Terms of Reference for the recruitment of a consultant

Final evaluation of Youth Talk Phase II

Empower young people in conflict-affected communities in Mali, the Central African Republic (CAR), South Sudan and Kenya.

Search for Common Ground (Search) is seeking a qualified consultant to conduct the final evaluation of Youth Talk Project phase II, a multi-country program implemented in Mali, the Central African Republic (CAR), South Sudan, and Kenya. This evaluation will assess the relevance, impact, effectiveness, and sustainability of the program in empowering young people in conflict-affected communities through media, advocacy, and peacebuilding initiatives.

We are looking for a consultant to lead the design of the evaluation, analysis, and reporting with:

- Proven expertise in participatory MEL methodologies, including: (1) adolescent-sensitive data collection techniques (2) inclusive evaluation methods ensuring representation of marginalized youth and (3) participatory, adolescent-inclusive MEL methods that actively engage young people in both data collection and interpretation.
- Experience conducting evaluations in conflict-affected settings, with an understanding of the socio-political landscape in Mali, CAR, South Sudan, and Kenya.
- Experience designing and leading hybrid evaluation models, coordinating with in-country data collection teams.
- Fluency in English and French, as deliverables will be required in both languages.

For detailed responsibilities, methodology, deliverables, and selection criteria, please see the full Terms of Reference below.

1. Context

Search for Common Ground

Search for Common Ground (Search) is an international conflict transformation NGO that aims to transform the way individuals, groups, governments and companies deal with conflict, away from adversarial approaches and towards collaborative solutions. Headquartered in Washington DC, USA, and Brussels, Belgium, with field offices in 35 countries, Search for Common Ground designs and implements multifaceted, culturally appropriate and conflict-sensitive programs using a diverse range of tools, including media and training, to promote dialogue, increase knowledge and determine a positive shift in behaviors.

The Project

Youth Talk Project phase II is a three-year peacebuilding program (2022-2025) implemented by Search for Common Ground (Search) with funding from the Bezos Family Foundation. The project operates in Mali, the Central African Republic (CAR), South Sudan, and Kenya and seeks to empower young people in conflict-affected communities by strengthening their voices, leadership, and protection mechanisms.

Building on the success of Phase I, Youth Talk Phase II expanded its youth-led media, advocacy, and community engagement initiatives, while also incorporating mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) and protection strategies for young people.

At the heart of this phase is Youth 360, a holistic and participatory model designed to shift power dynamics and equip young peacebuilders with the necessary resources, technical skills, and networks to drive meaningful change.

The overall goal of **Youth Talk Phase II** is to **empower young people in conflict-affected communities** to engage their peers and communities on **critical social and political issues**. The project seeks to achieve this through the following objectives:

- **Objective 1**: To strengthen capacities, support, and opportunities for young people to durably engage their peers and communities on the issues that matter to them.
- **Objective 2**: To advance learnings and best practices on mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) and protection of young people in peacebuilding programs.

By the end of **Phase II**, the project aims to achieve the following key outcomes:

- Youth have greater agency in shaping public discourse on peace, security, and development.
- Youth-led media and advocacy initiatives contribute to inclusive dialogue and attitudinal change.
- Youth participation in decision-making increases, with greater recognition from communities and policymakers.
- Improved protection mechanisms ensure young people can engage safely and meaningfully.

- Stronger intergenerational relationships, leading to a more inclusive and youth-friendly civic space.

2. Goal and Objectives of Study

The primary goal of this evaluation is to assess the performance of the programme against four OECD evaluation criteria, namely relevance, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of Youth Talk Phase II in empowering young people in conflict-affected communities in Mali, the Central African Republic (CAR), South Sudan, and Kenya.

The evaluation will generate actionable insights by:

- Measuring the project's performance in achieving its intended objectives, particularly in strengthening youth-led journalism, advocacy, and civic engagement.
- Documenting key results and unintended effects, including the project's influence on youth agency, adult-youth collaboration, and institutional support for youth participation.
- Identifying learnings and best practices from implementation, including on themes such Youth 360, MHPSS support, and safeguarding mechanisms, etc
- Providing targeted recommendations for improving participatory and adolescent-friendly approaches in future iterations of Youth Talk or similar initiatives.

The evaluation criteria of effectiveness of youth-centered participatory approaches and sustainability will be mainstreamed across the study, and data will be disaggregated by country and gender.

