the IDEAL team of the respective country: The Hague team separate from the RPM.

27 To support learning and discussion, ACE Europe shared following internal working documents with the teams;

28 Evaluation sheets for each of the seven countries (final versions August – mid-September 2019) including overview of documents and people consulted. These sheets were commented upon by the IDEAL teams;

29 Discussion paper for the IDEAL workshop with the team (The Hague and Resident Program Managers) (August 2019). Comments were taken into account in the draft of this report.

30 The reports of the baseline and midline measurement were used in the following way: the evaluators have started with the overall conclusions per country and have looked for information about explanatory factors (with limited success). Entry points identified for interventions have been considered to analyse the link between analysis and interventions and to idenify recommendations.

1.4 EXECUTION OF THE EVALUATION AND LIMITATIONS

31 The evaluation was largely executed as planned, except for the following aspects:

− The initial methods proposed in the ACE Europe offer to organize wider community based participatory analysis of timeline and external interventions during the field missions was not applied as the MTE coincided with the midline measurement missions of KIT which already required quite some mobilization from the side of the stakeholders. In consultation with VNGI and KIT, ACE Europe aligned its approaches and evaluation activities. As such, ACE Europe focused more on semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with IDEAL staff and stakeholders. Where possible and relevant, ACE Europe participated in KIT activities as an observer.

− The idea to work closely with the RPM as co-evaluator during the field mission with view to supporting learning appeared too ambitious, especially because the midline measurement already required a lot of involvement of the national IDEAL teams and was already designed as M&E learning for the IDEAL staff and RPM (for e.g. leading focus group discussions.

³² ACE Europe took into account the context of fragility in the execution of the evaluation: extensive communication with RPM prior to the field mission, consultation with the national IDEAL teams on the selection of the resources persons, focus on what respondents find important to share as results and comments, respecting the rules of engagement in the countries, sufficient time for all team members to comment on outputs.

³³ Following outputs were produced:

– Proposal for the evaluation framework (June 2019);

– Final draft report with conclusions and recommendations.

³⁴ Triangulation of information was ensured in different ways: cross-checking information from different sources against the evaluation framework and with available documents (from IDEAL and others), interviews with stakeholders but also with other development players where possible, comments on the evaluation sheets from the IDEAL teams, open discussion during the RPM workshop on the basis of a discussion document and comparison of findings with the results of the mid-line measurement.

³⁵ There were no major limitations to the evaluation. In the countries of the field mission it was not possible to speak with some of the identified respondents (mainly at government level) but this did not affect the overall program evaluation.

2 How does the design of the IDEAL program contribute to relevance of interventions?

³⁶ **Based on the ToR the evaluation framework identified 4 specific judgement criteria to answer this evaluation question**. The first judgement criterion is the quality of both the ToC and the contextual analysis that underlies the ToC: both a decent understanding of the context and a clear and well-informed ToC are seen as important elements to assure the relevance of the program and its interventions. The second judgment criterion is the appreciation of the program by the main stakeholders, i.e. the local governments and the local government associations: how do they appreciate the relevance of the program for their specific context? Third, the IDEAL program is compared to other develoment actors and their programs in order to identify the added value of IDEAL: what is the comparative advantage of VNGI and IDEAL vis-à-vis other interventions? Finally, the conflict-sensitivity of the program is evaluated: since IDEAL works in conflict-affected and fragile states (CAFS) the evaluation specifically assesses the adaptive capacity of the IDEAL program to work in such complex situations. In below the main findings are described.

2.1   QUALITY OF CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS AND TOC

37   The point of view of the evaluators on the added value of contextual analysis and a TOC which is guiding their assessment of IDEAL is the following: good enough analysis and a clear ToC that is explicit about the predicted pathways of change and the assumptions behind those pathways are essential to support the teams during execution and when thinking about adaptations when needed. A ToC should clearly link interventions and first level changes to overall impact in order to ensure that the program is relevant and can contribute to ongoing change processes in a particular context. A clear ToC helps implementing teams to regularly question themselves on their expectations with regards to changes and on how they think (and why) these changes can be realised and influence each other. As such, it is clear for each intervention developed why and how it is relevant for a particular envisaged change. The more explicit a ToC, the easier it is to clarify within the team and with other stakeholders what the program is actually about and what its limitations are. This is important to facilitate dialogue with various stakeholders and collaboration. Finally, a ToC that sufficiently represents complexity of change (by identifying intermediate steps or changes) informs teams about what is relevant to monitor. A perfect ToC does not exist and the visual representation is less important than the critical questioning that can support learning and adaptation throughout execution.

2.1.1   QUALITY OF CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

38   All country programs are based on a decent inception phase. During this inception phase VNGI and the local teams and stakeholders took the time to understand the context. For all countries contextual analysis includes a Political Economy Analysis (PEA) and a gender analysis. The teams received training and formats to guide the analysis and extensive analysis was processed in working documents. The inception phase also includes a baseline[10] for the social contract indicators, developed by KIT in consultation with the program. Furthermore, a risk and sustainability analysis is included. The findings and results of these different analyses were summarized in the overall IDEAL inception report.

39   Both during design and execution sufficient time and resources are available to conduct the necessary contextual analysis. Several additional studies were conducted in 5/7 countries: these mainly include the so called GCA or gender and/or conflict analysis (BU, MA, SS, UG) and security studies (SL, SS, MA, BU). The civil society study that was recently commissioned by IDEAL in Burundi is a good example of VNGIs willingness to invest in good contextual analysis: since the program observed difficulties in engaging with local civil society it was decided to put some activities on hold and order a specific study that should offer more in-depth information on the existance and constellation of local civil society organizations. On this basis the IDEAL team can decide to adapt the program and increase its relevance within the context of Burundi.

---

[10] The only exception is South-Sudan: due to the security situation the baseline was not available during the inception phase but was postponed to the second half of 2017.

40   The following table gives an overview of the analysis executed to inform execution in the various countries. It should be noted that in all countries existing information was also intensively used (based on documents shared with the evaluators)

	Inception Report	Additional In-depth studies after inception phase
PT	– Context analysis (PEA + gender analysis) – KIT baseline – Risk analysis – Sustainability analysis	– Strategy document 2017
SL	– Context analysis (PEA + gender analysis) – KIT baseline – Risk analysis – Sustainability analysis	– Security study + continuous security analysis (security firm)
UG	– Context analysis (PEA + gender analysis) – KIT baseline – Risk analysis – Sustainability analysis	– Situational gender analysis (another name for GCA)
MA	– Bilan du mandat électif 2009-2016 des femmes maires et adjointes aux maires du Mali (early 2017 – Context analysis (PEA + gender analysis) – KIT baseline – Risk analysis – Sustainability analysis – Études sur les besoins des communes (by AMM staff with NL experts, to better understand AMM members needs from the association)	– Assessment of IWRM needs and facilities – Identification of water related conflicts at commune level (= GCA) – Assessment of local tax collection capacity
RW	– Context analysis (PEA + gender analysis) – KIT baseline – Risk analysis – Sustainability analysis	– /
SS	– Context analysis (PEA + gender analysis) – KIT baseline was postponed to second half of 2017 because of security situation – Risk analysis – Sustainability analysis	– Gender and conflict analysis (GCA). – Security study + continuous security analysis (security firm)
BU	– Context analysis (PEA + gender analysis) – KIT baseline – Risk analysis – Sustainability analysis	– Gender and conflict analysis (GCA) – Security study – Civil society study (in execution)

Table 3: overview of analysis executed to inform execution

41   Concerns are raised by the IDEAL teams about the balance between time investment in analysis and execution. Although all IDEAL teams stress the importance of sufficient and good contextual analysis, some also warn for an overload of studies, documentation and analysis that delays the

execution of the program. They argue that it is not always possible to have a complete understanding of the context before intervening. It is therefore sometimes necessary to start on the basis of a 'good enough' analysis while assuring the flexibility to adapt the program during execution. The evaluators support this point of view: especially in combination with constant (informal) context updates during excution, the evaluators find that design and execution can based on good enough analysis, with two points of attention: (i) understanding of capacity of population and CSO as the 'other side' in the social contract model, (ii) and having a systematic fragility analysis allowing for problem-driven execution which would be appropriated in the context of FCAS. These points are further elaborated in the following paragraphs.

[42] **The contextual analysis only partially considered the social contract between LGs and population/citizens/CSOs.** IDEAL aims to strengthen the social contract between citizens/population and local government (program impact level) but did not analyse in depth the side of the population. The baseline exercise however was dedicated to a measurement of the strength of the social contract also taking into account perception of the population and CSO's. This was insufficiently supported by the context analysis.This 'gap' is also seen in the design and the ToC (see further below).

[43] **Contextual analysis was not based on a systematic fragility analysis.** IDEAL aims to increase the capacity of LGs to cope with fragility risks (program impact level). As a consequence, the evaluators expected to find a systematic analysis of these fragility risks and an identification of the existing coping capacity of LGs as the basis for the design of the program.[11] The intention was there[12], but the findings of the evaluators are that this fragility approach was not systematically integrated and used during the design (and implementation) of IDEAL.Neither the inception report nor additional studies (or yearly planning or narrative reports) include a systematic analysis of the fragility risks or the capacities of LGs to cope with them. For the evaluators this is a missed opportunity to consider a less traditional project-type of execution, more in particular, the PDIA (Problem Driven Iterative Adaptation) approach. The question here is of course: what was agreed with the Ministry and to what extent was/is there opportunity and space for another type of project execution, accepting that there is less focus on long term outcomes. Full fledged PDIA might require a complete change of mind-set (also with the donor), but actually it would be real added value in comparison to other development players. Interviews with members of the IDEAL advisory board confirm that the application of PDIA is incredibly difficult on the ground and it is fair enough that VNGI did not yet explore in practice this way of working. Yet, the continuation or creation of the specific small scale grant scheme – a recommendation of the previous LGCP program evaluation that was integrated in the IDEAL program – might offer the opportunity to experiment with PDIA in Uganda, Mali, Palestinian Terrirories and South-Sudan.

---

[11] For e.g. reference can be made tot he Baraza mechanisms in Uganda which seem to work in some of the municipalities.
[12] The M&E guidelines for IDEAL include a section on identifying and measuring fragility risks. Based on the multi-dimensional fragility concept of OECD-DAC the guidelines present a list of indicators for the 5 fragility dimensions (security, political, economic, societal and environmental fragility). Furthermore, the guidelines highlight that understanding the main fragility risks is important to both (i) understand the operational environment in which IDEAL will be implemented and (ii) to support the selection of policy areas for intervention. The full IDEAL team participated in a PEA workshop which addressed the 5 fragility dimensions and how these should translate into a PEA.

44   **The evaluators identified the gender and conflict analysis as good practice**. In 4/7 countries
     a GCA was conducted: in Burundi and South-Sudan, in Uganda it was called a situational gender
     analysis, in Mali it focused on IWRM-related conflicts. All 4 country teams highlighted the
     substantial added value of such a GCA study since it provides in-depth information up to the
     level of the specific pilot communes where the IDEAL program intervenes. The evaluators want
     to stress the importance and the necessity of such in-depth understanding of the local context
     before developing interventions. It facilitates conflict and gender-sensitive programming (see
     section on JC4 – conflict-sensitivity).

Good practice: Gender and Conflict Assessment (GCA) in Burundi and adaptation of program.

In April and May 2017 a mixed team of international and national experts conducted the GCA study that was commissioned by VNGI as part of the inception phase for the IDEAL program. The study was based on a mixed method approach in which desk study, semi-structured interviews, homogeneous and mixed focus groups were used as data collection techniques. The main components of the assessment were the identification of a gender-sensitive conflict profile, causes and gender consequences of conflict, actor analysis, conflict dynamics, options and capacities for peace and gender equality, and scenarios for the IDEAL program. The study provided the IDEAL team with valuable in-depth knowledge on the level of the 8 selected pilot communes. As a consequence, the program was also adapted on the basis of the new information provided by the GCA study. Initially, the program would work closely together with the Comités Mixtes de Sécurité, which include representatives of the municipality, police, department of justice, and local CSOs that come together to discuss security issues. However, the GCA study revealed that the Ibonerakure were active in the CMS of all 8 pilot communes. Since they are a destabilizing factor, the program decided to shift its attention towards strengthening the committees on communal development (CCDCs), the committees on colline development (CDCs), and the local committees for good governance (CLBG) as local platforms of inclusive decision-making. The GCA study illustrates very well how in-depth knowledge of the local context is crucial to be able to assure a conflict-sensitive programming and avoid of doing harm (in this case, avoid support to the Imbonerakure).

Also, in South Sudan, the GCA analysis ensured changes in intervention such as more attention for gender in planning processes at county level and more attention to gender when supporting WASH platforms at county level

Box 1
Gender and Conflict Assessment (GCA) in Burundi and adaptation of program

45   **Design of the interventions was not only based on the contextual analysis but also
     included pragmatic considerations**. As such, the selection of intervention regions, policy areas

and target groups was based on the available analysis and studies but also on the previous LGCP program (e.g. SS, PT) and the effort to align with other development actors, more in particular with the priorities of EKN (see for e.g. the alignment mission and workshop in BU, also in South-Sudan the alignment with the previous LGCP programe and EKN programming was done to answer anexplicit request from EKN). Where IDEAL worked together with the LGAs the latter were strongly involved in the selection process of LGs (e.g. MA, SL) together with stakeholders from national government (PT, RW, SL, BU). For Mali, South-Sudan and Somaliland (and PT to a certain extent) also the security situation played an important role in identifying where (not) to work.

2.1.2 QUALITY OF TOC

46 **The execution of the IDEAL program is oriented by an overall Theory of Change (ToC)** that is visualised in the inception report. A stronger social contract is seen as the result of progress in three pathways that are each divided in outcomes (output and input legitimacy, enabling environment) and outputs (related to capacity of LGs to generate development results, capacity of LGs to act and self-organise and capacity of LGs/LGAs to establish supportive relations with key stakeholders). The design of the ToC is based on a comprehensive and elaborated understanding of the social contract concept, which is strongly substantiated by theory and literature (see e.g. narrative proposal or the baseline study). On a theoretical level, it makes sense.

47 **The identification of an overall ToC at program level supports a programmatic approach**. Because of its conceptual and theoretical basis the ToC provides a overall framework that is valid for all 7 countries. Within this framework, each country defined a country specific ToC, taking into account all three pathways and formulating specific results and indicators. The set of indicators that was designed to monitor the social contract throughout the program (with a baseline, midterm and enline) makes it possible to compare progress between different countries and to demonstrate aggregated progress for all countries (as far as this is considered to be relevant).

48 **Some weaknesses in the ToC of IDEAL limit its use for steering, identification of appropriate interventions, monitoring and learning**. Weaknesses in a ToC do not automatically mean that program interventions themselves are weak or not appropriate. It means that the instrument of the ToC does not sufficiently orient the local teams in program execution and adaptation and it does not ensure that the teams are monitoring in a systematic way the issues that are really relevant to capture change processes and dynamics. The following weaknesses are important to share.

49 **The current ToC does not sufficiently represent the complexity of change processes** with its three levels and three pathways. Detailed reconstruction of the ToC (in PT and in SL) revealed firstly that envisaged change is not happening in three parallel pathways: pathways are interconnected and influence each other. A few examples:

- The LGA in Palestinian Territories (under outcome 3) is not clearly connected to the work that is done at the level of the 5 municipalities and the work with the 10 municipalities by MDLF (outcomes 1 and 2), whereas it is expected that the LGA will ensure further support to other municipalities.

