



PeaceNexus Foundation

Review of PBF Cross-border Cooperation for Sustainable Peace and Development

In the border area of Kyrgyzstan & Tajikistan

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20-11-2017

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Executive Summary

PeaceNexus Foundation was requested by the UN Country Teams in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to conduct a review of the Cross-border Cooperation for Sustainable Peace and Development (Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) project, funded by the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). This review aims to draw out the main lessons learnt on the relevance and effectiveness of the project, in order to develop recommendations for a further strengthening of the project, in case a second phase of the project would be approved.

The initial rationale for this cross-border project was to reduce the immediate risk of renewed violence, in the light of the escalation of tensions and violence that erupted in 2014 between Tajik and Kyrgyz villagers and border guards. Although the tension between communities on both sides of the border has reduced since this 2014 peak, the lack of progress on border demarcation and delimitation leaves this border area in a state of continuous fragility. In this context, the review concludes that the project remains relevant today, and it would be beneficial if a second phase were approved.

The project aims to achieve progress in six areas, covered under six outputs:

- Community leaders/ authorities in Kyrgyz-Tajik cross-border areas have access to reliable and balanced information about local conflict dynamics and trends and how they can be addressed
- Cross-border communities along the Kyrgyz-Tajik border establish/strengthen mechanisms for dialogue, deliberation, and joint problem-solving
- Improved linkages and cooperation between security providers, local authorities and communities to reduce violent incidents
- Communities restore cross-border linkages and cooperation by jointly addressing interdependent needs/ challenges associated with community infrastructure and natural resources
- At-risk youth have increased their level of inter-ethnic tolerance and are less likely to engage in violence
- Women enhance cooperation and trust between communities through actively participating in the identification and implementation of cross-border initiatives

In brief, it can be stated that the project received significant results in all these areas, and does indeed seem to have contributed to a reduction in tensions and lower immediate risks of renewed cross border violence. The project has contributed quite significantly to reducing tensions over water resources, as well as issues related to border-crossing rules, and attitudes towards the ‘other’ have been positively impacted. Some of the stories of the youth of how they have established friendships, with boys and girls that they used to be genuinely afraid of, are very impressive. Of course the durability of such ties in the face of renewed violence cannot be guaranteed, but most definitely worth the try.

Important lessons have been learnt in the first phase of the project, which can be viewed as recommendations for a next phase:

- A key lesson learnt was that the envisaged strategy of joint implementation and encouraging the shared use of infrastructure was often not the most effective way to reduce tensions. The project shifted increasingly towards an approach of increasing communities’ independent access to resources, rather than encouraging shared usage.
- The conflict monitoring data shows that the main triggers of conflict relate to land resources, water resources, road and transportation issues, border crossing rules, criminal action and youth. The project contributed significantly to reducing tensions over water resources, as well as to issues related to border-crossing rules. It focused on issues related to youth, and by extension possibly on criminal action to some degree. However, the main trigger for conflict seems to be land issues, which to a large extent fall outside the sphere of influence of the project due to the current political context of border delimitation and demarcation. Yet, a reflection is necessary on where the project may still be able to add value in this arena.
- The community conflict monitoring system has proven very useful as a means to ensure conflict-sensitive implementation. However, a community conflict monitoring system that aims to meet the purpose of strengthening the early warning capacity of authorities will require a different design and a deep institutional embedding in existing structures & government ownership, as well as a strong ownership from the authorities, which is not immediately obvious.
- It is essential that the mechanism for dialogue effectively links different institutional levels together in one integrated system for dialogue, which needs to be the starting point for all community-based project activities, most notably those related to community infrastructure.

- To address the issues related to formal and informal border-crossing, and the incidents associated with it, it is important to ensure that training and awareness raising for community members is sufficiently contextualized and addresses real-life situations.
- The risk of creating an expectation that food will be provided as an incentive for manual work on assets needs to be carefully balanced against the need to provide social protection to the vulnerable. Perhaps creative ways can be found to optimize this balance in the next phase.
- The sustainability of the water-related infrastructure could still be increased, most likely through strengthening the capacity of all water governance actors and their interactions.
- More emphasis could go to strengthening businesses ties and encouraging cross-border economic cooperation. The immediate peace dividend of the vocational training could also potentially be increased. This would lead to more durable ties than friendship ties alone.
- Although there is no indication that women were not sufficiently represented, the roles and responsibilities of the implementing agencies in ensuring that i) women can participate effectively in dialogue and consultations, ii) that women are increasingly involved in decision-making at community level, and iii) that women's needs and preferences are sufficiently taken into consideration may need to be more clearly defined in the second phase.
- At the onset of the project, the principle of a mirroring approach was adopted, which proved useful to ensure coherence in strategies and a balance in activities carried out on both sides of the border. However, an important lesson learnt is that mirroring activities is not always appropriate, due to different peacebuilding opportunities, entry points and governance structures. Context must lead.
- However, differences between strategies employed between the countries were not always based on differences in entry points and governance systems, but rather on agency's programming preferences and strong adherence to specific ways of working.

In relation to the effectiveness of implementation, some further gain can also be had.

- There is a need for a stronger synergy between the components; to make the whole greater than the sum of its parts. The degree of co-implementation between the agencies was not as strong as it could have been, be it with some positive exceptions. Each agency still worked to some degree on the basis of its own theory of change and ways of working. Outputs were still divided amongst agencies, almost as if they were stand-alone projects.
- Some agencies deliberately leveraged their on-going work. They developed activities based on their on-going programming, tailored them towards the context and the peacebuilding objective, and intend to use these as pilots to feed back into their on-going programme work. This is a great example of leverage one's mandate and using this project as catalytic.
- For the next phase it will be essential to clearly articulate the theories of change under each output and strategy, with a clear understanding of how each agency can contribute to the overall vision, and which ways of working will be adopted. A solid, well-facilitated strategic planning process needs to be organized upfront, which will ensure a greater complementarity between strategies and activities, and will ease coordination afterwards. Such strategic coordination needs to be continued throughout implementation, with a strong role for the PDAs. To further strengthen coordination and joint implementation the project team should sit as closely together as possibly, ideally all together in one office in the field, and have very regular face-to-face and on-line meetings.
- Reporting on project performance and progress was very weak. Other than the bi-monthly meetings where agencies reported on their progress under each output, no mechanism was in place to collect, consolidate and track progress on the project as a whole. The PBF reporting requirements are rather minimal, and cannot serve as a comprehensive overview of project implementation.
- The Monitoring and Evaluation Plan is very strong on impact measurement, and can serve as an outstanding example to other peacebuilding projects. However, more attention could be given to how progress will be assessed in the mean time, which will also require a clear articulation of the theories of change.

Joint implementation by five UN agencies is – and probably always will be - a challenge, but also creates real opportunities to create strong synergy, by leveraging the mandates, expertise and institutional relations of the agencies. The second phase can build further on the foundation already laid by the agencies during the first phase.

1 Introduction

The Cross-border Cooperation for Sustainable Peace and Development (Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) project was launched in December 2015 for an initial period of 18 months, funded by the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The project is implemented by five UN agencies on both sides of the Kyrgyzstan – Tajikistan border, with the aim to increase cooperation and trust between communities in pilot Tajik-Kyrgyz village clusters, in order to mitigate immediate risks of renewed cross-border violence. After a no-cost extension, the current project ends in December 2017. PBF has expressed an interest in a continuation of the project's funding, contingent on the approval of a revised project document.

PeaceNexus Foundation, a Swiss-based private foundation that provides expertise to organisations committed to preventing conflict and building peace, has a framework agreement with both the PBSO and the UN Country Team in Kyrgyzstan. PeaceNexus Foundation was requested by the UN Country Teams in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to conduct a review of this cross-border project. This review aims to draw out the main lessons learnt with a view to inform a second phase of the project. Furthermore, as this project is the first PBF-funded project that is implemented in two countries to address cross-border tensions, it is expected to provide valuable lessons and experiences on cross-border programming that can be applied to other contexts that are supported by PBF.

The main aim of this PeaceNexus-led review is therefore to provide useful insights into the relevance and effectiveness of the project, in order to draw out the main lessons learnt and to develop recommendations for a further strengthening of the project. As such, it is not a formal evaluation, but rather a forward-looking exercise with the aim of building on positive lessons and adapting the project to be as effective as possible in the next phase.

This report provides the overall findings of the review mission. After a succinct description of the methodology used, the report will present the main findings of the review. These findings relate to the relevance of the project, the effectiveness of the project, and the effectiveness of implementation. Based on these findings the report will provide an overview of recommendations for the second phase of the project.

2 Methodology

The review was conducted by the international consultant and author of this report, together with a national consultant in Kyrgyzstan, and accompanied by the Peace and Development Advisors in both countries. The review utilized a combination of desk research, interviews with a selection of key stakeholders, and direct observations in the field.

Desk research included the compilation and analysis of project documents, progress reports, work plans, minutes of coordination meetings, beneficiary surveys and other project-related information, as well as data from the community conflict monitoring information system.

The in-country mission took place between the 17th of October and the 3rd of November, with an itinerary starting from Bishkek, to Dushanbe, to Khujand, Batken and back to Bishkek. Interviews with stakeholders and beneficiaries were mostly conducted in person during the mission, complemented by some Skype conversations. Interviewees were selected in close coordination with the UNCTs, and included:

- Central level government authorities with a key responsibility towards the project, at central, provincial, district and municipal level¹

¹ In Bishkek the reviewer met representatives from the following government authorities: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the vice-Prime Minister's office on Border Affairs, the Border Services, the Security Council under the President Office and the State Agency of Local Self-Government and Inter-ethnic Relations (GAMSUMO). In Batken, the deputy governor of the Provincial administration and the head of the district administration were met, as well as several municipal authorities. In Tajikistan it had proven difficult to get formal approval to speak with government authorities at central level, due to the short timeframe within which this review mission had to be organized. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was therefore not met in

- UN Resident Coordinator, Heads of Agencies of UN implementing agencies, Peace and Development Advisers, PBF secretariat, and the program and project officers of the UN implementing agencies
- Sub-contracted implementing partners (FTI, Youth of Osh, ASTI, Ehio and AWS)
- Other civil society organizations active in the region, without a direct role in the project
- Project beneficiaries in the village clusters, i.e. villagers, youth, women, water users' associations

These interviews took place either on an individual basis or in groups, in which case men and women were often spoken to separately. Open interview techniques were used, based on interview guidance prepared beforehand and tailored to each meeting. In most cases the project staff were asked to not participate in the meetings, to allow for more open discussion. The reviewer was deliberately presented as independent.

The initial review findings were presented in a workshop at the end of the field trips, with participation of the project staff from both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The workshop was used to collect feedback on the initial findings and serve as a validation exercise. At the same time, this workshop was used as an opportunity for the field staff to make further recommendations and discuss ways to make the second phase more effective. Finally, a debriefing session was held with the Resident Coordinator and Heads of UN agencies in Bishkek (in person) and a similar session over Skype with the Resident Coordinator and Heads of UN agencies in Tajikistan. These debriefing sessions intended to share the findings of the review, and serve as a mechanism for the implementing agencies to provide feedback on these findings.

Within the limited scope and timeframe, and in the absence of the data from the end-line survey, the review does not pretend to have been able to produce hard evidence for its conclusions. Furthermore, genuine peacebuilding outcomes, such as durable increases in trust between communities, take time to establish and are notoriously difficult to measure. Nonetheless, the reviewer has invested strongly in ensuring there was sufficient substantiation for the findings, through available data, through direct observation and through triangulation of these sources of information.