3. Key Questions of the Study

Key questions that will guide this study include[1]:

1. **Relevance**
   a. To what extent did the project successfully reach and engage its intended primary audience (adolescents and youth in conflict-affected communities)?
   b. How well did the application of participatory methods, such as the Youth 360 approach and the Grounded Accountability Model, align with the lived realities, needs, and aspirations of young people?
2. **Effectiveness**
   a. To what extent did the project effectively equip adolescents with skills in journalism, advocacy, and leadership? What evidence demonstrates skill acquisition and application?
   b. How effective was media, and especially radio, in raising awareness and sparking community dialogue? What evidence from listenership, feedback, and discussions supports this?
   c. Did the project elevate adolescent journalists' voices to inform policies and programming on social and political issues related to peacebuilding?What were the key outcomes of

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[1] to be refined with the consultant during the inception phase

youth-led initiatives in peacebuilding? To what extent did they lead to greater recognition of youth as key stakeholders, and what other forms of change or impact did they generate?

d. How well were mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) and safeguarding activities integrated into the project, and to what extent did they contribute to adolescent well-being, resilience, and protection?

3. Impact
a. What are the intended and unintended results of the project on the project's internal and external stakeholders, both positive and negative? To what extent are these changes desirable?

4. Sustainability
a. Are the changes achieved sustainable at the individual, community, and institutional levels? What mechanisms (e.g., policy adoption, local partnerships, integration into existing media frameworks), lessons and recommendations could support the long-term sustainability of youth engagement?

In the process of addressing these research questions, the evaluation will need to collect endline data for the following indicators (data to be disaggregated by countries and gender) at different levels:

Impact level:

- % of adults who believe in youth's agency to bring an important perspective in social and political debates in the media
- % of young people who believe they can make a positive difference in social and political debates in the media
- % of youth stating that national social and political debates in the media represent their interests

Outcome level :

- # and types of actions taken by young participants without Search support to influence social and political issues
- % of youth participants who take actions to influence social and political issues they care about
- % of participants who feel that their voice and opinion are taken into account in the project
- % of community members who report improved collaboration between youth and adults
- % of participants aware of reporting mechanisms for protection and safeguarding
- % of young people who believe they are perceived as having irrelevant opinions ("less than human") by their adult counterparts
- % of youth mentors from Phase I involved in supporting new participants
- % of youth who report increased access to networks and peer support to take strategic action on shared priorities

- % of community adult members who state that new approaches and policies based on MHPSS and youth protection have helped them deal with youth protection issues
- % of youth participants who feel safe participating in project activities
- % of youth who state that new approaches and policies based on MHPSS and youth protection have helped them address youth protection challenges

The evaluation must explicitly integrate cross-cutting themes to ensure a comprehensive, inclusive, and conflict-sensitive analysis of the project's impact.

- **Gender inclusion**: The consultant should ensure that gender-disaggregated data is collected and analyzed, and that qualitative insights from young women are adequately captured.
- **Social inclusion and representation of diverse youth groups**: the consultant should ensure intentional representation of diverse youth groups in data collection and assess whether the project adequately addressed inclusion gaps.
- **Conflict sensitivity and "Do No Harm"**: the consultant should integrate conflict-sensitive research approaches, ensuring that data collection, analysis, and reporting are conducted in ways that are mindful of local dynamics and risks.

The consultant is expected to examine these dimensions throughout the evaluation process and reflect them in:

- Data collection methods and tools (ensuring inclusivity in participant selection and question framing)
- Analysis and reporting (disaggregating findings by gender, social background, and risk factors)
- Recommendations for future programming (providing actionable insights on strengthening inclusion, gender equity, and conflict sensitivity)

4. Geographic Locations

The study will target communities that were selected for project implementation in the four countries:
- Central African Republic (Bambari)
- Mali (Bamako)
- South Sudan (Juba : Mangateen IDP, Shirikat, Gudele, Newsite, Jondoru and Gumbo)
- Kenya (Mombasa and Kwale Counties)[2]

5. Methodology and data collection tools

The final evaluation of Youth Talk Phase II will adopt a hybrid approach, where:

- The consultant will lead the evaluation design, analysis, and reporting.