- It is not clear how the LED-pilots and the provision of training to LGs in Somaliland (outcomes 1 and 2) is connected to the lobby and advocacy activities (outcome 3).

- How are input and output legitimacy connected in the various countries: if decision-making is done in a more inclusive and participatory way (outcome 2) does logically follow that service delivery will become more responsive and effective (outcome 1). Perhaps better service delivery is possible without inclusive participation and/or inclusive participation does not always result in better service delivery. For e.g. in Mali (and in other countries), in the ToC the linkages between pathway 1 and 2 are not explicit nor concrete.

50 Secondly, three levels are not sufficient to predict and capture change: pathways of change are less linear and often entail more than three steps. Limiting change to three steps creates grey zones (or 'black boxes) that limit the understanding of how change happens and how it can be supported by a program, such as IDEAL. Just a few examples to illustrate this general observation made for all country ToCs.

- The expected change related to inclusive processes is not clearly defined by the current ToC for Somaliland: is it the task of the representatives of the marginalized groups to realize being more involved? Is it about LGs' providing mechanisms for representatives of citizens to be consulted on local government decisions and mechanism for social accountability?

- The planned support for women's' organizations in Mali: it is not clear now from the ToC how this is connected to the pathway under outcome 2 and how it will contribute.

51 Not identifying the relevant intermediate steps necessary in the longer change process (or the relevant assumptions explaining the change process), impedes the identification of indicators that need to be followed. Some examples illustrate generic findings:

- It is assumed in the TOC of the Palestinian Territories that the creation of a LED forum and its functioning will allow participants in LED forums to prepare full LED plans and for women's groups to influence decision making and to be less marginalized. This assumption refers to the capacity of participants/women's groups to meaningfully contribute to the LED forum. Evolution of this capacity (as a relevant indicator) is currently not monitored by the program.

- In Somaliland: why would 'increased understanding' and 'knowledge' lead to 'doing things differently' in the districts in Somaliland? Relevant assumptions were not identified, an important assumption is the capacity of the LGA to ensure follow-up on trainings at the level of the beneficiary districts. Being more explicit about this assumption would allow to identify relevant indicators to be monitored, such as: is the dialogue between ALGASL and the members effective, how is follow-up organized by the secretariat (is it enough, how can it be

strengthened, how can the Executive Director better delegate this tasks and support the team in executing these?)

52 All of the points addressed in the above clarify that country specific ToC might look very different (even within a similar framework). For e.g. in some countries the link between inclusive participation and service delivery is much stronger (e.g. IWRM services in MA or WASH services in SS) than in other countries (e.g. human security services in BU, LED in PT).

53 There is a disconnection between the ToC with three outcomes of equal weight and the way IDEAL teams and stakeholders understand the program. This demonstrates that there is a need to be more explicit about how IDEAL teams within their particular context think that change can happen and how it can contribute to a stronger social contract at impact level. In general IDEAL teams put much emphasis on the importance of inclusive participation (outcome 2) in planning while local stakeholders might define the social contract more in terms of concrete service delivery (outcome 1). This disconnection was clearly observed during the Mali case study: although local stakeholders underlined the importance of inclusiveness and participation, their main concerns were linked to increase the effective delivery of concrete services.

54 The ToC is quite ambitious and does not sufficiently take into account spheres of control and influence of the IDEAL program. A ToC may be ambitious, but it should be clear on which changes the program actually has control and on what changes the program can influence. This is expecially important in FCAS that are characterized by volatile contexts.The execution of IDEAL (and the available budget) make clear that IDEAL will not influence actual service delivery but intends to contribute to it by building capacity of LGs for inclusive decision making: however, improvement of service delivery is mentioned as an outcome on which IDEAL can influence within the lifespan of the program. This raises expectations that cannot be fulfilled and it can create frustration amongst stakeholders and thus imped ownership. For example, for the Mali team it is clear the outcome of the program should be limited to an increased awareness of LG for responsive and inclusive service delivery and not the actual change in service delivery (for which the financial means are insufficient). Another example is related the changes expected at the levels of LGAs: the field missions reveal that even when LGA's are co-implementors, changes at their level can be influenced by IDEAL but are not under the control of the program. However in the current ToC these changes are mentioned as outputs.

55 The last weakness is related to the use of assumptions. The ToC did not identify assumptions between input/interventions of IDEAL and expected output and as such does not highlight critical factors to monitor in the delivery of the activities such as trainings and workshops and their effectiveness. Two important assumptions were not made explicit in the overall pathway of change which might raise false expectations about what IDEAL can achieve. Because they are not made explicit, systematic monitoring and reporting is not ensured, whereas the assumptions are critical and IDEAL should be able to make more visible what it is doing. The assumptions are the following:

−   There is the assumption in the ToC that financial means are available for local governments to implement policies and deliver services to the population. Although this assumption remains

invisible and therefore implicit in the ToC, IDEAL is aware of the importance of access to financial means: in Mali, IDEAL is strengthening revenue mobilization for services, in Uganda, South-Sudan and Mali, IDEAL is providing additional financial resources through micro-grants, and in several countries the LED focus aims to increase revenue for LGs. However, being more explicit about the assumption would help IDEAL to monitor whether it is doing enough and in the best possible way. The effectiveness of the strategy of a micro-grant scheme is now not monitored with view to the overall objective of IDEAL.

– There is the assumption that the program can rely on a legitimate local government and civil society to act as effective counterparts in the social contract. As already highlighted in previous sections, the context analysis did not analyze the situation of the civil society in depth. Yet it is clear that local civil society is characterized by elite capture (all countries), weak civil society (all), clan-based society (SL), increasing inequality (UG), exclusion and marginalization of societal groups (including women) (all), less civic space (RW, BU). As a matter of fact, the questionable legitimacy of both local governments and civil society, and therefore the higher risk on elite capture and social exclusion and marginalization are key challenges for programs and donor interventions in FCAS. If the ToC would be more explicit about this assumption, it would urge the IDEAL teams to monitor better how the program and its approach, activities and instruments have a positive (or negative) effect on elite capture and social exclusion (see also section on conflict-sensitive execution).

2.2   APPRECIATION OF RELEVANCE BY DIRECT TARGET GROUPS

56   **The direct target groups of IDEAL are the staff and politicians of the local governments (LGs) selected by the program and staff and board of local government associations (LGAs).** Although closely connected to central government, IDEAL does not support central government institutions, except for Palestinian Territories. In few countries (PT, MA), the IDEAL program countries also reached civil society representatives through some activities; in other countries civil society organisations were involved as expert or partners in the organisation of activities (for e.g. in SL with the gender network NAGAAD). As the general focus was not on civil society or on direct support to citizens, this section mainly concerns appreciation of relevance by LGs and LGAs (as reported during field missions) and analysis of relevance based on desk study and interviews with IDEAL staff. There is some overlap in this section with the section on ownership.

57   **VNGI paid a lot of attention to the involvement of LGs and LGAs in the design of the program which supports the relevance of the interventions.** The limited number of LGs in each country (as pilots) allowed for a diversified approach and support (with some limitations, for e.g. in PT where the level of LGs is very different and where the co-implementor has difficulties to provide tailor made support). Respondents of LGs and LGAs appreciate alignment of IDEAL with central government policies (as far as they are clearly developed) because this ensures them that they are investing in something that is required by government. Selection of domains and municipalities was always done in consultation with LGAs. As a point of attention it should

be mentioned that in some countries, selected communities did not always clearly apply to be part of the program but were selected and then informed (for e.g. in, BU and in SL).

58 The table below provides an overview of how LGs and LGA were involved in the design of the program and its interventions and the efforts done to maximise involvement.

	Involvement in analysis and design	Specific needs assessment
PT	– Involvement of MDLF (co-implementor) – Other stakeholders: consulted (but no list available) – Municipalities: not fully informed (for e.g. about results of baseline measurement)	– IDEAL started with extensive benchmarking exercise (information processed by RPM, approach was abandoned because too difficult but information served execution)
SL	– Strong involvement of LGA, involvement in discussion of baseline measurement, selection of pilot districts – Members of LGA: feel consulted about design and execution/choices	– Planned for with the selected districts (selection was only done in 2019)
UG	– Specific consultation meetings with selected LGs on the operationalisation of the concept of fragility together with Dutch counterparts	– Space and attention for LGs to allow them to design their own process of change (micro-grants) – Analysis of drivers of conflict for each LG involved (SGA analysis)
MA	– Involvement of central government (DNH) and LGA in selection of beneficiary communes, beneficiary communes were consulted and volunteered for inclusion in program	– Assessment of IWRM needs and facilities in beneficiary communes – Identification of IWRM related conflicts at commune level – Assessment of local tax collection capacity – Study on electoral mandate of female mayors 2009-2016
RW	– Extensive consultation with previous LGCP actors (but list of interviewees not available)	– Analysis of capacity gaps for each of the districts – Needs assessment for each activity
SS	– Consultation sessions with Local Government Board, counties, CSOs and NGOs	– Gender and conflict analysis up to the level of counties (in 2/3 counties)
BU	– Wide consultation with LGA, central government and various development players through alignment mission	– Analysis at the level of the communes

Table 4: overview of stakeholder involvement in design

59 **The respondents, both LGA and LGs understood that IDEAL was about capacity building and that this was mainly done through workshops and trainings**. The relevance of this type of interventions was not contested.

60 **In Mali, Palestinian Territories, Uganda and South Sudan, VNGI uses the micro-grants as seed money to ensure that planned activities are executed by the LGs**. Some LGs question the limited budget (for e.g. in MA) or the fact that the budget should be used mainly to facilitate interaction with the population (UG).

61 **Overall the quality of the input/interventions and support provided was appreciated by the respondents.** The activities were systematically based on a needs assessment to understand the level of the participants and were repeated when needed.

62 **The IDEAL team recognised the need to adapt and simplify some tools and approaches to the level of understanding and the practical use**; adaptations were done in the Palestinian Territories (benchmarking approach was replaced by regular exchange meetings and the LED approach was broken done in small steps); in Rwanda (adaptation of the development of new materials with more attention for co-creation) and in Somaliland (plan to go very easy on the LED approach and to adapt to what is feasible at the level of the selected districts).

63 **The IDEAL program aimed to address specific needs in relation to strengthening the social contract and required a mindshift from service delivery to interaction with the population**. The LGs and LGAs found it difficult to connect to these wider concepts, which urged the IDEAL team to define more specific domains of intervention in countries where this was not yet done (for e.g. UG and SL). The definition of the specific domains was done in consultation with the LGA and other relevant stakeholders (such as central government departments and other developmen players), and/or was based on the experiences with LGCP. The evaluators did not find evidence of opposition against the domains that were chosen and accepts their relevance: the domains/topics chosen can all be seen as part of the (various) critical domains for conflict and conflict mitigation in each of the countries.

Good practice: unpacking concepts and understanding their added value

Efforts to discuss the wider concepts of social contract with the selected LGs were strongest in Uganda and weakest in the Palestinian Territories: in Uganda a lot of time was taken to unpack the concepts and the philosophy behind it. This was done by involving peer LGs from the Netherlands. It resulted in a document that clarified what it was about, how it connected to the practice of the LGs and what kind of actions were imaginable. In the Palestinian Territories the project builds further on the legacy of the previous LGCP program and its focus on LED. Here, it depends more on the quality of the municipal focal point to see the opportunities of the LED approach in connection to the central topic of IDEAL, which is inclusive decision making. More in particular the working with indicators and clear criteria to define priorities in the policy was seen as an opportunity. The focal point of Qalqilya stated that the different and more transparent way of jointly choosing and prioritizing interventions with a mixed group of people crosscuts the traditional decision making which was often done by consulting in a bilateral way with key stakeholders, often important families. If this practice is upheld it could in the long-term help to better answer the needs of the population (and not only those perceived by the elite).

Box 2
Unpacking concepts and understanding their added value

64 The relevance of the IDEAL program for LGAs should not be underestimated. Especially in countries where the LGA is a co-implementor, the IDEAL program is relevant to strengthen the capacity, the visibility of the organisation and its credibility, for e.g. in Somaliland where the LGA is the face of the program and gradually takes over a number of interventions. In Burundi and in Rwanda, working with VNGI through IDEAL helps the LGAs to position themselves (as much as possible) as professional organisations with their own agenda in a context where they are very close to government; this is important vis-à-vis potential donors (who might find that the LGAs are too close to government).

2.3   SPECIFIC ADDED VALUE OF VNGI/IDEAL IN COMPARISON TO OTHER DEVELOPMENT PLAYERS

[65]   **The added value of the IDEAL program lies in the particular mandate and expertise of VNGI working with LGAs and with local governments**. VNGI recognises that these are technical actors and political/development actors at the same time. Other development players appreciate the capacity of VNGI/IDEAL to support processes at LG level, to manage tensions between technical staff and politicians, to deal with political implications of what are seemingly 'easy' technical issues. However, the IDEAL program does not always succeed in an optimal exploitation, valorisation and visibility of this comparative advantage vis-à-vis other development actors.

[66]   **The unique selling proposition of a program such as IDEAL is the fact that it can work on 'the politics' of local decision-making**. Its ambition is to support LG's on 'soft capacities' to achieve not only efficient but also legitimate local decision-making. However, for the IDEAL program it remains challenging to go beyond a technical approach in which local governments are seen as technical implementers of central administration and an extended service delivery arm. Working on politics and social accountability is inherently more sensitive in FCAS, yet the difficulty of realising this shift towards a more political approach was also due to the legacy of the LGCP program, which in most countries had a technical service delivery approach. However, strengthening technical service delivery capacities of LG's could be done by a variety of development actors depending upon their technical expertise. VNG's unique position is that they can work with LG as political and development players in their own right, focusing on their political mandate vis-à-vis the population.

[67]   **The social contract focus of the program challenges the niche and added value of VNGI in two ways.** First, the social contract focus pushes IDEAL to work with the society side of the social contract (local civil society, population), which traditionally is neither VNGI's niche nor expertise. Second, the social contract focus pushes IDEAL to work on more political issues (outcome 2: input legitimacy – inclusiveness and participation) although the legacy of the LGCP program in particular hint towards a more technical approach (outcome 1: output legitimacy – service delivery). In both ways the social contract focus demands a more political approach The question remains if VNGI should extend its expertise to both sides of the social contract or if it should look for synergy with other actors that are able to cover the civil society side (or a combination of both). A response to this question will always be context specific.

[68]   **To a great extent the comparative advantage of VNGI also lies in the fact that LGAs are its privileged partners and and that they could interact more or less as peers.** This offers VNGI an unique entry point with various advantages (e.g. political leverage, understanding political processes, acceptance by the LGs …). However, it also comes with certain risks. Since the LGA is a political organisation, this can lead towards a relation between VNGI and local politics that is too close for comfort. On the other hand, and particular in fragile contexts, VNGI is also confronted with sometimes very weak LGA's that are not yet able to play a strong role.

69   **Aware of its comparative advantage (and its limitations with regards to the financial means), VNGI/IDEAL is making considerable efforts to look for collaboration, synergy and complementarity with other development players.** During the inception phase a lot of effort was put into aligning the IDEAL program with existing programs of other players (e.g. the alignment mission and workshop in Burundi). The use of the advisory committee has been an explicit strategy to involve the main stakeholders in a more structural way, while also assuring that the IDEAL program remains relevant in the context. Furthermore, the local teams have invested a lot in participating in relevant fora and networking with the relevant stakeholders.

