EVALUATION REPORT:
Iraq Cross-Faith Peacebuilding Pilot

For Tearfund

By Michelle Garred, PhD
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Ripple
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This evaluation of Tearfund Iraq's 2017-18 peacebuilding pilot project is learning-focused. As a formative mid-project evaluation of Phase 1 cross-faith efforts in Northern Iraq, the learnings apply to phase 2, and to similar Tearfund efforts in the Middle East and elsewhere. Tearfund's Incubation Hub commissioned the evaluation to inform its exploratory peacebuilding strategy of 2016-19.

Background

Nascent Tearfund peacebuilding in the Middle East includes Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Syria and Yemen, as well as Northern Iraq. The projects focus on local activists, following a gathering-nurture theory of change: If individuals are nurtured, equipped and connected with each other, with other peacebuilders and with sectoral experts then they will drive efforts within their communities and more widely across the country to build peace across sectarian divides. This is an emergent approach in which **activist communities** jointly propose their own strategy and activities.

The activists represent diverse faith traditions, reflecting the demographics and the reality that religion plays a role in many inter-group conflicts in the region. Northern Iraq is known for **sectarian patterns of violence**, culminating in the Islamic State occupation of 2014-17, and for the autonomy struggles of the Kurdistan Region. Tearfund had access only to Kurdistan during displacement response but is now expanding to Ninewa Governorate and into rehabilitation. The pilot operated in both Kurdistan (supported by Tearfund global core funds) and Ninewa (funded by GIZ).

In mid-2016, **Kurdistan** activists participated in Tearfund's first regional peacebuilders' gathering, held in Egypt. In January 2017, they gathered for a workshop on 'healing the wounds of war' and strategy planning leading to 2 initiatives in the education sector over 6 months. Following a Training-of-Trainers for 8 activists on peacebuilding and social cohesion, Duhok-based activists trained 84 school teachers (in 4 sessions). Erbil-based activists trained 36 Salahaddin University students (in 2 sessions). Ten of those students went on to assist 4 social cohesion needs assessments in Erbil.

In early 2018, 4 new activists were recruited in **Ninewa,** and joined by 2 from Erbil and Duhok. Following Training-of-Trainers, activists selected 2 women's groups and 4 Parent-Teacher Associations in the diverse minority communities of Hamdaniya and Bashiqa. Activists provided training and then coaching for those groups to implement local follow-up activities involving cross-faith interaction. Tearfund also conducted Ninewa conflict mapping with activist support.

This learning evaluation was motivated by one overarching question: Is Tearfund's **gathering-nurture model** effective? That question was pursued in a two-step process as follows:
- Identify **short-term 'outcomes'** through key informant interviews. 'Outcomes' refer to visible changes in the action or behaviour of a social actor.[1] (There was less emphasis on knowledge and attitude change, because such data had already been collected.)
- Probe **how those outcomes came into being,** through focus group discussions with participants. This step aims to discern the function and value of Tearfund's facilitating role in relation to other causative factors,[2] including the activists pre-existing skills and networks.

All 12 current activists participated actively, but interaction with their trainees was minimal, leading to limitations in process and data. Erbil and Duhok were the primary focus. Ninewa was secondary,

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[1] Inspired by the Outcome Harvesting approach.
[2] Inspired by the nascent practice of participatory contribution analysis.

limited by visa/access restrictions, and overlapping an internally-led endline review. 'Faith-sensitive' questions were selectively integrated, to test the 'Faith Matters' evaluation guide[3] for Tearfund use.

Key findings

Repeated instances of **'coming together' across identity lines** are primary positive outcomes. Identity refers primarily to faith affiliation, and secondarily to the other complex interwoven factors of ethnicity, region, displacement status, etc. This coming together is highly unusual and difficult in the context. An activist explains: "To gather teachers and people from different faiths and ethnic groups is by itself an achievement. Especially after IS, these groups do not often come together. Especially between Yazidis and Christians with Sunni Muslims as a result of the conflict."

Outcomes - Coming together across Identity Lines
Establishment of cross-faith activist 'communities' in Erbil and Duhok
Cross-faith gatherings of trainees: 4 in Duhok, 2 in Erbil, at least 1 in Erbil for Ninewa trainees
Cross-faith teamwork among university students in assessing social cohesion needs around Erbil
Creation of a cross-faith play area, in a community where parks were previously accessible only to Christians, in Hamdaniya
Dedication of a school classroom purposed solely for cross-faith, multicultural activities, in Bashiqa
Multiple cross-faith, multicultural events and celebrations, in Hamdaniya and Bashiqa

Joint activities represent legitimate 'outcomes' when they occur in settings where such relational contact has never existed, or where it has been significantly disrupted due to escalations of conflict. Even so, there remains a need to interrogate future scope, scale and sustainability.

These outcomes have multiple causes, including **changes in activists' lives,** such as expansion of their existing skills or roles, and ground-breaking cross-faith relationships with other activists. They describe the latter as a shift from acquaintances, to co-laborers, to friends that communicate outside of project activities. The activists were consistently surprised by their trainees' receptivity to the cross-faith approach. Activists identified **underlying success factors** as:
- A sense of initiative and responsibility, due to perceiving the needs of the context.
- A spirit of collaboration and teamwork among both activists and trainees.
- Tearfund support, including training, staff accompaniment, financial backing and freedom for activists to choose their own strategies and activities.

The primary challenges encountered during the project were:
- **Short project cycles** do not align easily with long-term peacebuilding. Ninewa in particular had just 3 months for active implementation, leaving little time for capacity- and relationship-building. Short projects have potential to do harm by re-opening war trauma with insufficient support for healing, but this does not appear to have happened in the pilot.
- **Timing challenges** caused delay, disruption and frustration. There were difficulties syncing activities with the academic and (multi)religious calendars. In Erbil and Duhok, phase 2 was suspended in order to launch Ninewa, leading to a perceived lack of follow-up.
- **Administrative problems** slowed approvals of hires, contracts, payments, procurements, etc., impacting activists directly and negatively. This was due to a mismatch between Tearfund's relief-phase organizational systems and the requirements of community-level peacebuilding. Improvements are already underway.

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[3] Woodrow, Oatley and Garred. 2017. 'Faith Matters: A Guide for the Design, Monitoring and Evaluation of Inter-Religious Action for Peacebuilding.' Washington DC: Alliance for Peacebuilding.

Key learnings

The pilot affirms Tearfund's overall strategy. The cross-faith approach is a priority need in the Iraqi context, and this relevance will extend to other contexts in which identity-based conflict includes a significant religious aspect. The gathering-nurture model was effective during this pilot, in that its short-term aims were met, subject to the limitations of the above challenges. Tearfund adds value in the roles of facilitator, catalyst for cross-faith interaction, and enabler for activist communities. Successful deployment of the gathering-nurture model requires the following:

- **Diversity among activists** in relation to the prominent inter-group divisions of the particular context. In Iraq, those divisions are prominently sectarian, so the project emphasizes a cross-faith approach. Other contexts may call for different aspects of diversity.
- **Continuity of engagement** with activists over a significant period of time. The time required to reach sustainability will vary, but it needs to be considered from the outset. The focus on relationships needs to be protected from the pressures of implementation.
- **Activist-led planning**, in which Tearfund frames the overall field of endeavour, but activists jointly propose their own strategies and activity plans. This increases relevance of activities, motivation to act and empowerment to effect real change.
- **Formation of a strong 'community'** among the activist cohort. Ninewa demonstrates that activists can be somewhat successful without a community in the short term. However, they would need the cross-faith partnerships and mutual support seen in the Erbil and Duhok activist communities in order to fulfil their potential over the medium term and long term.

The evaluation revealed some uncertainty about what **'cross-faith'** means in Tearfund. The term can refer to different concepts, so it is helpful to inquire what 'faith' means, and how it manifests itself, in different parts of the project. On the ground among pilot implementers, 'faith' refers to religious affiliation as an **identity marker** (related to ethnicity) and 'cross-faith' means intentionally crossing identity boundaries. Faith as a belief or experience is not an expressed source of motivation. This does not mean there are no 'people of faith' involved. Instead, it reflects a cultural assumption that faith is political, conflictual, and best kept out of public affairs. This is the perspective of the activists and, recognizing the very painful recent history of sectarian violence, Tearfund Iraq has also opted to approach faith solely as a matter of identity. This sensitivity to context has earned Tearfund a high level of acceptance and trust among diverse local people.

On the other hand, there have been cues from Tearfund global headquarters that faith is seen somewhat differently from that perspective. While faith as identity is recognized, faith is also seen as **belief or experience.** For example, Tearfund's global peacebuilding strategy emphasizes 'faith-based movements,' which implies faith belief or experience as a motivation, and some headquarters leaders have echoed this expectation. The evaluation Terms of Reference used the term 'interfaith,' further implying scope for faith as belief or experience, before shifting to 'cross-faith,' which may point more squarely to faith as identity. Tearfund headquarters was eager to test the 'Faith Matters' evaluation guide,[4] which implicitly emphasizes sensitivity to faith-motivated participants – a need that turned out to have less relevance than expected in the Northern Iraq pilot.

Both in-country and headquarters interpretations of 'cross-faith' are valid and potentially fruitful. It is not necessary to make a binary choice between them. However, it is necessary to increase clarity among all involved, which implies **theological and strategic reflection** on the wide range of possible cross-faith approaches, to discern which best fits Tearfund's global mandate and values, as well as its role in a particular context. The approach taken in Northern Iraq may differ from what other contexts require – yet the globalization of communications requires that Tearfund convey its overall approach with logical consistency.

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[4] Woodrow, Oatley and Garred. 2017.

Recommendations

For Tearfund Iraq, phase 2 recommendations centre around reinvigorating a cohesive activist community that spans Erbil, Duhok and Ninewa. This takes priority over geographic expansion. It will be important to continue activist-led planning and streamline the supporting organizational systems.

