

Pathways for Better Education and Livelihoods

External Review — Terms of Reference

Background

Background

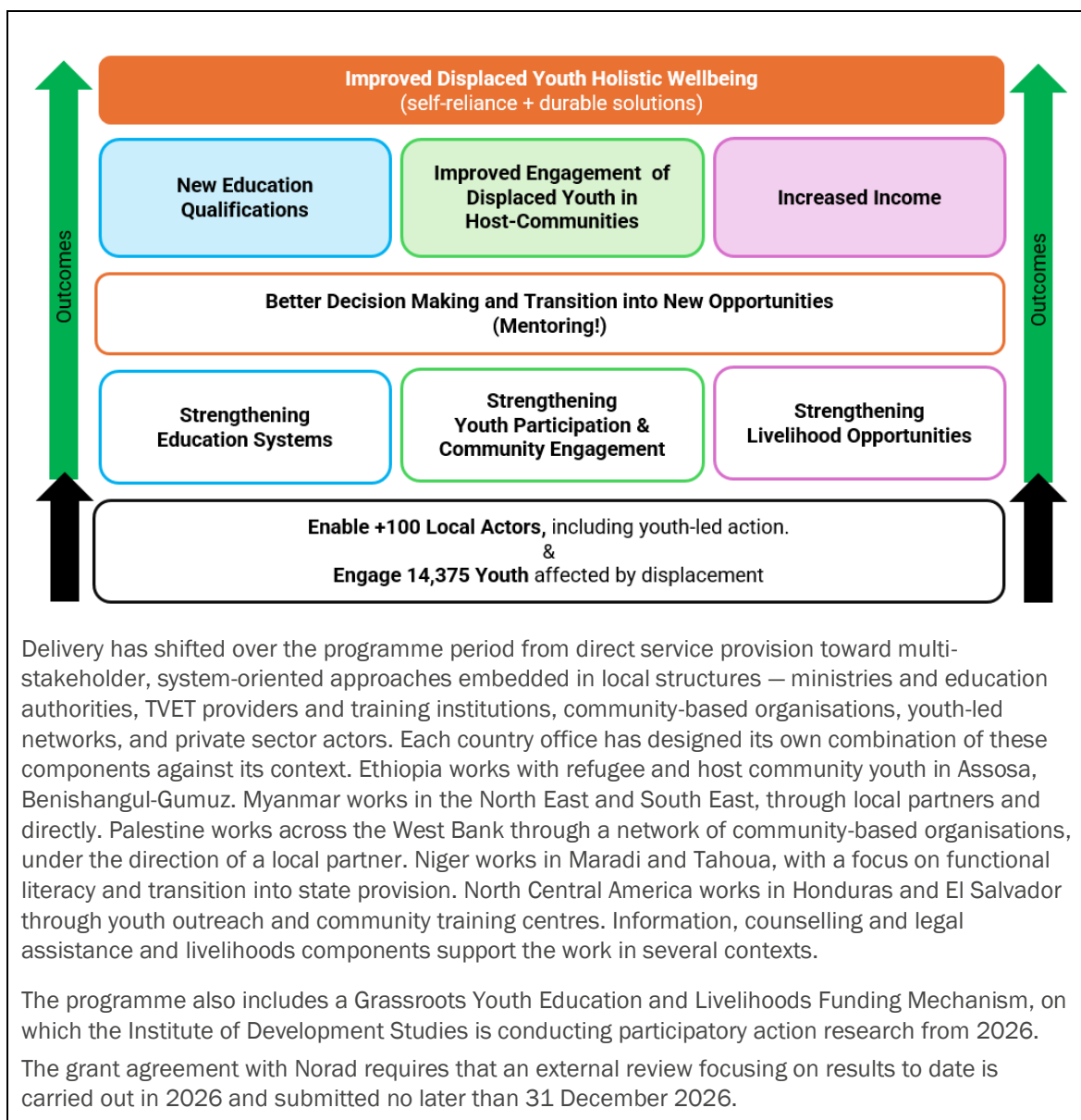
Pathways for Better Education and Livelihoods is a four-year programme running from 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2027, funded by Norad and implemented by the Norwegian Refugee Council in five country offices: Ethiopia, Myanmar, Palestine, Niger, and North Central America (Honduras and El Salvador). It follows a first phase implemented between 2020 and 2023.

The programme works with displacement-affected young people — refugees, internally displaced people, returnees and host communities — aged approximately 15 to 29, with the specific age range varying by context.

The programme goal is that displacement-affected young people continue their education and/or increase their own income, for improved wellbeing.

It pursues this through an integrated approach linking foundational learning, meaningful participation and economic opportunity, intended to support young people to move from learners to active contributors and decision-makers in their communities and local economies. Results are organised around four areas:

- **Education and transition into further learning pathways.** Re-entry into education for out-of-school, over-aged and displaced learners; retention and completion; and supported transition from accelerated, non-formal or literacy provision into formal education or further training, with certification and progression recognised by national systems.
- **Youth engagement and participation.** A shift from young people as participants to young people as leaders — designing and running community initiatives, mentoring peers, and engaging in the structures and decisions that affect them.
- **Skills development and livelihood support.** Market-relevant vocational and technical training, apprenticeships and work-based learning, start-up kits and grants, and mentoring and work-readiness support, alongside strengthening the capacity of training institutions and their links to employers.
- **Safe and inclusive programming.** Protection and psychosocial support embedded across delivery, and deliberate measures to include young women, ethnic minorities, young people with disabilities and those facing language or literacy barriers.



Purpose of the review and intended use

Overarching purpose

This review serves two purposes. For NRC it is a learning exercise. The programme operates a learning agenda, a consolidated results framework, cohort entry-to-exit analyses, and country office learning logs. Together these establish a great deal about what the programme has achieved and, in many areas, why. The review is commissioned to supply complementary qualitative evidence where NRC does not have it, and to test explanations that NRC's own data can suggest but not confirm.

