

Closure Stage Quality Assurance Report

Overall Project Rating: **Highly Satisfactory**

Project Number : 00087546

Project Title : Confidence Building Early Response Mechanism (COBERM) – Phase 3: 3rd phase of a flagship EU-UNDP programme, which provides a rapid response mechanism supporting confidence building opportunities to prevent and transform conflicts in Georgia.

Project Date : 01-Jan-2016

Strategic

Quality Rating: **Exemplary**

1. Did the project pro-actively take advantage of new opportunities and adapt its theory of change to respond to changes in the development context, including changing national priorities? (select the option from 1-3 which best reflects this project)

3: *The project team regularly completed and documented a comprehensive horizon scanning exercise to identify new opportunities and changes in the development context that required adjustments in the theory of change. There is clear evidence that the project board considered the scanning and its implications, and documented changes to the project's RRF, partnerships, etc. made in response, as appropriate. (both must be true to select this option)*

2: The project team has undertaken some horizon scanning over the life of the project to identify new opportunities and changes in the development context. The project board discussed the scanning and its implications for the project, as reflected in the board minutes. There is some evidence that the project took action as a result, but changes may not have been fully integrated in the project's theory of change, RRF, partnerships, etc. (all must be true to select this option)

1: The project team may have considered new opportunities and changes in the development context since implementation began, but this has not been discussed in the project board. There is limited to no evidence that the project team has considered changes to the project as a result. This option should also be selected if no horizon scanning took place during project implementation.

Evidence

2. Was the project aligned with the thematic focus of the Strategic Plan? (select the option from 1-3 that best reflects the project)

3: *The project responded to one of the three areas of development work as specified in the Strategic Plan. It addressed at least one of the proposed new and emerging areas and implementation was consistent with the issues-based analysis incorporated into the project. The project's RRF included all the relevant SP output indicators. (all must be true to select this option)*

2: The project responded to one of the three areas of development work as specified in the Strategic Plan. The project's RRF included at least one SP output indicator, if relevant. (both must be true to select this option)

1: While the project may have responded to one of the three areas of development work as specified in the Strategic Plan, it was based on a sectoral approach without addressing the complexity of the development issue. None of the relevant SP indicators were included in the project's RRF. This option is also selected if the project did not respond to any of the three SP areas of development work.

Evidence

During its implementation COBERM 3 addressed 2 out of 3 areas of development as specified in the Strategic Plan, namely number 2, inclusive and effective democratic governance, and number 3, resilience building and one emerging area, namely, risk management for resilience. Concretely, COBERM has evolved to a multi-functional and multi-thematic platform for civil society organizations, creating a niche for new cross-ABL alliances and partnerships, scaling up civil society initiatives,

experimenting new areas for joint Abkhaz-Georgian and Georgian-Ossetian professional cooperation with tangible impact, and for expanding local capacities willing to contribute to conflict prevention/transformation through peaceful means. Additionally, the complementarity with the CSSP programme launched in 2017 has increased the overall efficiency of COBERM in supporting and empowerment of civil society actors in the given context strengthening resilience of conflict affected communities.

3. Evidence generated through the project was explicitly used to confirm or adjust the programme/CPD's theory of change during implementation.

- Yes
- No

Evidence

The adjustments were done as needed throughout project implementation and validated through Project Boards.

Relevant

Quality Rating: Exemplary

4. Were the project's targeted groups systematically identified and engaged, with a priority focus on the excluded and marginalized, to ensure the project remained relevant for them? (select the option from 1-3 that best reflects the project)

- 3: *Systematic and structured feedback was collected regularly from a representative sample of beneficiaries, with a priority focus on the excluded and marginalized, as part of the project's monitoring system. Representatives from the targeted group were active members of the project's governance mechanism (i.e., project board or equivalent) and there is credible evidence that their feedback informed decision making. (all must be true to select this option)*
- 2: Targeted groups were engaged in implementation and monitoring, with a priority focus on the excluded and marginalized. Beneficiary feedback, which may be anecdotal, was collected regularly to ensure the project addressed local priorities. This information was used to inform project decision making. (all must be true to select this option)
- 1: Some beneficiary feedback may have been collected, but this information did not inform project decision making. This option should also be selected if no beneficiary feedback was collected.
- Not Applicable