70   **Unfortunately, these efforts have not always led to the expected concrete collaboration and synergy** (except in Mali with integration of trainings in the programs of Join For Water – previously Protos). But it did deliver some results, such as effective information-sharing, increased attention for duplication and overlap (negative coordination, which, in Rwanda, is strongly stimulated by central government), concrete collaboration, mainly through subcontracting and/or co-implementation of activities with other development actors to deliver services or expertise (such as in SL, MA) and increasing the visibility of VNGI and the IDEAL program (e.g. also through incorporating co-financing in EU projects in PT, BU and SL) .

71   **Factors explaining the weaker collaboration are applicable to development programs in general.** Main factors that were highlighted during discussions, interviews and the documents are: high donor competition, focus on execution of own programs, different focus or sectors, different planning cycles, different size of organizations (e.g. World Bank vs. VNGI in Rwanda), and weak capacity of potential local partners. In some countries (e.g. BU, RW) political risks, need for alignment and being associated with the regime (through the LGA) hampers collaboration with particular civil society actors.

Good practice: Strategic partnering in Somaliland

In Somaliland it has been a key strategy to seek complementarity with the UN JPLG program. JPLG is the most important donor program that directly supports the legal, administrative and fiscal functions of local government. The program amended the local government law (approved in 1997) in 2007 and is involved in the current review. JPLG was the only program providing LG capacity building before IDEAL came in. The program is now in its third phase and will implement an expansion/exit strategy in close collaboration with Somaliland Ministry of Interior. The involvement of this Ministry through the advisory committee of IDEAL is very important to remain connected. But IDEAL went further and that was essential to strengthen the legitimacy of the LGA, ALGASL. At the start of IDEAL, service provision by the LGA remained restricted to those districts that fell under JPLG. In other words, the LGA was seen as an agency to support implementation in the JPLG districts. To legitimize the LGA as an association of all districts, the IDEAL program consequently co-implemented / co-financed a number of JPLG activities (e.g. revenue mobilization workshops) whereby IDEAL covered the expenses of non-JPLG districts, so that the LGA, ALGASL could rightfully claim that it also addressed their needs. Further, there is an opportunity to learn: although JPLG did not focus on communities and their capacity to participate and contribute to decision making, JPLG has some limited experience with training community members in monitoring groups, using scoring cards and establishing complaint mechanisms (mainly through the part which is implemented by UNICEF). Compared to JPLG, the added value of IDEAL lies in various elements: (i) JPLG supported ALGASL but provided little space to strengthen its capacity = added value and much needed input of IDEAL/ASPIRE. (ii) A second added value is the focus of IDEAL on LED/economic opportunities, since JPLG has cut this out of the 3rd phase because of shortage of funds (as was the case with the support to ALGASL); (iii) plan of IDEAL to organize on the job coaching, get insights from the audiences and actively engage the citizens'.

Box 3
Strategic partnering in Somaliland

2.4   CAPACITY OF IDEAL TEAM TO ENSURE CONFLICT-SENSITIVE EXECUTION

72   **Since IDEAL works in conflict-affected and fragile states (CAFS) the evaluation specifically assessed the (adaptive) capacity of the IDEAL program to work in a conflict-sensitive way.** The evaluation takes the conflict-sensitivity guide of IDEAL as point of departure. In this guide it is explained that conflict-sensitive programming applies to both program planning and implementation. On the one hand, understanding the main fragility and conflict risks is important to support the selection of intervention regions, policy areas and target groups (program planning). On the other hand, it is important to understand the specific operational environment in which a program will be executed (program implementation). In other words, conflict-sensitive programming should focus on how a program will _work on_ conflict and fragility: if and how will it contribute to reduce conflict and fragility (program planning)? But it should also focus how a program should _work in_ a conflict-affected and fragile situation: what necessary operational adapatations are necesseary to work effectively in such situations?

2.4.1 PROGRAM PLANNING (WORKING ON CONFLICT / FRAGILITY)

73 The table below highlights to what extent IDEAL has to deal with preventing and/or managing conflict and fragility in the 7 different countries. The summary is structured according to the 5 OECD-DAC fragility dimensions.

Fragility Dimension	IDEAL challenges for working _on_ fragility and conflict
Security Risks	– Only the Burundi program 'accepted' the challenge to work directly on security risks through its human security lens. However, due to the tense political situation, the program was forced to broaden its human security concept towards more soft issues (e.g. health, economic security).
Political Risks	– Political risks are highly diverse, but present in all countries, including corruption and nepotism (SL, PT), state repression (RW, BU), political instrumentalization (UG, BU), weak(er) state capacities (all). – In most cases the IDEAL program and VNGI have too little leverage to work on these risks when they play on the national level (broader political evolutions, peace talks, …). However, several lobby and advocacy activities under outcome 3 address some of these risks on the national level. – On the local level, working on these political risks is key to the program through providing instruments and capacity building to increase the social accountability of local governments. These risks were addressed in all country programs under outcome and output 2 (with variations).
Economic Risks	– The analysis of the inception phase mainly referred to a lack of financial resources for local governments, but also to (youth) unemployment (RW), competition for scarce resources (water, land), and absence of sustainable livelihoods on the level of the population (RW, UG, SL, MA). – The lack of financial and human resources for the local governments to implement policy is mainly dealt with in a twofold way (but not in all programs): (i) providing micro-grants to local governments to execute policies, and (ii) supporting local government in public finance management and local tax collection. – The country programs of PT, SL and, to a lesser extent UG, directly address these risks by focusing on LED (and LED related issues).
Environmental Risks	– Environmental risks such as climate change, drought, degradation of natural resources, were highlighted in various countries and are directly addressed in 2/7 country programs (MA and SS). Indirectly also Rwanda (urban nature) and Uganda (waste management) are dealing with environmental risks.
Societal Risks	– Dealing with these risks is crucial for the IDEAL program, since it aims to strengthen the social contract between local governments and the population through more inclusive and participatory decision-making. – The program is challenged on this aspect since it is mainly confronted with weakly organised and non-inclusive societies in all countries.

	– Confronted with these challenges the IDEAL program in some countries reached out to local civil society and the population to strengthen their capacities to organize themselves (Mali, Burundi).

Table 5: IDEAL challenges for working on fragility and conflct

2.4.2 PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION (WORKING IN CONFLICT / FRAGILITY)

74   The evaluators find that VNGI/IDEAL is very conscious of the fact that the program works in fragile and conflict environments. The main measures to ensure a **conflict-sensitive programming** and execution are the following:

–   **Security management**: is an important factor in South-Sudan, Somaliland and Mali. In all three countries the security situation influenced the selection of the intervention region. The programs invest a considerable amount of time and resources in the monitoring of the security risks. Both in Somaliland and South-Sudan, the IDEAL program works together with specialized security firms that offer up-to-date security analysis and briefings for the local teams. In Mali and Burundi an external security firm conducted a security analysis on the basis of which a security plan was developed. In general, these measures demonstrate the willingness of VNGI to accept the security risks associated with working in fragile places and manage them

–   **Human resources**: although the ToR for the RPMs does not specify specific competences for working in fragile and conflict-affected environments (except for UG and SL), VNGI pays due attention to the profiles and composition of teams and is doing an effort to ensure that teams are strong enough and combine various competences, experience and thematic knowledge, for e.g. by adding advisors (PT and SL), RPO's (in BU, MA, PT) and international experts. All job profiles include attention for gender-sensitivity (in reporting). The field missions confirm that IDEAL teams are very conflict sensitive and cautious in taking decisions, engaging with actors, … The evaluators find that VNGI might underestimate the needed capacity on the ground to ensure capacity building for LGs and the ambition to influence systemic change in difficult contexts and to ensure sufficient support by proximity (it should be recognized however that the situation is much better than under the LGCP program).

–   **Instruments and training for IDEAL staff**: VNGI developed several instruments to support their teams in terms of conflict-sensitivity. The conflict-sensitivity guide is the most important one, but also the gender guide and the "working in the Grey Zone – operational principles for working in fragile states guideline" can be mentioned. These tools are available, but are not yet used in a systematic way to guide intervention design and execution. A second training (on conflict and gender sensitivity) took place 9-11 September.

–   **Proximity:** a crucial aspect that supports a conflict-sensitive approach is to ensure the proximity of the IDEAL teams to the local stakeholders (in particular the pilot LGs and the local LGA). This proximity is an important advantage in comparison to other development actors. In

order to ensure this proximity, the organizational set-up of the program differs from country to country. In general, proximity is assured through: availability of local teams (see above: human resources), presence of the staff from The Hague through regular field visits, intensive exchange by skype and email, investing in developing contacts with other stakeholders, setting up an advisory committee, setting up an additional field office close to the communities (BU), working closely with the LGA (even within LGA, for e.g. in BU), working with focal points on the community level (MA, UG, RW, PT, SL). The leverage and the role that the advisory committee can play with regards to conflict-sensitivity is dependent upon the specific country context. In Uganda, for example, central government administrations hint the advisory committee on upcoming re-centralization policy and therefore provide concrete new opportunities for lobby and advocacy. An opposite example is RW where the role of the advisory committee is mainly to ensure that IDEAL remains aligned with national level policies and priorities.

‒ **Flexible implementation**: in general, the IDEAL program offers substantial flexibility to adapt budget, activities and interventions when the context demands so. Examples are the re-focus on 'soft' human security issues and the shift of target group in the Burundian case (no longer targeting the Comité Mixte de Sécurité) or putting on hold activities because of the security situation in one of the counties in South-Sudan. This flexibility is definitely an advantage and allows to grasp opportunities or to address difficulties. A particular instrument that allows to work in a more flexible way is the use of micro-grants: in several countries (MA, SS, UG) LGs are invited to submit a project for which a small additional grant is provided. This can help to put into practice the skills, capacities and instruments/tools that have been provided through the IDEAL program. It enables IDEAL to satisfy certain context-specific (per LG) and sometimes ad hoc needs of local governments. This approach hints towards a problem-driven iterative action (PDIA) approach, which aligns well with working in fragile contexts, but is not yet fully applied.

75 **Political sensitivity as good practice.** The evaluators found several examples of political sensitivity. As such, the IDEAL program succeeds to minimize the potential negative effects of political risks on the execution of the program (depending upon the specific context). The following examples can be identified: adaptation of program focus (e.g. working on 'soft' human security issues in BU), being cautious with political connections (LGA board) to avoid negative publicity (SL), working on neutrality of local partner/LGA (BU), clan sensitivity (SL), investing in relation-building between local stakeholders (SL, BU, PT), closely monitoring alignment with government policies (RW), strengthening conflict-management skills (MA, SS), developing good working relationships with EKN (all), planning for additional contextual analsis (CSO study Burundi). The evaluators find that in case of high political tensions, the IDEAL team develops more intensive consultation with other stakeholders This is in particular witnessed in Burundi and in Rwanda where relations with other development players are strengthened through regular meetings and exchange of information. This can ensure that IDEAL does not become enclosed in the 'government bubble' (which is a clear risk for PT).

76 A point of attention is related do the principle of 'doing no harm'. There is an increased risk of doing harm when intervening in FCAS. In relation to the IDEAL program these risks are mainly

related to elite capture (and corruption) and exaberating conflict, social exclusion, marginalisation or societal tensions. The program does address this through a diversity of approaches, such as guidelines for composition of committees (most of the countries), manuals (LED manuals and pro poor urban planning manual), trainings on inclusive governance, involving CSO in trainings (RW, MA), broad sensitisation with radio campaign (RW). However, these measures do not de facto guarantee actual inclusivity of marginalised groups, and the risk of elite capture remains quite strong especially when working through (new) 'structures'. Although IDEAL pays attention to increasing inclusiveness, the evaluators have not seen examples of pro-active targeted approaches by LGs to identify specific marginalised groups as they tend to work with the known representatives of the various sectors in society: this risks to exclude specific groups. Already the midterm measurement confirms this risks for IDPs in Somaliland and South Sudan. Both the IDEAL team for Somaliland and the executive director of the LGA, confirm that pro-active identification of marginalised groups by the municipality (as civil society in itself is not automatically inclusive) is essential. According to the LGA, district local government can play a role in recognising the existence of specific marginalised groups (such as minority clans, IDP) by including them in the mechanisms of consultation. The respondent from EKN (based in Nairobi) confirms this and highlights that this is of utter importance to the Embassy: the fact that local government (to start with mayors) recognises that the government is there to serve the people and therefore needs to listen to the different groups is very important. It is government that can ensure that all groups are listened to. In the context of Somaliland this would require that district local authorities add an innovation in decision making and are able to find a working combination with existing mechanisms related to clan structures and the neighbourhood committees (Gudiyada xaafadaha). This exercise is difficult but key to realise outcome 2.

77 The evaluators acknowledge that not only the IDEAL program is struggling with this issue (also confirmed by members of the advisory board) and that pro-active targeting specific groups might be very risky yet needs to be considered deliberately (and argued when not applied)[13]. Although the IDEAL teams are conscious about this, the evaluators miss an in-depth discussion about this: the question is to what extent this risk of doing harm should be accepted or worked on (for e.g. by collaborating with other development players that focus on strengthening civil society) or avoided (for e.g. through an exit-strategy).

78 Still related to the principle of 'doing no harm', the evaluators expected to find monitoring of (smaller) conflicts that arise during execution (see also the section about the assessment of the M&E system).

---

[13] The main overall idea is to go beyond the 'usual suspects' (what are called the 'gatekeepers' between external intervention and the population) and design activities and interventions that reach out to the entire population. More in particular this concerns the provision of public goods (e.g. a radio broadcast offering training available to all) instead of private goods (trainings for selected group of people offering the opportunity to access per diems). There should be a clear / visible peace dividend to all. https://biblio.ugent.be/publication/3118330 .

3 Integration of gender in design and execution

79 VNGI has made a clear choice to make IDEAL a gender sensitive program and is quite ambitious in this respect. This is also reflected by the IDEAL gender sensitivity guide (2017) which touches various aspects of gender in programming (identifying and formulating interventions, gender sensitive indicators and gender budgeting). At the design phase, IDEAL proposed to have specific attention for gender by adding a separate outcome (outcome 4) to the 3 other outcomes in the ToC. At the suggestion of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, this separate outcome was not maintained as the Ministry itself also choose to integrate gender in its programs for Security and Rule of Law. Gender was as such integrated in the overal ToC of the program, integration in the country programs was done in various ways.

80 The effort of VNGI should not be underestimated: gender discrimination has long been a minor priority in donor's peace-and-state-building interventions as it was usually not the cause of conflict between groups. This means that it remains difficult to ensure that stakeholders effectively own the idea that a gender lense can help to mitigate conflicts. A gender perspective is today considered as key to any interventions in fragile contexts, as it can contribute both to pursuing women's rights in their own and to achieving development, peace- and state-building goals (OECD, 2013).

3.1 INCORPORATION OF GENDER IN STRATEGIES

81 Gender is an important part of IDEAL. The gender perspective is used in IDEAL as part of the solution, more than directly addressing gender-based conflicts, which is a legitimate choice given the focus of the program on inclusive decision making. Nevertheless, in all countries (planned in PT for 2020) a gender analysis, although not always very detailed, was executed which also looked at gender-based conflict and particular issues related to discrimination of women.[14]

82 To ensure gender sensitivity the IDEAL strategies are the following: make gender explicit in the ToC and the indicators, allow for gender sensitive budgeting, ensure gender sensitive staff and, to a lesser extent identify women's organisations to work with.