For Norad it is the external review of results to date required under the grant agreement, and a basis on which to judge the programme's contribution ahead of decisions on further funding.

The lines of inquiry are consequently explanatory rather than descriptive. Each begins from what NRC's monitoring and analysis have already established, and asks the review to address what remains open. None requires the review to re-measure a result the monitoring system already reports.

How will the review be used?

The primary users of the review are:

- Norad, in judging the extent to which the programme has achieved results to date and in considering further funding.
- Global and regional advisers designing the next phase of the programme.
- Country, regional and head office staff, including for internal processes such as evaluation plans and the management response.

The primary focus of conclusions and recommendations should be on programme design and delivery for a subsequent phase. The secondary focus is a succinct account of what the programme has achieved to date. Findings will also be shared, in summary form, with ministries, partners and education coordination structures where relevant.

Scope and lines of inquiry

Scope

The review covers the Pathways for Better Education and Livelihoods programme across all five country offices – Ethiopia, Myanmar, Palestine, Niger, and North Central America (Honduras and El Salvador) – for the period 2024 to 2026. Data collection is qualitative. All data collection is remote. Fieldwork may not cover all five country offices; the review team will propose a final selection at inception, and NRC will confirm it.

The following are outside the scope of this review:

- Re-measurement of outcome or output results already reported in the consolidated results framework.
- Relevance and appropriateness of programme design, which the 2023 end-term evaluation addressed and which has not materially changed since.
- How local actors experience partnership with NRC, including funding mechanisms and decision-making. This is the subject of concurrent participatory action research led by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) with local partners, and should not be duplicated. Where this review examines delivery arrangements it does so through outcomes experienced by young people, not through the experience of partner organisations.
- Participant-level fieldwork in Ethiopia and Honduras of a participatory or resource-intensive nature. Both are primary sites for the IDS action research groups through mid-2027, and country offices should not carry two demanding processes concurrently.

The review team is required to read the IDS participatory action research inception report before designing its approach, and to coordinate with NRC on any point of potential overlap. The team should not interview local partners about their experience of partnership with NRC, including funding mechanisms and decision-making; where a partner raises these matters, the team should

redirect rather than collect. Where required, NRC will facilitate exchange between the two processes during the review period.

Lines of inquiry

Line of Inquiry 1 — Does the way the programme is designed create the conditions for young people to achieve good outcomes and decide their own direction?

This question is answered by the synthesis of its sub-questions and is not investigated separately.

Sub-questions	1. Is the programme reaching the young people it was set up for — those with the least schooling, the weakest literacy and the fewest other options — and what does reaching them take that reaching others does not? 2. What does NRC do itself, what does it do through local actors, and what difference does that split make to what young people can get? 3. Where NRC works with local actors, state authorities and institutions, has that opened routes for young people that would not otherwise be there, and where has it not? 4. Does the way the programme is set up widen the choices young people can actually make, or does it steer them toward one path? 5. Where the programme runs differently from the way it was designed, does the set-up still hold together, and what does that say about how it should be designed next time?
Lens	Coherence and effectiveness of the operating model, through contribution.
Existing evidence	The following is already established in NRC's monitoring and analysis. It is the starting point for the review, not a set of findings to be reproduced. • Delivery has shifted over the programme period from direct service provision toward multi-stakeholder, system-oriented approaches embedded in local structures — ministries and education authorities, TVET providers, community-based organisations, youth-led networks and private sector actors. • 140 local actors reached and supported (including 1 local business reached in NCA in 2024). Institutional indicators on Education actors, market system actors and civil society actors strengthened sit slightly below target • In Ethiopia, refugee women who entered with the lowest recorded aspirations and were five times more likely never to have been schooled reached outcomes comparable to other participants. Separately, information, counselling and legal assistance work on business licences, land rental agreements and banking access appears in no indicator. • In Niger, NRC worked in collaboration with state authorities to ensure that community based functional literacy centers are fully recognized and accredited by the relevant state bodies. A teacher pathway with the Ministry has begun to emerge.

	• In Palestine, delivery runs through 26 community-based organisations under one partner, with results ranging widely by site. Community acceptance and trust was the enabler participants named most often, ahead of NRC's own training. • In Palestine, 74.5 per cent of participants were encouraged into onward activity and 92.6 per cent of those sustained it, while 12.9 per cent were connected to useful people or networks and 6.5 per cent received information about opportunities. Mentoring appears to deliver confidence more than access. • In Myanmar the North East is delivered through community-embedded organisations with remote coaching and the South East directly by NRC. In North Central America, delivery realigned to local partners following the phase-out of the Livelihoods and Food Security competency.
Sources and coverage	This line of inquiry draws on actors across the ecosystem as well as on young people. Where the other lines of inquiry ask what happened to participants, this one asks whether the set-up that produced it is sound. • NRC programme, monitoring and legal assistance staff across all five country offices, on what NRC does directly and why. • Local partners and community-based organisations, on what they contribute that NRC could not, and what they need in order to sustain it. Approached through what young people receive, not through their experience of partnership with NRC, which is the subject of the IDS research. • Local actors, state and authority counterparts — community-based organisations and youth-led networks, ministries of education and labour, regional bureaus, TVET and training institutions, and those holding decisions on state provision. • Employers, apprenticeship hosts and market system actors, on whether the set-up produces candidates they can use. • Young people, on where they went for help, whom they trusted, and whether they felt able to choose their own direction. Drawn from the same interviews as the other lines of inquiry rather than a separate sample. • Programme documentation, including the theory of change, country proposals and annual reports, read against what country offices describe as operating reality.
Use of findings	NRC will use the findings to decide whether the operating model is carried into the next phase as designed, adjusted, or rebuilt — in particular where to place NRC's own effort as against delivery through local actors and engagement with the state. Findings on targeting will inform who the next phase is designed for and what reaching them takes. For Norad, this line of inquiry provides a judgement on the model itself rather than only on its results: whether the way NRC works with local and state actors is a sound basis for the outcomes the programme reports, and therefore for further investment.

