**Cross-border cooperation for the Sustainable Peace and Development Project**

**Management response to the Evaluation Recommendations**

Dear colleagues,

Please see below the table to provide the management response from each RUNO to the evaluation report’s findings and recommendations. Please clearly identify 1) whether the UN Agency fully accepts, partially accepts or rejects a recommendation, 2) provide justification for the acceptance/rejection and 3) provide the detailed explanation how the Agency is going to address (implement) the recommendation.

Please feel free to add comments to the findings of the report, that you believe can contribute to a better design of cross-border programmes in the future [it can be done either in the cells, if relevant, or below as a separate text].

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Recommendation** | **UNDP** | **UNICEF** | **WFP** | **UN Women (TJ)** | **FAO** |
| 1. Revise Theories of Change and strategies to further clarify the logic of pathways with regards to changes in attitudes/Behaviours and linkages/cooperation/trust building. | Accepted.  In the design of future programmatic interventions having elements of cross-border cooperation and strengthening social cohesion, UNDP will build the TOC and approach on a thorough eco political analysis that takes into account immediate and underlying causes, root challenges and results chain logic to clarify the changes in attitudes/behaviors and linkages/cooperation/trust building.  Key Actions: (during project design and through project duration)   * Regularly monitor and analyze root causes, drivers, potential risks and other factors that define local context developments and results chain logic to clarify the changes in attitude/behaviors and linkages/cooperation/trust building; * Test and validate ToC with key stakeholders and target communities during design stage to identify potential risks in the results flow logic to find the best appropriate control measures.   Responsible: UNDP KGZ, UNDP TJK  Due Date: 2021/July | Partly agree.  Since this is the end of the project, it cannot be applied to this project, but definitely TOC needs to be applied in development of similar future projects. | Agree. Measuring contributions to peace is made more straightforward by simplifying the causal pathways we are trying to test. Also helpful to clarify from the start what level\* of peacebuilding is realistic for the intervention’s resources, design and context.  ----------------  **WFP TJ**: Accepted. | Agree, as we also see some important elements, i.e. joint discussions on problems and plans as a part of building trust and trigger for behavior change have been missed in the current one.  During the joint planning, UN Women will adopt a HRBA for women empowerment; the shared understanding will be achieved that women and girls have equal human rights and that violence against women is a violation of these human rights.  2 Will make sure that all engaged agencies apply a gender analysis, so that the project actors recognise that gender inequality is the root cause of violence against women and challenge and change the beliefs, attitudes and behaviours that allow it to continue.  4 UN Women will make sure that all project stakeholders follow ethical guidelines. Ethics are the morals and values that determine how people choose the correct action to take to respect and protect women’s rights to safety, dignity and privacy.  5 UN Women will ensure that all partners and RUNOs are culturally aware: Cultural and religious beliefs can have a big say over the way individuals and groups behave, and can and will challenge and change cultural beliefs and practices that violate the human rights of women and girls. | Theories of change and strategies need to be reviewed to further clarify the logic of pathways in relation to changes in attitudes / behaviors and communication/cooperation/confidence-building, by ensuring a transparent dialogue between state structures on defining borders and on problematic issues in the border area. |
| 1. Clarify the outcome of cross-border peace building projects to detail which drivers of conflict they aim to address and therefore which types of conflict incidents they may reduce. | Partially accepted  At outcome level, there are many root causes and drivers of conflict that come into play and that are closely interrelated, and the programmatic response should consider complexities of each particular target zone and conflict areas. The recommendation is more relevant to the level of project outputs, where the project can better focus its interventions on specific conflict drivers.  Key Action: (during project design phase and through the project duration)   * Analyze root causes, drivers, potential risks and other factors to identify context specific conflict drivers to be addressed by the project and design relevant programmatic response to reduce conflict incidents.   Responsible: UNDP KGZ, UNDP TJK  Due Date: 2021/July | Partly agree.  Similar to the above, this recommendation cannot be applied to this project, but should be used for the development of similar future projects, explicitly stating the nature of the outcomes and the contribution of participating agencies thereto. | Agree. WFP had introduced the conflict-sensitivity checklist in its overall operations to ensure the prevention of various types of conflicts.  **WFP TJ:** Accepted. An Integrated Watershed Management approach implying joint cross-border efforts (independently from administrative boundaries) would certainly reduce the risk of conflict over limited natural resources. | Agree. In this exercise different sources will also be used, such as Vulnerability and Resilience ATLAS, in particular its gender responsive indicators, to compare baseline and end-line data. F. ex. links between climate change, migration, and conflict; OR dependence on foreign aid and financial investments as a factor in inducing conflict and instability; OR the (as yet unclear) role of remittances in conflict; OR revenue from natural resources and the role of international actors in creating economic incentives that can fuel conflict and instability.  While global drivers have a significant role to play, they often act as triggers for underlying sentiments: it is also important to consider internal dynamics (local, national or regional).  The future planning will consider Gender dimension of the peace-building project as important as subordinate status of women leads to accumulating dissatisfaction, a decrease in the quality of life and the inability to defend their rights, including the rights of a consumer and user of services. The intervention logic will have to explain the rationale to achieve the expected results? | Improvement of natural resources management, in particular, FAO has contributed to the reduction of conflict tensions in border villages related to the access and use of water resources through capacity building activities for Water User Associations (WUAs), improving water accounting and distribution, introducing water-saving technologies (drip irrigation), and cooperation between WUAs of the two countries. |
| 1. Ensure that the strengthening of Capacities for Peace, in addition to the addressing of conflict drivers, is central to cross-border peace building, and build on existing Capacities for Peace. Ensure that outcome statements clarify which Capacities for Peace the project aims to contribute to strengthening. | Accepted.  UNDP will strengthen analysis of the existing and potential Capacities of Peace, in terms of systems, processes, mechanisms and institutions that can enable peace building and enhance broader social cohesion agenda and integrate the analysis into design and ToC for new projects aimed at peace-building and cross-border cooperation.  Key Actions: (during project design phase)   * Analyze the existing and potential Capacities of Peace, in terms of systems, processes, mechanisms and institutions that can enable peace building and enhance broader social cohesion agenda; * Integrate the analysis into design and ToC for new projects aimed at peace-building and cross-border cooperation.   Responsible: UNDP KGZ, UNDP TJK  Due Date: 2021/July | Same as above.  Partly agree.  Similar to the above, this recommendation cannot be applied to this project, but should be used for the development of similar future projects, explicitly stating the nature of the outcomes and the contribution of participating agencies thereto. | Agree. Strengthening the capacity of the project staff and involved partners.  ----------------------  **WFP TJ:** Accepted. This can be ensured by learning and sharing lessons about cross-border communities’ roles in preventing and responding to conflict; by building collaborative relationships between cross-border communities and local and national authorities, which are in a position to respond to tensions and conflicts. | Agree. | Agree |
| 1. Ensure that strengthening of cross-border trade is based on a further in-depth analysis of the linkages between income generation/business support and cross-border trade, and between cross-border trade and peace building. | Accepted.  Support to income generation and business has multiple purposes, such as strengthening local livelihoods, reducing poverty and inequality, empowering of vulnerable groups, strengthening social inclusion, etc. The linkages between more effective cross-border trade and cross-border peace building will be taken into consideration in future programming.  Key Actions: (during project design phase)   * In-depth analysis of the linkages between income generation/business support and cross-border trade, and between cross-border trade and peace building. * Design interventions on strengthening cross-border trade based on the above analysis * Embed peacebuilding/social cohesion approaches into existing and future livelihood and cross-border trade projects (Aid for Trade Project)   Responsible: UNDP KGZ, UNDP TJK  Due Date: 2021/July | n/a | Agree. During second phase WFP introduced additional consultation mechanisms with the local governance and focus groups with youth to ensure the proper and relevant training programme for income-generating activities.  -------------------------  **WFP TJ:** Accepted. | Agree, income generation activities should be based on feasibility/market research and based on comparative analysis of business initiatives on the both sides of the border. | Agree. |