Recommendations for Northern Iraq peacebuilding - phase 2	
Strategy	(Re)unite cohesive activist community.
	Focus next phase on depth and continuity, not expansion.
	Continue activist-led planning.
Ways of Working	Communicate more clearly about activity budgets.
	Consider sustainability of trainee groupings.
	Involve religious leaders as stakeholders in community activities.
	Consider possible future support for advocacy by activists.
Funding	Exercise caution with short project cycles.
	Integrate peacebuilding in sectoral grants.
Admin Systems	Address problematic administrative issues before phase 2 begins.
	Provide strong intake process for new peacebuilding manager.
	Involve support services staff more deeply in project planning.
	Consider peacebuilding as possible 'first wave' of new community partnerships.
Sectoral Integration	Pursue first tangible experience in integrating peacebuilding with other sectors.
	Develop mindsets for conflict sensitivity and integration through 'Do No Harm.'
Other	Become part of the interagency peacebuilding network in Iraq.

For the broader program model, recommendations on **developing activist communities** include:

1. **Journey:** Give further definition to the personal, vocational and potentially spiritual journey that Tearfund is encouraging activists to take over time, and when and how to phase out support.
2. **Aspirations:** Revive the aspirations developed at the 2016 regional gathering for activists to customize and use in the formation of their own communities: Grow together. Learn together. Support one another. Do things together. Connect with each other. Share with each other.
3. **Mutual accountability:** Consider ways to foster mutual accountability within activist communities, rather than just individual accountability relationships with Tearfund.
4. **Regional aspects:** Clarify whether Tearfund plans to continue nurturing the activist community at a regional level and consider staffing a regional peacebuilding position for the Middle East.

Recommendations on **monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL)** include:

5. **Framework:** Activist-led planning requires an open-ended, emergent approach to MEL. Consider Outcome Harvesting to identify behaviour changes, plus supplementary attitude tracking.
6. **About logic models:** Outcome Harvesting can co-exist alongside a logic model where donors require it, so long as long as that logic model is minimally proscriptive.
7. **Faith sensitivity:** If there is a future activist motivated by faith as belief or experience, the MEL framework can be adapted using the 'Faith Matters' guide.[5]

For further development of the **cross-faith approach:**

8. **Conceptual clarity:** Continue to refine concepts, terms and communications on what 'cross-faith' means for Tearfund, and what sorts of contexts might prompt adaptations. Develop staff and partner vision and capacities accordingly.
9. **Policy:** Review the context-sensitivity and potential unintended consequences of policies that prevent hire of non-Christians in key expatriate roles and limit partnering with non-Christian community-based organizations in religiously diverse regions such as the Middle East.

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[5] Woodrow, Oatley and Garred. 2017.

1.BACKGROUND

This evaluation of Tearfund Iraq's 2017-18 peacebuilding pilot project is focused on learning. As a formative mid-project evaluation of Phase 1 cross-faith efforts in Northern Iraq, the aim is to apply learnings to phase 2 in Northern Iraq, and to similar Tearfund efforts in the Middle East and possibly elsewhere. Tearfund's global Incubation Hub is pursuing an exploratory peacebuilding strategy from 2016 to 2019, and therefore commissioned this learning evaluation.

1.1 Project genesis

Tearfund hosted a regional Peacebuilders Gathering in Egypt in May-June 2016, which was instrumental in the development of its 'gathering-nurture' program model. Thirty-five key men and women from Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Syria, Yemen and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, representing diverse faith traditions, built relationships and envisioned building peace together as a community. Aspirations were identified for the regional community as a whole, and for country-specific cohorts. This discussion also helped Tearfund to refine its nascent **theory of change:**

⇒ **Gathering-nurture model:** If individuals are nurtured, equipped and connected with each other, with other peacebuilders and with sectoral experts then they will drive efforts within their communities and more widely across the country to build bridges between community, lead community based peacebuilding, discover common complex identities, address existing trauma, enable reconciliation, and challenge existing attitudes and norms of violence enabling improvements in relationships and dispute resolution across sectarian divides and contribute to improved living conditions.

Importantly, this program model is **emergent and open-ended,** in that key local peacebuilders (called 'activists' in Tearfund Iraq) are responsible for jointly proposing their own strategic direction and activities. Those plans are not imposed by Tearfund. This approach aligns with Tearfund's hope that some activist communities might grow into full-fledged people movements.

In the Middle East, activist communities represent **diverse faith traditions**, reflecting the demographics of the context, and the reality that religion plays a role in many inter-group conflicts within the region. Tearfund as a Christian INGO has a longstanding awareness of the religious aspects of humanitarian and development work, and this carries over into newer work on peacebuilding. Tearfund's social context research in Northern Iraq has included faith elements,[6] and Tearfund headquarters has purposed to test the applicability of the 'Faith Matters' evaluation guide[7] during this evaluation.

1.2 Context

Iraq is complex, and a full context description exceeds the scope of this report. However, there are three aspects essential for understanding this evaluation. First, the dynamics of politics and conflict include **sectarian patterns**, which evaluation participants feel increased after 2003 US invasion, and even more sharply after 2014 occupation by Islamic State. That occupation lasted until 2017, bringing extreme violence targeted on the basis of religious affiliation, massive displacement,[8] and probable widespread trauma. Among the general population, there is a current cultural assumption that faith as an external marker of identity is political and not conducive to peace, and thus a

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[6] Strang and O'Brien. 2017. 'Who Can I Turn to? Mapping social connections, trust and problem-solving among conflict-affected populations.' Edinburgh: Queen Margaret University and Tearfund. https://learn.tearfund.org/~/media/files/tilz/sgbv/2017-qmu-tearfund-who-can-i-turn-to-en-2.pdf
[7] Woodrow, Oatley and Garred. 2017.
[8] Kurdish Regional Government statistics indicate 1.1 million internally displaced people, plus nearly 300,000 refugees (mostly Syrian), have increased the population of Kurdistan by 32%. (NRT News Online, 20 June 2018).

growing preference to keep faith out of public affairs. However, this does not necessarily mean that individuals lack faith as an internal belief and/or experience. Recent social context research has revealed very high levels of connection and trust towards God among Yezidis and Muslims affected by the dynamics of displacement.[9] Tearfund global staff prefer to use the term 'faith' rather than 'religion' to point toward away from external politicization and towards internal faith experience, and that preference is honoured in this report.

Second, the autonomous **Kurdistan Region** of Iraq is unique, as is the history of the Kurds across the region. The Kurds are widely considered to be the largest ethnic group that does not have its own state, hence long-term struggles around Kurdish autonomy in Iraq, Turkey and Syria. Kurdish military forces were unusually successful in the recent fight against Islamic State, which further raised their profile. The Kurdistan Region in Iraq held an independence referendum in September 2017, to which the national government in Baghdad responded with a crackdown, taking control of the oft-disputed city of Kirkuk and surrounding oil fields. These tensions continue to ripple in 2018, delaying this evaluation for a time because Baghdad had closed Kurdistan's Erbil International Airport. Tearfund has worked primarily in the Kurdistan Region due to access limitations, and is now expanding programming to nearby Ninewa Governorate.

Third, the humanitarian sector in Iraq is currently shifting from emergency response into a **rehabilitation phase** and looking toward longer-term development. Tearfund opened in Iraq in 2014 and their emergency response was built around: water/sanitation/hygiene, essential non-food items, and cash-based programming. Tearfund's nascent rehabilitation approach will feature: protection (humanitarian protection and gender-based violence), livelihoods assistance and peacebuilding. Peacebuilding is not yet connected Tearfund Iraq's other sectors of work, however staff see high potential for integration with both protection and livelihoods in the next phase. Many local partners tend to prefer the term 'social cohesion' over 'peacebuilding,' because they feel 'social cohesion' is more realistically attainable.

1.3 Project description

Phase 1 of the Iraq peacebuilding pilot operated in two distinct geographic zones: Erbil and Duhok (in Kurdistan), and the Ninewa Plains (in Iraq proper). In both zones, Tearfund provided activist stipends of $US500/month to cover time and expenses and provided a budget for implementation of activities.

The **Erbil and Duhok activities of 2017**, supported by Tearfund global core funds, are the primary focus of this evaluation. In January, the Kurdistan Region's activist community gathered for a workshop on 'healing the wounds of war' and strategy planning. They planned two initiatives in the education sector over 6 months, one in Erbil and another 150 km away in Duhok. Following a Training-of-Trainers for 8 activists on peacebuilding, social cohesion and coexistence, Duhok-based activists trained 84 diverse school teachers (in 4 sessions). Erbil-based activists trained 36 Salahaddin University students (in 2 sessions). Ten of the university students went on to contribute to four assessments of social cohesion needs among internally displaced people, Syrian refugees and host communities in the Erbil area.

An internal interim evaluation of Erbil and Duhok activities found that trainees considered these activities relevant to their context and the training topics useful, and that their attitudes and practices were influenced towards social cohesion. However, trainees wanted more emphasis on practical skills and opportunities to put skills into practice. The trainings were held very near the end of the 2016-17 academic year, which significantly hindered follow-up. Among its recommendations,

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[9] Strang and O'Brien. 2017.

the interim evaluation suggested more intentionality in engaging women and Parent-Teachers Associations (PTAs) – both of which were applied to subsequent work in Ninewa. The one-year time lag since the last trainee activity in Erbil and Duhok made this an ex-post review, a factor which would have influenced the evaluation design, if not for the fact that the same evaluation also attempted to cover Ninewa.

The **Ninewa Plains activities of 2018,** supported by GIZ, are a secondary focus of this evaluation, included to the highest extent that access and security conditions permit. These activities are also the focus of a simultaneous endline review being undertaken internally by Tearfund Iraq, with the two processes overlapping one team member and sharing data.