Line of Inquiry 2 — What has changed for young people, why has it held for some and not for others, and what do they credit for it?

This question is answered by the synthesis of its sub-questions and is not investigated separately.

Sub-questions	6. What does the change consist of in practice, as distinct from how young people perceive their prospects? 7. What happens to young people when programme support ends, and what would be required for gains to hold beyond it? 8. Which elements of the support do participants credit, including what they did with any capital or cash received? 9. Where young people do advance, does advancement carry costs that current measurement does not capture?
Lens	Impact through contribution, with sustainability.
Existing evidence	The following is already established in NRC's monitoring and analysis. It is the starting point for the review, not a set of findings to be reproduced. • Self-reported results across the portfolio cluster near ceiling: 98 per cent report improved community participation, 96.6 per cent found mentoring useful, 85.4 per cent report improved wellbeing against a 69.3 per cent target, and 88.9 per cent report increased income against a 48.3 per cent target. • In Honduras, perceived economic security rose sharply over the cohort period — family basic needs met from 48 to 87 per cent, income stability from 45 to 71 per cent — while employment moved by a net one person. Cash transfer support delivered alongside the education programme is the probable explanation. • In Palestine, 86 per cent of respondents state that NRC support helped them find or improve work, while 21.9 per cent of those employed hold a job obtained through that support and 51.6 per cent hold jobs unrelated to it. • Palestine three-round panel data shows wellbeing moving 3.263 to 3.412 to 3.288. An entry-to-exit comparison alone shows a change of 0.043 and reads as no effect. The departure from linear is statistically significant and is not uniform across domains: measures concerning the programme environment hold, while those concerning agency and opportunity in the wider community fall. • In Ethiopia, 51 per cent of inactive businesses had sold the start-up grant, concentrated in poultry and in individual rather than group enterprises. In Myanmar North East, 7 of 11 inactive businesses had redirected grants into further training. • In Palestine, women gained substantially more income participation than men, at 34.5 percentage points against 13.3, and led more community projects, at 60 per cent against 50 per cent, while their wellbeing declined across every domain and men's rose. The pattern holds within both programme tracks and is therefore not a composition effect.

	In Myanmar, women are concentrated in trades associated with slower time to income. In North Central America, young women participate under adapted schedules alongside caregiving responsibilities.
Sources and coverage	The primary source is young people who have completed the programme. Programme staff can describe delivery but cannot establish what has held since. Sampling should be purposive rather than by convenience, spanning a range of outcomes so that the picture is not drawn only from those who did best. - Myanmar — remote. Approximately 12 to 15 participant interviews across the North East and South East, stratified by sex and delivery arrangement, including participants whose businesses are inactive. - Palestine — remote. Approximately 10 to 12 interviews, weighted toward women and toward sites where completion and mentoring results diverge. Palestine holds the only three-round dataset in the portfolio and is the only country office where the durability question can be interrogated against existing measurement. - Ethiopia — remote. Approximately 7 to 8 interviews, including participants who sold or redirected start-up grants. - El Salvador and Honduras — remote. Approximately 5 to 6 interviews. Employment moved in El Salvador and did not in Honduras; the contrast is material to the sub-questions. Honduras is limited to staff interviews and existing data. - Niger — remote and light. Approximately 4 to 5 interviews. - Across all country offices — approximately 6 to 8 interviews with those closest to participants' decisions, including coaches, facilitators, mentors, self-help group leaders and staff who released grants, as a check on participant accounts rather than a substitute for them.
Use of findings	NRC will use the findings to determine whether the next phase continues to invest in confidence-building, life skills and mentoring at current intensity, or shifts resources toward conversion — placement, brokerage and structured post-programme contact. Where gains are found not to survive the end of programme support, follow-up contact becomes a design requirement rather than an optional component. Findings on the use of capital will inform the size, staging and form of that component. For Norad, this line of inquiry establishes what the programme's reported results represent, and provides an independent basis for judging the strength of self-reported outcome data across the portfolio.

Line of Inquiry 3 — What constrains young people's transitions in these contexts and which NRC adaptations have made a difference?

This question is answered by the synthesis of its sub-questions and is not investigated separately.

Sub-questions	Which contextual barriers were binding — determining whether a transition happened at all, rather than merely making it harder?
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	2. Which NRC adaptations have made a demonstrable difference for young people, which have not, and which were never tested? 3. Where opportunities have not materialised, what lies within the influence of NRC and the local actors it works through, and what does not? 4. In the absence of the programme, what would young people in that context have done instead?
Lens	Effectiveness through contribution, with adaptive management.
Sequencing requirement	The review team must establish the barrier picture from participants and external actors before mapping NRC's adaptations onto it. Existing country office reports will surface the barriers NRC already recognises and the adaptations already made, leaving barriers the programme has not engaged with invisible. Reviewers should set out how their design ensures this sequence.
Existing evidence	• Institutional indicators across the portfolio sit below target: education actors strengthened at 62 per cent, market system actors at 55 per cent, and youth civil society actors at 42 per cent. Technical support to training centres is recorded at zero against a target of 29 across all five country offices. • In Niger, continuation depends on state provision the project does not fund, and participants are recorded as prepared and awaiting places. • In El Salvador, the referral landscape contracted during the period as civil society organisations closed or reduced operations; 49 per cent of participants report knowing a local organisation that assists young people. • In Ethiopia, movement outside camps is restricted and refugees are excluded from formal banking; information, counselling and legal assistance work on business licences, land rental agreements and banking access appears in no indicator. • In Myanmar South East, enrolment is constrained by conscription risk, with female-only enrolment anticipated in 2026. • Adaptations recorded across the portfolio include day care provision, multilingual instruction and recruitment of vocational trainers at 50 per cent female in Ethiopia; flexible scheduling for young women and realignment to local partners following the phase-out of the Livelihoods and Food Security competency in North Central America; small group and remote delivery in Myanmar; and dispersed community-based delivery under movement restriction in Palestine.
Sources and coverage	This line of inquiry draws on participants for the barrier picture and on actors external to NRC for what determines whether an opportunity exists. Employers and apprenticeship hosts are the group most consistently under consulted and the only source able to establish whether a placement constitutes substantive work. • Participants across all country offices, on what got in their way and on what they would otherwise have done.