| 1. Further strengthen conflict sensitivity by ensuring close alignment of interventions with the conflict context; robust and ongoing local community level understanding of conflict dynamics; providing space for adaptation of interventions where needed; and ongoing joint monitoring of intervention implementation. | Accepted  This recommendation will be taken into account in future programming. Space for adaptation of interventions based on joint ongoing monitoring data demands clarity of implementation arrangements, including protocols for change in the project approach prior to launch of the project and existence of clear agreement between the donor and implementing partners on the level of tolerance for change.  Key Actions: (through project duration)  - Regularly monitor and analyze root causes, drivers, potential risks and other factors that define local context and conflict dynamics;  - Test and validate the monitoring data and analysis with key stakeholders and target communities before the intervention takes place to identify potential risks and - strengthen conflict sensitivity.  Responsible: UNDP KGZ, UNDP TJK  Due Date: 2021/July | Partly agree.  Whereas a very grounded and practical recommendation, this cannot be done to the current project. Should be applied in development of new projects of similar nature. | Agree. Besides introduction of the conflict-sensitivity checklist, WFP is building long-term partnership with civils society organizations on strengthening gender and conflict-sensitivity approaches (partnership with Saferworld).  -------------------------  **WFP TJ:** Accepted. Conflict analysis, mediation and conflict resolution strategies are certainly necessary. However, those needs to be accompanied by livelihood enhancement/economic development actions in order to give the peace resolution process sufficient time to happen. | Will be included in further UN Women’s work as a part of national-wide roll-out of the new NAP 1325.  Special attention will also be paid to the understanding by stakeholders of the conflict roots and it’s early warning. | Agree |
| 1. Bring further nuance to the mirroring principle so that local context is prioritised in the design of interventions | Accepted.  The principles of any future projects will be defined based on the mirroring principle ensuring that interventions on one side of the border were mirrored on the other, as well as on the result of analysis of situation, local context and conflict drivers and ToC of project interventions. Moreover, the conflict sensitivity should be a core principle while designing interventions. The approaches should be tailored to particular local contexts. It is important to note that mirroring principle should abide by the principle of conflict sensitivity and should also be assessed from an impact and cost-benefit perspective.  Key Actions: (during the project design phase and through the project duration)   * Regularly monitor and analyze root causes, drivers, potential risks and other factors that define local context developments and conflict dynamics; * Design programmatic response based on the above analysis and mirroring approach tailored to particular local context in line with conflict sensitivity principle   Responsible: UNDP KGZ, UNDP TJK  Due Date: 2021/July | Partly agree.  Whereas a very grounded and practical recommendation, this cannot be done to the current project. Should be applied in development of new projects of similar nature. | Agree. Careful consideration of the local context is the main priority for WFP, for this purpose WFP has a full-time specialist working in the region, trained on the conflict-sensitivity approach and representing WFP in all activities with the local government and communities.  -------------------------  **WFP TJ:** Accepted. The mirroring principle is an appropriate approach to ensure balance in activities to be carried out on both sides of the border. However, the local context differences should be considered when using this principle. | Agree with reservations, despite of some validity of the statement: strict application of the mirroring principle can contradict another conflict sensitivity principle: the need to respond and align closely to the context, another undeniable point is balanced/symmetrical support of communities in both countries | Ensuring transparent coordination of planned events with the participation of local communities. |
| 1. Further strengthen coordination and M&E by appointing an overall cross-border coordinator. | Partially Accepted  The operational and management structure of future projects will be defined jointly by participating parties based on the scope of each particular project and taking into account the principles of impartiality and neutrality. Appointing one cross-border coordinator may have advantages in terms of ensuring programmatic coherence/alignment – although this cannot be assumed. However, combining this with an M&E function risks bias due to geographic location. This could also create unnecessary sensitivities in politically charged cross-border projects/interventions.  Key Actions: (during the project design phase)   * Discuss and design the need for project coordinator by implementing partners on case by case basis in case of having new cross-border project envisaging cooperation of several implementing agencies, * Consider other mechanisms and means to strengthen coordination and M&E by implementing agencies and UNDP   Responsible: UNDP KGZ, UNDP TJK  Due Date: 2021/July | Rejected, The coordination and M&E will be determined based on the needs and type of interventions to be implemented. | Agree. WFP’s Food Security Outcome Monitoring (FSOM) system uses random household surveys, qualitative focus groups and key informant interviews is adjusted to specific conflict areas and PBF projects. As funding available, engagement of a coordinator may be considered.  -------------------------  **WFP TJ:** Accepted. | Good for future projects | Agree |