Tearfund discussed the Ninewa expansion with Erbil and Duhok activists in late 2017, and they affirmed PTAs and women's groups as recommended partners. Subsequently one activist each from the Erbil and Duhok groups agreed to work also in Ninewa, and they were joined by 4 new activists recruited from that area. Following Training-of-Trainers, the activists led selection of 2 women's groups and 4 school PTAs, spread evenly across Hamdaniya and Bashiqa. These are diverse minority communities, which is typical of the Ninewa Plains, and distinct from the majority Arab population of nearby Mosul.

The activists instructed and coached their trainees on conflict management and peacemaking, understanding different identities, and increasing awareness of conflict drivers within their community. The trainees then went on to plan and implement hands-on activities with support from the activists. Key accomplishments include the development of spaces and venues for cross-faith interaction, as detailed in Section 4.1. Tearfund also conducted a Ninewa Plains conflict mapping exercise (in Hamdaniya, Bashiqa and Tlkef) with the support and collaboration of several activists.

Tearfund's **future intent** includes continuing to work on peacebuilding in these same locations. Global core funding is in place at least for next phase (e.g. 14 months), but it is not yet known how much the budget can be expanded through external donor funding. A phase 2 peacebuilding project manager is currently under recruitment. The aim is to resume activities in approximately August, in preparation for action within the education system in approximately October.

2. EVALUATION QUESTIONS
The evaluation is primarily motivated by one overarching question: **Is Tearfund's theory of change and methodology – the gathering-nurture model - effective?**

That question has been pursued by investigating two key sub-questions:
- **What short-term outcomes have been achieved** in the project to date? ('Outcome' here refers to a visible change in the action or behaviour of a social actor).
- **Why and how did the positive outcomes come to be?** What is the value added by Tearfund's facilitating role and action?

Further on that basis, the evaluation has explored: **What are the implications for Tearfund?**
- Do the learnings align with the project's theory of change, or do they challenge it?
- What conditions are required for the gathering-nurture model to be successful?
- What are the benefits and challenges of the cross-faith approach?
- What are recommendations for phase 2 of the Iraq peacebuilding project?
- What are recommendations for the broader region / program model?

The evaluation has considered two criteria:
- **Effectiveness** is the primary criterion, a standard affirmed by the OECD-DAC.[10] Effectiveness is typically understood to refer to achievement of pre-determined objectives. However, in this case, the objectives were developed during implementation by the activist community, so the evaluation aims to identify all 'outcomes' in evidence, whether expected or unexpected.
- **Consistency with values** as secondary criterion, to be pursued to the extent that available data permit. This criterion is proposed in the 'Faith Matters' guide[11] as an important one for faith-based peacebuilding.

3. EVALUATION FRAMEWORK
This section describes how the evaluation was planned and implemented.

3.1 Original design
The data collection process was originally designed to work as a two-step sequence, with each step involving both activists and their trainees (though activists more deeply).
- Step 1: **Identify 'outcomes'** through one-on-one conversations with participants (verbal surveys and key informant interviews). 'Outcomes' here refers to a visible change in the action or behaviour of a social actor, as inspired by the Outcome Harvesting approach.[12]
- Step 2: Select prominent outcomes from those identified in Step 1, **and probe how/why those outcomes came into being**, through focus group discussions with participants. This step, inspired by nascent practice of participatory contribution analysis, was designed to discern the role of Tearfund in relation to other causative factors.

This outcome-focused approach placed less emphasis on changes of knowledge and attitudes, not because they are less important, but because such data has already been collected in both geographic zones. Nonetheless there was an effort to discern personal development among individual activists, as the agents of change attempting to effect other outcomes. Questions pertaining to faith as a belief/experience were integrated into data collection with activists, based on 'faith sensitivity' recommendations in 'Faith Matters.'[13] For an overview of data collection, see Figure 1 below.

The Kobo Toolbox online platform was used for verbal surveys and key informant interviews questionnaires, to align with existing practice in Tearfund Iraq. The same instruments were used across all sites, with the intention to disaggregate by geographic zone as part of the analysis process.

The possibilities of bias were identified and addressed as follows:
- The gender mix among participants was equal among activists, and 83% male among trainees. The faith identity mix was fairly diverse for the geographic zones that it covered, including Yezidis, Christians and Muslims.
- Interactions with activists did not include Tearfund staff with whom they had worked closely, in order to create an atmosphere in which they could speak frankly and freely.
- The two-step data collection process, and the involvement of the evaluation team in data analysis, both strengthened triangulation of perspectives. Where appropriate, this report

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[10] OECD-DAC. 2012. ['Evaluating Peacebuilding Activities in Settings of Conflict and Fragility: Improving Learning for Results.'](#) Paris: OECD.
[11] Woodrow, Oatley and Garred. 2017.
[12] See: http://outcomeharvesting.net
[13] Woodrow, Oatley and Garred. 2017.

distinguishes between the perspectives of participants, Tearfund staff and the lead evaluator, to help ensure that all are heard.
- However, there was an unavoidable self-selection bias. Those who participated most fully are likely those with a sense of attachment to the project. Some signs of attachment were notable, such as a university student who was revising for exams while waiting for a focus group. The corollary is that those who felt less attached probably decided not to participate.

3.2 Limitations and Adaptations

Data was collected in Erbil and Duhok between 30 May and 6 June, by a 5-person team[14] composed of both outsiders and insiders. Each engagement was supported by one facilitator, one interpreter and one notetaker. A total of 12 activists[15] and 6 trainees[16] participated in that effort. Informed consent was confirmed both verbally and in writing. There were some limitations encountered due to the fluidity of the context, with adaptations made where necessary.

- The evaluation team did not receive visas to enter Ninewa. However other Tearfund staff conducted on-site endline data collection and focus group discussions, and shared summaries of their data. Additionally, activist participation in key informant interviews was notably high, despite the fact that it required them to travel to Erbil to meet with the evaluation team.
- In Erbil and Duhok locations, the trainees were less available than anticipated, because the evaluation coincided with academic year-end finals and the onset of summer break,[17] and probably also because of the one-year time lag since their involvement with the project. This implies limited contact between the evaluation team and the project's 'beneficiaries.'
- Kobo questionnaire design was shaped by the assumptions that it would be used with trainees and used by Tearfund staff collecting endline data in Ninewa. Neither of these assumptions came to pass. In retrospect, the Kobo questionnaire design could have been customized for activist interviews, making the structure smoother, decreasing the emphasis on quantitative ratings, and likely developing a richer qualitative conversation with the activists.
- All data were subject to linguistic interpretation, and therefore subject to some loss of precision in meaning. Arabic was used for most communication, and Kurdish where needed.

Again, it must be noted that this evaluation covers only the short-term results of program participation, and that peacebuilding is understood to be a very long and complex process.

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[14] The evaluation team included Michelle Garred (lead, external), Mariam Tadros (TF global), Laura Wheeler (TF Iraq), and Shivan Toma (translation/interpretation, external). Peacebuilding Project Managers Megan Kelly and Nazar Abdulaziz (TF Iraq consultants), and Peacebuilding Officer Vana Xanchy (TF Iraq) contributed to planning and analysis. Activist Wadha Youssef coordinated the participation of her fellow activists. Rangeen Shurky and Houwayda Mahdi contributed to data collection at specific sites.

[15] All 12 current activists participated in the evaluation in some form. Six participated in both key informant interviews and focus group discussions. Four participated in interviews only, and two in focus groups only. (Two other activists had withdrawn during the project because they moved outside of Iraq).

[16] Six out of 120 trainees represent a very low evaluation participation rate. However, this does not imply that all 120 received and declined an invitation. The coordinators reached out to them selectively, because it had been quite some time since they participated in the project, and because many of them were on summer vacation.

[17] This constraint was foreseen but had to be balanced against other delays caused by the prolonged closure of Erbil International Airport, and the May 2018 Iraqi national election.

Figure 1: Data Collection Process

Question	Sub-Question		Method	Staff	Activists	Trainees
Background - current project status	1. What were the key activities and outputs? 2. What were the immediate results of the trainings conducted? 3. How does this pilot intersect with the broader program profile of TF Iraq?		Existing reports. Key informant interviews with TF staff.	X		
What outcomes have been achieved in the project to date?	1. General: What worked well in the project (successes)? What did not work well (challenges)? 2. Positive outcomes: What outcomes were achieved that contribute toward peace? 3. Other outcomes: What hoped-for outcomes did not materialize? Were there any outcomes that did *not* contribute toward peace? 4. Suggestions: What ideas do participants have for future improvement?		Kobo Questionnaire Part A (survey style)		X	X
How did the positive outcomes come to be?	Key individuals	1. Change: Were there changes in their own personal, spiritual or vocational journey as a peacebuilder? 2. Contribution: In what ways did the role and action of Tearfund contribute to these changes? 3. Correlation: In what ways were these individual changes related to the project outcomes?	Kobo Questionnaire Part B (interview style)		X	
	Collective dynamics	1. Process: What was the step-by-step process that led to this outcome? 2. Factors: What were the multiple factors contributing to the outcome? 3. Contribution: In what ways did the role and action of Tearfund contribute to this outcome? How might things have unfolded differently without Tearfund?	Focus Group Discussion		X	X

4.WHAT OUTCOMES HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED TO DATE?

This section explores the first evaluation sub-question on the project's short-term outcomes. 'Outcome' here refers to a visible change in the action or behaviour of a social actor, and both positive and negative outcomes are considered.

4.1 Positive outcomes: What outcomes were achieved that contribute to peace?

All streams of data, from all participants of all backgrounds, point overwhelmingly towards various forms of **'coming together' across identity lines** as the project's main source of outcomes. Identity lines here refer primarily to faith, and also secondarily to the complex interwoven factors of ethnicity, region of origin, displaced/host, etc. Such activities represent outcomes (visible changes in behaviour), to the extent that they occur in settings where such relational contact has never existed, and in settings where relational contact has been significantly disrupted due to the Islamic State occupation or other escalations of conflict. Both of those conditions occurred during the pilot, though the data are not always clear on which are which.