3 Relevance of the project

The initial rationale for this cross-border project was to reduce the immediate risk of renewed violence, in the light of the escalation of tensions and violence that erupted in 2014 between Tajik and Kyrgyz villagers and border guards. Although the tension between communities on both sides of the border has reduced since this 2014 peak, the lack of progress on border demarcation and delimitation leaves this border area in a state of continuous fragility. In this context, the review concludes that the project remains relevant today, for reasons that will be discussed below.

The relations between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have traditionally been characterized by a large number of unresolved border-related issues, with almost half of the borderline not being delineated and demarcated. Lack of clarity and disagreements over the exact location of border continue to lead to misunderstandings and distrust between neighbouring communities. Small, local conflicts quickly create ripple effects that affect other communities living in the border areas, which exacerbates distrust and a negative perception of the 'other'. Furthermore, local conflicts can easily escalate up to higher levels violence and lead to deterioration in the political climate between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. The potential for conflict is especially high around the access to and use of natural resources, notably water resources. This is partially caused by the unsolved issues of access to and ownership of existing infrastructure that was developed at the time with little regard for internal borders. In addition, much infrastructure is in state of disrepair, which leads to significant loss of water through seepage. This reduces water availability and increases competition over resources, and affects the ability of both communities to receive the quantity water they are entitled to, for which it becomes easy to blame the 'other'.

person, but their main message had been relayed to the review team. In Khujand the review team met the mayor of Isfara town, district authorities and several municipal authorities.

Such tensions are likely to remain present in the border areas until – and potentially even after – border demarcation and delimitation has taken place. Although the project has addressed a good number of highly inflammable situations relating to natural resources, many other sites still harbour a high potential for conflict. Other conflict drivers, such as competition over other natural resources (land and pasture), high levels of (youth) unemployment and out-migration, also remain present in the region. Although relationships have improved since their low point in 2014, negative perceptions, distrust and even fear of the ‘other’ is still highly prevalent among all age groups. As such, the initial rationale for this project still holds true today.

In addition, there are other trends visible, which further confirm the continued relevance of the project. Population pressure, especially on the Tajik side, leads to an increase of pressure on land for construction of houses. As areas near the border are more insecure, and therefore cheaper, an increase in settlements close to the border can be noted. This can quickly raise tensions, as such initiatives are quickly perceived as an illegitimate claim to the territory in still disputed areas². Further, the border is increasingly militarized, with border guards ensuring the integrity of the border. In daily life of villagers living close to the border tend to cross the border informally. Such informal border crossing is becoming increasingly difficult, as the border services aim to have villagers follow the formal rules and procedures. People still need to adapt to this new reality.

Finally, the project never had the intention to fully solve these conflicts within the timespan of the project; it aimed to reduce the risk of escalation, in order to avoid such conflicts negatively affecting the political space for border demarcation. This, unfortunately, is an investment that is still necessary today. In sum, the project is and remains relevant and its overall theory of change valid.

4 Effectiveness of the project

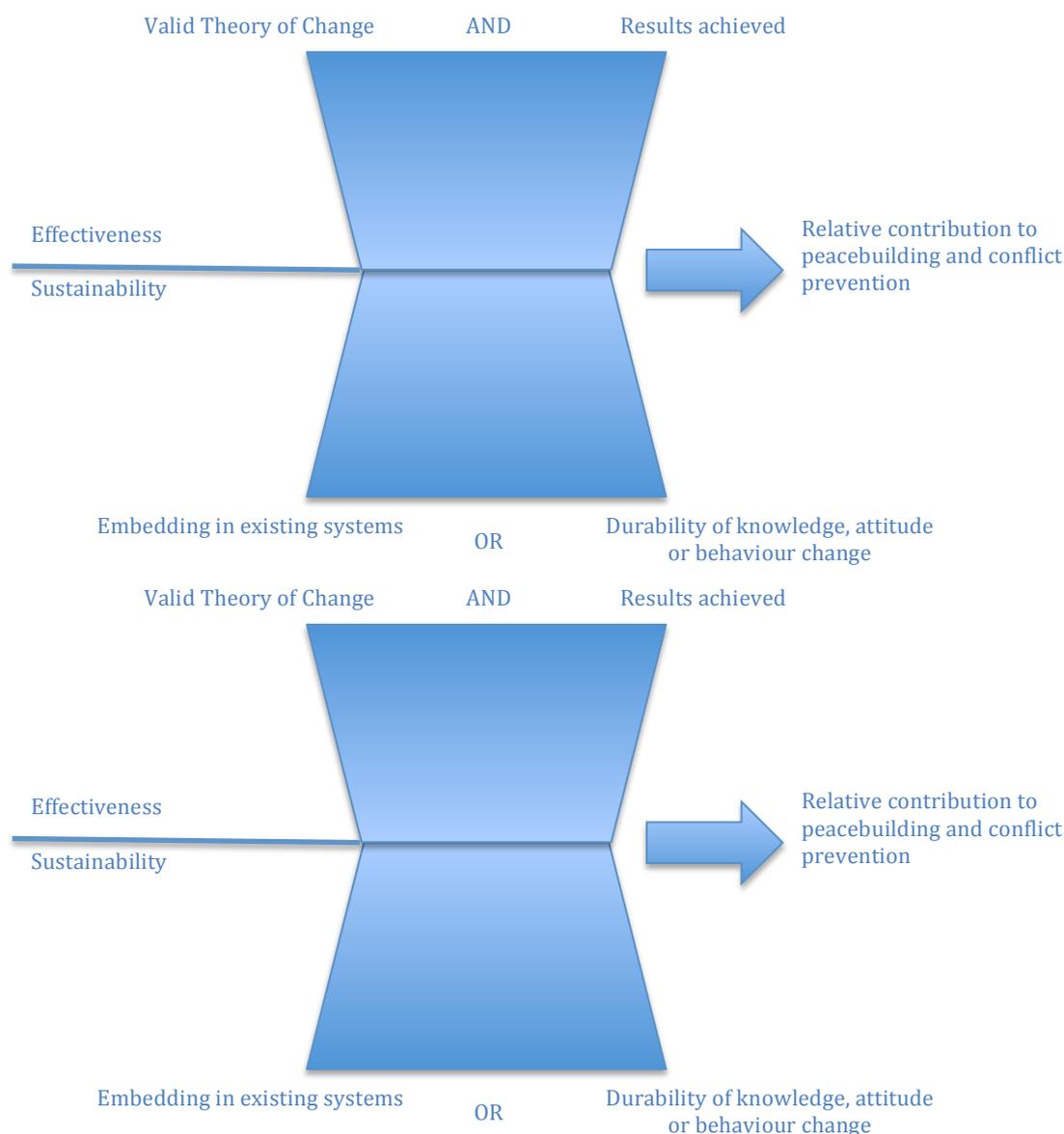
The PBF project had four outputs, plus two additional ones under the SDC component. Under each output the project employed a number of different strategies. As the reader will infer from the analysis below the intended results of these strategies have to a large extent been achieved.

This section will first explain the analytical framework that has been used to assess the effectiveness of the strategies employed by the project, followed by the main findings of the review.

4.1 Analytical framework

To assess the effectiveness of these strategies, the review has developed the following analytical framework.

² And often even in contradiction to bilateral agreements on infrastructure in disputed zones.



- The effectiveness of a strategy is determined firstly by its theory of change, the way in which a strategy intends to contribute to peacebuilding impact. Is this theory of change plausible in the given context? Is it logically linked to the outcome it aims to achieve?
- If the theory of change of a strategy is valid, then the next question is whether the intended results have been achieved. If the strategy aims to build durable ties between youth, to what extent have these ties been achieved and how durable are they?
- Effectiveness needs to be coupled with sustainability. Sustainability can come either from an embedding in existing systems, such as government institutions, which ideally would be strengthened in the process. Or sustainability can be derived from the durability of the changes in knowledge, attitudes of behaviour of individuals or institutions. If the way of working of a particular entity were durably changed, that would be a sign of sustainability.
- When strategies are both effective – in terms of their contribution to the peacebuilding objective of the project – and sustainable, then they can be said to contribute to peacebuilding.

The strategies employed by the project were not clearly articulated in the pro-doc, nor were they coherently presented as such in the project progress reports. The reviewer has therefore had to deduce these from different sources, or deduce them from the activities and the logic underpinning these activities.

This section presents the main findings related to the effectiveness of the project, first by looking at the degree to which the theories of change were clearly defined, and second by assessing the effectiveness

of the strategies employed based on the analytical framework described above. These findings do not aim to be fully comprehensive, but do cover the most important issues identified by the review. More details on the validity of the theories of change, the effectiveness and sustainability of each of the strategies employed, and specific areas where more attention is required, is provided in the annex to this report.

It is important to stress that the theory of change underpinning a strategy is essentially a belief system; we believe that ‘*if* we do this, *then* this will happen, *because* of this and that’. Analysing the validity and plausibility of theories of change is a combination of collecting evidence for the validity of the theory of change and - particularly when data is not yet available to that can provide hard evidence for this plausibility - a more subjective judgment on the plausibility of this theory of change, based on the reviewer’s expertise on peacebuilding and analysis of the context.

4.2 Main findings related to the effectiveness of the project

4.2.1 Clarity of theories of change

As discussed above, the effectiveness of a strategy is determined firstly by its theory of change, the way in which a strategy intends to contribute to peacebuilding impact. Is this theory of change plausible in the given context? And is it logically linked to the outcome it aims to achieve? Answering these questions helps to clarify whether the strategy chosen is indeed the one most likely to lead to high peacebuilding impact. It further helps to clarify what success would look like, and what information needs to be sought out to verify results are being achieved.

The original prodoc presented output-level theories for the PBF-related outputs 1.1 to 1.4. These theories of change clarified through what mechanism the desired change was expected to be achieved. These theories of change were well articulated and are and remain plausible, although some fine-tuning will be necessary, as discussed in more detail in the annex.

Subsequently the implementing agencies devised certain strategies that were aimed to contribute to these expected outcomes. At the level of these strategies the project employed, the theories of change have remained relatively unclear. For this reason, it is not always evident in what way a certain activity is intended to contribute to peacebuilding impact.

For the second phase it is crucial that the theories of change of the different strategies are more clearly articulated. This is important for three main reasons. Firstly, agreeing on the main strategies that the project will use can greatly increase the coherence between the two countries involved, while remaining sufficient space for each country to contextualize the strategy according to the institutional environment. Secondly, it builds a foundation for a shared vision on how and why the project can achieve impact, and allows for tough questions to be asked within the team members. Thirdly, it could support the more conscious collection of evidence that either validates or falsifies the theory of change by being more clear on what success would look like.

4.2.2 Results achieved, main lessons learnt and strategies’ relative contribution to peacebuilding

The effectiveness of the strategies employed by the project has been assessed on the basis of the analytical framework described in section 4.1 of this report.

This section first presents the output-level theory of change, as described in the original prodoc, and the strategies employed by the project under this output. As mentioned above, the strategies employed by the project were not clearly articulated in the pro-doc, nor were they coherently presented as such in the project progress reports. The reviewer therefore drew these from different sources, or deduced them from the activities carried out under the project³.

³ When strategies were not clearly formulated in any of these documents, the reviewer formulated these herself, and showed them as italic in the text.

This section then describes the main results achieved under this output, not as an exhaustive list of activities carried out, but rather as a presentation of examples of where the intended results – the intended outcome of a strategy - were clearly achieved. It further presents the main lessons learnt in relation to these strategies, and their relative contribution to peacebuilding.

