FINAL REPORT

EVALUATION: STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS FOR MEDIATION AND PEACEBUILDING 2019 – 2022

APRIL 2022

FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF STABILISATION AND HUMANITARIAN AID (DSH)
OF THE

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

BY

Transition International

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This evaluation explores the nature of the strategic partnership between the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and five non-governmental organisations whose work centres on peacebuilding and conflict prevention themes. These partners are: International Crisis Group (ICG), Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (CHD), International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), International Alert, and Interpeace. The evaluation covers a three-to-four-year period (2019-2022) and builds on findings from an earlier evaluation (covering 2016-2018). It focuses on the modalities, composition and added value of the partnership, and considers its overall strategic nature, as opposed to the performance of individual partners.

The evaluation applies six evaluation criteria (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, impact, catalytic effects, and value for money). Drawing on a mixed methods approach, it deployed a variety of tools (and sampling approaches) to inform the agreed evaluation questions aimed at understanding the inner mechanics of the partnership from the MFA's as well as partners' perspective. A total of 55 survey respondents were consulted, followed by 44 partner and MFA interviews, which were conducted independently, albeit in close consultation with the MFA. An initial group of respondents was proposed by MFA, complemented with others by the evaluation team to maximise independency.

Overall, the evaluation finds that the strategic partnership instrument has proven useful and added value to the MFA and partners alike. It is premised on trusted relationships and has provided the MFA with high-quality information and analysis on the issues and contexts in which it operates (or has an interest), thereby informing its policy making process. The added value for embassies seems, however, less evident. Interestingly, very few MFA staff referred to the contribution that the organisations make to bring about peace, and to support these organisations not because they can provide inputs to MFA, but because they contribute to MFAs peace and security objectives.

The **principal conclusions** are summarised as follows:

i. The strategic partnership has added important value for the MFA, especially through providing knowledge and analysis, policy making contributions and unique, flexible funding mechanisms.
ii. The MFA staff (especially in embassies and regional directorates) have insufficient understanding and awareness of the strategic partnership, the individual partners, and their in-country activities, compromising the effective use of the partnership.
iii. These difficulties are compounded by challenges vis-a-vis internal coordination, oversight, and systematic application of the partnership. Such coordination challenges especially exist between headquarters and embassies, who often have insufficient information or voice.
iv. Information and network sharing among partners is insufficient in relation to MFA expectations.
v. Some partners receive [additional] separate funds from embassies and trust funds, and the total amounts received is not monitored at MFA level.
vi. The composition of strategic partners remains relevant[1] and is linked to their comparative advantages, which centre on information, analysis, and knowledge production (as well as their contributions to conflict prevention and peacebuilding). There are minor technical gaps in partner

[1] The relevance of the strategic partnership's composition supports the recommendation that it should be continued. However, additional recommendations on [future] partner composition are beyond the scope of this evaluation, which did not consider partner performance in detail. Similarly, substantiated recommendations linked to the value for money of the partnership would require further assessment.

composition that require filling (security, governance) to cover all priorities in the new TOC. However, the composition is based on a market scan of 8 years ago and could be redone.

vii. The large share of unearmarked funding is transformational and unique. It provides the means to: build stronger organisations, flexibility, and increased ability to implement partner strategies, effectively implement earmarked funds, produce reliable information, and contribute to Dutch policy making. It also brings some challenges and risks, including limits to oversight and attribution.

viii. Earmarked funding too, comes with a mix of advantages, challenges, and risks. The main benefit is closer linkages between partners and embassies, more voice for embassies, and more attributable results. Challenges relate to transaction costs (including delays), the short-term and non-sustainable nature of the modality, the initiation of projects that may not reflect needs or priorities on the ground, and the reputation, presence, and capability of the partners in specific countries.

ix. The strategic partnership brings value and informs MFA policy in a way that the Ministry could not achieve on its own accord. But the extent to which these benefits merit the costs shouldered since 2019 must be assessed in a relative sense (i.e., if these could be attained via other means) and is beyond the scope of this evaluation. In terms of catalytic effects, unearmarked funds used for 'institutional investments' has, reportedly, helped attract investments from other donors.

x. The partnership is strategic in view of its long-term and unique funding structures, but how strategic the partnership is, has been questioned, including its strategic framing.

The SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis below summarises the main strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the strategic partnership modality.

STRENGTHS

- ☐ Stronger institutions
- ☐ Low transaction costs
- ☐ Access to information
- ☐ Informed policy
- ☐ Contributions to MFAs peace and security objectives
- ☐ Influencing peace processes without direct involvement (and accountability)

WEAKNESSES

- ☐ Many embassies and regional directories do not know / do not use the instrument
- ☐ Attribution of results (to an extent)
- ☐ Info-sharing among partners
- ☐ Intra-MFA coordination
- ☐ Shared objectives insufficiently established and clarified

OPPORTUNITIES

- ☐ Further align un-earmarked funding to MFA strategic and country priorities
- ☐ Better alignment with embassies and national priorities/strategies
- ☐ Merge existing DSH partnerships with one coordinator and increase collaboration
- ☐ Increase duration and scope of earmarked funding to reduce transaction costs

THREATS

- ☐ Reputational risks of money spent
- ☐ Partners can implement without fully aligning to embassies
- ☐ Un-monitored, multiple sources of MFA funding

The value added brought by the strategic partnership is both unique and has an important bearing on MFA policy making and impact in terms of the MFAs contributions to peace and security. Therefore, the evaluation concludes that the partnership instrument serves an important purpose and has added sufficient value to be continued (with certain adjustments). The proposed adaptions are as follows:

i. Develop, implement (and monitor) a system aimed at informing embassy staff (and staff of regional directories in the Hague) about the strategic partnership, the partners, and their activities per region on a consistent basis. It is recommended that one full-time senior staff member (possibly with an assistant) in the Hague (instead of three) ensures this internal and inter-partner information sharing and coordination.
ii. Explore merging this strategic partnership with other DSH partnerships. If merging is not doable, ensure clarity on the different partnership and their modalities to make it much clearer for embassies/regional directorates, who mix the different instruments and are often not aware of their differences.
iii. Consider an oversight (or advisory) mechanism, comprised of senior-level representatives from MFA (beyond DSH), strategic partners and Ambassadors of priority countries.
iv. Provide embassies with more voice and allow them to request the partners to take on certain tasks.
v. Revisit the decision that allowed strategic partners to receive additional funds from embassies, and at MFA level - ensure that the total funding a partner receives, and any possible overlap is monitored. Reconsider if the work of the more operational partners should be funded through this strategic partnership modality, or better via projectized funding.
vi. Consider additional partners, especially organisations from the regions – based on a market scan per region. This would reap programmatic and reputational benefits, can strengthen thematic coverage of the TOC areas, and contribute to building string and sustainable organisations in the regions.
vii. Modify objectives and (more realistic) expectations vis-a-vis coordination and information sharing between partners. Coordination can e.g., be improved through partners conducting joint advocacy with the embassies, or co-authoring briefings or position papers.
viii. Introduce a semi-earmarked funding model where large shares of unearmarked funding can remain in place, albeit with increased consideration for: a) reporting requirements against the TOC, b) more partner spending in-country versus at headquarters, c) partner availability to embassies to provide support on an as-needed basis.
ix. Explore an increase in earmarked funding, provided that: a) earmarked funding is programmed by embassies with the partners and MFA playing a supporting role, b) projects are longer and larger (and as flexible as possible) to both minimise and justify the transaction costs.
x. Rename and rebrand the instrument in a way that reflects what the partnership actually is, and in a captivating way, to improve the profile and status of the partnership.

ACRONYMS

BEMO	*Beoordelings Memorandi /* Activity Appraisal Document
CHD	Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease 2019
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
DSH	Department of Stabilisation & Humanitarian Aid (*Directie Stabiliteit en Humanitaire Hulp*)
DSH-RV	DSH - rule of law and peacebuilding (*Rechtsorde en Vredesopbouw*) Security and Rule of Law organisational unit of DSH
DSH -SV	DSH - stability and security (*Stabiliteit en Veiligheid*) Security and Rule of Law organisational unit of DSH
EKN	Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
EPLO	European Peacebuilding Liaison Office
EU	European Union
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
HH	Humanitarian Aid
IA	International Alert
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICTJ	International Center for Transitional Justice
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
ISSSS	International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy
IO	International Organisation
KII	Key Informant Interview
L&A	Lobby and Advocacy
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MO	Migration and Displacement
MSC	Most Significant Change
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development - Development Assistance Committee
PVE	Preventing Violent Extremism
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SRoL	Security and Rule of Law
SP	Strategic Partner
TI	Transition International
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

In 2016, the Security and Rule of Law (SRoL) division of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Department of Stabilisation and Humanitarian Aid (DSH) formally entered into a strategic partnership with five International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs). Funding for an average three-to-four-year period was provided to the: *International Crisis Group (ICG), Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (CHD), International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), International Alert (IA),* and *Interpeace.* DSH selected these INGOs with the broader aim of strengthening its support to peace processes, conflict prevention and peacebuilding in line with the SRoL Results Framework and based on their internationally recognised profiles, extensive networks, knowledge, and capacity.[2] Figure 1 provides an overview of the five strategic partners (SPs).

International Crisis Group (ICG) – a Brussels-based, independent organisation provides field-based research and expert analysis on often un-covered areas and situations and engages in often impactful relations and policy makers at all levels. Crisis Group's mission is to prevent, resolve and mitigate deadly conflict around the world by informing and influencing the perceptions and actions of policymakers and other key conflict actors

Center for Humanitarian Dialogue (CHD) – a Swiss-based private diplomacy organisation with a mission to help prevent, mitigate, and resolve armed conflict through dialogue and mediation. It focuses on Track 1 (e.g., governments, heads of warring parties) as well as Track 2 (e.g., civil society, communities, private sector) peace negotiations.

International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) – a New York-based justice-oriented organisation working to challenge the causes and address consequences of massive human rights violations. Through its work on transitional justice, it seeks to affirm the dignity of victims, fight impunity, and promote responsive institutions.

International Alert (IA) – a London-based global organisation working on conflict prevention by addressing its root causes. It conducts its peacebuilding work directly with affected communities and grassroots actors to find lasting solutions and aims to shape international policies and practices to support inclusive peace.

Interpeace – a Geneva-based international organisation (IO) focused on supporting inclusive peace agreements, conflict resolution as well as peacebuilding initiatives, globally. It promotes political and social decision making through inclusive processes at grassroots, local and national levels (a 'track 6' approach).

Figure 1: The five strategic partners[3]

The MFA's expectations of the strategic partnership include key factors such as the ability of the partners to utilise each other's networks, to inform MFA policy development, to support Embassies of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKNs), and to engage and influence global policy agendas.[4] The MFA has also emphasised their credibility as neutral and apolitical actors with the ability to operate independently, while also informing the MFA's own policy development, analysis, and country programming processes. Individual funding arrangements for the strategic partnerships were renewed

[2] Minutes of the Annual Policy Dialogue with SRoL Strategic Partners, MFA The Hague, 21 June 2019; De Weijer, Frauke (2018) Study on the added value of MFA/DSH strategic partnerships, pp. 7-9.
[3] Sources: Websites and strategies/ strategic frameworks (for 2019-2022/3 period) of all strategic partners.
[4] De Weijer, Frauke (2018) Study on the added value of MFA/DSH strategic partnerships, pp. 7-9.

and adapted for the 2019-2022 period (see section 2.3 below). While the first phase, prior to 2019, consisted of only non-earmarked global funding, the second phase introduced a percentage of centrally controlled earmarked funding (approximately 20%) to support DSH thematic and geographic priorities in situations and countries of emerging concern. Further, this mixed funding modality sought to better maximise the added value of the partnership, including by generating more awareness of the s (and the partnership mechanism) across the MFA, as it was seen as somewhat under-utilised and ad hoc.[5]

As the funding arrangements are set to expire in 2022 (or adjacent year, depending on individual partner), new arrangements and partnership modalities are under review and discussion within the MFA. To inform this process and help chart a new way forward, DSH has commissioned Transition International (TI) to conduct an evaluation of the strategic partnerships instrument, with a focus on the modalities of the strategic partnership, its composition, and the added value it brings to the MFA (as well as to the partners). This evaluation therefore includes a review of the nature of the relationship between the MFA and the five partners, between MFA the Hague and the embassies regarding the strategic partnerships, and the evolution of the partnership in recent years.

1.2 OBJECTIVES AND DELIVERABLES

Objectives

The main objective of this evaluation is to study and review the model and added value of the strategic partnership as an instrument for the MFA, as well as for the partners in question. The evaluation process has aimed to generate findings that speak to the bearing and strategic nature of the strategic partnership as a whole, rather than focusing on the performance of the individual partners.[6]

The findings have in turn provided the basis for several targeted recommendations to inform decisions vis-à-vis the future direction of the partnership model. More specifically, the evaluation sought to examine (and test) the MFA's expectations and refine or reset the prevailing understanding of the added value brought by the strategic partnerships (with as much precision and nuance as possible).

Specifically, the evaluation aimed to:

- Explore the nature of the strategic partnerships: their current state and [recent] evolution.
- Assess how the MFA and partners alike are benefiting from the partnerships and why, including by considering their composition, funding modalities, catalytic potential, possible constraints, and related factors.
- Consider how existing partnership modalities could be modified or new ones conceived.

Deliverables

Transition International (TI)[7] produced the following two deliverables:

1. An inception report with a focus on the methodological approach to conduct the evaluation.
2. This final evaluation report, including main findings, recommendations, and relevant annexes.

In addition to the above deliverables, the evaluation team is organising two joint reflection sessions with partners and with the DSH, to present, discuss and validate the findings and recommendations. TI further provided the relevant datasets to inform future research.

[5] De Weijer, Frauke (2018) Study on the added value of MFA/DSH strategic partnerships, p2.
[6] Where relevant or illustrative, performance will be taken into account.
[7] Evaluation team: Irma Specht, Team Leader; David Andersson, Senior Expert, Peace and Security; and Tara Hijnekamp, Evaluation Assistant.

1.3 SUMMARY OF THE METHODOLOGY

Scope and thematic focus

The evaluation covers a three-to-four-year timeframe on average [2019-2022] and builds on findings and recommendations identified in an earlier evaluation of the strategic partnership, covering the 2016-2018 period.[8] As one of the aims of the present evaluation is to provide substantive input to the MFAs decision-making processes and raise awareness of the strategic partnerships throughout the Ministry, the evaluation was predominantly written for MFA staff. However, it also discusses key issues that can prove useful for the partners and other relevant stakeholders.

As outlined above, the thematic focus of the evaluation is on the strategic partnership instrument and the various factors underpinning effective collaboration, collective impact and added value. It assessed the advantages and challenges of the dual funding modalities applied (earmarked, and un-earmarked). Further, the evaluation assessed the contributions of the strategic partnership model to the thematic priority areas of DSH and the SRoL and Theory of Change (ToC). The thematic areas that are covered by the evaluation also reflect: i) the relationships between the embassies and the partners, ii) the role of relevant MFA staff in the Hague (and their relationships with both partners and embassies), and iii) the composition and niches of the five partners, all of which relate to peace and conflict-related themes.

As mentioned in the Terms of Reference (ToR), with the re-selection of the strategic partners for the 2019–2022 period, DSH aimed to make better use of the partnerships' strategic component and generate more awareness of the partnerships throughout the MFA (beyond DSH), thereby increasing their added value. Considering this, the evaluation took a macro-level approach to evaluate the effects of this evolution. And while the evaluation has a predominantly institutional focus, it has also paid attention to the specific regions and countries covered by the partners, which were selected by DSH for earmarked funding.

Evaluation criteria and framework

Four evaluation criteria were applied (*relevance, coherence, effectiveness,* and *impact*), as per the official OECD-DAC criteria. Two outstanding DAC criteria (*efficiency and sustainability*) were only considered in so as far as they contributed to answering the evaluation questions, and some reflections pertaining to *Value for Money* were added. Further, the team applied an additional criterion: *catalytic effects*, which is often used in the context of peacebuilding programming and was found to be relevant to this evaluation.

Further, a list of indicators has been formulated to frame the evaluation These were used to finetune the evaluation framework (see annex B).

Targets and targeting principles

The evaluation consulted nearly one hundred staff members of the MFA and SPs. Initially, purposive targeting was applied whereby the MFA provided an initial list of target respondents. To ensure analytical rigor and fully address the evaluation questions, TI added respondents from additional embassies, in addition to the list provided. Further, snowball targeting was applied, based on recommendations of respondents. Figure 2 below presents the total number of people reached per respondent group.

[8] De Weijer, Frauke (2018) Study on the added value of MFA/DSH strategic partnerships.

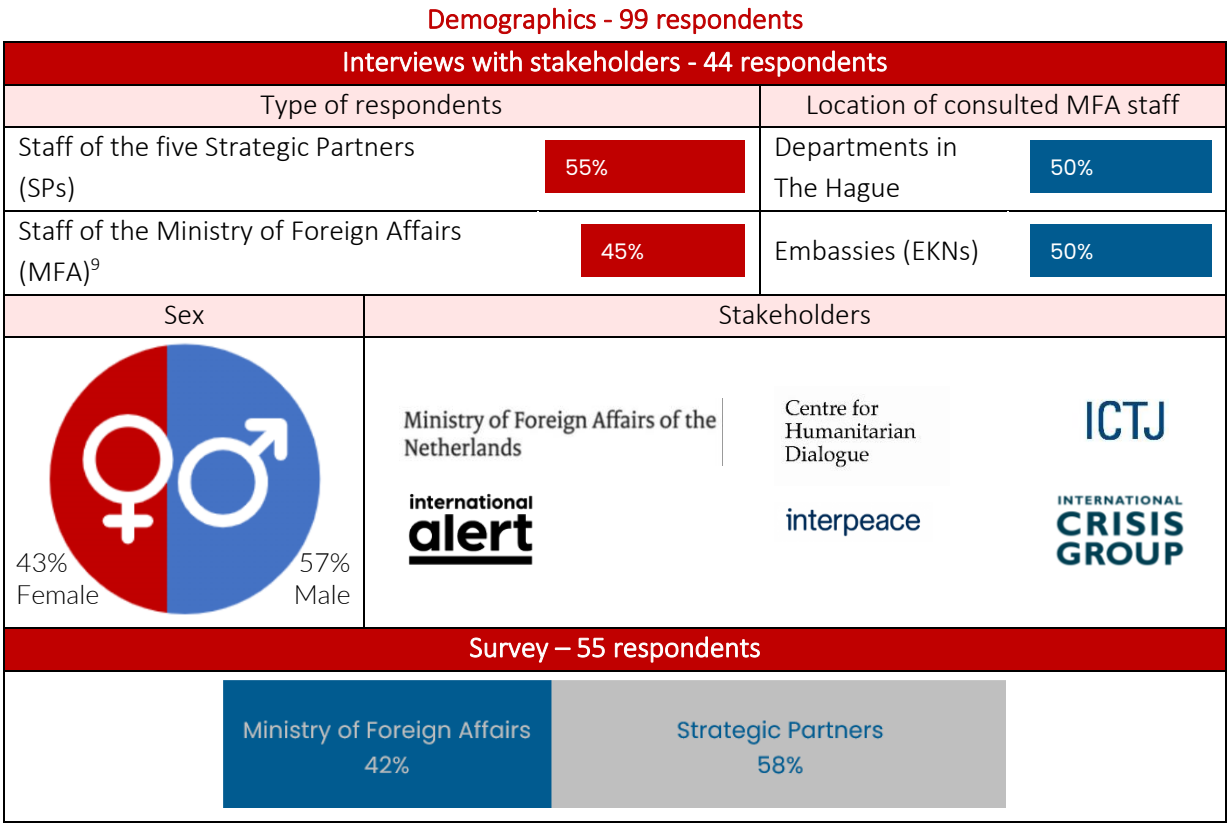

Figure 2: Profile of respondents

Tools

As part of the mixed methods approach used to conduct the evaluation, a variety of tools have been developed to allow for a combination of open and more targeted questions. This helped the team obtain the most relevant information from respondents, and account for an array of variables. The following table outlines the tools applied as part of the evaluation process and the targets that were reached:

Tool	Targets reached
Desk review	N/A
Tool 2.a Rapid survey MFA	23
Tool 2.b Rapid survey partners	32
Tool 3. Key Informant Interview (KII) with SPs' staff	24
Tool 4. KII with MFA the Hague and EKN staff	20
Tool 6. Most Significant Change	All the above
Total	**99**

Figure 3: Tools and targets reached

Caveats and limitations

As the focus of this evaluation is on the strategic partnership mechanism as a whole and not the performance of individual partners, some of its findings may portray their work or performance in an illustrative or aggregate manner (that may not be wholly substantiated or applicable to all partners). Findings that reflect both partners and the MFA must also be looked at in context, and in view of the many and often varied perspectives that have informed this evaluation. The fact that many embassy staff did not fully know the instrument, reduced their abilities to answer all questions and therefore results in different respondent numbers per questions, as seen in Annex B.

[9] Breakdown of MFA The Hague respondents per department: 6 from the Department for Stabilisation and Humanitarian Aid (DSH), 1 from the Asia and Oceania Department (DAO), 1 from the Europe Department (DEU), 1 from the Security Policy Department (DVB) and 1 from the Inclusive Green Growth Department (IGG).

2. MAIN FINDINGS

This chapter presents the main findings per evaluation criteria, and within these the evaluation questions agreed upon.

2.1 RELEVANCE

Q1. What are the comparative advantages of the strategic partners – both as individual organisations and as a collective?

Partners view the strategic partnership model as highly relevant – the MFA a bit less so.

The relevance of the strategic partnership model has been validated by strategic partners and to some extent by the MFA staff. All of surveyed partners found the strategic partnership either extremely relevant or relevant. In contrast, only 17 percent of MFA staff found it extremely relevant while most found it moderately relevant, as presented in Figure 4 below. During the in-depth interviews, most staff of embassies referred to the relevance of individual partners (or the lack thereof), especially in terms of providing relevant information. In contrast, MFA staff in the Hague referred more to the relevance of the partners as a group, especially in terms of influencing and supporting policy development.