The most visible and well-documented instances of 'coming together' are summarized in Figure 2. Each of these instances describe the result of a longer process, which also involved collaborative visioning and planning across identity lines. Further, in interviews, when individual activists were asked about the project's most significant achievements, all of them without exception pointed towards the towards the new or restored interaction between people of different identity groups. In the activist's focus group discussions, 2 out of 3 achievement tree diagrams were framed around the same type of accomplishment: "creation of shared spaces for diverse groups" and "gathering diverse teachers and creating safe space for individual learning." (For more on achievement trees, see Section 5.2).

Figure 2: 'Coming together' across Identity Lines[18]
Establishment of cross-faith activist 'communities' in Erbil and Duhok
Cross-faith gatherings of trainees: 4 in Duhok, 2 in Erbil, at least 1 in Erbil for Ninewa trainees
Cross-faith teamwork among university students in assessing social cohesion needs around Erbil
Creation of a cross-faith play area, in a community where parks were previously accessible only to Christians, in Hamdaniya
Dedication of a school classroom purposed solely for cross-faith, multicultural activities, in Bashiqa
Multiple cross-faith, multicultural events and celebrations, in Hamdaniya and Bashiqa

As an indication of the significance of these achievements, the activists' comments consistently shed light on how **unusual and difficult** it is to bring people together across identity lines in the current context. The tensions to be overcome exist not only between mainstream groups, such as Shia and Sunni Muslims, but also increasingly along among smaller minority groups, such as Christians and Shabak Muslims, particularly in Ninewa Plains. Sample comments:
- "To gather teachers and people from different faiths and ethnic groups is by itself an achievement. Especially after IS, these groups do not often come together. Especially between Yazidis and Christians with Sunni Muslims as a result of the conflict."
- "The coexistence that happened between people was a huge step. As a Sunni Muslim, for me to be able to bring 20 women from different faiths was a miracle. I managed to win their trust, especially considering that the tribal spirit of some prevents their women from coming

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[18] These outcomes have been generally verified by triangulation of sources during the evaluation process. However, the verification process was significantly less rigorous than it would be in a fully realized 'Outcome Harvesting' approach.

out to mix."
  ● "After returning to Bashiqa after IS, there was no cohesion between groups. This project was the first time different groups began to come together, even through being transported together to trainings etc. Sessions on social cohesion were opportunities to get to know each other."

The visible changes in groups meeting and working together are supplemented by numerous anecdotal reports of more subtle shifts in the **nature of relationships**, such as:
  ● a move from being acquaintances, to being co-laborers on peace promotion, to being friends
  ● a reassessment of previous biases against certain Muslim groups in the wake of horrific Islamic State violence, or against negative stereotypes of Yezidis
  ● increased frequency of contact, not only in person but also via electronic means such as Viber

Thus far, these relationship shifts are generally deepest and longest-standing among activists, but that does not preclude unusually deep relational development among certain groups of trainees.

Any 'coming together' in a context where this did not previously happen can be considered a legitimate 'outcome.' However there remains a need to consider their level of future influence by interrogating questions such as:
  ● **Scope and scale** – the project activities to date are relatively modest in view of the broader needs of the context. Their future impact can be amplified not only through general growth, but perhaps even more importantly through ensuring that activities are positioned or linked for influence at the socio-political level.[19]
  ● **Sustainability** – the future continuity of groups meeting together across conflict lines, and their long-term ability to eventually sustain momentum without the support of Tearfund, remains uncertain. However, it is clear that there is a very strong desire to continue among activists and trainees alike.

4.2 Other outcomes: What hoped-for outcomes did not materialize? Were there any outcomes that did not contribute toward peace?

Participants did not rate the occurrence of 'unintended negative outcomes' as quantitatively high. However, in their qualitative inputs, participants were forthright in describing their concerns. Most of those concerns are not 'outcomes' in the technical sense of visible changes in behaviour – but that does not diminish their importance.

Short project cycles do not align easily with the long-term nature of peacebuilding. This is often asserted by sectoral experts, but less commonly heard in such a clear and forceful way from project participants. In this case, participants communicated a high awareness of time constraints, and frequent observations that the project has made good first steps, but the road ahead is long. This is reflected in the activists' quantitative inputs, in which 'project purpose is fulfilled' garnered the lowest rating (see Figure 3 below). Several participants explained that as a realistic rating given the brevity of the interventions to date. It should also be noted that there was not a large difference between the highs and lows of participant's quantitative ratings – in big picture terms, all averaged somewhat above the midpoint.

In Ninewa, the modest 6-month project cycle was further squeezed by staffing transitions within Tearfund. Specifically, the peacebuilding project staff were not yet in place at the outset, and the

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[19] CDA Collaborative Learning Projects. 2016. ['Reflecting on Peace Practice (RPP) Basics. A Resource Manual.'](#) Cambridge, MA.

broader organization was experiencing a moment of significant staff turnover. December/January holidays inevitably caused further delays, leaving only 3 months in which to complete activities. Participants say they felt rushed to implement, which implies less time and attention devoted to the capacity and relationship building aspects of peacebuilding. The activists experienced some challenges in working with local government officials, which were likely exacerbated by a lack of time spent developing those relationships.

Staff feel that short projects in this context have the potential to do harm, by re-opening conflict-related emotional wounds without providing the time and support required to begin to heal them. This could re-traumatize individuals and reinforce inter-group tensions. Fortunately, there is no evidence of this happening in the project to date. It remains a risk to be considered for the future.

Figure 3: Activists' Quantitative Ratings
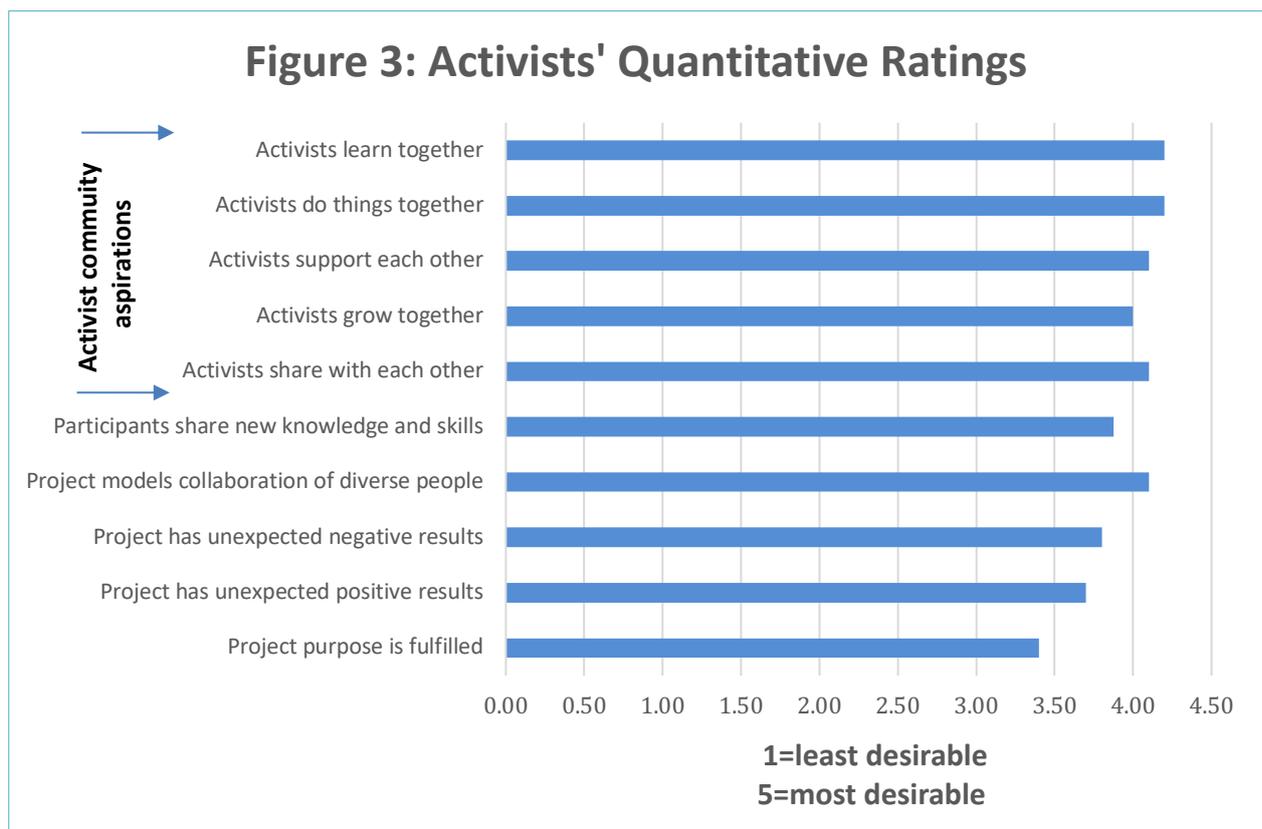
Timing challenges of multiple types caused delays and disruptions in continuity, leading to participant frustration in general, and to participant perceptions of a lack of follow-up in Erbil and Duhok. Some activists communicated a feeling of embarrassment when they could not provide their trainees or stakeholders with clear, accurate information on what was coming next, because they had not received information clearly or accurately from Tearfund. There may be a perceived contradiction with the Tearfund and peacebuilding values of mutual respect and transparent communication – albeit an unintentional one. At the same time, participant frustration on these matters is an indication that they see the project as significant, and they are keen to continue.

Across all geographic zones, there were repeated difficulties syncing up with the academic calendar, as well as major national and religious holidays such as Ramadan. In Erbil and Duhok, university student trainee activities were conducted at the very end of academic year 2016-17. In Ninewa, PTA trainee activities similarly took place at the very end of year 2017-18. Again, this led to rush in implementation, and made smooth follow-up impossible as most academic groupings are disbanded during the summer. Trainees in both Erbil and Duhok expressed their hope and expectation the

process would go further, and their disappointment when it did not. One Duhok teacher expressed strong feelings by saying: "We were abandoned."