83 **Gender in the ToC** - The overall ToC of the program specifies (as assumptions) key factors that will ensure output legitimacy, input legitimacy and the enabling environment related to gender. More in particular, IDEAL TOC states that success of the program will follow from the fact that services specifically address the needs of women, that women participate significantly at all the

---

[14] These studies highlighted in 5 countries (SL, UG, RW, MA, BU) the importance of land issue when it comes to gender and discrimination of women. This issue was not directly addressed by IDEAL also because it appeared to be too complex.

stages of the policy-making process and that LG or LGA institutional and policy dialogue activities promote women's participation and the tools to address their needs.

84   This attention for gender has been translated in various ways in the different country programs, divided over the three outcomes, outputs and indicators. Attention for gender is generally present in all the country specific ToCs and mainly under outcome 1 (except for RW) and outcome 2. It is not part of outcome 3 on enabling environment in PT, UG and SS mainly because work on gender was already done under LGCP (at the level of LGA strategies) and the program build further on that. The table below underlines general and broad attention for gender. Absence of reference to gender in particular ToC as showed in the table below are not persé problematic.

Reference to gender in the ToC of the country programs			
	outcome 1	outcome 2	outcome 3
PT	x	x	
SL	x	x	x
UG	x	x	
MA	x	x	x
RW		x	x
SS	x	x	
BU	X (through the indicators)	x	x

Table 6: integration of gender in the ToC

85   The indicators, identified at output level reveal that IDEAL has chosen to go beyond the counting of numbers, as is clear from the following table. This is commendable as only counting is not sufficient when promoting participation of women. All programs have done an effort to define other type of indicators, such as indicators that are related to awareness raising of LG staff and politicians, reflection on women's needs in LG plans and budgets. To a lesser extent, indicators in the three country programs are suggesting the organisation of activities that support women and empower them: in SL on political participation, in UG on territorial development and in MA on the (economic) strengthening of women's groups.

Gender indicators		
	Indicators on numbers (women's participation in new structures, more female staff, women in decision making roles)	Other type of indicators
PT	Increase of number of female technical staff and ensuring at least 5 women in decision making positions in the 5 LGs	- active promotion of women's access to the labor market has been promoted
SL	/	- awareness of gov staff and officials of relevance of paying attention to gender

		-	number of specific activities for women on political participation (empowerment)
		-	integration of gender component in LGA activities and strategic policies and documents and collaboration with women's organizations
UG	/	-	meeting government standards (equal opportunity commission)
		-	self-reported appreciation of gender sensitivity of services and awareness
		-	4 women organizations influence territorial development
MA	#women representatives in LGA governance bodies and at municipal level	-	Needs of women as user group clearly reflected in IWRM plans
		-	Support to 10 women-initiated activities
		-	Gender focus in strategic plan of LGA
RW	/	-	Gender budget statements in 3/7 districts
		-	Inclusion of women concerns in local decision making and policy development in 4/6 districts
SS	/	-	Understanding relevance of gender for service delivery amongst LG staff/politicians
BU	# repress. of women in committees for planning and their presences in meetings	-	Gender needs are reflected in community plans (PCDC)
		-	LGA: gender policy and women's needs reflected in docs.

Table 7: overview of gender indicators in the IDEAL program

86   At the request of the Ministry, IDEAL teams have started to keep track of participation in the activities that are organised, including participation of women. The evaluators received consolidated information from 2018 (see table further below). Together with the IDEAL team, the evaluators argue that these figures alone are not sufficient to appreciate the situation in each country: a higher score of womens' participation, for e.g. as in PT, is not always conclusive on the quality of participation or the evolution in attention for gender. However, tracking the presence of women in the activities can be part of the overall monitoring and support reflection over the years.

Women reached in activities (2018, IDEAL narrative report)	
PT	42,5%
SL	6%
UG	no consolidated figures
MA	39%
RW	29% (excluding the sensitization meetings with citizens)
SS	27,5%
BU	22%

Table 8: % of women reached in activities

87   In addition to the program specific indicators, IDEAL has integrated attention for different perception of men and women of the results of the program and an indication of (growing) attention for women's needs in LG programs in the indicators for outcome measurement. And the guidelines for data collection for outcome measurement specifies the importance of including equal numbers of men and women.

88   **Other strategies** – Besides ensuring attention for gender in the ToC and in the indicators, other strategies are related to gender sensitive budgeting, ensuring gender sensitive staff and, to a lesser extent, working with women's organisations. There is a small gender budget at overall program level and in each country program there is a separate budget for gender which forces the team to be more conscious about gender. The evaluators are not able to appreciate this strategy as they did not receive detailed overviews of budgets and expenditure.

89   To ensure gender sensitive staff the ToR for each staff member require specific attention to gender (more in particular in reporting), however it is clear that gender is for many of them an issue of numbers and an aftertought when designing interventions.

90   The collaboration with womens' organisations in the execution of the program is limited: collaboration with a womens' organisation can only be noticed in Somaliland (with NAGAAD), there is evidence of some exchange on tools and reports in Rwanda and in the Uganda program this strategy was mentioned (but not yet executed). The finding of a weaker strategy on collaboration connects to the findings already mentioned under the previous chapter in relation to the limited focus on the site of CSO/citizens/population.

3.2   GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN PROGRAM EXECUTION

91   In the analysis of the execution of the program, the evaluators found evidence of continuous efforts to maintain and ensure gender sensitivity and identified some challenges or points of attention. Continuous efforts concern a variety of measures, such as the following:

–   Having a dedicated gender sensitivity coordinator within the IDEAL team

–   Support to the IDEAL team members through trainings: a training in 2018 looked into the formulation of gender sensitive indicators, the September 2019 training of 3 days connected gender to conflict sensitivity and gender budgeting. This training (and further support) is needed as majority of the team members are not gender experts. It will help to further operationalize the gender sensitivity guide.

–   Reflection upon participation in workshops and trainings. Interviews with IDEAL staff members clarify the seriousness of identifying and mobilizing the right people (men and women) to promote the gender issue and to support female role models. This approach is clearly applied in PT and in SL with the efforts to sensitize LG (and LGA) to pay more attention to gender in recruitment procedures.

- Search for an entry point to address gender: more in particular in Mali, Rwanda and Uganda, gender is addressed in trainings and workshops related to the concept of inclusivity. This proved to be an effective entry point in these countries but also in other countries (for e.g. PT and SL). Together with ensuring training by a trainer who is a man and has African roots (such as in MA) or in collaboration with a national expert (such as in SL), this created greater opportunities for ensuring ownership over the training messages.

- Concern for moving beyond the counting of numbers and realizing more sustainable change: a clear example is the process that started with the design of the Transformative Agents of Change-program (TAC) as elaborated in Rwanda (see box 4). This program also introduces the concept of transformative learning, which generally sounds very promising as a strategy to support real change and a strategy than can be applied next to trainings and workshops. The importance for transformative learning is to be recognized without doubt as even in countries with clear policies and legal frameworks, the operationalization of gender equity remains difficult.

- Integration of attention to representation of women and attention for their needs in the grant manual for the micro-grant scheme (SS, UG, MA).

- strategies to support empowerment of women will soon be developed (in MA, SL and in UG).

92   Overall, the operationalisation of the ambitions on gender mainstreaming is at various stages looking a the country programs, with the weakest level obtained in the Palestinian Territories.[15] The evaluators identified three specific challenges:

Good practice: RFEL, the Local Elected Women's Network of ABELO (Burundi)

VNGI, being an important structural partner of the LGA ABELO, used the IDEAL program to support the creation of ABELO's Local Elected Women's Network. RFEL became operational in 2017 after a gender strategy was created and integrated in the general strategy of ABELO. Both ABELO and RFEL received training on gender-sensitivity and lobby strategies by the IDEAL program. RFEL has a gender strategy and action plans were drafted for 2018 and 2019. In 2019, for example, activities are planned with RFEL for the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence Campaign. The main purpose of IDEAL to support the creation and functioning of RFEL is to better assure that women needs are taken into account, both at the level of ABELO (in its service delivery, but also through its lobby and advocacy efforts) and the level of the communes and the development committees. For example, in May 2019 RFEL co-organized with ABELO (and with financial support by the IDEAL program) a two-day workshop to identify the barriers to more participation of women in local-decision making processes, and how to overcome these barriers.
http://www.abelo.bi/spip.php?article61

Box 4
RFEL, the Local Elected Women's Network of ABELO (Burundi)

---

[15] This is partly due to the fact that the Ramallah team did not hire the right expert on gender and found itself without an expert for several months. Additional efforts will be done in 2020.

− Investing in empowerment of women groups. It might be beyond the capacity of the IDEAL program to invest in this kind of strategies in general. What seems relevant is the issue of empowerment of women as officials or elected person which is key in the program of Somaliland. The experiences with the elected women's' network in Burundi might serve as inspiration.

− Monitoring of gender sensitive indicators. The evaluators find that some of the indicators (although commendable as they go beyond measuring numbers) are quite ambitious in terms of data collection. At this point it is not sufficiently clear how valid and trustworthy data will be collected. The challenges in monitoring touch upon a general point related to monitoring and evaluation that will be discusses more in depth in the next chapter.

Good practice: Setting up a Transformative Agents of Change program (TAC) in Rwanda and in Uganda.

In Rwanda, the TAC program or Transformative Agents of Change program on gender and inclusivity aims at supporting and coaching a well-chosen number of individual district professionals (both men and women) involved in service delivery. The TAC program was designed because the IDEAL team felt it was difficult to mainstream gender and that a more transformative approach needed to be developed; the team is aware that this will take more time but will at the same time be more effective. Even in the context of Rwanda where there are sufficient gender sensitive enablers, it proves hard for women to actually claim their rights and enjoy active and meaningful participation in governance processes. Women councilors face specific challenges compared to their male counterparts in LGs, such as heavy domestic workload and lack of support at household level, cultural perception non in favor of women leadership and lack of self-confidence. The underlying TAC framework (developed in 2018) was developed by an external consultant from the The Hague Academy for Local Governance and will soon be rolled out. The concept of transformative learning is relevant in supporting IDEAL to ensure that knowledge and awareness is effectively translated in a different way of doing things at the level of pilot LGs by understanding, challenging and transforming social norms and values going beyond symptoms of gender inequality and by focusing on (soft) capacity related challenges that impede meaningful participation of the population and women. The framework refers to the following challenges: 'lack of active listening skills, the lack of sufficient capacity/skills to mainstream inclusion-related crosscutting issues (for e.g. gender) into local plans, the fact that some local leaders might not know how to facilitate public meetings, get insights from the audiences and actively engage the citizens'. These are the things that the TAC would like to look at.

Box 5
Setting up a Transformative Agents of Change program (TAC) in Rwanda and in Uganda

− Ensuring a gender lens when developing topical issues. The evaluators found several examples that illustrate how difficult it is to keep a gender lens when developing activities and deliverables. Gender still is too often an 'afterthought'. Continuous training but also monitoring is needed to overcome this challenge and to avoid that gender remains an afterthought or

something that is added at the end of the design phase. Some examples are the following: (i) in Somaliland, so far the team members did not yet have an answer on how gender will be integrated in the current LED approaches (as a specific challenge/topic in local economic development), (ii) in Uganda, the situational and gender analysis does not clearly connect gender with the topics of IDEAL (such as TALD and PPP), (iii) in Rwanda: gender is not clearly addressed in the LGA guideline on how to engage with members in L&A.

4   Monitoring and evaluation of emerging changes

93   Measuring change in an effective way is necessary to sustain the claim for effectiveness of the program (and its contribution to change), it is essential to motivate and empower beneficiaries (through involvement in data collection, sense-making and downward accountability), it can play a key role as such in processes of transformative change through involving beneficiary LGs in an appropriate way, the choice of indicators and tools for data collection and analysis.

94   As such the M&E system can strengthen capacity at local level/pilot municipalities and LGAs to collect data that are relevant to them (relevant as in supporting them to execute their tasks and mandate). This requires that the aim, concepts and tools of an M&E system are understood and applied at the lowest level of data collection. If it works, the M&E system does not only capture change, but becomes part of the change.

95   This section looks into how the M&E system was build and to what extent emerging changes can already be noticed. Because of the level of execution of the IDEAL program, the consultants will mainly assess the output level and the extent to which it can be expected that this contributed to the outcomes.

96   It should be highlighted that changes at outcome level and even output level (as specified in the ToC) might take a much longer time to be realised than the life of the program, given the high ambitions on the one hand and the volatile context on the other hand. This might be the case even within the pilot LGs that have received more attention and support. Hence the importance of being able to monitor processes of change and intermediate changes.

4.1 DESIGN OF M&E SYSTEM

97 Various people within the IDEAL team at The Hague are dealing with monitoring and learning: 2 people are responsible for M&E and 3 others for ensuring learning, all supported by a M&E and Learning working group at corporate level.

98 An M&E system was developed for IDEAL with specific attention to outcome measuring (with the support of the KIT), an efficient upward reporting flow that takes into account local stakeholders' input (through the advisory committee) and potential risks (when sharing information), support to team members (with an M&E manual) and a lot of informal monitoring through regular bilateral exchange per country between The Hague and the teams on the ground.

99 The outcome measurement is an interesting exercise, in particular the fact that it includes a measurement of perception of changes (LG performance mainly) at the level of the population (next to objective indicators). The evaluators appreciate the effort done, especially for the midline to connect to the features of IDEAL in each country (which is important as country specific indicators at outcome level were not defined) and to collect stories which can have added value when combined with quantitative monitoring data.

100 The MTE reveals that the informal monitoring concerns regular monitoring of context (and risks) in each country, execution of the program and (to a lesser extent) ensuring the link of interventions with the expected outcomes. The informal monitoring is mainly done within the IDEAL country-team and is very much appreciated by the IDEAL team members. It is based on skype exchanges, e-mail exchanges and meetings during country visits. Monitoring is ensured within the country through meetings with the focal points (sometimes including the LGAs) and when planning for the next year. The evaluators assess the investment in this informal monitoring as very valuable.

101 The M&E manual was not really used by the IDEAL teams during management and execution of the program as they felt it was too theoretical and too little adapted to their specific country context.

102 The indicators at output level that are of specific interest to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are two process indicators: (i) No. of dialogue processes to strengthen the political/public debate and (ii) No. of people who participated in training activities for political participation (disaggregated for women and youth). IDEAL is able to provide data on these indicators.

103 The working sessions during the MTE inception phase with the IDEAL team already revealed that the practice of M&E is not yet consolidated and this was confirmed by the MTE. The main challenges concern the following:

− Providing relevant data for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: IDEAL teams have participants' lists per activity which are aggregated in the narrative reports by counting men, women and youth

(since 2018). These data are not clear on the type of people, their function/mandate and whether they are part of government structures, CSOs or other. This type of data is relevant as it can demonstrate who exactly is reached by the program and it can help to interpret information related to outputs and outcomes.

− It should be noted that the IDEAL team finds it challenging that result frameworks at the level of the Ministry and expectations for narrative reporting are not consistent and change over the years. This requires a lot of effort from the teams (high transaction costs) without clear benefits for reflection and learning.