Please note that issues related to sustainability and other points of attention that the review identified are not included here in detail, but rather presented in the annex. These issues have however informed the main lessons learnt as well as the analysis on the relative contribution to peacebuilding of the various strategies employed.

Output 0.1: Community leaders and authorities in Kyrgyz-Tajik cross-border areas have access to reliable and balanced information about local conflict dynamics and trends and how they can be addressed.

Strategies employed under this output:

- Establish and run community-based conflict monitoring system ‘TRACTION’
- Discuss ‘TRACTION’ findings and recommendations regularly with local authorities and leaders to jointly agree on follow-actions, thereby also building their analytical and response capacity

Validity of Theory of Change

- The community-based conflict monitoring system has 3 potential purposes, and theories of change underpinning them:
 - i) Providing information on conflict dynamics to ensure conflict sensitivity of project-implementation
 - ii) Mediation activities by the field monitors themselves
 - iii) Strengthening the awareness and capacity of local, regional or central authorities to prevent conflict or respond early and appropriately
- The theory of change of all three purposes is valid and these could therefore contribute to peacebuilding impact. The first purpose is an absolute precondition, considering the importance of conflict-sensitivity in a highly volatile but also exceptionally high geographical specificity in conflict dynamics.

Results achieved

- In relation to the purpose of providing information to ensure conflict-sensitivity, results were achieved on the ground. The information was collected, compiled, analysed and shared. In Tajikistan, this information was shared on a very regular – almost daily - basis with field staff, and was effectively used to monitor the conflict-sensitivity of project monitoring. In Kyrgyzstan, there was a less strong informal and highly regular exchange of conflict information, but conflict information was shared.
- In relation to the purpose of the field monitors serving as bridge-builders and mediators between communities, results were achieved on the ground. Anecdotal evidence shows that mediators shuttled back and forth between communities to defuse tensions, mostly by sharing information and dispelling rumours.
- In relation to the sharing of information with authorities the picture is more mixed. The monitoring information has been shared with the authorities at municipal and district level, often in meetings rather than in actual sharing of reports. The extent to which this has led to increases in the awareness and capacity of local, regional or central authorities to prevent conflict or respond early and appropriately is not very clear. The municipal and district authorities may have responded to the information provided, but from interviews the strong expression was gained that they mostly use their own systems and largely considered this monitoring system to be purely for project purposes. Little evidence has been found that they were interested in this system.
- At central level the uptake of central authorities also seems very low. Especially in Tajikistan, but the same possibly also applies to Kyrgyzstan, there was no intention of the project to have central authorities more involved in conflict preparedness or response. By contrast, the intention was to solve issues locally as much as possible, as issues are more likely to produce political tensions when they are escalated to central level.

Main lessons learnt

- For conflict monitoring to have a positive impact on conflict-sensitivity, the information needs to be very regularly shared with team members, including those from other agencies.
- Whether and how to institutionalize this monitoring system requires careful thinking about the purpose and how to make the system fit-for-purpose. A monitoring system that aims to meet the purpose of strengthening the early warning capacity of authorities will require a different design and a deep institutional embedding in existing structures & government ownership. It is not simply a matter of transferring this system to another entity.

Relative contribution to peacebuilding of the main strategies employed under this output	
HIGH	Conflict monitoring for conflict-sensitive project implementation
because	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - On-going conflict analysis is a precondition for conflict-sensitive implementation - Helps direct project resources to peacebuilding priorities, which can lead to greater impact - Assists in maintaining a strong link between conflict drivers and project activities
MEDIUM	Conflict field monitors as bridge builders
because	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can help defuse tensions swiftly - Only medium because of low number of monitors
MEDIUM	Strengthening the awareness and capacity of local, regional or central authorities to prevent conflict or respond early and appropriately
because	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Would lead to a greater embedding of early warning and response into existing systems - The uptake of local authorities can be doubted

Output 0.2: Cross-border communities along the Kyrgyz-Tajik border establish/strengthen mechanisms for dialogue, deliberation, and joint problem-solving

Strategies employed under this output:

- Create conducive environment for cross-border dialogue to take place and provide on-the-job training and mentoring to local dialogue facilitators
- Conduct inter-community dialogue/ consultations and agree on practical confidence building measures

Validity of Theory of Change

- The theories of change underpinning these strategies are valid and can plausibly lead to peacebuilding impact, because:
 - i) Cross-border dialogue is an essential component of diffusing tensions between the communities if and when they arise
 - ii) Conflicts can arise at various levels and at each of these levels dialogue can support the solving of conflicts and diffusion of tension
 - iii) Practical initiatives intended to serve as confidence building measures and reducing conflict need to be identified through a well-designed process of identification, prioritization and approval from within the community and with the community across the border. This is a precondition for conflict-sensitive implementation and the foundation of the project, especially in relation to output 1.2

Results achieved

- There is evidence that intended results are being achieved. Dialogue has taken place between the countries at different level, such as district authorities, municipal authorities, the border services and the ombudsman offices (see also output 1.1). The extent to which their capacity was strengthened has been difficult to ascertain by the review, but the associated activities have taken place.
- Dialogue has taken place between the countries at different level, such as district authorities, municipal authorities, the border services and the ombudsman offices (see also output 1.1). A strong example of a positive result of this dialogue was a mutual agreement between district authorities of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to henceforth aim to address conflicts locally rather than referring them to national level. Furthermore, there are indications that authorities⁴ have started to contact each other without project involvement. The review has also heard convincing examples of actual problems having been solved through such dialogue.

⁴ Source: the head of a municipality in Kyrgyzstan

- Inter-community dialogue has taken place also in the context of identifying jointly agreed projects under output 1.2. Whereas in Tajikistan this was done consistently and through one consolidated mechanism, in Kyrgyzstan there was a certain degree of parallelism in the mechanisms used⁵, which should be avoided in the future.
- Although not specifically stated as a strategy under this output, the project teams stressed the importance of inclusiveness of the dialogue platforms. In Tajikistan working groups are established to serve as a platform and interface for participatory dialogue at municipal level, and these were officially endorsed by the government. In Kyrgyzstan such groups were more informal⁶, but also inclusive and participatory. There are some indications that these ways of working may become adopted by the local authorities once they have seen the benefits, but this will for the time being remain a question mark.

Main lessons learnt

- It is essential that the mechanism for dialogue effectively links different institutional levels, including intra-community dialogue platforms, dialogue platforms with relevant authorities and dialogue platforms with the equivalent entities on the other side of the border, together into *one integrated* system for dialogue.
- This mechanism of dialogue between communities and authorities on both sides of the border is the necessary foundation of the project, as it serves as the main mechanism through which issues with the highest potential to reduce tensions are defined, and ensures the conflict sensitivity of this process. It therefore needs to be the starting point for all community-based project activities, most notably those under output 1.2 (infrastructure).

Relative contribution to peacebuilding of the main strategies employed under this output	
HIGH to MEDIUM	Create conducive environment for cross-border dialogue to take place and provide on-the-job training and mentoring to local dialogue facilitators
because	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Swift communication, functioning linkages and a minimal degree of trust between authorities and communities on both sides of the border is a precondition for early, conflict-sensitive and appropriate action by authorities that takes the other side's perspective into consideration. - Depending on the level of conflict, either communities themselves can solve it, or higher level authorities need to be involved. Dialogue is therefore necessary at all levels, and effective linkages between these levels need to be established. - In some cases these contacts did not exist before at all, in which case there is a high added value of the project. In other cases these linkages already existed so the project which reduces the added value of the project. - The durability of the cross-border dialogue is not guaranteed, but worthy of the benefit of the doubt.
HIGH	Conduct inter-community dialogue/ consultations and agree on practical confidence building measures
because	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This is a precondition for conflict-sensitive implementation. - It supports the identification of projects with the highest potential of reducing tensions.

Output 1.1: Improved linkages and cooperation between security providers, local authorities and communities to reduce violent incidents

Output-level Theory of Change: *If* security providers, local authorities and communities are assisted to strengthen information exchange, raise awareness of duty bearers and right holders, and ensure that an effective complaints mechanism is in place, *then* they will improve their linkages and cooperation (and subsequently increase trust among each other) towards reducing violent cross-border incidents

Strategies employed by the project:

- Fostering regular communication and dialogue between security providers, local authorities and communities

⁵ The first round of inter-community meetings had led to the identification of a certain number of infrastructure projects, in which different agencies had different components to contribute. This led to the situation that WFP had already implemented all its projects, and organized a second round of project identification to identify additional needs from communities and select new projects.

⁶ This relates to the difference in the political environment between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan

- Build capacity of Ombudsman's Office, State Border Services and Police to effectively receive and address complaints and strengthen existing complaints mechanisms (including from women)
- Raise awareness/increase knowledge of adolescents on border crossing rules and procedures at the school-level
- Build awareness of duty bearers (local authorities, security officials, border guards) on child rights and methods for dealing with children and youth who may violate border crossing rules and procedures
- Build capacity of the Ombudsman on Child Rights to effectively receive and address complaints related to child rights' violations (Tajikistan only)
- Establish project coordination committees and information centres (Kyrgyzstan only)

Validity of Theory of Change

- The output-level Theory of Change remains valid, although it requires a *because*-sentence.
- The theories of change underpinning these strategies are also valid and can plausibly lead to peacebuilding impact, because:
 - i) Increasing knowledge on border crossing regulations and procedures of adolescents, parents, community members can help minimize misunderstanding and conflict
 - ii) Increasing knowledge of issues faced by community members (incl. women and children) by security providers can potentially lead to changes in attitude and behaviour of security providers
 - iii) Strengthened mechanisms for registering and addressing complaints can reduce frustration and lead to changes in behaviour of security providers

Results achieved

- There are indications that the number of violent border-related incidents has been reduced. The Border Service Statistics show a reduction in border-crossing related incidents from 32 in 2015, 9 in 2016, and 7 to date in 2017. Community conflict monitoring data also confirm a reduction in border crossing incidents in the project cluster areas. Many other factors will have contributed to this, but it seems fair to assume that the project did contribute to this outcome to some extent.
- Regarding increased communication, linkages and capacity there is evidence that results are being achieved. In Tajikistan a mechanism for addressing community complaints has been established and is starting to function. A good number of complaints have been registered, and in a number of cases effective solutions have been found and implemented. One case related to Tajik citizens and Kyrgyz border guards has been placed on the agenda of the Inter-State Committee on Border Delimitation and Demarcation⁷. Anecdotal evidence also shows that the degree of trust in the ability of local authorities to address these issues has increased.
- In Kyrgyzstan there is also evidence that communication between Ombudsman, security providers and communities has been strengthened, and some mechanisms to address complaints have been initiated by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and State Border Service (reception hours) and the Institute of the Ombudsman. Sustained attention will be necessary to ensure these mechanisms will continue to function without project facilitation.
- Increased awareness and knowledge of youth (especially adolescents) and communities seems to have been achieved. School children clearly demonstrated their awareness of living in a border area, and their knowledge of official rules and procedures. The review has not been able to independently verify the duty bearers' increased knowledge on community concerns, nor whether there are any actual changes in the attitude and behaviour of state border services as a result of the trainings and community-meetings. However, in a few cases, border services have adapted their ways of working (notably changing their patrolling patterns), which could indicate that they are to some extent responsive to community concerns.
- In Kyrgyzstan information centres were established at municipal level to strengthen the dialogue platforms and serve as a source of information on peacebuilding related issues to the communities. In the view of the reviewer, the theory of change linking these information centres to peacebuilding impact is very weak. There is a clearer link between these information centres as a means to strengthen platforms for dialogue, but these entities were not effectively integrated into the overall institutional mechanism for dialogue.