In Erbil and Duhok, the launch of phase 2 was delayed, leading to a one-year time lag in activities involving trainees. The Erbil/Duhok activists did participate in a strategy workshop in November 2017, and generated proposals for their current sites as well as Ninewa. However, activities were implemented only in Ninewa, and involved only two of the Erbil/Duhok activists. From a staff perspective, there was a need to focus limited capacity on Ninewa, to uphold timeframes agreed with donor partner GIZ.

From an activist perspective, there was a wide range of interpretations of the reason for delay and the status of collaboration with Tearfund. The activists did not take much independent action on the project during the one-year lag. They continued communicating with each other and remained active in their other community roles. However, with regard to the Tearfund-supported project, several activists commented that they were "waiting for the green light," and/or confused about timing because they had understood that Erbil and Duhok activities would resume in January 2018, and then they were subsequently told that activities were further postponed due to Ninewa. Given their frustration, the evaluation team took the unusual step of having Tearfund global staff Mariam Tadros provide clarifications following the interviews and focus groups.

Administrative issues and delays were challenging across all geographic zones, including approvals for hires, contracts, payments, procurements, and implementations. This was due largely to the unique nature of peacebuilding compared to the traditional emergency response systems and experience within Tearfund Iraq. Seen in this light, peacebuilding involves payment for activities that appear intangible, procurement of items that are unusual (e.g. graduation gowns), recruitment and rate-setting for unfamiliar skill sets, and different ways of contracting to partner with community-based entities. The country office has already recognized these challenges and begun working toward improvement.

The most problematic administrative issue was delayed payments to activists, and in some cases a requirement that they commute long distances under variable security conditions to retrieve their payments in Erbil. This was frustrating for all, and particularly problematic for activists who are displaced or otherwise living under difficult circumstances.

Other administrative issues were embedded in project management structures. Most in-country project staff were considered 'consultants,' and all were new – which gave them less access, authority and 'social capital' to get things done within the Tearfund Iraq system. The Erbil and Duhok activities of 2017 were managed from Tearfund headquarters in the UK, which served some necessary functions while piloting, but also resulted in a parallel system with minimal project ownership among Iraq-based staff. The Ninewa activities of 2018 were run from the Erbil country office, creating more possibility for local ownership, but also requiring the very speedy creation of an entirely new project management system.

Most of these issues can be resolved, but certain tensions will remain inherent in the program model. Project staff observe that their role includes 'buffering' between the activists and Tearfund systems. The intensity of buffering should reduce as Tearfund develops systems better aligned to peacebuilding. However, it will remain important that project staff are fully 'connected' to both Tearfund systems and activist communities to ensure their liaison function works. It will also be important to streamline the managerial requirements placed on activists, because it is difficult for project staff to mediate between Tearfund's culture of administrative urgency and activists' culture of responsiveness to the community.

From an activist perspective, there was frequent mention that activity budgets were too low, sometimes accompanied by surprise or confusion in cases where activists had expected more budget to be available. From the project staff perspective, the limits had been communicated, and part of sustainable activism is resourcefulness in multiplying support. There are indications from Ninewa that this is possible, e.g. activists who negotiated free contributions of meeting halls and DJ services, and also made contributions from their own pockets. However, the Tearfund expectation of resourcefulness could be made more consistently explicit, and facilitation support could be provided for budgeting and planning.

4.3 Suggestions: What ideas do participants have for future improvement?

Frequently mentioned suggestions include the following:

- With urgency, reunite the Erbil / Duhok activist community, and clarify status / launch of phase 2. (This clarification is now in progress).
- Clarify relationship of Erbil / Duhok activists to Ninewa activists. (This was rarely stated as a formal suggestion, but rather expressed as a question or a point of confusion).
- Ensure that activist work with trainees is a process involving follow-up, not a one-time event.
- Ensure that activists are paid stipends on time, at a location that is feasible for them.
- Improve procurement, so that promised supplies are delivered on time, to correct locations.
- Ensure that all minority groups participate, and that partner (e.g. school) selection criteria are explained clearly, to avoid the perception of favouritism.
- Plan for more and longer training events (especially in Ninewa, where training was limited).
- Consider longer project cycles, or more continuity between project cycles to ensure momentum.
- Consider larger activity budgets (though see alternative staff perspective above).

5. WHY AND HOW DID THE POSITIVE OUTCOMES COME TO BE?

This second evaluation sub-question is intended to discern the role of Tearfund in relation to other causative factors. Positive outcomes are assumed to be multi-causal, and established activists bring pre-existing skill sets and relational networks to effect change within the project. Positive outcomes cannot be fully attributed to Tearfund, so it is important for Tearfund to have a specific understanding of its own contribution.

5.1 Key individual dynamics

The activists – as the project's change agents – indicated **significant changes in their own journey** as peacebuilders. At a vocational level, all of them were previously active in the community, but most added new dimensions to their work, e.g. adding peacebuilding or social cohesion to their work in other sectors, becoming a trainer for the first time, expanding their relational networks, increasing their engagement in voluntarism, and/or increasing their overall level of activity. These new dimensions of the activists' work affect not only activities done in collaboration with Tearfund, but also their overall vocational portfolio. For example, one activist who is a social worker has integrated new peacebuilding and social cohesion content into training provided for other social workers.

At a personal level, activists in Erbil and Duhok were impacted by strong cross-faith relationship development with other activists. Their highest quantitative ratings were generally reserved for the 'activist community aspirations' identified during the 2016 regional gathering – in other words, the things that they experienced *together.*[20] (See Figure 3 above). Listening to each other's stories

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[20] During this evaluation, the five aspirations were difficult to differentiate from each other, except for the strong qualitative emphasis on the mutual support. Further, while those questions were meant to assess the

brought learning about the experiences and sufferings of other groups. The qualitative data indicate that the mutual support function was particularly strong. Within project activities, activists appreciated the complementary perspectives and skills within their community, and relied on each other even more at times when Tearfund support appeared unavailable. Outside of project activities, activists stayed in touch via mechanisms such as Viber, and asked each other for information and advice. In some cases, this extended to practical assistance, such as helping one activist's efforts to support rescued Yazidi women, or rallying around a colleague who had been threatened with physical harm. While most activists shared this strong assessment of mutual support, one cautioned that mutual support had not yet developed.

Tearfund's **contribution** to these key individual changes centred around catalysing the early stages of people coming together in cross-faith settings, and creating and brokering opportunities for activity. Participants emphasized both the opportunities created by Tearfund action, and the periodic lack of opportunities created by Tearfund inaction. Importantly, activists emphasised both explicitly and implicitly that Tearfund supported activist-led planning, rather than imposing it's on plans on activists. For the activists, this was source of motivation and empowerment.

These individual changes are strongly **correlated** to the project's positive outcomes. Those outcomes would not have occurred without activists forming relationships across faith lines and adding new dimensions into their work. However, that does not imply the absence of other positive factors, as explored in the next section.
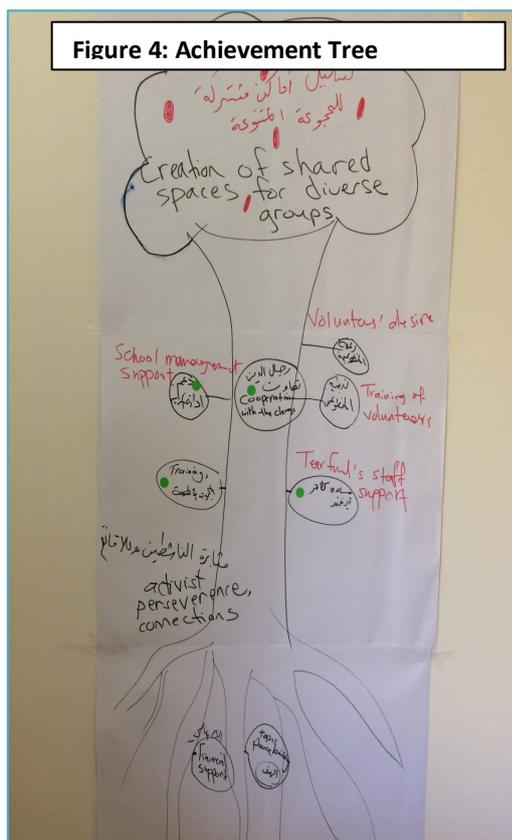

Figure 4: Achievement Tree

5.2 Collective dynamics

The multi-causality of project outcomes was explored in focus groups via participatory use of a simple tree diagram. Many participants were familiar with this diagram as a way of analysing problems. However, in this case the tree diagram was used to analyse achievements. The project outcomes – all forms of bringing people together across identity lines - were placed at the branches, and the causal factors were placed on the trunk or deeper down the roots. After discussion, participants were invited to place a green dot to prioritize the causes they felt were most influential. (See Figure 4 at left).

It was evident throughout the discussions that activists had been **pleasantly surprised by the receptivity of trainees** to the cross-faith approach. They had not expected trainees to be so enthusiastic, accepting and eager to put their learnings into practice, nor had they expected there to be a strong demand for more from others in the community. This sense of readiness and deep receptivity was ultimately reflected in the prioritized deep causes of success.

Among the **deep causes prioritized** by activists, those that received two or more prioritization votes (green dots) appear to cluster into three themes:

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effectiveness of TF's support for those aspirations, many participants did not interpret them in that way. The evaluation team considers this simply as an identified strength within the project.

- A sense of desire, initiative, and responsibility due to perceiving the needs of the context, among both activists and trainees. This implies understanding the problem of sectarianism and volunteering to pursue cross-faith collaboration for the common good.
- A spirit of collaboration and teamwork among the activists, or among the trainees engaged in follow-up activities.
  Tearfund support, including training, staff accompaniment, financial backing and freedom for activists to choose their own strategies and activities.