	• Niger — remote key informant interviews with local actors delivering the programme, and with DAFA, FAFPA and Ministry of Education counterparts, including those holding decisions on state training provision. • El Salvador — remote key informant interviews with former referral partners that closed or reduced operations, and with employers hosting apprenticeships. • Ethiopia — remote key informant interviews covering the Benishangul-Gumuz Regional Bureaus of Labour and Skills and of Education, Assosa Polytechnic, private sector platform members, and NRC information, counselling and legal assistance staff. • Palestine and Myanmar — remote key informant interviews. Community-based organisation coordinators at sites where delivery was interrupted; ministry and labour counterparts in Palestine; training providers and employers in Myanmar. • Within-context delivery variation: Myanmar North East and South East; the 26 community-based organisations in Palestine. • Across all country offices — programme and monitoring staff, country office key internal and annual reports. • Approximately 14 to 16 key informant interviews, predominantly remote, in addition to the participant interviews under Line of Inquiry 1.
Use of findings	NRC will use the findings to determine which adaptations to carry into the next phase as design features rather than responses, and where to invest in enabling-environment work as against designing around constraints that lie outside its influence. The findings will also inform what the next results framework records on the institutional side. For Norad, this line of inquiry provides an independent account of performance against Outcome 1, distinguishing between delivery shortfalls, measurement limitations, and constraints arising from the decisions of other actors — and an assessment of how well NRC has responded to conditions it does not control.

Methodology

Overall approach
The review team will develop the methods in line with the lines of inquiry and submit a review matrix setting out, for each sub-question, what would count as an answer, the sources of evidence, the methods, and the sampling frame. NRC has prepared its own matrix as a benchmark; proposals are read against it, and a proposal that reaches the same answers by a better route is not marked down. Reviewers should note: the qualitative work is intended to explain patterns NRC has already identified. Country office follow-up surveys are expected to conclude during the review period — at least one country office, and possibly two, by November or December 2026. These will serve to test and extend the review's findings rather than open new lines of inquiry, as fieldwork will have closed by the time their results are available. Where the two sources converge, that convergence

should be reported as a finding in its own right. Where they diverge, the divergence carries information about the instruments and should be reported as such.

Reviewers should not propose designs that promise measured attribution of individual programme components, or comparison across country offices. The five contexts differ too substantially for such comparison to be meaningful; where the lines of inquiry examine variation, they do so within a single context.

The overall approach is qualitative and explanatory. It is expected to comprise:

- Document review — proposals, annual and progress reports, the consolidated results framework and indicator definitions, cohort entry-to-exit analyses, country office learning logs, the 2023 end-term evaluation, and the IDS participatory action research inception report.
- Secondary analysis of existing monitoring and cohort data, including re-analysis disaggregated by sex, will be provided by NRC global MEL.
- Individual interviews with young people who have taken part, sampled purposively by outcome.
- Key informant interviews with NRC staff, delivery partners, employers, training institutions, and ministry and authority counterparts.
- A small number of group discussions where the subject matter is unlikely to surface in individual interviews.
- Contribution analysis at the level of each line of inquiry, drawing on what participants themselves credit.

The indicative volume is approximately 75 to 90 interviews, of which some 40 to 45 are with young people. The distribution is indicative and is to be refined by the review team at inception. Reviewers may propose an alternative distribution where they can justify it against the lines of inquiry.

Methods by line of inquiry

Line of Inquiry 1 — the operating model

This line of inquiry is answered largely by actors across the ecosystem rather than by participants. Where the other lines of inquiry ask what happened to young people, this one asks whether the arrangement that produced it is sound. Local actors are central to it: the review should establish what they contribute that NRC could not, approached through what reaches the young person rather than through their experience of partnership with NRC, which is the subject of the concurrent IDS research.

Expected methods:

- Key informant interviews with NRC programme, monitoring and legal assistance staff on what NRC does directly and why, and with local partners and community-based organisations on what they provide and what sustaining it requires.
- Key informant interviews with state and institutional counterparts — ministries of education and labour, regional bureaus, TVET and training institutions, and those holding decisions on state provision — on whether routes have opened for young people and whether anyone has travelled them.
- Interviews with employers, apprenticeship hosts and market system actors on whether the set-up produces candidates they can use.

- Interviews with recruitment and outreach staff, and with the local actors who identify candidates, conducted separately from delivery staff, on how young people are found and approached.
- Review of who actually enrolled against the profile the programme was designed for, drawing on existing registration records rather than new data collection.
- Questions carried within the participant interviews conducted under Line of Inquiry 2 on where young people went for help, whom they trusted, what options they were offered at each decision point, and whether declining one was possible. No separate participant sample is required.
- Document review of the theory of change, country proposals and annual reports, read against what country offices describe as operating reality.

Volume: approximately 15 to 18 key informant interviews, the majority with actors outside NRC.

Line of Inquiry 2 – participant-led

The primary source is young people who have completed programme activities. Programme staff can describe delivery but cannot establish what has held since.

Expected methods:

- Individual interviews that trace decisions backwards from the participant's current situation through the choice points that led there, rather than asking whether the programme helped.
- Questions structured around observable particulars — what a week now looks like, what money comes in, who decides — rather than around outcome statements.
- Interviews covering the period since exit specifically, including what contact if any was maintained, and what young people would otherwise have done.
- Where the use of start-up capital or cash is discussed, interviews should establish the sequence of events rather than reasons in isolation, and should not place participants in the position of accounting for themselves to a funder.
- Comparison of interview findings against the patterns reported in the cohort analyses, at aggregate level.
- Interviews with those closest to participants' decisions — coaches, facilitators, mentors, self-help group leaders — as a check on participant accounts rather than a substitute for them.