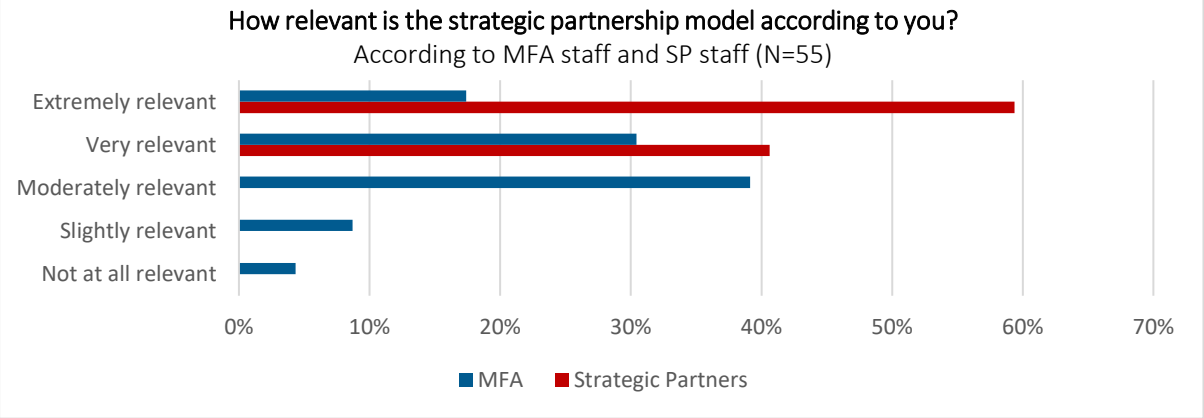

Figure 4: Relevance of the strategic partnership model

For the embassies, there appears to be a trend that for smaller embassies with less capacities, the strategic partnership models seem more relevant than for those that have larger implementation capacities and more funding. As explained by an embassy staff member:

> *When you have a small team at the embassy, it is nice that you don't have to establish contact, it is already there because of the strategic partnership. (…) The Hague is reporting on the earmarked funded projects. It is very positive that I am not reporting on it, so it does not lead to administrative burdens for us. It works well because DSH really relies on our opinion, and we have influence on the projects*. KII MFA EKN

Larger embassies with more funding at their disposal expressed a degree of confusion caused by projects funded centrally at headquarters in the Hague, pointing to how they often overlap with other projects, or are not in line with country strategies and objectives. They further pointed to the strategic partners not always being the best actors to undertake a particular intervention or that they must carry the burden of monitoring projects that they did not request. One embassy staff member explains:

> *I am not in favour of The Hague having a ton of money to give to organisations via calls for proposals, not a great model. It creates a dynamic in which organisations hire lots of people to write good proposals, huge paper exercise in The Hague, and the embassy has no impact. It could happen, and it happened, that an organisation that is bad in country gets the money. More in favour of delegating more money to embassies.* KII MFA EKN

The composition of strategic partners remains broadly relevant but requires review in some areas.

In addition to their global recognition and proven track records, DSH originally selected the strategic partners based on their respective comparative advantages, their complementary missions and outputs. This selection was, however, premised on a market scan conducted eight years ago. The previous evaluation noted that the relevance of the partners' composition can be seen through their coverage of different stages of the 'conflict cycle' and their thematic areas of focus, which coalesce around conflict prevention and mitigation, mediation, and peacebuilding themes.[10] Further, the composition (and comparative advantages) of the partners is also evident in the different 'levels' of their interventions (local, national, global) and the distinct methodologies they apply, which are mostly complementary.

The composition of the partners was perceived by DSH to be valid when they were re-selected for the second phase of the partnership in 2019, and this assessment still stands (albeit with some exceptions). However, the MFA's perceptions of the composition appear to have evolved and are somewhat more nuanced today. For instance, the relevance of the five partners as a collective has been subject to some questioning, notably at the MFA. There is little clarity on precisely how they were initially selected, and the market of [comparable] organisations has changed over time. Further, several staff members highlight that there are other organisations of equal or complementary relevance to MFA objectives that could also qualify as partners.

The thematic areas, and the outputs generated by the five partners broadly correspond to – and reflect – the outcomes in the SRoL results framework. However, looking at the intervention areas covered by the new ToC, there appear to be some minor gaps in terms of coverage. Firstly, none of the five partners work on security-focused themes in a purely operative sense (e.g., protection of civilians or mine action), which is a priority for MFA. Secondly, the ToC places emphasis on governance, social contracts and building accountable, effective, and transparent institutions. Several partners work on these themes, including in the context of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, but it can be argued that the area of governance is less comprehensively covered by the partners as a collective.

In terms of the relevance of the number of partners that make up the strategic partnership, opinions among MFA staff are divided. While some advocate for fewer partners, others highlight the need for - and opportunities that may come from - adding more partners and expanding the scope of the strategic partnership. Some argued for more non-western partners (e.g., regional) and adding of the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) from South Africa was suggested by several people. One reason for revising the number or geographic origin of partners reasons may be linked the thematic areas covered, as described above. Whatever the reasons may be, most MFA respondents agreed on the need to reassess the composition and number of partners (see section 2.5 on proposed revision of the partnership model).

It is important to note that most embassy staff referred to partners linked to the MFA's 'knowledge platform' (e.g., International Development Law Organisation (IDLO) and the Clingendael Institute), when discussing the 'strategic partnership' and were in several instances not aware that this was a different instrument. From their perspective, the instrument in question is of less concern, and their focus is rather on working with whoever is most relevant to them.

[10] De Weijer, Frauke (2018) Study on the added value of MFA/DSH strategic partnerships, pp.9-11.

Partners' have multiple *collective* comparative advantages, but the principal ones centre on knowledge and analysis.

Most embassy staff were not aware that the strategic partners were part of a group, and information sharing among partners remains low (see section 2.3 on Effectiveness). Further, most embassy staff have only engaged with certain subsets of partners (and with each to different extents), which makes it difficult to assess overall partner relevance and benefit from a comparative standpoint. The comparative advantages of partners in many ways mirror their core (and broadly complementary) features. MFA staff note that the most prominent comparative advantages of the partners as a *collective* are linked to their contributions in the areas of knowledge production and analysis, closely followed by expanded networks and collaboration (see Figure 25 in Annex A). However, these survey results stand in some contrast to interview findings, which showed that several MFA staff, especially at the embassy level, do not see many comparative advantages of the partners as a collective. There are different reasons behind these views, but one important explanation is that several embassy staff did not know either who the partners were or that they were part of a strategic partnership mechanism. Another explanation points to challenges vis-a-vis information sharing between MFA in the Hague and embassies (see section 2.3 on Effectiveness for further information).

The comparative advantages of the strategic partners, as *individual* organisations stand out.

The question of strategic partners' relevance is further demonstrated by *how* the individual partners go about their work, which in turn speak to their *individual* comparative advantages and unique features. Some, for instance, operate in a discrete and confidential manner by design (e.g., CHD) while others are highly visible in major policy fora and present their outputs as public goods (e.g., ICG, ICTJ). Partner comparative advantages are also evident in the nature and type of outputs that they generate. These include: i) context-specific analyses, ii) expansive global, and local-level networks and stakeholder access (including high-level actors), iii) programmes which positively impact peacebuilding and conflict trajectories (both directly and indirectly), iv) [often early] access to crisis-affected areas, and v) demonstrable influence on policy processes.

During this evaluation it was noted that MFA staff sees the comparative advantage of the partners mainly in terms of access to information, knowledge, and analysis. For example, 61 percent of respondents referenced partners' knowledge and expertise and 28 percent cited the access they bring with respect to programming, networks, and information (see Figure 24 in Annex A). Similarly, when asked what the strategic partnership has brought to date, 88 percent of consulted MFA staff state knowledge and analysis as added value (see Figure 14 in section 2.3 Effectiveness). From a slightly different, and longer-term perspective, one can also assert that partners' individual comparative advantages have evolved over time with the strategic partnership itself. In this sense, the comparative advantages are further accentuated by the high levels of trust placed in partners and in their ability to influence MFA policy development.

That said, interviewed MFA EKN staff, who have engaged and worked with some of the five partners in-country, referred to their relevance in different measures. ICTJ, ICG and Interpeace were considered most relevant by the consulted embassy staff, as illustrated in the figure below. Some did not find any of the partners to be particularly relevant. However, it must be considered that not all five partners are active in each country, and that most embassy staff were not aware of the five partners, which says more about the functioning of the strategic partnership, than of the relevance of the individual partners.

Which of the five partners do you regard as especially relevant? According to MFA EKN staff (N=12)					
	CHD	International Alert	Interpeace	ICTJ	ICG
Total	33%	17%	42%	58%	42%

Figure 5: Partners regarded as relevant

Interestingly, some partners such as International Alert, seem to work more with MFA in the Hague than with the embassies.

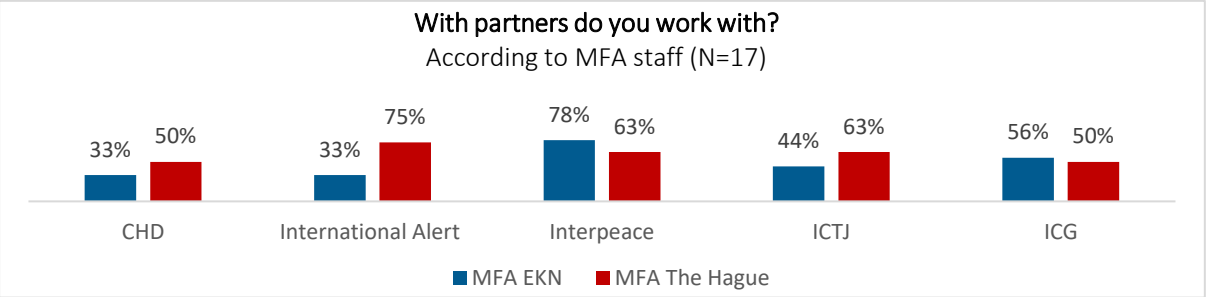

Figure 6: Partners MFA works with

Q2. What, if any, tensions exist between the need for flexibility for partners and predictable outcomes for DSH, and how have these been addressed?

Since the introduction of earmarked funding in 2019, DSH has registered a degree of tension between the flexibility needed by partners to conduct their work independently and impartially and DSH's need for predictable outcomes per the SRoL Results Framework (RF).[11] These tensions do not appear to have materialised in any significant way since, as presented in the figure below.

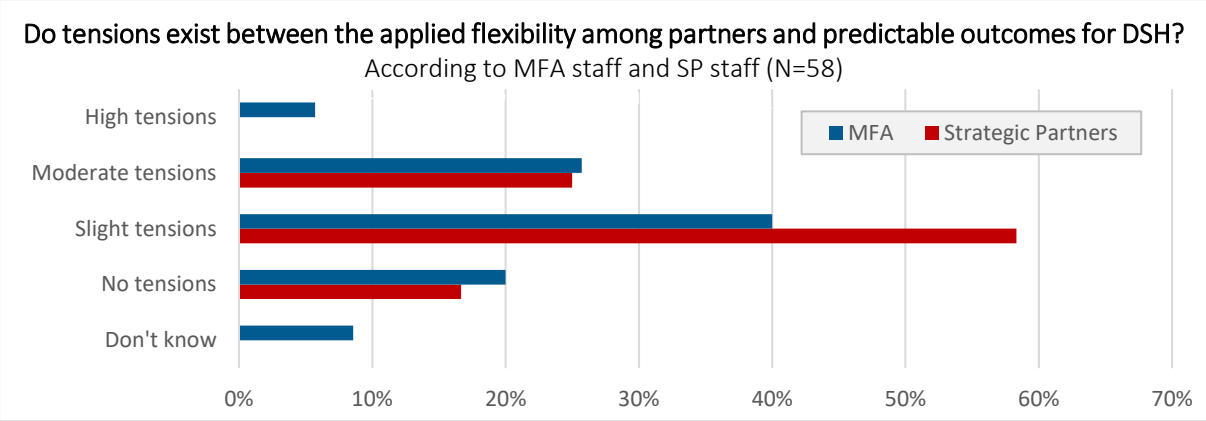

Figure 7: Tensions between flexibility and predictable outcomes

The tensions mentioned by MFA staff are mostly linked to the issue of attribution of results as well as concerns that allocated funds are not spent in accordance with what the MFA deems relevant (e.g., expensive headquarters instead of country offices, activities outside of DSH's focus countries, or on non-priority areas). In contrast, some MFA staff mentioned that the MFA's insistence on priority countries and contributions to the results framework are the cause of tensions and that this should happen less. From the perspective of partners, the main causes of tensions are linked to delays caused by DSH and the administrative burdens placed on the partners with the earmarked funding. Further, one partner registered tensions created by the perceived influence of the MFA on their outputs:

> *Sometimes the MFA want a say on what not to include. And this side of the spectrum is a bit strange. Sometimes for us it would make sense to include other outputs, but they prefer that we not include them.* KII SP

[11] Terms of Reference, Consultancy on Strategic Partnerships for Mediation and Peacebuilding 2019-2022 (1 Nov 2021); Results Framework Security and Rule of Law (Annual Plan, 2020).

Un-earmarked funding has enabled partners to effectively pursue their missions and has not been compromised by the delivery of earmarked funding

Partners are in near total agreement on the transformative benefits of un-earmarked funding, which has allowed them to effectively pursue their missions in a neutral and apolitical manner and more than three quarters of consulted partners stated that this was not compromised by earmarked funding. Even though the option was given, none of the respondents believed that the earmarked funding strongly compromised their mission (see Figure 26 in Annex A). Only one SP provided an example to the contrary:

> *The only challenge we have faced is when the Dutch changed their shift in focus countries. Peacebuilding is long-term work and when shifting of funds happens, it makes it feel more like a 3-year project fund rather than a partnership fund.* KII SP

Most partners further stressed that impartiality is key to the work that they do and that the earmarked funding does not compromise it. One partner mentioned that ahead of triggering donor funding, a political assessment was conducted to see if the funding would influence the pursuit of their mission, so that any issues could be addressed early on. And in the case of the earmarked funding under the strategic partnership, such issues did not materialise.

Some embassy staff point to tensions when partners use their unearmarked funding to undertake interventions that are contrary to the embassies policies or guidance, and where they have no control to stop them as they have no oversight over the funding. As outlined in detail in the section on value for money below, there are great variations in opinions of the relevance of earmarked versus non-earmarked funding among embassy staff.

However, in the evaluation survey most partner staff stated that earmarked funding requirements only 'slightly' or 'moderately' impeded on their organisation's ability to work in a flexible and independent manner (see Figure 27 in Annex A). Even though the option was given, none of the respondents' stated that the earmarked funding 'very much' impeded on their organisation's ability. Consequently, one can assert that impediments resulting from earmarked funding do exist but that these were neither significant in scale nor in scope. In partner interviews, earmarked funding was occasionally described as laborious given DSH reporting requirements. But overall, this funding modality was seen to offer sufficient 'breathing room' for partners to pursue their work in a nimble manner and make course corrections where needed. One explanation for this may be that DSH priority regions and countries tend to overlap with those already covered by the partners, which speaks to mutual interests and objectives, as well as the complementary nature of the two funding modalities. To this point, one partner noted how the mixed funding modalities "*work seamlessly and should be imitated by others*".

2.2 COHERENCE

Q3. To what extent are the partners and their outputs complementary to each other, including vis-à-vis sharing information and networks?

The outputs of the five partners are moderately complementary, but perceptions vary greatly.

As discussed in the section on relevance above, the complementarity of partners is seen in their different areas of focus, the distinct approaches they employ, and in their varying working levels and strengths. In terms of *outputs*, as presented in Figure 8 below, strategic partners perceive the five partners and their outputs to be more complementary than MFA staff.

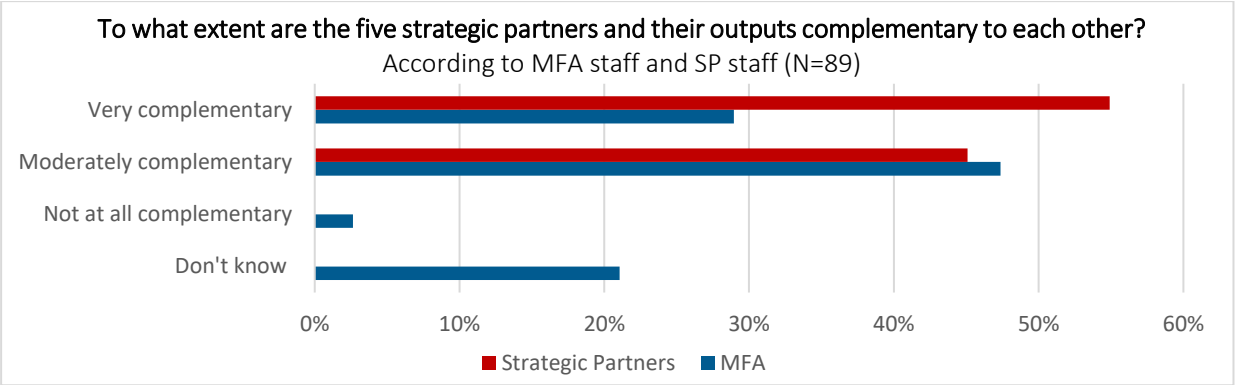

Figure 8: Strategic partners complementary

As presented in Annex A Figure 28, the main reasons indicated for lack of complementarity is that there is no/not enough collaboration between partners and that there is overlap between partners. One senior embassy staff member said: "*I am afraid there is quite a lot of overlap. I don't know if their outputs are complementary*." He also observed that each partner's role, and the funding modalities used to support them, should be further tailored by DSH, depending on the country context and embassy needs.

Information and network sharing among partners does happen but is more the exception than the rule.
One objective of the strategic partnership is for partners to exchange ideas and opportunities and make use of each other's networks. It is expected that this will benefit partner outputs, inform MFA policy development, and positively influence international agencies with strong links to the Ministry.

Information and network exchanges between partners do take place. 58 percent of surveyed partners noted that their staff do (moderately) share information and networks with other partners, and 26 percent said that 'much' information and networks were shared (see Figure 29 in annex A). Partner exchanges and learning sessions also occurred over the course of the past two years (and regularly in 2020), including in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic.[12] Thus, the Strategic Partnership has fostered some cooperation on issues where this would not otherwise happen, beyond already existing relationship. For example, in June 2021, ICG and HD did their annual briefing of the MFA, at the request of the then-DSH focal point.

Over the 2016-2018 period, a degree of independent partner coordination and information sharing already occurred (that was attributable to the strategic partnership)[13] and this has continued in the current phase but not always to great effect. One MFA staff noted that "*collaboration between partners never really kicked off*" adding that there is some collaboration between partners but questioning the degree to which the MFA has benefited from it.

> *We had hoped and discussed with organisations that it is not only a one-to-one partnership with us, but also a partnership between the 5 partners. Did this not happen, they have not been coming together. First year we organised this at the ministry, but they never took over the initiative. Most of the organisations where not interested, too much competition. They did not really share; they want to have the one-to-one relationship with the ministry. This was disappointing for us. If they would have put more effort in it, the strategic partnership might have been really a strategic partnership, now I think it is just one to one relation like subsidy agreement, not much strategic about it.* KII MFA staff

[12] See, IA, CHD, ICG, DAG, Interpeace, and Clingendael Institute: 'A peace and conflict sensitive response to COVID-19. Discussion note for the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs' (July 2020).
[13] De Weijer, Frauke (2018) Study on the added value of MFA/DSH strategic partnerships, p.21

According to one partner: "*the MFA failed to explain to strategic partners what its expectations were in terms of how they envisaged that collaboration serving the Strategic Partnership. We would like to note that we were not made aware that this was an objective of the Strategic Framework and were therefore not in a position to act on this aim*"[14].

Frequent, and independent, collaboration that is attributable to the strategic partnership tends to be the exception rather than the rule (bar examples referenced above). Where it takes place, examples tend to either be: i) limited or infrequent, ii) ad hoc in nature, or iii) linked to formal strategic partnership obligations (e.g., quarterly meetings). Especially embassy staff highlighted that partners do not share or collaborate much among them and are not even aware that this was an objective of the strategic partnership. This points to the need for concerted efforts to better map the role and activities of partners in-country to incentivise improved information and network sharing, if that is to remain an objective of the strategic partnership.

This point is aligned with the findings from partner interviews where several interviewees indicated that at the field level the meetings are often ad hoc, operational in nature, and could not necessarily be ascribed to the strategic partnership. Two partners mentioned quarterly online meetings with Dutch strategic partners, hosted by Clingendael. It must be mentioned that challenges pertaining to information and network sharing have been compounded by limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic though multiple strategic partnership-related meetings were held.

> *The relationship with the other strategic partners is mostly ad hoc and happens rarely – only really when it is needed (or called for by the MFA). Our focus with the Dutch is more of a bilateral relationship. But meetings and exchanges do happen more frequently at policy level at the Hague level as part of required annual meetings and per contractual obligations of the strategic partnership.* KII SP

Further, two partners mentioned that there is an annual meeting with the five partners, initiated by MFA The Hague. When asked, as an example, if the strategic partners were called to share their analysis and information on the Ukraine crisis to help inform the response, all explained they were not consulted, and were never called in such cases. Especially as Ukraine is not a priority country, the MFA could have benefited from the knowledge of the partners – partly gained through unearmarked funding. Overall, DSH does not create sufficient incentives for partners to share information among themselves.

Q4. Have earmarked funds resulted in closer ties with embassies and information sharing?

Earmarked funds increased collaboration between embassies and partners, to a degree.

A key role for partners in MFA policy development is the sharing of information and building closer ties with embassies. The 2018 strategic partnership evaluation pointed this out in recommending that partners should better share information and engage in dialogue with relevant embassies, and for the MFA to encourage this and hold partners accountable as well.[15] And one of the expectations that came with the introduction of earmarked country funding in 2019 was the strengthening of partner ties at the embassy level. While partners' spending of earmarked funds has certainly come with a closer degree of involvement of respective embassies, it is hard to assess the extent to which earmarked funding per se has resulted in closer embassy *ties* or strengthened relationships, including as it relates to information

[14] Reaction to draft evaluation report
[15] De Weijer, Frauke (2018) Study on the added value of MFA/DSH strategic partnerships, p.29-31.

sharing. More than half of surveyed MFA staff stated that they did not know if the newly provided earmarked funding modality resulted in closer ties with embassies, while one quarter of MFA staff stated that the earmarked funding 'somewhat' fostered closer ties with embassies (see Figure 32 in Annex A).

Where information exchanges take place, they are not necessarily linked to the strategic partnership.

Partner coordination and information exchange is a stated ambition of the partners themselves and it does occur outside of the regular DSH-organised meetings, though it is difficult to attribute this to the strategic partnership.[16] There is, for instance, regular coordination and information sharing between ICG and CHD – both bilaterally (at headquarters and in country settings) and as part of formal events, such as the 'donor and practitioner roundtable on evaluation and results in conflict, mitigation and resolution' organised by CHD[17] But while such examples may (and sometimes do) have a bearing on the strategic partnership, they are not necessarily a consequence of the partnership itself. ICG-CHD cooperation, for instance, predates the strategic partnership and would likely have been sustained in its absence. For some partners, limited information sharing is also a function of their unique mandates and the distinct operational contexts in which they work, which may not naturally lend themselves to frequent coordination. Further, there is among partners a degree of reluctance to partner simply for partnership's sake alone. Put differently, increased partner cooperation must respond to demand, have a clear and articulated reasoning as well as suitable opportunities to do so.[18]

Partner cooperation and information exchanges also occur indirectly, as well as with other actors.

