



External Evaluation of the Geneva Centres, Switzerland 2024-2027

Final Report

Prepared for // Federal Department of
Foreign Affairs FDFA, Switzerland

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Acronyms

AI	Artificial Intelligence
APMBC	Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention
CCM	Convention on Cluster Munitions
CHF	Swiss Franc
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DCAF	Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance
DDPS	Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport
DEI	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
EC	European Commission
EEAS	European External Action Service
EMI	Eastern Mediterranean Initiative
EORE	Explosive Ordnance Risk Education
EPF	European Peace Facility
ESC	European Security Course
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FDFA	Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (Switzerland)
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FIAPP	Fundación Internacional y para Iberoamérica de Administración y Políticas Públicas
FTE	Full-Time Equivalent
GCSP	Geneva Centre for Security Policy
GEDSI	Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion
GFFO	German Federal Foreign Office
GFI	Global Fellowship Initiative
GICHD	Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
HDP	Humanitarian–Development–Peace (nexus)
HR	Human Resources
IATG	International Ammunition Technical Guidelines
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IFU	Innovative Finance Unit
IHEDN	Institut des Hautes Études de Défense Nationale
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
IMAS	International Mine Action Standards
IMSMA	Information Management System for Mine Action
IOD PARC	International Organisation Development
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
IT	Information Technology
JPO	Junior Professional Officer
KII	Key Informant Interview

KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LISC	Leadership in International Security Course
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MOWIP	Measuring Opportunities for Women in Peace Operations
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDICI	Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument
NISC	New Issues in Security Course
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OECD-DAC	OECD Development Assistance Committee
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
P5	Permanent Five members of the UN Security Council
PISA	Platform for Security and Defence Initiatives
PPD	Personal and Professional Development
RBM	Results-Based Management
RCU	Regional Coordination Unit
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SMT	Senior Management Team
SSG/R	Security Sector Governance and Reform
SSR	Security Sector Reform
Stratex	Strategy Execution Unit
TFNA	Trust Fund for North Africa
ToC	Theory of Change
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNMAS	United Nations Mine Action Service
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

Evaluation of the Geneva Centres 2024 – 2027 Synthesis Report

Executive Summary

The three Geneva Centres - the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP), the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF), and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) - were established by the Swiss Confederation as a contribution to international peace and security. The Swiss Government remains their principal funder and is represented on the Council of Foundation of each Centre.

This synthesis report draws on the three individual Centre evaluations conducted by IOD PARC on behalf of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA). The combined evidence base includes 140 documents, 88 interviews with internal and external stakeholders, eight focus group discussions, field work in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a focused case study on the Centres' work in the Middle East, and a survey administered to staff and external stakeholders that yielded 463 responses (a 53 per cent response rate). The findings below are structured around the six Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) DAC evaluation criteria.

Relevance: The relevance of the three Centres' work has increased considerably in the current geopolitical context. All three have shown agility in adapting to emerging challenges, particularly through engagement with artificial intelligence (AI) and other technologies, which is a clear comparative advantage. However, the increasing global focus on hard security has put pressure on soft security and cross-cutting priorities, notably gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI). The Centres have successfully diversified their funding, but with this comes the risk of becoming increasingly demand-driven and less aligned with Swiss policy priorities. The Centres also lack coherent and uniform messaging on their key policy or thematic priorities, which limits the coherence of their external advocacy and communications.

Coherence: The three Centres form a complementary, concentrated ecosystem of Swiss expertise in peace and security. They advance Switzerland's foreign and security policy interests and support International Geneva. They are increasingly working together at an operational level including a new, joint DCAF–GICHD regional office in Amman, Jordan. However, strategic collaboration remains a work in progress: the opportunity to present the three Centres as a unified Swiss contribution to international peace – to the federal authorities in Bern, to donors, and to global audiences – remains unrealised.

Efficiency: The evaluation finds that significant financial savings across the Centres are unlikely to result from administrative mutualisation alone. Support functions across the Centres are already relatively lean, and the experience of the shared Information Technology (IT) service illustrates the limitations of mutualisation (including lack of responsiveness and innovation) when governance and incentives are not fully aligned. Meaningful cost reductions (other than the Centres' high rent costs) would likely require strategic decisions about reduction in the scope of programme portfolios, rather than further reductions in administrative capacity. Further, there is inconsistency between the Centres stated strategic importance for Switzerland, and a cumulated budget that amounts to less than 1 per cent of the country's Official Development Assistance (ODA).

Effectiveness: The three Centres have maintained their reputation for expertise and quality and are unanimously regarded by external stakeholders as Centres of Excellence in their respective fields. Their effectiveness is enabled by highly skilled and committed staff, the diplomatic standing of the Directors, and field presence in key contexts including Ukraine, Jordan, and the Balkans. Engagement with emerging technology and AI is a clear differentiator. Despite increasing political pushback, all three Centres have maintained a focus on GEDSI. Neutrality and impartiality are both enabling factors - providing trusted access in politically sensitive contexts - and constraining factors, limiting advocacy stances. The most pressing external constraint is the funding landscape, including reduced overall funding, increased donor earmarking and new requirements from key donors such as the European Union (EU).

Impact: Evidence of impact is only partially evidenced across the three Centres' work, in part due to limited follow-up mechanisms to track how research, capacity building and guidance are used in practice. Where impact is most clearly demonstrated, it is through international standards, frameworks and tools e.g. DCAF's contribution to the revised OECD Security Sector Reform (SSR) Handbook, GICHD's technical leadership on the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS), and GCSP's ceasefire toolkit. Strengthening evidence and follow-up will be central to demonstrating the full value of the Centres' work in future.

Sustainability: There is evidence across all three Centres of sustainable outcomes, including key policy wins and influence at the most senior official level. Sustainability is markedly stronger where capacity building is paired with long-term institutional accompaniment. Looking ahead, partnerships will be central to ongoing sustainability in an unforgiving fundraising landscape, but the Centres lack internal guidance on how partnerships should be identified, structured, managed or exited. Systematic follow-up with stakeholders is also a gap.

Overall, the three Geneva Centres have maintained their perception as Centres of Excellence. They contribute significantly to Swiss foreign and security policy norms and objectives, and their work is more relevant than ever in the current geopolitical context. With clear strategic prioritisation from the federal authorities in Bern, sustained Swiss financial backing commensurate with the Centres' stated importance as instruments of Swiss foreign and security policy, and a more deliberate approach to cross-Centre cooperation, the Centres are well positioned to continue their distinctive contribution to peace and security.

Recommendations: based upon these findings, the evaluation team puts forward nine recommendations, separated into three levels: 1) Priority Actions, 2) Strategic Shifts, and 3) Structural Reform. These recommendations are intended to prompt discussion and reflection on the direction, level, and depth of synergies and support for the three Centres.

Priority Actions

- 1.1 Support the three Centres with rent negotiations for the Maison de la Paix;
- 1.2 Increase Swiss funding levels to the equivalent of 1 per cent or more of ODA;
- 1.3 Re-examine options for IT synergies and develop a joint position on the use of AI;
- 1.4 Commission an external evidence, impact and learning expert to assess monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) and results-based management (RBM) capacity across the Centres;
- 1.5 Develop a joint communications strategy to strengthen the "Three Centres" brand.

Strategic Shifts

- 2.1 Strategically steer cost-saving through scope reduction based on Swiss priorities;

- 2.2 Align the strategy cycles of the three Centres to allow for joint strategic planning;
- 2.3 Scope where the Centres can collaborate strategically on shared geographic priorities.

Structural Reform

- 3.1 Revise the leadership structure of the three Centres.

Introduction

Switzerland's FDFA commissioned IOD PARC to undertake an external evaluation of the three Geneva Centres; the GCSP, the GICHD, and the DCAF. The Swiss Government remains their biggest funder, and the Swiss Confederation is represented on the governing boards of each of the Centres. All three Centres are governed by three separate Foundation Councils, composed of representatives of states that support the Centres' missions.

The overarching objective of the evaluation was to assess the performance of the three Geneva Centres (GCSP, GICHD and DCAF) in relation to:

1. The achievement of their mandated objectives.
2. Their contributions to their respective fields; and
3. Their contribution to Swiss foreign policy objectives

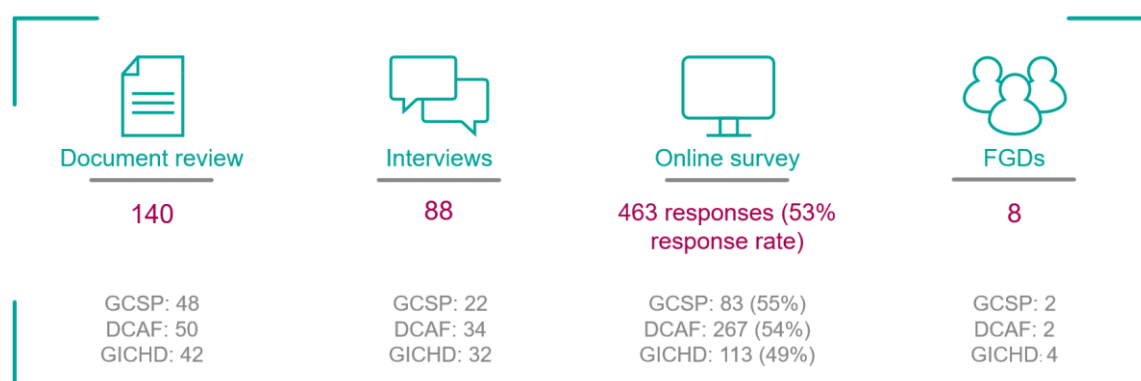
These three objectives are aligned with the expectations in the Federal Dispatch 20.081 for the 2024-27 period and the recommendations from the last evaluation conducted 2021-22.

This report presents a synthesis of the findings, conclusions and recommendations in the reports for the three individual Geneva Centres.

Methodology and Data Collection

The evaluation used a mixed methods approach, with findings triangulated using quantitative and qualitative data collection evidence sources, as shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Data Collection Summary



A total of 140 documents were reviewed, encompassing annual reports, programme reports, surveys, and other relevant materials. 88 interviews were conducted with a range of internal stakeholders (i.e. the Centre's staff) and external stakeholders (i.e. their partners, donors, and beneficiaries), providing balanced perspectives from both within and outside the Geneva Centres. This included field work in Bosnia and Herzegovina and a focused case study on the Centres' work in the Middle East. Eight focus group discussions were held, and the evaluation team observed an IT Steering Committee meeting. A survey was administered to all Geneva Centres staff and a selection of external stakeholders, which yielded 463 responses in total (a 53% response rate).

The following findings are drawn from this evidence base and have been triangulated across multiple data sources to ensure reliability. The following sections outline the evaluation findings, structured by the six OECD DAC evaluation criteria; relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. Following this, the evaluation team's conclusions and recommendations are presented.

Findings

Relevance

The relevance of the three Centres' work has increased considerably in the current geopolitical context. With renewed interstate conflict, rising defence spending, democratic backsliding and shrinking civic space, the Centres' work is more relevant as ever. The Centres have maintained their ability to carry out politically sensitive work, operating alongside key actors and providing them a discreet, neutral setting in which to do so. For example, all three Centres have engaged effectively in Ukraine following the full-scale invasion by Russia. In addition, DCAF have been praised for maintaining presence in unstable contexts when many other actors pull out, including in West Africa, North Africa and Syria. The Centres' long-term, politically sensitive approach is critical as many other Western actors withdraw support or stop engagement.

The Centres have adapted to emerging challenges and conditions. In a particularly turbulent geopolitical period, they have all shown great flexibility. For example, all three Centres have successfully engaged with and integrated new technology into their work, including but not limited to AI. This will likely be a key comparative advantage of the three Centres in the coming years, and they will need to ensure that they invest appropriately to remain ahead of the curve.

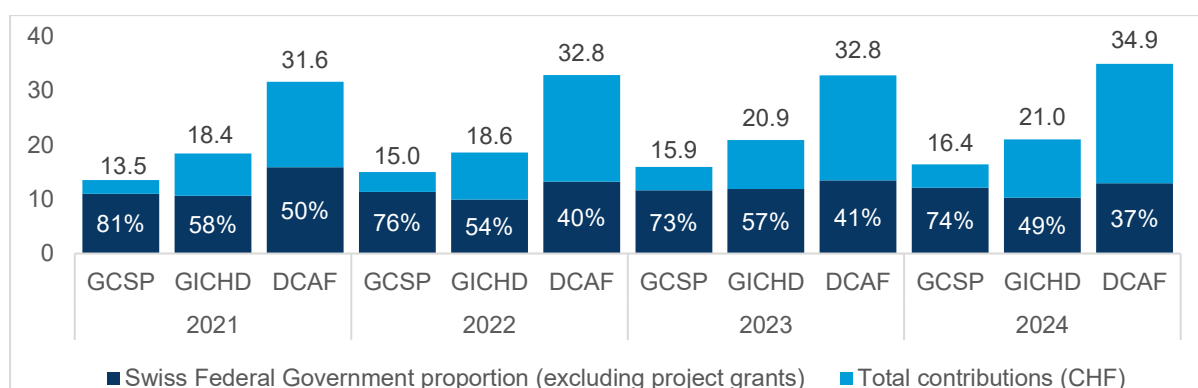
However, all three Centres have been impacted by the increasing global focus on hard security. The Centres can and do operate at the intersection of soft and hard security but the demand from many of their stakeholders is increasingly for hard security-related work. This has an impact on the Centres' focus on GEDSI, for example. Whilst the three Centres have maintained a focus on GEDSI amidst wide backsliding globally¹ (potentially satisfying some key donor requirements), the ongoing shift towards hard security presents challenges for programming and may potentially impact their ability to fundraise with other donors. This presents a difficult balancing act for each of the Centres. They acknowledge that GEDSI remains important but there is waning demand from many key donors and clients for this work at present, either in terms of stand-alone work or in terms of integrating GEDSI as a cross-cutting component of projects. The Centres will need to balance the ongoing needs in the sector with the reduced demand.

Amid these geopolitical challenges, all three Centres have successfully diversified their funding.

Figure 2 below shows that GCSP and GICHD have increased their total contributions and diversified their funding sources (to 26 and 51 per cent of total contributions respectively), whilst DCAF has maintained its total contributions and diversified its funding sources to 63 per cent of total contributions.

Figure 2: The Geneva Centres' total contributions and FDFA core contributions 2021-2024

¹ DCAF is the most advanced on GEDSI with a Gender and Security entity and focal points across the organisation at HQ and in country offices which has helped internalise GEDSI as a key aspect of what the Centre does.



This highlights the continued relevance of their work and puts the Centres in a strong position to maintain their work in the future. For example, GICHD have been able to adapt to the sudden US funding cuts in 2025, and GCSP is increasingly working with private foundations.

However, there are concerns amongst the Centres that as they diversify their funding, they are likely to become increasingly demand driven. Stakeholders noted that this comes with associated risks including maintaining their reputation for neutrality (aligned with Swiss neutrality) as other donors/actors try to influence their agendas and key thematic topics e.g. GEDSI becoming de-prioritised by many. The Centres are now working with a range of other donors, which are not necessarily aligned with Switzerland's policy priorities and the Centres are no longer accountable predominantly to Switzerland.

Interestingly across all three Centres, the issue of strategic policy priorities arose. Although the Centres have clear strategic plans and have made real progress in strategic direction in comparison to the last evaluation including developing Centre-level objectives, all three Centres were found to lack coherent and uniform messaging on their key policy or thematic priorities which impacts the coherence of their work as a whole and their external communications. Stakeholders noted that the Centres should look to identify and continually communicate their key policy priorities. This would support cohesive external communications and internal coherence and understanding of the Centre's policy positions. DCAF and GICHD have more defined mandates, whilst GCSP has spread its portfolio to a greater extent.

Coherence

The three Centres form a complementary, concentrated ecosystem that highlights Swiss expertise in peace and security and advances Switzerland's foreign policy interests. Together, they span a broad spectrum from normative and institutional reform to operational peacebuilding and high-level strategic dialogue, which allows Switzerland to project influence across multiple domains of the international peace and security agenda. This supports Switzerland's role in international peace and mediation as well as its ongoing commitments to GEDSI, women, peace and security (WPS), democratic values, multilateralism, and people-centred security.

The Centres have run several joint initiatives that demonstrate collaboration and provide visibility for Switzerland's peacebuilding brand and for International Geneva. This includes the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform (to which GICHD is now a member – previously only GCSP and DCAF), the Geneva Security Debates, and the Geneva Peace Forum - now established as a Foundation with the Centres support. Practical cooperation has also grown, including joint messaging from the three ambassadors, a mentoring programme between GCSP and DCAF, a joint DCAF-GICHD regional office in Jordan (which support cost efficiency and coherence), an informal working group on Syria, coordinated social media around events like International Women's Day, a joint anniversary event with high-level political participation, and joint communications on the cyberattack on the three Centres in 2024.

However, strategic collaboration remains a work in progress. Stakeholders noted that collaboration tends to be around joint events, and the Centres' staff often have limited knowledge of the details of the other Centres' work. There is collaboration on 'strategic' issues such as what the Centres are doing in Syria and their objectives in the medium- to long-term, and the Directors are increasingly engaging and communicating.

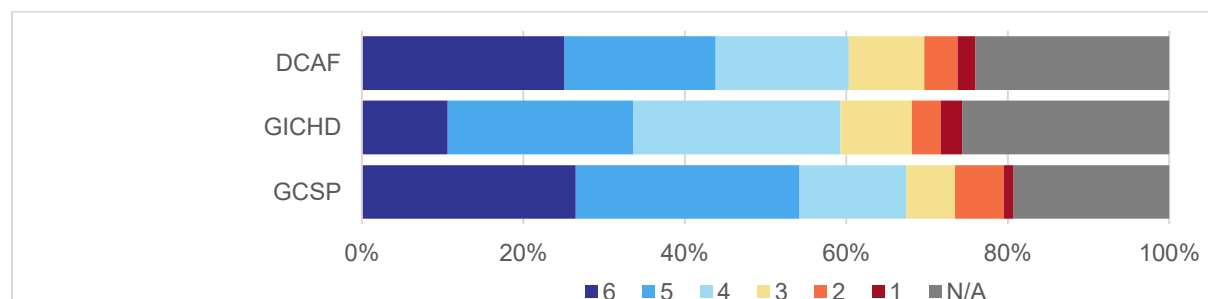
It appears that intention has not translated into external recognition of the three Centres as a coherent whole. For example, the majority of external GCSP stakeholders interviewed were unaware of DCAF and GICHD, suggesting that intention has not translated into external recognition of the three Centres as a coherent whole. Both internal and external stakeholders pointed to the importance of the Centre's different mandates and visions and some question the degree to which the Centres should work towards increased coherence when their differences are what makes them a unique trio of Centres.

There were others, however, both within and outside the Centres, who believed that it would be mutually beneficial for the Centres to work together on some strategic and geographic areas, as well as beneficial for the international peace and security sector more broadly. While recognition of the three Centres as a coherent whole has not been an explicit objective to date, the opportunity to present the three Centres as a unified Swiss contribution to international peace - to the federal authorities in Bern, to donors and to global audiences - remains unrealised.

This mix of opinion and high levels of stakeholders not knowing if/how the Centres work together is reflected in the survey data in Figure 3 below, which shows that 20 per cent or more of each of the Centres' stakeholders selected N/A as a response. The levels of agreement were also amongst the lowest for the survey questions overall.

Figure 3: Survey responses on effective collaboration with the other Geneva Centres

Question: To what extent are the Centres effective in the following areas? (where 1 = strongly disagree and 6 = strongly agree) 'Collaborating effectively with the other Geneva Centres'



GCSP's higher self-rating on effective collaboration with the other Geneva Centres is best read as reflecting differences in role rather than as a contradiction with the broader evidence. As host of the shared IT platform, convenor of joint events, and invitee of DCAF/GICHD staff as speakers for their courses, GCSP staff may experience cross-Centre interaction more regularly. DCAF and GICHD staff experience the shared arrangements primarily as service-recipients and hold the view that the IT service in particular is underperforming. The responses may also reflect different definitions of collaboration: GCSP respondents are likely assessing the administrative layer, where collaboration is genuinely active, while DCAF and GICHD respondents may be measuring against a more strategic collaboration e.g. positioning on shared geographies or themes.

GCSP's 2023-2027 strategy makes no reference to structured collaboration with the other two Centres whilst GICHD and DCAF's mention seizing opportunities to gain efficiencies but not to structured collaboration on strategic issues. Formalising joint research, coordinated advocacy toward the FDFA, and a shared external narrative would be steps towards improving this strategic coherence. Engagement with Swiss foreign policy is also limited in the cases of

GCSP and GICHD. GCSP is not used as strategically as they once were by the federal authorities in Bern and GICHD is not systematically engaging with Swiss missions at country level. In both cases, this is a missed opportunity for the parties.

Efficiency

The evaluation found that all three Centres have made improvements in efficiency and workplace culture. The internal management of staff wellbeing has improved across all three Centres and staff noted greater clarity, transparency and involvement in decision making in all three as well as improved internal communications. Staff retreats have been appreciated by GICHD and GCSP staff as a space to provide transparency. In terms of structure, GICHD and DCAF have both restructured and made line reporting clearer. However, GCSP's changed internal structure is not conducive to cross-departmental work and collaboration with the two departments related to dialogue and mediation - International Security Dialogue and Mediation and Peace Support – not working cohesively. Although, in principle, the departments do have separate approaches and thematic foci, the limited collaboration, cooperation and sharing of information between them limits their ability to work cohesively. GICHD and DCAF were found to have made improvements in the clarity of career pathways and career progression, but these remain issues across all Centres. This is particularly the case at junior level, with high levels of junior staff turnover noted in GCSP and GICHD.

All three Centres are experiencing challenges in monitoring and reporting on their outcomes, and the impact and sustainability of their work. DCAF has made the largest strides in addressing this with a push towards organisation-wide outcome thinking. The Centre has made investments in RBM, monitoring and learning, including the development of a new internal portfolio and knowledge management system ("One DCAF Hub") designed to improve coordination and compliance with donor requirements. GICHD have also hired a specific MEL staff member. However, monitoring and reporting remains a work in progress for all three Centres. The often-intangible nature of their results creates challenges in identifying and effectively reporting on the effectiveness and impact of their work and methodologies such as outcome harvesting, outcome mapping or stories of change are not yet used effectively to evidence the Centres' work and its ongoing impact in their respective sectors.

Achievement of Operational Synergies/Mutualisation between the three Centres

The evaluation team were tasked with assessing the Centres' progress in achieving synergies across their operations. The evaluation team analysed the synergies paper developed by the three Centres, which included three proposed scenarios of mutualisation. The paper lacks data to back up the claims made regarding the levels of investment required and the potential cost savings. The evaluation team was therefore not able to verify the claims made but the sections below present the team's analysis of synergies achieved to date and the potential for future synergies. Overall, the evaluation team agree with the Centres' analysis that there are some opportunities to provide 'quick wins' which will provide some savings but there is little room to make the more drastic cost-savings demanded through savings on operations.

The evaluation found that the Centres have made progress in increasing their internal efficiency but less so in increasing cross-Centre synergies. The support functions for all three Centres are lean, particularly for GCSP, which operates with 2.5 staff (full-time equivalent (FTE)) for Human Resources (HR) and finance functions for around 90 staff. In 2024, DCAF operated with approximately 3.5 HR staff supporting around 220 personnel globally, and 6 finance staff managing an annual budget of about Swiss Franc (CHF) 35 million, with overall management costs reportedly around 19 per cent of total budget. GICHD operates with 4 HR staff for 95 staff. Therefore, there is little room for further efficiencies to be gained in these services, particularly as inflation is driving operating costs up and reducing the spending power of their core contributions in real terms.

FDFA's expectations around mutualisation and synergies across the Geneva Centres are frequently framed in terms of efficiency and cost savings. However, interviewees involved in the mutualisation process suggest that this framing risks over-simplifying the economics of integration. On the one hand, the three Centres operate with distinct institutional cultures, mandates and operational models, and their geographically dispersed programmes make operational alignment difficult to achieve organically. On the other hand, meaningful efficiencies through mutualisation require upfront investment, including integration of systems (IT, HR, finance and reporting, MEL), harmonisation of policies, and sustained change management. Such reforms involve transaction costs and temporary productivity losses before stabilisation gains can materialise. In practice, mutualisation is more likely to produce gains in coherence, transparency, and reduced fragmentation than in headline financial savings – particularly as the Centres are operating with lean administrative services already and that operating costs in real terms are going up, as noted in the paragraph above. In addition, fundraising and complementary skills across the three Centres need to be considered alongside cost-cutting to ensure that the Centres have the workforce and capacity required to continue their work going forward.

Interview data with senior management of the three Centres shows that the debate around mutualisation is shaped by three considerations:

- Internal performance considerations,
- Institutional positioning and concerns about relative visibility and relevance among the three Centres.
- External optics, particularly amongst the federal authorities in Bern, where pressure for coherence is partly linked to uncertainties around duplication and relevance for some of the Centres' work. In this context, mutualisation can become a symbolic proxy for demonstrating reform, responsiveness, or fiscal prudence, even though there is limited evidence of financial inefficiencies on the part of the Centres.

In practice, significant cost reductions would require more fundamental choices about the scope and structure of the Centres' activities. Such decisions would go beyond administrative coordination and mutualisation of support functions and would likely involve reviewing and discontinuing specific programme lines or thematic areas across the Centres. Senior management of the Centres emphasised that this would require stronger strategic steering from the federal authorities in Bern. If cost reductions are to be pursued seriously, the federal authorities would need to signal clearly which areas of work it considers strategic priorities and which activities it may no longer wish to support. In addition, the evaluation notes that the Centres' cumulated budget amounts to less than 1 per cent of Swiss ODA² and is to be further cut in 2027 which sends mixed signals regarding the Centres as a priority of Swiss foreign and security policy. On the one hand, the Centres are portrayed as a key Swiss foreign and security policy tool; on the other, their budget from Switzerland has been maintained at the same level in the previous three Federal Dispatches since 2016, thus continually decreasing in real terms due to inflation.

A related issue raised in several interviews concerns the cost of office space at the Maison de la Paix. Rental costs represent a significant expenditure, estimated at approximately CHF 4 million³ per year for the three Centres combined. Interviewees suggested that renegotiating these costs could represent one of the most tangible opportunities for cost reductions. However, given the institutional relationship with the

² The evaluation team note that only GICHD and DCAF core contributions are ODA eligible, GCSP is not. The team have used this figure to highlight the order of magnitude as opposed to arguing for further ODA budget for GCSP.

³ The issue is compounded by long lease termination notice period, and the Centres need to decide in 2026 whether to renew or terminate part of the lease, which currently is set to expire in 2031. The Centres have also taken steps to densify office space, terminate leases on some floors, and sublet office space, with a view to realise savings.

Graduate Institute, which owns the premises, such discussions would require direct engagement from the Confederation rather than negotiations led solely by the Centres.

Overall, the evaluation finds that there is little potential for cost-saving besides rent. Substantial cost savings cannot be achieved by further reducing administrative overheads (outside of rent negotiations) but would likely require decisions to discontinue streams of work or activities on the part of each of the Centres (reducing the scope of their work). Avoiding blunt institutional redesign would therefore require strategic prioritisation on the part of the federal authorities in Bern, not technical mutualisation alone, with a view to assessing individual service lines and programme areas against their i) relevance for Swiss foreign and security policy priorities, ii) demonstrated performance, iii) complementarities and overlap across the Centres and with other key Swiss partner organisations.

Information Technology (IT)

The evaluation finds that the mutualised IT arrangements across the Geneva Centres have not, to date, delivered the efficiency or functionality gains typically expected from a shared services model. Interview evidence, particularly internal GICHD and DCAF stakeholders, consistently portrays the shared IT platform, managed by GCSP, as expensive relative to the value it delivers. With reported annual costs in the range of CHF 1.2 – 1.5 million, the current IT service is described as largely limited to core infrastructure, platforms and security services, help desk support and routine IT maintenance/asset replacement. This has led DCAF and GICHD to spend up to around CHF 300 000 per year extra for tailored user services not provided through the joint IT service e.g. for specific financial software.

The service offer is limited in relation to evolving needs. Respondents, particularly from GICHD and DCAF, noted that the current IT service does not meet core organisational needs around information management, data integration and digital tools for programme management and learning. The current IT set up does not help the three Centres design and develop integrated programme management platforms, shared digital workflows, harmonised cybersecurity, or use of adequate AI models. Examples such as prolonged disruptions to basic digital tools (e.g. a Teams travel booking app was blocked for six months in a row) illustrate a system that is insufficiently geared towards problem-solving or service improvement based on operational realities. For example, the IT service is not effectively involved in nor coordinating the exploration of AI solutions for the three Centres, despite this being highlighted as a potential cost-saving measure in the synergies paper. As a result, IT mutualisation has faced difficulties in keeping pace with the Centres' different evolving operational and analytical requirements.