Sampling: purposive rather than by convenience, spanning a range of outcomes so that the picture is not drawn only from those who did best. Country offices will support identification of participants against criteria agreed at inception.

Line of Inquiry 3 – barriers and adaptation

This line of inquiry draws on participants for the barrier picture and on actors external to NRC for what determines whether an opportunity exists. Employers and apprenticeship hosts are the group most consistently under consulted and the only source able to establish whether a placement constitutes substantive work.

The review team must establish the barrier picture from participants and external actors before mapping NRC's adaptations onto it. Country narrative reports will surface the barriers NRC already recognises and the adaptations already made, leaving barriers the programme has not engaged with invisible. Reviewers should set out how their design ensures this sequence.

Expected methods:

- Key informant interviews, predominantly remote, with ministry and authority counterparts, training institutions, employers, and local organisations, including those that have closed or reduced operations.

- Document review of country office learning logs, annual and progress reports, and adaptation records.
- Timeline reconstruction on two or three selected adaptations — what was changed, when, and what followed — rather than a survey of all of them.
- Stratification of the participant samples in Myanmar and Palestine by delivery arrangement, so that within-context variation surfaces in the analysis without separate data collection.
- Where a barrier is reported by staff but not by participants, or the reverse, that discrepancy should be reported.

Volume: approximately 14 to 16 key informant interviews, in addition to the participant interviews under Line of Inquiry 2.

Ethical and safety requirements

Participants include young people aged 11 to 29 and therefore include minors. Reviewers must set out their approach to informed consent, safeguarding and data protection, and must allow for ethical review within the proposed timeline.

Several country offices operate in contexts of active conflict, restricted movement and unreliable connectivity. Reviewers should set out how they will manage risk to participants, interpreters and researchers, and how they will conduct remote interviews safely and privately where participants may not have a secure or private place from which to speak.

Review follow up and learning

Follow up and learning

The findings will be used to inform organisational learning and decision making for a subsequent phase of the programme, and to communicate results, lessons and recommendations for accountability, advocacy and fundraising purposes.

Findings from this review will be read alongside two other processes running in the same period: the IDS participatory action research, which reports in early 2027, and country office follow-up surveys expected to conclude in late 2026. Where the review's findings converge with these, the convergence should be reported as a finding in its own right; where they diverge, the divergence carries information about NRC's instruments and should be reported as such.

A dissemination plan will be developed to ensure that learning is shared with internal and external stakeholders, including partners and civil society actors involved in the programme. A management response will be prepared following submission of the final report.

Management of the review

Management

The person responsible for ensuring that this review takes place is the Chair of the Steering Committee. A Steering Committee has been established by NRC with the following members:

- *Constantijn Wouters, Global Education Manager (Chair)*
- *Barbara Bergamini, Global Project Manager*
- *Craig Dean, Global Youth Advisor*
- *Ana Stiglic, NORAD MEL specialist.*

Review Manager: Ana Stiglic, NORAD MEL specialist.

The Steering Committee will oversee administration and overall coordination, including monitoring progress. Its main functions are to:

- Establish the Terms of Reference for the review.
- Select the review team.
- Review and comment on the inception report and approve the proposed approach.
- Review and comment on the draft report.
- Establish a dissemination and utilisation strategy.

The Review Manager will also be supported with administrative assistance.

Timeframe

Timeframe		
	Review team	Review management team and country offices
5 – 16 Oct	Review team starts. Introductory interviews, review of existing programme documentation, reports and analysis, and development of methods and tools. All to be summarised in an abbreviated inception report.	In the first week, the review manager notifies country offices of start-up and shares draft sampling criteria, so that co-creation can begin before the criteria are final. The review management team and country offices refine the sampling frame and begin identifying individuals matching the criteria, drawing on programme and partner records and on direct knowledge of participants.
Fri 16 Oct	<i>Abbreviated inception report submitted (Deliverable).</i> Brief, and to include a revised evaluation matrix with fine-tuned methods, the sampling approach and criteria for identifying participants, a detailed timetable, and a clear division of responsibilities within the review team.	
Wed 21 Oct	Review Committee provides consolidated comments on the inception report.	Country offices notified of the finalised fieldwork schedule and the final sampling required. Sampling is enacted against the confirmed criteria.
Fri 23 Oct	<i>Inception report approved.</i>	

26 Oct – 20 Nov	Primary data collection, remote.	Country offices confirm participants, arrange access and support scheduling.
23 Nov – 4 Dec	Data analysis and report writing.	
w/c 30 Nov	<i>Validation workshop (Deliverable).</i>	
Fri 4 Dec	<i>Draft report submitted (Deliverable).</i>	
7 – 11 Dec		NRC feedback on the draft report, consolidated by the Review Manager.
14 – 18 Dec	Revision.	
Fri 18 Dec	<i>Final report submitted and approved (Deliverable).</i>	
By 31 Dec		NRC submits the review report to Norad.
By end Jan 2027		NRC prepares the management response and develops the learning postcard.
<i>Note: the final report must reach Norad by 31 December 2026. The validation workshop sits within the analysis period so that findings are tested before the draft is written.</i>		

Review team

Review team
NRC seeks expressions of interest from individuals and teams with the following skills and qualifications: • Senior review and evaluation experts, with a minimum of eight years' experience. • Deep expertise in qualitative and explanatory methods, including contribution analysis, most significant change, process mapping, outcome mapping and harvesting, case-based approaches, and comparable methods. • Demonstrated experience of remote qualitative data collection in conflict-affected and access-constrained settings. • Demonstrated ability to work with participants on sensitive subjects, including experiences of loss, failure or non-completion, without placing them in the position of accounting for themselves. • Experience with education and youth programming in humanitarian and development organisations. • High-level knowledge of humanitarian ethics, policy and systems, including safeguarding and research ethics involving minors. • Language capability appropriate to the country coverage set out above, including Burmese or Karen, Arabic, Spanish and French. Teams combining an international lead with national researchers or interpreters are encouraged. NRC strongly encourages bids from teams rather than individual consultants.