It is interesting to note that two of the factor clusters refer to internal variables present within the activist communities and the trainees themselves. The participants' strong belief in their own commitment and capacity bodes well for future sustainability. The third factor cluster refers to the value added by Tearfund's external assistance affirming **Tearfund's role as a catalyst and facilitator** rather than an implementer.

6. COMPARISON ACROSS GEOGRAPHIC ZONES

The Erbil and Duhok activities of 2017 were implemented differently than the Ninewa activities of 2018. As mentioned above, Ninewa activities took place within a much shorter time frame, and Tearfund was more directly involved in implementation, with a pre-determined emphasis on women's groups and PTAs. In Ninewa, each activist took on their own small-scale project, whereas as in Erbil and Duhok the activists worked together as city-wide teams focusing on larger projects. Thus there to benefit in comparing results across geographic zones to the extent that data permit.

The pre- and post-training measures of knowledge, attitudes and practices are not comparable across zones. The quantitative project effectiveness ratings provided by activists during this evaluation are comparable but, interestingly, there is no significant difference across geographic zones. (However, note that the ratings cannot be fully disaggregated, because two of the activists served in one more than one zone). The most useful source of comparison lies in the qualitative data, as summarized below.

Activist community formation was clearly stronger in Erbil and Duhok, where it was a highlight, than in Ninewa, where time pressures prevented a 'community' from being formed. The Ninewa activists led mainly as individuals, albeit with some short-term success. They received less training; in fact, they say the training event was too short, and they need more learning on social cohesion. NInewa activists may also have had less autonomy in planning, since the focus on women's groups and PTAs was proposed before they were recruited (based on Erbil/Duhok lessons learned and interim evaluation).

Follow-up with trainees was significantly stronger in Ninewa, also drawing on learnings from Erbil and Duhok. All trainees in Ninewa had the opportunity to participate in follow-up activities, whereas there was no such opportunity in Duhok, and a limited one in Erbil. Also, the trainees in Ninewa were already part of existing action groups (PTAs or women's groups), making mobilization and sustainability potentially easier than it would have been in Duhok or Erbil, where groups needed formation support.

The **effects of timing challenges** were clearly different in each zone. In Ninewa, the short project cycle combined with accountability to GIZ as a donor partner contributed to the quicker achievement of more visible outcomes. However this probably came at a cost to the depth of individual and relational formation in Ninewa, because three 3 simply is not very much time for such changes to develop, as evidenced by the pattern of activists working separately In Ninewa.. The level of activist frustration is much higher in Erbil and Duhok, since their phase 2 was delayed in order to accommodate Ninewa.

Some stakeholders are interested in comparing the effectiveness of working with different social sectors – e.g. women's groups compared to the educational system. The data currently available do not support that inquiry, because attempting to disaggregate by geographic zone is not the same as disaggregating by social sector, and the 'sample size' from the women's sector is quite small. However, this remains a potentially useful inquiry for the future – assuming that the findings are understood as context-specific, and are used to support rather than supplant activist-led strategy development.

7.IMPLICATIONS FOR TEARFUND

This section explores the implications of evaluation learnings for Tearfund, including further development of the theory of change and strategic approach, as well as recommendations for both the Northern Iraq peacebuilding phase 2 and the broader program model.

7.1 Do the learnings align with the project's theory of change?

The evaluation findings generally support the theory of change. It was effective during Phase 1, in that short-term aims were met, subject to the limitations of small scale, short project cycles, and timing/administration challenges.

⇒ **Gathering-nurture model:** If individuals are nurtured, equipped and connected with each other, with other peacebuilders and with sectoral experts then they will drive efforts within their communities and more widely across the country to: build bridges between community, lead community based peacebuilding, discover common complex identities, address existing trauma, enable reconciliation, and challenge existing attitudes and norms of violence enabling improvements in relationships and dispute resolution across sectarian divides and contribute to improved living conditions.

Despite the general affirmation, the theory's lengthy list of things that nurtured, equipped and connected activists will *do* (e.g. build bridges, discover common identities, address trauma etc. as seen above) should be interpreted as illustrative, rather than an assertion that every result on the list will be obtained in every project.

Additional observations, which may help inform future refinements, include the following:
- Activists in Northern Iraq have added to the theory of change by proposing that they believe it will work best in the **education sector.** During phase 2, they may find it useful to explicitly re-engage this proposition, to explore the extent to which it holds true and under what conditions. Activists in other contexts are likely to make different customizations to the theory of change.
- The current theory of change has no mention of faith (as either identity marker or belief/experience) among activists - yet it does carry the expectation that they will be able to influence dispute resolution across sectarian divides.
- There is no mention of diversity within the activist community, or continuity of engagement – both of which appear below among the essential conditions for success.

It is also worth noting that the program model as implemented in Iraq involves a partial, implicit reliance on **contact theory,** meaning the assumption that knowledge, attitudes and behaviours will change when people of different identity groups spend time with each other. Contact theory has been proven effective - but only under certain important conditions.[21] Contact theory also

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[21] For more see: Pettigrew and Tropp. 2006. "Interpersonal Relations and Group Processes: A Meta-Analytic Test of Intergroup Contact Theory." In *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 90 (5): 751-783.

challenges the popular notion that attitude change leads in a unidirectional manner to behaviour change. When behaviour change involves coming together across identity lines – as in this Tearfund pilot - that 'contact' likewise has potential to effect changes in attitude. Where this holds true, the relationship between attitude change and behaviour change is better envisioned as a loop than as a unidirectional line.

7.2 What conditions are required for the gathering-nurture model to be successful?

Based on pilot learnings, the following conditions appear essential. In the main, these confirm Tearfund's working assumptions at the project outset.

- **Diversity among activists** in relation to the prominent inter-group divisions of the particular context. In Iraq, those divisions are prominently sectarian, so the project emphasizes a cross-faith approach. Other contexts may call for different aspects of diversity.
- **Continuity of engagement** between Tearfund and activists over a significant period of time. The time required to reach sustainability will vary across contexts, but it is something that needs to be considered from the outset, along with appropriate phase-out strategies. 'Nurture' implies consistency of relationship, which is consonant with TF values. The relational mindset needs to be protected, because it can easily be squeezed out by an achievement- or administration-oriented mindset during the pressures of implementation.
- **Activist-led planning** increases relevance of activities, motivation to act and empowerment to effect real change. It needs to be emphasized in a genuine way, guarding against tokenism.
- **Formation of a strong 'community'** appears essential among the activist cohort. Ninewa demonstrates that activists can be somewhat successful without this community for a short time. However, they are unlikely to be as influential or sustainable working as individuals over the medium term. (If this were not the case, it would call into question the theory of change).

Some of these success conditions may run counter to the typical modalities of INGOs when working in **emergency response** mode. It is not necessarily impossible to blend the gathering-nurture model with emergency response, but it would require extra commitment and intentionality to do it well. Eighty percent of humanitarian needs now occur in situations of protracted conflict and violence,[22] implying that emergency response, development and sometimes peacebuilding programming increasingly happen simultaneously in the same contexts. The essential, minimalist building block is conflict sensitivity practice (see recommendation fifteen below).

Gathering-nurture work may be possible after the initial rapid response phase gives way to ongoing humanitarian programming, in a context where Tearfund intends to stay for the long term. It would require a 100% dedicated, appropriately skilled peacebuilding project manager who is insulated from the 'relief fray,' backed by a country director who champions peacebuilding, and supported with organizational systems that can function in ways conducive to local partnering. If such conditions are not feasible within Tearfund during a particular emergency response, then another possibility would be to entrust the project to a long-term partner agency that is positioned outside of the humanitarian sector.

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[22] UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). 'Annual Report 2017.'

7.3 What are the benefits and challenges of the cross-faith approach?

This sub-section first explores the importance of clarifying what type of cross-faith approach is being taken, and then assesses the other benefits and challenges of the particular approach taken in the pilot project.

With regard to **clarification of the cross-faith approach,** the term 'cross-faith' can take on different meanings, depending on the context and on the implementers. During this evaluation, learning arose from cognitive dissonance. From the lead evaluator's perspective, it was striking that faith in any form was almost never mentioned until she eventually asked about it. When asked, most of the integrated 'faith sensitivity' questions fell flat. Even after accounting for the reality that any conversation about inter-group dynamics in Iraq implicitly references faith as identity as an identity marker, and that many people increasingly prefer to keep faith separate from public life, there was a perceived contradiction that needed to be explored.

Through ongoing conversation within the evaluation team and stakeholders, it became clear that **'faith' can mean different things, and manifest itself differently**, in different parts of the project infrastructure. For the activists as the change agents on the ground, faith refers primarily to an **external identity marker** that is often misused for political purposes. They are highly motivated by cross-faith engagement that counters this problem by building collaboration between people of different faith identities for the common good. In contrast, faith as an internal phenomenon that forms or informs a person's actions is not an expressed source of motivation. In other words, a 'cross-faith' approach can exist even where the protagonists are not motivated by individual faith beliefs or experiences.

Due to contextual sensitivities, and the painful recent history of Northern Iraq, Tearfund Iraq implemented that same type of cross-faith approach, emphasizing relationships and collaboration across identity lines, and not addressing faith as a belief or experience. This earned Tearfund a high level of acceptance and strong local relationships. One staff member from a non-Christian faith background explained: "I never felt that I was working with a Christian organization…rather than an organization that works with a cross-section of interfaith or religious groups and promotes social cohesion." In their experience, working on behalf of a particular faith tradition implies discrimination and sometimes even violence against others. Parts of their statement might alarm Christian stakeholders unfamiliar with the context. However, they were actually complimenting Tearfund on upholding one of its own core values: "Aid is given regardless of race, religion, nationality or gender, and it will never be used to further a particular political or religious standpoint."