The evaluation found that governance and incentive challenges are at the heart of the issue. IT staff are contracted and managed by GCSP, while serving all three Centres. This creates a structural asymmetry of incentives. The Centres have established an IT Steering Committee, adopted Terms of Reference and developed a Managed Services Agreement. However, as service providers embedded within one institution (GCSP), IT personnel are not fully accountable to the IT Steering Committee or a joint performance framework across the Centres. Nor are they institutionally incentivised to redesign service models that could alter existing roles, competencies, or resource allocations. In such a configuration, proposals requiring different skill profiles, outsourcing, or substantial changes to the current operating model may face inherent resistance, not as a matter of intent, but as a predictable outcome of organisational self-preservation dynamics.

Decision-making is channelled through an IT steering committee which was found to be inefficient and somewhat dysfunctional. The evaluation found evidence of lengthy decision-making processes that limit responsiveness and innovation. For example, all three Centres had to consolidate a common financial baseline for IT services across the three Centres. This process involved coordination across the IT services and the Centre's Finance

Directors and Directors and took over 12 months to complete. The lengthy decision-making processes reduce incentives for service improvement and have made adaptation slow. In addition, unlocking potential gains would require transparent IT performance benchmarks, and incentive structures aligned with service quality and innovation.

Importantly, the IT arrangement is currently the only concrete precedent for mutualisation across the Centres and to date the governance and management of the service have led to lack of value for DCAF and GICHD. To an extent, its perceived underperformance appears to shape broader institutional hesitancy about further integration or mutualisation efforts. There is no evidence that hesitancy is rooted in opposition to mutualisation per se. Rather, it reflects a concern that shared services may entrench suboptimal systems if alternatives, competition, or clear performance benchmarks are not considered.

Human Resources (HR)

The evaluation finds that mutualisation of HR functions across the Geneva Centres would be complex and prohibitively resource intensive. Interview data from all three Centres suggests that HR frameworks differ substantially in terms of policies, salary bandwidths, contractual arrangements, job titles, and levels of institutional maturity. Capacity constraints further limit feasibility. All three Centres operate with small HR teams relative to their workforce and geographic footprint. DCAF, which has approximately 3.5 FTEs supporting around 220 personnel globally in 2024, already allocates most of its capacity to core operational priorities, including but not limited to recruitment, contract management, safeguarding, compliance, staff welfare, and support to a geographically dispersed field presence. DCAF has limited “extra” capacity to engage in major system redesign without affecting day-to-day service delivery. HR capacity in the other Centres is similarly constrained. This further constrains the feasibility of rapid or large-scale integration without additional temporary resources.

Interview evidence from all three Centres indicates that **harmonising HR systems would require sustained transition investment**, including system redesign, policy harmonisation, co-location and shadowing periods, migration of data into shared platforms, and extensive staff consultation. In practice, such efforts typically generate temporary productivity losses before stabilisation gains can emerge. Given the lean HR structures across the Centres, additional temporary capacity would be required to simply manage the transition. In this sense, there is limited indication that the cost of HR mutualisation would generate significant financial savings, unless FDFA were to decide on structural reforms of the Geneva Centres, or choose to no longer fund part of the Centre’s portfolio.

That said, the evaluation identifies **selective and incremental opportunities** where harmonisation could add value without overburdening systems. Payroll administration could be aligned with relatively low effort, and learning and development functions offer scope for further coordination at limited cost. These areas represent “small wins” that could improve coherence without triggering the complexity associated with full HR integration.

Overall, the evaluation finds that HR mutualisation raises a fundamental question of purpose and potential increased rather than reduced costs. The Centres are functioning with lean administrative services and have quite different HR management needs. In the absence of clear gains and adequate resourcing, pursuing comprehensive HR mutualisation risks diverting attention from ongoing internal reforms and overstretching already lean teams, with limited efficiency returns.

Effectiveness

The three Centres have maintained their reputation for expertise and quality since the previous evaluation. All three Centres are perceived as centres of excellence in their fields.

External feedback was unanimous on this and the evaluation found strong delivery on expected outputs across the three Centres. This includes all three of the Centres providing evidence that they are on track to meet their strategic objectives in the current strategic period. For example, the Centres' own stakeholder/partner survey data shows continued high levels of satisfaction regarding their work.

The Centres are able to achieve this due to highly skilled committed staff groups with a reputation for quality. This needs to be maintained to ensure continued relevance. In addition, the Centres' work is enabled by the diplomatic standing of their directors, and the access and visibility this gives the Centres. For example, the GCSP director has numerous connections at Ministerial level in strategically relevant countries. GCSP were described by an external respondent as *"relevant, respected, and strategic when referred to as a partner on peace and security related issues"*. Furthermore, DCAF and GICHD's field presence is important and signals intent to their partners. This presence is set to increase with the opening of the DCAF-GICHD joint regional office in Amman, Jordan, covering their work in the Middle East. External respondents described DCAF as a partner that *"works alongside institutions rather than outside them"*. GICHD's Ukraine work combines Geneva-based coordination with national staff who bring language skills and contextual understanding, allowing the Centre to navigate relationships across all three Ukrainian national mine action centres. An external respondent noted that *"the organisation significantly contributes to strengthening national capacities through the development of the regulatory framework, professional training, and expert advice in line with North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and international standards."*

All three Centres have successfully engaged with technology including but not limited to AI. For example, GICHD information management systems for mine action (IMSMA) enables standardised data management across national authorities. GCSP has built a substantive body of work on AI and security including on technology in ceasefire agreements and AI-nuclear risk. DCAF addresses ethics around the use of AI in warfare, hybrid threats and disinformation, and the technological transformation of warfare. This is a clear differentiator for the Centres and they should assess how to maintain this advantage moving forward and make the requisite investments.

All three Centres have maintained a focus on GEDSI despite increasing political pushback. GCSP has worked towards gender balance among course participants and speakers and runs an Inspiring Women Leaders course. GICHD has adapted its language and framing while retaining its substantive focus, drawing on a diverse staff group from relevant countries and regions to navigate sensitive contexts. At a time when several governments and donors are scaling back gender-related agendas in security policy, DCAF has maintained gender and intersectionality as a central strategic pillar, and has around 30 staff working on gender-related issues across a dedicated entity and operational focal points at HQ and in the country offices. This has paid dividends in several instances; for instance, South Korean authorities approached DCAF directly for police and defence Gender Focal Points training.

Neutrality and impartiality function as both enabling and constraining factors across all three Centres. GICHD stakeholders emphasise that Swiss neutrality combined with humanitarian mandate enhances trust with national authorities but observe that this stance can limit the Centre's ability to actively uphold International Humanitarian Law (IHL) in an era when IHL principles are increasingly eroded. GCSP's neutrality enables Track 1.5 and Track 2 dialogues in spaces where formal diplomacy has broken down, illustrated by the Conversations on the Future of European Security dialogue producing the "Peace Matrix" disseminated in Washington, Kyiv, Moscow, Berlin and Vienna. For DCAF, the "accompanying partner" rather than "external critic" stance is described by staff as essential for maintaining access in politically sensitive environments. The constraint is similar in each case: discretion

sometimes prevents the Centres from taking strong advocacy stances, particularly on contested issues.

In terms of constraining factors, the funding landscape is the most pressing issue for all three Centres. As noted above, GICHD suffered from the US funding cuts and each of the Centres is operating in an increasingly constrained environment. All three Centres note that donors are increasingly earmarking funding, increasing the challenge of covering overhead costs. The funding landscape is likely to worsen in coming years. For example, the EU's introduction of pillar assessment as a prerequisite for managing EU funds has strengthened a limited group of accredited "pillar-assessed partners" - predominantly EU member state implementation agencies (GIZ, FIAPP, Civipol, Expertise France) and UN agencies (UNDP, IOM). DCAF, GCSP and GICHD are not pillar-assessed, which limits their ability to lead large EU-funded programmes. They remain eligible for smaller subventions or grants but are increasingly positioned as technical subcontractors within consortia led by others, with associated risks of losing intellectual ownership and donor visibility.

Impact

The outcomes and impact of the Centres' work is only partially evidenced across all three reports. The interview data and document review highlights the Centres' impact through a range of examples. There are limits to the extent that the evaluation team and the Centres themselves can triangulate this evidence and isolate the Centres' contribution to these changes but overall, the data points towards continuing impact of the Centres' work. For example, the ceasefire toolkit developed by GCSP gained traction in both Ukraine and the United States. In Ukraine, DCAF contributed to the Strategic Review of Defence Procurement and the implementation of the Ukraine–NATO Adaptive Programme and also engaged in the development of the gender self-assessment toolkit for the Security Sector, piloted with security or defence institutions in The Gambia, Burkina Faso, Colombia, Honduras, Mali, Ukraine, Zambia and North Macedonia. The GICHD-supported IMSMA enables standardised data management across national authorities, supporting evidence-based decision-making.

There is also evidence that the Centres are strong at translating what are often fairly abstract or academic principles into usable guidelines, policies, toolkits or papers. Work on international standards is the avenue that shows the greatest impact for GICHD and DCAF. For example, DCAF engaged in revising the OECD DAC Handbook on Security System Reform (SSR): Supporting Security and Justice, now a reference in the sector. GICHD provides technical leadership on the IMAS and International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATG) and supports the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) and Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), helping States Parties meet treaty obligations.

However, the Centres do not have strong follow-up mechanisms to evidence how their capacity building, research or evidence is used in practice and the actual impact it makes. There is a need to ensure that work is targeted and coherent across each of the Centre's work. This should be backed up by regular communication of these priorities.

Sustainability

There is evidence across all three reports that the Centres have achieved sustainable outcomes including some key policy wins and influencing of senior officials. This includes GCSP's research on AI feeding into discussions at NATO and in the Ukraine context, and a publication on AI in the Arctic developed with the FDFA is being used by the World Meteorological Organization. DCAF's Measuring Opportunities for Women in Peace Operations (MOWIP) methodology, co-developed with Cornell University, is now the international standard for assessing barriers to women's participation in peace operations. Engagement with officials at the most senior levels appears to have given the Centres meaningful influence over high-level decision-making in their respective fields. For example,

GICHD trains national authorities to use IMSMA independently, embedding capacity in state institutions rather than individuals. The sustainability of this influence is, however, predicated on those individuals remaining in post - a challenge inherent to advocacy, research and policy work. Even with this caveat, the cumulative effect across the sector is a net positive: senior champions, even when they move on, tend to carry the Centres' frameworks, networks and ways of working with them into new roles.

The evidence points strongly towards the importance of pairing engagement and training with long-term institutional capacity strengthening. Compelling illustrations of this approach in practice - most notably GCSP's sustained work with the European Commission, where accompaniment over time has embedded learning into institutional structures rather than individuals. The pattern across the different evidence streams is consistent: the Centres' work is most effective, and most likely to outlast donor cycles, where national governments or other counterpart actors are supported to design their own strategies, policies or legal frameworks in parallel with training and advisory inputs. Sustainability is markedly weaker where capacity strengthening is delivered as a stand-alone training product. It is also more uneven among national civil society partners, who tend to be more reliant on specific project funding and therefore more exposed when that funding ends.

Looking ahead, partnerships will be central to the ongoing funding and sustainability of all three Centres' work, especially in the current unforgiving fundraising landscape. Despite this, GCSP and DCAF do not have internal guidance on how partnerships should be identified, structured, managed or exited, whilst GICHD has a policy on how to engage with private donors and a general fundraising strategy. This capacity gap will need to be addressed if the Centres are to manage an expanding partnership portfolio coherently and avoid duplication, mission drift or reputational risk. There are positive moves in this direction: DCAF has established a dedicated Partnerships & Development entity, and GICHD has created an Innovative Funding Unit. This capacity gap will need to be further strengthened moving forward to ensure capacity across the organisations.

A related limiting factor - noted explicitly in the GCSP and GICHD evaluations - is the lack of systematic follow-up with stakeholders after the initial engagement. Building lighter-touch mechanisms for ongoing contact, refresher inputs and continued advisory support would help convert one-off engagements into longer-term relationships and could strengthen the sustainability of results across the Centres' work.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The conclusions and recommendations below are based upon the evaluation findings. The recommendations for each of the individual Centres are included in the specific Centre reports and are not repeated here. The recommendations below have been discussed with the Comité de Pilotage and the Geneva Centres' senior leadership. The recommendations are separated into three levels: 1) Priority Actions, 2) Strategic Shifts, and 3) Structural Reform. They are intended to prompt discussion and thinking around the direction, level and depth of synergies and support for the three Centres.

1. Priority Actions

#	Conclusion	Recommendation	Audience
1	Office rent: the second largest expense for the three Centres after staffing costs is rent. The annual payments amount to a cumulative 4 million CHF for all three Centres.	The federal authorities in Bern should support the three Centres with rent negotiations for Maison de la Paix. The Directors of the Centres should engage on this and mutually shape the structure, including objectives, for these negotiations.	FDFA with the Directors of the three Centres
2	The three Centres are an instrument of Swiss foreign and security policy and part of the foundation of International Geneva. On the one hand the Geneva Centres are perceived as strategic Swiss partners and key instruments of Swiss Foreign and Security Policy. The three Centres are universally seen as Centres of Excellence and as integral supporters of international peace and security. They contribute significantly to Swiss foreign and security policy norms and objectives. On the other hand, this is not reflected in the scale of financial support they receive from the Confederation and raises a question about the alignment between the country's strategic ambition and its resource allocation. Their cumulated budget amounts to less than 1% of Swiss ODA (noting that GCSP budget is not ODA eligible), have decreased in	Increase Swiss funding levels to no less than the equivalent of 1%+ of ODA to the three Centres, in line with apparent Swiss prioritisation of the three Centres as key tools of Swiss foreign and security policy. The work of the Centres has remained effective, as reflected in the external feedback on the Centres' work, and is more relevant than ever in the current geopolitical context and Swiss financial backing should reflect this.	FDFA

	real terms due to inflation and will be cut in 2027. This is in the context of International Geneva and Switzerland's position in peace and security being under pressure.		
3	IT: The current IT arrangements including the IT steering committee not working in its current composition. Although the IT helpdesk works well; innovative IT solutions for supporting three Centre synergies are not apparent. All three Centres are also currently considering their organisational positions on the use of AI which presents an opportunity to develop a common position paper and jointly consider opportunities and challenges posed by the use of AI.	Re-examine options for the IT synergies: - Introduce a formal review or sunset clause for current IT arrangements, after which alternative service delivery arrangements should be considered. This could be an opportunity to further develop and refine the mutualised IT model, both at the level of each Centre and across the three Centres. - FDFA could task one of the more operationally oriented Centres (such as DCAF or GICHD) or an external assessor with conducting an independent assessment of alternative models (including competitive external providers). - Conduct joint analysis of each Centre's use of AI and develop a common position paper, policy and guidelines for staff on the use of AI for their work.	Directors of the three Centres to jointly agree
4	Evidence, Learning and Impact: The evaluation has low confidence levels in impact and sustainability evidence across all three Centres. Various MEL/RBM approaches to measuring and tracking outcome and impact level change are at varying levels of maturity across all three Centres, with room for improvement in different areas. Research is conducted and published, but limited understanding of how this research is used in practice.	Commission an external Evidence, Impact and Learning expert to assess the MEL and RBM capacity of all three Centres. - This would include producing recommendations and tangible, realistic action plans for which areas to focus on for strengthening (and potentially additional resources). This could include, for example, harmonisation of tools and/or systems. - This could also include lesson sharing/technical capacity exchange between the three Centres, e.g. DCAF sharing their experience of using Outcome Harvesting and Stories of Change. - Identify ways in which research is applied and used by intended audiences.	Directors of the three Centres to jointly agree
5	Communications and the 'Three Centres' brand: There are some good examples of communications done by each of the Centres individually and some joint communications. This presents an opportunity to consider a joint	Develop a joint communications strategy - This could include joint communications around events as well as lesson sharing on what communications tools/approaches work best to support technical capacity exchange - This would need to be light touch to avoid adding to already busy workloads and would require communications focal points from each of the Centres to work together.	Directors of the three Centres to jointly agree

	approach to communications which in turn would strengthen the 'Three Centres' brand.	- Explore the possibility of a monthly shared newsletter. This could include, for example, a monthly geographic focus for Centres to share details of their specific regional/country work or a thematic/technical focus e.g. GEDSI. - Develop a joint onboarding package for the Three Centres with key cross-Centre policies, and potentially new policies including anti-harassment, guidance on how to write proposals etc.	
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2. Strategic Shifts

#	Conclusion	Recommendation	Audience
1	Strategic prioritisation The evaluation finds that further significant cost reductions across the Geneva Centres would require more direct strategic steering from the federal authorities. In the absence of such guidance, decisions on programme scope and resource allocation will continue to be taken independently by each Centre, limiting the potential impact of mutualisation efforts.	Strategically steer cost-saving through scope reduction based on strategic prioritisation of Swiss-funded components/activities. - Meaningful savings would require strategic prioritisation and likely reduction in scope. - Switzerland could therefore consider conducting a targeted strategic funding review of Swiss-supported activities, assessing programme lines and thematic areas against their most immediate relevance for Swiss foreign and security policy priorities, and complementarities and overlaps with other key Swiss partners. Such an approach would allow cost reductions through strict alignment with Swiss strategic choices, while preserving the Centres' ability to mobilise funding from other donors. There is a risk that this would potentially limit the Centres' ability to leverage Swiss funding to attract other third-party funders however.	FDFA and Directors of three Centres to jointly agree
2	Strategy cycle of the three Centres These are not currently aligned.	Align the strategy cycles of the three Centres This would allow for some joint discussions and planning of strategic priorities and resourcing.	Directors of the three Centres to jointly agree
3	Geographic collaboration The three Centres - in particular DCAF and GICHD - focus on several similar geographic areas in different ways. There are also some good examples of collaboration, e.g. Syria and Sri	Scope ways in which the Centres can collaborate more strategically in relation to their geographic focus to improve coherence and future cost-efficiency (as is the case with the new, joint DCAF/GICHD regional office in Amman)	Directors of the three Centres to jointly agree

	Lanka. This presents an opportunity to further strengthen collaboration and information exchange.	- Jointly map the top 5-8 geographic priority areas for each of the Centres and identify overlapping priority areas. - Learning from examples of what has worked well and why, set up light touch geographic working groups/networks to facilitate the exchange of experiences, challenges, partnerships, stakeholder engagement etc. - This would allow for further identification of possible joint projects/events etc. - Engage with the Swiss missions in these geographic priority areas – a responsibility of both the Centres and Swiss missions.	
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3. Structural Reform

This level of recommendations on structural reform is intended to prompt discussion and thinking around the direction, level and depth of synergies and support for the three Centres.

#	Conclusion	Recommendation	Audience
1	Discussions on mutualisation and synergies have been ongoing for a significant amount of time with little progress to date. This is in part because no one Director has oversight over all operational functions across the three Centres; there is not a unanimous view on the benefits of mutualisation across the three Centres; there is limited understanding of the detail of each Centre's work and limited time to address this; and work to date on synergies (including the joint IT service) has not delivered value for all Centres. Furthermore, the evaluation team found that there is limited potential for significant future savings. If the federal authorities in Bern are clear that it requires synergies and increased strategic cooperation – potentially leading to cost savings over time – then something materially different needs to be done. In the absence of this, it is likely that these conversations will continue on in the same vein for years to come.	Revise the leadership structure of the three Centres: - One option (amongst others) could be appointing one 'Geneva Centres' Director (at Ambassador level), supported by Centre Deputy Directors (at senior expert level). - This would ensure one person has oversight over all strategic and operational aspects of the three Centres with no preference/bias for any one of them, allowing them to 'connect the dots' in a way no one else currently can or does. - This would not involve dissolving the Centres but rather refining the overarching leadership structure whilst respecting the mandates and work of each individual Centre. - The trade-offs of this approach would need to be carefully considered. These trade-offs are set out in more detail below. Resources would be required to support this new structure i.e. a central 'Geneva Centres' budget and secretariat: - A central budget would cover shared admin and other mutualised functions, e.g. IT, travel, cleaning services, some procurement etc.	FDFA

		• This would be overseen by the Geneva Centres Director and a secretariat to support coordination, meeting preparation, planning, tracking decisions, and liaison with the federal authorities in Bern). • Without dedicated capacity, there is a high risk that the structure would exist “on paper” but not translate into faster decisions, clearer accountability, or measurable gains. This would need to be designed in a cost-neutral/cost-effective way to ensure that additional coordination cost is demonstrably offset by improved service quality, reduced duplication, and/or faster delivery.	
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The evaluation team note that this recommendation on structural reform comes with a series of trade-offs and potential risks and costs:

Trade-offs

The central trade-off is between strategic coherence and specialised focus. A single Director could connect dots across the three Centres and present a unified interface to FDFA and other stakeholders, but at the cost of agility within each Centre and the risk of losing the Centres’ distinct sectoral expertise under generalist leadership. Each Centre's mandate is highly specialised, and each has developed credibility in their respective sectors over decades. This may be less clear under more general leadership. Concentrating each of the Centres’ diplomatic standing with a single director may strengthen the overall positioning of the three Centres as a whole but weaken it at the individual sector level; having a Swiss Ambassador as the Director of each Centre provides access and a profile that could not be matched with senior expert in the role of Deputy Director.

Risks

The three Centres are separately constituted Swiss Foundations, each with its own Council of Foundation and state representation. A single director would potentially report to three Councils with different priorities, which could multiply rather than reduce governance complexity unless a new governance structure is created. Creating a new structure would require agreement amongst the states on the Council of Foundation, statute changes and potential legitimacy contests.

The three Centres have different donor profiles and some donors may prefer to fund Centres with Ambassadors as Directors. There is a potential risk of donor pause or exit during a transition period, especially given the difficult funding landscape at present. Should this recommendation be implemented, this would require carefully considered communication with all external audiences, including donors.

Costs

Costs would likely include an additional ambassador-level salary plus secretariat staff (likely a minimum of three to four FTE for the central function to be credible) and ongoing legal and governance support. The evaluation's existing finding that mutualisation has limited cost-saving potential means this could be a net additional cost, rather than a cost-saving, given the amount of resource and time required for such processes. Senior management time would likely be absorbed by the restructure rather than programmatic delivery, slowing decision-making during the transition and reducing fundraising capacity during a period when the funding environment is already constrained.

Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP)

Executive Summary

The Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP) was established by the Swiss Government in 1995. The Centre's mandate is to advance peace, security, and international cooperation through five core activities, 'the peace pentagon': executive education, international security dialogue and mediation and peace support, research-based policy advice, innovation, and networking.

This evaluation of the Centre was conducted by IOD PARC on behalf of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) and draws on a review of 48 documents, 22 interviews, two focus group discussions, and a survey yielding 83 responses. The findings below are structured around the six Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) DAC evaluation criteria.

Relevance: GCSP's work has grown in relevance in the context of an increasingly polarised international context. The five core activities are viewed as pertinent to the security sector. GCSP has demonstrated agility in responding to emerging challenges, including the acceleration of artificial intelligence (AI) in warfare, nuclear proliferation risks, and the fragmentation of multilateral institutions. However, the Centre's thematic niche remains less clearly defined than its counterparts, and its current strategy (drafted in 2022) requires updating to reflect the rapidly evolving security landscape, GCSP's latest capabilities and its expanded global reach.

Efficiency: Internal efficiency has improved, with better internal communication, leaner business support services, and cost reductions achieved. However, GCSP's current internal structure does not yet consistently enable cross-departmental collaboration, most notably between its two mediation and dialogue departments. Its monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) system remains output-focused rather than outcome-oriented. Performance management and personal and professional development (PPD) opportunities are areas for improvement.

Effectiveness: GCSP is broadly effective. The quality of its executive education offering is consistently high, with student satisfaction between 4.5 and 4.9 out of 5, and the Centre has successfully shifted to over 50 per cent customised courses. The Global Fellowship Initiative (GFI) has grown to 175 fellows (experts or practitioners drawn from government, business, academia, the military, international organisations or civil society who join the GFI in-residence or virtually to research, exchange ideas and contribute to GCSP's work on peace and security), and the alumni network now encompasses over 13 000 members. Mediation and dialogue work, research and policy products have had tangible influence in several important contexts, including Russia-Ukraine, Syria and the Arctic.

Impact: Evidence of longer-term impact is less conclusive. The absence of robust outcome-level measurement limits GCSP's ability to demonstrate the full value of its work, particularly in dialogue and mediation. However, the evaluation did find notable examples of impact including uptake of GCSP's ceasefire toolkit, the Centre's research on AI which has fed into North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) discussions, and support to the Armenia–Azerbaijan ceasefire agreement. Capacity-building impact is particularly significant for participants from the Global South.

Sustainability: Funding diversification is underway and has provided the Centre with key opportunities to sustain its work moving forward. However, long-term financial sustainability will require continued attention, and the sustainability of the dialogue and mediation programme in particular draws significantly on the current director's personal network. The alumni network, while a significant asset, could be more systematically leveraged as a strategic resource.

GCSP remains a valuable and increasingly relevant institution in an era of intensifying global security challenges. Its multi-disciplinary model, unique Geneva location, and expertise in in-demand topics including emerging technology and crisis management constitute genuine competitive advantages. With focused strategic choices, strengthened internal management, and more systematic documentation of its impact, GCSP is well positioned to continue its contribution to Swiss foreign and security policy and to international peace and security.

Based upon these findings, the evaluation puts forward seven recommendations:

- 1) Define a clear set of thematic priorities/niches linked to GCSP's comparative advantages
- 2) Conduct an organisational structure review
- 3) Strengthen the MEL system to capture outcomes and impact
- 4) Build structured capacity in partnership and fundraising
- 5) Reinvest in the Relationship with the federal authorities in Bern
- 6) Develop a succession plan for senior management and GCSP's mediation and dialogue work
- 7) Accelerate efforts to attain academic accreditation for executive education

Introduction

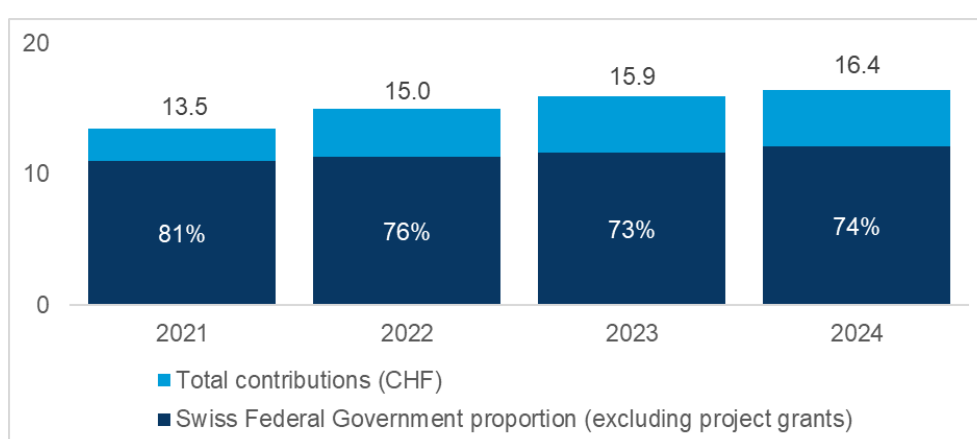
GCSP was established by the Swiss Government in 1995 as a contribution to NATO's Partnership for Peace. It is governed by a Foundation Council consisting of representatives from 55 states plus the Canton of Geneva. Its mandate is to advance peace, security, and international cooperation through an approach which combines executive education, international security dialogue and mediation and peace support, research-based policy advice, innovation, and networking for leaders worldwide. GCSP has around 90 staff based in Geneva.

GCSP focuses on five core activity streams:

- 1) **Executive education** – delivered to leaders across the world with in-person, virtual, hybrid, and customised training in areas including crisis management, cyber security, gender-inclusive security, peace operations, and AI
- 2) **International security dialogue and mediation and peace support** - facilitated confidential Track-1.5/Track-2 talks, such as the US–Russia Syria dialogue, High-North Arctic Talks, Bridge-States discussions, and Permanent Five (P5) nuclear risk roundtables, providing neutral, discreet platforms for stakeholders
- 3) **Research & policy advice** – thematic outputs, policy briefs and strategic foresight for example on AI in warfare or to support Switzerland's United Nations (UN) Security Council seat (UNSC) (2023 - 2024).
- 4) **Innovation and community initiatives** – GCSP runs two incubators, the GFI and 'Creative Spark', and presents a GCSP Prize for Transformative Futures
- 5) **Alumni and community initiatives** - GCSP runs a global alumni network

GCSP has grown its budget from Swiss Franc (CHF) 13.5 million in 2021 to 16.4 million in 2024. GCSP remains heavily reliant on Swiss funding although GCSP has responded to FDFA requirements to increase third-party funding as set out in the Federal Dispatches since 2016. Third party contributions to GCSP's total budget have increased from 18.7 per cent in 2021 to 26.2 per cent in 2024 (see Figure 4 below).