| 1. Further strengthen peace building coordination between RUNOs by considering more implementation through the same implementing partner and complementarity in terms of beneficiary targeting | Partially Accepted  Recommendation about ‘more implementation through the same implementing partner’ is vague and the usage of ‘Implementing Partner’ terminology needed to be clarified. It should be noted that the Implementing Partner terminology also refer to the RUNOs themselves in the lexicon of some UN Agencies. Based on the related section in the report on page 40, UNDP agrees that overall coordination within UNCTs is enhanced when agencies co-implemented through the same implementing partner or complemented each other in terms of beneficiary targeting.  Key Actions: (during the project design phase and through the project duration)   * Analyze comparative strengths, capacities and mandates of each RUNO and the level of access RUNOs/IPs have. * Discuss and agree with RUNOS on the distribution of the roles and responsibilities, complementarities of actions, targeted beneficiaries, coordination mechanisms, information exchange etc.   Responsible: UNDP KGZ, UNDP TJK  Due Date: 2021/July | Partly agree. Definitely complementarity and integration aspects should be taken into account at the design stage of future projects. However, the engagement (or not) of same IPs shall be based on the comparative analysis of their expertise, capacities and representation / reputation in target areas as well as other set of criteria that are specific for each project. Having same IP does not necessarily ensure strengthen in coordination. | Agree. WFP has already conducted joint implementation with UNDP and complementarity in beneficiary targeting (not only with UN but also with other INGOs and NGOs).  -------------------------  **WFP TJ:** Partially Accepted. WFP, under the 1st and 2nd phases, had coordinated its peacebuilding efforts with RUNOs, as well as worked with the same implementing partners to ensure complementarity in terms of beneficiary targeting. | Agree. Examples of such mechanisms include to be applied further are: i) establishment and effective operation of an Inter-Agency Implementation Team and nomination of focal points; ii) establishment and effective cooperation of thematic task forces in key areas - Communications, M&E and Finance and Operations; iii) creation - and increased use - of an internal online project platform containing folders of all key Programme Documents, and folders for Implementation (notably meeting minutes and decision logs), M&E, Comms and Visibility and the Civil Society Reference Group. Such a platform creates easy access in one location to all relevant information, documents and materials and, importantly, promotes an efficient way of co-creating and providing feedback to documents. These mechanisms usually allow for improved communication, both within the team and with external partners, as well as more coherent programming and greater efficiency in programme management. Moreover, the “new way of working” was illustrated in the coordinated and collaborative way the UN Country Team responded to the COVID-19 crisis. | Agree. |
| 1. Continuously consider the dilemma/trade-offs between the aim of short-term conflict reduction and longer-term trust building when considering the rehabilitation of infrastructure that discourages shared use. | Accepted  The trade-off between the aim of short-term conflict reduction and longer-term trust building will be continuously considered.  Key Actions: (during the project design phase and through the project duration)   * Define trade-off on case-by-case basis and considering the actual benefits for the local communities and target beneficiaries while planning the rehabilitation of community infrastructure. * Regularly monitor and assess the implementation approaches in delivering infrastructure activities   Responsible: UNDP KGZ, UNDP TJK  Due Date: 2021/July | Agree.  Relevant for the future and ongoing similar projects. | Agree. Each potential project should be considered with this dilemma; thus WFP conflict-sensitivity checklist and Project Review Committees are the mechanisms for such consideration.  -------------------------  **WFP TJ:** Accepted. | Not relevant to UN Women | Agree |
| 1. Incorporate a review of potential entry points on policy/advocacy to support progress towards a solution in the border areas into the design of future cross-border peace building projects. | Accepted.  UNDP will strengthen its partnership and advocacy work with the national counterparts to ensure the entry points for policy actions are clearly defined during the design stage and are in line with the principles of impartiality and do-no-harm.  Key Actions: (during the project design phase)   * Conduct participatory conflict analysis and needs assessment to identify potential entry points for programme interventions in line with principles of impartiality and do no harm. * Validate the results of analysis and envisaged programme response with key counterparts and communities   Responsible: UNDP KGZ, UNDP TJK  Due Date: 2021/July | Agree.  The recommendation is for the future. | Agree. Conflict analysis and programmatic design process should be able to identify all levels of potential project activities from the outset, and strategies for changes in the context that are regularly revisited to help ensure effectiveness and appropriateness of the intervention.  -------------------------  **WFP TJ:** Accepted. | Agree. During the project planning UN Women, in cooperation with RUNOs, will consider the full conflict transformation cycle. | Agree |