Evidence

According to the independent evaluation, overall, the COBERM III was relevant in addressing the frozen conflict of Georgia. Two participatory stock-taking end of COBERM conferences were held in Tbilisi and Sukhumi in close cooperation with our partners. A number of beneficiaries showcased the impact of their work with assistance from COBERM.

5. Did the project generate knowledge, particularly lessons learned (i.e., what has worked and what has not) – and has this knowledge informed management decisions and changes/course corrections to ensure the continued relevance of the project towards its stated objectives, the quality of its outputs and the management of risk? (select the option from 1-3 that best reflects the project)

3: *Knowledge and lessons learned (gained, for example, from Peer Assists, After Action Reviews or Lessons Learned Workshops) backed by credible evidence from evaluation, analysis and monitoring were regularly discussed in project board meetings and reflected in the minutes. There is clear evidence that the project's theory of change was adjusted, as needed, and changes were made to the project to ensure its continued relevance. (both must be true to select this option)*

2: Knowledge and lessons learned backed by relatively limited evidence, drawn mainly from within the project, were considered by the project team. There is some evidence that changes were made to the project as a result to ensure its continued relevance. (both must be true to select this option)

1: There is limited or no evidence that knowledge and lessons learned were collected by the project team. There is little or no evidence that this informed project decision making.

Evidence

Taking stock of the impact of COBERM and its relevance was undertaken periodically by the project team and key stakeholders during the Evaluation and Steering Committee meetings as well as during the monitoring visits that the project team undertook. Final appraisal was undertaken by an independent evaluation that was conducted in mid-2018. Key lessons learned were identified as a result.

6. Were the project's special measures (through outputs, activities, indicators) to address gender inequalities and empower women relevant and produce the intended effect? If not, were evidence-based adjustments and changes made? (select the option from 1-3 that best reflects the project)

3: *The project team systematically gathered data and evidence on the relevance of the special measures in addressing gender inequalities and empowering women. Analysis of data and evidence were used to inform adjustments and changes, as appropriate. (both must be true to select this option)*

2: The project team had some data and evidence on the relevance of the special measures in addressing gender inequalities and empowering women. There is evidence that at least some adjustments made, as appropriate. (both must be true to select this option)

1: The project team had limited or no evidence on the relevance of the special measures in addressing gender inequalities and empowering women. No evidence that adjustments and/or changes were made, as appropriate. This option should also be selected if the project had no special measures in addressing gender inequalities and empowering women relevant to project results and activities.

Evidence

Gender mainstreaming was a cross-cutting area throughout COBERM III. COBERM III dedicated specific efforts to both train and support initiatives from women or women-led organizations. As a result, 57% of training beneficiaries were women, out of 75 organizations trained to date and 50% of the grants (24) were awarded to women or women-led organizations. Thus, COBERM is also making significant contributions to the implementation of the UN Resolution 1325 by involving a critical mass of women's organizations (50% of our grantees) are at the forefront of peacebuilding efforts using non-political approaches to solve pragmatic issues that could otherwise become conflict triggers in the respective communities. Furthermore, women organizations have the opportunity to make specific contributions on raising awareness on GBV issues and

advocating for women's rights, particularly those affected by previous conflicts. Contributions have been positively assessed by the independent evaluation, too.