The perceived contradiction around the meaning of 'cross-faith' stemmed from the observation that different cues had emerged from Tearfund global. In that setting, while 'faith' as identity is recognized, faith is also seen as a **belief or experience.** For example, Tearfund's global peacebuilding strategy emphasizes 'faith-based movements,' which usually implies a level of faith belief or experience as a motivation, and some headquarters leaders echoed this expectation during interviews. The evaluation Terms of Reference used the term 'interfaith,' further implying scope for engaging faith as belief or experience, before shifting to 'cross-faith,' which may point more squarely to faith as identity. Tearfund headquarters was eager to test the 'Faith Matters' evaluation guide,[23] which implicitly emphasizes sensitivity to the perspectives of faith-motivated participants. The valuable lesson is a need for clarification on both sides: clarification of assumptions and terminologies within Tearfund, and also clarification of 'Faith Matters' to explicitly disclose the nature and limitations of its 'faith sensitivity' emphasis.

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[23] Woodrow, Oatley and Garred. 2017.

In big picture terms, Tearfund's global identity as a Christian organization gives it a general affinity for faith-based and cross-faith action. At the same time, it prompts the necessity to **reflect theologically and strategically** on the range of different possible approaches, and to discern which best fits Tearfund's values, and its role in a particular context. The approach taken in Northern Iraq may differ from what other contexts require – and yet the globalization of communications requires that Tearfund be able to convey its overall approach with logical consistency. Project staff foresee that the current identity-focused nature of the Middle East work might be better communicated and understood through reference to the problem of 'sectarianism.'

On the other hand, if and when Tearfund opts to approach faith as belief or experience, this will require staff and partners that are equipped to support cross-faith religious literacy, and possibly also to encourage spirituality while avoiding sensitive misunderstandings about conversions. This choice would open up an additional spectrum of options for consideration, because programming that approaches faith as a belief or experience can be done in myriad different ways. As a brief example, among the more useful typologies is the distinction between the dialogue of everyday life, the dialogue of action for the common good, the dialogue of theological exchange and the dialogue of religious experience.[24] Among the more useful encouragements is the affirmation that there is a meaningful and important role for religious conservatives in interfaith collaboration.[25]

With those important clarifications in mind, here are some other **benefits of the cross-faith approach** as implemented in Northern Iraq:
- There is unanimous agreement among participants and in-country staff that a cross-faith approach is what the current Iraqi **context needs.** Participants believe this to such an extent that they question whether a single-faith approach could add any value. In general, the relevance of the cross-faith approach will hold true in other contexts where identity-based conflict includes a significant religious aspect.
- Strong repeated emphasis on **'relationships.'** Some participants experienced cross-faith connections for the very first time during this project. Others broadened and deepened connections in significant ways. A project staff member explains the significance of these connections: "Social engagement makes it easier to have understanding, and you can then to begin to talk about touchy subjects, because you have a good social connection."
- A few activists emphasize the importance of **acknowledging one's own religious identity,** despite perhaps being a minority, and despite the risk of being misperceived as intolerant. One activist insists on including such content when training (although other activists do not necessarily agree). Another activist describes having experienced this change personally: "I began to become proud to say who I am, but also to learn how to respect others' identity. It gave me courage to express my identity – which I couldn't do before as a targeted minority." Tearfund values this but has not yet entered into the conversation. As the context evolves, there may be a time when it becomes appropriate for Tearfund to do so.

Additional **challenges of the cross-faith approach** as implemented in Northern Iraq include the following:
- It is worth repeating that it is tremendously difficult to facilitate bringing people together well across identity lines (as described in Section 4.1). The difficulty is an indication of its importance. In addition to the presence of outright 'spoilers,' many members of the public question how far it can go. To what extent can people of other identities really understand what I've been through? To what extent can I trust them not to damage me?

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[24] Thangaraj. 1999. *The Common Task: A Theology of Christian Mission*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.
[25] Bouta, Kadayifci-Orellana and Abu-Nimer. 2005. 'Faith-Based Peacebuilding: Mapping and Analysis of Christian, Muslim and Multi-Faith Actors.' Clingendael and Salam Institute.

- The question of **working with religious leaders** is problematic in this context. While not part of the original project plan, some activists raised the possibility because religious leaders carry influence. At the community level, religious leaders are among the key stakeholders who can open or close project doors. For example, in Hamdaniya, religious leaders helped an activist to identify a park project location and invite participants to workshops. People also trust their own religious leaders and see them as a resource for dispute resolution.[26] At the same time, some religious teaching has very divisive content that is fuelling conflict. Activists and staff mention a pattern of peaceful rhetoric in public followed by divisive rhetoric in private. The area of religious teaching needs work, yet that work is delicate and requires an intervenor with particular kind of mandate and reputation. The very idea of working with religious leaders is often polarizing in this context, and the activists themselves divided on this matter.

7.4 What are recommendations for Phase 2 of the Iraq peacebuilding project?

phase 2 will likely run from approximately August 2018 to October 2019. Recommendations based on the evaluation findings are as follows. Unless noted otherwise, all recommendations have been generally agreed with the evaluation team, and then further refined by the lead evaluator.

Strategy

1. **Activist community:** As soon as possible, re-unite Erbil and Duhok activists, and combine them with Ninewa activists, to form one cohesive community (with several geographically based sub-communities). To integrate the Ninewa activists, facilitate relationship building for all, plus additional training for those who have worked only in Ninewa (and therefore missed the Erbil/Duhok training opportunities). Tearfund staff point to the training gap as including negotiation; mediation; and conflict analysis, mapping and resolution.
2. **Depth and continuity:** Focus the next phase on depth and continuity in existing locations, not on geographic expansion. Work with the same activist communities, repairing the strains caused by discontinuity in Erbil/Duhok, and considering an increase in community size. The question of expansion to Mosul will arise when Tearfund begins operating other there, and Mosul is important because its Arab population could help balance the project's positioning. However, allow one year to understand the complex context of post-Islamic State Mosul before beginning peacebuilding there. Clarify phase-out strategy before expanding to any other Iraq locations.
3. **Activist-led planning:** Continue to support activists to establish their own project strategy and activities within the realm of building peace across lines of identity-based conflict, without imposition of specifics from Tearfund. Be prepared to defend this model when challenged by pressures to impose plans from outside. Where NInewa time pressures may have pushed Tearfund into implementation, step back and return to a facilitating role.

Ways of working

4. **Activity budgets:** Ensure very clear communication with activists about Tearfund activity budget limits. Encourage and facilitate planning about how to use those TF funds, and how to resourcefully supplement Tearfund budgets through the activists' own initiative.
5. **Working with trainees:** When considering follow-up with trainees, help activists to reflect on the difference between starting up a group and collaborating with a group that already exists. The latter may have greater capacity and sustainability.
6. **Religious leaders:** Involve religious leaders as key stakeholders in community activities, in the same manner as one involves local influencers from the government or civil society sectors. However do not pursue religious leaders as central project partners, or attempt to influence their religious teachings, at this point in time.

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[26] Strang and O'Brien. 2017.

7. **Advocacy:** Consider providing support if and when Northern Iraq activists develop interest in advocacy activities. This is part of the regional program model, but thus far has been premature in the Iraqi project. Advocacy may align with the aspiration of developing a people movement, and could be one way of expanding project reach through influence at the socio-political level.

Funding

8. **Project cycles:** Exercise caution with short project cycles and short-term peacebuilding grants. Short-term grants, in particular, must build directly on what activists are already doing. Ensure there is enough activist and administrative capacity to implement. Consider and mitigate the risk of doing harm by opening conflict-related emotional wounds without providing the time and support required to begin to heal them.
9. **Sectoral grants:** Look for opportunities to integrate peacebuilding in grants available for other sectors. For example, peacebuilding activists might provide coexistence training and coaching for people of different identity groups who come together intentionally and consistently to pursue livelihoods or protection goals.

Administrative systems

16. **Adapted procedures:** Work quickly, before phase 2 beings, to address the priority administrative issues that hampered Phase 1 operations. Adapt the procedures and test them, using robust feedback loops to gather activist feedback on how things are working. Be prepared to adjust again if needed before procedures are finalized.
17. **Staff connections:** Provide strong orientation and intake process for the new peacebuilding project manager, to ensure that they have access, authority and social capital to get things done in the Tearfund Iraq system.
18. **Staff engagement:** Involve Tearfund Iraq support services staff earlier and more deeply in various aspects of phase 2, to develop a mutually informed understanding of what's needed, and a shared stake in the project's success.
19. **Future partnering:** Consider the peacebuilding project as a possible 'first wave' indicating the new types of community partnering that will become important as Tearfund Iraq enters rehabilitation programming. What other adapted paradigms and mechanisms might be needed?

Sectoral integration

14. **Experiences:** Support sectoral managers to work together on opportunities for integration within the new rehabilitation portfolio. Provide staff with a tangible first experience of integration. 'Journey to Healing' workshops have already proven to be a promising entry point for peacebuilding in the protection sector. Livelihoods and peacebuilding integration are promising, subject to certain conditions which are under research by Tearfund global staff.
15. **Mindsets:**[27] Introduce staff to 'Do No Harm' (DNH)[28] as a light but powerful conflict sensitivity lens for envisioning conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding integration. There are a number of good tools are available, but DNH excels for action-oriented uptake at local levels. The program design team can use DNH in a more in-depth manner to meet donor conflict sensitivity requirements.

Other

16. **Community of practice:** Become part of the peacebuilding network in Northern Iraq's interagency community, to learn from others' experience and explore collaboration.

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[27] Not discussed with evaluation team. Added by lead evaluator.
[28] See: https://www.cdacollaborative.org/what-we-do/conflict-sensitivity/

7.5 What are recommendations for the region / program model?

Building on the Iraq recommendations, additional considerations for refining the program model include the following.

Development of activist communities

1. **Journey:** Give further definition to the personal, vocational and potentially spiritual journey that Tearfund is encouraging activists to take over time. Are there any unforeseen consequences resulting from success? How would Tearfund know when an activist community has become sustainable, and how long might that take? What is the eventual strategy for phasing out Tearfund support?