Figure 4: Total Swiss and Other Contributions of GCSP 2021 – 2024



Methodology and Data Collection

The evaluation findings draw on a range of quantitative and qualitative evidence and sources and stakeholder groups as shown in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5: Data Collection Summary - GCSP



During the data collection phase, a total of 48 documents were reviewed, encompassing annual reports, programme reports, surveys, and other relevant materials. 22 interviews were conducted with an equal split of 11 internal and 11 external stakeholders, providing balanced perspectives from both within and outside GCSP. Focus group discussions were held with 9 GCSP staff at the programme manager and officer level and the team observed an Information Technology (IT) Steering Committee meeting. A survey was administered to all GCSP staff and a selection of external stakeholders that yielded 83 responses in total, comprising 50 internal respondents and 33 external ones. The following findings are drawn from this evidence base and have been triangulated across multiple data sources to ensure reliability.

Findings

The following sections outline the evaluation findings, structured by the six OECD DAC evaluation criteria.

To what extent has GCSP taken on board recommendations from the previous evaluation?

GCSP has achieved (four) or partially achieved (six) of 11 recommendations from the previous evaluation, with only one not addressed (See Figure 6 below).

Figure 6: Summary - Achievement of recommendations from the previous evaluation

#	Recommendation	Achievement
1.1	One strategy document	Green
1.2	Consolidate and embed RBM approach	Yellow
2.1	Marketing function and strategy	Green
2.2	Customised course offering	Green
2.3	Academic accreditation for programmes	Yellow
3.1	Participative review of the Council function	Red
3.2	Council sub-committees	Yellow
4.1	Diversity of staff group	Yellow
4.2	Regionally focused work	Yellow
5.1	Alumni events	Green
6.1	Collective review of IT services	Yellow

Four are fully achieved including the development of the Medium-Term Strategy 2023 - 2027, a central marketing function, the Centre's customised course offering and alumni events. There has been progress on a further six, with the implementation of a Centre-wide results-

based management (RBM) approach, exploration of partnerships to enable academic accreditation for programmes underway, one Foundation Council sub-committee on strategic foresight established, the diversity of the staff group and regionally focused work explored, and an IT steering group committee established. However, work is still underway on these five initiatives, hence the partially achieved rating.

Finally, a participative review of the Foundation Council has not yet been advanced although GCSP notes the '*need to clarify roles, expectations and avenues for greater engagement*'.⁴ A working group on Strategic Anticipation and Foresight has been created, bringing interested members of the Foundation Council together. GCSP has also started a social media campaign on the Foundation Council members and their contributions to generate greater engagement across the Council group.

Relevance

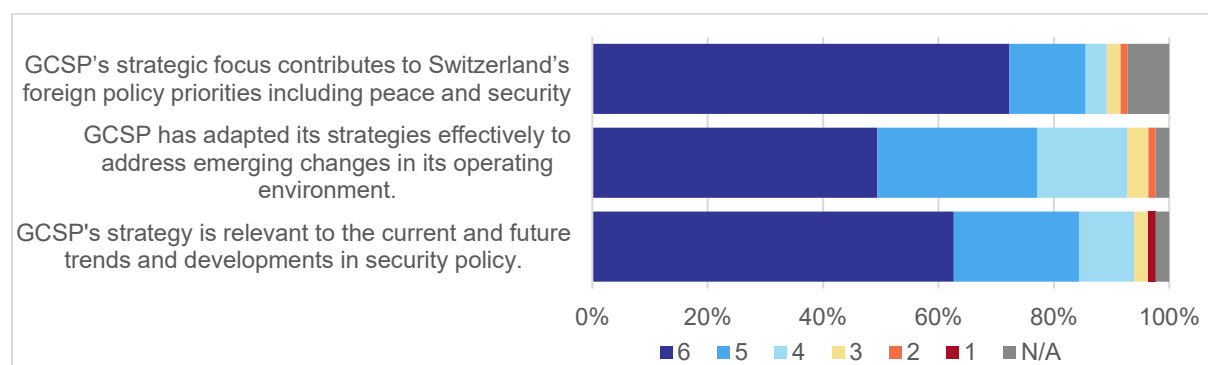
Overall, GCSP's work has increased in relevance (including to Swiss foreign and security policy priorities) in the context of an increasingly polarised world with numerous geopolitical challenges, including on Europe's doorstep. There is no shortage of contexts in which GCSP's services are demanded and GCSP has intervened in contexts including but not limited to Russia-Ukraine, Iran, Syria, Myanmar and the Arctic. There is no question that GCSP's offering will remain relevant in the years to come, given the numerous global security challenges currently unravelling.

The extent to which GCSP's current strategy (2023 - 2027) addresses the evolving global security challenges.

GCSP's strategy addresses evolving global security challenges effectively. The strategy sets out GCSP's intentions to address all five points of the 'peace pentagon' framework (executive education, international security dialogue and mediation and peace support, research-based policy advice, innovation, and networking) with greater focus on mediation and dialogue as compared to previous strategic periods, particularly in Russia-Ukraine. There is little doubt that this is required in the current geopolitical context and the emphasis in the strategy on emerging and disruptive technologies, cyber security, outer space security, and climate-security linkages, has been well founded.

Figure 7: Survey Responses on the relevance of GCSP's strategy

Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statements (Where 1 = strongly disagree and 6 = strongly agree).



The survey responses support this with stakeholders overwhelmingly agreeing that GCSP's strategic focus is relevant and that it contributes to peace and security (see Figure 7 above).

⁴ GCSP (2025), *External Evaluations Recommendations: Overview and Follow-up*.

That said, the strategy was drafted in 2022, and recent events require a response. This includes the acceleration of AI (including its use in warfare), the fragmentation of the multilateral system and NATO, the outbreak of war in the Middle East and the possibility of nuclear proliferation. GCSP has been working in these areas, but the strategy does not yet fully reflect GCSP's updated offering. Similarly, GCSP has expanded its reach in the Global South and with non-European actors. The current strategy speaks to global reach, but its resourcing and structural focus remain substantially Europe-oriented, which may constrain GCSP's recognition in other regions. Stakeholders therefore noted that the strategy requires an update (a note or annex rather than a full review) in the face of these evolving security challenges and GCSP's expanded activities, to help guide the organisation over the coming years.

Has GCSP adapted its strategies to address emerging challenges and changing conditions in its fields of operation?

GCSP has shown great flexibility and adaptation in terms of its strategies including but not limited to research, policy and course content, speakers and the delivery of its courses. The five areas of GCSP's work allow the Centre to flex and remain agile in the sector according to needs. GCSP is seen as adaptive, as shown in the survey responses in Figure 7. For example, in its education courses, GCSP responds quickly to new emerging demand from participants and changes in the context by adapting course content or bringing in new speakers. GCSP is consistently commended by external stakeholders for its ability to adapt to needs and its flexibility is appreciated by stakeholders in partner organisations, which often have much higher levels of bureaucracy. For example, GCSP shifted to online delivery during COVID and its virtual delivery is still considered strong compared to other academic providers. Similarly, GCSP has adapted both its courses, research outputs and dialogues according to new technologies that have been developed in recent years including AI.⁵

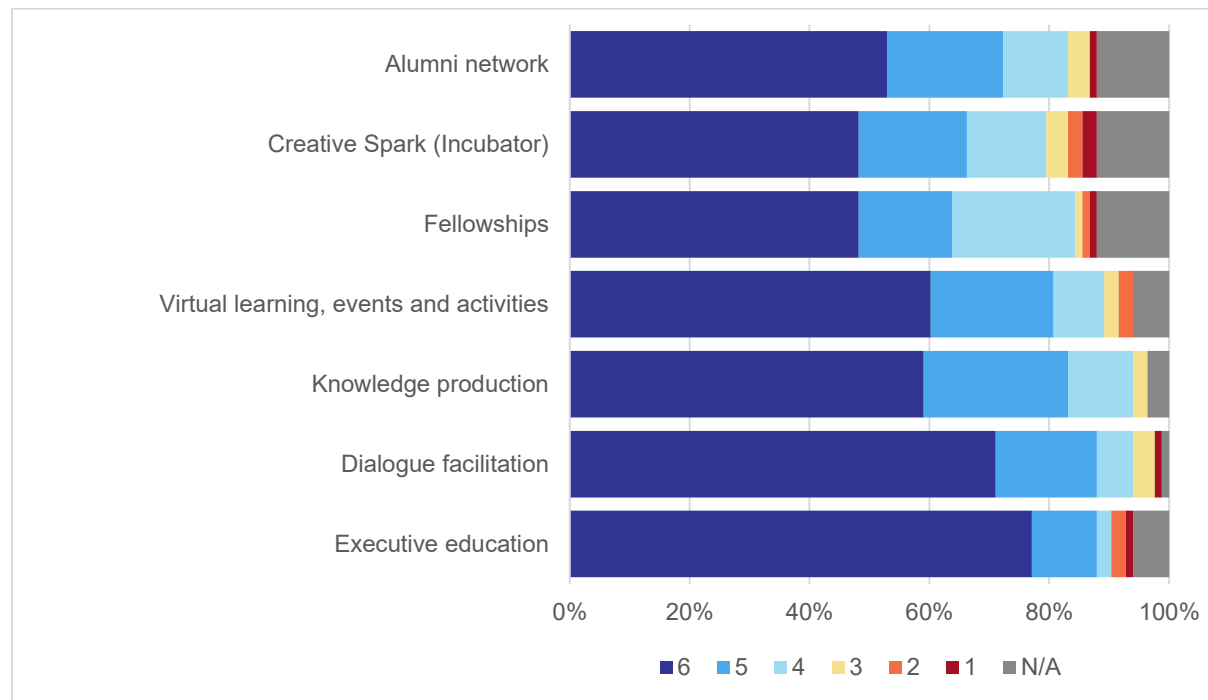
Are GCSP's programmes and partnership approaches responsive to the needs of its target beneficiaries, stakeholders and partner institutions?

Overall, GCSP's programmes and partnership approaches are found to be responsive to needs. As shown in Figure 8 below, survey respondents feel that the full range of GCSP services are relevant to the security sector, with executive education and dialogue facilitation rated as most relevant. This finding was consistent between internal and external stakeholders (See Figure 9 below for external stakeholder responses only). Stakeholders noted that GCSP's network and ability to bring in speakers or trainers with real world experience is unique e.g. former negotiators, armed force personnel or people with specific knowledge such as of International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standards.

⁵ GCSP (2026), 'The Third Summit on Responsible AI in the Military Domain (REAIM)'.

Figure 8: All survey responses on the relevance of GCSP's services

Question: GCSP provides the following services within its current strategy. Please score how relevant you feel each of these is to the sector GCSP works in (Where 1 = limited relevance and 6 = highly relevant).



Interestingly, GCSP's relevance is recognised by non-Swiss stakeholders to a much greater extent than Swiss stakeholders. The demand for GCSP's courses is growing among non-Western actors and GCSP has increased its offering of customised courses. Participants of these courses noted how well GCSP adapts the content to their needs. Stakeholders pointed to the increasing need for crisis management and leadership training for institutions in particular. GCSP has an effective offer here and can take advantage of this moving forward. Stakeholders also noted that small and middle states as a group are increasing in importance in the multilateral system⁶, and that GCSP addresses the need for capacity building in these states effectively. Questions on ceasefires, European security and metrics for peace, practical dialogue for stakeholders in conflict, and nuclear proliferation will likely increase in importance and GCSP does address this.

Despite this, many Swiss stakeholders feel GCSP's relevance among Western countries has waned with the shift in priorities of Western militaries towards hard defence and a lack of interest in the topics GCSP covers. GCSP's niche was found unclear, which can impede its positioning. However, stakeholders suggested that its foresight methodology is in demand and that procurement of new technology is a strong avenue for engagement with Western militaries.

The extent to which GCSP responds to the changing needs of its alumni network and stakeholders in providing timely, relevant peace and security policy insights.

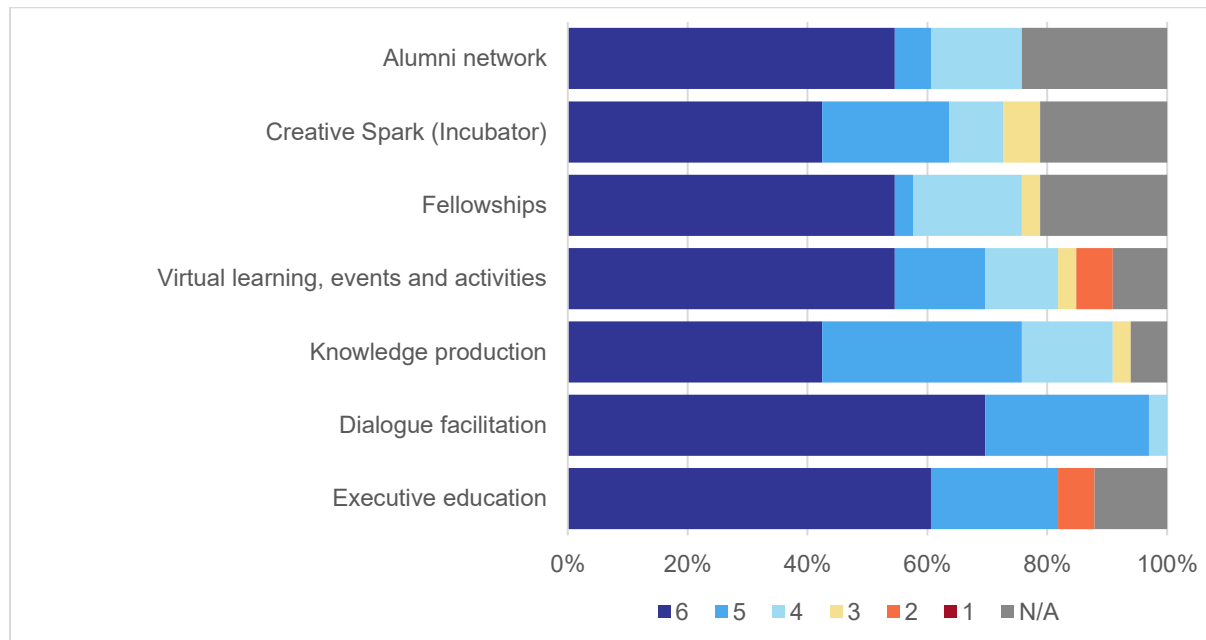
GCSP's knowledge production and other content was found to be high quality but wide-ranging, lacking a clear strategy or thematic focus. The evaluation team found that outputs are of high quality and usability i.e. they are concise documents that are pragmatic as opposed to overly academic. For example, GCSP published papers including 'Understanding the Crisis of Democracy in West Africa and the Sahel' (2023), and 'The Chief Geopolitical Officer:

⁶ See Mark Carney's speech on middle powers navigating a rapidly changing world: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/mark-carney-speech-davos-rules-based-order-9.7053350>

Guiding Business in a Polarised Global Era, (2024). The survey data shows that external stakeholders found that GCSP's knowledge production was overall relevant to the security sector but one of the less relevant areas as compared to its other activities (see Figure 9 below), potentially pointing towards its wide-ranging nature.

Figure 9: External stakeholder survey responses on the relevance of GCSP's services

Question: GCSP provides the following services within its current strategy. Please score how relevant you feel each of these is to the sector GCSP works in (Where 1 = limited relevance and 6 = highly relevant).



The evaluation did find that GCSP's focus on technology has been responsive to needs and could be a differentiator going forward. For example, GCSP has developed a series of publications on technology in the context of the Russia-Ukraine war including *'The War in Ukraine: Reality Check for Emerging Technologies and the Future of Warfare'* (2024), and *'Enabling Peace: The Potential Use of Technology for Ceasefire Monitoring in Ukraine'*, (2026). Technology in security studies is advancing rapidly and GCSP is well placed to produce ongoing insight into advanced technologies, AI, foresight, big data and procurement and development cycles of new technologies, for example. As aforementioned, interviewees noted that these topics are in demand amongst Western and other militaries/actors, meaning GCSP is well placed to provide a responsive offering to these actors in the future.

To what extent does GCSP add value to Switzerland's foreign policy priorities through its strategic and thematic areas of focus and its activities?

GCSP adds value to Switzerland's foreign policy priorities in several ways. It offers a platform to interact with the community and specific actors in a way that the government often cannot, supporting FDFA and Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (DDPS) priorities. GCSP has access to some actors the Swiss government cannot engage with and vice versa, Swiss missions provide support and access where required, a mutually beneficial relationship. This finding was consistent amongst internal and external interviewees. Furthermore, GCSP has provided support to key Swiss initiatives including the UNSC seat and Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) chairmanship. GCSP provided policy applicable research, and co-organised expert roundtables on relevant topics to support Switzerland's positioning during both tenures. GCSP continues to train members of the Swiss Armed Forces and Switzerland's diplomatic cadre.

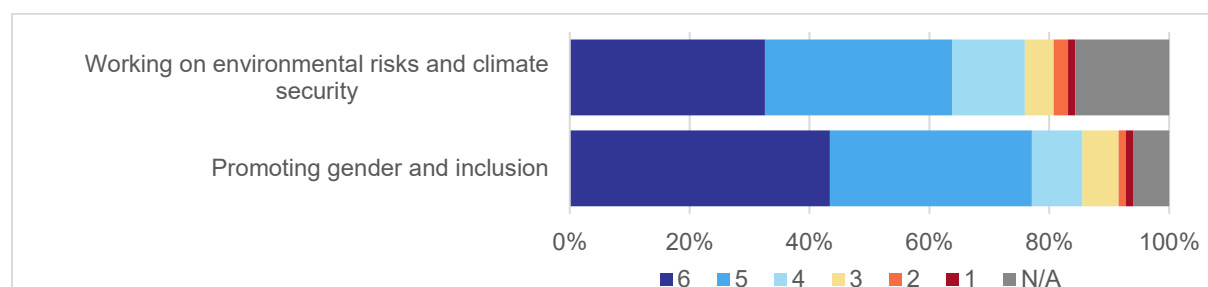
GCSP is also a part of Switzerland's global role in mediation and provides strong contributions to International Geneva. GCSP has been working on the International Geneva strategy and has developed and supported platforms including Geneva Peace Week, the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform and the Geneva Security Debates which are well attended and a good addition to the Geneva community. The Creative Spark is also exploring solutions relevant to International Geneva such as looking at back-office support for organisations that have experienced extensive funding cuts. This is particularly important given that International Geneva is experiencing something of a crisis given the deep cuts to UN and other Official Development Assistance (ODA) funding.⁷

GCSP continues to address gender, diversity, and sustainability as cross-cutting priorities in its strategy. Despite gender and climate increasingly losing funding and being overlooked in the security sector GCSP continues to integrate both into its work - both courses and dialogues - and will challenge its partners and clients where they do not do so. GCSP effectively addresses gender in its courses and operations. The Centre has succeeded in gradually improving gender balance in its courses – both participants and speakers - despite the overall security sector remaining male-dominated. In 2025, 46 per cent of 986 participants were female, up from 37 per cent of 1 085 participants in 2023. In addition, over 50 per cent of the GCSP facilitators and 42 per cent of speakers for the Leadership in International Security Course (LISC) were female in 2025.⁸ GCSP also runs a Gender and Inclusive course and an Inspiring Women Leaders course. In addition, GCSP has an active Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) working group, hosts the International Gender Champions Secretariat and has produced research on women's leadership in peace and security.⁹

Climate is addressed with specific courses e.g. Climate and Security Futures and Environmental Security training, as modules in other courses or as a threat/risk in analysis. However, climate appears to be less well integrated across the Centre's work than gender. This is highlighted in the survey data which shows that respondents rate GCSP as less effective in working on environmental risks and climate security although both were largely rated as effective (see Figure 10 below). It is also noteworthy that GCSP has made significant efforts to reduce carbon emissions since 2019, in line with the Swiss Confederation's target of achieving a 50 per cent reduction by 2030. It has reduced global CO2 equivalent emissions from 2 039 tonnes in 2019 to 1 524 tonnes in 2025, a 25 per cent decrease.

Figure 10: Survey Responses – effectiveness in Gender and Inclusion and Environmental Risks and Climate Security

Question: To what extent is GCSP effective in the following areas? (Where 1 = not very effective and 6 = highly effective) - Gender and Climate



⁷ International Geneva in Crisis: Where do we go from here?: <https://www.global-geneva.com/global-issues/diplomacy/international-geneva-in-crisis-where-do-we-go-from-here>

⁸ GCSP (2025), 39th Leadership in International Security Course: Course Report

⁹ GCSP (2023), *Reimagining Peace through the Women, Peace and Security Agenda*. <https://www.gcsp.ch/sites/default/files/2024-12/pb-11-reimagining-peace-through-the-women-peace-and-security-agenda.pdf>

However, GCSP's relationship with the federal authorities in Bern could be improved and therefore GCSP does not play the role it once did as a tool of Swiss foreign and security policy. Both internal and external interviewees as well as the survey responses highlighted the relationship as an area for improvement. For example, the federal authorities in Bern don't draw on GCSP's fellowship network and FDFA have not engaged with the Geneva Convention World Tour. There is a feeling amongst stakeholders that the federal authorities in Bern's management of GCSP has fallen into an administrative focus rather than a strategic partnership.

Similarly, GCSP could be more proactive in its approach with the federal authorities in Bern, for example, communicating successes, areas where it can contribute to the federal authorities' work and vice versa. There can also be pressure points between the federal authorities in Bern and GCSP when their mediation and dialogue views do not meet e.g. where GCSP takes a different position to Switzerland's national position. Therefore, perceptions of Swiss stakeholders are more mixed in this area and the relationship is not as strategic as it once was.

Efficiency

GCSP has improved internal efficiency, although work remains on internal management, governance and organisational structures, MEL systems, and PPD. GCSP's business support, including human resources and finance, is very lean for an organisation of its size, and it has been successful in cutting costs. Some work remains on making GCSP's operations more efficient including the tracking of inputs for activities *vis-à-vis* added value and strengthening procurement processes, in addition to its MEL systems and PPD. However, overall, it has made progress in efficiency as compared to the previous evaluation period.

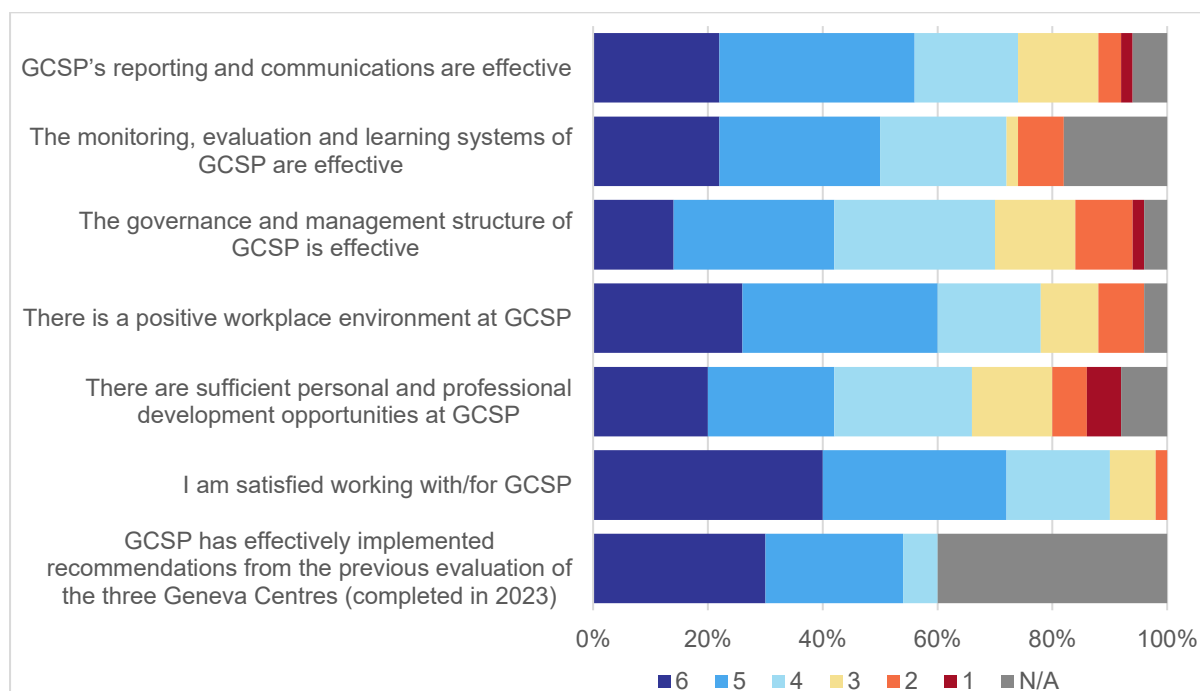
Does GCSP have robust internal management, monitoring and learning systems in place that support adaptive and high-quality programming?

GCSP has made evident improvements in internal communications. Quarterly town hall meetings, a weekly director update and a quarterly senior management retreat are new introductions and are appreciated by staff. Together, these have improved understanding of GCSP's work across the organisation.

However, GCSP's internal structure does not yet fully support cross-departmental work and collaboration. In particular, GCSP's two departments related to dialogue and mediation - International Security Dialogue and Mediation and Peace Support – are not working cohesively. The departments do have separate focuses, but the limited transparency and sharing of information between the departments and with the wider organisation limits their approach. The entry point principle upon which the departments work has even introduced competition. Similarly, executive education is currently managed through over ten clusters, although the evaluation team notes that work is underway to unify the department into two overarching clusters. The survey responses highlight that this is a key area for improvement; the governance and management structure was the lowest rated area (see Figure 11 below).

Figure 11: Internal Stakeholder Survey Responses – GCSP Internal Operations

Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (where 1 = strongly disagree and 6 = strongly agree)



Several good practice examples were found which can be built upon, including a joint staff member that works in both the Research and Policy Advice department and International Security Dialogue.

Overall, this seems to have led to a fragmented view of what GCSP does. Externals often were not aware of GCSP's other areas of work and even staff can struggle to provide an overview of GCSP's work. Many feel that GCSP is doing too much and has taken on work that isn't core to its mandate, diluting the coherence (and in some instances the quality) of its offering. For example, GCSP has recently taken on a migration management programme in the Western Balkans, which has raised concerns regarding strategic alignment, quality of delivery and potential reputational risk. The quality of GCSP's proposals has also been questioned by some external stakeholders pointing to the need for greater oversight over the quality and scope of its work.

In terms of governance through the Foundation Council, the Council is still playing a relatively low-visibility role. The Council members, constrained due to time and resource pressures (many members are represented by missions with multiple competing priorities), play a limited role in providing support to GCSP – as found in the previous evaluation. Previously, more members provided support through seconded staff, but this has waned in recent years as priorities have shifted. GCSP has created a working group on Strategic Foresight to which Foundation Council members are invited to improve engagement. However, members noted that GCSP needs to be more proactive in instructing Council members on what it expects from them given their resource constraints.

There have been improvements in GCSP's MEL system although evidence on impact and sustainability is not yet sufficiently developed. More explicit objectives that link to department-level targets have supported GCSP's staff to work in a common direction. However, the key performance indicators (KPIs), while measurable, tend toward activity-based metrics (number of events, publications, dialogue processes) rather than evidence of outcomes and impact. This leads to limited ability to track and communicate the outcomes,

impact and sustainability of GCSP's work. GCSP needs this evidence to prove its Theory of Change in a context where the soft security focus is increasingly coming into question. Qualitative methodologies which could support this – such as outcome harvesting – are not yet consistently used across the Centre. GCSP staff note that they carry out some follow up for monitoring e.g. with fellows (exit interviews), donors and networking in capitals but overall, this is not systematic. The exception is the GFI and Creative Spark that actively collect data on fellows including where they speak or lecture, what they publish and their media appearances. Despite the investment in Salesforce customer relationship management (CRM) software for the organisation, there is not yet consistent uptake for follow up and monitoring with stakeholders. For example, the tracking of fellows' media appearances and publications is currently managed in Excel rather than Salesforce.

How satisfied and engaged is the workforce of GCSP and what mechanisms are in place to monitor and respond to staff well-being and motivation?

GCSP's key asset is its staff and GCSP has been more active in managing staff wellbeing in recent years as compared to the previous evaluation period. The organisation can rely on a passionate staff force that are highly committed to the Centre's mission. Wellbeing is more actively managed by the Centre and the shifts in workplace policy to allow flexible work and the increased opportunities for staff contribution to decision making have been welcomed by staff. GCSP has strong staff retention although it also has high levels of junior professional officer (JPO) turnover (in part by design). This creates a lack of continuity and inefficiencies as GCSP must continually train new junior staff. This is a cost for GCSP but does provide an opportunity for young professionals to take on a paid role in Geneva and increases capability in the sector.

In general, PPD is an area for improvement. There are limited opportunities for progression and outside training (particularly for JPOs). The pathway to progression through the organisation is not well outlined and the organisational structure/bands currently don't allow for much progression. It was suggested that the organisation could create more job progression bands to improve opportunities for promotion within the organisation.

Performance management was also found to be an area for improvement. Currently, performance management is not linked to inputs/outputs and value added, leading to lack of accountability for work, including at senior management level.