− Ensuring some structured and systematic documentation of informal monitoring: most of the interesting information (read: information that tells something about what is actually going on) is shared in an informal way. However, this is valuable information for monitoring and learning which is now not collected in a systematic way. Hence, it is difficult to feed this relevant information into a more organized learning process at country and program level and to ensure reporting on emerging changes. The main explanation for this lies in the weaker development of M&E of change processes and changes leading to outcomes: indicators identified at the output level are not always the most relevant ones and do not provide a clear framework on what to monitor; this makes it difficult to structure information that is shared in a way that is useful for the teams and their reflection on next interventions.

Good practice: Monitoring Youth Trainers in Mali

In Mali the IDEAL program was confronted with a sometimes-weakly organized local population, and more in particular, a weakly organized youth. Therefore, it decided to also directly support youth with some trainings in order to strengthen their capacities to take up their role and place in inclusive participatory local decision-making. This included training on citizenship and inclusive governance (awareness of the use of existing accountability mechanisms, by law), thereby clarifying roles and responsibilities of stakeholders. In a second phase, through a ToT approach, these trained young individuals will assure that the acquired knowledge and skills will be passed on to the other members of their associations. Recently VNGI decided to invest in the employment of an additional RPO with the dedicated task to assure a close monitoring of this ToT approach, as it was felt that these youth trainers need a more hands-on support to execute their activities in their communes. This close follow-up was perceived as necessary to be able to monitor in a systematic way if and how the learned skills and practices were taken up.

Box 6
Monitoring Youth Trainers in Mali

− Monitoring of what is relevant: in general, the M&E system is weakly developed at output level. The pathways of change at output level and between output and outcome level are not sufficiently explicit about the necessary steps (intermediate changes) to reach outcomes and about the relation between the outcomes (see also the findings in the chapter on the design of the program and ToC in the above)). Therefore, there is a risk that relevant issues are not

monitored in a systematic way, for e.g. changes in soft competences at the level of officials and politicians, changes at the level of focal points at LG level (who 'carry' a lot of weight in the execution of the change processes), steps taken in lobby and advocacy, small conflicts that arise from execution and the way they are handled, …. A good practice of monitoring in a systematic way is provided by the case of Mali (see box 6). Consequently, reporting (by RPM in the output monitoring sheet and annual reporting) remains activity oriented or anecdotical and there is a gap between what is captured at output level and changes measured by the outcome measurement. Because of the weaker monitoring at execution and output level the M&E provides too little input for effective learning processes on how change (can) happen and on how, when and where IDEAL can best intervene with its support (to change). Stronger monitoring at this level will equip VNGI to better demonstrate added value of the program in the particular contexts of Fragile and Conflict Affected States (FCAS): when there are little concrete results to be shown related to pre-defined indicators, systematized information on how conflict sensitivity and inclusiveness is put into practice can underline the relevance of the program.

–   Systematic documentation at the level of the experimentation by LGs that were selected as pilots: monitoring at the level of these LGs is not sufficiently consolidated which impedes cross-case analysis, identification of lessons learned and opportunities for upscaling and dissemination. As the strategy of IDEAL is strongly based on the model of experimentation with a smaller number of municipalities, more systematic documentation and aggregation will support this model and provide relevant lessons for upscaling or duplication or deciding on what to do differently (in case the pilots only partially succeeded in being realized or reaching change). For e.g. in none of the countries it is clear how exactly lessons from pilots will be capitalized.

4.2   EVIDENCE OF EMERGING CHANGE

104   Typically for operating within FCAS, at least 4/7 country programs were confronted with delays in the start-up and readjustment of planning during later implementation stages (due to various reasons). In addition, progress in execution was slower than expected at the level of the pilot LGs (particularly in PT, MA and UG): it was necessary to invest in understanding the IDEAL concepts (or re-introducing them to other people that were new in the LG), LGs found it difficult to get actually started (after training and workshops) and structures/committees/forum needed to be either created either re-activated.

105   From what has been done so far (activities and interventions executed), the evaluators conclude that in fact all IDEAL country programs are in practice focusing on planning processes and inclusive and participatory planning, albeit in different sectors and with different entry points. Execution is not directly addressing the actual service delivery or the sources of conflict but is looking for an acceptable entry point that allows in an indirect way to work on issues leading to conflict. Choosing to work within the framework of government defined planning processes both has advantages and disadvantages. The advantage is that the program is aligned with what LGs

have to do and that there is an opportunity to revitalise planning processes that are often considered to be tick box exercises with limited space for public dialogue and debate. The disadvantage is that it might limit flexibility, especially when the government framework is construed as such to minimise open debate and to exclude more critical voices (for e.g. in RW and in BU).

106 In comparison to the other country programmes, the Uganda country program demonstrates greater flexibility in allowing the LGs to choose on which problems they wish to work based on their GCA, countries with small grant schemes also provide some flexibility (however within a specified topic). However, this does not necessarily means the LGs choose to work on the most critical issues coming out of this analysis. It appears also difficult for LGs to directly address conflicts or sources of conflicts, for e.g. in Uganda the analysis referred to a major conflict between central government and the kingdom in the municipality of Kasese (which resulted in a lot of killings). However, when asked to submit plans in order to receive a micro-grant, the LG of Kasese decided to work on tourism without any reference to the conflict. This was not approved by the IDEAL team after which Kasese started working on Own Source Revenue (OSR) with other municipalities.

107 Based on the analysis of the midline measurement reports and based on desk study and field missions, the evaluators conclude the following on emerging changes:

- awareness raising and understanding about IDEAL objectives and principles (including importance of having attention for gender) has been achieved amongst the people that were directly targeted by the program within the LGs and LGA (various examples in different countries).

- Respondents to the midline measurement (both population and respondents in FGD) recognise that LGs have clearer intentions to work on inclusive processes and are to some extent already doing efforts (which explains the fact that scores in most of the countries went up) (**outcome 2**).

- Change in practice and effect on the actual service delivery (**outcome 1**) is not yet that visible which is acceptable given the level of execution of the program.

- **Outcome 3**: overall and not surprisingly, next to changes in the effective service delivery, changes in the environment also appear more difficult to realise (with some progress reported by the midline measurement in MA, PT and RW). On the one hand, this might be related to the fact that respondents have become more critical because – due to IDEAL interventions – they have become more aware of what can/should be expected from government. On the other hand and as already stated under the appreciation of the design (EQ1), expectations specified at output level are too ambitious as they are not under the sphere of control of IDEAL. VNGI has some leverage because of being another type of development player (connected to LGs and LGAs) but the leverage in terms of financial means is limited and, in the end, this seems to be important for various stakeholders (program incentives do not weigh up against political and other considerations).

108   Taking a closer look at initiatives for lobby and advocacy by LGA (as mentioned under outcome 3 for majority of the programmes), it is clear that lobby efforts and results are moderate so far. It should be mentioned however that efforts are not always that visible as LGAs tend to use their position in technical working committees at central government level to make their points. Moreover, although VNGI is considered to be a 'peer', the LGAs are independent organisations: most of the expected changes are really not under the control of IDEAL and can only be influenced.

109   Nonetheless, a number of 'quick wins' have been realised at the level of the LGAs in various countries and should be underlined. Examples to illustrate are the following:

–   The LGA in Somaliland made the biggest leap of change, to be fair, also because the starting point of this LGA was very weak at the beginning of IDEAL. IDEAL has revitalized an organization that was almost non-existing/functional at the start. It still is fledgling (for e.g. relations of the secretariat with the board and positioning of the secretariat require some further clarification and support) but has made significant progress. For e.g. the internal working procedures have been formulated with the team, there is a revised constitution and a clear strategy, thus reflecting and supporting the principles of inclusiveness that IDEAL is propagating. Gender is explicitly integrated in the LGA strategy in different ways: as a value, as part of a vision on equity, as an objective and as focus of activities. The LGA executive director is not afraid of defending the importance of gender in dialogue with the members and the team members at the secretariat are acting as gender ambassadors.

–   Other changes within LGA that are important to mention are the drafts of lobby strategies, such as in Burundi (with specific attention to human security) and Rwanda (LGA guidelines on how to involve members in L&A and financial sustainability strategy) with more planned in the coming year. The consequent application of what is specified in the documents will be the next step, it is here that IDEAL can influence and support (more than control).

110   Examples of clear lobby results can be noted in Somaliland and in Uganda:

–   In Somaliland: the LGA is involved in several technical working groups at central government level. District local governments have been involved in a first success of lobby and advocacy when their LGA was involved in consultations on review of the LG law before it was voted in the Parliament. The LGA developed two policy briefs and used those to lobby, during the evaluation mission, respondents from districts confirmed that: 'we always used to be too late, but not this time'.

–   In Uganda: Operation Wealth Creation (OWC), which falls under the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) is an important initiative for LGs in relation to food security. OWC is a central government initiative which provides agricultural inputs to LGs; decision making and procurement of inputs is centralized. This was one of the lobby areas for the LGA ULGA, to have OWC decision making and procurement decentralized to LGs. ULGA and OWC signed an MoU to this effect in late 2018.

¹¹¹ What is contributing to execution and change? The evaluators were able to identify following factors in the countries visited (evidence is only weakly substantiated by data for the other countries because of lack of data at this level): availability of in-depth analysis on the level of the pilot communities (e.g. GCA studies in BU, MA, SS, UG), working with focal persons in the LGs (5/7 countries) and more in general, identifying and choosing the 'right' people for activities, learning together in an informal setting between RPM and focal points or between RPM and LGA, having previous experiences (for e.g. with LGCP which creates a certain level of understanding and trust), co-implementation and preparing for LGA staff to take over specific tasks (as was the case in SL), synergy with other programs (for e.g. EU programs ARD in PT and ASPIRE in SL), paying attention to the use of deliverables (for e.g. in Rwanda, see box 7) and last but not least, hands-on coaching and ToT.

¹¹² With the limited means available, staff on the ground does it utmost best to be with the LGs. On-the-job-coaching is mentioned in all the country programs as an important strategy to support changes in the LGs and in the LGAs. This approach is translated into an 'appui de proximité' and sometimes hands on support (not only exchange by skype or mail). Clear examples from the field missions are the following:

- In Somaliland, the IDEAL team is very close to the LGA and real hands-on and coaching support is provided on a daily basis. On the job coaching is related to the internal organization of ALGASL secretariat (ongoing): this concerns organizational capacity building of ALGASL by a VNGI expert on HR, management and functioning of team, leadership, and trainings/workshops and hands on support by the RPM and the IDEAL policy advisor.[16]

- In the Palestinian Territories, the IDEAL team tries to interact closely with the co-implementing partner, MDLF but with less success. A lot of coaching tasks that are supposed to be taken up by MDLF are in thus reality executed by the VNGI team, for e.g. assisting in the formulation of ToR for capacity building services at the level of the 5 selected municipalities: these ToR are mandatory to have access to the MDLF funds for capacity building.

¹¹³ The intensity of this type of support varies over the different countries as there are multiple obstacles: security challenges and logistics (SL, SS, PT), limited HR capacity on the ground (SL), difficulties in collaboration with the co-implementing partners that are not able to do their part (UG, PT, MA). To some extent ToT and strengthening of focal points can assist in overcoming obstacles and are designed as such. The evaluators underline the relevance of the

---

[16] The on-the-job coaching consists of training workshops on Project Cycle Management, Proposal/TOR writing, Budgeting, etc, accompanied with intensive hands on support in the preparation, execution and follow-up of activities, technical support in preparation of policy papers on various laws, developing forms/formats/reports/communication materials, facilitating the organizational development (inducing and ensuring imbedding in the organization of, e.g. annual planning cycle, weekly staff meetings, preparation agenda/minutes, weekly planner, job descriptions for all staff, delegations of duties and task, etc.), coaching of staff based on assigned tasks/assignments and needed support for developing individual capabilities(e.g. developing activities based on log frames/annual plans, report writing, presentation skills, facilitation skills, etc.), and further more intensive support in advising/guiding in the organizational change processes and processes on intervention level. The coaching process was based on two strands; (1) a strand related to Knowledge development, Training development tool and Organizational development tool (improving personal effectivity with the support of and international expert. (2) Personal Work plans that directly link the individual task/responsibility/action with the needed support, unfortunately this tool after induction was not used due to objections from ALGASL's Management, because this would lead to assigning responsibilities/tasks for longer periods/mandates, while preference was given to immediate delegation of tasks in accordance.

strategy to accompany LGs in particular but find that systematic documentation of the execution and contribution to change is not sufficiently ensured.

114 What are particular challenges? In the countries visited, the quality of the partnership with the co-implementor/LGA is key in supporting changes but this is not always easily established as already argued in the above, for e.g. in PT. Other challenges relate to changes in context (for e.g. less momentum in PT at government level for the anticipated changes, shrinking space for civil sowiety in BU), difficulty to deliver a short-term 'peace dividend' in terms of hard capacity (service delivery) that can demonstrate the relevance and added value of the program to the local population, the retention of staff in LGAs and LGs (clearly in SS, PT and SL, but also confirmed for the other coutries), the capacity to keep representatives of population in committees or forums really engaged and interested (PT and MA), the right methods and strategies to ensure quality of input by the population and dealing with their questions and critical input and finally, the challenge to manage relations and tensions between politicians and officials.

115 One of the factors hampering explicit lobby strategies and results are related to the context. For e.g. in Burundi, the political climate does not make it obvious to set up lobby and advocacy, and certainly not when it concerns more sensitive topics such as human security. The RPM confirmed that it is necessary to work cautiously.

Good practice: Paying attention to the quality of deliverables in Mali and Rwanda

Obviously, a lot of attention in the IDEAL program has gone to the development of products/deliverables. In all country programs due attention is given to the production of deliverables of good quality (manuals, strategic documents, guidelines, etc.). In the Rwanda country program, the evaluators find that the IDEAL team is very attentive to the process of developing these deliverables and to ensuring the use of these deliverables. Following measures should support the use of the manuals and subsequent changes: (i) attention for transformative learning by choosing people of integrity that can act as change agents, (ii) not accepting deliverables without a clear action plan on how to use them, (iii) having a test-phase for e.g. of the pro-poor planning manual (2019) with the involved LGs, (iv) co-creation of new deliverables for e.g. on urban-agrichain development: first have a needs assessment, working with district staff, developing a toolkit only afterwards. The country program in MA is also organizing a test-phase of public finance and local tax collection manual in Méguétan which is a good practice to ensure relevance, ownership and effectiveness of deliverables.

Box 7
Paying attention to the quality of deliverables in Mali and Rwanda

5   Ownership and strategies for ensuring sustainability

Each country program has defined strategies or measures for ensuring sustainability. In addition to what was said under the previous chapter about results that might need a longer time to be realised, it should be noted that in various countries important activities still need to start or have only just started. Developing ownership needs more time and probably continuous support given the high turn-over of staff in LGs and in LGAs in various countries (and more in particular at this time in SL, PT, SS).

5.1   OWNERSHIP

116   According to the IDEAL reports and the information from field missions, it needed some time to get the main stakeholders on board of IDEAL and its values and principles of inclusivity and gender (majority of countries). It is difficult to assess current ownership based on the data provided in documents/monitoring. What can be said on the basis of field missions and interviews is that some level of ownership has been realised at the level of people being closely and directly involved, more in particular focal points and stakeholders in LGs and at the level of LGAs. This finding is supported by some anecdotical evidence as mentioned in the IDEAL narrative reports (more in particular for BU and UG). In Mali political ownership at the level of 1 LG (Méguétan) was clearly demonstrated during the field mission. In Somaliland, the evaluator could witness the staff from the LGA acting 'ambassadors' of IDEAL objectives. In the Palestinian Territories, the focal points for LED proved to be very committed and engaged in realising the institutionalisation of the LED policies. In Palestinian territories, the evaluators find that the ownership of the co-implementor (government agency) over the IDEAL specific objectives is much weaker than compared to the other national implementors.