7. Was the project sufficiently at scale, or is there potential to scale up in the future, to meaningfully contribute to development change? (select the option from 1-3 that best reflects the project)

- 3: *There is credible evidence that the project reached a sufficient number of beneficiaries (either directly through significant coverage of target groups, or indirectly, through policy change) to meaningfully contribute to development change.*
- 2: While the project was not considered at scale, there are explicit plans in place to scale up the initiative in the future (e.g. by extending its coverage in a second phase or using project results to advocate for policy change).
- 1: The project was not at scale, and there are no plans currently to scale up the initiative in the future.

Evidence

COBERM III established an apolitical, flexible and impartial mechanism for confidence building relevant for the context of Georgia and is recognized as a trusted platform for conflict transformation that supported most impactful initiatives that addressed existing challenges and emerging conflict triggers. Furthermore, COBERM created a safe space for CSOs to enhance intra and inter-community dialogue and cooperation and engaged with a wide range of target groups and diverse fields of intervention. However, further efforts are needed to change attitudes and ensure local ownership and to build on existing people-to-people contacts and cooperation to ensure more diverse societal responses. For this reason a new phase of COBERM will be developed and will aim to further address these challenges.

Social & Environmental Standards

Quality Rating: Exemplary

8. Did the project seek to further the realization of human rights using a human rights-based approach? (select the option from 1-3 that best reflects the project)

- 3: *There is credible evidence that the project aimed to further the realization of human rights, on the basis of applying a human rights based approach. Any potential adverse impacts on enjoyment of human rights were actively identified, managed and mitigated through the project's management of risks. (all must be true to select this option)*
- 2: There is some evidence that the project aimed to further the realization of human rights. Potential adverse impacts on the enjoyment of human rights were identified and adequately mitigated through the project's management of risks. (both must be true to select this option)
- 1: There is no evidence that the project aimed to further the realization of human rights. There is limited to no evidence that potential adverse impacts on the enjoyment of human rights were managed.

Evidence

A human rights-based approach was at the core of the COBERM programme and was a cross-cutting issue for diverse areas of intervention supported, such as empowering civil society representatives to address peace, livelihoods, access to healthcare, environmental and security issues. Adverse risks and impact on enjoyment of human rights were carefully

analysed and addressed throughout the implementation of the project to the extent possible using the “ Do No Harm” approach to avoid entailing any potential negative effects as a result of project activities. At the same time the independent evaluation noted that due to the deteriorating human rights situation in both breakaway regions can be used as evidence for the need of a new programming phase, to further strengthen resilience of local communities, especially of vulnerable groups (ethnic minorities, women, people with disabilities, etc.)

9. Were social and environmental impacts and risks (including those related to human rights, gender and environment) successfully managed and monitored in accordance with the project document and relevant action plans? (for projects that have no social and environmental risks the answer is “Yes”)

- Yes
 No

Evidence

See Social and Environmental Screening Template uploaded in project documents' library. Through the projects supported, COBERM contributes to solving of emerging regional environmental problems, such as disaster risk reduction, pests' management and capacity building in environmentally-relevant data analysis.

10. Were any unanticipated social and environmental issues or grievances that arose during implementation assessed and adequately managed, with relevant management plans updated? (for projects that did not experience unanticipated social and environmental risks or grievances the answer is “Yes”)

- Yes
 No

Evidence

Yes
As previously reported, COBERM addressed issues of joint environmental relevance through a number of its funded initiatives. Issues addressed joint pest management, emerging cattle disease epidemics (e.g. nodular dermatitis) disaster risk reduction, a clearance of ordnance as a result of the explosion of ammunition depot in Abkhazia. All these projects were completed with significant results for the livelihoods of the conflict affected communities while also contributing to confidence building.