Application process and requirements

Application process

This call is issued subject to final approval of these Terms of Reference by Norad. NRC reserves the right to adjust dates should approval be delayed.

Closing date for submission of bids: Friday 18 September 2026

Interviews with shortlisted teams: Tues 22 Sept - Friday 25 September 2026

Contracting finalised: Friday 2 October 2026

Bids must include the following:

- A proposal setting out the review approach and methods, including comments on these Terms of Reference, a draft review matrix, proposed timeframe and work plan. Bids over five pages will be automatically excluded; the review matrix may be annexed and does not count toward the page limit.
- A statement of how the team will build a sample spanning a range of outcomes, including participants for whom little changed.
- A statement of team composition and management. Who is on the team, which member leads each line of inquiry and each country office, how national researchers and interpreters are engaged, briefed and supervised, and how the team is coordinated across languages and time zones. Where a single person carries more than one role, this should be stated.
- A proposed approach to quality assurance. How consistency will be maintained across researchers, languages and country offices; how interviews will be recorded, transcribed, translated and checked; how analysis will be moderated across the team so that findings are not the product of a single researcher's reading; and who holds final responsibility for the accuracy of what is reported.
- A proposed distribution of remote data collection across country offices, with the reasoning behind it. Which country offices are covered in depth and which more lightly; how interviews will be scheduled around participants' connectivity, safety and availability; how the team will secure meaningful engagement remotely with young people who may be unfamiliar with such interviews; and what contingency applies if a country office cannot be covered as planned.
- A proposed budget.
- CVs for all proposed team members, including national researchers.

The indicative budget is NOK 750,000.

Submit completed bids to: HO.Procurement@nrc.no

For clarification questions please write to Ana Stiglic: ana.stiglic@nrc.no

Annex 1 : Pathways for Better Education and Livelihoods External Review 2026 — Evaluation Matrix

Question	What would count as an answer — <u>explanation</u>	What would count as an answer — <u>illustrative examples expected</u>	Where the evidence is (sources)	How it will be gathered (methods)
Q1 Does the way the programme is set up — who it reaches, what NRC does itself, and how it works with local and state actors — create the conditions for young people to achieve good outcomes and decide their own direction?				
<i>Answered by the synthesis of the sub-questions below, not separately. A good answer judges the set-up as it actually operates, not as designed, and says where local actors add something NRC could not.</i>				
Sub-question 1.1 Is the programme reaching the young people it was set up for — those with the least schooling, the weakest literacy and the fewest other options — and what does reaching them take that reaching others does not?	The answer describes who is actually enrolling, in terms of prior schooling, literacy and available alternatives, rather than in terms of displacement category alone. Where the programme reaches the intended group, the answer says what made that possible. Where it reaches people who were already better placed, that is stated plainly rather than treated as a targeting failure.	That Ethiopia reaches women who have never been to school because recruitment runs through camp structures and self-help groups rather than through training centres. That in North Central America outreach through trade networks reaches young people who already have some connection to work, and misses those who do not.	Enrolment and registration records against the profile the programme was designed for. Ethiopia: refugee women entering with the lowest recorded aspirations, five times more likely never to have been schooled. Niger: functional literacy as the entry point, with completion among women at 95%. Recruitment and outreach staff in each CO, and the local actors who identify candidates.	Interviews with recruitment and outreach staff, separately from delivery staff. Interviews with local actors on how they identify and approach young people. Review of who enrolled against the intended profile, using existing registration records or equivalent.
Sub-question 1.2 What does NRC do itself, what does it do through local actors, and what difference does that split make to what young people can get?	A clear account of where the line sits in each context and why it sits there. The answer says what local actors provide that NRC could not, and what NRC provides that local actors could not, in terms of what reaches the young person.	That Palestinian participants name community acceptance and trust as the main enabler, ahead of NRC's own training — indicating that the CBO relationship carries something the curriculum does not. That Myanmar NE participants describe sustained contact after training while SE participants describe faster entry to work, and that this follows the delivery arrangement.	Palestine: 26 CBOs under one partner, results varying widely by site; community acceptance and trust named most often as the enabler. Myanmar: NE community-embedded organisations with remote coaching, SE direct NRC delivery. North Central America: realignment to local partners following the phase-out of the Livelihoods and Food Security competency. NRC programme staff and local partner staff across all COs.	Stratification of participant samples by delivery arrangement, so the difference surfaces in the analysis. Interviews with NRC and local partner delivery staff on what each contributes. Comparison is within a single context only; no comparison is drawn across country offices.