2. **Aspirations:** Revive and further clarify the meanings of the aspirations developed at the 2016 regional gathering. (Grow together. Learn together. Support one another. Do things together. Connect with each other. Share with each other). These aspirations may be a source of inspiration and self-assessment for future activist communities. Some communities may also wish to customize the aspirations to fit their own needs.

3. **Mutual accountability:** Consider ways to foster mutual accountability within activist communities, rather than just individual accountability relationships with Tearfund. For example, perhaps activists could develop and sign an agreement with each other, which is separate from their Tearfund contract.

4. **Regional aspects:**[29] Clarify whether Tearfund plans to continue nurturing the activist community at a regional (Middle East) level, and if so when the next gathering might come. Consider staffing a peacebuilding position at the regional level, given the increasing demand for support in the region.

Monitoring, evaluation and learning

5. **Framework:** Establish an open-ended, emergent MEL framework to support the program model. Recommended elements include:
    - Outcome Harvesting to credibly identify visible changes in social actor behaviour, in a manner that is not limited by pre-defined objectives.
    - Supplementary tool to track individual attitude changes, and to better understand their relationship to visible changes in behaviour.
    - Feedback loops to allow activists to inform timely adaptations by Tearfund, and possibly allow trainees to adaptations by activists.
    - Activist community self-assessment tool based on the aspirations described in #18 above.

6. **About logic models:** This emergent MEL framework described above can co-exist alongside a logic model where donors require it, as long as that model is minimally proscriptive.

7. **Faith sensitivity:** If there is a future activist cohort for whom faith as belief or experience is a primary motivator, then most components of this emergent MEL framework can be adapted to help capture and understand the faith-related aspects of their work. The 'Faith Matters' evaluation guide[30] would be an appropriate resource to support that effort.

Cross-faith approach

8. **Conceptual clarity:** Continue to refine concepts and communications on what 'cross-faith' means (and doesn't mean) for Tearfund, how this aligns with Tearfund's values, and what sorts of contextual differences might prompt adaptations.

9. **Policy:** Review policies that prevent hire of non-Christians in key expatriate roles (including peacebuilding managers), and limit partnering with non-Christian community-based entities or

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[29] Not discussed with evaluation team. Added by lead evaluator.
[30] Woodrow, Oatley and Garred. 2017.

civil society organizations. Such policies, intended as an expression of Tearfund's Christian commitment, may have unintended consequences in the Middle East, such as communicating a message of exclusion, or hampering the use of context-relevant approaches.

ANNEX A: PARTICIPANTS

Individual Questionnaires (key informant interview style):

Name	Role	Sex	Participation site	Interview location	Interview date
Nahla Mahood	Activist	F	Erbil	Erbil	30 May 2018
Athraa Jawaad Habeeb	Activist	F	Erbil	Erbil	30 May 2018
Yasser Abdel Jawad Yasser	Activist	M	Erbil	Erbil	30 May 2018
Ghanim Elias Salim	Activist	M	Erbil, NInewa	Erbil	30 May 2018
Bassam Salim	Activist	M	Duhok, Ninewa	Erbil	31 May 2018
Adam Abduljabbar Abdulla	Activist	M	Erbil	Erbil	31 May 2018
Wadha Merie Youssef	Activist	F	Erbil	Erbil	31 May 2018
Abdulla Abdulrahman Abdulla	Activist	M	Erbil	Erbil	31 May 2018
Bernadette Stefan Shala	Activist	F	Ninewa	Erbil	31 May 2018
Sozan Khudeda	Activist	F	Duhok	Duhok	3 June 2018

Focus Group Discussions:

FGD	Name	Sex
Duhok Teachers (trainees*) **4 June 2018 in Duhok** **It was determined that only four participants were actually peacebuilding project trainees. The other three had participated in other Tearfund projects.*		M
		M
		M
		M
		M
		M
		M
Duhok Activists **4 June 2018 in Duhok**	Bassam Salim	M
	Sozan Khudeda	F
	Sarjon Ruban	M
FGD Erbil Uni Students (trainees) **5 June 2018 in Erbil**		M
		F
FGD Ninewa Activists **5 June 2018 in Erbil**	Ghanim Elias Salim	M
	Bernadette Stefan Shala	F
FGD Erbil Activists **6 June 2018 in Erbil**	Wadha Merie Youssef	F
	Fairoz Mohammad	F
	Abdulla Abdulrahman Abdulla	M

Tearfund staff interviews:
- Nazar Jamil, consultant Project Manager, Erbil & Duhok, 1 June 2018
- Megan Kelly, consultant Project Manager, Ninewa Plains, 3 June 2018
- Willem van Amerongen, Country Director, Iraq, 5 June 2018
- Tricia Mazo, Protection Specialist, Middle East Response, 5 June 2018
- Veena O'Sullivan, Head, Thematic Support Team (global), 6 June 2018
- Vana Xanchy, Peacebuilding Officer, Iraq, 6 June 2018
- Mariam Tadros, Peacebuilding Coordinator (global), 6 June 2018

ANNEX B: QUESTIONNAIRES (summarized)

Part A - for both activists and trainees

1. In which project location did you participate
Erbil   Duhok   Ninewa

2a. How would you describe your nationality (ethnicity)?
Kurdish   Iraqi   Other   I'd prefer not to say

2b. How would you describe your religion?
Sunni Islam   Shia Islam   Shabak Islam   Christian   Khakai   Yezidi   Other   I'd rather not say

3. The purpose of this project was to mobilise a religiously diverse community of activists that can promote peace, coexistence and social cohesion in community settings, for example schools and community-based organizations. In your opinion, to what extent did the project fulfil its purpose?
5-point scale; 1 Purpose not fulfilled . . . 5 Purposely highly fulfilled

4. In your opinion, what were 3 significant project achievements that contributed toward peace?

5a. To what extent did the project have unexpected results that were positive?
5-point scale; 1 Almost no unexpected positive results . . . High level of unexpected positive results
5b. Can you share an example?

6a. To what extent did the project have unexpected results that were problematic?
5-point scale; 1 High level of problematic results . . . Almost no problematic results
6b. Can you share an example?

7a. To what extent did the project model collaboration between people of diverse social identities (nationality, ethnicity, religion, etc.)?
5-point scale; 1 Almost no diverse modelling . . . High level of diverse modelling
7b. Can you share an example?

9a. To what extent did project participants share their new knowledge or skills with others in the community?
5-point scale; 1 Almost no sharing . . . 5 High level of sharing
9b. Can you share an example?

10. Do you have any recommendations for improvement?

Part B – for activists only

11. Can you tell us a bit about the nature of your normal, ongoing work? (Possible follow-up questions: What is your job/agency called? What is its focus?)

12. How have your personal capacities changed since you began partnering with Tearfund? (Possible follow-up questions: What have you learned? In what ways have you grown? Are there any things that you do differently now?)

13. How has the nature of your work changed since you began partnering with Tearfund? (Possible follow-up questions: Have you added new activities or areas of work that you weren't doing before? Have you carried new capacities back into your previous job/agency?)

14. Tearfund has aimed to help activists form a peacebuilding community focused on several key aspirations identified at the Middle East Regional Peacebuilders Gathering in 2016. How would you rate the effectiveness of Tearfund's assistance for the following aspirations?
       SHARE with each other - 5-point scale; 1 not effective . . . 5 highly effective
       GROW together - 5-point scale; 1 not effective . . . 5 highly effective
       SUPPORT each other - 5-point scale; 1 not effective . . . 5 highly effective
       DO things together - 5-point scale; 1 not effective . . . 5 highly effective

LEARN together - 5-point scale; 1 not effective . . . 5 highly effective
Can you share examples that impacted you personally?

15a. Tearfund intended this project to support a community of faith-based activists, from a range of diverse faith traditions. In your experience, was this cross-faith approach different than a single-faith project? If yes, in what ways? If not different, why not?

15b. How did the cross-faith approach impact you personally?

15c. How did the cross-faith approach impact your trainees, and the broader community?

16. If Tearfund were not present, what aspect of their partnership would you miss the most?

17. Are there any further issues that you want to talk about?

ANNEX C: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE (summarized)

Warm-up	We understand that you have participated in (activity). What do you remember about that (activity)?
If not already done: **Identify and prioritize positive outcomes.**	In your opinion, what did this project achieve (or accomplish)? Which of these achievements made the most significant impact for peace?
Contingency	IF there are no identifiable outcomes, then ask: Did that training help you in understanding or relating to people of different identities (nationalities, faiths, etc.)? If so in what ways?
Process: What was the step-by-step process that led to this outcome?	Restate the outcome on which you will focus during this step. How did this exciting achievement come into being? What were the events that led up to it? Participants brainstorm events, and write each event on one post-it note. Participants arrange the events in a chronological order. Watch for insights that may help to understand causation. Ask participants to expand further on those points.
Factors: What were the multiple factors contributing to the outcome?	What were the causes (or factors) that brought this achievement into being? Show example of a tree diagram. Participants fill in the diagram by identifying causes and sub-causes of the achievement. Participants weight most important causes using sticker dots.
Factors (continued): deeper probe on cross-faith aspect	Can you tell me more about how the cross-faith composition of the activist group came into play? Do you think any of the causes are faith-related?
Contribution: In what ways did the role and action of Tearfund contribute to this outcome?	Point to any causes that relate to the role of Tearfund. Can you tell me more about what Tearfund did here? What was their role? What actions did they take? What would have happened if Tearfund had not been present?
'Other outcomes'	This project has clearly had some positive results! Of course, it's also normal to have disappointments. Are there any achievements that you have been hoping for, but have not yet happened? If yes, what prevented this achievement from taking place? Have there been any unintended (accidental) negative results from the project? If yes, it's important to discuss so we can learn together from the experience. Can you share your perspective on what happened?
Wrap-up: What ideas do participants have for future improvement?	What are your ideas and hopes for the future of your group? Do you have any suggestions for Tearfund on how it should implement similar projects in the future?