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[2] Mombasa : Kisauni-Mwakirunge,Nyali-Kadzandani, Mvita-Tudor Moroto, Jomvu-Bangladesh
Kwale: Kinango A,Kinango B, Soweto

- Search country teams will conduct data collection in Mali, CAR, South Sudan, and Kenya.

Given the project's focus on youth-led engagement, the consultant must propose a methodology that ensures meaningful participation of adolescents in the evaluation process, not only as respondents but as active contributors to data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

The consultant is expected to propose a robust methodology that includes:

- **A participatory and adolescent-inclusive MEL approach**, ensuring young people have a **voice in shaping and engaging in the evaluation process**.
- **Adolescent-sensitive tools and methodologies**, ensuring research methods are age-appropriate, accessible, and engaging.
- **Use inclusive data collection approaches** that engage diverse youth, including marginalized groups (e.g., displaced youth, young women, youth with disabilities)
- **Use conflict-sensitive and trauma-informed methods**, especially in engaging youth in fragile and conflict-affected environments.
- **Apply a gender-sensitive lens** to ensure equal representation of young women and gender-diverse youth in the evaluation process.

Deliverables

Search expects the following key deliverables from the external consultant. These deliverables must align with the hybrid evaluation model, ensuring participatory, adolescent-inclusive MEL methods and rigorous data analysis and reporting.

Deliverable 1 : Inception report (needed in both French for CAR and Mali - and English for South Sudan and Kenya).

a) A detailed evaluation plan, including:
   i) Refined version of objectives and research questions (if relevant)
   ii) Methodology and data collection tools
   iii) Include a plan for participatory and adolescent-inclusive MEL methods but keeps implementation practical.
   iv) Sampling strategy and ethical considerations
   v) Workplan and timeline for evaluation activities (in collaboration with Search country teams)
b) Data collection tools and training materials in french and english
   i) Survey, focus group discussion (FGD) guides, key informant interview (KII) guides, and success story documentation template
   ii) Guideline on how to conduct data collection using participatory / adolescent inclusive methods

Deliverable 2 : Orientation and training sessions[3]

The consultant will conduct orientation and training sessions[4] (in French and English) for Search country teams to review and validate the evaluation methodology, tools, and data collection approach. These sessions will ensure that teams fully understand how to implement the designed methodology and apply participatory MEL methods effectively.

Deliverable 3 : Data analysis and interpretation

The consultant will analyze the data provided by Search teams, ensuring consistency and quality and provide a cleaned and structured dataset in an agreed-upon format (Excel, or other).

Deliverable 4 : Preliminary findings presentation[5]

The consultant will prepare a presentation of preliminary findings and recommendations to Search staff, partners (in french and english).

Deliverable 5 : Final evaluation report *(first draft expected by October 1st)*
Final Report in English (using search template - 40 pages max in length, excluding appendices) that consists of:

- Table of contents
- Abbreviations
- Executive summary of methodology, limitations, key findings and recommendations (max. 3 pages)
- Background information (project specifics)
- Methodology: Objectives, data collection and analysis and limitations of the study
- Research findings, analysis, with associated data presented - both quantitative and qualitative data - (should be structured around the main objectives/evaluation criteria and should cover all indicators)
- Indicator table showing all indicator data (comparing baseline and endline values)
- Appendices, which include detailed research instruments, list of interviewees, etc

A 2-page learning document in English and French, capturing key lessons learned from the program (or 1 success story per country - to be discussed)

At least 4 in-depth success stories from different project countries, showcasing the transformative impact of Youth Talk Phase II.

Presentation of key findings and recommendations to Search staff, partners, and donors in French and English (remote).

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[3] Remote

[4] Sessions **recorded for country teams** to rewatch as needed

[5] remote

All deliverables will be **validated by the Strategy Alignment focal point** before final approval. Any modifications to the evaluation approach and methodology must also be reviewed and approved to ensure consistency with organizational learning objectives.

7. Timeline

The final evaluation of Youth Talk Phase II will follow a structured timeline, with the consultant responsible for evaluation design, analysis, and reporting, while Search teams conduct data collection between July and August 2025. The **final report is due on October 31, 2025**, following a **validation session in September/October** to ensure findings are refined and actionable.