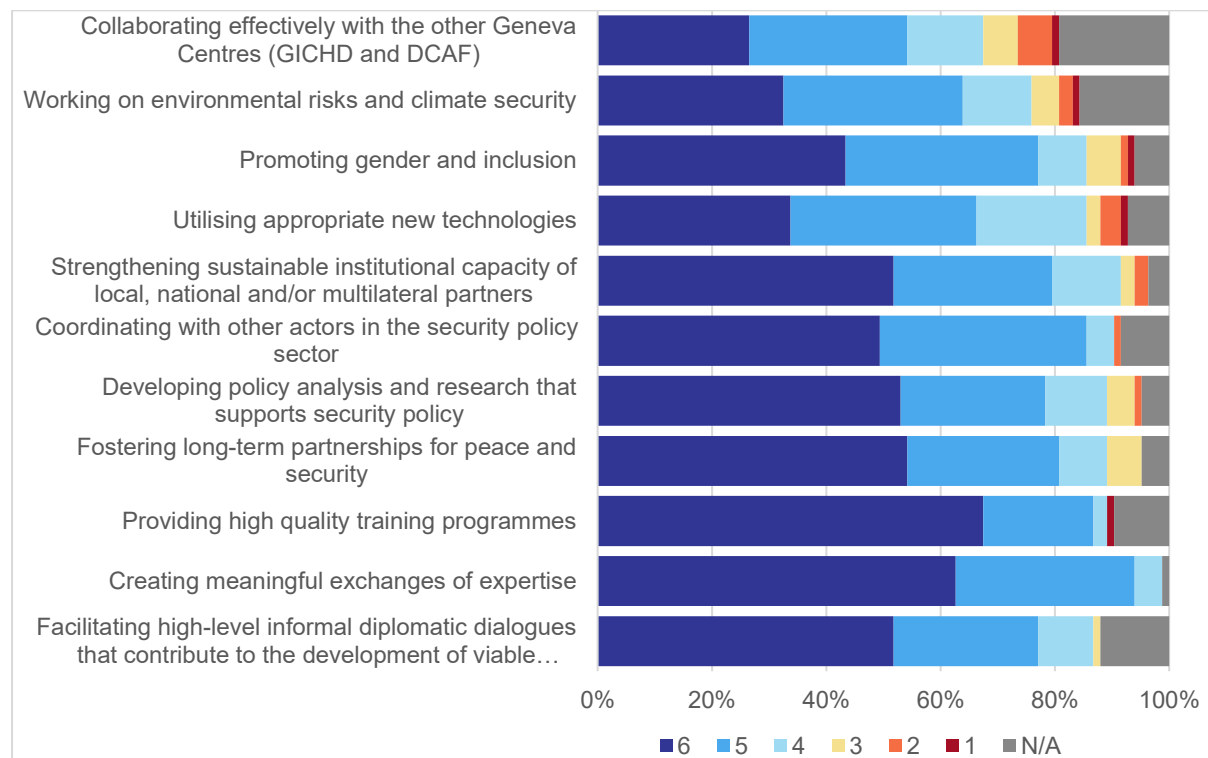
Since the previous evaluation, diversity in GCSP's staff force has not improved. The senior management team are mostly male and the staff force largely European (noting that there are structural constraints to addressing this due to Swiss employment law). In addition, the senior management team includes a secondment position which was noted as less than ideal for a critical management position.

Effectiveness

Overall, GCSP was found to be effective in its work with a multi-disciplinary approach that is mutually reinforcing where work streams are properly aligned (noting that this is an area for improvement as highlighted in the previous section). The work streams are mutually supporting, whereby research and policy advice can provide evidence and content for the mediation and dialogue work, and similarly, the mediation and dialogue team can provide excellent insight as part of GCSP's courses. The survey responses in Figure 12 below highlight that stakeholders view GCSP as effective across its activities, noting that this is predicated on GCSP working cohesively and collaboratively across the organisation.

Figure 12: Survey Responses – GCSP's effectiveness

Question: To what extent is GCSP effective in the following areas? (Where 1 = not very effective and 6 = highly effective)

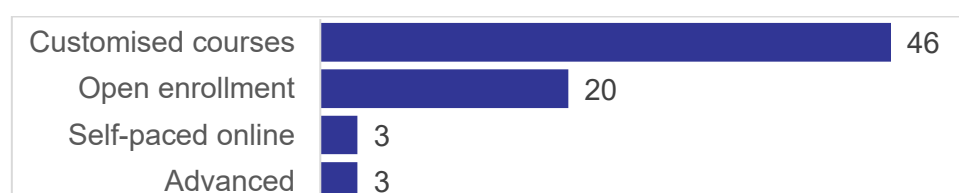


To what extent has GCSP achieved its expected outputs and outcomes for the 2024 - 2027 period, as outlined in its mandates and strategic plans?

GCSP is broadly expected to meet its expected outputs in the 2024 - 2027 strategic period. GCSP's key intended outputs include producing at least six research or policy papers and six online publications annually, organising at least 12 events per year, achieving 50 per cent customised courses in executive education by 2027, increasing women participants in education to 30 per cent, growing third-party funding by 30 per cent from 2024 to 2027, and launching an annual signature conference by 2025 (a new conference has not been launched but GCSP continues to co-organise the annual Geneva Peace Week). Outcome-level ambitions include strengthening GCSP's profile as a platform for international security dialogue and mediation and peace support, rebuilding trust among key powers on European security, and drawing more effectively on GCSP's global alumni community across 174 countries.

GCSP has continued to offer high quality executive education and has shifted its focus to generate additional revenue from this. As shown in Figure 13 below, GCSP has successfully shifted to over 50 per cent customised courses (64 per cent in total). This includes multiple new partners across the world including in the Gulf States, Africa and Latin America. The customised courses provide greater revenue as compared to open-enrolment courses.

Figure 13: Number of GCSP courses in 2025



Interviewees noted that the quality of GCSP courses is consistently high. The logistics and organisation are well thought through and the pragmatic, practical offering with diverse participants provides participants with skills they can transfer to their work. Student satisfaction was between 4.5 and 4.9 out of 5 in the post-course surveys. The expertise GCSP can draw upon is valued by many e.g. its ability to bring in expertise on the ISO in crisis management. GCSP also hit its target of 30 per cent of woman participants in its courses, achieving 46 per cent of 986 participants in 2025. Documents on specific courses show that GCSP is progressing towards gender balance in its participants and speakers e.g. the Master of Advanced Studies in International Security - run jointly with the University of Geneva - has achieved gender parity since 2019¹⁰, and over 50 per cent of the GCSP facilitators and 42 per cent of speakers for the LISC were female in 2025.¹¹

GCSP produced a substantial volume of publications across five series as well as numerous events, covering topics from Ukraine and AI-nuclear risk to South Caucasus peacebuilding and humanitarian law. The Geneva Security Debates series delivered 12 debates in 2024, and a high-profile event with the Indian External Affairs Minister Jaishankar was attended by 400 participants. The event was requested by the Minister himself (according to interviewees), highlighting GCSP's reach. The 2024 Symposium for Swiss Staff Officers attracted 120 general staff officers and in 2024, the Global and Emerging Risk Cluster gave over 90 media interviews, an indicator of visibility in both Switzerland and abroad.¹²

GCSP also deepened its alumni network. The 2024 - 2027 strategy aimed for 80 alumni speakers per year, 10 thematic events with alumni experts, one regionally focused networking event per region per year, and 10 strategic security analyses annually. By end 2024, the community had grown to 13 909 members across 174 countries, with 33 hubs. A total of 36 events were organised including 13 thematic events and 16 Global Alumni Networking Night events. The MyGCSP digital library also published 16 alumni-contributed publications in 2024.¹³

The extent to which GCSP's training programmes have strengthened capacities in the security sector.

GCSP training programmes have strengthened capacities in the security sector to some extent, noting that participation amongst Western countries has dropped. The Centre's advanced courses - the European Security Course (ESC), LISC, and New Issues in Security Course (NISC) - had 63 participants from 43 countries in 2024 alone, while the Crisis Management Cluster ran 23 courses engaging 410 participants across ten countries and three continents, with 80 per cent of offerings customised to specific organisational needs. According to GCSP's own analysis, 10 per cent of defence attachés globally have been trained by GCSP. Interviewees and survey respondents note that there are often significant changes in perspectives amongst participants. For example, 98 per cent of defence attaché course participants in 2024 reported an expected positive impact on peace, security and stability, and 88 per cent noted concrete improvements in trust-building and communication with other parties.¹⁴ This is effective partly due to the diversity of participants, including from countries that rarely engage otherwise e.g. North Korea, Israel and Palestine. As a result, GCSP also has an extensive network to draw upon to support work in the security sector.

¹⁰ GCSP (2022), *'Impact report: Leadership in International Security Course'*

¹¹ GCSP (2025), *39th Leadership in International Security Course: Course Report*

¹² GCSP (2025), *Annual Report 2024*.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

The extent to which GCSP's role in facilitating high-level informal dialogues has contributed to the development of viable political options and solutions for conflict resolution.

GCSP has been steadily increasing the number of mediation and dialogue tracks. GCSP ran several sustained Track 1.5 and Track 2 formats including the Chambesy and Zermatt Roundtables, Bridge States Dialogue, High North Talks, Eastern Mediterranean Initiative, Space Security Dialogue, and the P5 Experts' Roundtable on nuclear risk reduction.

Stakeholder feedback is mixed on the effectiveness of GCSP's work in this area. On one hand, many feel that GCSP has provided a strong offering, can offer a space for discreet dialogue, and have offered essential Track 1.5 and 2 dialogues where Track 1 has broken down. For example, the "Conversations on the Future of European Security" dialogue produced the "Peace Matrix", a concrete policy tool presented to the FDFA and disseminated in Washington, Kyiv, Moscow, Berlin and Vienna.

On the other hand, other stakeholders view it as stretching GCSP's capacity across a broad range of initiatives, leaving them unable to focus on their core offering in executive education. Others believe that Tracks 1.5 and 2 are of limited effectiveness compared to Track 1, as the lack of presence of the highest-level government officials limits the capacity to influence decision making and peace and security outcomes. In response, GCSP points to the historic precedent of Track 1.5 and 2 leading to the resumption or success of Track 1 dialogue e.g. in Nepal.¹⁵ However, the KPI in GCSP's 2023 - 2027 strategy of defining three measures to monitor and evaluate the impact of its dialogue processes by 2027 has not yet been operationalised. Doing so would strengthen GCSP's ability to demonstrate the value of this work.

The extent to which GCSP's Global Fellowship Initiative has been successful in creating a meaningful exchange of expertise and fostering long-term partnerships for peace and security.

The GFI has extended its reach and built the foundations for long-term impact. With 175 fellows in 2024, around one third of which maintain more regular contact with GCSP, and six projects incubated through the Creative Spark, the GFI has built a community that combines international academics studying theory with applied scientists and frontline practitioners including retired generals, ambassadors, and senior diplomats. The range of fellows is a strength: they serve as contributors to GCSP's intellectual output - nine publications were produced by fellows in 2024 - as well as a 'sounding board', helping shape the Centre's thematic priorities, fill gaps in in-house expertise, and support early warning and foresight functions on emerging security issues. It was noted that the federal authorities in Bern could make greater use of this resource, e.g. using fellows as a strategic foresight tool as GCSP does.

GCSP fellows often move into senior positions in both diplomatic and multilateral roles. Fellows stay longer with GCSP than other course participants and therefore engage and learn about Swiss priorities e.g. women, peace and security. When GCSP's teams travel, they consistently find that the fellows and alumni network can provide introductions and open doors that would otherwise be inaccessible. This is also useful for the Swiss Embassies abroad. Creative Spark has added further practical value by supporting fellows in translating ideas into action, while also generating a modest revenue stream and widening the Centre's network in the process.

¹⁵ Miklian, J. (2009) *Nepal's Terai: Constructing an ethnic conflict*, South Asia Briefing Paper No. 1. Oslo: Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO).

What are the enabling and constraining factors that have affected the success of GCSP?

In terms of **enabling factors**, GCSP can rely on a unique location in Geneva that allows it to bring together actors and leverage Swiss neutrality. The Centre's range of approaches and staff expertise allow it to bridge academic, theory, applied practice in a way that other academic institutions and think tanks cannot. This is enabled by a passionate, committed staff group and an extensive and relatively engaged alumni network. The Centre's network is further enhanced by the director's unique access to high-level political stakeholders globally.

In terms of **constraining factors**, GCSP's location is equally a barrier. The cost of doing business in Geneva is high and as a result GCSP's services cost more than other equivalent education providers. GCSP also lacks academic certification (outside of ISO certification) which can be a limiting factor, particularly for its open-enrolment courses. The evaluation team notes that partnerships being explored here and existing academic partnerships are fruitful e.g. with the University of Geneva.

Furthermore, the funding environment is increasingly constricted with cuts across the sector and increases in earmarked funding. GCSP faces several challenges in diversifying its funding including developing fundraising capacity across the Centre (noting that one fundraising training session has been provided to date), and lower brand recognition in the private sector as compared to some universities for example. In addition, European Union (EU) procurement laws could create issues for GCSP being contracted by EU institutions.

Impact

What are the longer-term expected effects of GCSP's programmes on security policy?

As aforementioned, the longer-term effects of GCSP's programmes are difficult to attribute. The data being collected through GCSP's monitoring work is inconclusive and GCSP's work is often intangible in nature. Satisfaction rates remain very high, and the survey data points towards the quality of GCSP's work. However, GCSP's evidence does not show how the capacity gained through its courses and other work is put into practice. This likely points towards a lack of investment in evidencing impact as opposed to a lack of impact.

However, the interview evidence does provide signals that GCSP builds capacity across the security sector. GCSP's courses and the GFI are attended by high-level foreign delegates, defence attachés and others, many of which now hold positions of power either nationally or in the multilateral system. For example, a GCSP fellow is now President and CEO of Interpeace.¹⁶ For participants, particularly those from Global South countries where prior training in security policy is often absent, attendance at GCSP courses can represent some of the only structured professional development they receive, making the Centre's role in shaping their analytical frameworks and professional networks consequential.

In terms of the dialogue, the longer-term policy effects are more contested but potentially more consequential where they materialise. The ceasefire modalities papers developed by GCSP have received traction in both Ukraine and the United States. This was due to GCSP's early and continued investment in these tools, even when a ceasefire was inconceivable. The Syria track facilitated between US and Russian participants in early 2025 identified ten points of common interest at a moment when both countries were the only military actors cooperating with the new Syrian government. This produced direct effects: two US participants testified before the Foreign Affairs Committee of Congress, reportedly using information and perspectives gathered through the GCSP dialogue.

¹⁶ <https://www.interpeace.org/member/itonde-kakoma/>

Similarly, the Armenia-Azerbaijan dialogue track ran in parallel with, and supported, conditions for a ceasefire agreement. GCSP is now supporting implementation of the agreement. The High North Talks offer another illustration of impact. When Russia assumed the chair of the Arctic Council and the Council was effectively paused, GCSP recognised the gap and created three parallel unofficial tracks: security and confidence-building measures, governance scenarios, and scientific collaboration to maintain communication between Arctic actors (including scientists) who had no other forum for exchange.

GCSP's impact on shaping security policy through its training programmes, dialogues, and policy analysis, especially regarding Swiss foreign policy priorities and multilateral frameworks.

GCSP's support for Switzerland's UNSC mandate was direct and substantive, encompassing two tailored studies to support Switzerland's seat: 'Ideas Notes 2030: Strategic Reflections on the Future of UN Policing' (2024) and 'United Nations Truce Supervision Organization: Role, Relevance, Function, and Utility – Lessons for Future Peace Operations' (2024). The former has had ongoing influence, and work has continued to support the UN Peacekeeping Ministerial and the UN peace operations review. The OSCE Focus Conference and preparations for Switzerland's 2026 OSCE presidency represent another contribution to Swiss multilateral engagement.

In research and policy analysis, GCSP has built a substantive body of work on AI and security that is beginning to translate into concrete policy influence. Its AI-related research¹⁷ has fed into discussions at NATO and in the context of the Ukraine conflict, and a recent publication on AI in the Arctic¹⁸ - developed in collaboration with the FDFA - is being used to inform policy at the World Meteorological Organization. GCSP's ceasefire toolkit also had reported influence on the language of the February 2025 US-Russia Riyadh statement where the framing of "bilateral irritants" traced back to GCSP dialogue recommendations.¹⁹

Looking at international security dialogue and mediation and peace support, the Bridge States Dialogue has supported the shaping of security policy. It operates at a quasi-Track 1 level with an unconventional stakeholder mix, bringing together countries such as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine to manage their positioning between NATO, the EU and Russia. Stakeholders note the value of putting policymakers and scientists in the same room - across disciplinary and political divides. The Eastern Mediterranean Initiative (EMI), now in its sixth year and originally hosted and funded by GCSP and the FDFA, brought together Turkey, Cyprus, Greece, Lebanon, Israel, Egypt, and Palestine around maritime delimitation and energy security. The format's longevity and its combination of plenary discussions and discreet bilateral conversations illustrate how GCSP can create spaces for dialogue that allow progress on difficult issues without requiring formal commitments.

Sustainability

To what extent are the global, regional and national outcomes of GCSP likely to be sustainable beyond the current funding period (2024 - 27)?

The most critical element underpinning the sustainability of GCSP's outcomes is continued funding. GCSP's work is long term and often intangible. FDFA's requirements for GCSP to increase the share of third-party funding (in the Federal Dispatches since 2016) have pushed GCSP to diversify funding and become more entrepreneurial in many ways. It has

¹⁷ The Geneva Process on AI Principles: <https://www.gcsp.ch/the-geneva-process-on-AI-Principles>

¹⁸ GCSP (2025), *Algorithmic North: Weather, Security and International Law*. https://www.gcsp.ch/sites/default/files/2025-11/GCSP-Policy-Brief-21_Algorithmic-North_%3Bdigital.pdf

¹⁹ U.S. Mission Russia (2025), Secretary Rubio's Meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov. <https://ru.usembassy.gov/secretary-rubios-meeting-with-russian-foreign-minister-lavrov/>

shown successes in raising funds with private foundations e.g. the Carnegie Foundation and developed a number of partnerships e.g. *l'Institut des hautes études de défense nationale* (IHEDN), Naif Arab University of Security Studies, and the Institute for Economics and Peace. Although GCSP has enjoyed less success with the private sector to date, this diversification has enabled the Centre to balance its budget amidst a tumultuous funding landscape whilst managing increased demand. However, long term funding remains a concern and new donors come with their own risks including attempts to influence from other states.

The sustainability of GCSP's work in dialogue and mediation is less clear than for its education work. The shift into dialogue has been enabled by the director's connections and therefore, a significant part of this work currently relies on the director's personal relationships and networks. This makes a succession plan for GCSP's mediation and dialogue work essential.

Finally, the alumni network as well as the fellows has huge potential. The alumni network currently hosts events through 33 hubs in specific countries including France, Jordan, Ethiopia and Saudi Arabia. The network contains 13 000 people, around half of which are available to be contacted. However, GCSP staff note this vast resource isn't yet fully optimised and GCSP does not yet have a cross-organisation strategy for using this network.

To what extent has GCSP contributed to the sustainable institutional capacity of local, national and/or multilateral partners?

GCSP has made a tangible contribution to institutional capacity in a number of partner organisations. The most compelling evidence comes from long-term engagements rather than one-off training events. For example, the European Commission crisis management programme and the procedures developed through GCSP training have been used almost daily for five years across the Commission, standardising crisis management language and methodology across the institution. These have been directly applicable during multiple real-world crises. This kind of institutional capacity building, where training is accompanied with the development of standard operating procedures, represents strong practice. Similarly, the civilian resilience programme delivered for Ukrainian officials across 12 ministries in partnership with the Swiss Federal Office for Civil Protection and NATO Ukraine demonstrates GCSP's ability to work at institutional scale in high-stakes environments, with a design explicitly intended to strengthen cross-ministerial coordination and feed into longer-term policy and training frameworks through 2025 and 2026.

At the multilateral level, the evidence is promising but more nascent. The Foundation for Humanitarian Action at Sea, was incubated through the Creative Spark and launched in 2024. It represents a case of GCSP supporting a new institutional actor in the international humanitarian space. GCSP is providing ongoing efforts to support OSCE reconfiguration, including facilitating exchanges between scientists, researchers, and foreign diplomats to explore how the organisation can be renewed in practice, and its preparations for Switzerland's 2026 OSCE presidency. These examples point towards the importance of long-term, repeated engagement with partner organisations.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The evaluation finds that GCSP's work is increasingly relevant, and its overall effectiveness and impact is real although unevenly evidenced. GCSP's mandate has grown in importance as the international security context has deteriorated. Its executive education and research and policy products are consistently high quality, its customised course portfolio is growing and diversifying geographically, and its mediation and dialogue work has expanded considerably. The GFI is building a network with genuine potential for long-term influence, and GCSP's contributions to Switzerland's UNSC and OSCE engagement demonstrate concrete added value to Swiss foreign and security policy.

At the same time, a number of structural and strategic challenges constrain GCSP's ability to fully realise its potential and avoid risks. The organisation's breadth - spanning executive education, mediation and dialogue, policy and research, innovation, and community engagement - is both a strength and a risk. While it allows for high levels of adaptability, without a clearly defined set of thematic priorities and robust internal coordination, there is a danger of dilution: spreading the Centre too thin, presenting an incoherent image of the Centre externally and potentially damaging its reputation for quality. In particular, the two mediation and dialogue departments are not working cohesively which impacts the exchange of information and possible synergies across the Centre. Furthermore, the MEL system does not yet capture outcomes in a way that supports the organisation's Theory of Change, and the relationship with the federal authorities in Bern has become less strategic. The funding environment is tightening, and GCSP's diversification efforts, while promising, are not yet underpinned by the systems, fundraising expertise, and quality assurance required to expand while maintaining its focus on quality and strategic relevance.

The recommendations below are drafted with these challenges in mind. They have been discussed with FDFA and GCSP's senior leadership. Note that they should be read in conjunction with the overall recommendations for all three Geneva Centres in the accompanying synthesis report.

There are **seven key learning areas** that support the recommendations:

1. Clear thematic priorities
2. Organisational structure
3. Monitoring, evaluation and learning
4. Funding capacities
5. Relationship with the federal authorities
6. Mediation and dialogue pillars
7. Academic accreditation

#	Conclusion	Recommendation	Audience
1	GCSP's wide-ranging activities can be mutually reinforcing and offer advantages such as adaptability. However, the Centre lacks a well-defined set of thematic priorities which creates a risk of diluting the Centre's offering, external image, reputation for quality and strategic relevance.	Define a clear set of thematic priorities/niches linked to GCSP's comparative advantages: As part of the strategy review process, GCSP should identify the key themes in which it has a comparative advantage e.g. emerging technology and crisis management. The strategy should deprioritise areas where GCSP lacks distinctive expertise or resources i.e. migration management. Activities across the five pillars, including research and policy should be assessed against this framework, to ensure that activities across the five pillars are mutually reinforcing where possible. This would provide a stronger thematic niche for GCSP, helping provide a sharper comparative advantage and 'pitch' for the Centre as a whole which would support GCSP's fundraising.	Audience: GCSP senior management
2	GCSP has developed its mediation and dialogue pillars considerably since 2024, which has expanded the Centre's work and funding sources. However, the Centre's internal structure inhibits collaboration. The two mediation and dialogue departments have created inefficiencies and competition which limits sharing of information across the organisation and risks creating an incoherent external image of the Centre. Similarly, the executive education department is split into over ten clusters. GCSP has several examples of good practice including two departments which share a staff member which can be built on.	Conduct an organisational structure review: A review of the Centre's structure (led either internally or externally) could assess: (a) whether the two mediation/dialogue departments should be merged, restructured, or given clearly differentiated mandates and priorities (including geographic areas); (b) how cross-departmental working can be incentivised through joint staffing arrangements i.e. staff working across two departments, shared workplans, or matrix management; (c) whether reporting lines and team configurations reflect current strategic/thematic priorities; and (d) whether secondment posts on the senior management team should be reconsidered for more permanent roles.	Audience: GCSP senior management, with input from departmental heads
3	Although there is good anecdotal evidence of the outcomes of GCSP's work, the Centre's MEL system does not systematically capture outcomes or impact. Therefore, evidence on impact and sustainability remains inconclusive and insufficient to support GCSP's Theory of Change. This means GCSP does not have	Strengthen the MEL system to capture outcomes and impact: Progress the MEL focus from outputs to outcomes and longer-term impact, incorporating qualitative methodologies such as outcome harvesting and stories of change alongside quantitative indicators. This should track issues including gender-related impact. This could provide useful data for fundraising with new donors and partners including foundations and the private sector. The system should be linked to inputs (e.g. resources	Audience: GCSP senior management and MEL lead (in collaboration with the other Geneva Centres to ensure

	strong data on which approaches are most effective which could support decision making. This also potentially limits GCSP's ability to sell its work to new donors or partners.	including staff days required for running activities) to link resources to added value which would provide evidence on which approaches are most effective. The evidence should inform strategic decision-making and performance management based on what activities are most impactful/sustainable. The framework should be harmonised with DCAF/GICHD – more details of this are provided in the synthesis report.	an aligned approach where possible).
4	GCSP has successfully diversified its funding over the last years across the pillars of its work. This has happened in the context of an increasingly constricted funding environment which should be commended. While funding diversification is well underway, GCSP lacks the systems and oversight to ensure that partnerships, funding opportunities and proposals are strategically aligned and of sufficient quality, which in some cases has led to GCSP taking on non-aligned work which can represent a reputational risk.	Build structured capacity in partnership and fundraising: Develop a formal partnership and fundraising function with dedicated capacity (including knowledge of the private sector and philanthropic foundations). This should include: • a mapping of priority funding markets and partners - suggested areas for exploration include partnerships with Swiss or European private small or medium companies working globally, Global South partnerships, and greater defence ties • a tiered partnership framework distinguishing strategic, programmatic, and transactional relationships • mandatory use of Salesforce for tracking donor relations, pipeline opportunities, and follow-up actions A formal quality assurance mechanism should be established for new programme proposals and partnerships, assessing strategic alignment, reputational risk, delivery capacity, and expected impact before commitments are made. Where opportunities are identified, the Foundation Council should support on fundraising efforts where possible.	Audience: GCSP senior management, relevant programme and finance leads, and Foundation Council
5	GCSP continues to play a role in Swiss foreign and security policy and has shown itself to be a key part of International Geneva. However, GCSP and the federal authorities in Bern's relationship is under strain. This impacts trust and strategic alignment, a concern given the pressure on International Geneva and Switzerland's role in mediation, and wider shifts to hard security.	Reinvest in the relationship with the federal authorities in Bern: Senior leadership on both sides should engage in a structured process to reinvest the relationship, including a high-level dialogue to surface mutual expectations and areas of misalignment.. The federal authorities in Bern should provide an explicit and formal articulation of what it values in GCSP's wider work but particularly its mediation and dialogue work, which should in turn inform GCSP's programming priorities and reporting. GCSP should adopt more proactive engagement; not waiting for signals from the federal authorities in Bern but regularly sharing results, surfacing challenges, and	Audience: FDFA and GCSP senior management

		proposing collaboration. This could boost GCSP's profile in Bern and support the Centre's image in Switzerland more generally, helping make the case for continued funding.	
6	GCSP has successfully expanded its mediation and dialogue portfolio. However, much of the work is dependent upon the director's access and network in the diplomatic world. Therefore, the current arrangement creates a key-person dependency that should be addressed through a more robust mitigation plan.	Develop a succession plan for senior management and GCSP's mediation and dialogue work: Develop a succession plan for GCSP's mediation and dialogue work. A formal succession plan and knowledge management strategy for the mediation and dialogue function should be developed, including documenting key contacts, process notes for active dialogue tracks, and a transition plan for incoming leadership.	Audience: GCSP senior management to address the sustainability and knowledge management plan, FDFA and Foundation Council to look at succession plan.
7	GCSP's executive education offer is consistently praised for its quality. However, the high cost of its courses compared to other providers and the lack of academic accreditation are constraints on the brand awareness, reputation and commercial viability of GCSP's executive education offer.	Accelerate efforts to attain academic accreditation for executive education: Accelerate efforts to secure academic accreditation for courses with recognised higher education institutions. This should involve identifying priority programmes most suited to accreditation, mapping credible institutional partners with shared interests, and establishing a clear workplan with milestones. In doing so, GCSP can provide a stronger selling point for potential participants, particularly for its open enrolment courses, and can leverage the stronger brand awareness of higher education partners to promote the organisation.	Audience: GCSP deputy director and executive education department

Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD)

Executive Summary

The Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) was founded in 1998. Its mandate is to support countries, multilateral processes and partners to reduce risks from landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive ordnance through technical, advisory and policy support. GICHD's activities span capacity and institutional development, training, research, the translation of standards into operational guidance, explosive ordnance risk education innovation, and support to treaty implementation bodies. The Centre works in more than 30 countries and territories, with major programmes in Ukraine, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Sri Lanka, Yemen, Somalia and Cambodia. Switzerland remains the GICHD's main donor, providing 45 per cent of total contributions in 2024.

This evaluation of the Centre was conducted by IOD PARC on behalf of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) and draws on a review of documents, 32 key informant interviews, four focus group discussions, and a survey yielding 113 responses (a 49 per cent response rate). The findings below are structured around the six Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) DAC evaluation criteria. Drawing from the findings, the evaluation team have developed six recommendations.