⁷ Please note that this case has not been resolved as such, but it can be seen as a sign of an increasingly functioning complaint response mechanism.

Main lessons learnt

- It is important to ensure that training and awareness raising for community members (adolescents, youth, women) is sufficiently contextualized and addresses real-life situations. Although there is a need to impart knowledge on formal rules and procedures, it is the living reality of people that they cross the border informally. The modalities of awareness raising must be sufficiently tailored towards these real-life realities and support the people to better manage the challenges associated with these.
- Especially in Kyrgyzstan more attention may need to be devoted to support the institutionalization and effective functioning of the community complaint mechanisms. The ability of women to meaningfully engage in such mechanisms may also require further attention⁸.

Relative contribution to peacebuilding of the main strategies employed under this output	
(potentially) HIGH⁹	Increased linkages and an effective complaints mechanisms
because	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Incidents related to border-guards are important drivers of conflict and can quickly escalate a small conflict to one of national-level proportion - An effective complaint mechanism and regular dialogue can allow for customized solutions to be found to highly context-specific conflicts
MEDIUM	Increased awareness, knowledge and capacity of security providers, communities and youth
because	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communities will need to adapt to the realities of an increasingly closed border, and require awareness and knowledge to do so - But, knowledge of – and abiding by – the formal rules does not reduce their need to cross informally. Most problems with border services arise when those used to crossing informally suddenly find their way blocked by border guards. There is not much the project can do to address this issue, as border guards are abiding by the law
LOW	Information centres with peacebuilding information
because	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provision of information on issues related to peacebuilding has only a weak link to actually addressing tensions

Output 1.2: Communities restore cross-border linkages and cooperation by jointly addressing interdependent needs/ challenges associated with community infrastructure and natural resources

Output-level Theory of Change: *If community-led small scale infrastructure and natural resource management (NRM) initiatives are jointly identified, implemented and maintained, then cooperation and linkages between communities will be restored or improved towards fostering coexistence and stability at the local level because these initiatives meet common needs and present incentives for peaceful coexistence that help to reverse the trend of increasing segregation and reduce the likelihood of conflicts over natural resources.*

Strategies employed by the project:

- Rehabilitate or build small-scale social or natural resource-related infrastructure with a high potential for reducing tensions
- *Rehabilitate or improve access to natural resources with a high potential for reducing tensions*
- *Increase the effectiveness and transparency of the use of the natural resources in order to reduce pressure on the resources*

Validity of Theory of Change

- The description of the output and the output-level Theory of Change remain largely valid, but will require some fine-tuning for the second phase. One of the most important lessons learnt of the project is that the envisaged strategy of joint implementation and encouraging the shared use of infrastructure did not seem workable. In the majority of cases extensive discussions with communities and authorities showed that tensions were far more likely to be reduced by ensuring communities' independent access to resources rather than encouraging shared use. Although this

⁸ Based on comments made by UN Women. The reviewer has not been able to independently verify the quality of engagement of women in these complaint mechanisms.

⁹ The qualifier 'potentially' is included here, as the peacebuilding impact will depend on the complaint mechanism actually functioning and being well integrated into existing systems, for which results are currently still mixed.

may increase the trend of segregation, artificially reducing segregation seemed to lead to more tensions rather than reducing them.

- The theories of change underpinning these strategies are valid and can plausibly lead to peacebuilding impact, because:
 - i) Ineffective and disputed infrastructure, especially water related infrastructure, leads to reduced access to irrigation and drinking water. This is one of the most important drivers of conflict, especially when (climatic, political) circumstances reduce water availability.
 - ii) Ineffective use of water, in particular the overuse of irrigation water, increases the pressure on existing water resources. Furthermore, it can lead to rising ground water levels and salinization¹⁰, which is already noticeable now as an additional driver of conflict, and may further exacerbate tensions in the future.
 - iii) Conflict often arises from disagreements or misunderstandings over the amount of water actually being delivered to communities. This becomes particularly salient when Kyrgyz and Tajik villages are acquiring their irrigation water from the same channel, one downstream from the other. Increasing transparency can reduce such misunderstandings.

Results achieved

- There are indications that results are being achieved towards a reduction of social and natural resource infrastructure related conflicts. One of the most important lessons learnt of the project is that the envisaged strategy of joint implementation and encouraging the shared use of infrastructure did not seem workable. In the majority of cases extensive discussions with communities and authorities showed that tensions were far more likely to be reduced by ensuring communities' independent access to resources rather than encouraging shared use.
- On all the sites visited, the communities were very happy with the infrastructure projects and unanimously stressed the high priority of these specific projects. In all these cases, with the exception of Kaerma canal, tensions around these water resources have been significantly reduced, if not entirely removed. The case of the Kaerma canal is described in more detail in the box below, and will be discussed again under lessons learnt below.

The case of the Kaerma canal

The rehabilitation of Kaerma canal is a case where the cross-border consultation was not sufficiently well carried out, which led to significant tensions between the Kyrgyz and the Tajik authorities. It shows how sensitive these issues can be, and how careful these consultations need to be planned.

After an initial misunderstanding on whether this project had received full approval by communities and authorities from both sides of the border, rehabilitation works started on the head facility of Kaerma canal, located in Chorku municipality in Tajikistan, and owned by the Isfara Water Department in Tajikistan. Based on the technical documents provided, a specific technical solution was chosen which led to a widening of 300 meters of the head part of the canal from two to five meters (the canal's entire length is 17km). This widening significantly increased the potential water intake of the canal. The Kyrgyz water authorities (Batken water department) saw risks in this widening and claimed it creates potential risks of violating the Isfara river water allocation quotas established by the interstate agreement between the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The Isfara Water Department stressed that the increased volume of water falls back to the river after the 300 meters of the widened structure, and that there was no intention on the part of Tajik authorities to change the distribution of water. The Kyrgyz authorities claimed that these reconstruction activities violate inter-government agreements about the need to agree any infrastructure work in the border zone, whereas the Isfara water department claimed that no permissions for doing such work on Tajik territory were required.

The project team responded by immediately halting the work, and facilitating the process of finding a technical solution acceptable to both parties. An in-principle agreement on a technical solution has now been reached, but both sides have not yet come to a fully mutually acceptable agreement that can put this case to a close. The project team subsequently also drafted, discussed, and approved new Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for implementing cross-border infrastructure initiatives. These introduced additional safeguards to prevent disputes over infrastructure projects, in particular in relation to the involvement of district authorities.

¹⁰ This may further lead to decreases in yield, and a deepening inability of farmers to pay the irrigation service fees to the Water Users' Associations.

- As can be understood from the Kaerma case, the process of consultations within communities and between authorities on both sides of the border had initially not been sufficiently watertight. With the adoption of the new SOP, the process has been sharpened.
- Regarding rehabilitating or improving access to pastures, few results have been achieved by the project. The project teams in Tajikistan seriously tried to identify opportunities to improve pasture areas, but came to the conclusion that these issues were very contentious and largely beyond the sphere of influence of the project¹¹. The decision not to engage further on the pastures was a conflict-sensitive and sound decision. In Kyrgyzstan, an e-pasture management system was introduced and pasture committees were trained on this program. The review has not been able to assess this project component.
- Increased transparency, through enabling Water Users Associations to measure the exact amounts of water, seems to have assisted in reducing conflict over water¹², especially since Tajik and Kyrgyz responsible persons conduct this measurement jointly.
- Drip irrigation significantly reduced the amount of water necessary, and therefore increased the effectiveness of water usage, but only in a few demonstration plots. There is little indication at this point that this practice may become adopted more widely.

Main lessons learnt

- As mentioned above, the project teams learnt that the envisaged strategy of joint implementation and encouraging the shared use of infrastructure did not seem an effective way to reduce tensions in most cases. Therefore the project shifted increasingly towards an approach of increasing communities' independent access to resources rather than encouraging shared use. Such analysis shall continue to be done on a case-by-case basis however, and not extrapolated to a general rule.
- It is essential that all infrastructure projects come through an intensive and well-facilitated intra- and inter-community dialogue process, with high-quality engagement from men, women and youth, and that these projects acquire the formal approval of both communities and the municipal and district authorities on both sides of the border.
- As can be understood from the Kaerma case, the process of consultations at the community level should be continued by consultations between technical staff of respective structures and an agreement on the technical components of planned works between authorities on both sides of the border. A main lesson learnt is that the technical details do matter in such volatile situations.
- Some of the prioritized infrastructure projects required a degree of manual labour, in which case food was provided for the most vulnerable in the community. Such support contributes to alleviating the level of vulnerability for the most poor, and provides a degree of social protection, but the causal link to peacebuilding needs to be more clearly defined and articulated. The risk of creating an expectation that food will be provided when work on assets needs to be done must be carefully balanced against the need to provide social protection to the vulnerable¹³. Perhaps creative ways can be found to optimize this balance in the planning stage for the second stage.
- The sustainability of the water-related infrastructure needs to be increased through strengthening the capacity of the water governance actors (WUAs, district and municipal water depts, mirab) and their interactions.

Relative contribution to peacebuilding of the main strategies employed under this output	
MEDIUM	Increased transparency and effectiveness of water usage

¹¹ Most pastures are located in Kyrgyzstan, and are also used to some extent by Tajik shepherds. This is done on the basis of informal arrangements that, although not entirely satisfactory for both parties, do work to some extent. Any attempt by the project to engage with these arrangements would accrue to a formalization, or at least increased visibility of these arrangements and is likely to aggravate tensions and could potentially be illegal.

¹² The effect of water volume measurement is hard to separate out from the effects of the rehabilitation of the canals, after which the measuring devices were installed or provided. Yet, Water Users Associations spoke convincingly about the conflict-reducing effect of the water meters.

¹³ WFP has a different point of view. In their view, WFP engages the most vulnerable/food insecure community members facing a food gap to implement project only for a short-term period from two weeks to one month, which is limited time for creating a culture of expectation. WFP also stresses that they conduct post distribution monitoring after the completion of the projects twice a year and such cases were not revealed, and if such risk existed, it would be mitigated by a communication campaign. The reviewer does not think that these measures take the risk away. In the view of the reviewer, the distribution of food as a component of an infrastructure project does create an expectation that such manual labour will be compensated, now and in the future. In the case of privately owned infrastructure (the canals are effectively owned and operated by the farmer's themselves through the Water Users' Associations), this is not the expectation we want to create., especially as in other infrastructure projects in the area such compensation is often not used.

to HIGH	
because	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increasing the transparency of water usage has a multiplier effect, as it reduces misunderstandings, creates collaboration between WUAs, and can assist in tailoring water usage to crop requirements. - Increasing the effectiveness of water usage has a more indirect impact on reducing tensions by reducing the pressure on the resources. The effect is less immediate but still worthwhile, especially since it can help mitigate the problems of rising ground water levels and salinization which are emerging drivers of conflict.
LOW	Food contributions to vulnerable people as an incentive and social protection mechanism
because	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The provision of food to the most vulnerable has a short-term benefit to those in need of protection, but the link to the peacebuilding objective of the project is very weak.