117   Several practices in the execution of IDEAL were found to support the development of ownership:

–   It was a good choice of the IDEAL team to contextualize and localize the external expertise that was brought in, for e.g. by hiring national consultants (often in team with international experts during their missions) and through co-implementation of activities with LGAs (such as in SL, BU and RW).

–   Attention for transformative learning seems very promising (RW and UG) with regards to boosting ownership of the IDEAL objectives related to gender but execution and results need to be awaited.

- The practice of working with grants (more in particular in UG, MA, SS, and PT by supporting access to TA procured through MDLF) can contribute to ownership as LGs are stimulated to define their own change process/project, plan it en monitor it.

5.2   STRATEGIES TO ENSURE SUSTAINABILITY

118   A variety of strategies/measures was indicated in each of the country programs' inception reports. Two types of strategies for sustainability can be distinguished: (i) ensuring sustainability of results within the pilot LGs and (ii) ensuring duplication or upscaling.

119   The evaluators noticed following strategies for ensuring sustainability of results within the pilot LGs:

- Working on institutionalization of (new) structures (strongest in PT with the institutionalization of LED);

- Paying attention to resource mobilization by the LGs (including improving access to financial means). This is the case in 5/7 programs (PT, UG, MA, SS, BU);

- Targeting both officials (that coordinate and execute) and politicians (that take decisions): this is common practice in the VNGI programs and is adopted in all the country programs. The practice is weakly documented though and cannot be strongly substantiated because of the lack of relevant data (data are available for each activity but are not aggregated).

- Alignment with the existing institutional framework, being developed the strongest in Rwanda and Burundi, and the weakest in South Sudan (because there is not much yet to align with). Alignment is a principle adhered to by VNGI but the extent to which it is developed is largely determined by the strength of the government policies and structures. In Mali, for example, alignment with the local institutional framework proved difficult because of the inactivity and weakness of the most important local stakeholders, i.e. the CLE (Comité Local d'Eau). In addition, here is also a challenge: although alignment ensures relevance of the intervention for the LGs involved in IDEAL, it might limit the opportunity for both IDEAL (and the LGs) to explore the role of LGs role as development actors and to stimulate LGs to start using their discretionary space to take initiatives that are relevant to their population and their specific context. This might be a risk in Burundi and in Rwanda. In the Palestinian Territories, the choice for alignment was relevant but at the same time is currently limiting the influence and space of IDEAL (because of weaker capacity of the co-implementor, MDLF to really include specific attention for gender and inclusivity in the policies and manual for LED).

120   The strategies to ensure duplication and/or upscaling are the following:

– Strengthening the capacity of the LGAs to ensure they are able to use the experience and evidence of the pilot LGs to train/support other members and to develop Lobby and Advocacy towards central government level. This strategy is most clearly pursued in Somaliland, Burundi and in Rwanda. For e.g. in Burundi non-pilot communes in the province are systematically integrated in program activities by ABELO (this is also the case in SL, UG, PT). Not in all countries working through LGA immediately pays of as working with LGA encounters specific challenges such as: tensions/imbalance between political side (board) and technical side (secretariat), or the lack of distinction between the two as was noticed in 4/7 country programs (RW, SL, PT, MA). In the Palestinian Territories, Mali, and in Uganda, the LGAs are less engaged in the program and their input as allies or partners for realizing the IDEAL objectives remains below expectation.

– IDEAL staff taking part in forums at central government level to contribute with their insights and practice and to put issues on the agenda, which is a strategy developed (in SL, PT, RW, BU).

– Ensuring deliverables that can be used by other LGs or (government, development) programs, such as manuals for LED (PT, UG, SL), toolkits for pro poor urban planning, policy dialogue guide for civil society (SS), a gender Transformative Agents of Change program.

– To a far lesser extent and with weaker results (see also in the above): establishing collaboration with other development players that can integrate specific approaches or interventions in their programs, for e.g. in Mali (where training for community stakeholders will be integrated in programs of the NGO Join for Water and in Uganda where there is an initiative to develop the use of scorecards in LGs with ACODE (Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment). A Collaboration with CARE in Rwanda seems to be planned for under the strategic partnerships financed by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

[121] The evaluators would like to highlight two risks for sustainability. The first one is related to the finding under the analysis of the ToC that IDEAL did not develop a specific pathway of change or strategy for working on the capacity of the population. What is not taken into account in an explicit way is the risk of weaker claiming capacity at the level of CSO/population for the sustainability of results achieved at the level of LGs. Without this capacity, there is little push for LGs to ensure inclusivity and transparency beyond what is arranged in all the countries by central government mechanisms for planning, but what often appears to be a tick box exercise and does not always offer space for the desired debate with the population. Clearly, the program of IDEAL has little influence over this risk; cooperation with other organisations who target CSOs/population directly is yet to be strengthened to mitigate this risk.

[122] The second risk lies in the choices for collaboration (or not) with existing structures: in some cases there seem to be good reasons for bypassing or paying less attention to existing structures (after an analysis of risks, such as in BU); in other cases however, such as in Mali and in South Sudan, arguments to invest less or not in capacity building of the LGA (SS) or the existing water structures (MA) is not well argued.

6   Conclusions and recommendations

123   The recommendations are related to design and relevance, conflict sensitive execution and management of the program, effectiveness and sustainability (as requested in the ToR for this assignment). As this is a mid-term evaluation, the evaluators preferred to formulate recommendations that are useful within the given timeframe of program execution. Most of the recommendations have already been discussed at the IDEAL RPM workshop and have been accepted and supported by the team members.

124   **Design and relevance**

125   The evaluators find that the interventions of IDEAL in the various countries are based on 'good enough' analysis that takes into account power relations, sources of conflict and gender. The IDEAL teams ensure constant update on changes in context through additional studies and through their embeddedness in the country (through their connection with the LGA and the relations with relevant stakeholders in the IDEAL advisory committees). The overall ToC is based on a comprehensive and elaborated understanding of the social contract concept and on relevant literature. The country ToCs are aligned with the overall program ToC and are coherent with the country specific analysis executed during the inception phase.

126   The evaluators identified three points for improvement: (i) the current ToCs are too abstract and are not sufficiently reflecting complexity of change processes in the specific country context. The evaluators find that both a more detailed country-specific ToC and a more dynamic use (revisiting and readjusting) of the ToCs will provide more relevant focus and orientation to the teams in terms of designing specific interventions and monitoring relevant indicators. (ii) The ToCs are not sufficiently clear on the niche and added value of IDEAL/VNGI (in working with LGs and LGAs) and on the limitations with regards to direct support to the capacity of CSOs/citizens/population to be actively and meaningfully engaged in local governance processes. The specific added value of the IDEAL program lies in the particular mandate and expertise of VNGI working with LGAs and with local governments as technical structures and political/development actors at the same time. Other development players appreciate the capacity of VNGI/IDEAL to support processes at LG level, to manage tensions between technical staff and politicians, to deal with political implications of what are seemingly 'easy' technical issues. However, the IDEAL program does not always succeed in an optimal exploitation, valorisation and visibility of this comparative advantage vis-à-vis other development actors. (iii) Not having explicit assumptions about why the team thinks that change will happen impedes a valorization of what is happening (for e.g. efforts to support LGs to have access to finances resources) and to measure how and to what extent it is contributing.

127 VNGI paid a lot of attention to involving LGs, LGAs and other stakeholders from government in the design of the program, which supports the relevance of the interventions and allows for diversified approaches. Overall, the selection of policy areas and intervention regions and selected LGs is coherent with the contextual analysis and the suggested entry points of the baseline measurement that was executed during the inception phase. In some countries, other choices could have been made but in these case additional and legitimate considerations have played a role, such as having built relations of trust through the previous LGCP program and opportunities provided by other programs. The relevance of intervention types (mainly capacity building through workshops, trainings and on the job coaching) was not contested by the stakeholders in the interviews during field missions. Activities were systematically based on needs assessment to assure relevance for the specific target groups and participants.

128 Aware of its comparative advantage (and its limitations with regards to the financial means), VNGI/IDEAL is making considerable efforts to look for collaboration, synergy and complementarity with other development players. This was done in various ways: (i) during the inception phase a lot of effort was put into aligning the IDEAL program with existing programs of other players; (ii) The use of the advisory committee has been an explicit strategy to involve the main stakeholders in a more structural way, while also assuring that the IDEAL program remains relevant in the context; (iii) local teams have invested a lot in participating in relevant fora and are networking with the relevant stakeholders.

129 Thanks to these efforts, IDEAL/VNGI did manage to develop strategic partnerships with other development players in some countries (such as in MA, UG, SL and with plans for the future in RW) albeit less than might be expected given the efforts. An important explanatory factor lies in the architecture of development aid.

130 **Recommendation 1 - Conduct a midterm review of the country ToCs with the IDEAL teams and co-implementing organisation.** The midterm evaluation and measurement offer an opportunity to review the pathways of change that have been defined at the beginning of the program. On the basis of two years of execution the country teams should be able to produce a more detailed picture of the desired pathways of change. This should help them to identify some 'grey zones' where steps in the change process are not clear or should be supported by more explicit assumptions about how the team thinks that change will happen.

131 When reviewing the country ToCs the evaluation advises to take the following aspects into account:

– **Sphere of control and influence**: make a clearer distinction between what the IDEAL program can actually control and therefore can be held accountable for, and what is only in its sphere of influence. This could lead to the observation that some of the expected outputs and outcomes in the current ToC are far too ambitious to be realized or influenced by the IDEAL program.

– **Interaction between pathways (and the outcomes as envisaged by the overall program ToC)**: make more explicit the relationships between the three outcomes, how they interact,

how they can be mutually reinforcing (or not) in the particular context. It is possible that some pathways receive more weight than others.

- **Assumptions**: formulate explicit assumptions that explain why the IDEAL team thinks change will happen as predicted in the pathways of change.

- **Clarify to what extent IDEAL can strengthen capacity of CSOs/citizens/population**: working on both LGs and CSO capacity is easier said than done and will require means (both in terms of finances and expertise). The current ToC raises too much expectations on what the program can do. Although the citizen/population perspective needs to be maintained in a program aiming at strengthening social accountability and a stronger social contract, the extent to which IDEAL works on this 'other' side of the equation is necessarily limited and probably different from country to country. During the RPM workshop in September 2019, all IDEAL team members started to reflect upon how IDEAL could and should interact with CSOs and the population. The evaluation advises the IDEAL teams to take sufficient time to do this exercise before deciding to have more CSO studies such as the one in Burundi. Looking into how IDEAL could work together with other development players with expertise on working with CSO is already one track to investigate.

132   After reviewing, it is recommended that all IDEAL teams continue to use the ToC in a dynamic way, meaning that the ToC would be used at least every six months to support critical reflection within the team on the execution of IDEAL. Following questions need to be addressed: is our understanding of change still the same, is it supported by what we can observe in the field, are there opportunities we left unexplored, …? A ToC should not be envisaged as a static picture and the weight given to certain pathways can change over time (but not persé as it will depend on the context). This approach calls for a monitoring approach that is less based on indicators and is more looking at progress markers, observation, frequent analysis (based on outcome mapping approaches),

133   **Recommendation 2 (but directly connected to recommendation 1) – Better define the niche of IDEAL/VNGI**, ensure robust monitoring of the contribution to change and communicate better about the niche and its added value. In most of the countries (if not all), IDEAL is the only program that is well equipped to address typical capacity challenges of LGs and this should appear clearer from the ToC and the execution of the program. To ensure that this added value is sufficiently clear, it requires appropriate identification of indicators and monitoring (see also recommendations 9 and 11). Better communicating about this added value and being able to demonstrate through monitoring the added value is considered to be key in developing strategic partnering with other development players.

134   **Conflict sensitive execution**

135   The IDEAL program makes great efforts to adapt to the fragile contexts in which it works, and thus displays a conflict-sensitive approach in practice. Due to their proximity to the field and their embeddedness (because of their partnerships with the LGAs) the local teams are capable of 'reading' the political situation. Another important aspect is IDEAL's choice to work in insecure

places such as Somaliland and South-Sudan: also here IDEAL is making the necessary investments to adapt its operational way of working. The evaluators acknowledge the efforts to ensure conflict-sensitive programming and execution in various ways, such as: (i) paying attention to professional and appropriate security management (SS, SL and MA), (ii) ensuring that teams are strong enough and combine various competences, experience and thematic knowledge. The evaluators found several examples of political sensitivity in the functioning of the IDEAL teams. As such, the IDEAL program succeeds to minimize the potential negative effects of political risks on the execution of the program (depending upon the specific context). (iii) providing IDEAL staff with instruments, tools, manuals and training. (iv) ensuring proximity of the IDEAL teams to the local stakeholders (in particular the pilot LGs and the local LGA). (v) Last but not least, the IDEAL program offers substantial flexibility to adapt budget, activities and interventions when the context demands so. This flexibility is definitely an advantage and allows to grasp opportunities or to address difficulties. A particular instrument that allows to work in a more flexible way is the use of micro-grants.

136 The evaluators identified following points for improvement: (i) ensuring that tools are used by the team. Various tools are available, but are not used in a systematic way by staff to guide intervention design and execution. The tools are well designed and look attractive but seem to be less practical when applying them. (ii) Although there is flexibility, the execution of the program still is based on classic project execution, even at the level of the micro-grants. Working in the context of FCAS however might need even more flexibility to allow problem driven working. (iii) An important point of attention is related do to the principle of 'doing no harm' and paying more deliberate attention to the risk of elite capture and the monitoring of (smaller) conflicts that arise during execution. Certainly in FCAS external interventions can unintentionally reinforce root causes of conflict such as elite capture, social exclusion, marginalisation, corruption, and so on. A more systematic approach to monitor and evaluate these aspects is important. A conflict-sensitivity guide is available and is a good starting point for such an exercise. Furthermore, VNGI already organised a workshop on conflict-sensitivity in September 2019.

137 **Recommendation 3 – Elaborate a more systematic conflict-sensitive programming, with a specific focus on Doing No Harm.** This approach should pay more attention to monitoring conflicts, and elite capture, and potential unintended negative effects of the program more in general. To further strengthen the capacity of IDEAL, the following steps could be taken into account:

–   Extend the Gender and Conflict Assessments (GCAs) to all countries and review yearly. This is an important step because good contextual knowledge of the potential for conflict is a first and crucial step. Currently GCA studies have already been conducted in 4 countries (MA, BU, SS, UG) and they have provided detailed information about the situation in the particular communities.

–   Integrate a Do No Harm assessment in the GCA that specifically focuses on the potential risk of doing harm.

– Elaborate a Do No Harm plan per country that explains how teams act to prevent negative impact or will respond when negative impact is observed (e.g. exit strategy).

138 **Recommendation 4 – Experiment with PDIA**. The IDEAL program is strongly oriented towards long-term structural and systemic change. This is a crucial added value, certainly in contexts where many other development actors intervene with short-term (humanitarian) programs. However, working in FCAS also demands so-called peace dividends, not least because local authorities are in urgent need to 'prove and recover their legitimacy towards the local population. Therefore, it is important to initiate long-term change through a rapid cycle of short-term quick win projects that are problem-driven. The PDIA approach is helpful in doing so and aligns well with the IDEAL program objectives on inclusive participation. PDIA is about achieving this inclusive participation in practice. This is not an easy recommendation given the current way of operating of IDEAL with one main partner (LGA/implementing partner/LG), whereas PDIA requires much more management of multi-stakeholder involvement and finding effective solutions to particular problems.