Relevance: GICHD is widely regarded as the most effective and trusted partner in the mine action sector, with a strong global footprint and high-quality work. External stakeholders universally value the Centre's combination of technical and non-technical support, its facilitation and convening role, and its leadership on international standards. The strongest evidence relates to GICHD's work on the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) and on International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATG). There are divergent views, internally and externally, on whether GICHD's work has become too donor demand-driven, with concerns that this could dilute the Centre's leadership role in championing needs-based approaches. GICHD is strongly aligned with Swiss foreign and security policy, although engagement with Swiss Embassies and Missions at country level remains limited.

Efficiency: GICHD has invested significant resources in strengthening monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL), with clear evidence of a positive trajectory and 2.3 full-time equivalent MEL staff now in place. However, many indicators framed at outcome level remain output-focused in practice, and there is limited interoperability between financial and programme monitoring systems. The organisational culture and staff satisfaction have improved significantly since the previous evaluation, with the share of staff reporting they are "very satisfied" rising from 18 per cent in 2021 to 50 per cent in 2026. The main outstanding concern is career progression, particularly for more junior staff.

Effectiveness: GICHD is on track to deliver strongly against its 2023–2026 strategic objectives. External stakeholders consistently describe GICHD as the leading voice in the mine action sector, with Swiss neutrality and a clear humanitarian mandate underpinning its credibility. The Centre has adapted well to rapid shifts in the global context, including through the establishment of the Innovative Finance Unit (IFU) and the Regional Coordination Unit (RCU), and through rapid adjustment to the 2025 US Stop Work Order. Neutrality and impartiality function as both enabling and constraining factors – providing trusted access while

limiting GICHD's ability to actively uphold and promote International Humanitarian Law (IHL) in an era when those principles are increasingly eroded.

Impact: GICHD contributes to longer-term impact by strengthening knowledge, capacity, governance structures and standards at global, regional and national levels. Its leadership on IMAS, IATG, and its support to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) and the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) underpins safer and more consistent practice across the sector and supports States Parties to meet their treaty obligations. A key challenge for longer-term impact lies in how national authorities respond as they approach mine-free status, where progress has slowed in some countries through multiple treaty extension requests, and a difficulty in ensuring a sufficient national budget as well as an international context tending towards a decrease in funding for a majority of mine action programmes around the world.

Sustainability: GICHD's work at the global and normative level is highly sustainable, while sustainability at the national level is more variable. The newly established IFU is particularly well placed to contribute to sustainable outcomes that last beyond funding cycles. However, several stakeholders were critical of the extent to which GICHD's capacity-strengthening approach is sustainable at the national level, observing a "fly in, fly out" model and limited long-term accompaniment to embed new skills institutionally. Sustainability is also constrained by external factors, including national-level financial dependence, staff turnover, and shifting government priorities. The establishment of a GICHD regional office in Amman in 2026 seeks to address some of these challenges.

Overall, GICHD is a high-performing, well-respected and highly credible organisation that is delivering strongly against its mandate. Since the previous evaluation, the Centre has made substantial progress in strengthening leadership, organisational culture, and internal systems. The findings highlight several strategic considerations as GICHD moves into its next strategic period, in particular ensuring that high-quality technical delivery translates into sustained institutional change at the national level, that outcome- and impact-level evidence is more systematically captured, and that GICHD continues to navigate growing external pressures including increasingly demand-driven funding, reduced funding sources, and work in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

Based upon these findings, the evaluation puts forward six recommendations:

- 1) Adopt a more explicit systems-based approach to strengthening institutional capacity at the national level, with clearer measurement and tracking of progress over time;
- 2) Strengthen evidence, impact and learning, including outcome-level measurement, follow-up on research uptake, and investment in fit-for-purpose MEL systems;
- 3) Consolidate the current organisational structure during the next strategic period, assess staff workloads (particularly at junior level), and implement a clear career progression framework;
- 4) Continue to integrate Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) flexibly across all areas of work, balancing donor and partner priorities with the need to prevent backsliding;
- 5) Systematically engage with Swiss Embassies and Missions in priority contexts to strengthen coherence with Switzerland's diplomatic and development engagement;
- 6) Strengthen GICHD's ability to operate in conflict-affected and fragile environments, including rapid mobilisation, conflict sensitivity, localisation, and humanitarian–development–peace nexus approaches.

Introduction

IOD PARC has been commissioned by the Swiss FDFA to undertake an independent external evaluation of the Geneva Centres, namely the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP), the GICHD, and the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF). The overarching objective of the evaluation is to assess the performance of the three Geneva Centres (GCSP, GICHD and DCAF) in relation to:

1. The achievement of their mandated objectives.
2. Their contributions to their respective fields; and
3. Their contribution to Swiss foreign policy objectives

These three objectives are aligned with the expectations in the Federal Dispatch 20.081 for the 2024-27 period and the recommendations from the last evaluation conducted 2021-22.

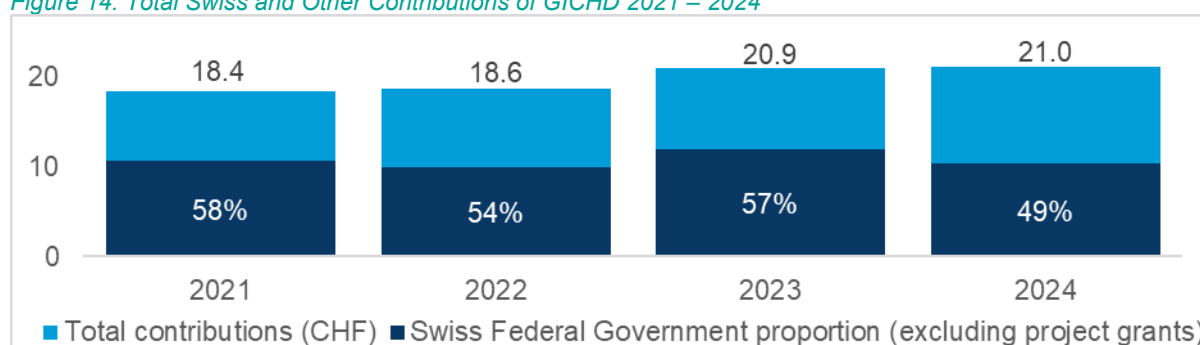
This report represents the findings, conclusions and recommendations for the GICHD.

GICHD, founded in 1998, is governed by a Council of Foundation representing 22 states/organisations. GICHD supports countries, multilateral processes and partners to reduce risks from landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive ordnance. Mandated by States Parties to major disarmament treaties - including the APMBC, the CCM and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons - the Centre provides technical, advisory and policy support to strengthen national strategies, operational standards (IMAS/IATG) and information-management systems such as Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA).

GICHD activities span capacity and institutional development, training, research, translation of standards, operational guidance, explosive ordnance risk education innovation, and support to treaty implementation bodies. Geographically, the GICHD works in more than 30 countries and territories across Africa, the Middle East, Europe, Asia and Latin America, with major programmes in Ukraine, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Sri Lanka, Somalia, Cambodia and others, while also contributing to global policy frameworks on ammunition management, gender and diversity, and broader humanitarian, development and peace agendas.

GICHD has increased its operating budget from Swiss Franc (CHF) 18.4m in 2021 to 21m in 2024 (see Figure 14 below). Switzerland remains the GICHD's main donor. Swiss core contributions were at 45% of the total contributions in 2024, down slightly from 51% in 2021. Other major donors from 2021–2025 include Australia, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, the European Union (EU) and the USA, though USA global funding pauses created uncertainty for GICHD funding in 2025.

Figure 14: Total Swiss and Other Contributions of GICHD 2021 – 2024

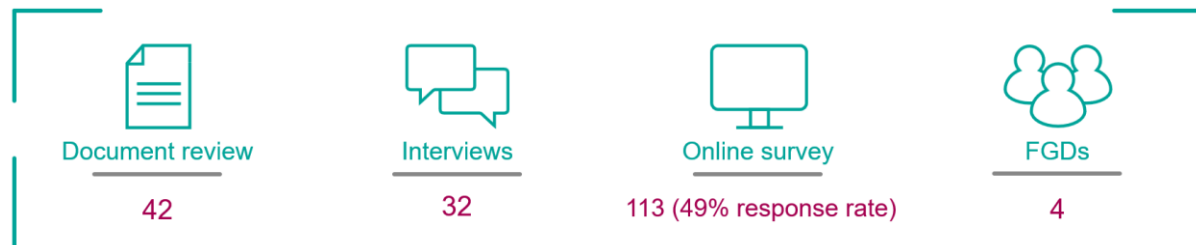


Methodology and data collection

The evaluation adopted a participatory, mixed methods approach, including key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), a systematic document review and a short

online survey. The data collection phase ran from January to March 2026 and the evidence base is summarised in Figure 15 below. Data collected from the four different evidence streams was consistent across different stakeholder groups, allowing for strong confidence in the evidence and clear triangulation of data.

Figure 15: Overview of the evidence base underpinning findings and analysis



Sequencing was an important consideration for the data collection phase. The survey was launched first to ensure analysis of survey responses could inform the interviews and focus groups later in the data collection phase. The online survey had a response rate of 49% which equates to 113 responses; of these, 54% were internal and 46% were external respondents. 32 key informant interviews were conducted with an even split between GICHD staff (16 interviews) and external stakeholders (16 interviews), including donors, partners, peer organisations and national authorities. Two focus groups were conducted with GICHD staff and two with national authorities. The sampling approach to identifying and including stakeholders in the data collection process was purposive to ensure a relevant and balanced representation of views and experiences. Sampling was also designed to ensure the selection of stakeholders was representative of different staff groups within GICHD from the most senior to more junior staff members, across different organisational functions and including stakeholders who have been with the organisation for a significant period as well as more recent staff members.

Following analysis of the data, validation workshops were conducted with the Steuergruppe and the Comité de Pilotage in Bern and with representatives from the three Geneva Centres in Geneva to discuss the emerging findings and draft recommendations. The validation workshops focused on the findings and draft recommendations for *each* of the three Centres, as well as on the focus on synergies *between* the Centres. This report focuses specifically on the findings and draft recommendations for GICHD, with the synergies findings and conclusions presented in a separate report that also synthesises the findings across the three Centres.

Findings

To what extent has GICHD taken on board recommendations from the previous evaluation?

GICHD carefully considered all nine recommendations from the previous evaluation²⁰ in their management response and has made significant progress in implementing them. The management response developed by the senior leadership of GICHD indicated broad agreement with all the recommendations and a senior member of staff was tasked with developing a clear action plan for implementing the recommendations, with regular reporting on progress on this. There is clear evidence indicating that this action plan benefitted from strong buy-in and support from senior leaders, with resources – including funding – allocated to ensure implementation and achievement of objectives. Figure 16 below provides an overview of the progress against each of the specific recommendations made by the previous evaluation, highlighting that seven of the nine have been fully implemented and the remaining

²⁰ Independent External Evaluation of the Three Geneva Centres, 2021.

two are still underway. The section below provides more detail on some of the specific recommendations.

Figure 16: overview of the implementation of recommendations from the previous evaluation

#	Recommendation	Achievement
1	Re-establish Advisory Board	
2	Commission an independent review of leadership and management	
3	Review the composition and operating modalities of the Management Board.	
4	Ensure Senior Managers are appropriately empowered to focus on the key aspects of their role aligned with appropriate levels of decision-making authority.	
5	Include a greater balance between qualitative and quantitative indicators in the next RBM plan.	
6	Recruit a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning focal point to support programme staff	
7	Develop an HR strategy to support the promotion of gender and diversity within the workplace	
8	Review internal systems including IT and Recruitment to ensure they are fit for purpose.	
9	All three Centres to collectively review the provision of IT services and support provided by GCSP	

The second recommendation on commissioning an independent review of leadership and management was addressed early on and there is strong evidence that this has had a significant positive effect on GICHD. The recommendation related to challenges in the organisational culture and leadership and these challenges have been systematically addressed, with clear evidence of positive shifts in staff satisfaction across all interviews, focus groups and the survey results. The seismic shift in the organisational culture is all the more remarkable given how long it generally takes to address these types of challenges in an organisation, as well as the time it takes for staff to observe and positively report on these changes.

Recommendations five and six related to MEL, with strong evidence of progress in this area. A MEL advisor was recruited to support staff on monitoring and learning and the current GICHD strategy sought to include a greater balance between output and outcome indicators. Whilst progress is positive, and there is strong support from senior levels for clear measurement and tracking of results, there is still scope for improving the focus on qualitative indicators and outcome-level indicators to ensure GICHD sufficiently captures and communicates achievements. This is discussed further in the section on MEL below.

Recommendations eight and nine are still in progress; however, this is in part linked to challenges that go beyond the direct control of GICHD. GICHD has invested in several Information Technology (IT) systems contributing to greater organisational efficiency, including the current financial systems for financial tracking and reporting. However, the evidence clearly indicates that the provision of IT services by GCSP for all three Centres is not producing intended results, despite the establishment of a cross-Centre IT committee focusing specifically on this issue. This informs the cross-Centre recommendations to ensure this challenge does not remain unresolved.

Relevance

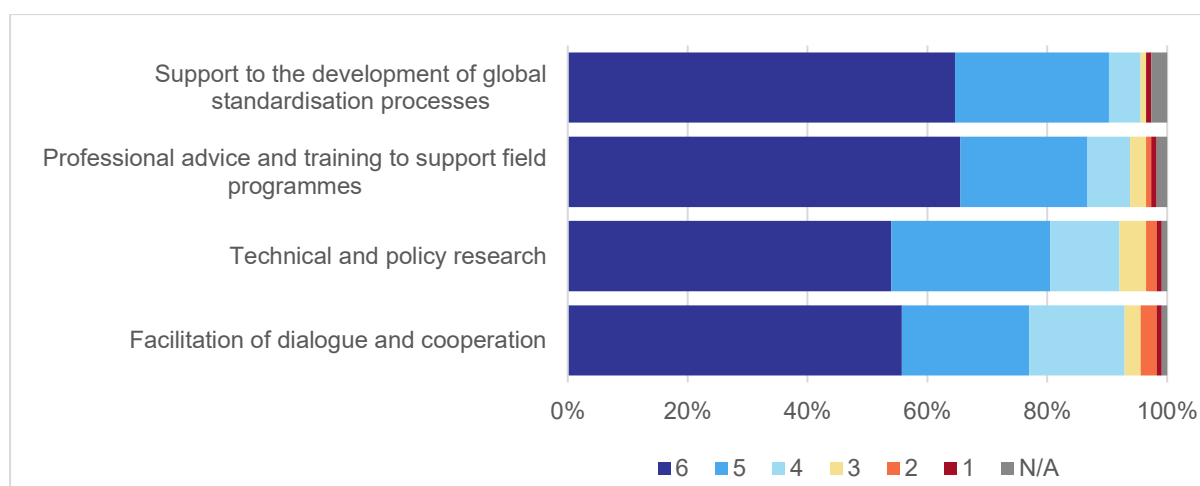
Are GICHD's programmes and partnership approaches responsive to the needs of their target beneficiaries, stakeholders and partner institutions?

GICHD's approach to programmes and partnerships is highly responsive to the needs of the mine action sector, including for national mine action authorities. GICHD is widely regarded as the most effective and trusted partner in mine action with a strong global footprint and high-quality work. The evidence across interviews and survey responses from external stakeholders indicates that GICHD continues to play a unique role in bridging the gap between technical expertise and international policy and cooperation, and that the Centre continues to provide vital tailored support for mine-affected countries which do not have the capacity or resources to fully engage in mine action and the associated protection of civilians. External stakeholders universally acknowledged the relevant combination of GICHD's technical and non-technical support, as well as the positive multiplier effect of their facilitation and convening role at global, regional and national levels.

Overall, stakeholders found GICHD's work to be highly relevant for the sector. The strongest evidence relates to GICHD's work on international standards, both for mine action and for ammunition management. Both internal and external stakeholders noted that the GICHD's work on standards ensures there is a minimum level of quality tailored to national and local contexts, as well as minimum levels of safety and efficiency. This positive view is reflected in the survey results in Figure 17 below, with a clear majority of respondents indicating their positive views on the relevance of GICHD's support for, and promotion of, international standards. In line with this, GICHD's focus on information management systems is also highly appreciated.

Figure 17: Survey responses on how relevant stakeholders find GICHD services

Question: GICHD provides the following services within its current strategy. Please score how relevant you feel each of these is to the sector GICHD works in (Where 1 = limited relevance and 6 = highly relevant).



There were some points of divergence on the extent to which GICHD's work responds to need or demand:

- Demand-driven:** There was a range of views across both internal and external stakeholders in relation to whether GICHD's work is needs-driven or demand-driven, i.e., is the work based on needs of the sector or on demands/requests from donors or national authorities. This was particularly of concern when there is a potential tension between needs and demands. GEDSI was given as an example of this tension by several stakeholders, where donors or national authorities may commission research or strategy support but do not consider GEDSI a priority or indeed wish to omit such a

risk of becoming too demand-driven indicated that in practice, GICHD prioritises requests from donors and national authorities rather than grounding its work in a comprehensive, systematic assessment of needs. The absence of a systematic standardised organisational methodology for conducting needs assessments was also cited by a small number of staff as an associated concern.

Stakeholders expressed concern that relying too heavily on stated preferences rather than evidence-based analysis could create structural vulnerabilities, including ethical concerns about neutrality and the possibility of implicit pressure to align with donor interests. There was a concern that relying too heavily on donor priorities has led to GICHD focusing disproportionately on some contexts, e.g., Ukraine, whilst other contexts with high levels of need receive less attention, e.g., many African countries. Both internal and external stakeholders also cautioned that GICHD's leadership role within the mine action sector could be diluted if it is perceived as following donor demand rather than championing needs-based approaches.

- **Balancing need and demand:** There were also internal and external stakeholders who believed that GICHD strikes an appropriate balance between specific requests from donors and national authorities and priority needs, emphasising that GICHD's work is grounded in genuine needs assessment and context-based prioritisation. Several partners highlighted GICHD's strong ability to understand national mine action authorities, assess their capacity, and tailor support accordingly. Several internal stakeholders also pointed to structured processes that facilitate needs driven work, such as conducting country missions to inform needs assessments, meeting with a wide range of relevant national partners, and integrating findings into detailed action plans.

A good example of this can be found in South Sudan, where GICHD staff reviewed all relevant documents, met with national authorities, operators, and donors, and used the mission to develop a targeted plan aligned with observed needs on the ground. In Ukraine, ongoing meetings with government counterparts and thematic partners ensure that needs are continuously updated and addressed, with GICHD providing both strategic and technical support in response to evolving national priorities. External stakeholders also affirmed this approach, describing GICHD as an impartial facilitator focused on strengthening national systems in a way that responds to real institutional capacity gaps and operational constraints.

On balance, the evidence indicates that GICHD's model is not simply reactive to requests but anchored in continuous engagement, contextual understanding, and evidence-based judgement about specific sectoral and national needs. There is a clear awareness within the Centre of the need to continue to strike a balance between needs and demand, while still navigating the practical realities of demand driven funding.

The GICHD produces high quality relevant research, though some stakeholders noted areas for strengthening. Two key points arose in relation to this. First, several stakeholders on the operational side noted that while the research is very comprehensive, it can sometimes take the form of lengthy reports which are quite time-consuming to read. They indicated it would be useful to ensure a focus on accessibility and 'user-friendliness' for specific audiences. Second, internal stakeholders observed that there is very little follow up or understanding in terms of how the research is applied in practice and that it would be useful to have a process for tracking this to demonstrate impact.

To what extent do GICHD add value to Switzerland's foreign policy priorities through their strategic and thematic areas of focus and their activities?

GICHD is highly aligned with of Swiss foreign and security policy, and this is reflected in all its work. There is strong alignment of both GICHD and Swiss government views on this point, with strong evidence supporting it. The neutrality and humanitarian mandate of GICHD further reinforces this. There are five key areas that stand out most in terms of GICHD contribution to Swiss foreign and security policy:

1. **Multilateralism:** GICHD has strong partnerships with United Nations (UN) agencies on mine action and related topics that span research, coordination, events and protection of civilians. One of the most notable and multifaceted partnerships is with the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS). For example, the IMAS are owned and mandated by UNMAS with GICHD hosting the IMAS Secretariat on behalf of UNMAS, contributing to a strong strategic and technical approach to managing IMAS. UNMAS and GICHD also jointly organise the annual International Meeting of Mine Action National Directors and United Nations Advisers (NDM-UN). The two organisations also work well together at the country level, with close cooperation in Ukraine and a Trilateral Agreement in Syria which clearly sets out the role of UNMAS, GICHD and the Syrian national authorities. GICHD, and the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) have also conducted a joint study on the links between food security and mine action and GICHD also conducted and promoted joint initiatives with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) on Explosive Ordnance Risk Education to strengthen the protection of displaced civilians. Finally, GICHD has a strong partnership with UNODA on ammunition management, in particular through the GICHD's Ammunition Management Advisory Team (AMAT).
2. **Women, Peace and Security (WPS):** There are several good examples of GICHD focusing on WPS, including at the country level. In Ukraine, GICHD conducted research on the extent to which WPS had been integrated in Ukraine's mine action response to date, with key recommendations on how to strengthen this. In South Sudan, the country needs assessment highlighted key barriers facing women working in demining which informed the follow tailored support.
3. **Hard security and soft security:** as the international focus increasingly shifts more towards hard security, GICHD operates at the intersection of hard security and soft security, addressing both the immediate physical risks posed by explosive hazards and the longer-term conditions needed for safety, stability and development. Its hard security contributions include the removal of landmines and unexploded ordnance, supporting the stabilisation of post conflict areas, and enabling safe military and peacekeeping operations. At the same time, GICHD's work strengthens soft security by facilitating economic recovery, restoring access to essential services, and improving the protection and wellbeing of civilians. These two dimensions are mutually reinforcing. Without clearing mines, development and civilian wellbeing cannot happen; and without improved livelihoods, trust, and social resilience, the gains of physical security are less likely to last. GICHD's dual focus therefore ensures that both immediate threats and the underlying drivers of long-term peace and stability are addressed in a coherent and complementary way.
4. **Ukraine:** the evidence suggests that GICHD has played a highly effective role in Ukraine's mine action sector, combining strong coordination from Geneva with expert national staff who bring essential language skills, contextual understanding and relationship-building capacity. Despite the complexity of Ukraine's decentralised and complicated mine action landscape, GICHD has successfully navigated relationships across all three national mine action centres. Its work remains closely aligned with national authorities' priorities, including, for example, contributions to national strategy

development; information management training; and ongoing support on underwater demining standards. GICHD also facilitated a learning visit between Ukraine and Lebanon which was highly appreciated by Ukrainian mine action stakeholders. GICHD also supported the development of Ukraine's national mine action strategy (2023-2033); conducted a localisation study to strengthen national operators and address barriers to accessing international funding; and convened annual donor coordination workshops to align vision, challenges and opportunities across partners. All external stakeholders spoke very positively about GICHD's engagement and contribution to mine action in Ukraine.

5. **International Geneva:** The evidence also indicates that GICHD, along with GCSP and DCAF, contribute very effectively to International Geneva, including strong partnerships with Swiss and international actors.

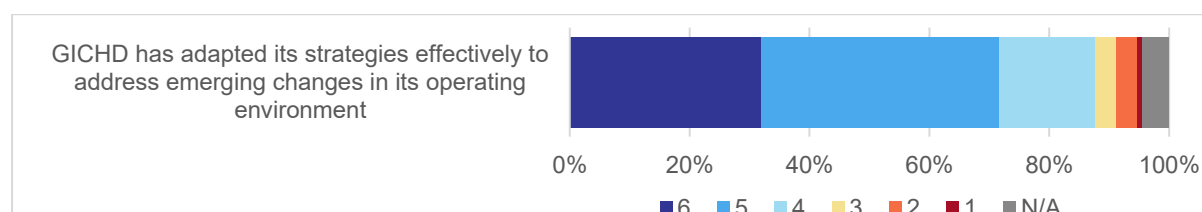
The only negative finding on alignment with Swiss foreign policy was in relation to systematic engagement with Swiss Embassies in countries of operation. GICHD's contribution to Swiss foreign and security policy is strong and well-articulated at headquarters level. However, engagement with Swiss Embassies and Missions at the country level is more limited. This represents a missed opportunity to strengthen visibility, coherence, and mutual reinforcement between GICHD's operational work and Switzerland's diplomatic and development engagement in priority contexts.

Has GICHD adapted their strategies to address emerging challenges and changing conditions in their fields of operation?

There is clear evidence that GICHD has adapted well to rapid shifts in the global context, including evolving donor priorities and reduced funding. The organisational culture and structure facilitate reflection and open discussion on where adaptation is required, including strategic, organisational and programmatic adaptation which is an important enabling factor that strengthens GICHD's ability to adapt. The survey responses in Figure 18 below reflects GICHD's ability to adapt to changing conditions.

Figure 18: Survey response on how well stakeholders believe GICHD adapts to different contexts

Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statements (Where 1 = strongly disagree and 6 = strongly agree).



The Centre was recently restructured to create two new units to respond to emerging challenges, namely the IFU and the RCU. The IFU was set up in September 2025 in response to the increasing structural misalignment between long-term mine action needs and short-term project funding. The IFU is exploring which innovative finance mechanism could be best applied to the mine action sector. Their work has notably included the initial design of a frontloading facility for mine action, with the aim of providing a common financing platform for donors to pool funds and the development of a framework to incorporate blended finance using grants as catalytic support that could bring in additional actors. The longer-term, predictable nature of funding is also designed to reinforce positive shifts towards greater national ownership of mine action. The RCU was set up to reflect an increasingly stronger donor focus on geographic rather than thematic approaches. Internal stakeholders also observed that this has strengthened GICHD's own work as it supports coherence and

coordination across the organisation and strengthens the engagement approach with national authorities. Syria was frequently cited as an example of this.

GEDSI is a good example of GICHD adapting to shifts in donor priorities. There has been growing pushback in recent years from some donors and national governments on including a focus on GEDSI, which is a risk both for maintaining progress and backsliding in the mine action sector and beyond. While a small number of GICHD staff expressed concern that GICHD could and should be doing more to respond to this, there is good evidence that the Centre has adapted its approach by remaining focused on the key goal of saving lives and adapting language and framing whilst retaining the necessary focus and activities. This is supported by a diverse staff group from relevant countries and regions who frequently advise on how best to navigate different contexts and by relying on national legislation and international commitments as necessary.

There is strong evidence that GICHD has adapted well to funding cuts. This includes the IFU example above, as well as rapid adaptation to the US Stop Work Order in 2025 which could have had a significant negative impact on the Centre. There is good evidence of strategic thinking and positioning to appeal to different donors and their priorities.

The only negative point in relation to adaptation was on speed and agility in emergencies, with mixed perceptions on how well GICHD manages this. Syria and Gaza were frequently cited as examples where GICHD could have been more agile and mobilised more rapidly.

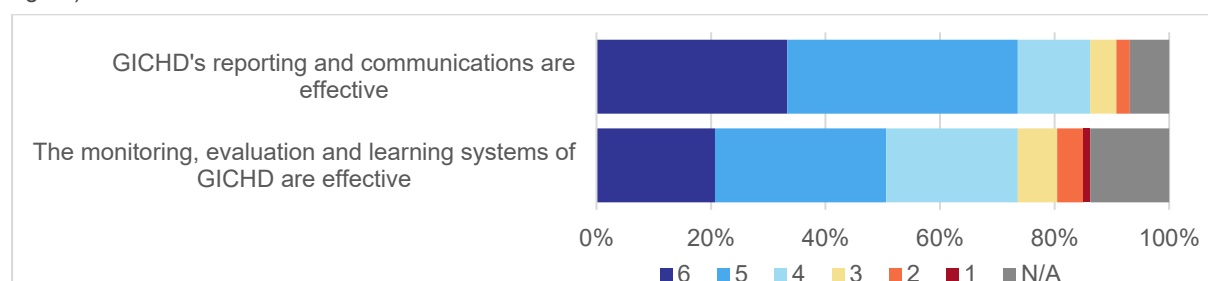
Efficiency

Does GICHD have robust internal management, monitoring and learning systems in place that support adaptive and high-quality programming?

GICHD has invested a lot of resources to strengthen its monitoring and learning systems in recent years, with clear evidence of a positive trajectory. However, there is still scope for improvement in several areas. Two of the nine recommendations from the previous evaluation focused on MEL and Results-Based Management (RBM) and these have been actioned, with 2.3 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) MEL staff now supporting projects and clear efforts to increase the focus on qualitative measurement. Overall, internal and external stakeholders spoke positively about improved MEL and reporting approaches, as reflected in Figure 19 below.

Figure 19: Survey responses on GICHD's communications, reporting and MEL

Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (where 1 = strongly disagree and 6 = strongly agree)



There is strong coordination between project/programme monitoring and financial monitoring staff, with positive feedback from relevant stakeholders on positive communication supporting this. However, the lack of interoperability between the financial and project/programme monitoring systems creates inefficiencies; the financial management systems were upgraded in recent years which makes finances much easier and more efficient to track and has reduced risk of human error. It would be useful to invest in a similar way in

MEL systems, ensuring interoperability with finance. This informs the recommendations section of this report.