Output 1.3: At-risk youth have increased their level of inter-ethnic tolerance and are less likely to engage in violence

Output-level Theory of Change: *If youth from cross-border communities are assisted to improve their multi-cultural skills/ level of tolerance and engage in developing and implementing joint activities with youth from the other side of the border, then youth will be less likely to participate in cross-border related violence.*¹⁴

Strategies employed by the project:

- Improving contacts and friendship ties between youth and adolescents through joint cross-border activities based on their own initiative
- Raise awareness and provide opportunities to youth and adolescents to develop a peacebuilding attitude and vocalize this perspective
- Enhance the access to psychosocial support for adolescents
- Business training and support to businesses that strengthen cross-border trade linkages
- Vocational trainings for at-risk youth to reduce unemployment

Validity of Theory of Change

- The description of the output and the output-level Theory of Change remains valid, but needs to be completed with the ‘because-sentence’. This could read as follows: *because they will have built enduring ties and increased their understanding of and tolerance towards the other community.* This will help to clarify what mechanism is envisaged, and what intermediate results can be expected.
- The theories of change underpinning the employed strategies are valid and can plausibly lead to peacebuilding impact, because:
 - i) Engaging youth and adolescents in joint activities – in which they both have an interest - will lead to friendships and increases in trust and tolerance
 - ii) Strengthening life skills & peacebuilding skills will increase the capacity of youth to be tolerant and empathetic towards the other youth
 - iii) If the youth becomes more aware and vocal of their potential as peacebuilding actors, they will change their own attitude and that of those around them
 - iv) If adolescents address their psychological problems early, they are less likely to become intolerant and violent
 - v) If youth build business ties and engage in cross-border trade, they will have a greater incentive to maintain peace and less prone to violent behaviour
 - vi) If unemployed youth gain access to jobs, they will be less prone to violent behaviour

Results achieved

- Very many of the youth interviewed have built friendships with youth from the other community, whom they did not know before or were even afraid of. Furthermore, in a good number of cases, significant changes in attitude can be observed among youth and adolescents. Many interviewees expressed persuasively their commitment to peacebuilding and many have started their own initiatives. In a good number of cases, significant changes in attitude can be observed among youth and adolescents.

¹⁴ This last sentence was not included in the original prodoc, but can be easily derived from the narrative below it.

- Many of the joint activities were identified by the youth themselves, and most of them seem to have strong champions committed to them. Some of the activities are starting to move towards a greater institutionalization, such as the mixed team football league.
- The business plan competition seems to have been very effective, as good business plans seem to have been developed, with high job creation opportunities. Although it is too early to tell whether these business plans will lead to successful business, strong multiplier effects may be expected, such as durable business ties and employment generation.
- The review has not been able to verify the degree of enhancing the access of adolescents to psychological support. It seems however that in Tajikistan the approach used both strengthens the linkages between communities and the existing systems and strengthens these systems themselves. In Kyrgyzstan this is less strongly the case, and thus the effectiveness may be lower. The social pedagogues receive one week training only, without real follow up, which seems much too short to impart any significant knowledge. Furthermore, just the contact details for the hotline are provided, but there is no further support or institutionalization of this link¹⁵.
- The vocational training aimed to reduce unemployment of vulnerable youth. The review has not sufficiently been able to meaningfully assess the extent to which these trainees gained employment, but has some doubts about this.

Main lessons learnt

- Many youth activities are relatively ad-hoc cultural or sports exchanges, which may not lead to durable ties. Initiatives that may have a higher likelihood of becoming more permanent or institutionalized may warrant additional support of the project.
- More emphasis could go to strengthening business ties. Currently this is done through support to business plans, an activity that could perhaps be expanded. In addition other ways of strengthening business ties could perhaps also be considered, based on context-specific opportunities for cross-border economic cooperation, which could perhaps emerge out of through cross-border meetings of entrepreneurs or business associations.
- For the vocational training, results in terms of reduced unemployment were not so clearly observable, which may require further tailoring of the training to the employment opportunities present. Furthermore, the theory of change of this strategy needs to be more clearly articulated and defined. The peacebuilding dividend to be gained from reducing unemployment is a valid, but rather indirect one. It would increase if youth with specific high-risk of conflict were mostly targeted for these trainings. Although the criteria of vulnerability will partially overlap with this definition of at-risk youth, they could perhaps be even more tailored to such youth. A more immediate peacebuilding dividend of vocational training could also be gained if the job creation were to lead to more cross-border economic cooperation, which would reduce the incentive for engaging in violence. In Tajikistan a module on peacebuilding, leadership and gender equality was added into the existing curriculum, and in both countries the trainees participated in a cross-border exchange, which added somewhat to the potential peacebuilding dividend.

Relative contribution to peacebuilding of the main strategies employed under this output	
HIGH to MEDIUM	Enhance peacebuilding attitude and forge friendship ties between cross-border youth and adolescents
because	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individual capacities for tolerance and peacebuilding are crucial for sustaining peace - Over recent years the perception of the ‘other’ has become more negative, and nationalist tendencies are on the rise in both countries. This puts the youth at risk of becoming increasingly tolerant - Since many of the infrastructure projects lead to increased segregation, it is important to ensure connections between the communities across the border are maintained. - The peacebuilding impact of these friendship ties is somewhat reduced by their potentially low durability in the face of renewed violence or political tension
(potentially HIGH)	Enhance the access to psychosocial support for adolescents
because	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The peacebuilding impact of this component is rather long-term and indirect. - However it the project could institutionalize the increased access to psychosocial care within

¹⁵ In Kyrgyzstan, there is no institutionalized psychosocial support available for adolescents. One teacher from each school is assigned as “social pedagogue” and expected to react to students’ needs, but no additional funding is available for their function as such. It was/and probably is therefore a challenge for RUNOs to make strong, sustainable interventions with limited project resources.

	the timeframe of the project, the multiplier effect would be very high.
(potentially HIGH)	Business training and support to businesses that strengthen cross-border trade linkages
because	- If the business becomes successful, strong multiplier effects may be expected, such as durable business ties and employment generation.
MEDIUM	Vocational trainings for at-risk youth to reduce unemployment
	- The link between reduced unemployment and reduction of tensions is a rather indirect one. - If vocational training were to lead to more economic cooperation and cross-border trade the immediate peacebuilding dividend would be higher. - Equally, a stronger focus on targeting the risk most at risk of resorting to violence would increase the potential peacebuilding impact.

Output 1.4: Women enhance cooperation and trust between communities through actively participating in the identification and implementation of cross-border initiatives

Output-level Theory of Change: *If barriers to women's active participation are identified* and men and women better understand the benefits of women's involvement in cross-border cooperation initiatives, then these initiatives will have more ownership, and benefit from women's perspectives and views because women can contribute new ideas to problem solving and trust-building, and use their influence to strengthen cross-border linkages and cooperation.*

Strategies employed by the project:

- Enhance capacity of women leaders to assess, understand and analyse human insecurities felt by women and have these needs and preferences influencing decision-making
- Enhance capacity of women leaders for conflict analysis, prevention and mediation
- Increase social and economic ties and build tolerance between women leaders through joint cross-border initiatives
- Increase awareness of authorities on human insecurities felt by women and recommendations provided by women

Validity of Theory of Change

- The description of the output and the output-level Theory of Change remains largely valid, but requires adjustment, since these barriers have now largely been identified. Furthermore, the attitudes of village women towards the 'other' are not sufficiently captured by this Theory of Change, as the discussion below will show.
- The theories of change underpinning the employed strategies were largely valid and can plausibly lead to peacebuilding impact, because:
 - i) Women have an important role to play as peace builders and mediators
 - ii) Women's needs and preferences need to be adequately considered in decision-making
 - iii) Women pass on their attitudes towards peace and conflict to their children and are therefore important agents in changes in attitude and behaviour
- In the view of the reviewer, the initial research on human insecurities had only a weak link to the output-level theory of change; only in the sense that it can help women better identify the extent and scope of their insecurities, which may allow them to be better prepared to provide high quality input into dialogues on their needs and perspectives.

Results achieved

- Regional consultations with authorities, civil society organisations and RUNOs were conducted on the basis of the human insecurities report. The review has not sufficiently been able to verify whether the awareness of authorities on human insecurities felt by women was increased, but has some doubts on the extent to which these consultations would have significantly contributed to this understanding.
- To some extent women leaders have started to serve as a bridge between community women and women leaders, and support community women to better understand and vocalize their needs and preferences. There are some indications that women participated quite effectively in the decision-making on the projects under the other outputs (notably output 1.2). In all the cases where the reviewer visited an infrastructure project site, the women had been clearly involved and the project was indeed also their priority.

- Relationships between women from both side of the border were clearly established. Furthermore, in a good number of cases these ties went beyond mere cultural exchanges but actually involved economic collaboration, which arguably builds stronger ties than mere friendship ties.
- The capacity development of women leaders did lead to some positive results, as women leaders seem to have become more equipped to prevent and mediate conflict and have undertaken some own initiatives to address tensions (e.g. garbage collection). There is also some evidence that women have been able to mediate conflicts effectively, in spite of the fact that men are more likely to conduct the negotiations over serious conflicts.
- However, the reviewer feels that the focus of the activities under this output may have been too strongly concentrated on these women leaders, and perhaps not sufficiently to ordinary village women who also have an important role to play in changing attitudes and maintaining ties across the borders¹⁶. In Tajikistan, this was recognized, and an additional activity of organizing ‘women’s clubs’ was instated as a result.
- A gender mainstreaming plan was developed at the beginning of the project, which clarified roles and responsibilities on gender inclusion throughout the different output areas. The reviewer received quite mixed messages however on the degree to which the gender mainstreaming plan was effectively used and monitored by all RUNOs.

Main lessons learnt

- The output-level Theory of Change lends high importance to the functions of ensuring that i) women can participate effectively in dialogue and consultations, ii) that women are increasingly involved in decision-making at community level, and iii) that women’s needs and preferences are sufficiently taken into consideration across the other outputs. There is need for stronger clarity on where responsibility for these functions lies, what intended results are and how they are best achieved. The quality of engagement may need stronger attention vis-à-vis the quantity of engagement.
- The focus of the activities mostly related to strengthening the capacity of women leaders to understand their issues, to organize cross-border activities and to act as mediators. The importance of their role in families and in transferring peacebuilding attitudes to their children may have been insufficiently considered. To reach this goal different strategies may have to be employed.
- Many women are quite economically vulnerable and dependent on labour migration and informal seasonal field works across the border. Although this project is primarily a peacebuilding project and not an economic development or empowerment project, there is still a lot of value in engaging in projects that encourage economic activity for women, especially when it has a cross-border dimension. This could perhaps be further expanded on the second phase.
- In the view of UN Women, more of young female participants could be attracted to the project activities, as they often have innovative ideas and demonstrate proactive contribution to the project activities. Traditionally the female participants of the project activities are nominated on behalf of the local authorities, influential formal and informal leaders, and those women activists who had participated in previous cross-border projects.

Relative contribution to peacebuilding of the main strategies employed under this output	
MEDIUM to LOW	Enhance capacity of women leaders to assess, understand and analyse human insecurities felt by women to enable their contribution to conflict related dialogue and decision making processes
because	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Although theoretically the close involvement of women in identifying and addressing insecurities is important, the reviewer doubts the extent to which research on human insecurities effectively contributed to this - The women leaders were quite vocal about their needs and preferences, and to some extent had started to function as a bridge to other community women
HIGH to MEDIUM	Enhance capacity of women leaders for conflict analysis, prevention and mediation & increase social ties and build tolerance between women leaders through joint cross-border initiatives
because	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individual capacities for peacebuilding and attitudes of tolerance are essential for sustaining peace - The durability of the friendship ties in the face of renewed violence or political tension is potentially low

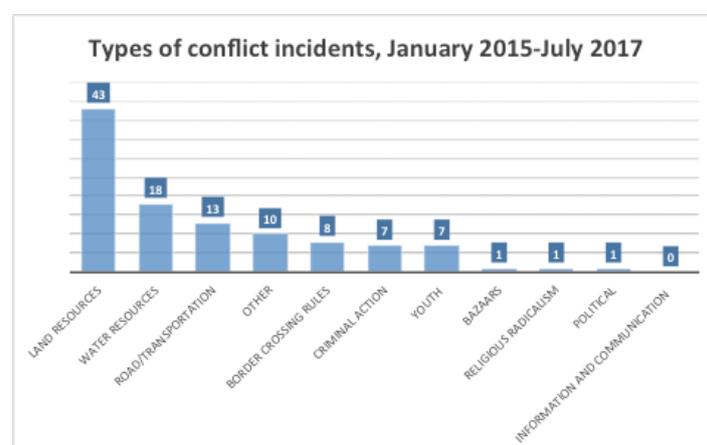
¹⁶ Please note that UN WOMEN looks at this issue differently, and does not recommend to focus on a large number of village women. They feel that these women leaders are much needed to serve as the bridge with municipal and district authorities, and to facilitate cross border links.