Phase	Timeline	Key activities
Recruitment Process	March/May 2025	Publication of ToR, consultant selection, contract signing.
Inception Phase	June/July 2025	Consultant submits Inception Report, methodology, and tools.
Data Collection	July/August 2025	Search teams conduct data collection across four countries.
Preliminary findings & draft Report	Before September 30, 2025	Consultant submits preliminary analysis and draft report
Final restitution	October 2025	Presentation of key findings and recommendations to Search staff, partners, and donors in French and English.
Final report submission	October 31 , 2025	Consultant delivers the Final Evaluation Report incorporating feedback and validation insights.

8. Budget

The proposed budget for this consultancy **is $20,000**.
The consultant's financial proposal should clearly specify the cost breakdown for each key deliverables listed above.

9. Requirements of consultant

The consultant must have demonstrated expertise in participatory Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) with a strong focus on adolescent engagement, media, and conflict-affected communities. Given the hybrid evaluation model, the consultant must possess strong analytical, facilitation, and cross-cultural communication skills to effectively collaborate with Search country teams.

- Strong experience in designing and implementing age-appropriate, participatory evaluation methods tailored to adolescents (ages 14-18), including those from marginalized and hard-to-reach backgrounds with varying levels of literacy and education.
- Demonstrated skills in participatory MEL approaches, particularly in ensuring meaningful adolescent engagement in both data collection and interpretation.
- Strong quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis skills, including the ability to adapt tools to be youth-friendly and accessible.
- Prior experience working in conflict-affected settings, particularly in one or more of the following countries: Mali, CAR, South Sudan, and Kenya, with an understanding of the local socio-political and security contexts.
- Proficiency in English and French, as deliverables will be required in both languages.
- More than 5 years of experience in project evaluation, including collecting data in interviews, surveys and focus groups;

In addition, the consultant is required to respect the following Ethical Principles:

- *Comprehensive and systematic inquiry: Consultant should make the most of the existing information and full range of stakeholders available at the time of the review. Consultant should conduct systematic, data-based inquiries. He or she should communicate his or her methods and approaches accurately and in sufficient detail to allow others to understand, interpret and critique his or her work. He or she should make clear the limitations of the review and its results.*
- *Competence: Consultant should possess the abilities and skills and experience appropriate to undertake the tasks proposed and should practice within the limits of his or her professional training and competence.*
- *Honesty and integrity: Consultant should be transparent with the contractor/constituent about: any conflict of interest, any change made in the negotiated project plan and the reasons why those changes were made, any risk that certain procedures or activities produce misleading review information.*
- *Respect for people: Consultant respect the security, dignity and self-worth of respondents, program participants. Consultant has the responsibility to be sensitive to and respect differences amongst participants in culture, religion, gender, disability, age and ethnicity.*

In addition, the consultant will respect SFCG's evaluations standards, to be found in Search for Common Ground's evaluation guidelines: http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/ilt/dme_guidelines.html

Applications

Interested consultants must submit a **technical and financial proposal** detailing how they plan to **conduct the final evaluation**, ensuring **a participatory, adolescent-inclusive MEL approach**. To apply, interested candidates (individuals or teams) are requested to submit the following two documents:

- **A technical proposal**: applicants must demonstrate their ability to conduct a participatory, adolescent-inclusive evaluation by addressing the following:
  - Understanding of the assignment & proposed approach (clear articulation of how the consultant understands the objectives of the evaluation and explanation of how participatory and adolescent-friendly MEL methodologies will be integrated).
  - Detailed evaluation methodology: methodological framework, ensuring that data collection tools and approaches are age-appropriate, participatory, and accessible to adolescents (ages 14-18), including those from marginalized and hard-to-reach backgrounds. A description of quantitative and qualitative methods and their suitability for this evaluation.
  - Work plan and timeline: Clear evaluation timeline and indication of key milestones, deliverables, and engagement with Search teams.
  - Ethical considerations and safeguarding approach, particularly for working with young/adolescent people.
  - Team composition and roles (if a consulting team is proposed) - CV(s) (Specific expertise in adolescent MEL methodologies must be demonstrated in key personnel)
  - Two examples of previous evaluations relevant to this consultancy.
  - At least two references from organizations that have commissioned similar work.
- **Financial proposal (max. 2 pages) :** detailed cost breakdown for each deliverable. *Additional costs required to complete the evaluation, as justified in the technical proposal, may be considered*

Note: Only two documents can be submitted

Deadline for Applications: **April 11, 2025.**