Question	What would count as an answer — <u>explanation</u>	What would count as an answer — <u>illustrative examples expected</u>	Where the evidence is (sources)	How it will be gathered (methods)
Sub-question 1.3 Where NRC works with local actors, state authorities and institutions, has that opened routes for young people that would not otherwise be there, and where has it not?	Named routes, with an account of whether young people actually travelled them. Where a route was opened but nobody used it, that is reported as such. Where institutional work has produced nothing yet, the answer says whether it is too early to tell or the approach is not working.	That Niger's emerging teacher pathway with the Ministry gives literacy graduates a route that did not exist before, even if few have taken it yet. That Ethiopia's legal assistance work enabled refugees to register businesses and open accounts — a route opened that no indicator records.	Institutional indicators below target: education actors 62%, market system actors 55%, youth CSO actors 42%, technical support to training centres 0 of 29. Ethiopia: ICLA work on business licences, land rental agreements and banking access; case studies under development. Niger: FAFPA, DAFA and MoE counterparts; the emerging teacher pathway. Palestine: MoE and labour counterparts. Myanmar: training providers and employers.	Key informant interviews with local actors, ministries, authorities and training institutions. Employer and institution interviews on whether a route leads to substantive work. Document review of institutional agreements against what followed.
Sub-question 1.4 Does the way the programme is set up widen the choices young people can actually make, or does it steer them toward one path?	The answer establishes what options a young person was presented with, who presented them, and whether declining one was possible. Where the programme effectively offers one route, that is stated rather than described as choice.	That participants in Ethiopia were offered a trade list shaped by what the training centre could deliver rather than by what they wanted. That Palestinian participants describe being encouraged into onward activity but receiving little information about what else was available.	Palestine: 74.5% encouraged into onward activity and 92.6% of those sustained it, while 12.9% were connected to networks and 6.5% received information about opportunities. Participants across all COs, on what they were offered and what they chose. Coaches, mentors and facilitators on how options are presented.	Interviews asking what options were on the table at each decision point, and who put them there. Interviews with those who advised participants, on how they present options.
Sub-question 1.5 Where the programme runs differently from the way it was designed, does the set-up still hold together, and what does that say about how it should be designed next time?	The answer describes operating reality against design intent without treating divergence as failure. Where the streams run in parallel rather than in sequence, the answer says whether that still produces the intended conditions. Concrete implications for the design of a next phase.	That the education, livelihoods and participation streams operate in parallel with limited crossover, and that participants tend to enter at one point and remain there. That in several contexts mentoring and community engagement preceded training rather than followed it, and that this sequence worked better.	The programme theory of change, country proposals and annual reports. Country office programme and monitoring staff on how delivery actually runs. Participants on the order in which they experienced programme components.	Document review read against what country offices describe as operating reality. Interviews with programme staff in each CO on where design and delivery diverge, and why.
Q2 What has changed for young people who took part between 2024 and 2026, why has it held for some and not for others, and what do they credit for it?				

Question	What would count as an answer — <u>explanation</u>	What would count as an answer — <u>illustrative examples expected</u>	Where the evidence is (sources)	How it will be gathered (methods)
<i>Answered by the synthesis of the sub-questions below, not separately. A good answer describes change in young people's own terms, covers those for whom little changed, and reports credit given to things other than NRC with equal weight where they exist.</i>				
Sub-question 2.1 What does the change consist of in practice, as distinct from how young people perceive their prospects?	The answer separates what is materially different in a young person's life from what <u>feels</u> different, with examples of each. Cases where outlook improved and circumstances did not, or the reverse, are reported rather than smoothed over.	That Honduras participants describe being able to meet transport and materials costs during the cycle, while describing the same job prospects at the end as at the start. That some Palestinian participants describe their increased income participation as helping in a family enterprise rather than earning independently.	Participants who completed programme activities 2024–2026 across all COs. Honduras in particular: perceived economic security rose sharply (basic needs met 48% to 87%) while employment moved by a net one person. Palestine: 86% credit NRC support with finding or improving work; 21.9% of those employed hold a job obtained through it. Existing cohort entry-to-exit analyses (NCA, Palestine); CO learning logs; consolidated results framework.	Individual interviews that trace decisions backwards from the participant's current situation through the choice points that led there, rather than asking whether the programme helped. Questions structured around observable particulars — what a week now looks like, what money comes in, who decides — rather than around outcome statements. Comparison of interview findings against the patterns reported in the cohort analyses, at aggregate level.
Sub-question 2.2 What happens to young people when programme support ends, and what would be required for gains to hold beyond it?	An account of the period after exit: what young people lost access to, what they retained, and who they still turn to. An explanation of why measures concerning the programme environment hold while those concerning agency in the wider community fall. What would have to be in place for gains to hold is named concretely enough to cost.	That Myanmar graduates describe losing the coach and the peer group rather than the skill itself. That Palestinian participants describe community initiatives ending with the programme, with no route to continue them and no one to convene the group.	Palestine participants, being the only cohort with three rounds of measurement (wellbeing 3.263 → 3.412 → 3.288, with the fall concentrated in community contribution, social connection and self-efficacy). Myanmar and Ethiopia participants six months or more past exit. PalVision staff and CBO coordinators; Ethiopia self-help group leaders; coaches and mentors across COs.	Interviews covering the period since exit specifically, including what contact if any was maintained. Palestine sampling weighted to the domains that fell, and to women, whose scores declined across all domains. <u>Purposive sampling spanning a range of outcomes, so that the picture is not drawn only from those who did best.</u>
Sub-question 2.3 Which elements of the support do participants credit, including	A weighted account in participants' own terms of what mattered and what	That participants rank the kit or grant above the training, or the reverse, and can say why.	Ethiopia: participants who sold grants (51% of inactive businesses), including poultry;	Interviews establishing sequence of events rather than reasons in isolation.

Question	What would count as an answer — <u>explanation</u>	What would count as an answer — <u>illustrative examples expected</u>	Where the evidence is (sources)	How it will be gathered (methods)
what they did with any capital or cash received?	did not, rather than a list of components delivered. Use of capital or cash is described with sequence and circumstance — what arrived, what happened in the weeks after, what else was going on in the household — covering use as intended, redirection, sale, and absorption into household needs. The account does not frame use outside the intended purpose as compliance failure.	That an Ethiopian participant describes selling poultry stock after feed costs rose and using the proceeds for food, distinguishable from one who sold in order to start a different trade.	self-help group leaders and business mentors who observed what followed. Myanmar NE: the seven who redirected grants into further training; the three who reported mentoring was not useful. Honduras: staff and partners on the retention transfer (70% at cycle start, 30% at close); mentoring-to-action data including the 13% who sought nothing. Staff who released grants across Ethiopia and Myanmar.	Ethiopia interviews conducted remotely and in language, given the sensitivity of the subject. Country offices will support identification of participants against agreed criteria.
Sub-question 2.4 Where young people do advance, does advancement carry costs that current measurement does not capture?	A clear statement of whether it does, for whom, and of what kind — time, safety, household standing, care burden, exposure to risk. Where no such cost is found, that is stated rather than left silent.	That Palestinian women who led community initiatives describe recognition alongside added time burden or household friction. That Myanmar women in trades with slower time to income describe pressure from family to abandon them before they became profitable.	Palestine women, whose wellbeing declined in every domain while men's rose, and who led more community projects (60% against 50%) while reporting less benefit. Myanmar women in trades associated with slower time to income; host-community women, consistently least active and least documented. NCA young women participating under adapted schedules alongside caregiving responsibilities.	Two or three small single-sex group discussions in Myanmar, since household and care constraints seldom surface with an unfamiliar individual interviewer. Individual interviews with women who advanced, focused on what advancing required of them. Interviews with women who led community initiatives, on what leading involved. Interviews under sub-questions 2.2 and 2.4 draw on the same participants and should be conducted as one conversation, with findings reported under both.
Q3 What constrains young people's transitions in these contexts and which NRC adaptations have made a difference?				

Question	What would count as an answer — <u>explanation</u>	What would count as an answer — <u>illustrative examples expected</u>	Where the evidence is (sources)	How it will be gathered (methods)
<i>Answered by the synthesis of the sub-questions below, not separately. A good answer establishes barriers from participants and external actors first, then maps NRC's response onto them, so that constraints the programme did not recognise remain visible.</i>				
Sub-question 3.1 Which contextual barriers were binding, determining whether a transition happened at all, rather than merely making it harder?	Barriers are ranked by how binding they are in each context, not listed. The answer distinguishes barriers that stop a transition outright from those that slow or complicate it. Barriers are attributed to specific groups rather than to young people in general. Barriers young people report but the programme has not recorded are identified as such. Where a barrier is reported by staff but not by participants, or the reverse, that discrepancy is reported.	That in Niger the binding barrier is the absence of a place in state provision, not literacy, motivation or family support. That in Myanmar South East conscription risk prevents young men attending irrespective of interest, while in Ethiopia movement restriction caps what a completed trade can earn.	Participants across all COs, on what got in their way. Niger: state provision on which continuation depends; participants recorded as prepared and awaiting places. Ethiopia: movement restriction outside camps; exclusion of refugees from formal banking. Myanmar SE: conscription risk, with female-only enrolment anticipated in 2026. Palestine: incursions and movement restriction interrupting delivery. El Salvador: contraction of local organisations under the Foreign Agents Law and withdrawal of US funding. NCA: caregiving and income-generating responsibilities recorded as limiting participation.	Participant interviews conducted before the review team maps NRC's adaptations, so that the barrier picture is established independently of programme records. Key informant interviews with external actors: local actors, employers, training institutions and ministry counterparts — on the same barriers.
Sub-question 3.2 Which NRC adaptations have made a demonstrable difference for young people, which have not, and which were never tested?	Named adaptations with an account of what changed for young people as a result. Adaptations that did not work, or were abandoned, are reported alongside those that did. The answer distinguishes adaptations that solved a problem from those that reduced its visibility. Adaptations made but never tested against outcomes are identified as such rather than counted as successes.	That young mothers in Ethiopia credit day-care provision with making attendance possible, and name what would have happened without it. That Myanmar remote coaching worked for participants with reliable phone access and not for others; that flexible scheduling in North Central America was offered but little taken up, and why.	CO learning logs and annual reports, which record adaptations as made. Programme and MEAL staff in all five COs. Participants who experienced delivery before and after an adaptation, where identifiable. Examples available: Ethiopia day-care provision, multilingual instruction and recruitment of trainers at 50% female; NCA flexible scheduling for young women and realignment to local partners after LFS closure; Myanmar small-group and remote	Document review followed by verification interviews. Timeline reconstruction on two or three selected adaptations — what was changed, when, and what followed — rather than a survey of all of them. Adaptations mapped onto the barrier picture from sub-question 3.1, so that unaddressed barriers are visible as a residual.

Question	What would count as an answer — <u>explanation</u>	What would count as an answer — <u>illustrative examples expected</u>	Where the evidence is (sources)	How it will be gathered (methods)
			delivery; Palestine dispersed CBO delivery under movement restriction.	
Sub-question 3.3 Where opportunities have not materialised, what lies within the influence of NRC and the local actors it works through, and what does not?	A clear division between the two, with reasoning. Where institutional results fall below target, the answer establishes whether this reflects activity not delivered or activity delivered and not recorded. Work NRC is doing on the opportunity side that no indicator captures is identified and described – note some case studies are being developed now and will be handed to review team Where no genuine alternative was available to the country office, that is stated rather than treated as a failure to act.	That the zero recorded against training-centre support reflects support delivered to state-run centres and recorded under a different indicator, rather than support not delivered. That Ethiopia's legal assistance work enabled businesses to register and open accounts, and that this is counted nowhere in the results framework.	Institutional indicators below target: education actors 62%, market system actors 55%, youth CSO actors 42%, technical support to training centres 0 of 29. Ethiopia ICLA work on business licences, land rental agreements and banking access, which appears in no formal indicator and is being developed as a case-study now. Niger: local actors delivering the programme; FAFPA and DAFA officials; holders of the decision on opening state training centres; MoE counterparts on the emerging teacher pathway. El Salvador: former referral partners that closed or reduced operations; employers hosting apprenticeships.	Key informant interviews. Employer and institution interviews, treated as the primary source on whether a placement constitutes substantive work.
Sub-question 3.4 In the absence of the programme, what would young people in that context have done instead?	Answers in young people's own terms — state provision, another organisation, informal work, migration, or nothing — rather than an inferred counterfactual. Where an alternative existed and young people chose the programme over it, the reason is given. Where no alternative existed, that is stated plainly.	That Myanmar participants name migration to Thailand as the realistic alternative, and say what made them stay instead. That Ethiopian participants name gold mining, casual labour or nothing; that Niger participants name the state centre they are still waiting for.	Participants across all COs. Myanmar: migration to Thailand as an established alternative pathway. Niger: state training provision as the nominal alternative that did not open. Ethiopia: prior occupations including gold mining. Community members and local actors on what else is available to young people in the same areas.	A consistent line of questioning carried across all participant interviews, rather than a separate exercise. Triangulated against local actor and staff accounts of what provision exists.