	- Economic cooperation ties were also established that may have a higher durability
MEDIUM	Increase awareness of authorities on human insecurities felt by women
	- The reviewer doubts the extent to which the research and regional consultations on human insecurities effectively contributed to an increased awareness of the authorities - A greater effect can be had from the active participation of women in municipal level working groups and other participatory platforms

5 Peacebuilding gaps and opportunities

The project’s aim is to address immediate tensions and reducing the risk of escalation. To what extent has the project addressed the key drivers of such immediate tensions?

Data from the community conflict monitoring system shows an overview of the types of incidents that occurred during the course of the project, with land resources, water resources, road and transportation issues, border crossing rules, criminal action and youth as the dominant triggers of conflict.



The project has contributed quite significantly to reducing tensions over water resources, as well as issues related to border-crossing rules. It has also focused on issues related to youth, and by extension possibly on criminal action to some degree.

However, the main trigger for conflict seems to be related to land issues. This is a broad category, which includes a number of issues, such as conflicts over pastures, the construction of infrastructure close

to the borders and others. As mentioned above, the project has seriously looked into the possibility of mitigating conflicts of pastures, and concluded that engagement by the project would not be beneficial¹⁷.

A high number of conflicts are however triggered by conflicts over infrastructure, including houses, built near the border, sometimes illegally. Almost no result has been achieved in this arena, perhaps with the exception of some very marginal conflict mitigation conducted through the Ombudsman complaint mechanism and the work of the field monitors. The challenge with this type of conflict is that it is very closely related to the disagreements and difference in perspective on where the borderline lies. This falls largely outside the sphere of influence of the project, as it is clearly the sole mandate of the inter-state Committee on Border Demarcation and Delimitation. However, the project may still be able to have positive influence on these issues, for instance through increasing the awareness and knowledge of communities on the official rules, and by incorporating these issues strongly into the community complaint mechanisms. Looking more deeply into the added value that the project can bring to such border-infrastructure related issues should be on the agenda of the second phase of the project. Equally, the project should look more into what added value it can bring to conflicts over road and transportation. Both these categories of conflicts would first require a degree of unpacking and analysis of the monitoring data, to really understand what these conflicts entail.

¹⁷ FAO Tajikistan put forward an idea to reduce the dependence on pastures by increasing fodder production and enhance on-farm livestock production systems. This is a good idea, which could have positive benefits for reducing tensions in the future. Considering the short timeframe and the lower amount of resources available for the second phase of the project, this may not be an immediate priority now, although it could also perhaps be considered as an equal alternative to the drip-irrigation systems, which also have a more long-term effect on reducing tensions.

Another issue that needs to be considered is the conflict-sensitivity of the geographical targeting. Although the initial choice for these clusters was based on solid conflict analysis, the implementation of a project creates its own dynamic. Infrastructure projects are highly visible and could lead to envy or resentment from adjacent communities, as it may seem that all efforts are concentrated in a few areas. It may even lead to the impression that triggering conflict is an effective strategy for gaining access to external resources. The project has been quite aware of this risk, and has ensured that the process of prioritization of projects was done in a participatory manner, including representatives from adjacent communities. Within the broad cluster areas there are still a good number of areas with high conflict potential, which would warrant further engagement in this area. Although there has been no updated conflict analysis conducted at this stage, the project staff feels very confident that these areas are still the key areas from where conflict can arise. Although an updated analysis would provide a stronger foundation for decision-making, in the light of the short timeframe of the second phase this may not be cost-effective. The reviewer was sufficiently convinced by the arguments of the project team that the current geographical targeting remains the correct one.

Finally, the question of including policy dialogue has come up in conversations, although it was never very clear what such policy dialogue would entail. In the eyes of the reviewer it could be good to have a stronger engagement from government authorities in addressing key drivers of conflict in the region. However, there are two issues to consider. Firstly, the project has as one of its main aims to mitigate conflict locally, rather than having it escalate up. This strength of the project should be kept in mind when reflecting on policy dialogue options. Secondly, the question of border demarcation and delimitation is the sole mandate of the inter-state committee on border demarcation and delineation, and the government authorities from both sides have made it quite clear that they do not welcome third party engagement in that process. As such, the merits of policy dialogue would need to be considered with these issues in mind.

6 Effectiveness of Implementation

6.1 Integration and synergy between the components within a country

- In terms of integration between the components of the project within the country, there was a significant difference between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. In Tajikistan there was a highly degree of integration of the components, manifested for instance in the fact that there was one mechanism of community and inter-community meetings which all agencies supported, from which all projects were derived; and that conflict-monitoring information was shared on a regular basis, with other agencies consistently checking their actions against this conflict information. In Kyrgyzstan this was less strongly the case, and a few examples of parallel implementation occurred. For instance, project committees set up one agency were not used as the main platform of engagement with the communities by the other agencies. In the second half of the project a second community mobilization and project selection process was initiated, which was not conducted jointly and did not follow the same level of inter-community scrutiny.
- In both countries ad-hoc opportunities were still found by the field-team to gain greater integration where possible and relevant, even more so in Tajikistan than in Kyrgyzstan. When the representatives of the agency were in closer proximity to each other, it proved easier to find such opportunities. This is easier to achieve in a place like Khujand than in Batken, which may account for some of the differences.
- However, in both countries, a full integration of the components was still not achieved and differences of perspective on approaches and activities still occurred. Each agency still worked to some degree on the basis of its own theory of change and ways of working, which were only to a degree shared. The initial planning stage did not lead to a fully streamlined and integrated work plan and outputs were still divided amongst agencies, almost as if they were stand-alone projects.
- The importance of having one individual - not aligned with one particular agency - fulfil a strategic coordination role was clearly confirmed by the review. In Tajikistan the former Peace and Development Advisor (PDA) performed this role effectively, whereas this position was vacant for a long time in Kyrgyzstan. Also at field-level, there were some management shuffles, which may have reduced the ability to coordinate at field level in Kyrgyzstan.

6.2 Coherence and integration between countries

- There was a relative alignment between strategies and activities between countries. At the onset of the project, the principle of a mirroring approach was adopted, which proved useful to ensure coherence in strategies and a balance in activities carried out on both sides of the border. However, one lesson learnt is that mirroring activities is not always appropriate, due to different peacebuilding opportunities, entry points and governance structures.
- Some agencies very deliberately tried to leverage their on-going work, for instance their strengthening of governments' systems or policies. They developed activities based on their on-going programming, but more specifically tailored towards the context and the peacebuilding objective, and intend to use this experience to feed back into their on-going programme work. The strategy of increasing access of to psychosocial support through strengthening the youth-friendly health services and enhancing the linkages of adolescents is one example of how the mandate of each agency can be leveraged. It also shows clearly why strategies and activities do not necessarily have to be the same on both sides of the border.
- However, differences between strategies employed between the countries were not always based on differences in entry points and governance systems, but rather on agency's programming preferences and specific ways of working. The establishment of project coordination committees on one side of the border and not on the other may serve as an example.
- A relatively high degree of crosschecking between the same agencies on both sides of the border took place, and certain activities were not carried out due to sensitivities on one side, which contributed to the conflict-sensitivity of project implementation. As already mentioned, not in all cases was this crosschecking done consistently however. The agencies further had a tendency to crosscheck only with their agency counterpart on the other side, rather than with the agency that may have had more relevant information pertaining to the issue. This would have been fine in the case of good information flow between the agencies in one country, but this was not always the case.

6.3 Degree of coordination and collaboration with the authorities

- The two countries have slightly different institutional arrangements to engage the authorities at central level. Tajikistan has a project-specific project board, whereas Kyrgyzstan uses the PBF Steering Committee as the platform for coordination and collaboration. This mechanism seems to work quite well in both countries, and is adjusted to the different political culture and institutional arrangements in these countries
- At district and municipal level¹⁸ the project maintains quite strong relations with the authorities. In Tajikistan this is slightly more formalized than in Kyrgyzstan, which again points to the difference in political culture.

6.4 Implementation modalities

- Implementation by five UN agencies is by definition ineffective; it means five times overhead costs, different operating procedures, and agencies are limited by their mandate. Yet, working jointly can also have great benefits, as agencies can tap into the expertise and institutional relations of other agencies. The challenge therefore is to optimize the added value of working together and minimizing the ineffectiveness.
- In project implementation there was relative clarity over which agency had the lead in each output, and which others played a complementary role. This was helpful, but not sufficient, as it led to a relative carving up of responsibilities rather than a conscious effort to search for the added value each agency could bring. On the whole the level of joint strategic planning at the level of the strategies employed was insufficient. Due to this relatively weak overall joint strategic planning coordination often became a matter of sharing information, rather than joint planning.
- However, a number of issues were heavily debated and in some cases did lead to some real clarification of roles and responsibilities, such as the division between youth under 18 (UNICEF) and above 18 (UNDP). On other issues it proved more difficult to build consensus, especially those issues that were particularly close to the mandate of the agencies. Particularly salient was the

¹⁸ The provincial (oblast) level seems to be somewhat more engaged in Kyrgyzstan than in Tajikistan, but the reviewer has not been able to meet provincial authorities in Tajikistan. Considering the desire of both the project team and the Tajik authorities to address these conflicts locally as much as possible, it may not be necessary to engage the oblast level more strongly at this point. The national level authorities seem quite committed and supportive of the project.

discussion on what ‘at-risk-youth’ means, on which agency has its own view. These kinds of discussions are very important in order to clarify the theory of change of the different strategies, and should be held sooner rather than later, as these differences become difficult to course-correct later.

- Both in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan the same implementing partner was used by different agencies. This really assisted in increasing the coherence between the activities and increased the implementation effectiveness.
- Arguments over visibility of the agencies continued to appear throughout the review period, and could clearly be seen to have a negative effect on the level of trust and cooperation between the agencies, and can therefore negatively impact the effectiveness of implementation.

6.5 Reporting, M&E and Learning & Adaptation

6.5.1 Reporting

- Reporting on project performance and progress was very weak. Each agency has its own reporting process, but for the process as a whole only the PBF reporting format was used. Though PBF can be commended for not requiring elaborate reporting from its partners, these reporting requirements are insufficient for the project needs.
- It was very difficult and time-consuming for the reviewer to determine what project activities and results were, especially since reporting between the agencies partially overlap. Agencies are also very unaware of what the other agencies are doing, and in some cases the level of knowledge about the project in the capitals was also limited. This adds to the perception of the project being carved up into different components that can be implemented by each agency individually.