The 2018 strategic partnership evaluation noted that increased cooperation between partners need not be limited to the five strategic partners but could include other actors who work closely with the MFA. Such cooperation has, and continues, to take place with the encouragement of DSH, notably with the knowledge partners (knowledge platform) led by the Clingendael. Many partners have, for instance, engaged in some form of bilateral or joint cooperation and exchange with Clingendael. In addition, embassies regularly call all partners at national level, including the strategic partners but also others that they are funding. This is echoed by the partners, with one partner stating:

> *We were told by the Dutch MFA that Clingendael is an important partner and that we should work together. Your question [on who the strategic partners are and who are not] seems a technicality, it does not matter to us what legal relationship they have with MFA. The Dutch government has encouraged us to see us as web of actors in relationship to each other and to them. Clingendael is part of that web, as is Dialogue Advisory Group. Actors in this web are linked on topics where they can work together. We form a web of engagement, us and these partners*. KII SP

Many MFA staff do not know that Clingendael is part of a different partnership modality (knowledge partners). For most staff, they are all simply partners that they engage with. An MFA staff member, involved in establishing different partnership modalities, explained that different consolidated programmes were to counter too much fragmentation among activities and funding agreements.[19] These programmes are called partnerships as a result of intensive dialogue with the organisation in question. There are, however, differences between these partnership modalities:

[16] Strategic partner proposals for 2019-2022/3 period.
[17] CHD Narrative Report, 2019; Strategic partnership proposals for International Crisis Group, and Center for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2019-2022/3 period.
[18] De Weijer, Frauke (2018) Study on the added value of MFA/DSH strategic partnerships, p.21; Strategic partner interviews.
[19] In this light, a process was started in 2020 called "Minder-Beter-Flexibeler", to improve the subsidy practice of the MFA. For more information on this see: Visser, A.P. (2021) Aandachtspunten bij de ontwerpbegroting 2022 van de minister voor Buitenlandse Handel en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking [Letter of Government].

The knowledge platform is less free than the strategic partnerships, there is a concrete budget and more of a project relation. The MFA is guiding. This is a different modality than strategic partners because there is no core component. With the knowledge partners there are projects, but they already know they are getting the project beforehand. KII MFA

However, these differences are not always known to embassy staff, as one embassy staff member noted:

The partners from the knowledge platform and the ones under the strategic partnership platform are similar for us, we see no difference. Why is ICG not a knowledge partner? KII MFA/EKN

The box below provides an overview of strategic partner cooperation with other partners, which is somehow linked to the MFA (please refer to Figure 30 in Annex A for a more detailed account of MFA-linked partnerships).

Cooperation with other MFA-linked partners

The working methods and outputs of all five strategic partners are influenced by their cooperation with an array of partners that are directly or indirectly linked to the MFA (both within and outside of the scope of the strategic partnership) – the most common of which is the Clingendael institute. Most partners also have formal partnerships with different UN entities, including the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Peace Operations and Office for Project services as well as with Specialised UN Agencies (Interpeace, notably, draws on its hybrid NGO-UN-affiliated status in its work to help execute UN agency mandates). The five partners frequently engage with and support NGOs at the national and subnational levels as well as NGO networks, think-tanks (often based in country capitals, for research and advocacy purposes), government agencies and international bodies such as the European Union (EU). In some instances, this cooperation is encouraged or facilitated by the MFA while in other cases, cooperation happens on an independent basis.

Figure 9: Cooperation with other MFA-linked partners

Q5. What levels of trust exist between MFA and partners, which allows for critical discussions and input and who/what does this apply to?

There are high levels of trust between MFA and the individual partners.

According to the TOR of this evaluation, the strategic partnership has since its inception sought to strengthen the MFA's knowledge base and to influence its policy development by creating a 'relationship of trust', which allows for critical discussions.[20] Trust levels between partners and the MFA were generally high in the first phase of the partnership[21] and appear to have evolved consistently since – with all five strategic partners (on an individual basis). All consulted partner staff stated that there is a good level of trust in their relationship with the MFA. And while MFA staff appears to be more critical, a large majority still stated that the level of trust is good (79%). These high levels of trust point to a strategic partnership that is becoming increasingly institutionalised in how it is viewed as predictable, reliable and in many ways [positively] taken for granted.

There was good trust with people from strategic partners on the ground. They circulate in networks, you see them at places, you drink a beer, you get to know them, you trust them. These conversations tended to be open, with room for critical advice. This was less the case with partners that I perceived as more commercial. KII MFA EKN

For partners, trust tends to manifest in: i) the frequency, quality, and informality of interactions with DSH (at higher and working levels); ii) the frankness of conversations (and discretion in sharing sensitive

[20] Terms of Reference, Consultancy on Strategic Partnerships for Mediation and Peacebuilding 2019-2022 (1 Nov 2021).
[21] De Weijer, Frauke (2018) Study on the added value of MFA/DSH strategic partnerships.

information); and iii) the willingness of MFA to be introspective and flexible when engaging them (including vis-à-vis adjustments made due to the COVID-19 pandemic). Factors underpinning this trust can be discerned in how MFA values and priorities align with partners' missions, the confidence placed in the value of the strategic partnership and the mutual benefit it brings. One partner referred to the relationship with the MFA today as being "natural" while another referred to the MFA as being a "go to" partner – a reliable counterpart that can be turned to. Partners only referred to few (and minor) factors that may impede on trust levels, including country contexts, individual personalities as well as the frequency of MFA/ embassy staff turnover. The last point is also highlighted by MFA staff in the Hague, regarding the embassy staff. And according to one embassy staff member, some partners gain less trust as they tend to share information as they also use these opportunities to lobby for more funds.

2.3 EFFECTIVENESS

Q6. Have the strategic partnerships achieved their stated objectives in terms of their contributions to the SRoL TOC, results framework, and knowledge position?

Partner contributions to the SRoL TOC and results framework are evident but still difficult to pinpoint.
The SRoL ToC points to how effective (long-term) reform is a function of analysis-based approaches, gender-transformative approaches and strengthening analytical foundations of policy and programmes as well as promoting knowledge exchange.[22] And to this end, the MFA effectively draws on the strategic partners' international networks, knowledge, and influence. Equally, all five partners contribute directly to the SRoL's ToC and results framework in this respect.[23] At a more granular level, however, it is difficult to assess the precise extent to which the outputs of partners contribute to the SRoL ToC given the large share of unearmarked funding, which is not always allocated to in-country activities. For earmarked funding the picture is equally unclear as 68 percent of surveyed MFA staff state that they do not know if the provided earmarked funds resulted in more outputs to the SRoL ToC. 18 percent said yes to the same question (see Figure 33 in Annex A).

As pertains to the SRoL results framework (see section 2.4 on Impact), the outputs generated by partners largely correspond with - and contribute to - its medium-term outcomes, with a few minor exceptions (notably under the 'human security' outcome). These contributions include outputs enabled by unearmarked funding. For instance, core partner activities in areas such conflict sensitivity, conflict analysis or transitional justice directly contribute to multiple outcomes the results framework, are viewed by the MFA favourably, and have clearly enhanced the MFAs value proposition. Only certain unearmarked funded activities that are more geared towards 'institutional investments' or strengthening the internal systems of the partners are more difficult to link to the results framework.

The partnership, and the partners, have effectively contributed to the MFA's knowledge position.
As illustrated in Figure 14, knowledge and analysis are perceived by MFA staff as the main added value of the strategic partnership, and partners have very effectively contributed to the knowledge position of the MFA on their respective issues and [globally recognised] areas of expertise. This has been acknowledged by the MFA as well as partners who acknowledge that their (significant and sometimes unique) contributions in the knowledge space often translate into capacity to advance the MFA's policy objectives.

[22] Netherlands Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation (2020) Theory of Change, Security & the Rule of Law, p.4,7.
[23] Procesbemo subsidieverstrekking [DRAFT], Naam subsidieprogramma: Strategische Partnerschappen DSH 2019-2022.

The 2018 evaluation noted that some partners may have contributed to a *more proactive* exchange of ideas and knowledge, in line with the original intent of the strategic partnership.[24] This [differentiation] appears to still be the case albeit for two different reasons. Firstly, certain partners appear to work with their embassy counterparts in a closer manner than other partners (though this also varies between countries). Secondly, certain partners are more specialised in the production and dissemination of [relevant] knowledge and analysis than others are. Only few challenges vis-à-vis knowledge contributions were mentioned by partners. One partner pointed to 'demand side' issues, suggesting that the MFA "*maximise the benefits of knowledge via better internal coordination at the MFA, and to help facilitate the relationship between HQ and embassies*."

Q7. What has the MFA's role been in the application of the partnership model and what, if any, lessons have been learned from the experience?

Embassy staff are still insufficiently aware of the strategic partnership and how to make use of it.

The 2018 strategic partnership evaluation referenced "*low awareness of embassy staff of what these strategic partnerships entail – and the extent that they can make use of them*."[25] And this remains a challenge today and points to a strategic partnership that is under-utilised. In the initial survey, more than half of MFA the staff are very aware of the strategic partnership between DSH and the five partners and its purpose, while one-third of MFA staff are somewhat aware (see Figure 34 Annex A). While this points to a degree of awareness of the strategic partnership mechanism (as well as the partners within it) it is still insufficient, particularly among geographic directorates and embassies. And interview findings painted a poorer picture in this respect. Only 10 percent of embassy staff had a good understanding of the instrument and how to make use of it, as illustrated in the table below.

What is your understanding of the strategic partnership modality? According to MFA staff (N=20)				
	No understanding	Limited	Moderate	Good
KII EKN	30%	20%	40%	10%
KII The Hague	0%	0%	40%	60%
Total	**15%**	**10%**	**40%**	**35%**

Figure 10: MFA's understanding of SP modality

Further, only half of the interviewed MFA staff were fully aware of the five partners within the strategic partnership arrangement. However, as presented in the figure below, there are important differences between MFA staff in the Hague and embassy staff. Only a very small percentage of embassy staff could name all five of the partner organisations, and those that could had all worked with the partners in a previous position in The Hague. One MFA staff acknowledged that "*we should have created more awareness among missions*" while an embassy staff who was unaware of one of the partners expressed the desire to: "*know more what the strategic partnership was about and how I could have used it.*" And another embassy staff spoke of a need to "*ensure that the strategic partnership is known and utilised better.*"

[24] De Weijer, Frauke (2018) Study on the added value of MFA/DSH strategic partnerships, executive summary.
[25] Ibid, p.25

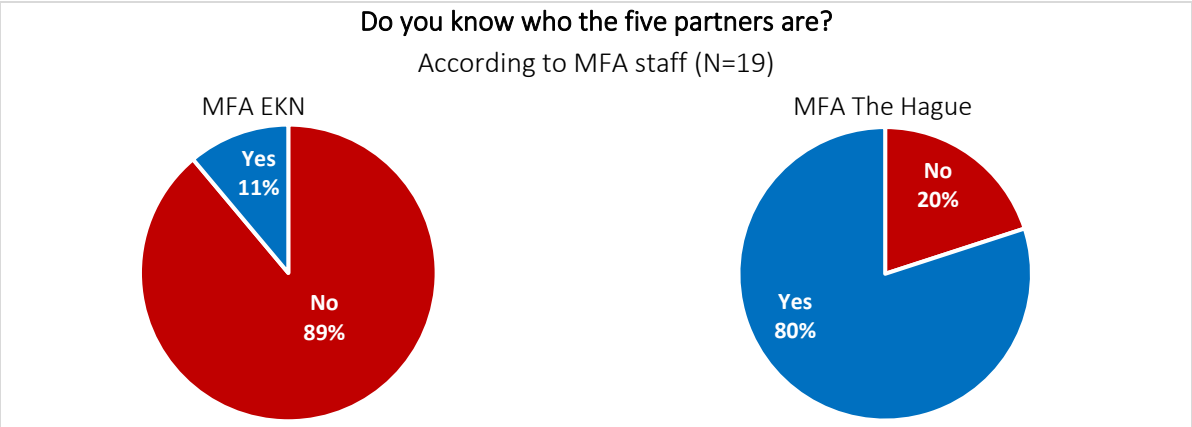

Figure 11: Knowledge of the five partner organisations

While universal knowledge of the partnership may be too high of an expectation, these relatively low levels of awareness do appear rather insufficient and hinder efforts to maximise the utility of the partnership, particularly at country level. Low levels aside, it must be acknowledged that embassy awareness of the partners is also a function of the varying country contexts in which embassy staff operate (e.g., not all five partners operate in all countries, or embassies may not have a reason to engage them all). Furthermore, partner-embassy relationships and interactions are often dynamic and conducted on an informal and personal basis, which while very useful may in some instances inhibit efforts to increase embassy awareness.

Efforts have been made to better engage partners but to mixed effect.

The 2018 evaluation noted that key windows of opportunity to influence Dutch policies were often missed, in part due to partners being the *principal* party that takes the initiative to share information with the Ministry.[26] This seems to remain a challenge today though the extent to which the MFA (and notably embassies) has made 'demand side' efforts to receive knowledge and analysis at more optimal times is unclear. According to MFA staff in the Hague, embassies have been encouraged to reach out and engage partners in-country to benefit more from their networks and form their expertise (though this evaluation finds that embassies are insufficiently engaged).

Importantly, the introduction of earmarked funds appears to have increased the frequency and nature of interactions between partners and embassies, though it is hard to attribute closer ties with embassies to earmarked funds alone. The table below shows that both partners and embassies take initiatives to reach out, and only in a few cases was the connection established by the MFA in The Hague. However, in many (if not most) instances, who reaches out first or most depends on the country and context-specific factors as well as the nature of relationships and how these evolved over time. Partner- embassy relationships are, for instance, often-times informal, pre-existing and/or long-standing. This is an indicator of trusted and functioning [personal] relationships but may also have a bearing on the timeliness (and efficacy) of the partner-embassy relationship[27].

[26] De Weijer, Frauke (2018) *Study on the added value of MFA/DSH strategic partnerships*, p.17; Strategic partnership proposals for ICG, International Alert for 2019-2022 period.
[27] The nature and frequency of these engagements, including in-country, have also been impacted by limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

When partners were supporting EKNs, who mostly took the initiative? According to MFA staff and SP staff (N=40)			
	SPs took initiative	MFA The Hague took initiative	MFA EKNs took initiative
MFA EKN	80%	20%	80%
MFA The Hague	67%	33%	67%
SPs	75%	0%	71%
Total	**75%**	**10%**	**73%**

Figure 12: Initiative taken to reach out

When asked explicitly (see the figure below), there were mixed views on the effectiveness of the relations between embassies and the Hague as far as the strategic partnership model is concerned. Some embassies highlight great working relations, while others are very negative, mostly in terms of lack of information, or perceived interference of centralised funding. The fact that the strategic partnership has three different focal points/coordinators in the Hague compromises effectiveness. Partners have also expressed concerns of "sitting in the middle", as explained by one partner staff:

> *There are tensions between the Hague and the embassies, and we are sometimes caught in the middle of that. The degree to which the vocal point in The Hague understands the work we do makes a huge difference. Not always good knowledge, sometimes things get lost in translation. Encouragement to DSH to think about its vocal point in terms of their substantive knowledge, this would facilitate the effectiveness of the bureaucratic matters.* KII SP

Was the working relation between embassy and MFA effective in relation to the strategic partnership model?

According to MFA staff (N=17)

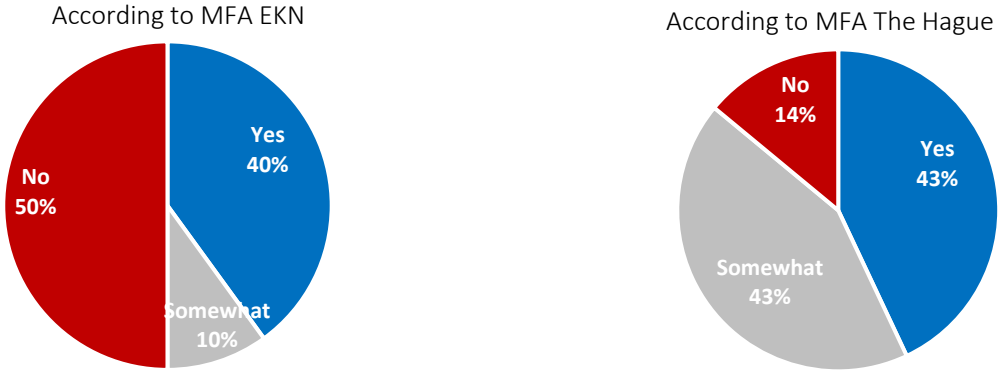

Figure 13: Working relation between MFA The Hague and EKNs

Q8. Has the strategic partnership arrangement created additional value for the MFA (and if so, how) and could other partnership models or compositions achieve better effects?

The strategic partnership has created notable added value for the MFA as well as for partners, predominantly in the knowledge and analysis space.

The strategic partnership's expected added value was in the 2018 evaluation described along four dimensions: i) strengthening partners' operating abilities ii) meaningful and strategic contributions to MFA policy objectives, iii) enhancing MFA knowledge and capacity, and iv) advancing open dialogue and exchange of ideas. The study found that all four dimensions played out in practice (albeit in slightly differing degrees) with the latter two seen as particularly important to MFA staff.[28] Today, these findings remain broadly accurate. Overall, consulted MFA staff perceive knowledge and analysis to be the main added value of the strategic partnership (see Figure 14 below). For the partners, the key value-added

[28] De Weijer, Frauke (2018) Study on the added value of MFA/DSH strategic partnerships.

lies in influencing key decisions and policy and in the flexibility the partnership provides. This point was also echoed by partners in the 2018 evaluation who emphasised the importance of flexibility provided by unearmarked funding, which allowed them to maximise added value along the other dimensions.[29]

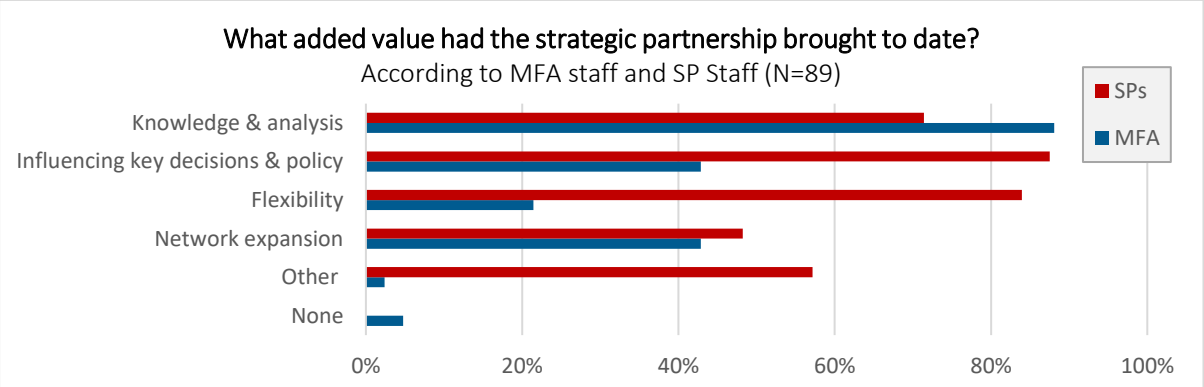

Figure 14: Added value of strategic partnership

There are certain factors that can help put these perceptions into context. For instance, most KII respondents only referred to the added value of the specific organisations they worked with, which means that this added value is not necessarily attributable to the strategic partnership mechanism. And flexibility – a less common added value from the MFAs perspective (21% of responses) – was mostly mentioned in relation to the willingness and availability of partners to tailor briefings and provide information on requested topics. However, for the partners the added value of [MFA] flexibility was seen as significant (84% of responses) and mentioned in KII's in terms of how they were allowed to react quickly, to adjust and adapt their work in view of COVID-19, to innovate and encouraged focus on their stated priorities. This point was illustrated well by one partner:

> *'Core' funding at country level gives at flexibility, it helps us unpack the peacebuilding priorities that matter, instead of the ones that get funding. It gives space to reflect and allows us to focus on the aspects that are overlooked. This is an additional value.* KII SP

Furthermore, more than half of consulted partner staff mentioned other areas of added value (see figure above). Chief among them, was the long-term nature of support enabled by the strategic partnership, which strengthens the position of the partners internationally, and allows them to be more efficient and to learn as an organisation.

The strategic partnership enabled strong partner-embassy relationships (but somewhat less for EKNs).
Overall, the strategic partnership is clearly seen to have created a strong relationship between partners and embassies, though it has done so to varying degrees. Especially staff from the five strategic partners indicate that the partnership enabled a strong partner-embassy relationship in some way. Almost all of the 20 percent who noted that it only 'slightly' enabled the relationship, were embassy staff members.

[29] Ibid.

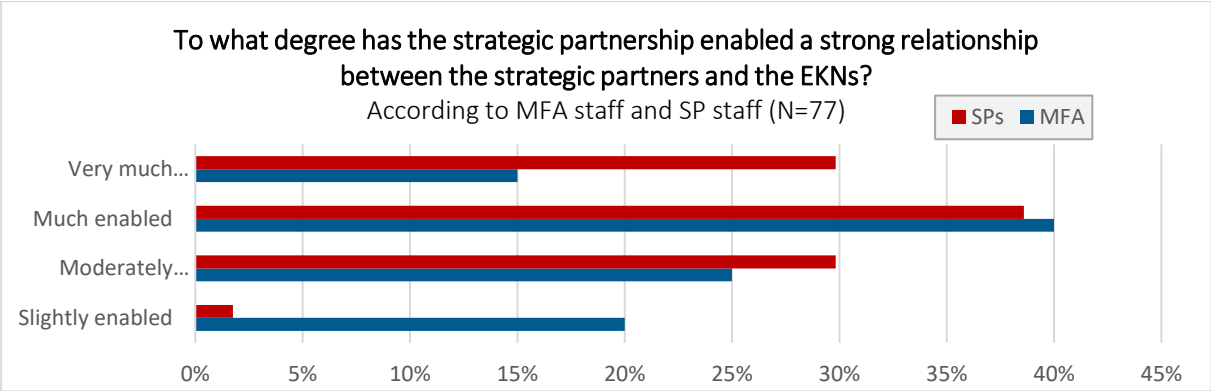

Figure 15: Relationship between the partners and the EKNs

Obstacles which inhibited strong relationships with the embassies mentioned by the partners include high staff turnover at the embassies, a lack of awareness of the strategic partnership at embassy level and that the broader relationship with embassies is often dependent on personal, often informal, relationships (which was conversely also seen as a strength). Although the nature of exchanges and relationships varies a lot between embassies and partners, overall, the partners describe the relationships as strong, frank, and open.

The strategic partnership brings mutual benefit to partners and MFA alike, with some exceptions.

Overall, the strategic partnership brings important and *mutual benefit* for MFA and partners alike (at higher and working levels). One partner described the strategic partnership as a "two-way street", which speaks to the increasing effectiveness and institutionalised nature of relationship between partners and MFA - a point also raised in the 2019 evaluation.[30] There are, however, some important caveats. Partners and MFA staff in the Hague tend to view the strategic partnership more favourably, while the picture among embassy staff is mixed, particularly given the uneven levels of awareness and engagement with partners. The (overall) benefit and effectiveness of the partnership arrangement is further echoed by how MFA and partner priorities frequently align and overlap. A key example is how one partner staff stressed how it benefits from the networks and access that DSH brings in global and European policy fora while DSH actively leverages and builds on its unique and recognised expertise.