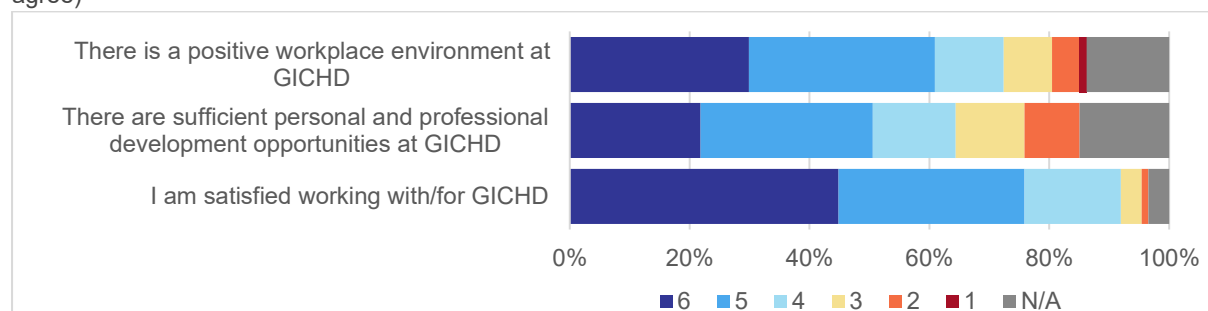
GICHD tracks progress through five strategic outcomes supported by 13 indicators; however, many of these indicators remain output focused despite being framed at the outcome level. While output monitoring is strong and demonstrates progress against immediate objectives, it is often unclear how most indicators are measured or tracked to show contribution to broader outcome level or impact-level change. This is particularly evident for qualitative indicators such as the extent to which GICHD's expertise is recognised in multilateral processes (indicator 1.2); in annual reports, this is captured through numbers of statements and presentations rather than a qualitative analysis of how these statements and presentations contributed to change or to GICHD's role being recognised. Similarly, qualitative measurement approaches are not fully defined for the representation of diverse groups in GICHD organised events (indicator 4.2); annual reports cover the percentages of women, local/national organisations and people from affected countries/territories attending events rather than the added value of attendance or contributions to change this facilitated. These numbers are important and are complemented by further detail in the 'Results by Outcome' sections of the reports; however, including a more specific focus on outcome level measurement and monitoring would further strengthen communications and reporting, as well as ensuring project/programme teams are well positioned to adapt in real-time as necessary. Donors also noted that they would like to see a greater focus on outcomes and impact in reporting.

How satisfied and engaged is the workforce of GICHD and what mechanisms are in place to monitor and respond to staff well-being and motivation?

There has been a significant positive change in the organisational culture and in staff satisfaction levels since the previous evaluation. This is one of the strongest findings of the evaluation. There were universally positive responses and engagement on this point in all interviews and focus groups with staff who all observed that the changes in senior leadership over the last four years have contributed significantly to positive changes in management, culture and staff well-being. This is also well reflected in the survey responses. In 2021, 18% of staff reporting being 'very satisfied' working for GICHD compared with 50% of staff in 2026. This is also clearly reflected in Figure 20 below on effective management within GICHD. In 2021, just 2% of staff strongly agreed that the management and governance structures of GICHD were effective, compared with 25% of staff strongly agreeing with this in 2026.

Figure 20: Survey responses on the workplace environment and staff satisfaction

Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (where 1 = strongly disagree and 6 = strongly agree)



There are several reasons for the positive shifts, including changes in personnel at senior levels, restructuring of management and leadership, clearer reporting lines and clear communication about Human Resources (HR) policies related to staff well-being. The organisational restructure saw the 'Administration & Support Division' replaced with the 'People and Culture Division', with the addition of a People Manager and a Learning and Development Manager. Staff indicated in interviews and focus groups that the organisational

culture is now much more transparent with space for open discussion and raising of issues. Several staff mentioned the recent all-staff retreat as an example of this, noting the much more relaxed atmosphere and encouragement to ask questions either anonymously or in-person which were then honestly and publicly addressed by the senior leadership. There is an internal annual all-staff survey that is conducted every June focusing on staff perspectives of the organisation, culture and well-being. Where issues are raised via this survey, the People and Culture Division responsible for HR follow up and seek to understand and address the underlying causes for these issues. The positive shifts in organisational culture are highly valued by staff and are likely to contribute to stronger staff retention for GICHD in the long-term.

The only notable concern regarding staff well-being and motivation related to career progression. This was an area of particular concern for more junior staff who observed that career progression pathways are not currently clear and that people can remain in junior roles for a relatively long time without progressing. This can be seen in the survey responses above. There is strong evidence that the People and Culture Division are aware of the issues relating to career progression and are in the process of developing frameworks to address this.

Effectiveness

To what extent have GICHD achieved their expected outputs and outcomes for the 2023-2026 period, as outlined in its mandate and strategic plans?

GICHD is on track to strongly deliver against its objectives by the end of 2026. The 2023-2026 strategy is guided by three pillars, namely i) means/finance, ii) results and iii) people. The financial pillar focuses on ensuring the organisation has sufficient financial resources to deliver on its mandate and ensure these resources are managed efficiently. GICHD has diversified its funding sources in recent years, invested in its internal financial management systems to strengthen efficiency and has also set up the IFU to strengthen sustainable financing approaches for the mine action sector more broadly. These steps clearly demonstrate a strong commitment to long-term, sustainable financial resourcing and resource management. As noted above, there has also been significant progress on the people pillar, with notable changes in staff satisfaction and the organisational culture.

The results pillar is guided by four strategic objectives and five outcomes, with clear evidence of progress against all of these.

Figure 21 below is an extract from GICHD strategy detailing these objectives and outcomes, and annual reports are structured in line with these to communicate progress and achievements against each.

Figure 21: Extract from GICHD's current strategy showing strategic objectives and outcomes

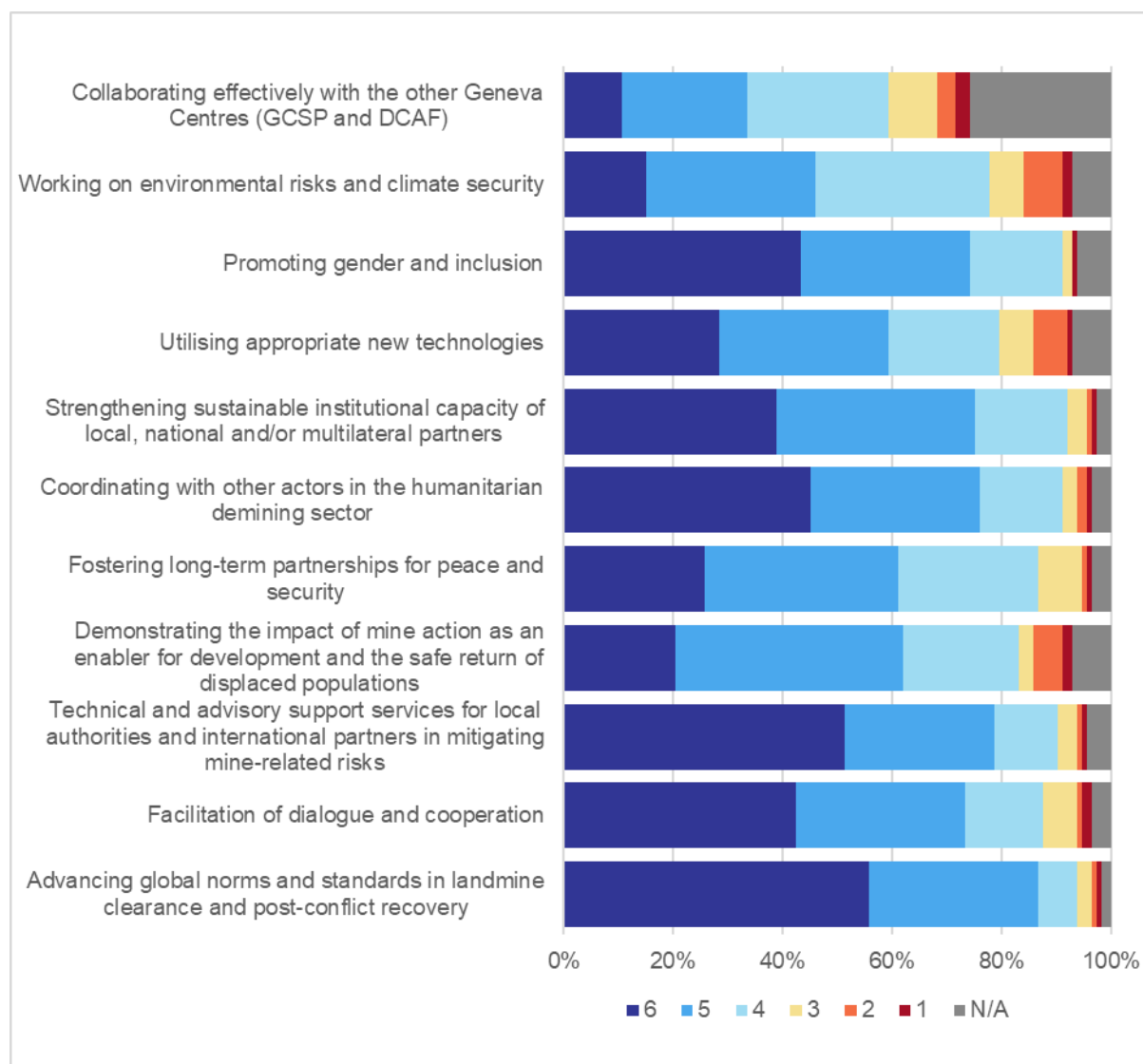


There is strong evidence that GICHD is effective across all its work in support of its strategic objectives and five outcome areas. Clear, consolidated annual reporting supports this, as well as evidence from the survey, interviews and focus groups. The survey results in

below show that there are no areas of weakness for GICHD in terms of its results pillar, with internal and external stakeholders indicating positive views across all areas of operation. The most positive response was in relation to the question on how effective GICHD is in advancing global norms and standards in landmine clearance and post-conflict recovery; this is important as ensuring these standards are in place serves as an enabler for all other activities such as coordination, strengthening capacity of national actors, technical advisory support and explosive ordnance risk education (EORE). The lowest score overall was in relation to working on environmental risks and climate security, with 15% of respondents disagreeing that GICHD is effective in this area. There is evidence that GICHD is aware of this as an area for strengthening and that the organisation has taken steps to address this, including the publication of the 'Methodology Guide - Climate Resilience Priority-Setting in Mine Action' in 2025 to support national authorities and mine action actors in areas vulnerable to climate related events.

Figure 22: Survey responses on stakeholder perspectives on GICHD effectiveness in specific areas

Question: To what extent is GICHD effective in the following areas? (Where 1 = not very effective and 6 = highly effective)



The strategy also includes a focus on ‘key strategic implications’ for GICHD’s work which cover important considerations such as i) moving from a period of transition to consolidation, ii) continuing to promote national ownership and iii) working closer to conflict. There is strong evidence that these points have been kept in focus throughout the strategic period, with a tailored focus on national ownership across all activities and careful consideration of what it means for GICHD to be working closer to conflict, e.g., for the team in Ukraine and the new office in Jordan covering the Middle East. A clear example of this is the objective of establishing gender sensitive travel policies for staff with risk assessments and support mechanisms in place for travel to high-risk and conflict-affected areas.

GICHD has made meaningful progress in advancing localisation and humanitarian–development–peace (HDP) nexus thinking across its work, though the depth and consistency of understanding and application vary across teams and roles. There is evidence that GICHD has made meaningful progress in advancing localisation and humanitarian development peace (HDP) nexus thinking across its work, particularly in contexts where national ownership and systems strengthening are central to long-term effectiveness. However, the findings also indicate that understanding and application of these

approaches varies across teams and roles, reflecting differences in operational contexts, experience levels, and functional focus. While learning on localisation, conflict sensitivity, and nexus related practice does occur, it is largely informal and driven by individual teams or projects rather than being systematically captured, shared, and embedded across the organisation. This potentially limits GICHD's ability to consistently translate emerging practice into organisation wide guidance and to build a shared understanding of what effective engagement looks like in fragile and conflict affected environments.

What are the enabling and constraining factors that have affected the success of GICHD?

Several clear enabling factors emerged that support the GICHD's work, including its highly skilled staff and its reputation as the most respected leading voice in mine action. Swiss neutrality coupled with GICHD's humanitarian mandate enhance trust and credibility amongst global, regional and national stakeholders which is critical for all aspects of GICHD's work. This is evidenced by the fact that national authorities repeatedly request support from GICHD and speak positively about the nature of support and consistent engagement they receive from GICHD. The distance between GICHD as a normative organisation and demining organisations working at the technical operational level is seen as a strong advantage, especially when coupled with the neutrality aspect as it removes any perception of bias or self-interest. Strong partnerships and professional and personal connections also enable efficient and effective ways of working, including the fact that many of the GICHD staff previously worked in organisations such as UNMAS and the Small Arms Survey which means they understand those organisations and can facilitate contacts across all areas of operations.

There are also some obvious constraining factors that can be challenging for GICHD's work, though these are mainly external factors that GICHD must navigate. The seismic shifts in the funding landscape emerged as the most obvious challenge, coupled with donors becoming more focused on their own national security interests and less flexible in geographic and thematic areas they are willing to fund. GICHD has sought to mitigate this by diversifying donors as well as restructuring internally. This includes the establishment of the RCU responding to donor preferences for a geographic approach over thematic and the IFU responding to the perennial challenge of short-term projectized funding.

Almost every stakeholder mentioned the challenge of backsliding on GEDSI and the need to consider this as GICHD moves into its next strategic period. Governance issues in some countries GICHD supports was also noted as a constraining factor, alongside resource constraints and varying levels of political backing at the national level that can potentially limit progress. Many stakeholders also noted the pattern of some countries slowing down their efforts as they approach mine-free status due to the economic incentives for ensuring continuity of support. This is a major challenge and links to GICHD's integrated focus on humanitarian, development and peace approaches to ensure socio-economic and livelihoods development to reduce dependency on mine action jobs.

Neutrality and impartiality emerged as both enabling and constraining factors for GICHD. On the one hand, neutrality is widely viewed as a strength, as it underpins GICHD's credibility and trust and enables effective engagement with a wide range of global and national actors. On the other hand, some stakeholders noted that this neutral stance can limit GICHD's ability to actively uphold and promote IHL, particularly in an era where IHL principles are increasingly eroded and some states are withdrawing from or ignoring well established treaties and norms. Within this challenging environment, GICHD's mandate remains firmly focused on the protection of civilians and the reduction of harm and many stakeholders indicated that must remain the focus of its support to national authorities.

Impact

What are the longer-term expected effects of GICHDs' programs on the humanitarian demining sector?

GICHD contributes to longer-term impact in the sector by strengthening knowledge, capacity, governance structures and standards and norms at global, regional and national levels, as well as by linking mine action to sustainable development. Over time, this contributes to safer and more resilient countries, with improved protection outcomes for civilians and stronger national ownership and capacity. A key area of impact is GICHD's support to international norms and standards, including technical leadership on the IMAS and IATG, as well as support to treaties such as the APMBC and the CCM. This work underpins safer, more consistent, and more effective mine action practice and supports States Parties to meet their treaty obligations. GICHD also supports cooperation and coordination between governments, NGOs and UN agencies in the sector which facilitates a more coherent global response, strengthening longer-term impact.

GICHD's sustained investment in research and innovation further strengthens longer-term impact by promoting continuous learning and improvement across the sector. This includes research on new technologies and clearance methodologies, information management, and risk reduction strategies. Tools such as the IMSMA enable standardised and shared data management, supporting more robust evidence-based decision-making.

A key challenge facing longer-term impact relates to ways in which national authorities respond as they begin to approach mine-free status. In some cases, GICHD support has helped accelerate progress through the development of completion strategies. In others, progress has slowed, with multiple extension requests submitted under the APMBC. Contributing factors include clearance of mined areas in hard-to-reach areas, limited planning for alternative livelihoods for deminers, and reduced incentives to scale down funding. While these dynamics are largely beyond GICHD's direct control, there is strong evidence that the Centre engages proactively with national authorities, providing targeted technical and strategic support to address these challenges where possible.

Sustainability

To what extent are the global, regional and national outcomes of GICHD likely to be sustainable beyond the current funding period (2024-27)?

GICHD's work at the global and normative level is likely to be highly sustainable, while sustainability at the national level is more variable. At the global level, GICHD's focus on international norms and frameworks coupled with its role in codifying knowledge and standards creates sustainable systems that last beyond funding cycles. There is also good evidence indicating GICHD's expertise and contributions to multilateral processes help shape long-term policy and that these outcomes are institutionalised at the global level. At the national level, however, sustainability is more dependent on context. Factors such as financial dependence on external support, limited resources, and differing levels of institutional capacity among national actors can constrain the extent to which outcomes are sustained over time.

The newly established IFU is highly likely to contribute to sustainable outcomes that last beyond funding cycles. The pooled funding modality is specifically designed to provide predictable, multi-year funding for mine action to address the disconnect between short-term project funding and long-term, resource-intensive needs. By enabling more stable financing, the model also supports GICHD's broader objective of linking mine action more effectively to sustainable development processes.

To what extent have GICHD contributed to the sustainable institutional capacity of local, national and/or multilateral partners?

GICHD clearly prioritises national ownership and capacity strengthening for national actors which creates a strong enabling environment for sustainable institutional capacity. National governments are supported to design and develop their own strategies, policies and legal frameworks which embeds mine action within state institutions and governance structures. The focus on systems supports this approach, including the IMSMA which national authorities are trained to use and manage independently and strategy support which provides clear systematic guardrails for national authorities over a set period of time.

Many stakeholders – both internal and external – were critical of the extent to which GICHD's approach to capacity strengthening for national authorities is sustainable.

This mainly centred on the view that capacity strengthening focuses on the individual rather than the institutional level which creates single points of failure within a weak system. Stakeholders observed that GICHD have a 'fly in, fly out' approach, travelling for training and capacity strengthening workshops and then leaving again and that there is a lack of associated accompaniment in the long-term to ensure new skills and knowledge are fully embedded and put into practice. While the quality of capacity strengthening activities is universally seen as high quality, stakeholders were less clear on how GICHD ensures these activities contribute to longer-term institutional systems strengthening or on how this is measured and tracked over time.

There are several challenges in relation to sustainability of institutional capacity at the national level. Many mine affected countries remain highly dependent on external donor funding, not only for demining operations but also for core support functions such as data management, coordination, and strategy development. Public sector salaries are often significantly lower than international organisations, which can lead to staff from national authorities who have been trained by GICHD leaving for jobs with better financial incentives. Staff turnover can undermine institutional effectiveness over time. Sustainability also depends on whether governments in mine-affected countries continue to prioritise mine action, with changes in government and shifting post-conflict priorities potentially reducing resources available for mine action.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Overall, the findings clearly demonstrate that GICHD is a high performing, well-respected and highly credible organisation that is delivering strongly against its mandate. The Centre is widely regarded as a trusted leader in the mine action sector, with a distinctive role in combining technical expertise, policy influence, and convening power underpinned by Swiss neutrality and a clear humanitarian mandate. Since the previous evaluation, GICHD has made substantial progress in strengthening leadership, organisational culture, and internal systems, resulting in improved staff satisfaction, clearer and more effective management practices, and increased organisational confidence. These strengths provide a solid foundation for continued effectiveness and influence at global, regional, and national levels.

At the same time, the findings highlight several strategic considerations for GICHD as the Centre moves into its next strategic period. In particular, there is a need to ensure that high-quality technical delivery consistently translates into sustained institutional change at national level, and that evidence, learning, and outcome-level impact are more systematically captured and used. GICHD will also need to continue navigating growing external pressures, including increasingly demand-driven funding, reduced funding sources, politicised operating environments, shifting donor priorities and work in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. Addressing these challenges will require intentional reflection and decision-making about where GICHD seeks to be transformative, how it balances needs and demand, and how it supports its staff and systems to operate effectively under increasingly complex conditions.

Taken together, the findings clearly demonstrate that GICHD is well placed to consolidate recent gains while addressing a number of structural and strategic risks that could undermine longer-term impact. The recommendations that follow are therefore focused less on corrective action and more on strengthening and sharpening existing approaches. They are intended to support GICHD in further strengthening its focus and approach to sustainability, evidence-based learning, workforce resilience, and effective engagement in fragile and conflict-affected contexts as it enters the next strategic period.

There are **six key learning areas** that support the recommendations:

1. Sustainability of capacity strengthening work
2. Evidence, impact and learning
3. Organisational structure and workforce sustainability
4. GEDSI
5. Links to Swiss foreign and security policy
6. Working in conflict-affected/fragile context

#	Conclusion	Draft recommendation	Audience
1	Sustainability of capacity strengthening work GICHD is widely recognised for the high quality of its technical delivery. However, the findings suggest that this has not always translated into sustained institutional strengthening at the national level. GICHD is sometimes perceived more as a high-quality service provider than as a transformational actor, with limited visibility on whether -capacity building support leads to lasting systemic change. This points to a need for a more explicit focus on institutional systems strengthening and clearer articulation and evidence of how this support contributes to -long-term- national ownership and sustainability.	1.1 Adopt a more explicit systems-based approach to strengthening the institutional capacity of affected States, with a clear focus on enabling sustainable national ownership of mine action and ammunition management programmes. This would include for example, deeper systems-based institutional/organisational analysis and associated action plans tailored to the organisational/systems needs identified as part of that analysis. 1.2 Develop and apply clear methods and indicators to measure and track progress on institutional systems strengthening over time. 1.3 Strengthen communications and reporting to donors by clearly articulating how GICHD's capacity-strengthening support contributes to long-term institutional change and sustainability at national level.	Programme Managers' Forum with support from the MEL focal point
2	Evidence, impact and learning While GICHD produces a substantial volume of high-quality- research and reporting, tracking the uptake and application of research is perceived as limited. While MEL processes have improved, outcome and -impact level- measurement and monitoring remain underdeveloped and not as well understood by the full staff group. Reflection and learning processes are not yet consistently embedded in programming. The lack of interoperability between financial and programme monitoring also creates inefficiencies, with fewer resources invested in MEL systems to date.	2.1 Assess GICHD's capacity to systematically follow up on research products and to understand the extent to which they are taken up and applied by stakeholders. 2.2 Strengthen organisational understanding and practice related to outcome- and impact-level measurement, including guidance on developing, tracking, and using relevant indicators. 2.3 Ensure that ambitions for outcome and impact measurement are matched with realistic capacity and resources to support consistent monitoring over time. 2.4 Invest in fit-for-purpose MEL systems by conducting a targeted assessment of options and ensuring interoperability between financial management and project/programme monitoring tools.	Research, Innovation, Standards and Operations Division with support from the MEL focal point
3	Organisational structure and workforce sustainability Recent restructuring and organisational change have contributed positively to management,	3.1 Consolidate and maintain the current organisational structure during the next strategic period to reduce staff fatigue and allow recent changes to stabilise.	Director and Chief of Operations with support from the

	culture, and performance, but the pace and cumulative effect of change over the past four years have also resulted in staff fatigue. Heavy workloads, particularly at more junior levels, and concerns about limited or unclear career progression pathways present risks to workforce sustainability. These issues could undermine staff motivation and retention if not addressed as GICHD moves into the next strategic period.	3.2 Assess staff workloads across the organisation to ensure job descriptions are realistic and aligned with available capacity, with particular attention to junior roles. 3.3 Finalise, communicate, and implement a clear career progression framework to support staff motivation, retention, and longer-term workforce sustainability.	Programme Managers' Forum and the People and Culture Division
4	GEDSI The integration of GEDSI is widely recognised as an important driver of structural change and long-term- impact in the mine action sector. However, the findings highlight a real risk of backsliding due to external political and donor pressures. While GEDSI is present across GICHD's work, there is scope to deepen its integration at outcome and impact levels and to ensure that progress is sustained, even in challenging contexts and where explicit demand for GEDSI related- work is weakening.	4.1 Continue to integrate GEDSI across all areas of work using flexible and context-appropriate approaches that balance responsiveness to donor and partner priorities with the need to prevent backsliding and sustain progress over time.	Inclusive Risk Reduction (IRR) Division
5	Links to Swiss foreign and security policy GICHD's contribution to Swiss foreign and security policy is strong and well-articulated at headquarters level. However, engagement with Swiss Embassies and Missions at the country level is more limited. This represents a missed opportunity to strengthen visibility, coherence, and mutual reinforcement between GICHD's operational work and Switzerland's diplomatic and development engagement in priority contexts.	5.1 Systematically engage with Swiss Embassies and Missions during field visits and in priority contexts to improve information sharing-, visibility, and coherence between GICHD's operational work and Switzerland's diplomatic and development engagement.	Director
6	Working in conflict-affected/fragile contexts GICHD increasingly operates in complex, fragile, and conflict affected environments, but the findings	6.1 Assess barriers to rapid mobilisation of staff and resources in response to crises and sudden contextual changes and identify practical measures to improve speed and agility.	Director and Chief of Operations

show mixed performance in terms of speed, agility, and consistency of response. Capacity for rapid mobilisation in crisis situations varies, as does understanding of conflict sensitivity across staff groups. While progress has been made in advancing localisation and humanitarian-/development-/peace nexus approaches, these areas could be strengthened further through more systematic learning, clearer guidance, and targeted staff support.	6.2 Conduct a focused review of GICHD's work on localisation and humanitarian-development-peace nexus approaches to identify emerging good practice, success stories, and remaining gaps. 6.3 Provide targeted training, guidance, and ongoing support to staff on conflict sensitivity, localisation, and nexus approaches, tailored to their roles and operational contexts.	
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Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF)

Executive summary

This evaluation has been commissioned by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), to inform the Federal Council's dispatch to Parliament concerning Switzerland's support to the Geneva Centres for the 2027–2030 funding cycle. The present report focuses specifically on findings related to the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF).

The evaluation finds that **DCAF's relevance has increased rather than diminished in the current international security environment**. Renewed interstate conflict, rising defence spending, democratic backsliding and shrinking civic space have heightened the importance of ensuring that security institutions operate within accountable governance frameworks. Across regions, external partners consistently associate DCAF with expertise on the institutional and accountability frameworks that shape how security is exercised. They also praise the organisation's ability to accompany politically sensitive reform processes over long periods of time and to maintain institutional relationships in difficult environments where other actors often disengage. This operational credibility remains one of DCAF's principal comparative advantages.

Leadership has contributed to strengthening DCAF's external profile. Interviews point to a consistent appreciation of the Director's appetite for change, visible engagement with partners, frequent field presence and senior diplomatic standing, which appear to leverage and contribute to Swiss influence.

A defining feature of DCAF's positioning is its continued commitment to **gender-responsive and inclusive security governance**. At a time when several governments and donors are scaling back gender-related agendas in security policy, DCAF has maintained gender and intersectionality as a central strategic pillar. This positioning is widely recognised by external partners, and the organisation has a strong reputation as the one actor capable of translating these principles into concrete institutional reforms for defence and security organisations.

The evaluation also finds that **DCAF has made substantial progress in strengthening its internal effectiveness since the previous evaluation**. The organisation has invested significantly in results measurement, monitoring and organisational learning. The establishment of the Strategy Execution (Stratex) unit, the introduction of the "One DCAF Results Framework," and expanded monitoring and evaluation capacity represent important steps towards more outcome-oriented management. These reforms signal a clear shift towards stronger results orientation, even though the institutionalisation of learning across programmes remains in transition.

At the same time, **DCAF operates in an evolving and increasingly competitive funding environment**. Donor instruments, particularly within the European Union (EU), increasingly rely on large implementation consortia capable of delivering complex programmes combining governance, training, infrastructure and security assistance. In this context, DCAF faces an important strategic question regarding how it positions itself within consortium-based delivery models. While the organisation retains strong technical credibility in governance reform, its ability to shape governance components within larger security assistance programmes will depend on clearer partnership strategies and positioning within evolving donor architectures.

The evaluation identifies that **strategic policy positioning needs to be clarified in the coming years**. DCAF enjoys strong credibility and demand for its expertise, yet external

stakeholders often struggle to identify a concise set of forward-looking policy priorities associated with the organisation. In an international policy environment saturated with analysis and reports, influence increasingly depends on the clarity and distinctiveness of policy messages. Selective signalling of priorities is needed, for DCAF to translate its operational credibility more effectively into agenda-setting influence.

More broadly, the evaluation finds that **reasserting security sector governance in a hard-security policy environment requires clearer articulation of governance as a driver of security effectiveness**. While in some geographies, DCAF's programmes frequently address internal institutional reforms - including but not limited to procurement governance, personnel Personal and Professional Development (PPD) systems and internal accountability mechanisms – this dimension of the work is not always externally visible. As a result, external stakeholders often associate the organisation primarily with oversight functions. Strengthening communication around governance *within* security institutions, rather than governance *of them*, would reinforce the relevance of DCAF's work in a policy landscape increasingly focused on defence capability and operational performance.

Overall, the evaluation concludes that **DCAF remains uniquely positioned to bridge governance, institutional reform and policy security debates**, provided it sharpens its strategic policy positioning, adapts to evolving donor funding architectures, and consolidates ongoing organisational reforms.