Management & Monitoring

Quality Rating: Highly Satisfactory

11. Was the project’s M&E Plan adequately implemented? (select the option from 1-3 that best reflects the project)

3: Progress data against indicators in the project's RRF was reported regularly using highly credible data sources and collected according to the frequency stated in the project's M&E plan, including sex disaggregated data as relevant. Evaluations, if conducted, fully met decentralized evaluation standards, including gender UNEG standards, and management responses were fully implemented. Lessons learned, including during evaluations, were used to take corrective actions when necessary. (all must be true to select this option)

2: Progress data against indicators in the project's RRF was collected on a regular basis, although there may have been some slippage in following the frequency stated in the project's M&E plan and data sources were not always reliable. Any evaluations conducted meet most decentralized evaluation standards; management responses were fully implemented to the extent possible. Lessons learned have been captured but not used to take collective actions. (all must be true to select this option)

1: Progress data either was not collected against the indicators in the project's RRF, or limited data was collected but not regularly; evaluations did not meet decentralized evaluation standards; and/or lessons learned were rarely captured and used.

Evidence

A

full-fledged M&E matrix has been developed and used as the main tool during the COBERM project to identify bottlenecks and for data collection. This document was updated throughout of COBERM. A new M&E tool for tracking our numerous projects was also developed and used during the implementation of COBERM. Furthermore, political monitoring via media was also undertaken on a monthly basis (few samples attached). The M&E was hailed by the independent evaluation as well.

12. Did the project's governance mechanism (i.e., the project board or equivalent) function as intended? (select the option from 1-3 that best reflects the project)

The project's governance mechanism operated very well, and is a model for other projects. It met in the agreed frequency stated in the project document and the minutes of the meetings are all on file. There was regular (at least annual) progress reporting to the project board or equivalent on results, risks and opportunities. It is clear that the project board explicitly reviewed and used evidence, including progress data, knowledge, lessons and evaluations, as the basis for informing management decisions (e.g., change in strategy, approach, work plan.) (all must be true to select this option)

The project's governance mechanism met in the agreed frequency and minutes of the meeting are on file. A project progress report was submitted to the project board or equivalent at least once per year, covering results, risks and opportunities. (both must be true to select this option)

The project's governance mechanism did not meet in the frequency stated in the project document, and/or the project board or equivalent did not function as a decision making body for the project as intended.

Evidence

The

Steering Committee operated very well and it was the main decision body under the project. A stock-taking meeting was held on 3 December 2018 to review achievements and discuss way forward. (minutes attached elsewhere already).

13. Were risks to the project adequately monitored and managed? (select the option from 1-3 that best reflects the project)

3: The project actively monitored risks every quarter including consulting with key stakeholders at least annually to identify continuing and emerging risks to project implementation and to assess if the main assumptions remain valid. There is clear evidence that relevant management plans and mitigating measures were fully implemented to address each key project risk, and some evidence that risk mitigation has benefitted performance. (all must be true to select this option)

2: *The project monitored risks every quarter, as evidenced by a regularly updated risk log. Some updates were made to management plans and mitigation measures. (both must be true to select this option)*

1: The risk log was not updated every quarter as required. There may be some evidence that the project monitored risks that could have affected the project's achievement of results, but there is no explicit evidence that management actions were taken to mitigate risks. The project's performance was disrupted by factors that could have been anticipated or managed.

Evidence

Political updates and risks are covered through EU interim reports and monthly political monitoring reports. (samples attached elsewhere).

Efficient

Quality Rating: Highly Satisfactory

14. Adequate resources were mobilized to achieve intended results. If not, management decisions were taken to adjust expected results in the project's results framework.

Yes

No

Evidence

Expenditures were made in line with the AWP for 2018 and were tracked rigorously throughout the year. To ensure the most efficient use of funds, top-ups of 8 grants were allocated. The efficiency of the COBERM programme was also positively assessed by the independent evaluation.

15. Were project inputs procured and delivered on time to efficiently contribute to results? (select the option from 1-3 that best reflects the project)

3: The project had a procurement plan and kept it updated. Implementation of the plan was generally on or ahead of schedule. On a quarterly basis, the project reviewed operational bottlenecks to procuring inputs in a timely manner and addressed them through appropriate management actions. (all must be true to select this option)

2: *The project had a procurement plan and kept it updated. The project annually reviewed operational bottlenecks to procuring inputs in a timely manner and addressed them through appropriate management actions. (all must be true to select this option)*

1: The project did not have an updated procurement plan. The project team may have reviewed operational bottlenecks to procuring inputs regularly, however management actions were not taken to address them. This option is also selected if operational bottlenecks were not reviewed during the project in a timely manner.