One the MFA's part, it leverages the partners' complementarity and outputs to good effect, which allows it to operate effectively in the security and rule of law field and play a constructive role in peace processes. This was the case in the first phase of the partnership and is even more so today.[31] A notable example can be found in how ICG and CHD regularly provide the MFA with timely, quality and highly applicable conflict analysis and access to their networks (including conflict protagonists and inside mediators) that it would otherwise not have access to, and in this way serve a critical advisory function. Similarly, Interpeace and International Alert bring unique value across the entire peacebuilding and conflict prevention spectrum: analytical, programmatic, policy and operational.[32]

Administrative burdens sometimes inhibit the effectiveness of the strategic partnership.

Several interviewed MFA staff expressed dissatisfaction at the length of time taken to process projects at country level, and the administrative burdens that are associated with the strategic partnership's centralised system (notably as it pertains to earmarked funding). One embassy staff, for instance,

[30] De Weijer, Frauke (2018) Study on the added value of MFA/DSH strategic partnerships.
[31] Ibid, pp.9-11. See also Process BEMO for strategic partnerships' (2018, DRAFT); Activity Appraisal Document ODA (BEMOs) for Center for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2019-2022, pp.8-9; Interpeace (2020) Impact Report for Strategic Partners, p.45.
[32] See e.g., International Alert's conflict sensitivity guide.

critically referred to the "*tons of work*" put into results frameworks while another noted that the "*earmarked part creates a lot of administrative burden*" – from both sides. This view was echoed among some (not all) partners who referenced sometimes significant delays because of administrative burdens. One example indeed, with International Alert, is in practice 4 of 5 'contracts', because of the sub-Activity Appraisal Documents (BEMOs) per earmarked country project.

2.4 IMPACT

Q9. To what extent have partners contributed to achieving legitimate stability as a basis for sustainable peace and development in the priority countries of the Netherlands?

Strategic partnership activities and outputs help meet MFA and DSH policy objectives.

The activities and outputs of all five strategic partners clearly contribute to achieving legitimate stability as a basis for sustainable peace and development in priority regions and countries of the Netherlands. And these contributions go beyond what is expected of earmarked funding and are attributable to unearmarked funding as well. For instance, the (publicly accessible) results achieved by CHD include a comprehensive security agreement between the Iraq's Prime Minister's office and Sunni tribal sheikhs in the Anbar province in 2019, which allowed over 2000 displaced families to repatriate.[33] The International Crisis Group's results include sustained efforts in the Yemen conflict, including pressing the Saudi-led coalition to take steps toward political conflict and mitigating the risk of conflict with Iran. ICG also contributes to contributed to cross-cutting outcomes in the SRoL results framework by mainstreaming a gender-sensitive approach in its programming (including on deepening the awareness of women's role in militancy).[34]

Other examples of impactful partner contributions include ICTJ's sustained and recognized contributions (and close collaboration with the Netherlands) to the Colombian Truth Commission where, among a plethora of results, ICTJ helped ensure a truth-seeking mechanism with the broadest possible participation of actors from across society.[35] International Alert's guidance and tools on conflict sensitivity, as well as its work in north and central Mali are additional examples of partner contributions to MFA objectives and SRoL outcomes. The latter has, for instance, helped communities' ability to analyse and respond to conflicts peacefully through providing dialogue forums for inclusive means of dealing with local conflict, particularly natural resource conflicts, and thereby improving state-citizen relations.[36] And Interpeace too, has contributed to the Netherlands legitimate stability goals, including by work to strengthen democratisation efforts in Somalia and Somaliland. It enhanced, for instance, citizen participation and government accountability in Puntland through an initiative that facilitated direct interaction between authorities and citizens, which allowed for information sharing and promoted accountability.[37]

[33] Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2019 Narrative report.
[34] International Crisis Group, Core Report 2019-2020.
[35] International Center for Transitional Justice, Analytical progress report FY19-20.
[36] International Alert, 2020 MFA Annual report.
[37] Interpeace, 2020 Impact report for strategic partners.

Q10. How have unearmarked funds contributed, directly or indirectly, to the intended outcomes of SRoL results framework?

MFA staff mostly report on direct impacts of partners work, and less on their contributions to peace and security.

Interestingly, very few MFA staff referred to the [often significant] programmatic contributions made by the organisations to bring about peace globally, and to support these organisations not because they can provide inputs to MFA, but because they contribute to peace and security objectives more broadly. This was part of the original rationale of the strategic partnership, which informed the selection of the strategic partners. Additional factors determining the partners' selection included the alignment with MFA policies and objectives, their solid track records, and their ability to intervene in areas and ways that the MFA cannot, including beyond the scope of individual projects.

Reporting on the contributions of unearmarked funds to the SRoL results framework has improved and is detailed (but varies in terms of form).

All partners report on unearmarked - as well as earmarked - funds against the SRoL Result Framework in some way. While the nature of this reporting varies between partners (especially for unearmarked funds), all partners [today] account for unearmarked funded results in a detailed manner. Reporting challenges mainly speak to the attribution of results of a portion of unearmarked funds, notably those that are allocated toward 'institutional investments' as described below. Figure 16 provides an overview of how partners report on unearmarked and earmarked funding.

	Strategic partner reporting activities[38]
CHD	Annual narrative reports cover all strategic partnership activities and outline progress against objectives for each region it works in, including vis-a-vis the SRoL Results Framework. Earmarked funding is reported on separately to distinguish contributions in MFA priority regions. Additional narrative reports are provided on engagements in priority regions, and annual programme reports.
ICG	A strategic partnership document outlines financial allocations from unearmarked and earmarked support on priority conflicts and early warning activities on situations of key concern. Narrative progress reports cover engagements as well as results and impacts of unearmarked and earmarked funding. A 'core [funding] report' summarizes ICG's broader coverage and impact, which is also covered in an annual work plan. In its 'Core Report' for FY 2020-2021, ICG reports on its contributions to the SRoL Results Framework, drawing mainly on qualitative indicators at the outcome level.
ICTJ	Analytic progress report and annual financial progress reports are provided for country specific programmes – covering both unearmarked and earmarked funding streams. Financial progress reports outline detailed expenses for each country programme. Linkages between its own program outcomes and outcomes in the SRoL results framework are provided in its 'Core and Designated Support (2018-2022)' report.
Inter-peace	An impact report outlines Interpeace's own impacts and change framework. It also contains clear links to outcomes in the SRoL Results Framework. The report covers earmarked funding for all country activities as well as the strategic allocation of unearmarked funding. It also provides detailed linkages between its own [institutional] outcomes and the SRoL Results Framework.
IA	An annual report covers the range of International Alert's activities and their impact. It includes both earmarked and unearmarked funding and references the strategic partnership's added value. The report also includes detailed reporting on both MFA and non-MFA-specific programmes, strategic partnership contributions (e.g., conflict sensitivity support) and progress towards the SRoL Results Framework.

Figure 16: Strategic partner reporting activities

[38] CHD: i) Annual core contribution report (2019); ii) Annual narrative reports (2019) for Horn of Africa, MENA and Sahel regions, iii) Annual program reports (2020) for Horn of Africa, MENA and Sahel regions. ICG: i) Core reports (FY's 2019-2020, 2021-2021); ii) ICG Engagements specific purpose (Annex I); iii) Narrative progress report – specific purpose (2020-2021); ICTJ: i) Analytical progress reports (2019-2020), ii) Financial progress reports (2019-2020). Interpeace: Impact report for strategic partners (2020). International Alert: Annual report for Dutch MFA (2020).

Unearmarked funds clearly contribute to the SRoL results framework - but the attribution of results happens in both direct and indirect ways.

Reporting by partners demonstrates that unearmarked funding has indeed contributed to the (near) full range of medium-term outcomes in the SRoL results framework. However, the full extent to which they do so, as well as how they do it, still varies somewhat between partners. This is partly due to reasons cited above, and also due to how unearmarked funded outputs are designed, implemented, and monitored. Some activities are pursued in a manner that very clearly aligns with, and contributes to, all of the framework's outcomes, including (but not limited to), conflict sensitivity trainings, mediation activities, conflict analyses, and the general provision of policy advice (and attribution has much improved over time). Other unearmarked-funded activities also contribute to SRoL outcomes, but in a more indirect way and are more akin to 'institutional investments.' These contributions can be grouped into two broad categories:

Longer-term contributions: Unearmarked funding enables the effective implementation of partner strategies and consistent functioning of their organisations, enabling them to engage stakeholders, build relationships, innovate, and contribute to results over longer-term horizons – thereby indirectly contributing to SRoL outcomes. One partner noted "*look at our ToC, the [core enabled] research, learning and expertise is foundational and catalytic for all other strands of work we do*". However, this evaluation also finds complaints on unearmarked funding being used too much for funding headquarters, and insufficiently on increasing field presence (see 2.6, Value for money).

Implicit contributions: For some partners, SRoL contributions are implicit in that they are inherent to the type of work they do, notably in the prevention space (which explains qualitative forms of reporting). To illustrate, demonstrating the 'impact of prevention' is by its very nature a counter-factual and difficult to do with any precision (but is nevertheless validated by positive, often informal feedback, and strong qualitative evidence). One partner noted the subject matter of their work is a "*massive, complicated, multifaceted process that doesn't easily translate into a results framework*."

> *Strategic partners are very important to reach the results, but I cannot say that it has led to that, and contributed to this, there are too many steps in between. We call it the enabler; we accept that they do not directly contribute to our results, but they are important enablers so that other things can happen.* MFA The Hague

Distinguishing attribution from contribution is a dilemma by its very nature.

As illustrated in Figure 36 in Annex A, 33 percent of consulted MFA staff and 25 percent of partner staff acknowledged the difficulties of attribution and translating unearmarked funding directly to the results framework. The challenges of attribution of results are, however, in many ways offset by the high levels of trust that exists between partners and MFA, and by the MFA's reassurance in partners' expertise and recognised value add (alongside increasingly detailed reporting against the SRoL results framework). The attribution challenge is further mitigated by DSH recognition that conflict prevention and peacebuilding organisations by their very nature struggle to isolate the impact of their activities given the nature of their work (as argued above). Another challenge is that attribution becomes even more difficult when multiple [strategic] donors are involved, which is the case for most partner activities. The MFA attributed some results from multi-donor [partner] activities as their own partner's contribution, based on the percentage of funding provided. By doing so, results can be selected that in effect fit the MFA's ToC, which is a questionable form of attribution.

Further, all partners confirm that for the MFA, attribution of the impact or change resulting for the partners' work is complex. Attributing direct impact against the results framework is not always easy to do, according to three of the five strategic partners. Further, they suggest that the MFA should also consider how well their organisations are run and have managed to overcome challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the catalytic impacts of their work, when considering attribution.

Clear attribution of unearmarked funds is further complicated given linkages to earmarked funds.

Unearmarked funding can easily be characterised by the significant value it brings to partners. But it can also be portrayed as a rather essential means of implementing earmarked funds. In interviews, partners were often unable to clearly differentiate between the value of the outputs brought by the two funding modalities and they could not assess them on an 'either-or' basis. Instead, they stressed that unearmarked and earmarked funds tend to act in concert and are highly complementary. This view was echoed among consulted partner staff albeit to a lesser extent. 33 percent stated that one cannot separate the two modalities (while 100% noted that both contributed in different ways – see Figure 36 in Annex A). And given the interlinked nature of the two funding modalities, it was also difficult [for partners] to assess in the interviews, which of the two funding modalities contributed more to the SRoL Results Framework. Assessing the *relative* contributions of each funding modality to the Results Framework is further complicated as each partner's unique contributions are also a function of the *absolute* (net) amounts received for each one.

Partners perceive unearmarked funding to be transformative (and with good reason)

For the 2019-2022/3 period, the majority of funds (approximately 75%) allocated by DSH to strategic partners have been unearmarked. This funding modality was commended by all partners in the previous phase of the strategic partnership[39] and it is still viewed as one of the partnership's most noteworthy (and appreciated) features, particularly given its rarity in the donor community, and how it enables the partners to effectively pursue their missions. The strategic and transformative nature of unearmarked funding cannot, in this regard, be underestimated.

Unearmarked funding was referred to by one partner as "the magic". More specifically, it has enabled highly flexible implementation of partners' own strategic plans as DSH neither interferes nor opines on how or where funds are used. Unearmarked funding has also enabled partners to have a presence and maintain networks in countries with no acute conflict (or engage on themes and in areas where they are not yet present) and allowed rapid disbursement of resources in situations requiring immediate action. Importantly, partners cite unearmarked funding as key to making essential institutional investments with a view towards the long-term, e.g., in training, monitoring and evaluation (M&E), innovation, and staff retention, and helping partners adapt their work to restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

[39] De Weijer, Frauke (2018) Study on the added value of MFA/DSH strategic partnerships.

Q11. To what extent have partners facilitated policy development and networks by providing relevant information on priority areas and topics?

The impact of partners on policy development is higher in terms of providing information, than in providing networks.

It is clear that the most important benefit brought by the strategic partnership to the MFA is perceived to be access to information, as presented in the table below. On this basis, the partnership instrument has a direct impact in terms of creating more informed policy development.

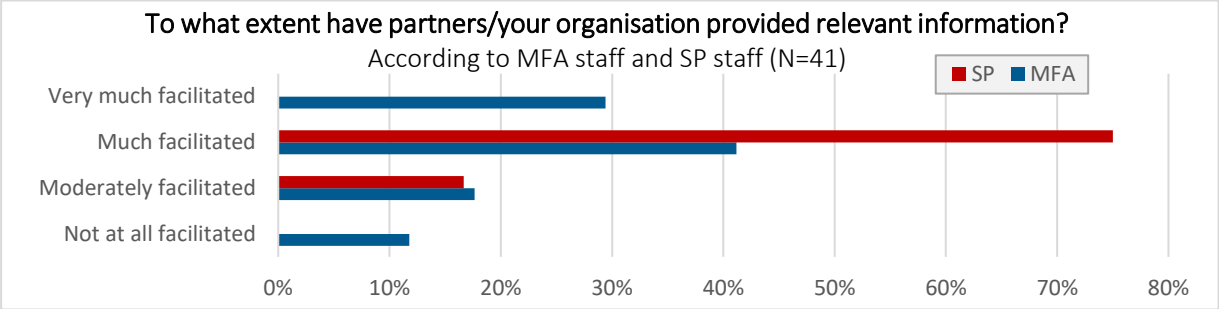

Figure 17: Relevant information provided by partners

In terms of partners facilitating networks to the MFA, the results appear less convincing, as illustrated in the figure below. This is partly explained by the fact that in several embassies there was little or no knowledge of the strategic partnership instrument, but also that the partnership modality in many instances does not extend beyond the point of partners sharing analyses and providing briefings to the MFA. This points to the fact that the *strategi*c nature of the partnership is oftentimes limited.

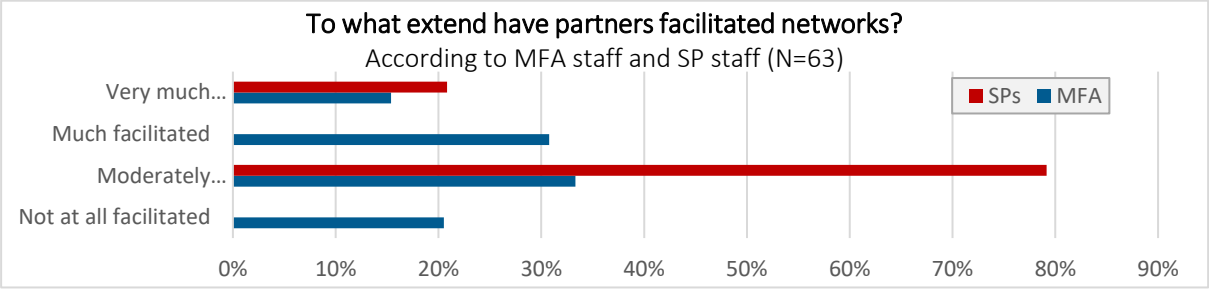

Figure 18: Networks facilitated by partners

The strategic nature of the partnership (mostly) stands, but its framing is questioned

The strategic nature of the partnership lies in its trusted relationships and long-term, predictable commitments. This is particularly true for partners who also emphasize the strategic nature of unearmarked funding, which is a unique feature of Dutch funding, rarely applied by other donors. The 2018 strategic partnership evaluation noted two factors that were considered by MFA staff as essential to the strategic nature of the partnership. These were: i) enhanced MFA knowledge and capacity on thematic and geographical issues related to the security and rule of law, and ii) the frank and open dialogue, and exchange of ideas, opportunities and networks leading to increased collaboration and mutual benefit for the partners and MFA.[40] While these findings largely stand, factors such as the limited awareness of the partnership combined with the often short-term (and transactional) nature of earmarked funding point to a partnership that is not (in all instances) as strategic as assumed. Further, most MFA staff consulted do not like the word strategic, as other partnerships are also strategic and it creates a strange atmosphere, especially for embassies, to call some strategic partners and others not.

[40] De Weijer, Frauke (2018) Study on the added value of MFA/DSH strategic partnerships.

Q12. What was the most significant change and biggest disappointment of the strategic partnership instrument and practise?

MFA staff mostly mention access knowledge as the Most Significant Change (MSC) followed by policy development. The partners, however, especially see relationship and institution building as the MSC of the strategic partnership, as presented in the figure below. When asked, MFA staff highlight collaboration among partners, coordination, and management of the strategic partnership as their biggest disappointments with the model, while for partners the coordination of the strategic partnership instrument was most mentioned.

Figure 19: Most significant change and biggest disappointment of the SP instrument

2.5 CATALYTIC EFFECTS

Q13. How have the partners influenced the international agenda and informed and IOs in line with Dutch policy objectives?

Partners effectively influence the international agenda, but more could be done jointly.

All partners pursue unearmarked funded activities in line with their own mandates and to implement their own strategic plans. And overall, there is overarching alignment between partner outputs and MFA objectives vis-a-vis conflict prevention and peacebuilding themes. Long-term outcome 2 (rule of law) and long-term outcome 3 (peace processes and political governance) are the two outcomes that are most clearly covered by partners' unearmarked funded activities – the former being seen as increasingly

important to all, though most comprehensively covered by one partner.[41] Contributions to long-term outcome 1 (human security) appear to be somewhat more limited in scope, notably for medium-term outcomes 1.2 (personal safety) as well as medium-term outcome 1.3 (preventing violent extremism (PVE)) to a certain extent – and are more evident in the core work of some partners than others.

The 2018 evaluation examined how partner activities and outputs contributed to MFA goals, including by influencing the international agenda and informing international organisations.[42] This finding very much stands as all partners influence the international agenda, though some more than others – and this mainly depends on their core features and areas of engagement. Crisis Group, for instance, prides itself on its impactful international policy influence, including by positively impacting EU policy (in line with MFA priorities).[43] ICG's international influence is also evident in how it is leveraging the COVID-19 situation to highlight issues *not* on the international agenda, which has been appreciated by the MFA. Other partners such as ICTJ emphasize the tone setting nature of their work and how strategic partnership funded activities has elevated its work on transitional justice at the EU and in other global international policy fora, which in turn has "provided the Dutch with outsized influence in this field".

At country level however, the partnership hardly ever results into joint lobby and advocacy, something that would be expected and could be explored more.

Did provided relevant information and networks provided by partners resulted in joint lobby & advocacy? According to MFA staff and SP staff (N= 38)				
	Yes	Limited	No	Do not know
MFA	1	0	11	5
Partners	ICG	Alert & Interpeace	ICTJ & HD	-

Figure 20: Joint L&A

Q14. Has the strategic partnership instrument created any catalytic effects?

Catalytic effects of the strategic partnership were less pronounced among MFA staff.

In contrast to partners, perceptions of catalytic effects are significantly less widespread among MFA staff. Only 40 percent of MFA staff noted that the partnership created 'much' or 'very much' catalytic effects, as presented in the figure below. From the MFA's perspective, the catalytic effects that were generated by the strategic partnership centred on increased learning, knowledge, expertise, and innovations and influenced policies. There are important differences between partners and MFA staff on perceived catalytic effects, as well as areas of convergence wherein both partners and MFA identified similar catalytic effects. These include learning, expertise and innovation generated by the strategic partnership in addition to improved quality, effectiveness, and substantive contributions of MFA and embassies at country level (see Figure 44 in annex A).

[41] See all strategic partner proposals and narrative results reports.
[42] De Weijer, Frauke (2018) Study on the added value of MFA/DSH strategic partnerships.
[43] International Crisis Group, Narrative progress report, FY 2020-2021.

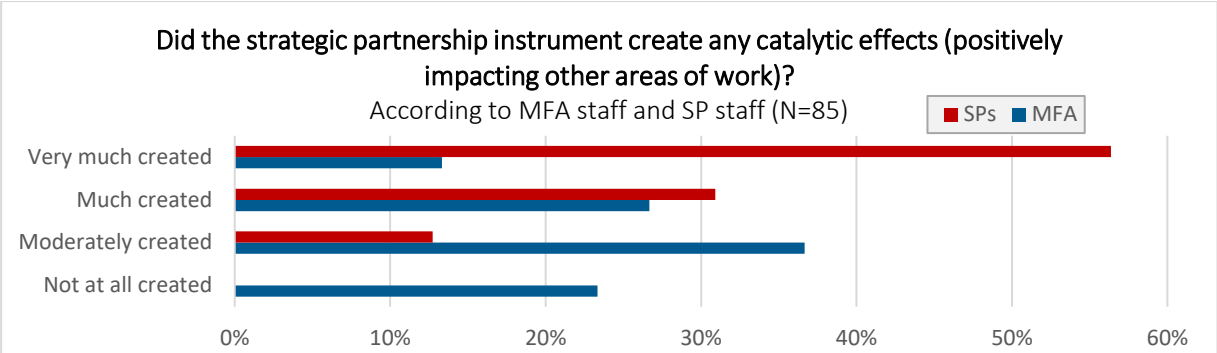

Figure 21: Catalytic effects of the strategic partnership instrument

Partners view the strategic partnership modality as being highly catalytic.

All partner interviewees pointed to the flexible, long-term nature of engagement with embassies and the MFA as generating important and multiplying effects that would not have occurred in the absence of the strategic partnership. These include [longer-term] programmatic results and improved outputs, which in turn has contributed to a more institutionalised relationship. One partner referred to a strand of work that was initially very output based (e.g., standalone trainings), which evolved into a service frequently called for by the MFA and was later integrated into its work. Other catalytic effects cited include innovation and testing new methodologies, improved systems (financial, digital) enabled by Dutch funding, catalytic effects around advocacy (and being able to jointly work on key political issues) as well as improved ability (or basis) to fundraise. Partners referenced numerous factors underpinning these catalytic effects, including trust. One partner explained that *"when you manage to create that trust – it has a legacy and lives on – even, for example, when [MFA] focal points move on."* Most of these catalytic effects are somehow linked to the flexibility afforded to partners by unearmarked funding. However, some partners also cited certain catalytic effects generated from earmarked funding for projects (mainly) at country level, linked to programmatic impacts and visibility.

2.6 VALUE FOR MONEY

Q15. What are the perceptions on the value for money of the strategic partnership's modality?