139 **Recommendation 5 – Create more space for 'messy' tools to support implementation and learning towards really effective manuals**. The evaluators would urge IDEAL management to identify and valorise how the IDEAL country teams are working and to learn from this, rather than to (always) answer a need with a good quality document written by an external consultant. The answer is not always in fancy tools but in providing necessary support to try out things, to learn from that and to use this to come up with tools (validated by practice) at the end of the program. The evaluators understand that IDEAL is already trying to stimulate the teams to share their own tools. The evaluators would support this initiative and recommend that efforts are done to come up with more robust manuals and guides by the end of the program, based on expericence with what is working and what not.

140 **Recommendation 6 - Strengthen the donor-VNGI dialogue**. The evaluators invite both MFA and VNGI to have a dialogue on what it means to work in FCAS and what it requires both from implementors and from their donors (in terms of space given and accepting that planned results are not easy to realise). The evaluator acknowledges and supports the initiatives of EKN Nairobi to look into the challenges for donors and implementors and to consider more space for experimentation. This process of dialogue might require an overall thematic evaluation (across various programs and funding lines) to learn from experiences of different programs (as they all seem to struggle with similar issues and evaluators do not always have clear answers and recommendations). The evaluators refer to a paragraph in their inception report where they quote Kleinfeld: '*The author points at the need for analysis of underlying rules of politics and space for change (including analysis of how divergent opinions are punished), flexible planning and budgets (and approaches such as scenario planning, PDIA), space for experiments that are safe to fail (try an intervention, assess and decide whether to continue), investment in building solutions/proposals in order to be ready when there are windows of opportunities (even without a guarantee that they will be used in the course of the program), to use the approach of working with a TOC to test assumptions and not to define a static results framework, to pay attention in monitoring to some key, generic changes (emergence of coalitions, changes in relations,*

development of elite influencers/leaders) and the functioning of feedback mechanisms for complaints from citizens/population, …'[17]

[141] **Gender mainstreaming**

[142] Attention for gender is generally present in the ToC and the different country programs. The gender perspective in IDEAL is used as part of the solution, more than directly addressing gender-based conflicts, which is a legitimate choice given the focus of the program on inclusive decision making. How to address gender appears clearly from the gender sensitivity guide. In the analysis of the execution of the program, the evaluators found evidence of continuous efforts to maintain and ensure gender sensitivity and identified some challenges or points of attention. The concern for moving beyond the counting of numbers and realizing more sustainable change becomes most clear in the process that started with the design of the Transformative Agents of Change-program (TAC) as elaborated in Rwanda.

[143] Overall, the operationalisation of the ambitions on gender mainstreaming is at various stages looking a the country programs, with the weakest level obtained in the Palestinian Territories. The evaluators identified three specific challenges:

− Investing in empowerment of women groups. It might be beyond the capacity of the IDEAL program to invest in this kind of strategies in general. What seems relevant is the issue of empowerment of women as officials or elected person which is key in the program of Somaliland. The experiences with the elected women's' network in Burundi might serve as inspiration.

− Monitoring of gender sensitive indicators. The evaluators find that some of the indicators (although commendable as they go beyond measuring numbers) are quite ambitious in terms of data collection. At this point it is not sufficiently clear how valid and trustworthy data will be collected.

− Ensuring a gender lens when developing topical issues. The evaluators found several examples that illustrate how difficult it is to keep a gender lens when developing activities and deliverables. Gender still is too often an 'afterthought' when designing interventions.

[144] **Recommendation 7** - **Strengthen the IDEAL way of working**: the evaluators recommend to apply the existing gender mainstreaming guide, more in particular for programming and designing interventions. The guide contains a clear overview of steps and questions to answer. It is useful when designing topical interventions such as LED, PPP, TALD, lobby and advocacy to ensure always having a gender lens when defining the issue and the solution (as this is a point of attention). The IDEAL team conducted an additional training (with attention for scenario planning and is planning to interview members of team to understand how they implement (gender and conflict sensitivity analysis) and what difficulties they encounter. The evaluators suggest that the

---

[17] ACE Europe (2019) MTE IDEAL program, Inception report, page 9.

gender guide is used to structure these interviews. It is recommended that members of the team (The Hague and in the field) identify particular and concrete issues that are difficult for them and develop a personal learning path to address these (modelled along the TAC framework developed for the country program in Rwanda as to experience themselves what transformative learning could mean). Such a learning path should identify a number of activities. A variety is possible: short training, readings, taking part in meetings with women, … The results of the learning path should be part of the performance interview/dialogue with team members (as being accountable highly contributes to efforts for change and change attitude and behaviour). Specific attention should ensure that gender receives particular attention in the conflict sensitive approaches.

145 **Recommendation 8 - Further develop interventions with high potential**: The evaluators support the approach of 'Transformative Agents of Change' and would recommend the IDEAL team to see what elements could be useful in other countries. One of the key questions in the gender guide that needs to be at the start is the following one: '*Which of our own views on the relationship between the sexes have their origins in our own background*?' The evaluators recommend to review the activities related to women empowerment in order to manage expectations. If empowerment remains on the agenda, the evaluators suggest that the focus is much more on women aspiring or executing LA functions (both elected and nominated).

146 **Measuring of change and emerging changes**

147 An M&E system was developed for IDEAL with specific attention to outcome measuring (with the support of the KIT) and an efficient upward reporting flow that takes into account local stakeholders' input (through the advisory committee) and potential risks (in sharing information). Outside of the system is a lot of informal exchange of information within the country teams and between the teams and relevant stakeholders, which is valuable and relevant.

148 The evaluation revealed that the practice of M&E is not yet consolidated. In particular the weaker development of the system at output level (as identified in the ToC) is a point of attention; since this is the level where the analysis of contribution to change should start, the level that can help to interpret the results of midline measurement and the level that should feed information into a learning oriented M&E. The evaluator thus finds that the current M&E system mainly serves upward accountability and is less usefull for the teams on the ground. Following challenges are important: focus on what is is relevant to be monitored, how to agree with the Ministry on the most appropriate reporting format, how to document well the experiences and the process at the level of the pilot municipalities.

149 To appreciate emerging changes, delays and slow start up in several countries needs to be taken into account. The evaluation clarifies that, although working in various domains, all IDEAL programmes are in practice focusing on planning processes with the advantage of being aligned with government frameworks. This provides an opportunity to revitalise existing planning mechanisms. On the other hand, there is a risk, particularly in countries such as Rwanda and Burundi that existing mechanisms limit the objective of having inclusive debate and dialogue that includes marginalised groups and more critical voices. Together with the midline reports, the

evaluators conclude that current outputs and results/outcomes can lead to the realisation of the three envisaged outcomes. Various IDEAL strategies support change; the 'on the job coaching' approach is highlighted by the evaluators as particularly interesting. Expected changes under outcome 3 depend a lot on the capacity of the LGA and their investment in the development and execution of lobby strategies. Although VNGI is considered to be a 'peer', the LGAs are independent and some changes identified at the output level in the TOC are really not under the control of IDEAL and can only be influenced. Nonetheless, a number of 'quick wins' have already been realised in the capacity of LGAs for lobby and some clear lobby results can be noted in Somaliland and in Uganda. Most challenging in realising results (besides the context) is the staff retention at the level of co-implementing partners and pilot LGs.

150 The recommendations are closely connected to the recommendations in the above (under design and ToC) and should contribute to monitoring what is relevant.

151 **Recommendation 9** – **Improve documentation of informal monitoring**: the evaluators recommend to review the format of the monthly RPM format. The format should require the RPM to (i) share observations of changes at the level of the main stakeholders at municipal level (focal points to start with). This is connected to the review of the ToC and the identification of intermediate changes, observations should not necessarily be related to predicted or expected changes and their indicators. (ii) To document issues related to conflict that are related to the execution of the IDEAL program, what was done to solve them and with what results. Especially in volatile context, it is important to monitor small changes/emerging dynamics and resolution of conflicts as the chances of realising predicted changes might be limited.

152 **Recommendation 10** - **Continue to apply the on-the-job-coaching or support by proximity**: pilot municipalities are understood as laboratories where experimentation and learning can take place in order to feed lobby and advocacy and to duplicate/replicate good practices (for e.g. in government programs). This supposes sufficient support on the ground for execution and learning. Working through focal points at municipal level is a good idea (and might be considered for all the countries), but is not sufficient to ensure systematic analysis and processing of experiences with view to replication and lobby. In some cases the local implementor could do part of the job, but human resources are limited at this level. The evaluators suggest that the IDEAL team analyses what support by proximity is needed: how often should somebody pass by in the municipality, to do what with whom, who should pass by, how much time does it take, what does this mean for time management, …? Only after this analysis, it can be decided if work packages should be rearranged and/or if additional staff should be hired or if the LGA should be supported to hire more staff and build their capacity. The answer can be different from one country to the other.

153 **Recommendation 11** - **Connected to the above and to recommendations 1 and 2 on the review of the ToC and the niche of IDEAL, strengthen appropriateness of monitoring**. The evaluators recommend that the (change) process at the level of focal points (to start with in the countries where they are UG, RW, PT, MA) receives more attention in the overall M&E system (clarify what is expected of them as drivers of a change process, and support them in executing) and more attention is paid to changes in soft competences of politicians and officials that are

required to interact in a different way with the population. More in particular this is about the following issues: how to relate to citizens and how to deal with criticism, what posture to adopt, how to effectively invite for input, how to process input, how to translate this into planning, how to manage official-politicians interaction, how to go back to population and closing the feedback loop, … These issues should be part of on-the-job-coaching and effects related to changes in soft competencies should be monitored more closely. Specific attention should go to the installation and functioning of grievance mechanisms (formal or during interaction with the population.

154 **Ownership and sustainability**

155 Ownership has been realised at the level of people being closely and directly involved, more in particular focal points and stakeholders in LGs and at the level of LGAs. Evidence is however anecdotical. Several practices in the execution of IDEAL were found to support the development of ownership: (i) contextualisation and localizing of expertise, (ii) co-implementation of activities with LGAs (such as in SL, BU and RW), (iii) the practice of working with grants (more in particular in UG, MA, SS, and PT by supporting access to technical assistance and capacity building procured through MDLF) where LGs are stimulated to define their own change process/project, plan it en monitor it. The attention for transformative learning seems very promising (RW and UG) with regards to boosting ownership of the IDEAL objectives related to gender but execution and results need to be awaited.

156 A variety of strategies/measures was indicated in each of the country programs' inception reports. Two types of strategies for sustainability can be distinguished: (i) ensuring sustainability of results within the pilot LGs and (ii) ensuring duplication or upscaling. For each of the types, examples are provided in the report. The evaluators would like to highlight two risks for sustainability. The first one is related to the finding under the analysis of the ToC that IDEAL did not develop a specific pathway of change or strategy for working on the capacity of the population. What is not taken into account in an explicit way is the risk of weaker claiming capacity at the level of CSO/population for the sustainability of results achieved at the level of LGs. Without this capacity, there is little push for LGs to ensure inclusivity and transparency beyond what is arranged in all the countries by central government mechanisms for planning, but what often appears to be a tick box exercise and does not always offer space for the desired debate with the population. Clearly, the program of IDEAL has little influence over this risk; cooperation with other organisations who target CSOs/population directly is yet to be strengthened to mitigate this risk.

157 The second risk lies in the choices for collaboration (or not) with existing structures: in some cases there seem to be good reasons for bypassing or paying less attention to existing structures (after an analysis of risks, such as in BU); in other cases however, such as in Mali and in South Sudan, arguments to invest less or not in capacity building of the LGA or the existing water structures is not well argued.

158 **Recommendation 12 – Accept to work with structures that have no or limited capacity**. This means also accepting that there might not be results to be upscaled because it is not sure

that the work with the municipalities through existing structures will be fully successful or lead to changes. Hence the importance of documenting well the processes as argued under recommendation 9). This recommendation is in line with the importance to stay focused on longer term changes while at the same time keeping a balance with the short-term cycles (proposed under PDIA approach).

7 Annexes

7.1 OVERVIEW OF LITERATURE

Goldwyn, R. (CARE) and Chigas, D. (CDA) (2013) Monitoring and evaluating conflict sensitivity. Methodological challenges and practical solutions

Grävingholt, J. and von Haldenwang, C. (2016) The promotion of decentralisation and local governance in fragile contexts. DIE German Development Institute, Discussion Paper 20/2016)

Kleinfeld, R. (2015) IMPROVING DEVELOPMENT AID DESIGN AND E VALUATION. Plan for sailboats and not for trains. Carnegie Endowment for international peace

Klimis, E., Leclercq, S., Martini, J., Matagne, G., Vervisch, T. (2017). *Guidance on Fragility*. https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/886e27_f7241b8ef519401dbdc54d66f1718794.pdf

Securelivelighood.org (2017) How to support statebuilding, service delivery and recovery in fragile and conflictaffected situations. Lessons from six years of SLRC research. Synthesis briefing 2.

Securelivelighood.org (2017) Tracking change in fragile and conflict-affected situations. Lessons from the SLRC panel survey. Synthesis Briefing 1.

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (2006) CONFLICT-SENSITIVE PROGRAM MANAGEMENT. CSPM. INTEGRATING CONFLICT SENSITIVITY AND PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE INTO SDC PROGRAMS

United Nations; World Bank. (2018). Pathways for Peace : Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict.

UNDP (S.D.) Local governance in fragile and conflict affected settings. Building a resilient foundation for peace and development.

Wallace, M (2015). From Principle to Practice. A User's Guide to Do No Harm. CDA, Collaborative Learning Project.

Palestinian Territories

APLA (December 2018) *Strategic Plan 2019-2022*

Evaluatiesessie IDEAL/debrief (Dec. 2018) – in Dutch only

Grant disbursement manual

IDEAL, all documents related to the March 2019 workshop on the role out of the LED cycle and CDIs (requirements and procedure, roadmap, stepping stones)

IDEAL, complete list of collected data for benchmarking on LED (Excel Sheet)

IDEAL, financing agreement MDLF – VNGI 2017 + amendment June 2019 (including annex)

IDEAL (2017) *INCLUSIVE DECISIONS AT LOCAL LEVEL (IDEAL) – PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES. 5 YEAR STRATEGY – FINAL DRAFT*

IDEAL, mission report June 2018 of Sander Maathuis on Benchmarking

IDEAL, overview of LED council members (Excell)

IDEAL, report working event on institutionalisation and operationalisation of LED, February 2019

IDEAL, retreat Amman, presentation of CDI's (June 2019) (in Arabic)

IDEAL, ToR for country director

IDEAL, ToR for RPM for IDEAL and assistant

MDLF, manual draft on LED guidelines (in Arabic)

State of Palestine, Ministry of Local Government. (2018) The integrated national framework for local economic development.