**Planning for After Action Review:** if your Agency is interested in pursuing a separate and subsequent exercise - perhaps akin to an After Action Review – please provide below your thinking and plans with regard to it. These exercises may document practices to help design and implement more efficiently future programmes.

**UNDP:** UNDP supports the idea of undertaking a complementary best practice and lessons learned exercise, such as an After Action Review related to this cross-border project.

In addition, a careful, balanced analysis of the political, socio-economic and international relations analysis of the border states will be pursued to serve as basis for shaping future interventions.

**UNICEF:** Most of the recommendations above – though stemming from the findings of the evaluation – cannot be pursued by a single agency and can only be considered and implemented in future work.

**WFP:** WFP continues working in the Batken region and cross-border areas with Uzbekistan applying the lessons learned from the 1 and 2 phase of the PBF cross-border project (applying the conflict-sensitivity checklist, establishing partnership with Saferworld)

**UN Women (TJ):** UN Women will consider all commitments and recommendations of current evaluation during its **future PB project planning and the conflict resolution cycle**. Special attention will be paid to **women’s movement and greater engagement of the CSOs**, as well as a **gender responsive coherence of the overall design of the action.**

**On the Knowledge Management**: October 2020 marks the 20th anniversary of the landmark UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). This milestone occurs in the midst of the global COVID-19 pandemic and in the face of persistent and complex tensions in the OSCE area and a rising backlash against gender equality and women’s rights. The “20th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security” event will take place on the 12th of October 2020.

The theme for this year’s UN SC Open Debate is “Towards the successful implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda: Moving from the commitments to accomplishments in preparation for the commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325”. For re-confirming the national commitments; and given the multitude of high-level events on WPS taking place this autumn, the OSCE and UN Women have decided to join forces and **bring together a wide range of WPS practitioners from civil society and women’s organizations**. The purpose is to compliment high-level events by focusing on real experience with implementing the WPS agenda and practical proposals for future action. The meeting will result in recommendations for the OSCE, UN Women and institutions as well as for other actors working on the WPS agenda. It will be held in an interactive format of moderated discussions. Online tools will be used to facilitate participant interaction. The gained knowledge will greatly contribute to development of a more targeted approaches in line with “One UN” implementation principles.

