**FINAL PROJECT EVALIATION:**

**COBERM-phase 4**

# Executive Summary

COBERM is an apolitical, impartial, and flexible joint EU-UNDP programme funded by the EU and implemented by UNDP. It provides a neutral ground for addressing the prevailing needs of local communities, including post-conflict isolation and low capacities, as well as for the development of new approaches to peace and confidence building. The current fourth phase of COBERM runs from May 2019 until November 2022.

The **main goals** of the fourth phase of COBERM project are to:

* foster interactions and trust among the people affected by conflict and further support grassroots and civil society-driven confidence building initiatives with a high anticipated impact and potential for conflict prevention and peace.
* provide a flexible tool to address emerging needs and build the required trust by supporting ad hoc opportunities identified through various dialogue platforms.
* support an enabling environment for ongoing dialogue and engagement in addressing various issues of joint interest.

COBERM operates with **three components**: The COBERM Main Window, the EU Responsive Resource Fund (RRF) and the Dialogue Coordination Mechanism (DCM), to promote inclusive peace, stability, and human security within and across divided communities.

The aim of this external final evaluation of the fourth phase was to assess COBERM’s results, lessons learned and contributions to sustaining and further enhancing an enabling environment for building confidence within and across divided communities, to promote inclusive peace, stability, and human security.

The main **objectives of the evaluation** were to:

* evaluate the impact of the Program on building enabling environment for sustainable peace.
* document lessons learned, good practices and challenges, as well as identify the strategies for replicating and up-scaling the project’s best practices.
* provide practical, actionable, and feasible recommendations for future interventions in the field.

The evaluations’ **Conclusions** and corresponding **Recommendations** are:

| **No** | **Conclusion** | **Recommendation** |
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| 1 | COBERM is a unique project, that has over the years become a strong “brand” as a project that many Georgian and Abkhaz (and a few South Ossetian) CSOs have benefitted from. Through hundreds of projects and many more activities, COBERM has facilitated contacts and exchange between Georgians, Abkhaz and South Ossetians. There is no comparable project like COBERM that has led to so much interaction and contacts between these. Old human-to-human and expert-to-expert contacts (from before the 2008 war and even Soviet and post-Soviet times) have been revived and maintained and new ones have been created. COBERM has supported many CSOs in Georgia, Abkhazia and earlier also in South Ossetia regions, that were then able to attract additional and other donor funding. COBERM had and has a strong role in building civil society in Abkhazia. | Continue the good work. |
| 2 | COBERM has developed a sophisticated grant-selection process and takes many relevant aspects into account during the selection process and the project/activity implementation that follows. The COBERM team, both in Tbilisi and in Sukhumi provides hands-on, day-to-day support to selected CSOs which was also highly appreciated by everyone interviewed. When working with partners, such as INGOs, Georgian, Abkhaz and South Ossetian CSOs, COBERM takes local sensitivities into account. | Continue the good work. |
| 3 | COBERM IV has made a specific effort to increase participation of vulnerable groups, women, as recommended by the final evaluation of COBERM III. | Continue the good work. |
| 4 | COBERM coordinates and exchanges with other UNDP projects, other IO, and INGO projects as well as with the EU and other donors. This is largely positive. Occasional impressions of secrecy and opaqueness of COBERM among other actors exist. | Continue with the coordination. Explore more concrete synergies with projects such as EU4Dialogue. Only treat as confidential what really needs to be treated as confidential and share information about grantees, projects, approaches, challenges as much as possible with others working in Abkhazia and in conflict transformation and peacebuilding. Share all COBERM outputs (such as DCM monitoring reports, surveys in Abkhazia) with the EU. |
| 5 | At the time of the evaluation, COBERM has demonstrated reasonable progress on all outputs. For four out of ten output indicators, COBERM has overachieved their targets, while in other parts it only partially achieved or underachieved targets. | Consider formulation of indicators that are SMART - specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound and addresses one aspect at a time. |
| 6 | COBERM has made substantial efforts to integrate both gender and human rights in its work, as also recommended by previous evaluations.  Gender mainstreaming and women empowerment in confidence building processes has been a crosscutting theme within COBERM. 57% of COBERM beneficiaries are women and 55% of grants are awarded to women led CSOs. However, there is no clear linkage drawn between the gender mainstreaming efforts and their contribution to confidence building and peacebuilding, COBERM’s ultimate goals.  For human rights, five projects were specifically funded with a focus on human rights, such as juvenile justice, protection of children from violence, and education of youth on human rights. Two projects were funded in addition with a specific focus on addressing the rights and needs of people with disabilities. Other projects also touched upon human rights aspects, e.g., the gender-focused projects mentioned in the previous section. | Continue with the inclusion of gender and human rights in COBERM’s work. Develop a stronger conceptual and practical link, how these projects contribute to COBERM’s overall goals and higher-level objectives. Consider elaborating and including a gender-specific outcome-level indicator. Consider a gender-lensed analysis of confidence-building. |
| 7 | Expert-to-expert contacts in fields such as culture, environment, health, history, and archaeology have shown to be the most relevant. However, they are most of the time restricted in scope with limited or no spill over effect, especially on the Abkhaz and South Ossetian sides, as participation in projects is often kept too much below the radar. | Consider elaboration of a well-thought-through outreach strategy to multiply and scale-up the results of expert-to-expert contacts, integrating media literacy and peaceful journalism built on experience gained from media grants. |
| 8 | COBERM is fully in line with the UNDP country programme for Georgia, the global UNDP Strategic Plan and with the UN SDGs, especially SDG 16. | Continue the good work. |
| 9 | Monitoring & Evaluation is not properly developed, and resources are not sufficiently allocated. This prevents COBERM to fully capture and communicate its outcomes and impact in a convincing and evidence-based way. | More resources should be allocated to M&E. COBERM should add M&E responsibility within the COBERM team, either a full-time position or a minimum of 50% responsibility for one staff member.  More training should be given, first to COBERM staff and then to CSOs implementing grants, to better formulate, capture, and report outcomes and impact. Every COBERM staff member needs at least a mid-level understanding of UNDP’s standards for M&E and results-based management and the EU’s expectations for project monitoring and evaluation. Especially the project effects not easily observable, yet highly relevant, the establishment and maintaining of networks between Georgian-Abkhaz-Ossetians need to be better captured. |
| 10 | There is a missing conceptual link and weakness in COBERM’s Theory of Change that questions its relevance as a project contributing to conflict transformation and peacebuilding, as claimed in many documents. There is a lack of a clear theory and approach how the work at levels Track 2 and 3 will lead to positive progress on conflict transformation and peacebuilding.  There is a disconnect between the output and high-level impact indicators, as described also in the relevant section above. The results framework misses outcome level objectives and indicators, making it ambiguous how planned outputs translate into and contribute to wider and higher-level changes. Thus, observed findings lack evidence and results are restricted to specific outputs expressed in numbers of grants, beneficiaries and trainings/capacity building measures undertaken; all output-level but not outcome- or impact-level indicators. Also, the indicators used are not formulated in a SMART way (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound) and therefore do not meet UNDP’s own quality standards. They are rather of a composite nature, composed of two or more elements, all these make it difficult to objectively assess performance of the programme. | For COBERM to better show and communicate its relevance, the Theory of Change needs to be strengthened. A clear contribution to conflict transformation and peacebuilding (despite visible non-progress on the political level) need to be shown in theory or practice. |
| 11 | Most recommendations from previous evaluation were addressed however it is not clear or documented how the recommendations from previous COBERM were addressed and why some were declined. A management response, a standard tool in response to evaluation recommendations, seems to be missing for the COBERM main window, while it was available and used for the DCM component. | COBERM should provide a management response to approved evaluation reports, clearly addressing each recommendation, whether, how, when and by who it will be addressed and follow-up on the commitments in the management response, to ensure real progress and learning from approved evaluation reports. |
| 12 | COBERM has implemented its work efficiently. Standard UN procedures for procurement, UNDP staff recruitment, salaries etc. were followed. The budget is explained and justified by UNDP through the sensitive nature of the project, UNDP’s significant network and presence and UNDP’s ability to handle challenges on the ground which would present significantly more problems for other organisations. Some important activities, such as M&E, have been substantially under-budgeted. | Revise a future COBERM budget and ensure that all relevant elements, such as proper resources for M&E, are included in the budget to implement all recommended changes and improvements to COBERM. |
| 13 | The current Impact-level indicator, measuring COBERM’s achievements against global country rankings such as the Global Peace Index, is unrealistic and not suitable. | Indicators in the logframe, especially on the Impact- and Outcome-levels should be revised to be more meaningful and to follow SMART indicator criteria. |

Evaluation team: Andre Kahlmeyer (Team Leader), Rusudan Konjaria (Local consultant)

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