The strategic partnership does create value for money, though how much depends on who is asked.

In all SP and MFA interviews, value for money was difficult to ascertain with any degree of specificity. While two-thirds of SPs stated that the strategic partnership very much created value for money, this belief was less shared among MFA staff. Only one-third of MFA staff stated that the strategic partnership 'much' created value for money, while another one-third of MFA staff believe that the partnership moderately created value for money.

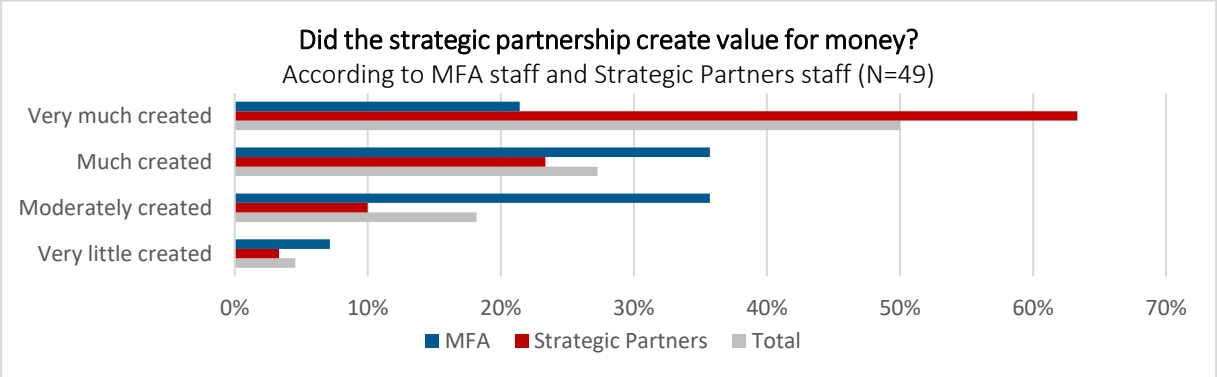

Figure 22: Value for money

Value for money is difficult to attribute to either funding modality.

Most MFA staff (67%) did not know (or were not able to) address 'value for money' in interviews. Among those who did offer perspectives, responses were varied or inconclusive. Some viewed earmarked funding as bringing more value for money (perhaps as outputs and outcomes are more easily identifiable) while others, in contrast, pointed to the relatively high administrative burdens brought by the [earmarked] short-term projects, which were also seen as not sustainable. These MFA staff also emphasised the value for money inherent in building longer-term relationships with partners (which corresponds with unearmarked funding). Embassies seem to be slightly more convinced on the value for money of the earmarked funding (see Figure 40 in annex A).

Most of the interviewed partners referred to the two funding modalities as being complementary and mutually beneficial in terms of the value for money they bring. Partners cited both the flexibility afforded to them by unearmarked funds and the targeted activities enabled by earmarked funds as providing value for money. However, with respect to the former, some partners did emphasise the inherent organisational effectiveness enabled by unearmarked funding (and the prospects it brought to scale activities) as well as its contributions to innovation. This points to a slight advantage for unearmarked funding in terms of its ability to be further leveraged. Moreover, unearmarked funds used for 'institutional investments' may in turn (and reportedly has) help attract new income and investments from donors, which can be seen as a notable value for money proposition. Also, as outlined in the section above on Impact, it is near impossible to accurately measure the value for money of prevention, and what e.g., would have happened in the absence of successful mediation, and what the ensuing recovery and peacebuilding costs would have been (post escalation).

> *Indicators on conflict prevention are impossible to measure, what would have happened if we did nothing?* MFA The Hague

There are challenges and risks associated with both earmarked and unearmarked funding

In the first phase of the partnership, challenges vis-à-vis unearmarked funding included: i) MFA's limited ability to make specific requests on thematic and geographic priorities causing confusion about expectations; ii) legal restrictions on partners from obtaining additional grants; and iii) identifying contributions to MFA priorities as formal reporting requirements were limited.[44] These challenges were largely addressed in the current partnership phase, though not in full. The introduction of earmarked funds, for instance, helped improve contributions to (and reporting against) MFA thematic and geographic priorities, but the larger share of unearmarked funding still creates some confusion regarding what the MFA can expect of partners.

Other challenges lie in the indirect way that certain unearmarked funds are spent. While these funds make clear and important contributions to the results framework, the challenge of attribution does present a degree of risk for the MFA. Another *reputational* risk for the MFA is in case the unearmarked funds would be misallocated, fraudulently used, or spent on items which are not priorities or standards of the Dutch government – particularly given the increasing rarity of un-earmarked funding among other donors. These risks are largely offset by the trusted relationships between them and the MFA, although some evaluation participants did reference concerns about funding of expensive headquarters (instead of in field offices), or salaries. And while these reputational risks are minimal in this instance, increased oversight of unearmarked funds, or other assurances, may still be merited.

[44] De Weijer, Frauke (2018) Study on the added value of MFA/DSH strategic partnerships.

How earmarked funding is administered also poses challenges vis-à-vis the value for money of the strategic partnership. For instance, earmarked funding is regarded as having high transaction costs. As mentioned above, most projects are short-term in nature, often take a long time to process and come with significant administrative burdens, which is linked to the centralised nature of the strategic partnership. Furthermore, reputational risks are also relevant in relation to earmarked funding: where the MFA is more aware and involved in partner activities, due diligence principles apply even more.

> *I do see added value of earmarked funding. I only don't know if the value is enough, I also see lots of extra work and administrative work and not enough capacity at embassy level or in The Hague. I wonder if we can afford the earmarked funding. Is it worth it?* KII MFA EKN

While the five organisations together make up the strategic partnership, in practice there are differences in the modalities regarding earmarked funding. For CHD and ICG (both managed by DSH-SV), the earmarked part of the funding is largely defined and designed in the BEMO. Whereas the BEMOs for the other three partners merely outline the process for design and selection of earmarked projects, with specific roles assigned to DSH and embassies, leading to more administrative work on both sides.[45] Since the evaluation did not evaluate individual performance of the partners, the evaluation cannot draw lessons on the effect of these differences. Further, multiple MFA staff have expressed concerns regarding mixing unearmarked funding from the MFA with those of other donors, and the possible influence of these donors.

> *This partner does independent research. However, they also have other big donors like Shell and Qatar, so how independent are they?* KII MFA The Hague

The share of unearmarked funding that comes from the MFA is significant for the partners.

The share of unearmarked contributions from the MFA strategic partnership is as significant for the partners as it is unique and highly valued. While for ICG, it is less than 8 percent of their total unearmarked funding, for CHD it is more than 20 percent. For ICTJ it is about a third of its total unearmarked budget, and for International Alert and Interpeace it is more than 40 percent. Because most other donors do not provide unearmarked funding, or very small percentages, the funding is to a large extent spent on institutional investments, such as trainings, staff retention or monitoring. As outlined above, these institutional investments can, and often do, still contribute to the SRoL results framework albeit indirectly. In some instances, however, expenditures may appear too excessive or too 'indirect' to make any meaningful contributions to the results framework. Some MFA staff have echoed this point in arguing for reduced levels of unearmarked funding. Others argue the opposite, noting that the significance of these organisations has increased as they have grown.

On the contrary, the percentage of the earmarked funding received in the priority countries, comes to around 5 percent to 8 percent from the strategic partnership. However, one partner notes that earmarked funding from the strategic partnership was used to set up the country presence in some countries, and that the earmarked funding from the strategic partnership constituted 100 percent of the partners country funding. In the priority countries where this figure is still 100 percent, the partner has funding prospects for the next phase from other donors, thus creating catalytic effects.

[45] BEMOs of ICTJ, ICG, CHD, Interpeace and International Alert

Multiple funding sources further complicates the value for money proposition.

The challenge of assessing the nature and extent of value for money generated by the strategic partnership is further complicated in how partners receive several sources of Dutch funding, coming from different instruments, but on similar topics – and all on stabilisation. The case study in the table below reflects the work of one organisation, in one country, over the past three-to-four-years. The amounts listed are in addition to the global funding received and illustrates the challenges of assessing value for money. Further, the picture painted in the table also questions coherence and efficiency of MFA funding, as there appears to be nobody in the MFA with an adequate overview of the different sources of funding that a partner receives. As a result, instances of 'double reporting' cannot be verified.

Project title	Period	Description	Total budget	Donor
Strengthen the conflict sensitivity of the Dutch MFA's and International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy (ISSSS) programming in eastern DRC	May – October 2019	This earmarked project aimed to improve Dutch programming in the region by strengthening its conflict sensitivity capacity. This was an addition to the conflict sensitive technical advice (mentioned below) that we also provide and delivered a longer-term focus on the target country.	£70,000	MFA, Netherlands **Earmarked from strategic partnership.**
Comprehensive Conflict Assessment of Dutch and ISSSS funded projects in Eastern DRC.	May – October 2019	Taken from the drawdown funds for CS support for EKNs. Conflict analysis of 12 Dutch-funded projects in DRC for EKN in Rwanda.	£113,000	MFA, Netherlands **Earmarked from strategic partnership.**
Improving security, social cohesion, and human rights in conflict mineral rich regions of Eastern DRC.	November 2019 – December 2023	This project aims to increase the number of pre-validated mining sites in red areas of South Kivu and Ituri, and to improve security, social cohesion, and human rights protection in these areas through the promotion of inclusive processes.	$7,500,000	EKN in Kigali
Njia za Makubaliano/Les Chemins vers les Accords.	*Phase 1:* Oct 2016 - Dec 2018 *Phase 2:* Jan 2019 - Feb 2021	This project strengthened the confidence and mutual accountability between the state and society in Kitshanga to jointly resolve and mitigate the key drivers of conflict.	*Phase 1:* $1,800,000 *Phase 2:* $1,700,000	Multi-donor trust fund contributed to by the Dutch (with 11% of the fund funded by the Dutch)
Tujenge Pamoja Kwa Ajili Ya Amani.	July 2017-Feb 2020	Alert lead a consortium with 8 other NGOs to implement a stabilisation project in DRC. This supported the 4 pillars of the ISSSS: democratic dialogue; restoration of state authority; return, reintegration, and economic recovery; and gender and SGBV.	$6,000,000	muti-donor trust fund contributed to by the Dutch (with 11% of the fund funded by the Dutch).

Figure 23: Case study on multiple sources of money

3. CONCLUSIONS

The main objective of this evaluation was to assess the added value of the strategic partnership as an instrument for both the Ministry and the partners and how could it be improved, altered, or redirected – also in terms of its composition and set up. This chapter summarises the conclusions.

3.1 SWOT OF THE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP MODALITY

The SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis below summarises the main strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the strategic partnership modality.

STRENGTHS

- Stronger institutions
- Low transaction costs
- Access to information
- Informed policy
- Contributions to MFAs peace and security objectives
- Influencing peace processes without direct involvement (and accountability)

WEAKNESSES

- Many embassies and regional directories do not know / do not use the instrument
- Attribution of results (to an extent)
- Information sharing among partners
- Intra-MFA coordination
- Shared objectives insufficiently established and clarified

OPPORTUNITIES

- Further align un-earmarked funding to MFA strategic and country priorities
- Better alignment with embassies and national priorities/strategies
- Merge existing DSH partnerships with one coordinator and increase collaboration
- Increase duration and scope of earmarked funding to reduce transaction costs

THREATS

- Reputational risks of money spent
- Partners can implement without fully aligning to embassies
- Un-monitored, multiple sources of MFA funding

3.2 DETAILED CONCLUSIONS

This evaluation found that **the strategic partnership mechanism has added important value for the MFA,** mainly through the provision of high-quality knowledge and analysis and through contributions to its policy making processes. Further, the unique and flexible funding has proved instrumental to partners' institutional development and interventions, further contributing to global peace making and conflict prevention.

However, in multiple instances, embassy staff (and staff of departments) are seemingly unaware of the strategic partnership instrument, the partners, their respective country activities, and their roles vis-a-vis the partnership. This lack of information was flagged in the 2018 evaluation and no significant improvements have been observed since, pointing to a somewhat under-utilised strategic partnership.

This challenge is further complicated by how the strategic partnership is coordinated at MFA headquarters in the Hague. There are three the Hague-based partnership coordinators who manage different partners of the instrument, which is a source of confusion and does not facilitate collaboration (including between partners) and information provision to embassies and departments on the instrument as a whole and its opportunities.

Coordination can also be a challenge within the MFA (notably between the Hague and embassies). Internal systems and guidelines can be unclear, not acted on, or too heavy comparing to the short duration of projects, impacting the partnership's transaction costs and value for money proposition. In some countries, the centrally funded programmes are regarded as an obstacle to effective programming (in view national priorities and policies).

Some strategic partners receive separate funds from embassies (and MFA funded trust funds) in addition to those channelled through the strategic partnership. Notably, there is no monitoring of the multiple sources of funding a partner receives (and the possible overlap this brings) at MFA level.

Despite recommendations in the 2018 evaluation (and MFA efforts taken to address these) information and network sharing among partners remains low, in part due to poor MFA instruction. However, several partners work closely together (and to good effect), though such collaboration is often demand driven, context specific and difficult to attribute to the partnership mechanism itself.

The strategic partners' composition is broadly relevant to the MFA and is evident in their comparative advantages, which while multifaceted centre on information, analysis, and knowledge production. Composition is further relevant in terms of the partners' thematic and geographic coverage and their collective outputs, which contribute to key outcomes under the SRoL results framework. In practice, however, there are instances where partner niches and key features overlap, or where country context does not necessarily translate into constructive and complementary roles of the partners.

Furthermore, there are some minor technical gaps in the current partner composition (in relation to the new TOC and results areas) that require filling, especially in the field of security and governance, although some governance themes are covered by partners. The partnership's relevance is also linked to the number of partners within it. The Hague-based MFA staff mostly wish to reduce partner numbers, while embassy staff envision a larger pool, particularly as the 'market' of suitable partner organisations has changed in the past eight years, also pointing to organisations based in the regions.

Unearmarked funding is transformational and unique. It provides the partners with the flexibility and means to successfully pursue their missions, strengthen internal systems, innovate, and inform and facilitate Dutch policy making (including by enabling the MFA to support interventions it cannot otherwise support directly). Further, it also allows for the effective implementation of earmarked funds. Beyond contributions to MFA peace and security objectives, unearmarked funding also enables the organisations to substantively contribute to the broader cause of global peace.

Unearmarked funding does, however, come with challenges and risks, among them being difficulties of attributing results in certain instances. From the perspective of embassies, unearmarked funding implies little control or oversight of how funds are spent and limited ability to request specific services. Another risk is that the MFA may find itself funding activities that are not necessarily in line with its ethics and priorities. These risks are, however, largely offset by partners' strong track records, their activities' overlap with broader MFA/DSH objectives, and trusted relationships with MFA interlocutors.

There are also advantages, challenges, and risks with *earmarked* funding. The main benefit brought by the introduction of partial earmarked funding is closer partner relationships with embassies and more attributable results. The main challenges of this funding modality relate to its transaction costs, as the lifespan of earmarked projects tends to be very short, are seen as unsustainable and implemented with serious delays. This challenge is linked to how the strategic partnership is administered from headquarters, though some smaller embassies expressed great appreciation for earmarked funding administered from the Hague, which brings no additional burdens to embassies that seem understaffed.

The greatest risk, however, relates to the centrally led funding of in-country projects. Especially larger embassies with more funding at their disposal, perceive the earmarked projects as "coming from the Hague" as interfering in carefully designed priorities and portfolios. Despite such difficulties, with adaptions in modalities and scope, earmarked funding can clearly support embassies and foster change aligned with the TOC in the priority countries.

Value for money exists but it is difficult to assess. The strategic partnership has, as outlined above, brought a range of benefits, and added value to the MFA, which at face value points to a partnership that has brought clear value. But the extent to which this value is akin to the near 50 million Euros spent on the partnership since 2019, must also be assessed [by the MFA] in a *relative* sense. Put differently, it must account for if (or how) equivalent or additional benefits could be gained in the partnership's absence or via other means (which is beyond the scope of this evaluation). For a proper analysis of this, an evaluation of each partner's spending and performance under the strategic partnership would be required.

In terms of catalytic effects, unearmarked funds used for 'institutional investments' may in turn (and reportedly has) help attract new income and investments from other donors, which can be seen as a notable value for money proposition.

The strategic partnership is indeed *strategic* considering its long-term, predictable features and funding modalities. However, the more apt concern is rather *how* strategic the partnership is. In view of certain limitations cited above (e.g., limited awareness at embassy level), the partnership may not in all instances be as strategic as assumed, which also has a bearing on the value for money it brings. Further, the strategic features of the partnership are also questioned in terms of how it is framed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations speak to the strategic partnership instrument's future and are strongly interlinked, as one might lead, or is a precondition, to another. Overall, the evaluation concludes that the partnership instrument serves an important purpose and has added sufficient value to be continued (with certain adjustments).[46] The proposed adaptions are as follows:

i. A more coherent and capacitated arrangement could improve the internal oversight, coordination, and systematic application of the strategic partnership mechanism, and help address certain 'legacy issues' linked to staff turnover. It is recommended that one dedicated senior staff member (possibly with one assistant) in the Hague (instead of three) administers and coordinates the strategic partnership – and all five partners - to help improve communication and collaboration.

ii. Develop, implement (and monitor) a system aimed at informing embassy staff (and staff of regional directories and countries in the Hague) about the strategic partnership, the partners, and their activities per region on a consistent basis. Further embassies should be provided voice. For example, during the formulation of the MLS the embassies could be involved in the framing of the new partnership agreements, and where embassies can ask the partners to take on certain tasks.

iii. An oversight (or advisory) mechanism should be considered, comprised of senior-level representatives from MFA (beyond DSH), strategic partners and Ambassadors of priority countries. It would periodically advise and review partnership activities against set criteria. The mechanism would be 'light touch' (limited bureaucracy), strategic in nature, and be afforded a higher-level status.

iv. Revisit the decision that allowed strategic partners to receive additional funds from embassies, and at MFA level ensure that the total funding a partner receives, and any possible overlap is monitored. Reconsider if the work of the more operational partners should be funded through this strategic partnership modality, or better via projectized funding.

v. It is recommended that organisations from the regions will be incorporated – based on a (regional) market scan and in view of the areas less covered by the current partners (per the new TOC). Including reputable organisations based in the priority regions (e.g., adding one per region) would reap programmatic and reputational benefits for the MFA. It would also contribute to building strong and sustainable organisations in the regions.

vi. As knowledge and analysis are the strategic partnerships principal benefits to the MFA, it is recommended to explore merging it with that of the knowledge partners, and the strategic partnership with DCAF on SSR (and possibly other DSH strategic partnerships), to streamline efforts and lower transaction costs. If coordinated effectively by one central person, this will also be much clearer for embassies who currently already mix the two instruments and are often not aware of the differences.

[46] The broad relevance of partner composition supports the overall recommendation that the strategic partnership merits continuation. However, as the evaluation did not address the performance of individual partners (in sufficient detail), it cannot offer fully qualified recommendations vis-à-vis the [future] composition of the partnership (e.g., on removing or adding an individual partner). Similarly, it is beyond the scope of this evaluation to make concrete recommendations linked to the value for money of the partnership, which would require further assessments on efficiency of each partner.

vii. The MFA should create new partner incentive structures to ensure deliberate efforts that encourage partners to act even more in line with MFA objectives, and to have meaningful meetings and information sharing, especially at country levels. Any new or revised partnership model should come with modified objectives and (more realistic) expectations, vis-a-vis coordination and information sharing between partners. Coordination can e.g., be improved through partners conducting joint advocacy (also with the embassies), co-authoring briefing or position papers.

viii. Introduce a semi-earmarked funding model where large shares of unearmarked funding can remain in place, albeit with increased consideration for: a) reporting requirements against the TOC, b) more spending on in-country presence versus headquarters, c) partner availability to embassies to provide regular briefings, (and other support) on an as-needed basis. It is important for the partners to administer the money as they see fit (they are the experts) though with a small degree of oversight and guidance from the MFA – to ensure that money is being spent in priority regions and on priority issues.

ix. Explore an increase in earmarked funding, provided that: a) earmarked funding is programmed by embassies with the partners and MFA playing a supporting role, b) projects are longer and larger (and as flexible as possible) to both minimise and justify the transaction costs.

Recommendations from the evaluation participants

Partners wish to see the strategic partnership continued in current form, while MFA staff tend to prefer an adapted version. There is a significant contrast between MFA and strategic partner staff's view on whether the partnership should be continued or extended in its current form. While nearly 100 percent of partner staff agree that it should be continued/extended in its current form, only one-third of MFA staff concur. Most MFA staff state that the strategic partnership should be continued/extended in an adapted form (see Figure 43 in Annex A).

Revising the roles of the MFA in the Hague versus embassies is the most important suggested revision. The most important revision to the strategic partnership suggested by MFA staff is to increase embassy influence, and importantly, to promote and clarify the role of the partnership to embassies. This concern was also flagged in the 2018 evaluation, which suggested to increase awareness and buy-in of the partnership among embassies, keep them more informed and put the partnership to more strategic use at country-level.[47] One MFA staff found it *"difficult to arrange a strategic collaboration with partners from my role at an embassy, they were not always driven by a joint strategic discussion and HQ did not always seem interested to facilitate ideas we had at a mission".*

Clarify goals and revisit the (word) strategic – and make it more strategic. There are clear requests for a reassessment of the goals and structure of the strategic partnership, as well as the use of the word strategic. Most MFA staff consulted do not see the need to use the word strategic, as everything the MFA does, including vis-à-vis other partners, should be strategic in nature. Furthermore, as emphasised above, not all aspects (or outputs) of the partnership can be seen as strategic per se, particularly at embassy level, and this should be addressed.

[47] De Weijer, Frauke (2018) Study on the added value of MFA/DSH strategic partnerships.