Based upon these findings, the evaluation puts forward five recommendations:

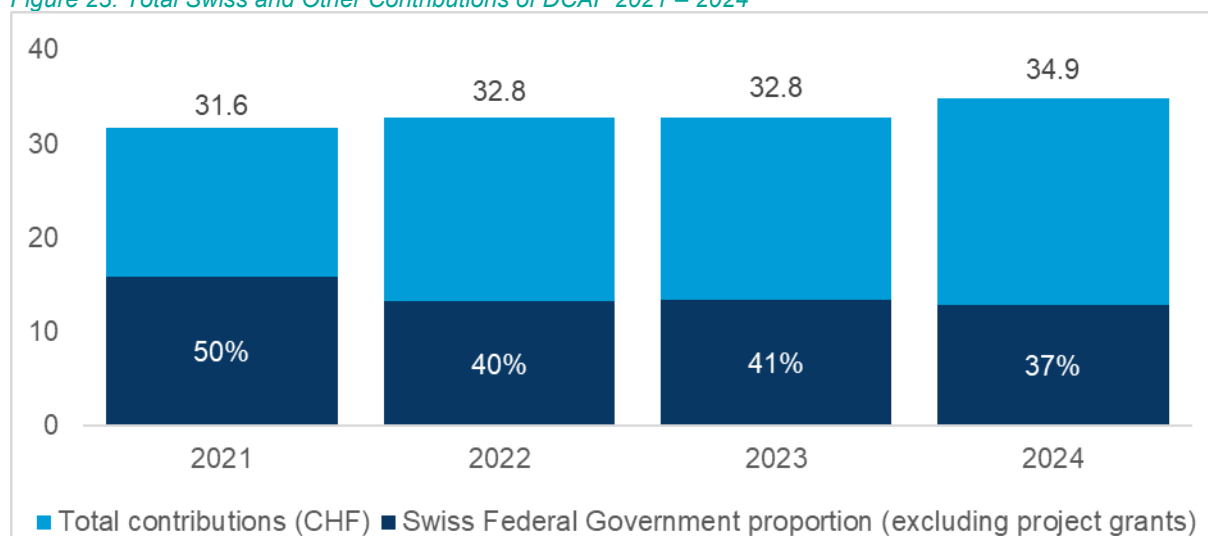
- 1) Articulate a concise set of strategic policy priorities
- 2) Strengthen and systematize policy messaging on governance as a driver of security effectiveness
- 3) Strengthen strategic engagement with large security assistance programmes
- 4) Broaden expertise in reform processes for defence and security institutions
- 5) Consolidate the shift towards outcome-oriented learning

Introduction

Switzerland's FDFA commissioned IOD PARC to undertake an external evaluation of the three Geneva-based security policy centres, the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP), the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD), and the DCAF.

All three Centres are perceived as centres of excellence in their fields. The Swiss Government remains their biggest funder, and the Swiss Confederation is represented on the governing boards of each of the Centres. All three Centres are increasing the proportion of funding they receive from other countries and partners (see Figure 23 below for DCAF's budget and the Swiss Federal Government proportion), and are governed by a Foundation Council, composed of representatives of States that support DCAF's mission.

Figure 23: Total Swiss and Other Contributions of DCAF 2021 – 2024



The present evaluation report focuses on DCAF and is expected to contribute to the drafting of the dispatch of the Federal Council to Parliament for the period from 2028-2031.

Methodology and Data Collection

This evaluation was conducted between January and March 2026 and used a mixed-methods approach combining document review, stakeholder consultations, and survey data. The objective was to assess DCAF's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and impact in relation to its mandate and the Swiss Confederation's support to the Geneva Centres. The evaluation draws on four main sources of evidence as shown in Figure 24 below.

Figure 24: Data collection summary



First, a structured document review examined DCAF's strategic and operational documentation, including strategy papers, results frameworks, annual reports, programme evaluations, and internal policy notes and documents. Relevant Swiss foreign policy and security policy documents were also reviewed to assess alignment with national priorities.

Second, an online stakeholder survey was conducted. It had a response rate of 54% which equates to 267 responses, including 152 internal respondents from DCAF and 115 external respondents from partner governments, donors, civil society organisations (CSOs), and experts. Third, 34 semi-structured key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted with DCAF personnel across levels of responsibility, thematic and functional portfolios, Swiss and other donor representatives, external partners including but not limited to civil society figures. Finally, two focus group discussions with DCAF staff provided additional insights into organisational culture and internal processes.²¹

Findings are based on triangulation across these data sources. While the evaluation relies partly on stakeholder perceptions and was conducted within a limited timeframe, the breadth of consultations and documentary evidence provides a sufficiently robust basis for the observations presented in this report.

Findings

To what extent has DCAF taken on board recommendations from the previous evaluation?

The 2022 external evaluation of the Geneva Centres produced a series of recommendations aimed at strengthening DCAF's strategic positioning, governance and organisational efficiency. Overall, the evidence reviewed for this evaluation indicates that DCAF has broadly acted upon the 2022 evaluation recommendations, particularly when it comes to organisational governance and strategic planning (see Figure 25).²²

Figure 25: Summary - Achievement of recommendations from the previous evaluation²³

#	Recommendation	Achievement
1	Better understand and engage with selected armed groups and hybrid security and justice providers	
2	More engagement with civil society in SSG/R	
3	More proactive engagement with Swiss government at complementary levels	
4	Redefine ISSAT governance arrangements	
5	Delegate management below director's level	
6	Reduce the bureaucracy	
7	Bring coherence to DCAF's branding	
8	Conduct a human centered evaluation of DCAF's work at country level	
9	Deliberately collaborate with International Geneva	
10	Review IT Services	

Several recommendations from the 2022 evaluation concerned internal governance, management systems and administrative efficiency. Evidence from organisational

²¹ One formal session was held with seven participants, and an informal discussion convened during a DCAF retreat.

²² For more details, see DCAF (2025), Report on the implementation of recommendations from external evaluations.

²³ It is worth noting that recommendation 10, the "review of IT services", was addressed collectively to all three Centres.

documentation and interviews indicates meaningful progress in this area. Measures implemented since 2022 include strengthened financial approval procedures, greater involvement of the finance function in grant management processes, and the development of a new internal portfolio and knowledge management system (“One DCAF Hub”) designed to improve coordination and compliance with donor requirements. Interview data also points to broader organisational reforms, including the establishment of a new unit responsible for strategy execution and organisational learning. These initiatives appear aligned with the 2022 evaluation’s recommendations to improve organisational coherence and reduce bureaucratic fragmentation.

Interview and survey data nonetheless suggests that the state of implementation of some of the 2022 recommendations remains in transition, and that translating strategic priorities into institutional learning, as with many institutional reform processes, will require sustained operationalisation over the coming years.

Relevance

Are DCAF’s programmes and partnership approaches responsive to the needs of their target beneficiaries, stakeholders and partner institutions?

Relevance has increased, not diminished, in a world shifting towards hard security – both internal and external interviewees deem that DCAF’s relevance is higher now than in previous years. The renewed emphasis on hard security, rising defence spending, renewed interstate conflict and democratic backsliding, has heightened the importance of Security Sector Governance (SSG) as a political and normative agenda. Interviewees consistently spoke of a sharp increase in risks associated with weak oversight, politicised security institutions, human rights violations, and long-term institutional fragility across most countries of intervention. Against this backdrop, they i) see a renewed urgency and relevance for international partners to anchor security in governance, human rights, and accountability, and they ii) clearly associate this role with DCAF.

When asked about international partners active in this field, external interviewees view DCAF as *the only organisation* that focuses on the institutional and accountability frameworks that shape how security is exercised. They further deem that DCAF has the credibility and access to bring evidence from multiple contexts at global level, to engage policymakers on how Security Sector Governance and Reform (SSG/R) *actually* strengthens security outcomes.

DCAF’s relevance is particularly evident in contexts of coups, democratic regression, or shrinking civic space, which interviewees deem exposed the limits of hard-security approaches. In the Sahel, interviewees noted that DCAF has maintained carefully calibrated engagement designed to keep governance and human rights spaces open, while other actors have disengaged or scaled down. This included continued involvement with financial audits and anti-corruption in the security and defence sector (in Burkina Faso), military justice, community engagement and accountability (Mali) and community security (Niger), as well as dialogue with donors around “red lines and non-red lines” for continued cooperation. Rather than retreating from politically difficult environments, DCAF appears to have adapted and maintained institutional relationships.

Tunisia provides an illustration of how democratic regression can increase DCAF’s relevance - While many international actors have scaled back or faced access constraints, DCAF has expanded engagement, working with the Ministry of Interior, internal security forces, and increasingly the Ministry of Defence. DCAF is currently the only actor deeply engaged on matters of SSG/R in Tunisia, including in the adoption of a code of conduct for internal security forces, and in designing subsequent training and capacity-building programmes.

Across regions, appreciation of DCAF appears grounded not only in what it does, but in how it works - Internal and external respondents alike emphasised DCAF's ability to listen, adapt, and accompany rather than prescribe; to engage on sensitive governance issues without triggering resistance or withdrawal; and to sustain long-term relationships in politically constrained environments. DCAF's comparative advantage lies in expertise and, equally importantly, in its ability to remain engaged in politically sensitive reform processes over extended periods of time, often maintaining relationships where other actors withdraw.

External stakeholders express strong appreciation and demand for more engagement

- Across external interviews, feedback on DCAF's relevance is enthusiastically positive and framed in terms of appreciation and trust. External partners consistently ask for *more*—more thought leadership, more agility, deeper engagement, more funding for CSO partners and sustained presence in-country—rather than questioning DCAF's role or relevance. The indication that value is strong and demand-driven cuts across interviewees and geographic regions.

Field presence underpins legitimacy, access, and relevance - DCAF's field presence (through country offices or embedded staff) significantly enhances its relevance and legitimacy. Being physically present allows DCAF to maintain access, build trust, and ground policy influence in operational reality. External partners interviewed as part of this evaluation consistently associate DCAF's credibility and influence with its ability to combine in-country practice with global policy engagement.

Convening power and brand recognition are central to DCAF's added value - DCAF's ability to convene diverse and politically sensitive actors, in an inclusive manner, remains one of its strongest assets. All respondents indicate that the organisation's governance structure, broad stakeholder base, and trusted brand enable it to bring together donors, partner governments, civil society, and international organisations in ways very few others can. Events such as the one held in November 2025 convening high-level Lebanese and Palestinian participants were cited as examples of DCAF's unique positioning as a neutral and credible broker in otherwise contested environments.

To what extent do DCAF add value to Switzerland's foreign policy priorities through their strategic and thematic areas of focus and their activities?

Alignment with Swiss foreign policy priorities reinforces strategic relevance - DCAF's work shows strong alignment with Swiss strategic priorities, including people-centred security, human rights, democratic values, conflict prevention, and multilateral engagement. This alignment is particularly evident in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Sahel, where countries have increasingly pushed back against what they perceive as "Western" or colonial political agendas, and DCAF's Swiss identity has emerged as an additional asset. The organisation benefits from an established perception of neutrality, impartiality, and non-alignment associated with Switzerland, which helps distinguish it from actors more directly linked to geopolitical blocs. Interviewees indicated that this Swiss factor reinforces trust and facilitates continued engagement in politically sensitive environments, anchoring DCAF's work in a reputation for discretion and principled but non-confrontational dialogue. A similar point was made about Switzerland's non-North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) status, in the context of central and eastern Europe.

Strategic rhetoric vs financial signal – DCAF, much like the other two Geneva Centres, is presented by Switzerland as a key strategic partner and instrument of influence in security

governance. They are also perceived as such by other external partners. While politically visible, DCAF actually is financially marginal within the overall portfolio.²⁴

If DCAF is expected to keep functioning as a strategic lever to i) shape norms, ii) influence multilateral debates, and iii) reinforce Switzerland's global standing, the contemplated reductions in Swiss core funding generate strategic ambiguity for them and a number of external respondents.

Has DCAF adapted their strategies to address emerging challenges and changing conditions in their fields of operation?

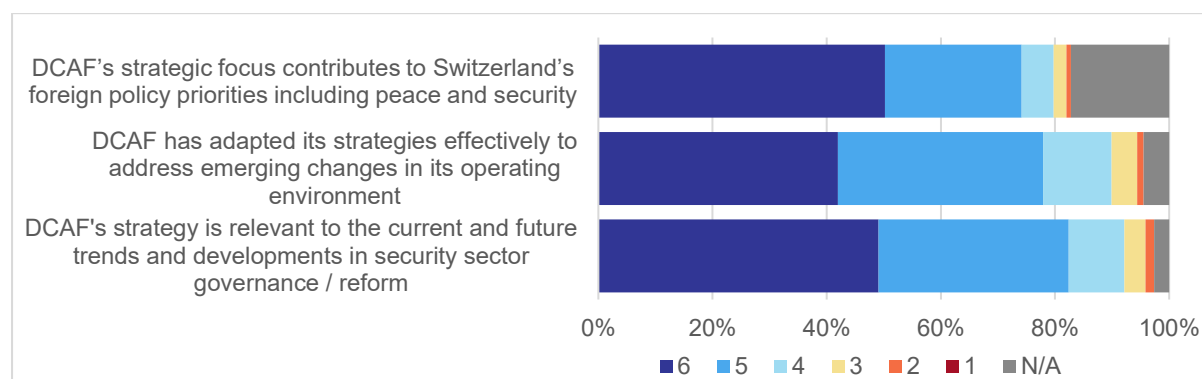
DCAF's strategy appears forward-looking, adaptive, and well-aligned with both global SSG/R developments and Switzerland's foreign policy priorities. DCAF's strategy correctly identifies many of the key trends shaping the SSG/R landscape, including renewed interstate conflict, the erosion of democratic governance, climate-related security risks, and the ethical and governance implications of emerging technologies and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the defence and security industry. At the level of strategic intent and framing, "the strategy demonstrates strong situational awareness and normative coherence."²⁵

However, the evaluation finds a gap between strategic recognition and operational translation. While emerging challenges are referenced in strategic documents and at director level, their implications for prioritisation, sequencing, resource allocation and institutional trade-offs are not yet consistently articulated. As a result, in the first year of the current strategy, adaptation has started and is still uneven in practice, and the strategy's relevance is not always reflected in sustained analytical focus of organisational follow-through at the time of writing.

Survey data broadly supports this finding. Internal respondents²⁶ consider the strategy broadly relevant and aligned with Swiss foreign policy, but they report comparatively weaker performance on adaptation to emerging challenges (see item 2 in Figure 26 below). This may suggest that the strategic direction is well understood indeed, but that operationalisation remains work in progress.

Figure 26: Survey Responses on the relevance of DCAF's strategy

Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statements (Where 1 = strongly disagree and 6 = strongly agree).



²⁴ Switzerland's ODA amounts to about 4 billion CHF for 2024, of which 1 billion goes for in-country refugee assistance. See here for an indicative breakdown. In comparison, the Centres' cumulated annual budget amounts to 30-35 million CHF in recent years.

²⁵ Quote from survey respondent, February 2026.

²⁶ The table below captures survey respondent feedback for 152 internal (DCAF) respondents, see item 2 on the extent to which DCAF has adapted its strategies effectively to address emerging changes.

Efficiency

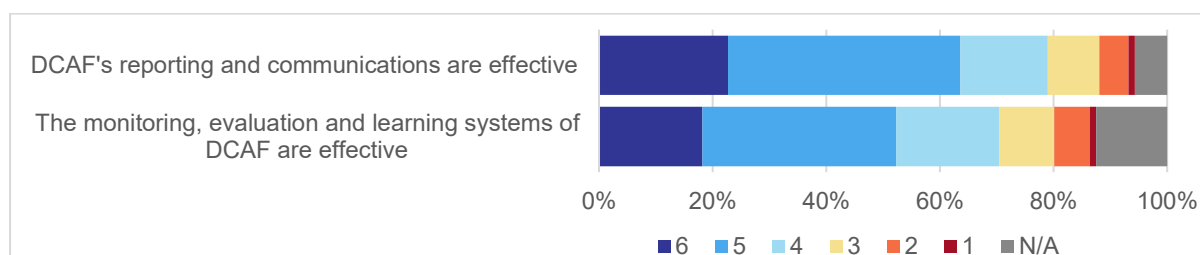
Does DCAF have robust internal management, monitoring and learning systems in place that support adaptive and high-quality programming?

Overall, the evaluation finds that DCAF is **firmly on a trajectory towards stronger results orientation**, with the necessary systems, resources, and intent increasingly in place. Interview evidence indicates that the said shift is deliberate and leadership driven. “The signal comes from the top”, as one interviewee put it.

While the direction of travel is clear, DCAF staff is in the midst of the transition from measuring results to institutionalising learning across the organisation. Survey respondent feedback data corroborates this analysis and indicates that only 20% of respondents strongly agree with the proposed statement that DCAF’s monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) systems are effective (see item 2 in Figure 27 below).

Figure 27: Internal Stakeholder Survey Responses – DCAF Internal Operations

Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (where 1 = strongly disagree and 6 = strongly agree)



The three following elements will determine the extent to which current reforms translate into a mature learning culture in the future: i) how the new systems (described below) are used in practice from 2026 onwards, ii) the extent to which the organisation succeeds in normalising critical reflection (including on shortcomings and setbacks) as a core component of effectiveness rather than a reputational risk, and iii) systematic feedback loops from evaluations into programme redesign.

Systems have been strengthened and capacities increased. Concrete steps underpin this shift and include the following:

- The establishment of the Strategy Execution (“Stratex”) unit represents a structural investment in coherence and decision-making at executive level. The said unit consolidates corporate risk management, programme cycle management, MEL, planning, and outcome reporting under one structure. It is widely seen as a necessary and promising investment, which has been made possible thanks to Swiss core funding and Dutch support.
- To support this change, Stratex features dedicated MEL capacity and a central MEL budget for internal training on outcome harvesting, stories of change, and piloting learning approaches. Field-level MEL capacity has also expanded, notably in Africa and Middle East and North Africa (MENA), where dedicated Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) advisors support operational teams.
- The adoption of a single monitoring framework,²⁷ supported by a limited set of corporate outcome indicators aligned with the DCAF strategy. The so-called “One DCAF Results Framework,” launched in late 2025, marks a clear move towards organisation-wide outcome thinking. In turn, the 2026 Work Plan and Mid-Term

²⁷ DCAF will have piloted the implementation of the monitoring framework across all projects by the end of 2026.

Delivery Plan translate these into time-bound objectives, measurable milestones, and clearer internal accountability. They signal a shift from aspirational framing to structured delivery.

- Alongside these structural changes, DCAF has changed the frequency of its results reporting to strengthen reflection and accountability. Learning from the 2024 results review (see below), comprehensive biennial performance reports Programmatic Reviews will be produced from 2027 onwards, and the collection of outcome-focused stories of change has already begun. As of early 2026, DCAF has developed over 30 stories of change. This marks a rapid institutional uptake and growing awareness that credible learning requires focusing on what changes *after* laws, policies, or tools are adopted, not merely on their production.

The 2024 results review marked a pivotal moment²⁸ - facilitated by two experienced external consultants (both former DCAF staff), the review was repeatedly cited a turning point. Staff engagement with the review was high, and staff interviewees highlighted the value of having trusted sparring partners who were both familiar with DCAF and sufficiently independent to challenge assumptions. The review helped surface critical questions about changes at outcome level, organisational culture, and reluctance to document setbacks or negative findings. A few interviewees noted that the process “made [them] reflect on the distance between the discourse and [their] own practice,” in so far as discussions about what does not work often remain confined within project teams and are not documented in writing.

Learning culture: in progress despite some resistance and legacy patterns - Despite clear leadership commitment, organisational learning remains uneven. In several interviews, monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems were still described as underdeveloped and inconsistently applied at project level. Interviewees mostly alluded to a strong cultural legacy marked by caution, hierarchical habits, and reluctance to document failure. “Fear of failure” and concerns that critical reflection might negatively affect funding or performance reviews continue to limit openness. In contexts where funding has recently declined, this sensitivity may be particularly acute.²⁹

Importantly, this is not the first attempt to introduce organisation-wide frameworks for results and learning. Previous frameworks existed but were implemented inconsistently across units. The current reform effort appears more comprehensive and better resourced, as well as benefiting from strong support on the part of the organisation’s leadership, hence giving it stronger prospects for sustainability.

Evidence from country programmes illustrates both the potential and the unevenness of current approaches to data use and results monitoring. In The Gambia, DCAF has generated a substantial body of quantitative and qualitative evidence over several years, allowing programme teams to track institutional reforms and behavioural change within the security sector. Legislative reforms, professional standards, oversight mechanisms, and institutional practices have been documented through a combination of performance indicators, stakeholder feedback, and qualitative monitoring. Similarly, the outcome harvesting evaluation underway in Niger at the time of writing (covering several years of programming and extending beyond donor reporting requirements), is a very promising pilot test to capture institutional change in complex environments and strengthen organisational learning. Interview evidence nonetheless suggests that such systematic approaches remain uneven across programmes,

²⁸ Hagan P. and Robinson A. (2025), Programmatic review 2023-2024.

²⁹ Source, interviews with DCAF personnel, January 2026.

and several respondents described the Gambia as “not the norm yet” in relation to data collection and monitoring.³⁰

Looking ahead: the test of institutionalisation – The present moment can be characterised as transitional: foundations are in place, but cultural and behavioural shifts are still consolidating. 2026 will be the first full reporting cycle under the One DCAF framework and will provide a real test of the consistent use of the new monitoring and reporting systems at outcome level, and the extent to which it informs adaptive management and learning within and across units. A reassessment in late 2026 will provide a more reliable basis for assessing how successfully DCAF has embraced outcome measurement and embedded organisational learning.

How satisfied and engaged is the workforce of DCAF and what mechanisms are in place to monitor and respond to staff well-being and motivation?

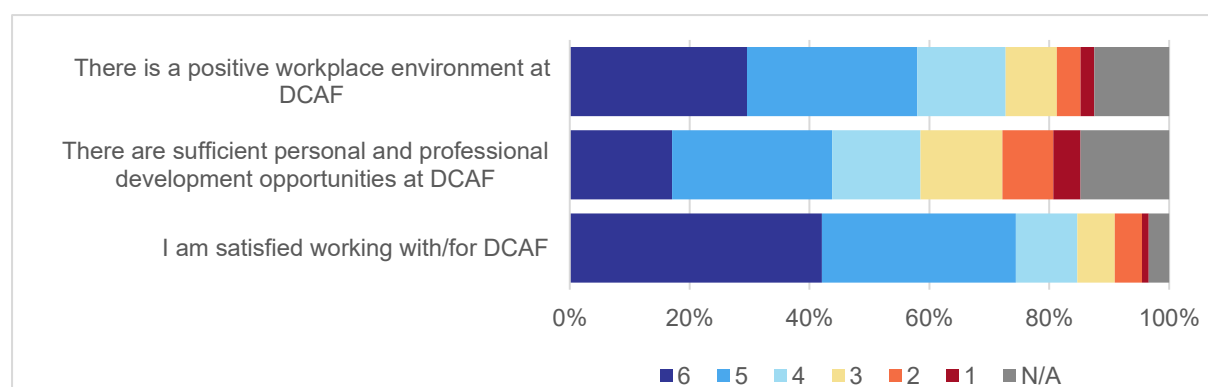
DCAF has undergone a tangible internal transformation over the past several years, resulting in a widely perceived improvement in how the organisation functions. Interview data speaks to the current working environment as more open, collegial, and enabling than in the past, backed by the survey data shown in Figure 28 below.

A recurring theme is the move away from vertical, permission-heavy management practices towards a more horizontal and empowering organisational ethos. Staff reported greater clarity around decision-making processes, fewer bottlenecks, and increased confidence in exercising responsibility without constant upward referral. Traces of legacy behaviours obviously remain (for instance, around document sharing) but the overall trajectory is clearly towards trust.

This cultural shift has been reinforced by concrete management and organisational measures. The introduction of more systematic feedback loops, including staff barometers and structured exchanges between business units and Human Resources (HR) as of late 2023, has improved internal dialogue. Several interviewees referred to “a genuine open-door policy” at senior leadership level and improved internal communication compared to the past. The establishment of a staff commission in late 2025, alongside renewed integrity and whistleblowing mechanisms, further signals institutional commitment to dialogue and transparency.

Figure 28: Internal Stakeholder Survey Responses – DCAF workplace satisfaction

Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (where 1 = strongly disagree and 6 = strongly agree)



Organisational restructuring has contributed to improved efficiency and coherence. The creation of dedicated units focused on strategy execution and partnerships was widely

³⁰ This finding that learning is not fully operationalised across projects is also corroborated by independent evaluation findings at project level, for instance the 2025 External Evaluation of the DCAF Trust Fund for Security Sector Development Assistance in North Africa (TFNA), esp. pp.30-37.

understood as an effort to rationalise workflows, strengthen evidence-informed decision-making, and present a more coherent interface to external partners. Interviewees described these changes as part of a broader efficiency agenda, including harmonisation of salary scales, job titles, timesheets, and reporting processes introduced from 2024 onward. These efforts were seen as laying the foundation for clearer career pathways, internal fairness, and improved cross-unit and HQ/field offices coordination. Staff repeatedly described DCAF as “much more agile than before”, emphasising faster decision-making, improved coordination between Geneva and the field, and a stronger sense of being part of a single organisation rather than semi-autonomous units.

Taken together, there is evidence of enhanced organisational efficiency, staff motivation, and internal coherence compared to the last evaluation period. The transformation is still in progress and capacity constraints remain in a few core functions where workload pressures remain high relative to staffing levels.

Effectiveness

To what extent have DCAF achieved their expected outputs and outcomes for the 2024-2027 period, as outlined in their mandates and strategic plans?

DCAF’s performance against its strategic objectives is supported by a structured but still maturing evidence base, combining strategic documents, corporate monitoring systems and independent project evaluation findings. DCAF’s 2025-2030 strategy defines four core objectives and intended results areas, providing a clear conceptual framework for outputs and outcomes across contexts.³¹ These strategic objectives are as follows:

- Objective 1: Empower national partners to promote and strengthen democratic SSG based on international norms and good practices and develop responses to new security challenges that place good governance at the core.
- Objective 2: Identify and capitalize on innovative and secure entry points to advance good SSG in highly adverse environments, such as those marked by substantial democratic reversal, extensive civilian violence, and open violent conflict.
- Objective 3: Engage with security sector actors to promote gender equality and intersectional approaches in addressing discrimination and injustice through SSG.
- Objective 4: Influence international engagement on SSG.

Available evidence from the document review and interviews realised as part of this evaluation indicates that DCAF is consistently delivering planned outputs. Across its portfolio, this includes sustained delivery of advisory support, capacity building, policy development, and facilitation of multi-stakeholder dialogue processes.

DCAF also demonstrates credible progress towards intended outcomes, with evidence of changes in institutional practices, strengthened oversight mechanisms, adoption of policies and legislation (e.g. Tunisia’s Code of Conduct), and, in some cases, improvements in public perceptions of security provision (see longitudinal surveys realised in the Gambia). However, the extent of achievement at outcome level remains only partially evidenced at the time of writing.³² This is especially the case for outcomes in relation to policy influence and institutional change.

Gender and intersectionality

³¹ For more insight, see DCAF Strategy document for 2025-2030.

³² DCAF’s consolidated results framework is not yet fully operationalised to demonstrate organisation-wide achievement at outcome level, but aggregated results will be available at the end of 2026. See more about MEL systems and reporting under the efficiency section above.

DCAF's continued prioritisation of gender equality and intersectionality as one of its core strategic pillars is a consequential and deliberate choice in the current geopolitical climate. At a time when many governments are scaling back or contesting gender-related agendas (especially in relation to security sector assistance and reform), DCAF has maintained gender-responsive and people-centred security as a visible and sustained strategic priority. Interview data confirms that it reflects a conscious strategic positioning from DCAF, which appears widely recognised and appreciated by external partners, and should be acknowledged as both principled and forward-looking.

There is evidence that the organisation's credibility in this area is strong. External stakeholders³³ consistently associate DCAF with rigorous, practice-based work on gender, Women, Peace and Security (WPS), and inclusive security governance. This feedback is further illustrated by external demand for gender expertise applied to SSG/R. Canada, for example, has been a key partner in advancing gender integration within security institutions, including the *Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations*, which aims to increase the meaningful participation of uniformed women in United Nations (UN) peace operations, with a focus on military and police roles. The programme works directly with troop and police contributing countries to address institutional barriers to women's participation within security institutions, including recruitment, career progression, leadership development, and deployment readiness.³⁴

Similarly, South Korean authorities approached DCAF directly based on its reputation in gender-responsive security governance despite not being part of DCAF's formal governance structures. They requested training for police and defence Gender Focal Points, with a specific focus on investigative techniques in cases of GBV and domestic violence. A one-week training for 23 participants from South Korea and Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) participating States was held in November 2025, and a follow-up engagement, also involving international participants, is planned for June 2026. This example of an actor outside of DCAF's formal governance structure actively seeking out collaboration, attests to DCAF's international standing, normative and technical credibility in the field of gender equality for security institutions.

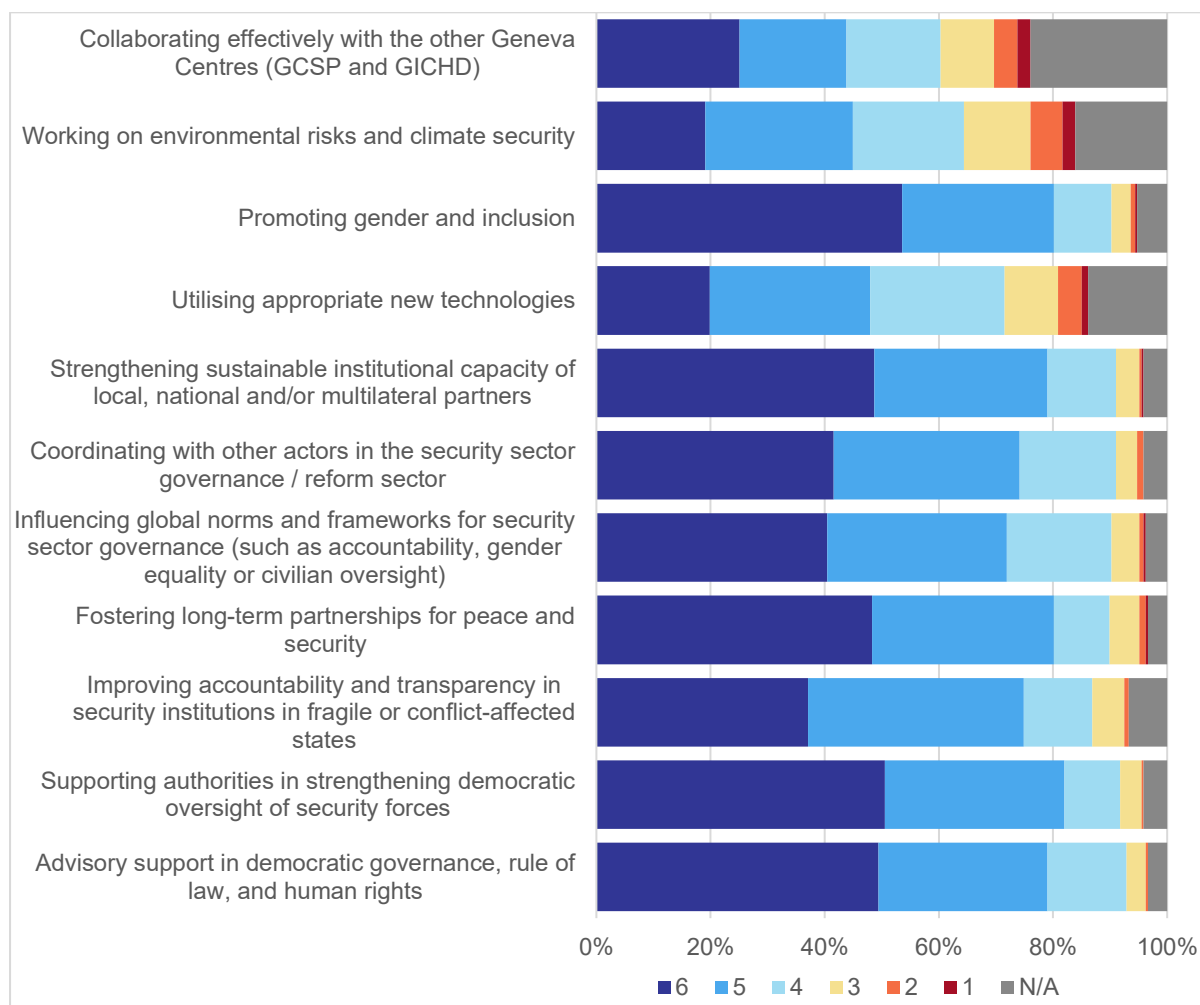
below specifically shows how strong that perception is in relation to the promotion of gender and inclusion norms.

³³ This includes donors and national partners alike, based on a review of KII and survey feedback, March 2026.

³⁴ Under the Elsie initiative, DCAF works directly with troops and police contributing countries such as Bangladesh, Jordan, Senegal, South Africa and Uruguay. For more insight, see DCAF (2025), Elsie programme midterm review.

Figure 29: Survey Responses – DCAF's effectiveness

Question: To what extent is DCAF effective in the following areas? (Where 1 = not very effective and 6 = highly effective)



Evidence from country programming illustrates that DCAF's approach to gender-responsive SSG/R is frequently embedded within broader reform efforts. The Gambia evaluations³⁵ provide evidence to the effect that DCAF's work went beyond training on gender and rights compliance to include systemic institutional reforms within the police and security sector. This included the i) institutionalisation of gender-responsive policies within the Gambia Police Force, ii) Strengthening of HR management systems and professional standards, iii) Development and implementation of codes of conduct and oversight mechanisms, and iv) A reform of private security companies and their oversight, v) Collection and triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data to assess behavioural change over time.

Internally, this reputation is underpinned by dedicated capacity. DCAF currently maintains a specialised gender and diversity unit of approximately 14 staff, complemented by gender focal points embedded across operational teams at HQ and in country offices, bringing the wider community of staff working on gender-related issues to roughly 30 staff across the organisation.³⁶

³⁵ Details can be found in the 2023 final project evaluation of DCAF's Support to the Gambian Security Sector Reform process as well as the 2025 final project evaluation of DCAF's Strengthening the efficiency, effectiveness and accountability of The Gambia immigration department.

³⁶ Source, internal staff interview, January 2026.

As a result, the evaluation finds that gender-responsive governance appears strongly internalised in the way DCAF staff speak about their work and is reported to be routinely embedded in discussions of programme design. This suggests that gender considerations are not treated as a separate thematic add-on but are integrated into the organisation's broader conceptual framework for security sector governance. Interview data shows that internal and external respondents alike, tend to associate gender work more closely with oversight than its structural reform implications or operational practices.³⁷ The evidence, however, does not suggest a substantive gap in programming, but rather an opportunity for DCAF to more consistently emphasise that gender-responsive and inclusive approaches contribute directly to the effectiveness, professionalism, and legitimacy of security institutions, not only to oversight and accountability functions.

What are the enabling and constraining factors that have affected the success of DCAF?

Organisational ethos as a key enabler

Across interviews and focus group discussions, staff consistently described DCAF's organisational identity as a **"do, think, and influence" organisation – specifically in that order**. This formulation was articulated independently by staff at different levels of seniority, suggesting that it is not simply a leadership message but an internalised understanding of how the organisation sees its role.

The dominant view across DCAF interviewees is that **practice comes first**. DCAF's influence is understood to derive primarily from operational engagement in countries and regions, rather than from stand-alone analysis or advocacy. The value of "Thinking" is framed as supporting and gathering evidence from the "doing", and refining methodologies. Influence, in turn, is seen as a consequence of credibility built through sustained, practical engagement. This sequencing marks a departure from more traditional think-tank or advisory models and underpins DCAF's distinctive advantage in the security sector governance space.

This ethos has concrete implications for how DCAF engages with partners. Staff repeatedly stressed that DCAF does not position itself as an external critic or evaluator of national actors, but as an accompanying and supporting partner. They view DCAF as an organisation that works *alongside* institutions rather than *outside* them, to help them navigate reform processes, manage political constraints, and identify feasible pathways for change. This approach is seen as essential for maintaining access, trust, and relevance in politically sensitive and constrained environments.³⁸

The emphasis on "doing first" also reinforces the importance of country-level presence and operational depth. Concretely, most interviewees, internal and external alike, deem that DCAF's policy influence derives from the operational credibility the organisation has built through field engagement. Similarly, staff highlighted the importance of a strong operational footprint to anchor learning in their own implementation experience. In this sense, DCAF's organisational culture and business model appear closely aligned: the organisation's ability to think and influence effectively is understood to depend on its continued capacity to deliver, accompany, and adapt in the field. There is however limited indication that this realisation has translated into a clear policy agenda (see below under impact).

37 This finding applies to internal and external respondents alike, to the extent that only three internal respondents articulated clear analytical messages linking gender and intersectionality to effective institutional reform, whereas most others spoke about DCAF's work in terms of oversight (see the next finding for more insight).

38 The importance of the "accompany rather than prescribe" ethos built on internal feedback and was triangulated through conversations with external respondents in west Africa, north Africa and Syria, speaking to DCAF's ability to adapt to local contexts and stakeholders' feedback.

The increasingly competitive SSG/R market is a key external constraint

DCAF operates in a SSG/R landscape that has become increasingly competitive, crowded, and commercially sophisticated.³⁹ Interviewees mentioned a range of organisations and operators active in the Security Sector Reform (SSR) space, including but not limited to Civipol, Coginta, Expertise France, GIZ. Some have built significant SSR track record in the field, they may often lack a single focus on matters of Security Sector Governance but rather combine governance components with training of security and police forces, rehabilitation of security infrastructures in rural areas, and equipment. Their approach is much more that of an implementing partner capable of delivering solutions across the entire security assistance chain, in contrast to DCAF's ethos of influencing national partners and informing their choices.

This shift is particularly visible in the EU's funding architecture. The recent introduction of a thorough compliance assessment as a prerequisite for managing EU funds has strengthened the role of a limited group of accredited *pillar assessed partners* in the peace and security space, mostly EU member state implementation agencies such as GIZ (Germany), FIAPP (Spain), Civipol and Expertise France (France), working in large consortia covering governance, security assistance, border management and institutional reform.⁴⁰ In the peace and security space, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the EU member state agencies named above are the most frequent pillar-assessed partners for the EU, and offer the EU administrative simplicity, scale and multi-sector capacity across SSR interventions. Pillar assessed partners are eligible for EU contributions agreements and manage large programmes, whereas organisations such as DCAF are eligible to specific project-funding of a smaller scale referred to as subventions (or "grants").

Feedback from several interviewees' points to a key dilemma for DCAF in this increasingly consortium-driven and competitive SSG/R market. On the one hand, there are now more competitors offering "train, equip and reform" packages that can sideline DCAF's accompaniment-based approach. On the other, donor preference for large consortium-based delivery models, risks diluting DCAF's influence. One donor respondent acknowledged that "DCAF is great" but specifically cautioned that the organisation risks "taking too much for granted" in a context where donors are actively "solicited by SSR operators (...) who cover the whole security assistance range, including 'train and equip' and governance," and "position themselves very smartly" on calls for proposals.⁴¹

At senior leadership level, there is clear awareness of these shifts, including changes in donor behaviour, increased reliance on large consortia, and the growing prominence of actors able to span the full spectrum of security assistance. However, this awareness is not yet consistently shared across the organisation. Interviews and conversations below leadership level show limited familiarity with consortium dynamics and partnership negotiation. This may indicate that the strategic implications of the evolving market are not uniformly understood across the organisation. Based on past (and current) experience, most DCAF interviewees fear consortium arrangements would reduce the organisation to a "technical subcontractor",

³⁹ Most respondents mentioned "competitive" and "crowded" and five (2 DCAF and 3 external) specifically elaborated on sophisticated commercial negotiations and consortia arrangements.

⁴⁰ In the case of Lebanon, examples include two 2024 EU NDICI/AAP Actions to "Promote safety, security and stability" and "Enhanced border security" for a cumulated total of 55 million euros. These were allocated to two consortia, one including Civipol, FIAPP, GIZ and IOM, and the other one GIZ, Expertise France, UNODC and other pillar assessed partners. Source, author's knowledge from other recent assignments.

⁴¹ Quote from an interview with a donor representative realised as part of this evaluation.

which “cannot maintain intellectual ownership of the work” and would “lose visibility with donors.”⁴²

Specifically, when it comes to the EU, DCAF is not pillar assessed, which limits the organisation’s ability to compete for, or lead large EU-funded security governance programmes, which increasingly combine governance, train and equip and institutional reform components.

Closely linked to this is the question of *perceived absorption capacity*. DCAF’s relative absence from large, multi-component consortia appears, in some cases, to generate donor uncertainty about its ability to manage programmes at significant scale. This is especially the case when compared to larger implementing organisations or UN agencies such as UNDP, which routinely act as lead entities for complex delivery structures.⁴³

How DCAF positions itself within larger delivery models remains an open question for now. In contrast to organisations that position themselves as one-stop providers, offering donors scale, administrative simplicity, and rapid delivery through consortium-based models, a couple of respondents see DCAF at a risk of gradual marginalisation. If the organisation does not sufficiently align its offer with evolving donor funding schemes, its ability to shape governance components within larger security assistance envelopes and programmes may diminish, irrespective of the quality of DCAF’s work.

Given the direction of EU and other donor funding models, this represents a consideration of structural significance whose depth and long-term implications do not yet appear to be consistently understood organisation wide. Clearer internal guidance on partnerships and consortia, more deliberate positioning around absorption capacity, and sharper articulation of DCAF’s role within larger delivery models (as the partner who can integrate governance into wider defence and security assistance policy and programming), will be critical to sustaining relevance and influence in an increasingly competitive SSR environment.

Impact

What are the longer-term expected effects of DCAFs’ programs on the respective sectors (security policy, humanitarian demining, and security sector governance)?

The evaluation finds limited evidence that DCAF’s do–think–influence ethos shapes strategic policy choices

Survey and interview data confirm that DCAF enjoys a very strong external reputation. External respondents consistently describe DCAF as “the world’s most important knowledge centre on SSR&G,” a partner that is “reliable, technically strong and highly adaptable” and “a leader in inclusive and gender-responsive security governance.”⁴⁴ Respondents across widely different geographies (e.g. Ukraine, Central Asia, the Middle-East, the Sahel and North America) emphasise DCAF’s professionalism, field presence, convening power, and ability to

⁴² Quote from participants to an informal FGD with DCAF personnel, held in January 2026. To be clear, the evaluation does not suggest that DCAF should engage in “train and equip” activities itself. Rather, interview data points to the need to move beyond a simple dichotomy and acknowledge that “train and equip” initiatives often constitute an entry point through which governance questions can be addressed. While the Director appears acutely aware of this, interview data suggests a need for more constructive engagement with these realities across the broader team.

⁴³ Five respondents specifically raised concerns about DCAF’s “perceived absorption capacity” at country level when compared to commercially agile or pillar-assessed organisations. In addition, some other respondents spoke to a perceived reluctance on the part of DCAF to “go big” and manage significant operational portfolios, not knowing whether the organisation is equipped to do so, in terms of management capabilities.

⁴⁴ Quotes from survey feedback forms, selected only from external (i.e. non DCAF) respondents. February 2026.

translate normative commitments into practical tools.⁴⁵ There is no ambiguity about DCAF's credibility or relevance.

Importantly, DCAF plays a significant role in norm-setting and operationalisation of standards. Its engagement in revising the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) DAC Handbook on Security System Reform, and its development of practical instruments such as the gender self-assessment toolkit for the Security Sector (piloted with security or defence institutions in countries such as the Gambia, Burkina Faso, Colombia, Honduras, Mali, Ukraine, Zambia and North Macedonia), inspector toolkits (e.g. in Burkina Faso) were recurrently mentioned as i) evidence of strong methodological leadership, and ii) the foundation upon which effective capacity-building interventions are built.⁴⁶ Survey responses confirm appreciation for this “how-to” expertise and for DCAF's ability to operationalise principles into implementable guidance.

Most external partners struggled to articulate a concise set of thematic and/or policy priorities, when asked to identify DCAF's key policy messages or priority areas for the coming years. While they recognise DCAF's expertise, they do not consistently associate the organisation with a clearly signalled forward-looking intellectual agenda. This does not suggest a lack of demand for thought leadership, various external respondents indicated that they look to DCAF to help them understand “what's going on in the field of SSR.” However, when asked for specifics, external interviewees were generally unable to identify distinct themes or priority areas shaping the SSR landscape. They similarly had no clear sense of which SSG/R issues DCAF may seek to lead on in coming years, and those specifically prompted, could not come up with examples of how DCAF reports, policy events or publications had shifted their perceptions or own policy on a dedicated topic.

Similarly, internal respondents did not articulate a clear set of overarching SSG/R policy priorities or strategic themes that DCAF intends to champion in the coming years. Nor could most interviewees point to explicit linkages between field practice and the organisation's publication agenda, public positioning, or policy engagement. Four interviewees specifically see an opportunity to better articulate and leverage the “think” and “influence” dimensions externally.

The issue does not appear to be about weak expertise, but limited signalling. DCAF's strategy articulates a broad and comprehensive framework that lists a large number of thematic areas, including but not limited to climate-related security risks, defence governance in hard-security contexts, technological transformation of warfare, hybrid threats and disinformation, ethics around the use of AI in warfare, or shrinking civic space. Also, DCAF operates in a saturated information landscape, where policy stakeholders get “bombarded with information, analysis and reports”⁴⁷ and have limited absorption capacity. Against this backdrop, influence depends on the clarity and distinctiveness of the policy message, more than it does on the volume of outputs.

Greater external clarity could be achieved by identifying and consistently communicating a selective set of medium-term thematic priorities. This is not a negative finding. Rather it is a reminder that DCAF has strong operational credibility and a clear brand, and can decide to more assertively leverage these to signal policy priorities and influence agenda-setting on the part of key SSG/R donor and partner countries. Shortlisting a limited

⁴⁵ Observation derived from interview notes as well as survey feedback across a set of 115 external respondents.

⁴⁶ In follow-up enquiries in March 2026, DCAF also mentioned rolling out a Police integrity toolkit in Moldova, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Bosnia Herzegovina, and a dedicated Expenditure review & affordability assessment tool for the Security Sector, which the organisation recently piloted in Somalia. Lastly, DCAF indicated having recently received a request from China to assist with training on matters of “responsible security management.”

⁴⁷ Quote, KII, February 2026.

number of strategic domains for sustained focus (across publications, events and public engagement), would help translate DCAF's strategy into more effective policy influence.

Internally, such prioritisation could also strengthen feedback loops from field practice into research and policy messaging, as well as set priorities for organisational learning, hence reinforcing coherence across the "do–think–influence" spectrum.⁴⁸

The evaluation finds that a clearer articulation of governance as a driver of security effectiveness would reinforce the relevance of DCAF's work. In an international security environment that is, again, increasingly shaped by defence spending, force modernisation, and "train and equip" approaches, the continued relevance of SSG/R depends on its ability to engage credibly with defence and security institutions themselves,⁴⁹ not only with oversight bodies or normative accountability frameworks. In this context, **reasserting SSG/R requires positioning governance as integral to the effectiveness of defence and security institutions themselves**, not just an external "corrective" layer applied after capability development.

Stakeholders consulted as part of this evaluation mostly describe DCAF's contribution primarily in terms of oversight, accountability, and human-rights monitoring, particularly through engagement with CSOs, media, ombuds institutions, and parliamentary actors.⁵⁰ These activities represent well-established strengths and reflect DCAF's recognised normative leadership in people-centred security and accountable governance. However, the evaluation finds that this framing sometimes obscures the organisation's contributions to deeper institutional reform processes within security institutions themselves.⁵¹

Programming in conflict contexts such as Syria illustrates the need to combine engagement at complementary levels of the security governance ecosystem:⁵² top-down engagement with institutional actors on matters of institutional reform, and bottom-up work with civil society and community stakeholders to help shape the accountability of the defence and security sector.⁵³

Evidence from the survey and interview material illustrates that DCAF has supported substantive reforms in areas directly linked to defence effectiveness. The Balkans were repeatedly mentioned as a case in point, in addition to Ukraine (where DCAF contributed to the Strategic Review of Defence Procurement and the implementation of the Ukraine - NATO Adaptive Programme).⁵⁴ Such work demonstrates how governance reform directly contributes to strengthening defence sector performance and credibility when it covers questions of procurement integrity and institutional accountability for instance.

Available evidence suggests the existence of a perception imbalance rather than a substantive programming gap. While i) DCAF's Director is pushing to more explicitly position SSG/R as integral to defence effectiveness,⁵⁵ and ii) DCAF's operational practice often addresses internal governance systems and institutional reform, both internal and external stakeholders consistently tend to associate the organisation primarily with external

⁴⁸ Worth noting, DCAF 2026 workplan specifically recognises the need to "deepen the connection between in-country programming, evidence, and policy engagement."

⁴⁹ This broader point came out of several interviews and was discussed in more details in four separate KIIs realised in Jan/Feb 2026.

⁵⁰ Source, multiple KIIs and survey feedback data, for both internal and external respondents.

⁵¹ For more insight into how security governance initiatives have strengthened institutions in Morocco and Tunisia, see the 2025 External Evaluation of the DCAF Trust Fund for Security Sector Development Assistance in North Africa (TFNA). In addition, the Gambia project evaluations mentioned in a previous footnote will provide ample insight into institutional strengthening and reform in a different context.

⁵² Source, six separate in-person and remote interviews, January/February 2026.

⁵³ On the latter, it is worth highlighting that DCAF derived much convening power from its partnership with Syrian CSOs with pre-existing relationships with local governance and security actors.

⁵⁴ Source, anonymous respondent (February 2026).

⁵⁵ <https://www.dcaf.ch/why-defence-build-up-fails-without-governance>

oversight functions. In a geopolitical context increasingly oriented toward military capability and operational effectiveness, this perception risks narrowing the perceived contribution of Security Sector Governance, and DCAF as an organisation.

Strengthening strategic communication around the relationship between governance and effectiveness could therefore reinforce the strategic positioning and relevance of DCAF's work. Governance reforms - including but not limited to personnel management systems, procurement oversight, leadership accountability mechanisms, and internal integrity frameworks - are essential components of capable and legitimate security institutions. Clarifying this link may help ensure that governance is understood not as an external "constraint" on security actors, but as a core contributor to their operational effectiveness and long-term sustainability. Such clarification would benefit from i) a shift in emphasis from governance *of* security actors to governance *within* security institutions; and ii) more clearly articulating this expertise as a core part of DCAF's work.

The need for this shift in emphasis is also reinforced by evolving donor instruments. Mechanisms such as the EU's European Peace Facility (EPF) have significantly expanded "train and equip" modalities with – currently - limited attention to institutional reform and system-strengthening within partner armed forces. This creates both a risk and an opportunity for DCAF and SSG/R as a whole. The risk is that governance actors become gradually marginal to major defence assistance envelopes. The opportunity is for DCAF, given its unique mandate, to articulate and operationalise how governance reform enhances the sustainability, accountability, and effectiveness of defence assistance itself, and engage the EU and others on the topic.

Delivering on this positioning also has implications for organisational skillsets. Several interviewees highlighted the value of broadening staff profiles to include practitioners with direct background and experience in defence institutions, law enforcement, military justice, maritime security, and related operational domains. While expert rosters and short-term consultants remain valuable, embedding such expertise within permanent teams would likely strengthen both analytical depth and credibility in engagements with partner institutions.

On this last point, selected interviewees noted that engagement with partner institutions often benefits from shared professional backgrounds, which tend to facilitate trust-building, peer-to-peer dialogue, and more candid exchange. In this sense, workforce diversification strengthens not only technical delivery but also DCAF's ability to be "relatable" and credible in high-level institutional settings.⁵⁶

Sustainability

To what extent are the global, regional and national outcomes of DCAF likely to be sustainable beyond the current funding period (2024-27)? To what extent have DCAF contributed to the sustainable institutional capacity of local, national and/or multilateral partners?

The evaluation finds mixed but credible prospects for sustainability beyond the 2024-27 funding period. There is some evidence that DCAF has paved the way towards sustainable reform, particularly where interventions are embedded within institutional reform process or legal frameworks. In Ukraine, DCAF has been instrumental in helping the Parliamentary Law Enforcement Committee understand comparative lessons and draft

⁵⁶ Source, senior military respondent interviewed as part of this evaluation, January 2026. Another respondent made a related point that DCAF may have relatively few staff with prior experience working in government to begin with, i.e. people with experience under high political pressure and short timelines to convey strategic relevance to high-level government audiences (e.g. Ministers, minister advisers, MPs and parliamentary committees).

legislation on firearms legislation.⁵⁷ Similar signs of institutional uptake have been documented in DCAF project evaluation for Ukraine (although on matters of military policing and justice).⁵⁸

Interventions related to gender and WPS demonstrate more consistent evidence of sustainability. The Measuring Opportunities for Women in Peace Operations (MOWIP) methodology DCAF co-developed (with Cornell University) is now the international standard used to assess barriers to women's participation in peace operations,⁵⁹ and DCAF is working with half a dozen countries to roll out MOWIP assessments of their police and/or military, as a baseline to plan for institutional reform. The involvement of "change champions" in each security institution, as well as with external partners, is deemed to have played a significant role in addressing resistance to reforms.

Project evaluation reports for The Gambia and the Trust Fund for North Africa (TFNA) programmes provide further evidence. Training-of-trainers approaches, internal training structures, and the integration of governance tools (e.g. codes of conduct or oversight procedures) into ministerial practice and professional routines appear to increase the likelihood that reforms will continue beyond project cycles. However, each of these evaluations notes that stronger institutional capacities do not automatically translate into sustained reform outcomes and significantly depend on political developments which can constrain oversight or accountability in selected contexts.

National civil society partners interviewed as part of this evaluation paint a more nuanced picture on matters of sustainable institutional capacity. While there is evidence of some partners being able to monitor security legislation, defence strategy and engage key national security partners (e.g. in Moldova), the said capacity appears directly linked to the provision of external funding, and partner organisations working on security policy and reform remain very dependent on external funding (this point came out strongly of interview data for Syria, for instance).

Overall, the full implementation of DCAF's consolidated monitoring framework at the end of 2026 is expected to generate more systematic evidence in relation to sustainability, across the board.

⁵⁷ The draft law was approved by the Parliament and sits with the President for adoption, at the time of writing, source interview realised in February 2026.

⁵⁸ Source, Bloed A. and Burdett R (2024), End of Programme Evaluation for DCAF programme "Linking Good Security Sector Governance and Sustainable Development Goal 16", esp. pp.28-30, which acknowledge evidence of sustainability for an immediate outcome on military justice, while noting a broader difficulty of finding evidence of sustainability across the programme.

⁵⁹ Source KII with DCAF respondent in January 2026 and Hagan P. and Robinson A. (2025), Programmatic review 2023-2024, pp.30-31.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Evidence data indicates that DCAF remains a highly relevant, credible and well-regarded actor in a security environment increasingly shaped by defence priorities and geopolitical tensions. Overall, the organisation is on a positive trajectory, with strong demand for its expertise, and sustained credibility with partners across diverse geographies.

At the same time, sustaining and strengthening this position will require sharper strategic focus and adaptation to evolving policy and funding landscapes. DCAF's policy positioning will benefit from clearer prioritisation, particularly in what appears to be a crowded analytical space. In a context dominated by “hard security” agendas, the organisation will also benefit from more explicitly and consistently demonstrating how governance and oversight contribute to the *effectiveness* of security institutions, not only their accountability.

These challenges are also compounded by shifts in donor architectures, notably within the EU, where funding increasingly favours state-aligned operators working in consortia. In this context, DCAF's ability to engage with, and influence, broader security assistance frameworks will be critical.

There are **five key learning areas** that support the recommendations:

1. Strategic policy priorities
2. Policy messaging on governance as a driver of security effectiveness
3. Strategic engagement with large security assistance programmes
4. Expertise in reform processes for defence and security institutions
5. Outcome-oriented learning

#	Conclusion	Recommendation	Audience
1	Lack of clear policy priorities internally and externally	Articulate a concise set of strategic policy/thematic priorities - DCAF should identify and consistently communicate a <i>small</i> number of flagship policy/thematic priorities that i) reflect its comparative advantage and operational experience, and ii) to be championed internationally.	Audience: DCAF Director, Deputy Director, Stratex entity, Policy Engagement entity, Research and Training entity
2	In a context of hard security, DCAF's interlocutors need data and evidence on how governance and oversight make the security sector more effective.	Strengthen and systematize policy messaging on governance as a driver of security effectiveness - DCAF should more consistently frame its work around the idea that governance reforms strengthen the operational effectiveness of security and defence institutions.	Audience: DCAF Director, Deputy Director, Heads of entities
3	The EU SSG/R funding architecture increasingly prioritises EU based state-aligned operators + train and equip models (EPF).	Strengthen strategic engagement with large security assistance programmes - DCAF should develop a clear organisational approach to consortium-based programming and large-scale security assistance mechanisms, particularly within EU funding frameworks.	Audience: DCAF Director, Deputy Director, Partnership & Development entity, and programme leadership
4	DCAF workforce lacks people with background in government, law enforcement and security agencies.	Broaden expertise in reform processes for defence and security institutions – DCAF should progressively broaden in-house expertise in core defence and security governance and reform domains.	Audience: DCAF leadership, HR and Stratex entities
5	DCAF has shifted towards a results culture, but learning remains uneven across the organisation.	Consolidate the shift towards outcome-oriented learning - DCAF should pursue the consistent and systematic implementation of the new organisation-wide monitoring and learning framework, including when it comes to i) documenting both successes and setbacks, and ii) integrating lessons and evaluations into programme design and strategic planning across all teams.	Audience: DCAF Director, Deputy Director, Stratex entity and programme leadership