VNGI, ARD project, inception report, logical framework and planning of Year 2

VNG International (2016) *Local Government Capacity Program. Context and Conflict. Analysis of Palestine (PEA)*

Eelco Jacobs, Geneviève Audet-Bélanger, Marcelo Tyszler, Verena Bitzer (KIT) (2019). *Midline report. State of Palestine.*

Somaliland
VNGI and IDEAL Documents
Klaas Breetvelt, Activity report gender workshop, 2018
Klaas Breetvelt, Expert report gender follow-up training Somaliland, 2019
Materials from the 3rd workshop on gender (including attention for action planning), July 2019
Monthly narrative report RPM (copy of April 2019)
MoU of understanding between VNG I and ALGASL, 2017
Pilot district matrix (Excell)
Sander Maathuis, Mission report 2 (November 2018) on organisational development
Sander Maathuis, Mission report Final (August 2018) on TOT for training skills
Somaliland Output indicator sheet (excel, not used by the team in Somaliland)
ToR of members of IDEAL team (RPM, RPO)
VNGI team in Hargeisha, blueprint planning 2019
VNGI (2019) *destination specific security plan Somaliland*
Expert National Decentralisation Conference report (December 2018)
Joint statement, national decentralisation conference
Report on the ALGASL Special General Assembly
Olivier Onvlee, Geneviève Audet-Bélanger, Marcelo Tyszler, Verena Bitzer, KIT (2019) *Midline report. Somaliland.*
Other documents

ALGASL (S.d.) *Constitution English Version*

ALGASL (2018) *Final Strategic plan 2018-2022*

EKN (2019) *Multi-Annual Country Strategy Somalia Public*

Integrity (2015) *Mid-term Review of the UN Joint Program on Local Governance and Decentralized Services Delivery. Final Report.*

JPLG (2013) *Local economic development toolkit*

Kaplan, S (2010). *Rethinking state building in a fragile state. Center for Strategic and International Studies The Washington Quarterly • 33:1 pp. 81-97*

Presentation of JLPG (UN-)program and expansion strategy

Somaliland *Development* Fund (May 2015) *Somaliland perception survey*

Rwanda
IDEAL, Output indicator sheet up to May 2019
IDEAL, RPM Monthly narrative report Jan, Feb, March 2019
IDEAL (2017) *Rwanda Baseline IDEAL*
IDEAL (2017) *Rwanda inception report IDEAL*
LGCP (2016) *Profile of 6 secondary cities and investment opportunities*
MININFRA (2016) *development of urban infrastructure in six secondary cities*
RALGA (2017) *Report on participatory needs analysis in secondary cities*
RALGA (2014) *Strategic Plan 2015-2020*
Ralga (2019) TOOLKIT HANDBOOK ON PRO POOR DETAILED MASTER PLANS DESIGN FOR SECONDARY CITY DISTRICT ONE STOP CENTRE STAFF
RALGA (2018) Gender mainstreaming strategy 2019-2014
RALGA (2019) GUIDELINES FOR RALGA MEMBER REPRESENTATION IN SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY DESIGN PROCESSES
RALGA (2019) Report on AWARENESS RASING COMPAIGN ON INCLUSIVE URBAN DEVELOPMENT "UMUJYI WANJYE CAMPAIGN" November 2018
RALGA (2017) Overall report on OSC study visit
WB (2018) *Drivers of Growth*
WB (2016) *Urban Development project*
Gerard Baltissen, Geneviève Audet-Bélanger, Marcelo Tyszler, Verena Bitzer, KIT (2019) *Midline report. Rwanda*
Uganda

IDEAL RPM, narrative report 2017 and 2018

IDEAL (2017) Uganda program 2017-2021. Territorial Approach to Local Development (TALD); Inclusive Decision Making, Financial Management and Local Economic Development

IDEAL (2018) Annex XX- Learning objectives for IDEAL Uganda on 2017 and IDEAL's 2018 Learning Objectives.

IDEAL, Uganda Output indicator sheet in Excell (including information on activities/events)

IDEAL RPM, Notes on meetings with focal points in Uganda, May 2019

IDEAL/RPM Uganda (August 2018) *MID-TERM REVIEW TRAINING FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, JINJA, 27 - 28 JULY 2018*

WHYZE Communications & Research (2018) *Situational Gender Analysis*

Olivier Onvlee, Geneviève Audet-Bélanger, Marcelo Tyszler, Verena Bitzer, KIT (2019) Midline report. Uganda.

Burundi

IDEAL, narrative proposal

IDEAL, inception report

IDEAL, baseline (aggregated)

IDEAL, baseline (Sudan)

IDEAL, annual report 2017

IDEAL, annual report 2018

IDEAL, annual plan 2018

IDEAL, annual plan 2019

IDEAL, M&E Guidelines

IDEAL, Conflict-sensitivity guide

IDEAL, output monitoring sheet

IDEAL, Gender and Conflict Analysis 2017

IDEAL, Terms of Reference RPM

IDEAL, Example community card scoring

Commune Matana, PCDC 2019-2023

Verena Bitzer, Geneviève Audet-Bélanger, Marcelo Tyszler (2019) KIT, Mid-line report Burundi

South-Sudan

IDEAL, narrative proposal
IDEAL, inception report
IDEAL, baseline (aggregated)
IDEAL, baseline (Sudan)
IDEAL, annual report 2017
IDEAL, annual report 2018
IDEAL, annual plan 2018
IDEAL, annual plan 2019
IDEAL, M&E Guidelines
IDEAL, Conflict-sensitivity guide
IDEAL, output monitoring sheet
IDEAL, Gran manual 2018
IDEAL, Grant proposal KEC
IDEAL, List of activities so far implemented at field level 2017 – 2018
IDEAL, Guide and recommendations on policy dialogue for civil society organizations
IDEAL, Gender and conflict analysis (2019)
IDEAL, Terms of Reference RPM
IDEAL, Terms of Reference RPO
Greater Kapoeta East County local government council, WASH strategic plan 2019-2021.
Geneviève Audet-Bélanger, Marcelo Tyszler, Verena Bitzer, KIT, (2019) Mid-line report. South Sudan.
Mali
IDEAL, narrative proposal
IDEAL, inception report
IDEAL, baseline (aggregated)
IDEAL, baseline (Mali)
IDEAL, annual report 2017
IDEAL, annual report 2018
IDEAL, annual plan 2018
IDEAL, annual plan 2019
IDEAL, M&E Guidelines
IDEAL, Conflict-sensitivity guide
IDEAL, output monitoring sheet
IDEAL, Analyse de risque pays : Mali
IDEAL, Plan de sûreté du program IDEAL Mali
IDEAL, Rapport sur la formation: la sensibilité au genre et aux conflits dans la gestion intégrée des ressources en eaux – Mali
IDEAL, Terms of reference, several experts.

IDEAL, Terms of Reference, RPO post Mali.

Bertus Wennink, Geneviève Audet-Bélanger, Marcelo Tyszler and Verena Bitzer, KIT (2019), Midline Report. Mali

Cisse, A. (2017). Etat des lieux du genre a l'AMM et dans les 5 communes pilotes du program ideal mali de vng international

Diallo N.A.C., Diakité, T. and Fanetu, E. (2016). *Bilan du mandat électif 2009-2016 des femmes maires et adjointes aux maires du Mali, et perspectives d'amélioration pour les prochaines échéances électorales.*

Figuères, D.C. (2017). Rapport relatif aux conflits dans le domaine de l'eau - Stratégie de communication et Stratégie de renforcement des capacités humaines du program IDEAL-Mali

Mamadou TOGOLA, M and NELEN, J. (2018). *Thèmes prioritaires en GIRE par Commune du Program IDEAL Mali de la VNG. Rapport de mission.*

7.2   PROGRAM AND OVERVIEW OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED

Members of the Advisory Board

−   Mr. Mark Osiche, local governance field expert

−   Ms. Amita Gill, local governance specialist, Prevention and Peacebuilding Team within Crisis Bureau, United Nations Development Programme

Rwanda program

date	Name	function
August 14th 2019	Daan Stelder	IDEAL project manager
August 14th 2019	Anouk Lodder	IDEAL project manager
August 14th 2019	Paskaliah Kachienga	RPM

Uganda program

date	Name	function
14/08/2019	Anne-Marie Tosserams	Senior program manager VNGI The Hague

16/08/2019	Deborah Asikeit Tumusiime	RPM Uganda

Burundi Program

date	Name	function
13/08/2019	Volkert Doop	PL
	Bo Altema	JPL
13/08/2019	Remy Ndayiragije	RPM Burundi

South Sudan program

date	Name	function
13/08/2019	Robert Meerman	PM
	Wessel Kremer	JPM
13/08/2019	Emmanuel Mori	RPM South-Sudan

Palestinian Territories - mission

	Name	function
Jerusalem, 29/07/2019	Jamal Atamneh	Consultant and resource person for the MTR mission
Ramallah and El Bireh, 1/07/2019	Kick off meeting with VNGI team	RPM, RPO, Miriam (team The Hague)
	Saïd Omar	program manager in the Royal Danish Representative Office
	Olivier Donnet	program manager at Enabel
	Tawfiq H. Albudairi	Director General of MDLF (Municipal Development and Lending Fund)
	Lina Jeldeh	

		Focal point Institutional Development and Technical Assistance at MDLF for VNGI - IDEAL
	Dana Mubayed	Staff member urban analyst, World Bank
Jericho, 2/07/2019	Observation of FGDs	members of staff members of LED forum
	Salem A. Grhrouf	Mayor
	Abdelmajeed Hamud	RPM IDEAL
Jericho, 3/07/2017	Samar Al Tamimi	LED Unit manager
	Luna Erekat	Women & Youth Rep. in LED forum/women activist
	Interview with Nazar Husari Al-Halteh	Executive director of YWCA young women Christian association Women & Youth Rep. in LED forum
	Interview with Khader Ghanem	LED Forum member and CEO of Seeds of Hope, Youth Center Director.
	Interview with Hisham Baloo	consultant for the Governorate of Jericho and Al-Aghwar, member of the LED forum
	Jehad Y.A. Alayasa	assistant professor at Birzeit University, Faculty of Law and Public Administration
Ramallah, 4/07/2019	Observation of FGDs	members of staff members of LED forum
	Miriam Collaris Jarik Stolenga	IDEAL team The Hague
Ramallah and Jerusalem, 5/07/2019	Subha Ghanam	Netherlands Representative office
	Jamal Atamneh	Consultant and resource person for the MTR mission
Ramallah 6/07/2019	Nadine Burbar	LED Unit manager

	Ahmad Abu Laban	city manager (excused)
Ramallah, 7/07/2019	Doa'Wadi	Executive director of Business Women Forum Palestine
	Amal Daraghmeh Masri	Editor in Chief of Middle East Business Magazine and News, member of El Bireh and Ramallah LED Forum
	Abdelmajeed Hamud	RPM IDEAL (continuation)
	Nasser Sheikh Ali	Country director, VNGI – Palestine branch
Qalqiliya, 8/07/2019	Observation of FGDs	members of staff

members of LED forum |
		Mayor and city manager
Qalqiliya, 9/07/2019	Khalid Nazzal	LED Unit manager
	Khaled Nazzal	Member of LED forum, Director of Planning, governorate
	Muna Affanah	Member of LED forum, Palestina House Association, women sectio
	Lutfi Hassaneh	Member of LED forum, Qalqiliya Rehabilitation Association -People with Special Needs
	Dr. Salah Sabri	Member of LED forum, Professor at Al Quds Open University
	Mohammad Qatqat and Kamal Al Sabe'	Member of LED forum, Director of champer of commerce and plant nursery private company
El Bireh	Nasser Sheikh Ali

Abdelmajeed Jum'a

Miriam Collaris

Jarik Stollenga | Feedback workshop with IDEAL team and resource person |

	Yara Nasser Jamal Atamneh	
Belgium/by skype, 17/07/2019	Abdallah Anati	Executive director of APLA

Somaliland - Mission

	Name	function
The Hague,	Chris Van Hemert	VNGI, The Hague, senior program manager IDEAL
Hargeisha, 19/07/2019	VNGI team meeting with Abdi Hamud and Khaalid Hassan	VNGI, RPM VNGI, RPA
Hargeisha 20/07/2019	ALGASL team under the lead of Mohamed Hashi,	Executive director of ALGASL
	Mohamed Hashi	Executive director of ALGASL
	Abdirahman Mohamoud Aideed	Mayor of Hargeisha, president of the Board of ALGASL
	Sa'eed Nuh	Legal officer ALGASL
	FoSia Omar	Capacity building officer ALGASL
	Abdirahman Ali	Communications officer ALGASL
Hargeisha, 21/07/2019	Maxime Smeets	VNGI, IDEAL assistant program manager
	Mohamed Hashi	Executive director of ALGASL
Hargeisha, 22/07/2019	Abdi Guvey	Director-General, Ministry of Interior, responsible for local government
	Nafisa Yusuf	Director of Nagaad
	Alberto Fait	Consultant for the EU
	Ahmed Egels	Admin and finance officer at the champions office

	Participation/observation in Conference on gender	
Hargeisha, 23/07/2019	Muhammoud Hussein	JPLG office
	Abdi Hamud	VNGI, RPM
	Khaalid Hassan	VNGI, RPA
	Omer O. Miigane	Executive Director of Sonyo, national youth Network
	Observation of KIT training	
Hargeisha, 24/07/2019	Meeting with technical staff involved in IDEAL training from different municipalities (Gabiley, Cheich, Odweine, Boroma, Buroa), 7 participants, 1 female rep from Cheich	Depts of planning, HR, social affairs, tax and revenue
	Processing of information	
Baligubadle, 25/07/2019	FGD with representatives of civil society (6 participants, 1 female)	Elders of the village Youth organisation, HYDO (and working for Ministry of Health/education) Environmental informal self-organisation Women's organisation, Horseth Organisation for non-formal education
	FGD with representatives of local government, 8 participants, no female rep, 3 elected politicians (mayor and two council members)	Mayor Council member, economic committee Council member, social services committee Executive Secretary Chief cashier

		Chief accountant Guard Director of Land Department
Hargeisha, 26/07/2019	Processing information	
Gabiley, 27/07/2019	**Participation in meeting with Mayors from Cheich, Gabiley, Boroma, Burao, Zeila, Odweyne and Aynabo** And visit to investments/infrastructure	Mayors
	Feedback workshop with VNGI team	RPM RPA Program assistant
	Debriefing with AlGasl with Muhammad Hashim and Khalid Abdi	Executive director ALGASL Finance manager ALGASL
Ramallah/by skype, 10/07/2019	Roelof Haveman	EKN, Deputy Ambassador to Somalia
Belgium (e-mail exchange)	Paul Simkin	Project coordinator JPLG

Mali – Mission

Date	Place	Meeting
18/6	Brussels/Bamako	Arrival at Bamako
19/6	Méguétan	Focus group civil society Focus group commune

20/6	Méguétan	Interview representatives women groups Interview representatives youth groups Interview mayor, secretary-general, IDEAL focal point
21/6	Bamako	Interview DNH (PCA-GIRE program) Interview AMM Team meeting IDEAL team
22/6	Bamako	Reading/writing
23/6	Bamako	Reading/writing
24/6	Baya	Focus group commune Focus group civil society
25/6	Tagandougou	Focus group commune Focus group civil society Debriefing IDEAL team
26/6	Baya/Tagandougou	Interview representatives youth (youth trainers) – Tagandougou Interview 1st and 2nd counsellor and IDEAL focal point – Tagandougou Interview representatives youth (youth trainers) – Baya Interview secretary-general and IDEAL focal point – Baya
27/6	Bamako/Brussels	Telephone call EKN (Félix Hoogveld) Departure from Bamako