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ANNEXES

ANNEX A. ADDITIONAL DETAILED EVALUATION FINDINGS

Relevance

What are the comparative advantages of the strategic partners, as individual organisations? According to MFA staff (N=18)	
Knowledge/expertise	61%
Access to programming/networks/information	28%
Collaborate/support/impact on MFA/UN/partners/other organisations	11%
Engagement and relations between partners and networks	22%
Evidence-based policy/policy influencing/policy development	22%
Gained analysis advice/support from partner(s)	6%
Informal/personal contact/no bureaucracy	6%
Adaptive/flexible needs-based engagement	17%
Comparative advantages have not been used	6%
Limited joint meetings	6%
Limited expertise/limited information-sharing	11%

Figure 24: Comparative advantages of the strategic partners as individual organisations

What are the comparative advantages of the strategic partners as a collective? According to MFA staff (N=18)	
Contributed to more knowledge	44%
Expanded network/partners collaboration	33%
Complementarity	22%
Learning/information-sharing among partners/triangulation of information	22%
Contributed/influenced more evidence-based policy/ programming/policymaking	17%
Partners collaboration could be improved/not always visible	17%
Not clear if Strategic Partnership improved working collective	6%
Strategic Partnership too fragmented/too overlapped	6%
No comparative advantages	6%

Figure 25: Comparative advantages of the strategic partners as a collective

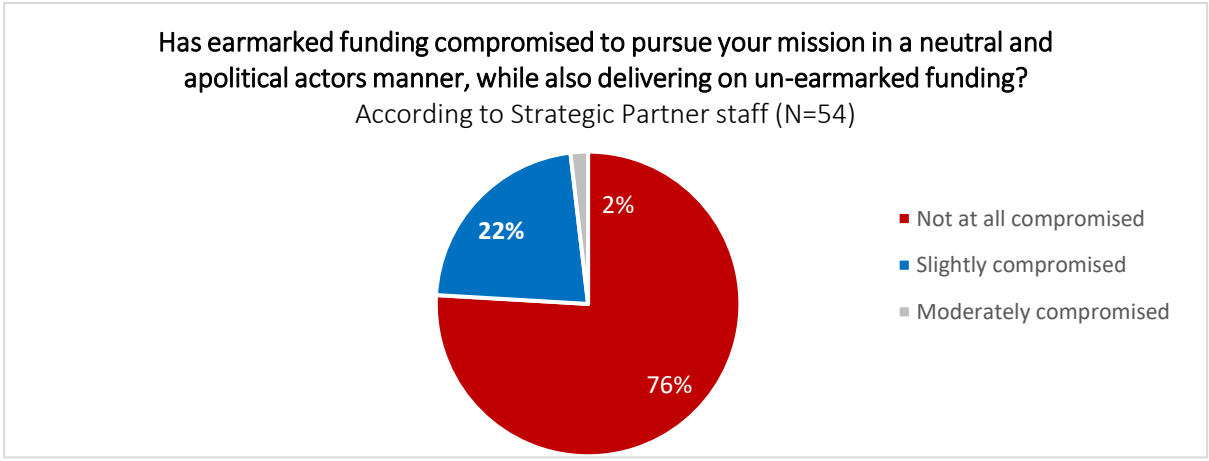

Figure 26: Compromises of earmarked funding

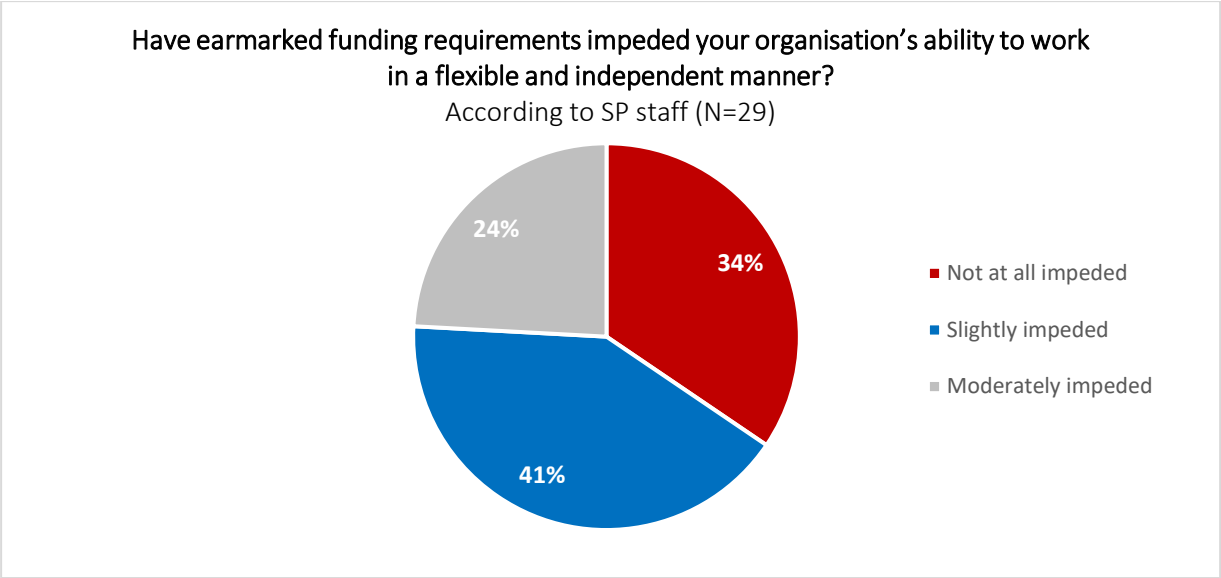

Figure 27: Earmarked funding requirements impeded flexibility and independence

Coherence

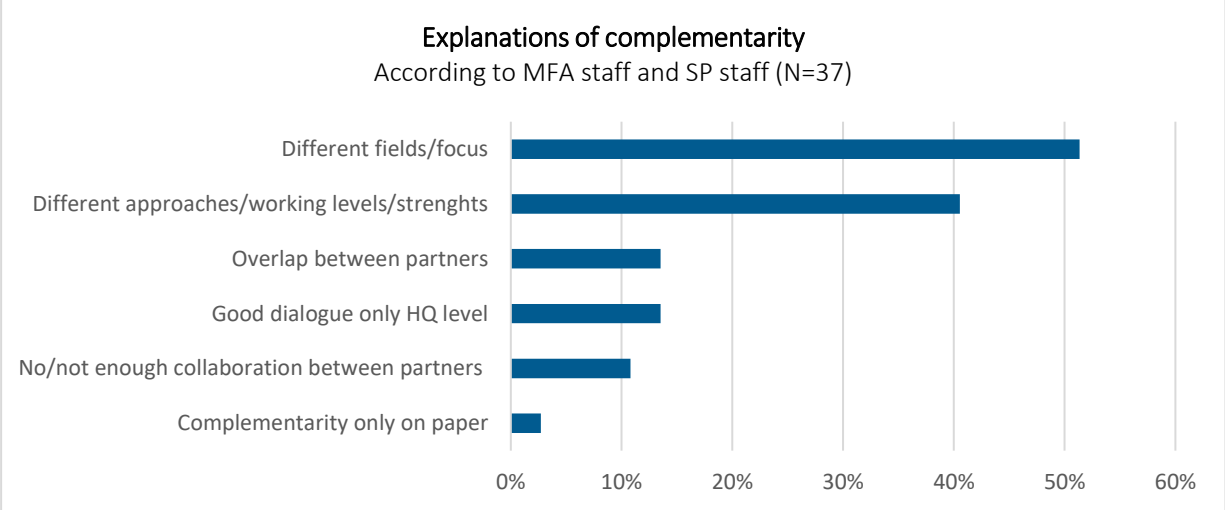

Figure 28: Explanations of complementarity

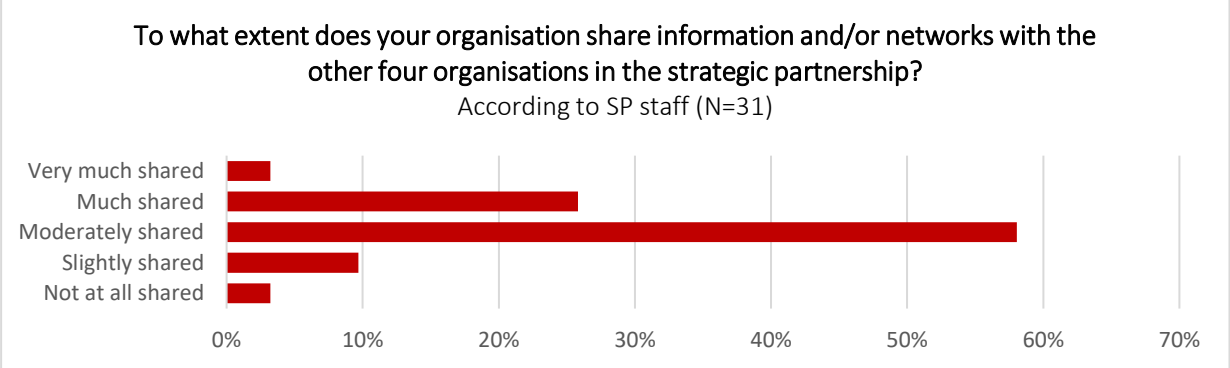

Figure 29: Working together with other strategic partners

	Cooperation with other MFA-linked partners
CHD	CHD participates in meetings organized by the Dutch Dialogue Advisory Group (DAG) and engages in trainings with the Clingendael Institute - an important CHD partner. In addition, CHD is a formal partner of the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (UNDPPA), engages the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Advisory Board on Mediation, in which its Executive Director serves, and works closely with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the World Economic Forum. CHD regularly shares insights with global mediation networks, and has a longstanding relationship with ICG, with frequent exchanges, at all levels.
ICG	In addition to its well-established relationship with CHD, ICG works closely with a range of organisations linked (or of relevance) to the MFA. This includes DAG, Al Sharq Forum, Chatham House, Conciliation Resources, Rift Valley Forum, and the Brookings Institution which whom it holds policy seminars, briefings and report launches. ICG also collaborates with conflict-focused organisations in the fields of mediation, peacebuilding, gender, economics, and environment and works closely with governments, IOs, and NGO networks with common policy objectives, such as the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO).
Interpeace	Interpeace collaborates with a range of actors through its Advisory Council, which provides it with strategic advice, and through platforms like its 'Principles for Peace' initiative. It draws on its hybrid NGO-UN-affiliated status to implement formal agreements with the UN Office for Project Services, which facilitates its support to UN missions and as an implementer of UN programmes, and it has agreements with UNDPPA and the UN Department of Peace Operations to help execute their mandates. Interpeace also works with specialised UN agencies such as the World Health Organisation, International Labor Organisation and the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization, while also working closely with NGOs networks such as the EPLO and the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform.
International Alert	International Alert works with a highly diverse group of around 200 partners, half of which are local NGO's and 15% are women groups. It supports strengthening conflict sensitivity for key Dutch stakeholders and partners, and continues to work with others in trainings, engagements, dialogues, and workshops to share capacity and learning. As part of its business model, Alert will (by 2023) seek to have further built its relationships with the U.S. Agency for International Development, the UN, the U.K. Foreign, Commonwealth & Development office (FCDO) and the European Union.
ICTJ	ICTJ works with a broad range of actors, and cooperates very closely with civil society groups, including on knowledge sharing, joint strategy development, rigorous research, contextual analysis, and stakeholder mapping. It also works with MFA-linked partners, most notably Clingendael institute, and the MFA plays an important role in facilitating networks and creating connections and alliances that benefit ICTJ's country and policy work, including at EU level and in other global policy fora.
Sources: Activity Appraisal Document ODA (BEMO) for all five strategic partners, 2019-2022/3 period; Strategic partnership proposals for all five strategic partners, 2019-2022/3 period; Alert 2020 MFA Annual Report, and 2019 Strategic Report; ICTJ 2018-2022 Strategic Plan; Partner interviews.	

Figure 30: Cooperation of partners with other MFA-linked partners

What levels of trust exist between MFA and partners, which allows for critical discussions? According to MFA staff and SP staff (N=38)		
	Good levels of trust	Differs / depending on personalities
KII partners	100%	0%
KII MFA	79%	21%
Total	92%	8%

Figure 31: Levels of trust between MFA and partners

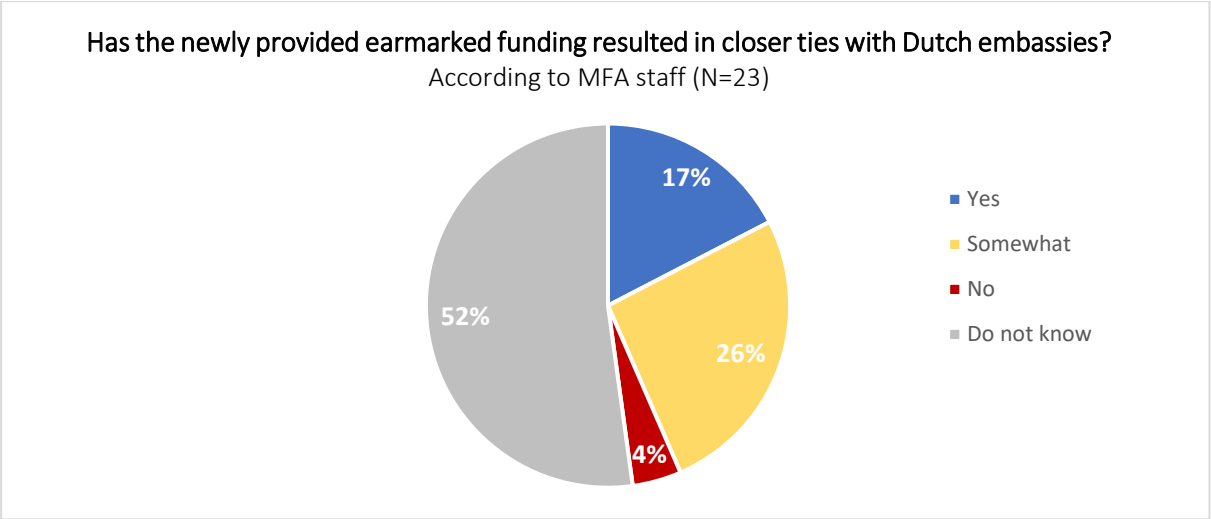

Figure 32: Earmarked funding resulted in closer ties with EKNs

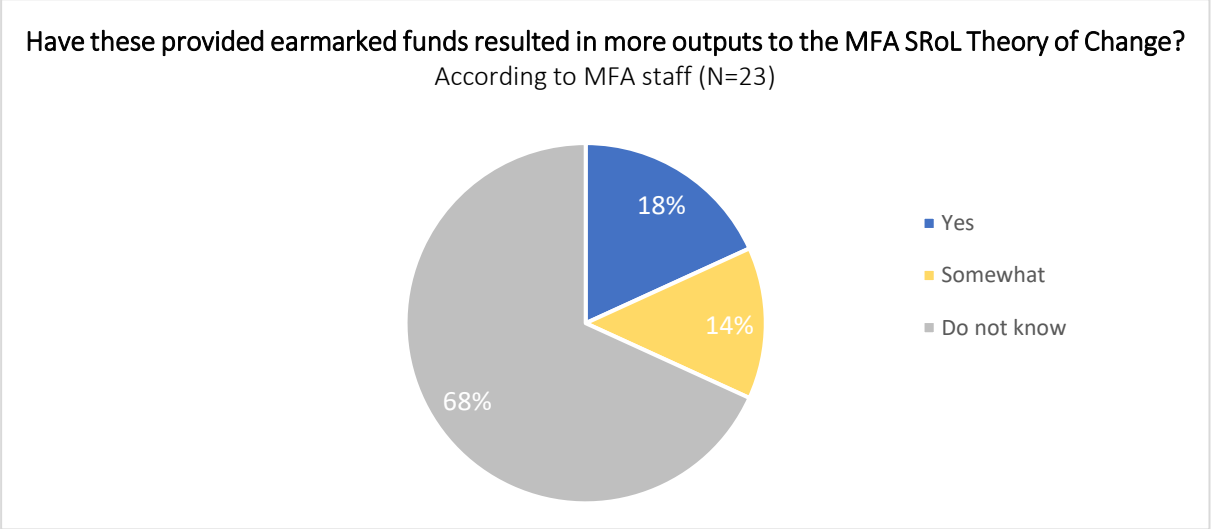

Figure 33: Earmarked funding resulted in more outputs to ToC

Effectiveness

Figure 34: Awareness of the strategic partnership

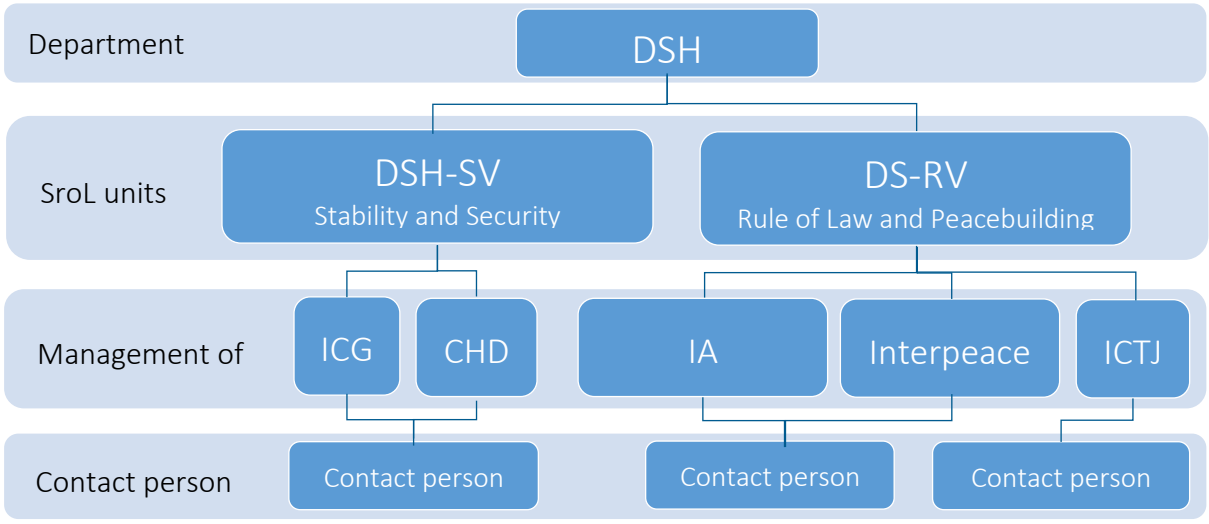

Figure 35: Model of management strategic partnerships[48]

Impact

To what extend has the unearmarked versus earmarked funds contributed directly to the intended outcomes of the Security Rule of Law results framework of MFA NL? According to MFA staff and SP staff (N=39)			
	MFA	SP	Total
Both contributed in different ways	13%	100%	67%
Do not know / not enough aware of the model / not aware of earmarked component	67%	0%	26%
Cannot separate the two	0%	33%	21%
Problem of attribution/cannot translate unearmarked directly to results framework	33%	25%	18%
Earmarked yes, more concrete	27%	0%	10%
Depends on the organisation	7%	0%	3%
Unearmarked indirectly	13%	0%	5%

Figure 36: Unearmarked versus earmarked funds contribution

What is the most significant change the strategic partnership instrument brought?			
	MFA staff	SP staff	Total
Knowledge	41%	14%	22%
Relationships	4%	29%	21%
Continuity	4%	17%	13%
Institution	4%	12%	9%
Policy	11%	8%	9%
Alignment	4%	7%	6%
Innovation	0%	7%	5%
Flexibility	11%	0%	3%
None	7%	0%	2%
Peacebuilding	7%	0%	2%
Trust	0%	3%	2%
Visibility	7%	0%	2%
Learning	0%	2%	1%
Networks	4%	0%	1%
Strategic	0%	2%	1%
Number of respondents	**27**	**59**	**86**

Figure 37: Most Significant Change

[48] Based on Organization Chart Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2019). This model is confirmed as right model by the client.

What is your biggest disappointment with the strategic partnership instrument?			
	MFA staff	SP staff	Total
Collaboration/Coordination	24%	30%	26%
Info	22%	11%	18%
Management	17%	7%	13%
Delays	0%	26%	10%
Impact	10%	0%	6%
COVID	0%	11%	4%
Earmarked	7%	0%	4%
Strategic	7%	0%	4%
Competition	5%	0%	3%
Focus	2%	4%	3%
Fundraising	5%	0%	3%
Turnover	0%	7%	3%
Costs	0%	4%	1%
Number of respondents	**41**	**27**	**68**

Figure 38: Biggest disappointment

Value for money

Percentage of SP funding that is earmarked versus unearmarked[49]		
	% Earmarked	% Unearmarked
ICTJ	60%	40%
CHD	32%	68%
ICG	26%	74%
Alert	21%	79%
Interpeace	20%	80%
Total	**33%**	**67%**

Figure 39: Percentage of SP funding earmarked and unearmarked

Is earmarked funding or unearmarked funding creating more value for money? According to MFA staff and SP staff (N=42)				
	Earmarked	Unearmarked	Both	Do not know
MFA	22%	11%	0%	67%
SPs	0%	46%	54%	0%
Total	**10%**	**31%**	**31%**	**29%**

Figure 40: Earmarked vs unearmarked funding creating value for money

Partner	Share of core funding coming from SP
CHD	23%
ICTJ	40%
ICG	7.4%.
Interpeace	47%
Alert	42%

Figure 41: Share of core funding coming from SP

[49] Activity Appraisal Documents ODA (BEMO's) for 2019-2022 of all partners.

Partner	Share of earmarked funding coming from SP in focus countries
CHD	5%
ICTJ	46%[50]
ICG	5.7%
Interpeace	Currently 100% in Ethiopia and Yemen, funding prospects of other donors
Alert	No information provided

Figure 42: Share of earmarked funding from SP

Catalytic effects

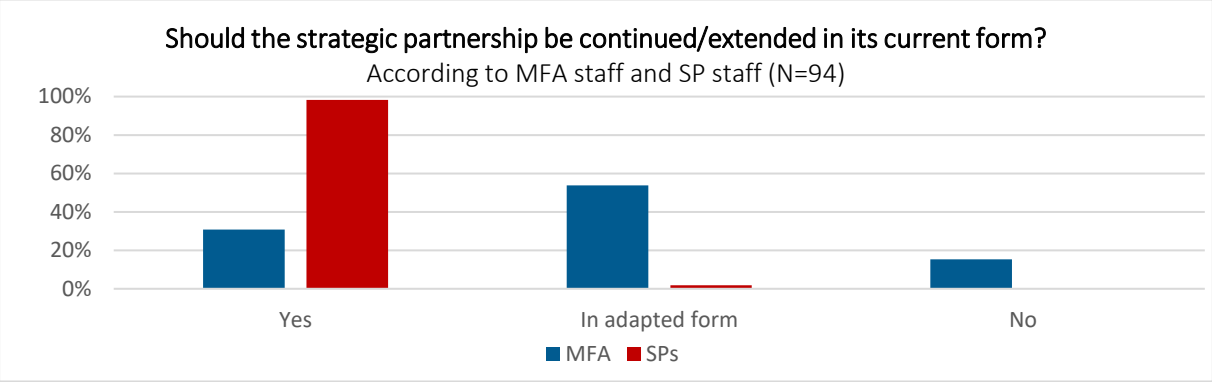

Figure 43: Continuation of the strategic partnership

Please explain why the strategic partnership instrument created any catalytic effects? (N=41)		
	Strategic Partners Staff	MFA Staff
Improved relationships and collaboration between partners and MFA/partners and EKNs	27%	0%
Improved relationships and collaboration between partners	10%	0%
Extended the scope of the work/amplified strategic priorities/increased partnership engagement and opportunities	30%	9%
Increased learning/knowledge/expertise/innovation	33%	27%
Enhanced peace impact of non-peacebuilding actors	7%	0%
Influenced policies and contributed to policy development processes	13%	27%
Conflict sensitivity analysis and training	10%	27%
Improved quality/effectiveness/multiplier effect/leadership/output of MFA/EKNs	27%	18%
Attracted support of other donors to transitional justice/peacebuilding works	13%	0%
Reshaped financing/donorship principles	10%	0%
Provided financial certainty for projects/programmes	10%	0%
Helped to develop regional/national strategies	10%	0%
Positively enhanced governance systems	7%	0%
Enabled flexibility in engagement/programming/organisational management	7%	0%
Capacity development of local organisations	10%	0%

Figure 44: Reasons for catalytic effect

[50] This amount is inclusive of designated support to Colombia during the partnership period 2018-2022.

Recommendations

Which revisions of the strategic partnership model to you propose? According to MFA staff (N=18)			
	MFA EKN	MFA The Hague	Total
Promote / clarify partnerships (on country level) to EKNs	70%	25%	50%
More money and influence to EKNs / involve EKNs in selection of partners	40%	38%	39%
Make more strategic / effective / joint policy plan / better policy framework	30%	50%	39%
Need for reassessment (of structure, needs and goals and meaning of 'strategic', more clarity for partners)	30%	38%	33%
Need for reassessment of partners / less partners	10%	50%	28%
More earmarked funding/more financial leverage on partners/more equal distribution of earmarked and unearmarked funds	30%	25%	22%
Emphasis more on thematic areas instead of geographical	0%	13%	6%
More work with local communities through the IOs	10%	0%	6%
Back to only unearmarked funding	0%	13%	6%
One policy coordinator in The Hague	10%	0%	6%
Possible collaboration with other departments	10%	0%	6%
Diminish administrative burden for EKNs	0%	13%	6%
Total respondents	**10**	**8**	**18**

Figure 45: Proposed revisions of the strategic partnership model

ANNEX B. DETAILED METHODOLOGY

To meet the objectives of the evaluation, it addressed the following central question: *What has been the added value of the strategic partnership as an instrument for both the Ministry and the partners and how could it be improved, altered, or redirected – also in terms of composition and set up*?

This overall evaluation question has been broken down in the following three sub-evaluation questions:

x. To what extend are the five partners unique and complementary to each other, and is there overlap in and demand for their niches (i.e., does it require strategic partnership or is 'regular' project contribution just as effective for partners and/or for the MFA)?

xi. What kind of arrangements could increase the added value of the strategic partnership instrument – and should it be maintained, altered, re-defined or abandoned (and how does this translate to partner composition)?

xii. What has been achieved at the output-level in DSH focus countries (vis-à-vis the strategic partnership) and how does this relate to what partners have achieved (more or less on their own device) in other countries or at the global level?'

This was assessed by using the following **evaluation framework**:

Added value of the strategic partnership as an instrument for both the Ministry and the partners				
Contribution/ attribution	Contribution to MFA ToC (and related indicators of the Results Framework)	Attribution of results to the strategic partnership	Facilitated policy development	Facilitated knowledge transfer and use of information
Funding mechanisms	Earmarked	Non-earmarked	Value for money	Independence
Collaboration among partners	Information sharing	Shared networks	Joint lobby & advocacy (L&A)	Levels of trust versus competition
Composition	Complementarity	Type of partners	Added value	Comparative advantages of partners and or niches
Relation with MFA	Levels of trust	Supporting Embassies of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKNs) and regional and thematic departments	Flexibility	Awareness and use of the partnerships across the MFA

Figure 46: Evaluation framework

The following are descriptions of the categories included in the evaluation framework above:

Contribution/attribution: The ways in which strategic partners contribute, and add value to, MFA goals (per the SRoL Results Framework and DSH ToC) and if and how the outputs can be attributed to the strategic partnership itself (of both earmarked and non-earmarked funding).

Funding mechanisms: The means that DSH apply to provide financial support to each strategic partner (and any/all conditions attached) - as well as the qualities and features of each mechanism. An indication of value for money of the strategic partnership funding modalities, and the level of independence of the partners and the added value of that for MFA.

Collaboration among partners: How strategic partners cooperate and communicate among themselves, including through information and network sharing as well as learning activities, and how this collaboration is linked to the strategic partnership. The levels of trust and extend to which partners undertake joint L&A (with or without MFA).

Composition: The combined sum of the various niches, comparative advantages, and outputs of the strategic partners, and how these complement each other and [collectively] contribute to the strategic partnership's added value.

Relation with MFA: The nature and characteristics of the interactions between partners and the MFA (in the Hague as well as with embassies) and how these – at the institutional and personal levels – are a function of the strategic partnership. The awareness and use of the strategic partnership modality across MFA (and especially by the EKNs).

Based upon the MFA Results Framework, the indicators below have been formulated to further inform the evaluation. This list was used to inform the development of the evaluation tools, as presented in Annex C. Based upon the initial survey results these were refined further.

Indicators	
1	Evidence of the MFA's adaptive management based on outputs produced by the strategic partners.
2	Number of knowledge products, exchanges or trainings for policy making resulting from the partnerships.
3	Perceived impact of earmarked programming in priority countries and areas.
4	Perceived added value of the strategic partnerships by key MFA and partner organisation staff.
5	Quantity and quality of outputs produced by partners that strengthen evidence base of relevant Dutch policies.
6	Relevance of partner outputs to the SRoL's intended outcomes (see e.g., Results Framework medium-term outputs).
7	Perceived utility and timeliness [among MFA staff] of partner's outputs (partner outputs that are tactical as opposed to strategic).
8	Evidence of events, tools and/or reforms used by partners to influence the international agenda and advise IOs.
9	Evidence of exchanges and collaborations between partners at country and higher levels.
10	Evidence of instances where the partners directly engaged (e.g., via expertise or conflict analyses) with the MFA?
11	Number of relevant and quality outputs produced with earmarked versus unearmarked funding.
12	Perceptions among MFA staff of transaction costs resulting from engagement with strategic partners.
13	Perceptions among MFA staff and partners on the balance between earmarked and non-earmarked funding (and the impact of this balance on the strategic partnerships).
14	Perceived complementarity (of the missions, activities, and outputs) of the partners.
15	Relevance of the strategic partnerships in relation to other institutional partnerships with the MFA.
16	Relevance of the strategic partnership to the assumptions in the DSH Theory of Change.

Figure 47: Indicators

3.2 Evaluation questions

The evaluation is organised by applying the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) Evaluation criteria. Specifically, the "Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use" by the OECD/DAC Network on Development

Evaluation from 2019,[51] was applied with a particular emphasis on the *relevance, coherence, effectiveness,* and *impact* of the strategic partnerships. The OECD has defined two additional evaluation criteria: *efficiency*, which focuses on the delivery of results in an economic manner and *sustainability*, which considers longer-term net benefits. These criteria were accounted for as far as they had bearing on the evaluation questions, e.g., in analysing the value for money of the different funding mechanism, as presented in the evaluation framework above. In addition, the criteria *Catalytic effects* has been added as it is of relevance to this evaluation.

These evaluation criteria have been operationalised into the questions and presented in the table below. They guided the literature review and data collection process, informed the analysis and the development of key findings and recommendations.

	Questions
Relevance	1. What are the comparative advantages of the strategic partners – as individual organisations and as a collective? 2. What is the relevance of the strategic partnerships' composition considering the SRoL results framework? 3. To what extent has un-earmarked funding allowed partners to pursue their missions as neutral and apolitical actors while also delivering on earmarked funding? 4. What, if any, tensions exist between the need for flexibility among partners and predictable outcomes for DSH, and how have these been addressed?
Coherence	5. To what extent are the partners and their outputs complementary to each other, including vis-à-vis sharing information and networks? 6. What levels of trust exist between MFA and partners, which allows for critical discussions and input and who/what does this apply to? 7. Have earmarked funds resulted in closer ties with embassies and more outputs to the ToC?
Effectiveness	8. Have the strategic partnerships achieved their stated objectives in terms of their contributions to the DSH ToC, Results Framework, and knowledge position? 9. Has the strategic partnership arrangement created additional value for the MFA (and if so, how) and could other partnership models or compositions achieve better effect? 10. What has the MFA's role been in the application of the partnership model and what, if any, lessons have been learned from the experience?
Impact	11. To what extent have partners contributed to achieving legitimate stability as a basis for sustainable peace and development in the priority countries of the Netherlands? 12. How have unearmarked funds contributed, directly or indirectly, to the intended outcomes of SRoL Results Framework? 13. To what extent have partners facilitated policy development and networks by providing relevant information on priority areas and topics? 14. What was the most significant change and biggest disappointment of the strategic partnership instrument and practise?

[51] Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (2019), *Better Criteria for Better Evaluation*. Retrieved from: https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/revised-evaluation-criteria-dec-2019.pdf.

Catalytic effects	15. Could any revised arrangements help increase strategic partnerships added value, considering new insights on mediation and peacebuilding approaches? 16. How have the partners influenced the international agenda and informed and advised IOs in line with Dutch policy objectives? 17. Has the strategic partnership model created any catalytic effects?

Figure 48: Evaluation criteria and research questions

3.3 Overall Approach

The evaluation is based on data and perspectives of primary sources (among partner organisations, relevant MFA units and other knowledgeable stakeholders) as well as a variety of secondary sources. The evaluation is structured along the evaluation criteria and related questions listed above. Data is collected with the aim of maximising triangulation. The evaluation team adopted a mixed methods approach to the evaluation, combining and sequencing both qualitative and quantitative evidence. This overall approach helped discern the added value of the strategic partnerships model and unpacked the degree to which it is fit for purpose, and why.

The evaluation process was conducted with the intended end-users of the evaluation in mind and in a non-prescriptive manner. Procedurally, this means that the work plan (see annex D.) was implemented in a flexible way to maximise collaboration and ensure that any bottlenecks were addressed mid-course as needed.

3.3 Phased approach

Inception phase

During the inception phase, the inception note was developed.

Data collection phase

The data collection process was comprehensive by design. A variety of secondary sources were reviewed and synthesized (based on the initial document review included in this inception note). Secondary sources consulted included MFA documentation linked to DSH's efforts to achieve SRoL goals and materials specifically linked to the strategic partnerships and the partners.

As part of the data collection process, the evaluation team drew on primary sources, starting with designing and disseminating (with the assistance of DSH) a brief online survey. The results of the survey were analysed and provided a guide for conducting in-depth interviews with partners, MFA staff and other relevant stakeholders. As presented in the tool section below, a combination of individual interviews and group discussion, in online form, were organised. Part of the interviews with MFA staff took place face-to-face in the Hague. The interviews with MFA staff working at embassies were conducted online.

Towards the end of the process, one or two reflective sessions are organised with DSH staff and partners to discuss and validate the evaluation findings.

Analysis phase

The analysis phase of the evaluation was conducted gradually throughout the evaluation process. Data was processed and analysed in a database, and qualitative data was (partly) coded and quantified to enable a comparative analysis of findings.

TI has developed an innovative way to ensure triangulation, in the form of a master list, as presented in Annex B, ensuring that each question is answered from different sources, and perspectives can be compared.

The SRoL Results Framework and DSH ToC were accounted for (see indicator table in figure 9 above), and the evaluation framework presented in figure 8 above, assisted the process of translating data into findings that are relevant and recommendations that are actionable.

Report writing phase

Based on the analysis and findings, the team drafted the evaluation report. This was done in a collaborative and iterative manner based on mutual feedback and review. The report includes an executive summary, as well as separate annexes containing relevant supplementary information and data. Noteworthy sources, statements and findings are referenced in footnotes, as needed. Where deemed appropriate, information is presented in visual form as figures or graphs. The final report adopted high editorial standards, is written in clear, concise English and stripped of unnecessary institutional jargon (to the extent possible).

Validation phase and presentation of results

Initial findings and results are shared with DSH on an ad hoc basis (or upon request) to keep counterparts abreast of progress and solicit feedback. Findings and recommendations compiled in the first draft report submitted to DSH are discussed during a reflective session. In this session, overall evaluation results are discussed and reviewed with the aim of validating or complementing them. Comments will then be incorporated prior to submitting the final deliverable. A similar but separate meeting will be organised with the partners.

3.5 Tools

As part of the mixed methods approach to conduct the evaluation, a variety of tools have been selected to allow for a combination of open and more targeted questions to obtain the most relevant information from respondents, and account for an array of variables.

Desk review

The evaluation team conducted a thorough desk review to examine documents that spoke to the work and strategic priorities of partners and the nature of their collaboration with the MFA. These materials included, but are not limited to:

- MFA and DSH-specific documents, including on the SRoL goals and Results Framework, ToC, and evaluation of the strategic partnerships for the 2016-2019 period.
- Background materials and briefs used by the MFA to inform the strategic partnerships, including documentation about expectations and/or funding arrangements with partners (e.g., BEMOs).
- Key documents sourced from partners, including strategic plans, annual reports, board documents, assessments and relevant outputs documents provided by the partners to the MFA.
- Meeting minutes, briefings, and event summaries with a bearing on the strategic partnership.

As part of the desk review, the evaluation team examined and synthesised documents considered to be priority and identified the most pertinent features and reflections of the strategic partnership. Summary

notes were taken and assessed against the evaluation criteria and later integrated into the broader analysis. Newly identified or referred materials were considered on a continuous basis in accordance with the analytical approach outlined above.

Rapid surveys

Two rapid, online surveys were conducted to solicit views from a diverse range of stakeholders. This helped capture systematic, quantifiable data points on the nature and perceived value of the strategic partnerships that would have been difficult to discern from a more limited subset of interviews. The surveys targeted a large and (to the extent possible) representative sample comprised of partners, DSH, MFA and EKN staff who are both directly and indirectly involved in the strategic partnerships, and knowledgeable of it to varying degrees.

In terms of design, the surveys consisted of a small number of questions to maximise completion rates. Questions and response options were designed to be collect frank and nuanced perceptions of the partnerships that reflect both challenges and recommendations. The surveys were designed and disseminated at an early stage in the evaluation process so that survey responses could help further design the interview questions and informed the subsequent analysis.

Key Informant Interviews (KII)

The desk review and survey results informed an interview process aimed at capturing perspectives and observations from key stakeholders in the MFA, among embassies and partners, as well as possibly other stakeholders in receiving countries. The interview process was an important component in providing contextual and nuanced answers to the evaluation questions. Prospective interviewees were interviewed on an individual basis or in a small group format, whenever appropriate to improve the efficiency of the process. Multiple staff members of one partner organisation were interviewed in one interview.

28 interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner. This enabled more frank responses while ensuring that all interview responses are comparable and could be coded accordingly. No electronic recording took place to further engage honest responses and discussions. Interviews were conducted virtually over Teams or Skype platforms, or in person where feasible. They did not last longer than one hour and were conducted in English, French or Dutch when appropriate.

After completing the first draft report, two reflection sessions are organised with DSH and strategic partners, where findings and recommendations are be presented and tested. This meeting serves in effect as a validation session and comments received will be incorporated into the final version of the report after which it will be submitted.

Most significant change

The Most Significant Change (MSC) tool has been adapted and applied by TI in more than 15 evaluations. The tool helped collect and compare stories and narratives from stakeholders in three important ways:

1. It identifies perceptions of the most significant positive changes resulting from the Strategic Partnerships, by the different stakeholders.
2. It identifies perceptions of the disappointments of the model of the Strategic Partnerships, by the different stakeholders.
3. It identifies the perceived level of attribution of change resulting from the partnership.

The following table outlines tools that were applied as part of the evaluation process.

Tool	Type of respondents
Tool 1. Desk review	Internal to evaluation team with key findings, case studies or summaries to be made available externally, as needed.
Tool 2. Rapid surveys	A large and representative sample of respondents (that may otherwise be difficult to interview), including working level partner representatives, DSH staff, relevant MFA staff and select EKN staff in target countries. A separate similar survey targeted staff of the five strategic partners.
Tool 3. KII with strategic partners	3-4 staff members per strategic partner – both at higher and working levels, including donor liaison staff.
Tool 4. KII with MFA	DSH and SRoL staff members and interviews with select EKN staff, including former MFA staff, and MFA staff formerly at DSH or EKN, and or staff in relevant thematic or regional departments in The Hague
Tool 5. KII with other stakeholders	Other relevant stakeholders with knowledge or insight on the strategic partnership.
Tool 6. Validation meetings	MFA meeting and partner meeting.
Tool 7. Most Significant Change	All respondents (2 questions measuring positive and negative change).

Figure 49: Tools

3.6 Sampling

The evaluation team's approach to sampling draws on a combination of purposive and snowball sampling methods. The former involves advance recommendations from DSH and partners with a solid understanding of the partnership, while the latter relies on nominations for subjects from primary data sources and other referrals. In selecting target audiences, the team aimed to reach a mix of senior and working level staff. Importantly, the team ensured regional and gender sensitive targeting.

The evaluation team requested the support of DSH to ensure that the survey is widely circulated, and that the most relevant subset of stakeholders are identified and contacted. The following table shows the targets which are set for the evaluation:

Target	Tool
Up to 100	Tool 2.a Rapid survey MFA
	Tool 2.b Rapid survey partners
15	Tool 3. KII with strategic partners (3 per partner)
20	Tool 4. KII with MFA/EKN
10	Tool 5. KII with other stakeholders
15	Tool 6. Validation workshops
All	Tool 7. Most Significant Change

Figure 50: Research targets

3.7 Ethical considerations

Confidentiality and protection

Confidentiality refers to the protection of the informants and data collected. To the extent that the data collection process involves access to sensitive materials, confidentiality of that data was respected, and precautions were taken to guarantee the anonymity of the information and people in question. Sensitive information revealed in confidence was not disclosed to others without expressed permission to do so. Individual names are not attributed in the evaluation report and recording equipment was not used during interviews. Further, all data that may be potentially useful for other research was only obtained

with the consent of relevant survey or interview respondents and the decision of respondents to participate was fully voluntary. Throughout the evaluation, the team respected the principles of voluntary participation and informed consent and work in line with the ICRC "Handbook on data protection in humanitarian action".[52]

Do no harm and safeguarding

TI provides maximum assurances regarding protection from violence, exploitation, and abuse through involvement, directly or indirectly. This includes sexual exploitation and abuse but should also be understood as all forms of physical or emotional violence or abuse and financial exploitation. All team members signed the TI code of conduct, including the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and the commitment to observe zero tolerance on sexual exploitation and abuse.

COVID-19 pandemic

At the time of writing, the COVID-19 pandemic is posing significant health and safety risks globally and prevention and mitigation measures are often restrictive and limiting the mobility of people. In careful consideration of this, and to prevent the transmission of the virus, all necessary precautions were taken during the evaluation process. Most interviews and meetings with MFA staff working in The Hague were held in-person. Some MFA staff were still working from home, these interviews were conducted virtually. The planned reflective sessions are considered on a case-by-case basis and in accordance with Dutch regulations and guidelines.

3.8 Limitations and anticipated challenges

Any evaluation of this kind is likely to encounter bottlenecks and challenges, which need to be identified and addressed to avoid them having an adverse impact on the process, including:

Access to quality data

To ensure access to timely and quality data, the survey was conducted in a way that complemented the interview process and mitigates any risks brought by [relatively] limited sample sizes of interviewees and period allocated to complete the evaluation. Further, triangulating data from the survey and desk review helped minimize the risk of biased or skewed interview samples (e.g., from partners with potentially strong financial incentives vis-à-vis donors).

Reaching respondents

The number of interviews may be challenging risking the ambition to get a good representation. As surveys tend to have a high attrition rate, and relevant respondents can be difficult to reach, TI relied on DSH counterparts (in line with the sampling approach outlined above) in facilitating their identification and securing relevant contact details. In addition, the evaluation assistant focused on respondent outreach, enabling the Team Leader and Senior Expert to focus on the more substantive aspects of the evaluation.

Transparency and clarity

Throughout the evaluation process and when interacting with all stakeholders, the evaluation objectives and process were made clear to avoid any surprises and maintain the analytical integrity of the process. Simplicity and clarity were ensured in how findings and results are explained and presented.

[52] Kuner, C. & and Marelli, M. P. (2017) Handbook on data protection in humanitarian action, p.46.

Cut-off dates

The timeframe for delivering the evaluation report necessitates a cut-off date for data collection and each individual phase of the evaluation. At the same time, the evaluation team, to the extent possible, exercised flexibility to accommodate new information and considerations related to the strategic partnerships.

Expectation management

It was important to, especially as part of the inception phase, balance the scope of the evaluation with the time and resources available to conduct it, and to avoid open ended lines of inquiry. The team in this regard ensured that the scale and scope of the selected tools were adequately defined and that the process was undertaken in a realistic and pragmatic manner. The evaluation team did its utmost to adhere to the methodological framework outlined above and ensured that DSH counterparts are continuously briefed, including on early findings.