Evidence

Due to the nature of the COBERM programme that is a grant-making mechanism, the procurement was tracked through AWP (uploaded above)

16. Was there regular monitoring and recording of cost efficiencies, taking into account the expected quality of results? (select the option from 1-3 that best reflects the project)

3: *There is evidence that the project regularly reviewed costs against relevant comparators (e.g., other projects or country offices) or industry benchmarks to ensure the project maximized results delivered with given resources. The project actively coordinated with other relevant ongoing projects and initiatives (UNDP or other) to ensure complementarity and sought efficiencies wherever possible (e.g. joint activities.) (both must be true to select this option)*

2: The project monitored its own costs and gave anecdotal examples of cost efficiencies (e.g., spending less to get the same result,) but there was no systematic analysis of costs and no link to the expected quality of results delivered. The project communicated with a few other projects to coordinate activities. (both must be true to select this option)

1: There is little or no evidence that the project monitored its own costs and considered ways to save money beyond following standard procurement rules. It is not clear that the link between cost savings and quality of results was made.

Evidence

The complementarity with the CSSP programme launched in 2017 has increased the overall efficiency of COBERM in supporting and empowerment of civil society actors in the given context. COBERM Plus component added value to the mechanism as a whole, including its objective to quickly react to new developments related to peace building and stability.

Effective

Quality Rating: Highly Satisfactory

17. Is there evidence that project outputs contributed to the achievement of programme outcomes?

Yes

No

Evidence

The independent evaluation report.

18. The project delivered its expected outputs.

Yes

No

Evidence

The independent evaluation report.

19. Were there regular reviews of the work plan to ensure that the project was on track to achieve the desired results, and to inform course corrections if needed? (select the option from 1-3 that best reflects the project)

3: Quarterly progress data informed regular reviews of the project work plan to ensure that the activities implemented were most likely to achieve the desired results. There is evidence that data and lessons learned (including from evaluations) were used to inform course corrections, as needed. (both must be true to select this option)

2: *There was at least one review of the work plan each year with a view to assessing if project activities were on track to achieving the desired development results (i.e., outputs.) There is no evidence that data or lessons learned were used to inform the review(s).*

1: While the project team may have reviewed the work plan at least once per year to ensure outputs were delivered on time, no link was made to the delivery of desired development results. Select this option also if no regular review of the work plan by management took place.

Evidence

AWP
2018 was revised to achieve the planned results.(uploaded).

20. Were the intended targeted groups systematically identified and engaged, prioritizing the marginalized and excluded, to ensure results were achieved as expected? (select the option from 1-3 that best reflects the project)

3: *Targeted groups were systematically identified using credible data sources on their capacity needs, deprivation and/or exclusion from development opportunities relevant to the project's area of work. There is clear evidence to confirm that targeted groups were reached as intended. The project engaged regularly with targeted groups to assess whether they benefitted as expected and adjustments were made if necessary to refine targeting. (all must be true to select this option)*

2: The project targeted specific groups and/or geographic areas, based on some evidence of their capacity needs, deprivation and/or exclusion from development opportunities relevant to the project's area of work. Some evidence is provided to confirm that project beneficiaries were members of the targeted groups. There was some engagement with beneficiaries to assess whether they benefitted as expected. (all must be true to select this option)

1: The project did not report on specific targeted groups, or there is no evidence to confirm that project beneficiaries have capacity needs or are populations deprived and/or excluded from development opportunities relevant to the project's area of work. There may have been some engagement with beneficiaries to assess whether they benefitted as expected, but not regularly.

Not Applicable

Evidence

The independent evaluation report.