6.5.2 Monitoring and Evaluation

- The Monitoring and Evaluation plan is very strong on impact measurement, and can serve as an outstanding example to other peacebuilding projects that are often weak in this area. However, this M&E plan largely intends to gather its data through the end-line survey. In the intermediate, progress is mostly measured against the number of interventions carried out, which is hardly a good indicator of project results. Most agencies have started with pre-and post activity surveys, which can indeed help to understand the effect of the activities carried out¹⁹.
- As mentioned earlier, the project would have significantly benefited from more clarity on the theory of change at the level of strategies. Per strategy, it could have been clarified what success would look like. These would not be project inputs (such as number of cross-border events organized) but rather indications of changes in attitudes, behaviours or ways of working. Examples could be; i) youth contact groups organize their own events, independent from project funds, ii) district or municipal authorities contact each other to solve a conflict without project involvement, iii) adolescents make friends and remain in regular contact with them, and iv) the behaviour of border guards has changed, in the perception of the people.

6.5.3 Learning and adaptation

- How well did the project do in terms of learning and adaptation? At field level there was quite a high degree of adaptation of project activities based on the findings of the community conflict monitoring. One clear example is the additional package of activities that went to Somoniyon / Koktash village after tensions rose there. Another example of learning was the recognition in Tajikistan that women were not yet sufficiently included in the dialogue and cross-border activities, and as a result women’s clubs were established.
- Another clear case of learning and adaptation was the Kaerma case, which clearly showed the sensitive nature of infrastructure projects and the need to facilitate the consultation process very carefully. Following this case, new Standard Operating Procedures were developed, which addressed these issues.
- However, more in general, the mechanisms for joint learning and adaptation were not very well established, partially because the theories of change were not very well articulated at the level of strategies, and thus could not serve as the basis of discussion. The joint coordination meetings were the primary platform for such learning and adaptation, and although some learning definitely

¹⁹ Although such data, gathered immediately after an event and often about attitudes or knowledge acquired, is often not a very reliable indicator for these effects in the long run. Still it is important to do.

took place at these meetings, it seems that most learning was done by agencies individually, rather than jointly.

- However, the PDA in Tajikistan did play a very important role in drawing out lessons learnt and sharing and discussing these with the focal points at coordination meetings, which did significantly contribute to joint learning. He can also be commended for the excellent lessons learnt document that he produced, which was very useful for the reviewer.

7 Main lessons learnt & Recommendations

7.1 In relation to the effectiveness of the strategies employed

7.1.1 General recommendations

- There is a need for a stronger synergy between the components; to make the whole greater than the sum of its parts. This relates partially to the mechanisms of joint strategic planning and coordination, which will be discussed in the next section. It further relates to the need to more clearly articulate the theories of change, not just at output-level, but also at the level of strategies. This can be a simple one-line sentence: *'If..., then..., because....'*
- The relative importance of the various strategies has been discussed under 'relative contribution to peacebuilding impact'. The reviewer would advise the project stakeholders to use the relative contribution of the strategies employed as a guideline for prioritization of resources for the second phase.
- The main lessons learnt have been presented under each output above. In the annex more specific points of attention are described, which can also be read as more detailed lessons learnt or recommendations.

7.1.2 Main recommendations per output

This section provides a summary of the main recommendations per output. Again, the annex provides more detailed information on each of these outputs.

- Output 0.1:
 - Reflect on whether and how to design a fit-for-purpose conflict early warning and response mechanism for local, regional and/or national authorities and the feasibility to establish and institutionalize such a system within a three year timeframe²⁰
- Output 0.2:
 - Ensure there is one institutional mechanism in place, that connects community, municipal and district level, and that serves as the main platform for dialogue as well as the entry point for all community-based activities
- Output 1.1:
 - Ensure that training and awareness raising on border crossing rules and procedures for community members is sufficiently contextualized
 - Focus more strongly on establishing / strengthening an actual complaint mechanism and follow up on its functioning (Kyrgyzstan)
- Output 1.2:
 - The risk of creating a culture of expectation that food will be provided as an incentive for manual work on assets needs to be carefully balanced against the need to provide social protection to the vulnerable. Creative ways need to be found to optimize this balance in the planning stage for the second stage.
 - Provide highly contextual capacity building of WUAs and other water governance actors, with a view of strengthening the overall system of water infrastructure operation and maintenance. Ensure this training is highly context-specific, as the situation varies greatly between clusters and even villages
 - Reflect on optimising the value the project can bring to land-and road related issues, and devise appropriate strategies accordingly
- Output 1.3:

²⁰ As this component will be funded by SDC, the timeframe is three years.

- Focus more strongly on strengthening more durable ties, even within the sports and cultural sphere, but most importantly in the business sphere
- In general, more attention could be given to strengthening cross-border trade and economic cooperation in the project.
- Reconsider the design of vocational training, make it more highly tailored to the individual, and more strongly linked to actual business or employment opportunities.
- Output 1.4:
 - Clarify the responsibility on ensuring community women’s active involvement in dialogue at all levels
 - Leverage the higher capacity of women leaders by linking them more strongly to women in the communities, and helping them to better clarify their needs and perspectives
 - Invest more broadly in community women’s attitudes and tolerance
 - Continue to build relationships between women, with an emphasis on economic cooperation where possible and relevant

7.2 In relation to the effectiveness of implementation

7.2.1 Strategic planning

- There is a strong need for a solid, well-facilitated joint strategic planning process upfront. The process of developing the prodoc for the second phase can be the first step in this strategic planning process, but needs to be followed through with a more detailed planning process.
- As part of this process, agencies need to consciously reflect on and maximize the way they can contribute to peacebuilding impact based on their own mandate, but not remain too strongly wedded to their own approaches and procedures. It is important to seriously invest in this first phase, as it will greatly improve implementation afterwards
- Strategic planning must have the aim to:
 - Arrive at an agreed theory of change at outcome and output-level
 - Arrive at an agreed theory of change for each strategy
 - Agree on the main principles of the project approach for the project as a whole and per strategy
 - Per strategy, agree on the types of activities to be conducted, i.e. develop a joint work plan
 - Per strategy, agree on who is the lead agency and who is complementing
 - Per strategy, agree on the specific input to be delivered by which agency (could be just one agency, could be more than one)
- Gender mainstreaming needs to be an integral part of the strategic planning process, and responsibilities clarified (including financial commitments)
- The strategic planning must either be conducted jointly, or with strong collaboration between the countries. Ideally, the two PDAs should both be involved in both processes.
- Throughout implementation, there is the need for one person per country, ideally the PDA in each country, to be responsible to maintain strategic integration of project components. The PDAs need to have sufficient backing from the Resident Coordinator to challenge the implementing agencies when necessary.

7.2.2 Coordination

- The strategic planning process will lead to a more integrated joint work plan and make coordination easier.
- The current mechanisms of coordination and collaboration with the authorities can be maintained.
- Joint KG/TAJ Focal point coordination meetings can continue on bi-monthly basis.
- Per country, coordination meetings should be more regular, for instance at least monthly between agencies working on different strategies, and weekly between agencies working on the same strategy²¹.
- Agencies urgently need to stop arguing over visibility and over who gets to present first

7.2.3 Implementation modalities

²¹ Please note that there are more strategies under each output. Some strategies may be implemented by one agency, in others more agencies may be involved.

- In order to strengthen coordination and make implementation more effective the project team should sit as closely together as possible, ideally all sitting together in one office in the field.
- Where possible and the capacity is sufficient, it is recommended to have different agencies use the same implementing partner for similar activities.
- A joint results monitoring framework will need to be developed.

8 Conclusion

The Cross-border Cooperation for Sustainable Peace and Development project was and remains an important investment into reducing the risk of immediate violence in the border area between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. It has effectively managed to reduce tensions, in particular around water infrastructure, and has established a stronger foundation of tolerance and positive attitudes towards the ‘other’. It has established platforms for dialogue at different levels and equipped a good number of individuals with the skills to prevent and mitigate conflicts that may occur within their sphere of influence. It has increased the knowledge and awareness about border regulations, and has started to prepare people to live with the new reality of increasingly regulated borders. With the exception of the Kaerma case, the project has successfully managed to address highly sensitive issues without raising the temperature of the political climate, which is not an easy task.

This project is a complex one, as it aims to address these conflict risks systemically. This is the real strength of the project, but also makes it challenging to implement. A stronger shared vision between the agencies needs to be developed at the onset of the second phase, which will allow the whole of this project to be greater than the sum of its parts. The review has identified a number of ways in which the effectiveness could be further strengthened in a possible second phase of the project. In this second phase special emphasis should be given to a building on each other strengths, mandates and entry points for further institutionalization.

A stronger foundation for peaceful co-existence has been created, and to sustain this foundation the changes need to become even more strongly embedded in people and institutions’ attitudes, behaviours and ways of working. A second phase would be able to solidify these changes and make them more durable. The reviewer would therefore warmly welcome a second phase of this project.

Annex I: Additional findings on effectiveness and sustainability

The effectiveness of the strategies employed by the project has been assessed on the basis of the analytical framework described in section 4.1 of this report. It looks at the validity and plausibility of the Theory of Change, the extent to which results are being achieved and sustainability of the results. Drawing on this analysis the review identified points of attention; areas that require additional attention or may need to be better thought through in the second phase of the project. On the basis of this analysis the relative contribution to peacebuilding impact of the various strategies was assessed.

The main findings of this analysis have been provided in the main body of the report. This annex provides more detailed information specifically in relation to the sustainability of the strategies employed and other points of attention identified by the reviewer.

Output 0.1:

Community leaders/ authorities in Kyrgyz-Tajik cross-border areas have access to reliable and balanced information about local conflict dynamics and trends and how they can be addressed

Sustainability

- The sustainability of the conflict-monitoring system depends on the main purpose it is aimed to serve. If the main purpose is conflict-sensitive project-implementation, then there is no need for sustainability beyond the life of the project. If the main purpose is to have field monitors serve as bridge builders, then it seems likely that these monitors will continue to play this role, as they are members of their own communities, their communities have come to expect this role from them, and their contacts with their counterparts are firmly established.
- If the main purpose is to increase the awareness and capacity of the authorities, then this is not yet reached, let alone sustainable. In order to arrive at sustainability of such a system it would have to be designed through co-creation with these authorities, in order to have it both suit their needs and be of higher quality than what they currently use.

Points of attention

- For conflict-monitoring to have a positive impact on conflict-sensitivity, the information needs to be regularly shared with team members (including those from other agencies). In Kyrgyzstan there is space for improvement in this regard.
- Although there is one shared database between the two countries, the format of the monthly reports differs between the countries, and in Kyrgyzstan has been somewhat inconsistent. Although this does not seem to have led to problems, it may be better to follow the same format, unless there are very good reasons to use a different format (for instance when the authorities have different demands or information needs).
- Whether and how to institutionalize this monitoring system requires careful thinking about the purpose and how to make the system fit-for-purpose. A monitoring system that aims to meet the purpose of strengthening the early warning capacity of authorities will require a different design and a deep institutional embedding in existing structures & government ownership. It is not simply a matter of transferring this system to another entity.

Output 0.2:

Cross-border communities along the Kyrgyz-Tajik border establish/strengthen mechanisms for dialogue, deliberation, and joint problem-solving

Sustainability

- Durability is difficult for dialogue platforms without external facilitation. This was recognized in the design of the project, and therefore focused on creating conducive conditions for such dialogue to take place, rather than on establishing a permanent platform as such.
- What matters is whether the relevant entities will continue to sustain the dialogue without external facilitation. This is hard to predict, and although there are indications that some entities have already started to have non-facilitated dialogue, this is not a given. In some cases the entities (e.g. district authorities) already had plans to meet regularly, and the project facilitated this. In these cases the probability may be higher than this practice will be continued.