ANNEX C. MASTERLIST OF TOOL QUESTIONS

Research questions	#	Tool Questions	Tool 1a	Tool 1 b	Tool 2	Tool 3	Tool 4
			Survey MFA	Survey Partners	KII Strategic partners	KII MFA	KII other stakeholders
	Relevance						
What are the comparative advantages of the strategic partners – both as individual organisations and as a collective?	1	How relevant is the strategic partnership model according to you? *Not at all relevant, slightly relevant, moderately relevant, very relevant, extremely relevant*	X	X			
	2	What are the comparative advantages of the strategic partners, as individual organisations?	X				
	3	What are the comparative advantages of the strategic partners as a collective?	X				
What is the relevance of the strategic partnerships' composition considering the SRoL results framework?	4	What is the relevance of the strategic partnerships' composition considering the SRoL results framework?				X	
To what extent has un-earmarked funding allowed partners to pursue their missions as neutral and apolitical actors while also delivering on earmarked funding?	5	Has earmarked funding compromised to pursue your mission in a neutral and apolitical actors manner, while also delivering on un-earmarked funding? Sliding scale of 1 to 5 (1 not at all – 5 very much).		X			
	6	Have earmarked funding requirements impeded your organisation's ability to work in a flexible and independent manner? Sliding scale of 1 to 5 (1 not at all – 5 very much).		X			
What, if any, tensions exist between the need for flexibility among partners and predictable outcomes for DSH, and how have these been addressed?	7	Do tensions exist between the applied flexibility among partners and predictable outcomes for DSH? *No tensions, slight tensions, moderate tensions, high tensions, very high tensions*	X		X	X	
	8	How have these been addressed?			X	X	
	Coherence						
To what extent are the partners and their outputs complementary to each other, including vis-à-vis sharing information and networks?	9	To what extent are the 5 strategic partners and their outputs complementary to each other? *Not at all complementary, partially complementary, moderately complementary, very complementary, extremely complementary*	X	X			

Research questions	#	Tool Questions	Tool 1a	Tool 1 b	Tool 2	Tool 3	Tool 4
			Survey MFA	Survey Partners	KII Strategic partners	KII MFA	KII other stakeholders
	10	Are they complementary vis-à-vis sharing information and networks?			X	X	
	11	To what extent does your organisation share information and/or networks with the other four organisations in the strategic partnership? Sliding scale of 1 to 5 (1 not at all – 5 very much)		X			
What levels of trust exist between MFA and partners, which allows for critical discussions and input and who/what does this apply to?	12	What levels of trust exist between MFA and partners, which allows for critical discussions? High, medium, low			X	X	
	13	What are the obstacles for trust and sharing of information?			X	X	
Have earmarked funds resulted in closer ties with embassies and more outputs to the TOC?	14	Has the newly provided earmarked funding resulted in closer ties with Dutch embassies? *Yes, somewhat, no, don't know*	X				
	15	Have these provided earmarked funds resulted in more outputs to the MFA SRoL Theory of Change? *Yes, somehow, no, don't know*	X				
	Effectiveness						
Have the strategic partnerships achieved their stated objectives in terms of their contributions to the SRoL TOC, results framework, and knowledge position?	16	To what extent have the strategic partnerships achieved their stated objectives in terms of their contributions to the SRoL TOC, results framework, and knowledge position?				X	
Has the strategic partnership arrangement created additional value for the MFA (and if so, how) and could other partnership models or compositions achieve better effect?	17	Does the strategic partnership add value to your work and/or that of your organisation? Sliding scale of 1 to 5 (1 very little, 5 very much)			X	X	
	18	What added value has the strategic partnership brought to date? Multiple choice: *a) knowledge & analysis, b) influencing key decisions & policy, c) flexibility d) network expansion f) none g) other (text box).*	X	X			
	19	To what degree has the strategic partnership enabled a strong relationship with between the strategic partners and the EKNs? *Not at all enabled, slightly enabled, moderately enabled, much enabled, very much enabled*	X	X			

Research questions	#	Tool Questions	Tool 1a	Tool 1 b	Tool 2	Tool 3	Tool 4
			Survey MFA	Survey Partners	KII Strategic partners	KII MFA	KII other stakeholders
	20	When partners were supporting EKNs, who mostly took the initiative? Partner, EKN, MFA in the Hague?			X	X	
What has the MFA's role been in the application of the partnership model and what, if any, lessons have been learned from the experience?	21	What lessons have been learned from the MFA's role in the application of the partnership model?			X	X	
	22	To what extent are you aware of the strategic partnership of DSH with the 5 partners and its purpose? *Minimally aware, A little aware, Somewhat aware, Much aware, Very aware*	X				X
	23	Can you describe the nature of this?				X	X
	Impact						
To what extent have partners contributed to achieving legitimate stability as a basis for sustainable peace and development in the priority countries of the Netherlands?	24	To what extent have partners contributed to achieving legitimate stability as a basis for sustainable peace and development in the priority countries of the Netherlands?				X	X
How have unearmarked funds contributed, directly or indirectly, to the intended outcomes of SRoL results framework?	25	To what extend has the unearmarked funds contributed directly to the intended outcome of SRoL results framework? Sliding scale of 1 to 5 (1 not at all – 5 very much)			X	X	
	26	To what extent has the unearmarked funds contributed indirectly to the intended outcome of SRoL results framework? Sliding scale of 1 to 5 (1 not at all – 5 very much)			X	X	
To what extent have partners facilitated policy development and networks by providing relevant information on priority areas and topics?	27	To what extent have partners facilitated policy development by providing relevant information on priority areas and topics? Sliding scale of 1 to 5 (1 not at all – 5 very much)				X	X
	28	To what extend have partners facilitated networks? *Not at all facilitated, slightly facilitated, moderately facilitated, much facilitated, very much facilitated*	X				
	29	What is the most significant change the strategic partnership instrument brought?	X	X	X	X	X

Research questions	#	Tool Questions	Tool 1a	Tool 1 b	Tool 2	Tool 3	Tool 4
			Survey MFA	Survey Partners	KII Strategic partners	KII MFA	KII other stakeholders
What was the most significant change and biggest disappointment of the strategic partnership instrument and practise?	30	What is your biggest disappointment with the strategic partnership instrument?	X	X	X	X	X
	Catalytic effects						
Could any revised arrangements help increase strategic partnerships added value, considering new insights on mediation and peacebuilding approaches?	31	Should the strategic partnership be continued/extended in its current form? Yes, no, in adapted form	X	X			
	32	Which revision do you propose considering new insights on mediation and peacebuilding approaches?			X	X	
How have the partners influenced the international agenda and informed and IOs in line with Dutch policy objectives?	33	Has the strategic partnership helped your organisation to exert influence on global policy issues with IOs? Sliding scale of 1 to 5 (1 not at all – 5 very much).			X		
	34	To what extent have the strategic partners influenced the international agenda and informed and advised IOs in line with Dutch policy objectives? Sliding scale of 1 to 5 (1 not at all – 5 very much)			X		
Has the strategic partnership instrument created any catalytic effects?	35	Did the strategic partnership instrument create any catalytic effects (positively impacting other areas of work)? *Not at all created, slightly created, moderately created, much created, very much created+ text box*	X	X	X	X	
	36	If no, why not, if yes how?			X	X	
Value for money							
What are the perceptions on the value for money of the strategic partnership's modality?	37	Did the strategic partnership create value for money? *Very little created, slightly created, moderately created, much created, very much created*	X	X			
	38	Is earmarked funding or unearmarked funding creating more value for money? Earmarked, unearmarked, none of them			X	X	

ANNEX D. DRAFT TOOLS

Tool 1a Survey – MFA

1	To what extent are you aware of the strategic partnership of DSH with the 5 partners and its purpose? *Minimally aware, A little aware, Somewhat aware, Much aware, Very aware*
2	What added value has the strategic partnership brought to date? *Multiple choice: a) knowledge & analysis, b) influencing key decisions & policy, c) flexibility d) network expansion f) none g) other (text box).*
3	To what degree has the strategic partnership enabled a strong relationship between the strategic partners and the EKNs? *Not at all enabled, slightly enabled, moderately enabled, much enabled, very much enabled*
4	How relevant is the strategic partnership model according to you? *Not at all relevant, slightly relevant, moderately relevant, very relevant, extremely relevant*
5	What are the comparative advantages of the strategic partners, as individual organisations? *Text box*
6	What are the comparative advantages of the strategic partners as a collective? *Text box*
7	Do tensions exist between the applied flexibility among partners and predictable outcomes for DSH? *No tensions, slight tensions, moderate tensions, high tensions, very high tensions*
8	To what extent are the 5 strategic partners and their outputs complementary to each other? *Not at all complementary, partially complementary, moderately complementary, very complementary, extremely complementary*
9	Has the newly provided earmarked funding resulted in closer ties with Dutch embassies? *Yes, somewhat, no, don't know*
10	Have these provided earmarked funds resulted in more outputs to the MFA SRoL Theory of Change? *Yes, somehow, no, don't know*
11	To what extend have partners facilitated networks? *Not at all facilitated, slightly facilitated, moderately facilitated, much facilitated, very much facilitated*
12	What is the most significant change the strategic partnership instrument brought? *Text box*
13	What is your biggest disappointment with the strategic partnership instrument? *Text box*
14	Did the strategic partnership instrument create any catalytic effects (positively impacting other areas of work)? *Not at all created, slightly created, moderately created, much created, very much created+ text box*
15	Did the strategic partnership create value for money? *Very little created, slightly created, moderately created, much created, very much created*
16	Should the strategic partnership be continued/extended in its current form? *Yes, no, in adapted form*

Tool 1b Survey - Strategic Partners

1	How relevant is the strategic partnership model according to you? *Not at all relevant, slightly relevant, moderately relevant, very relevant, extremely relevant*
2	What added value has the strategic partnership brought to date? *Multiple choice: a) knowledge & analysis, b) influencing key decisions & policy, c) flexibility d) network expansion f) none g) other (text box).*
3	To what degree has the strategic partnership enabled a strong relationship between the strategic partners and the EKNs? *Not at all enabled, slightly enabled, moderately enabled, much enabled, very much enabled*
4	Has earmarked funding compromised to pursue your mission in a neutral and apolitical actors manner, while also delivering on un-earmarked funding? *Sliding scale of 1 to 5 (1 not at all – 5 very much).*
5	Have earmarked funding requirements impeded your organisation's ability to work in a flexible and independent manner? *Sliding scale of 1 to 5 (1 not at all – 5 very much).*
6	To what extent are the 5 strategic partners and their outputs complementary to each other? *Not at all complementary, partially complementary, moderately complementary, very complementary,* *extremely complementary*
7	To what extent does your organisation share information and/or networks with the other four organisations in the strategic partnership? *Sliding scale of 1 to 5 (1 not at all – 5 very much)*
8	What is the most significant change the strategic partnership instrument brought? *Text box*
9	What is your biggest disappointment with the strategic partnership instrument? *Text box*
10	Did the strategic partnership instrument create any catalytic effects (positively impacting other areas of work)? *Not at all created, slightly created, moderately created, much created, very much created+ text box*
11	Did the strategic partnership create value for money? *Very little created, slightly created, moderately created, much created, very much created*
12	Should the strategic partnership be continued/extended in its current form? *Yes, no, in adapted form*

Tool 2 KII - Strategic Partners

1	Do tensions exist between the applied flexibility among partners and predictable outcomes for DSH? *No tensions, slight tensions, moderate tensions, high tensions, very high tensions*
2	How have the tensions between the applied flexibility among partners and predictable outcomes for DSH been addressed?
3	Are the strategic partners and their outputs complementary vis-à-vis sharing information and networks?
4	What levels of trust exist between MFA and partners, which allows for critical discussions? *High, medium, low*
5	What are the obstacles for trust and sharing of information?
6	When partners were supporting EKNs, who mostly took the initiative? *Partner, EKN, MFA in the Hague?*
7	What lessons have been learned from the MFA's role in the application of the partnership model?
8	To what extend has the unearmarked funds contributed directly to the intended outcome of SRoL results framework? *Sliding scale of 1 to 5 (1 not at all – 5 very much)*
9	To what extend has the unearmarked funds contributed indirectly to the intended outcome of SRoL results framework? *Sliding scale of 1 to 5 (1 not at all – 5 very much)*
10	Which revision do you propose considering new insights on mediation and peacebuilding approaches?
11	To what extend have the strategic partners influenced the international agenda and informed and advised IOs in line with Dutch policy objectives? *Sliding scale of 1 to 5 (1 not at all – 5 very much)*
12	Does the strategic partnership add value to your work and/or that of your organisation? *Sliding scale of 1 to 5 (1 very little, 5 very much)*
13	Did the strategic partnership instrument create any catalytic effects (positively impacting other areas of work)? *Not at all created, slightly created, moderately created, much created, very much created+ text box*
	If no, why not?
	If yes, how?
14	Is earmarked funding or unearmarked funding creating more value for money? *Earmarked, unearmarked, none of them*
15	What is the most significant change the strategic partnership instrument brought?
16	What is your biggest disappointment with the strategic partnership instrument?
17	Has the strategic partnership helped your organisation to exert influence on global policy issues with IOs? *Sliding scale of 1 to 5 (1 not at all – 5 very much)*

Tool 3 KII - MFA

1	Can you describe the nature of the strategic partnership of DSH with 5 partners and its purpose?
2	What added value has the strategic partnership brought to date?
3	To what extent have partners provided relevant information and networks? Did this result in joint L&A and/or in influencing policy development?
4	To what extent are the 5 strategic partners and their outputs complementary? If yes, in what way?
5	To what extend has the unearmarked funds contributed directly to the intended outcomes of SRoL results framework?
6	To what extend has the earmarked funds contributed indirectly to the intended outcome of SRoL results framework?
7	Do tensions exist between the applied flexibility among partners and predictable outcomes for DSH?
8	Did the strategic partnership instrument create any catalytic effects? If no, why not? If yes how?
9	Is earmarked funding or unearmarked funding creating more value for money?
10	What lessons have been learned from the MFA's role in the application of the partnership model?
11	What levels of trust exist between MFA and partners, which allows for critical discussions? What are the obstacles for trust and sharing of information?
12	When partners were supporting EKNs, who mostly took the initiative? Partner, EKN, MFA in the Hague?
13	Was the working relation between EKN and MFA effective in relation to the strategic partnership model?
14	Should the strategic partnership be continued/extended in its current form? If yes, which revision of the strategic partnership model do you propose?
15	What is the most significant change the strategic partnership instrument brought?
16	What is your biggest disappointment with the strategic partnership instrument?

Tool 4 KII - Other stakeholders

1	To what extent are you aware of the strategic partnership of DSH with 5 partners and its purpose? *Minimally aware, A little aware, somewhat aware, Much aware, Very aware*
2	Can you describe the nature of this?
3	To what extent have partners contributed to achieving legitimate stability as a basis for sustainable peace and development in the priority countries of the Netherlands?
4	To what extent have partners facilitated policy development by providing relevant information on priority areas and topics? *Sliding scale of 1 to 5 (1 not at all – 5 very much)*
5	What is the most significant change the strategic partnership instrument brought?
6	What is your biggest disappointment with the strategic partnership instrument?

ANNEX E. EVALUATION TEAM AND WORKPLAN

The evaluation took approximately four months, from January 2022 until the end of April 2022, in accordance with the work plan and division of labour outlined below. Deliverables and anticipated key dates have been included in the table below, the latter of which should be considered as milestones (or target dates). The evaluation team adopted a flexible approach to implementing the work plan – meaning that the team choose to sequence the process in a particular way or conduct some phases in parallel provided that either approach ultimately improves the quality of the final report.

Deliverables	Key date
Inception report finalised and submitted (deliverable #1)	January 25
Reflective sessions with DSH and partners held	Second week of April
Final evaluation report submitted (deliverable #2)	End of April

Figure 51: Deliverables and key dates

Evaluation team

The evaluation was conducted by a three-person team from TI, two members of whom are based in the Netherlands and one in New York. Their division of labour is based on their respective areas of expertise and comparative advantages:

i. The *Team Leader* was responsible for the delivery of the final evaluation report and quality control, communication, interviews, and meetings with the MFA, and lead in the design of the methodology.
ii. The *Senior Expert, Peace and Security* supported the Team Leader in the design and completion of the evaluation. He assumed leadership for the desk review and conducted the interviews along with the team leader and contributed to drafting the final evaluation report.
iii. The *Evaluation assistant* supported the team with all organisational and operational issues, including the bulk of communications and administrative tasks. She led on rolling out and analysing the survey and further contributed to the desk review and the drafting process.

WORKPLAN EVALUATION MFA'S STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS																				
Activity	January				February				March				April				May			
Week of project	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Phase 1: Inception Phase																				
Desk review		X	X																	
Design methodology			X																	
Draft and final inception report			X	X																
Phase 2: Data Collection																				
Short online survey shared by email				X	X															
In depth interviews with partners and MFA staff					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X								
In person meetings with DSH								X												
Phase 3: Data analysis																				
Quantitative analysis of survey results					X	X														
Qualitative analysis of interviews										X	X	X								
Phase 4: Report writing																				
Report writing											X	X	X	X						
Draft report														X						
Incorporate feedback															X					
Final report																X				
Phase 5: Validation phase and presentation of results																				
Reflective conclusive sessions with DSH and partners														X						

Home-based working days	
Team leader	15
Senior Expert, Peace and Security	20
Evaluation assistant	10
Total	**45**

ANNEX F. TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE EVALUATION

Consultancy on Strategic Partnerships for Mediation and Peacebuilding 2019 – 2022 for the Department of Stabilisation and Humanitarian Aid (DSH), NL MFA

This document outlines the main purpose of the desired evaluation, the evaluation questions and the associated timeline. Its primary user is DSH, responsible for development of the policy theme and instrumentation/partner selection. Secondary users and sources of input are the partners and relevant missions.

Introduction organisation and policy

The Department of Stabilisation and Humanitarian Aid (DSH) aims to offer perspective to people in areas afflicted by violence, exclusion and injustice, to increase their resilience and security. DSH focuses on the root causes of instability and conflict and on mitigating the negative effects, such as humanitarian crises and irregular migration. As such, DSH consists of three thematic divisions: Security and Rule of Law (SV/RV), Migration and Displacement (MO), and Humanitarian Aid (HH). This evaluation falls under the Security and Rule of Law division and its goal at impact level of 'legitimate stability' and sub goal peace building and rule of law and to a lesser degree of human security and inclusive governance.

In order to achieve the Security and Rule of Law goals, DSH relies in part on several strategic NGO partners. These partners often have presence in the field through which they can interact with various actors during conflict, with whom DSH for strategic, capacity or other reasons cannot (directly) engage. Furthermore, the partners have relevant expertise and a valuable network and source of information and conflict analysis which the MFA and embassies can get access to in order to develop and critically assess its own policy. Finally, the partners play a role in international policy development, or can prepare the MFA to operate in these fora. The strategic partners complement in that sense the several UN agencies (such as UNDPPA etc), and MFA's support of those facilities.

More concretely, as part of the goal to strengthen peace processes, the Security and Rule of Law division has supported five (5) international non-governmental organisations[53] in the field of mediation and peacebuilding and transitional justice since 2016. The organisations received individual funding and were considered – in line with above paragraph – as 'strategic partners'. From 2016 – 2019 the funding was solely for their strategic plan ('core'). These partnerships were renewed and adapted in 2019 (for the period 2019 – 2022), based on an evaluation performed in 2018, reviewing the period 2016 - 2019. For more impact on DSH focus countries, from 2019 on an earmarked part (from 20% to 40%) was destined to be spent on projects in DSH-focus countries with close involvement of the respective Dutch embassies. Following the evaluation, these five partners were re-selected for the time frame 2019 – 2022. The new modality aimed to make more use of the strategic component and to generate more awareness for the strategic partners outside DSH alone.

The Strategic Partnerships

53MFA also engages with several other NGO's, formally not 'strategic partners', and mostly around a specific project. The concept 'strategic' has not been formally defined but compared to other NGOs, the strategic partners were given a relatively high degree of freedom and there was an expectation of mutual benefit from regular informal exchanges on policy between the MFA and the strategic partners, also amongst each other.

The current Strategic Partnerships consist of the following organisations54:

- ICG or International Crisis Group (primarily conflict analysis);
- CHD or Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (peace dialogue/mediation);
- ICTJ or International Center for Transitional Justice (transitional justice);
- International Alert (peacebuilding/mediation);
- Interpeace (peacebuilding/mediation).

Whilst the aims and priorities of the organisations differ depending on the expertise and niche per organisation, the overall aim of the partnerships was to support the partners to operate independently and flexibly considering upcoming or occurring conflicts and also to provide the Ministry with relevant information and input for policy development, analysis and programming. In practice this meant a tension between flexibility for partners and predictability on outcome for DSH.
The expected added value of the 'strategic partnerships' was not defined precisely at the beginning of the partnerships, but the following points can be seen as expectations from the side of the Ministry:

- Partners make use of each other's networks;
- There is a relationship of trust between MFA and partners allowing for critical discussions;
- Partners play an important role in policy development of Ministry and embassies by providing relevant information on priority areas and topics, strengthening MFA's knowledge base;
- Partners also influence the international agenda and advise IOs in the field of conflict and peacebuilding;
- The funding allocated to the strategic plan ('un-earmarked') allows the partners to present themselves as neutral and apolitical actors, yet at the same time allows for flexibility and speed. The earmarked part allows for more focused country projects, relevant to MFA;
- The influence of the MFA on the (un-earmarked) programming of partners is limited, but the MFA does emphasize the NL priority areas (via earmarked).

A new evaluation

The funding arrangements with most of these partners ends in 2022 (foot note) and therefore new arrangements will have to be investigated. To inform potential new funding arrangements, modalities and possible partners, DSH has planned to undertake a study on the added value of the Strategic Partnership arrangement. The evaluation concerned will be covered in the Framework Agreement Evaluations 2020 under Lot 2. A reference group for the evaluation will not be set up.
This evaluation will generate datasets that are potentially useful for other research, later, possibly by other researchers. The Contracting Authority may forward these data (in an anonymized form), to the Data Archiving and Networked Services, as explained in Article 4 of the Framework Agreement Evaluations 2020. The Contracting Authority will indicate this potential 'multiple use' in the Request for the performance of services, on a case-by-case basis. The Contractor should then explain the potential multiple use of the research data to the participants in surveys or interviews when asking for their consent.

Focus of the evaluation

54 The current grants end on different timings, ranging from 31/3/2022 to 30/6/2023. As indicated, there are more partners with whom DSH has multiyear relations, or projects. Formally, those are not referred to as strategic partners and are not part of this evaluation.

The evaluation study will focus on the relationship between the Ministry (both DSH and embassies) and the strategic partners over the last (averagely) four years. MFA wants to learn from the experience and use insight to prepare a way forward. The central question is:

What has been the added value of the 'strategic partnership' as an instrument for both the Ministry and the partners and how could it be improved, altered or redirected – also in terms of composition and set up?

Tentative sub-questions:

- Cooperation and complementarity
    - How was the cooperation amongst partners and how did it evolve as a result of the grant and instrument? Was there added value for them being in this together?
    - To what extend are the five partners unique and complementary to each other, is there overlap in and demand for their niches? Is it a logical/complete composition, and to what degree have historic relations played into the arrangement?
- Modality 'strategic partnership'
    - How did the modality with earmarked country funding work out (for instance concerning workload, involvement embassies, contribution to DSH/SRoL priorities)? Did it result in closer ties with embassies and more output to ToC, as hoped?
    - What were up- and downsides of unearmarked ('core') funding?
    - What kind of arrangements could increase the added value of the instrument strategic partnerships?55 Should it be maintained, altered, re-defined, abandoned?
    - Can other compositions of expertise (of partners) reach the same, better or different effect? What are lessons for future approaches, compositions and models?
- Contribution to DSH ToC and focus countries
    - To what extend did the outputs emerging from the partnerships contribute to the SRoL Theory of Change and results framework and knowledge position? What was each partner's contribution in this?
    - What has been achieved at the level of countries DSH considers their focus for SRoL vs what have they done – more or less on their own device - at global level?
    - Did the strategic partnership arrangement create additional value for the MFA as opposed to regular project contribution? Is the nominator strategic partner (still) one in its own right?
    - What was MFA's role in the use of the model, what lessons from the experience?

The consultant will be requested to formulate more precise sub-questions in the Inception Note on Methodology. Consultant can optimize evaluation questions based on feedback from key informers.
Besides the research on the above questions, the consultancy will include various sessions with staff at the Ministry (DSH and some embassies/permanent missions) to discuss the value of the Strategic Partnerships. The idea behind this is that by sharing and discussing perceptions about the partnerships, the added value perceived among staff members at the Ministry (DSH and embassies) can be evaluated and, in case of continuation, the partnerships themselves can be strengthened by helping to create a shared focus and increased awareness among staff members at the Ministry.

55 E.g., tested against recent insights and evidence with regard to mediation and peacebuilding approaches

Time frame and products

The consultancy will take about 35 days and take place from January 2022 – April 2022. The consultant will turn to partners as well but is to do so digitally (no physical visiting of partners).

The consultant will be expected to deliver the following products:

19. Inception Note on Methodology
20. Final report: including main findings and recommendations for a way forward of new (strategic) partnership(s) and funding arrangements or different models/compositions.
21. Organise joint reflection session with DSH (consultant responsible for contents, DSH for logistics)

The report will contribute to the MFA-internal process of a potential way forward (input for DSH) in this policy domain and choice of instrumentation. However, the evaluation report will be made public. The strategic partners often work with confidential information which is inherent to the type of work that they do. The consultant will be expected to act with respect to this confidentially.

Planning

Inception note	December	2021
Research	January	2022
Draft report	March	
Session	April	
Final report	April 2022	

After each phase, DSH is consulted and updated. This is also done on ad hoc basis when needed.