**FAO:** No offers

**UN Women Kyrgyzstan position on the evaluation**

Thank you so much for your tireless efforts leading this exercise in a very complex context. At this point as I have learned key feedback will remain unaddressed, I need to point UN Women has earlier and repeatedly raised the issues regarding limitations and shortfalls of the evaluation process and related deliverables and provided comments to all key milestones, including ToR, Inception Report, draft Evaluation Report (and different revised versions). So far, out of 21 comments provided to the second draft of the report, 19 remains unaddressed, and some of these comments are to our view critical and cannot  be left unattended. This includes (but is not limited to) the following:

* The process was not designed in a way which allows full representation of key stakeholders during data collection and hence the report misses key analytical elements.
* The presentation of finding, conclusions and lessons learned remains very confusing since actual finding statements (and conclusions and lessons learned statements) are not identified. Furthermore, findings are not clearly formulated. Same applies for conclusions and recommendations.
* The findings should be more comprehensively presented, supported by detailed information and in-depth explanations of causal factors should have been provided. There is need for more detailed analysis and further explanations, showing how the project contributed to the results, beyond describing that the achievement took place, but showing not only what was done and how was done and/or that the results are attributed to project activities. The report lacks proper justification on the evidence for the statements being included, to demonstrate systematically that analysis is grounded on multiple lines of evidence and proper data triangulation took place.
* GEEW is not integrated in the evaluation scope of analysis and evaluation criteria and questions are not designed in a way that ensures GEEW related data was collected. The evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendation lack, among others, a gender analysis.
* The evaluation report does not provide specific recommendations addressing GEEW issues, and priorities for action to improve GEEW or the intervention or future initiatives in this area.
* It is important to note all United Nations Evaluation Group Heads endorsed the UN SWAP Evaluation Performance Indicator (EPI), which serves both as a reporting tool and a benchmark to help UN entities integrate Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (GEEW) related considerations into evaluation processes in the UN. It is unclear on how this framework was considered in the context of this evaluation process since, as stated above this cannot be distilled in the presentation of the key sections of the report, naming, findings, conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations.
* The above are among other recommendations and comments we have provided earlier and we feel remain unaddressed.

I need to point out, UN Women repeatedly alerted the profile of the evaluator hired to conduct this assignment did not qualify as an experience evaluator and lacked key skills for a meaningful analysis and data collection (including language skills which were not complemented by a national consultant either). We believe shortfalls of the evaluation are partially a consequence of this. As a result of this and the key issues pointed above the recommendations included in the report cannot be considered for a meaningful action plan and related Management Response (MR) we feel confident to endorse. Hence we regret to inform you that we are unable to endorse this evaluation report which we strongly feel does not comply with minimum quality and rigor for evaluations in the UN system (as refrected in UNEG Norms and Standards for evaluation) and related MR.

Thus, we will refer to this exercise for internal use only.

Best regards,

Ulziisuren Jamsran, UN Women Country Representative

Isabel Suarez, UN Women Regional Evaluation Specialist for Europe and Central Asia

**WFP TJ Position on Evaluation**

We have provided our response to the matrix online and in the attached file highlighted in yellow. Besides, please see below a couple of concerns we have regarding the evaluation:

* We agree with the Project having room to improve, and we will benefit from findings/recommendations from the evaluation, but the credibility of the evaluation (referring to UNEG norm 3) is diminished. While the evaluation design meets required rigor, the actual implementation of the methodology (due to external circumstances, which were unavoidable and not the fault of the evaluation team) was quite constrained, and there was little mitigation for reduced rigor.
* Given that it was a cross-border and multi-partner project, we believe that a joint meeting of UNCT KG and TJ should be organized for the evaluation team to present its findings, conclusions, and project lessons learned. The UNCT of the two countries should provide the management response collectively.

Thank you.

Best Regards,

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**Hafiz Kalandarov**

Senior Programme Associate