- To a large extent, these entities (working groups, project coordination committees) were created for the purpose of the project and do not necessarily require to be sustained beyond the life of the project. In this regard, it is rather the more participatory way of working that would need to be sustained. There are some indications that these ways of working may become adopted by the local authorities once they have seen the benefits, but this remains questionable.

Points of attention

- It is essential that an institutional mechanism for dialogue effectively links different institutional levels together in an integrated system for dialogue. This includes intra-community dialogue platforms, dialogue platforms with relevant authorities and subsequently dialogue platforms with the equivalent entities on the other side of the border. In Tajikistan one agency was clearly in the lead on the establishment and capacity development of these dialogue platforms. Other agencies used the entities created by UNDP as their interface.
- In Kyrgyzstan, this integration between different platforms was not as strong. Pre-existing project management committees established by one UN agency were not sufficiently integrated into one mechanism. Furthermore, additional project management committees were established, which were also not strongly integrated. This leads to ineffectiveness and possible confusion among the communities, and should be avoided in the future.
- This mechanism of dialogue between communities and authorities on both sides of the border is the necessary foundation of the project, as it serves as the mechanism through which issues are defined with the highest potential to reduce tensions, and ensures the conflict sensitivity of this process. It therefore needs to be the starting point for all community-based project activities, most notably those under output 1.2 (infrastructure). In Tajikistan this was clearly the case; all community-based projects implemented were identified through one joint process. In Kyrgyzstan this was the case in 2016, but in 2017 a separate process took place, which adhered less strongly to those principles. Although there is no evidence that this separate process had any negative impact, such parallel processes of community mobilization, dialogue and prioritization needs to be avoided in the future.

Output 1.1:

Improved linkages and cooperation between security providers, local authorities and communities to reduce violent incidents

Sustainability

- The durability of improved knowledge and awareness is likely to be quite high, as knowledge embedded tends to remain, although sufficient follow up remains necessary. In Kyrgyzstan the revolving nature of the Forum Theatre, where older students engage younger students, is an interesting example.
- Using the schools as an entry point for reaching adolescents adds to the sustainability, especially as teachers and parents²² are also involved. The close involvement of the Min of Education at national and district level, especially in Tajikistan, further adds to sustainability. In Tajikistan, schools not yet targeted by the project have already requested to be provided with the same materials and training.
- The durability of improved linkages and the complain mechanisms seems relatively strong in Tajikistan, partially because the Border Services, police and Office of the Ombudsman are legally required to hold such meetings and were already included in their own action plan. A perhaps even stronger sign of durability is that the Border Services actually invited themselves to the first meeting and have by themselves increased the frequency of these meetings.
- In Kyrgyzstan the durability seems significantly weaker, no doubt partially due to the different legal and political environment. Nonetheless, paying more attention to the establishment or strengthening of an actual community complaint mechanism, in addition to organizing the meetings themselves, could improve the durability of these linkages and strengthened communication.

²² Parents are involved more on the Tajik side than on the Kyrgyz side, which relates to the educational form used. Forum Theatre relies more on the openness and creativity of pupils, who may be shy in front of parents. In Tajikistan the educational form is more formal, which is also more in line with Tajik educational culture.

Points of attention

- It is important to ensure that training and awareness raising for community members (adolescents, youth, women) is sufficiently contextualized and addresses real-life situations. Although there is a need to impart knowledge on formal rules and procedures, it is the living reality of people that they cross the border informally. Crossing through a formal border crossing point is not realistic for most, as there are only three official border-crossing posts in the Batken – Sughd border area. The Forum Theatre modality used in Kyrgyzstan seems to be more strongly geared towards the lived experience than the more formal modality used in Tajikistan.
- As already discussed above, in Kyrgyzstan more attention may need to be devoted to support the establishment and institutionalization of a functioning community complaint mechanisms.
- Although the review did not manage to assess the commitment or capacity of the Ombudsman of Child's rights, it seems important to highlight the importance of making sure that a complaint mechanism related to children's issues on border-crossing is sufficiently strongly linked to the general community complaint mechanism being established. Although the review has no indication that this is not the case, it seems like a risk to point out, considering the fact that different agencies are primarily involved in each.

Output 1.2:

Communities restore cross-border linkages and cooperation by jointly addressing interdependent needs/ challenges associated with community infrastructure and natural resources

Sustainability

- The sustainability of the infrastructure depends on the capacity of the Water Users' Associations (WUAs), as well as their ability to collect sufficient fees from the farmers to pay for the water, the operating costs of the infrastructure, the running costs of the WUAs, and the maintenance of the irrigation infrastructure and the on-farm irrigation structures. For larger canals it is mostly the district authorities that are responsible for maintenance, but even here a significant part of running costs stems from the irrigation service fees paid by members of the Water Users' Associations.
- WUAs are relatively new in Tajikistan and often have low capacity to manage the irrigation infrastructure and drainage (leading to salinization). Recent reforms of the law will lead to changes in roles and responsibilities of state authorities and WUAs, with additional responsibilities and costs for WUAs. Also in Kyrgyzstan the ability of WUAs to operate and maintain the structures is an issue, as many WUAs also suffer from lack of capacity and financial resilience.

Points of attention

- As already discussed above, it is essential that all infrastructure projects come through the inter-community dialogue process and have the formal approval of communities, municipal and district authorities on both sides. In Kyrgyzstan the initial round of project identification did go through such a consolidated process, conducted jointly by all involved UN agencies, but this was followed by a second round conducted by one agency, with the aim of identifying additional projects to which this agency could contribute. This second round of projects identified was not thoroughly crosschecked with the other side of the border. Although certain precautions were taken to ensure conflict sensitivity, and there is no evidence that these projects did cause conflict, it was still not an ideal approach.
- Some of the prioritized infrastructure projects required a degree of manual labour, in which case food was provided as an incentive – and social protection mechanism – for the most vulnerable in the community. Such support contributes to alleviating the level of vulnerability for the most poor, but the causal link to peacebuilding is somewhat hard to see. The asset that is rehabilitated may have a peacebuilding impact, but the added value of the food as an incentive is not clear. It may lead to a culture of expecting to receive food for labour that the community should be conducting by itself. Confusion can also arise, as similar projects implemented in the area require a significant contribution from the community and do not provide food as an incentive. The risk of creating a culture of dependency needs to be carefully balanced against the need to provide social protection to the vulnerable. Perhaps creative ways can be found to optimize this balance in the planning stage for the second stage.
- The sustainability of the water-related infrastructure needs to be increased, most likely through strengthening the capacity of the water governance actors (WUAs, district and municipal water

depts, mirab) and their interactions. Such a capacity building effort would need to be highly contextualized and tailored to the specific requirements of each local system of water governance.

- A difficult issue is the high number of conflicts over land, currently the most important driver of conflict. Almost no result has been achieved in this arena, perhaps with the exception of some very marginal conflict mitigation conducted through the Ombudsman complaint mechanism and the work of the field monitors. Since this is the main driver of conflict, it seems the project should focus on this more, but it may be largely outside the sphere of influence of the project.

Output 1.3:

At-risk youth have increased their level of inter-ethnic tolerance and are less likely to engage in violence

Sustainability

- Durability can come from the sustained existence of the entities created (Youth Contact Groups), the systems they are embedded in, or the durability of the attitudinal changes. The Youth Contact Groups are not very sustainable as entities, as they are not likely to continue to exist when no funding is available, and were mostly created as an entry point to the youth (the way the schools are for the adolescents). However, the durability is expected to come from the durability of their knowledge and attitudinal changes, which is hard to predict ex-ante, but worthy of the benefit of the doubt.
- The durability of these ties in the face of a new eruption of violence or changes in the political environment is hard to predict. It is however logical to assume that ties with a strong personal interest (such as business or kinship ties) are more enduring.
- The access to psycho-social support seems to have been enhanced more systemically and sustainably in Tajikistan than in Kyrgyzstan.

Points of attention

- Many youth activities are relatively ad-hoc cultural or sports exchanges, which may not lead to durable ties. More effort may need to go to ideas that lead to more durable ties, even within the sports and cultural sphere. The project should not necessarily set up such more permanent mechanisms itself, as the strength of the approach currently lies in the fact that the activities are conducted through the youth' own initiative. However, initiatives that may have a higher likelihood of becoming more permanent or institutionalized may warrant additional support of the project.
- Also for adolescents, more institutionalized approaches could be considered. As for the youth, such arrangements should not be overly engineered by the project, but mechanisms of more permanent exchanges between schools could be considered, such as sister school mechanisms²³.
- Youth, women, and adolescents all conduct cross-border meetings, organized by different implementing partners. Is the flow of information sufficient to get maximum peacebuilding benefit out of these activities?
- More emphasis could go to strengthening business ties. Currently this is done through support to business plans, an activity that could perhaps be expanded. In addition other ways of strengthening business ties could perhaps also be considered, based on context-specific opportunities for cross-border economic cooperation, which could perhaps emerge out of through cross-border meetings of entrepreneurs or business associations.
- In relation to psycho-social support, more reflection may be required in Kyrgyzstan on how to tap into and leverage existing systems, for instance by tapping into expertise of the existing hotline system, and strengthening the connections to this system.
- For the vocational training, results were not so clearly observable. Trainees seem to struggle to find employment based on their training. It seemed to the reviewer however that the trainings were rather generic, and although based on a labour market assessment, perhaps not sufficiently tailored to the actual employment opportunities in the places where the trainees live.
- The reviewer also wants to point out that the link between unemployment and a peacebuilding dividend is a rather indirect one. It increases if youth with specific high-risk of conflict was mostly

²³ This idea was already put forward by UNICEF.

targeted for these trainings. Although the criteria of vulnerability will partially overlap with this definition of at-risk youth, they could perhaps be even more tailored to such youth.

- A more immediate peacebuilding dividend of vocational training would be if this led to more cross-border economic cooperation, which would reduce the incentive for engaging in violence. The Job Fair event organized by the Isfara District administration was an interesting add-on that may have opened up such opportunities, but the review has not been able to verify this.

Output 1.4:

Women enhance cooperation and trust between communities through actively participating in the identification and implementation of cross-border initiatives

Sustainability

- As discussed for the youth, the durability of the friendship ties created through the cross-border initiatives could be quite low in the face of renewed conflict or violent tension
- The women's initiative groups themselves are also not likely to survive without external funding. However, also similarly to the youth, the durability would have to come from the attitudinal changes, which are not certain but worth the benefit of the doubt.
- A deeper understanding of the issues and insecurities faced by women would probably be durable, but for it to have an enduring effect, this increased understanding would need to translate to an enduring effect on influencing decision-making. The review did notice changes towards more participatory processes, including women's participation, at municipal level. Whether this way of working will remain after the end of the project will remain an open question at this point.

Points of attention

- The functions of ensuring that i) women can participate effectively in dialogue and consultations, ii) that women are increasingly involved in decision-making at community level, and iii) that women's needs and preferences are sufficiently taken into consideration across the other outputs have not received sufficient attention by the lead agency of this output.
- There was lack of clarity of where the responsibility lay for these functions, which were eventually mostly fulfilled by the lead agencies under each output independently. This needs to be clearly defined and strategies formulated to reach this goal.
- The focus of the activities mostly related to strengthening the capacity of women leaders to understand their issues, to organize cross-border activities and to act as mediators. The importance of their role in families, and transferring their attitudes to their children may have been insufficiently considered. To reach this goal different strategies may have to be employed.