21. Were at least 40 per cent of the personnel hired by the project, regardless of contract type, female?

Yes

No

Evidence

Contracts

Sustainability & National Ownership

Quality Rating: Satisfactory

22. Were stakeholders and partners fully engaged in the decision-making, implementation and monitoring of the project? (select the option from 1-3 that best reflects the project)

3: Only national systems (i.e., procurement, monitoring, evaluation, etc.) were to fully implement and monitor the project. All relevant stakeholders and partners were fully and actively engaged in the process, playing a lead role in project decision-making, implementation and monitoring. (all must be true to select this option)

2: National systems (i.e., procurement, monitoring, evaluation, etc.) were used in combination with other support (such as country office support or project systems) to implement and monitor the project, as needed. All relevant stakeholders and partners were actively engaged in the process, playing an active role in project decision-making, implementation and monitoring. (both must be true to select this option)

1: There was relatively limited or no engagement with national stakeholders and partners in the decision-making, implementation and/or monitoring of the project.

Not Applicable

Evidence

The project operated in a highly politicized and sensitive post-conflict environment and therefore needed to strike a delicate balance between engagement and participation of all parties.

23. Were there regular monitoring of changes in capacities and performance of institutions and systems, and were the implementation arrangements adjusted according to changes in partner capacities? (select the option from 1-3 that best reflects the project)

3: Changes in capacities and performance of national institutions and systems were regularly and comprehensively assessed/monitored using clear indicators, rigorous methods of data collection and credible data sources. There is clear evidence that capacities and performance of national institutions and systems improved by the end of the project, if applicable. Implementation arrangements were formally reviewed and adjusted, if needed, in agreement with partners according to changes in partner capacities. (all must be true to select this option)

2: Aspects of changes in capacities and performance of relevant national institutions and systems were monitored by the project using indicators and reasonably credible data sources. There is limited evidence that capacities and performance of national institutions and systems improved by the end of the project, if applicable. Some adjustment was made to implementation arrangements if needed to reflect changes in partner capacities. (all must be true to select this option)

1: Some aspects of changes in capacities and performance of relevant national institutions and systems may have been monitored by the project, however changes to implementation arrangements were not considered. Also select this option if changes in capacities and performance of relevant national institutions and systems were not monitored by the project.

Not Applicable

Evidence

Monitoring of COBERM partners' capacities and performance was undertaken regularly and relevant data was collected throughout the project. Capacity building support and technical assistance was tailor-made to support the variances in the partners' capacities. As a result, positive results were noted in reporting, M&E and identification of impact, sustainability and lessons learned.

24. Were the transition and phase-out arrangements implemented as planned by the end of the project, taking into account any adjustments made to the plan during implementation? (select the option from 1-3 that best reflects the project)

3: The project's governance mechanism regularly reviewed the project's sustainability plan, including arrangements for transition and phase-out, to ensure the project remained on track in meeting the requirements set out by the plan. The plan was implemented as planned by the end of the project, taking into account any adjustments made during implementation. (both must be true to select this option)

2: *There was a review of the project's sustainability plan, including arrangements for transition and phase-out, to ensure the project remained on track in meeting the requirements set out by the plan. The plan was implemented by the end of the project, taking into account any adjustments made during implementation. (both must be true to select this option)*

1: The project may have had a sustainability plan that specified arrangements for transition and phase-out, but there was no review of this strategy after it was developed. Also select this option if the project did not have a sustainability strategy.

Evidence

The independent evaluation noted that throughout this programme, gains have been made in this area by enhanced skills development of the COBERM beneficiaries, as well as through forging numerous cross-ABL channels of cooperation and interaction, both professional and informal. However, given the political climate, further efforts are needed to change attitudes and ensure local ownership and to build on existing people-to-people contacts and cooperation to ensure more diverse societal responses.

25. Please upload the final lessons learned report that was produced for this project.

Summary/Final Project Board Comments: