

Management Response Template


Project Title: Supporting the Western Balkans' Collective Leadership on Reconciliation: building capacity and momentum for the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO)

UNDP PIMS ID: 00112766

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Recommendation 1.

Future interventions should strengthen efforts to reach out to young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and minority groups, as well as youth living in rural areas. The Joint Project has made an attempt in this direction, but its outreach was hampered by Covid-19 conditions, which prevented mobility and made IT connectivity a pre-condition for participation. The local workshops and best innovative ideas in Output 2, and the mini-grants in Output 4, are ways in which the Joint Project attempted to have a broader outreach.

Management response:¹ Partially Accept

As noted in the evaluation report, the project made its efforts to include young people from disadvantaged groups in many forms. The project embraced a positive image of young people as potential agents of change in their communities. It explicitly recognized that young people are not a homogenous group, and that the experience of individual young men and women is determined by intersectional identities (gender, class, economic circumstances, ethnic and linguistic identities, sexual orientation, among others) rather than simply by 'being young'. The project itself is rooted in RYCO's effort to reach out to young people beyond the 'usual suspects', i.e., urban, educated, well-connected youth. Youth groups were engaged in different forms during the project implementation:

- UNDP in its regional research, engaged in the design of methodology, validation of findings and consultation of its recommendations a representative youth group from WB6, for the selection of which the criteria included ethnicity, age, gender, and belonging to/experience with disadvantaged groups of youth population.
- Moreover, UNDP during the conduction of the *regional quantitative survey* with youth in the region, involved a comprehensive and statistically representative sample of 5400 young people aged 15-29 in the region. Attention was given to gender balance and representation of ethnic minorities (such as Roma youth). 20% of the sample comprised of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), considered a proxy for the inclusion of hard-to-reach and marginalised youth. 40% of the sample reported living in households with a modest or poor economic situation.

¹Select one: Fully Accept, Partially Accept, Reject

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RYCO grants were distributed also to NGOs which were tackling issues of, or were representing disadvantaged groups of youth, amongst others young women, rural youth, LGBTI etc. - UNFPA engaged young trainers who then trained their peers in their communities. The selection of youth trainers was made on a set criterion, in order to ensure involvement of representatives from vulnerable groups, such as Roma and Egyptian, LGBTI, and more. - Small scale projects, designed and implemented by youth with financial support UNFPA and UNDP, not only engaged youth from different strata of population in the WB6 but tackled issues that concern these groups. 				
Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking ²	
			Comments	Status ³
Use the lessons learned, in the design of future regional projects on youth activism in peacebuilding, reconciliation and social cohesion in the region and in Albania	2021 - 2022	UN agencies		Ongoing

Recommendation 2.

Future interventions should continue to support the involvement of girls and young women, by tackling the specific challenges faced by girls and young women in rural areas and context where patriarchal norms are particularly strong. At the same time, peacebuilding projects should recognize and address prevalent notion of masculinity that prevent young men from participating in peacebuilding and social cohesion activities seen as ‘uncool’ or ‘feminine’ (or make them at risk of bullying and social backlash if they do participate).

Management response: Partially Accept

While the project in itself did not have a particular focus on gender issues, the gender equality was one of the guiding principles in its implementation. The evaluation report indicates that the project strived to be gender-sensitive in its choice of participants, methodologies and activities. A gender lens was incorporated in the activities and methodologies, and some grants and ‘best innovative ideas’ focused specifically on gender-related themes. Gender aspects have been considered in the selection of participants, development of terms of reference, as well as funding decisions on specific activities. There was a commitment to go beyond a binary and cis-normative notion of gender equality as ‘parity’ of young women and men in participants. As a general trend, project activities seem to have attracted more women than men. Young women and girls in rural areas faced the greatest challenges in participation in project activities due to abnormal Covid-19 situation during the implementation.

² Status of implementation is tracked electronically in the Evaluation Resource Centre (ERC).

³ Select one: Not initiated, Initiated, Completed, Completed, No longer applicable

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
Consider strengthening the gender equality component in other future youth related projects, by providing a special focus to meaningful engagement of girls and young women in rural areas and by tackling the specific challenges faced by girls and young women in contexts where patriarchal norms are particularly strong	2021 - 2022	UN agencies		Ongoing

Recommendation 3.

RYCO, UNICEF and other UN agencies should build on the work started with the teachers' group, and expand support to 'whole of schools' including school administration and school communities. Crucial to this is to ensure high-quality translations of the toolkit and teaching materials on the online portal in all languages of education in the Western Balkans. Exchange of learning with the Dialogues For the Future (DFF) project is recommended to build a strong evidence base on 'what works' when integrating peacebuilding in education, with a view to then engage Ministries of Education in discussing institutionalization into formal curricula.

Management response: Fully Accept

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
Follow up the implementation of the recommendation with UNICEF and RYCO	N/A	UNICEF, RYCO		N/A

Recommendation 4.

RYCO, UNFPA and other UN agencies should continue to nurture the Y-PEER group of trainers, and identify ways in which they can contribute to ongoing and future peacebuilding efforts. Given that an identified challenge in the ToT workshops was the different level of experience among Y-PEER trainers, a possible next step would be to provide follow-up training and mentoring at different levels (something that the Y-PEER methodology is uniquely suited for). Possible connections can be

established with the work done in schools, where Y-PEER trainers could support teachers in designing and implementing extra-curricular activities.

Management response: Fully Accept

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
Follow up the implementation of the recommendation with UNFPA and RYCO	N/A	UNFPA, RYCO		N/A

Recommendation 5.

RYCO, UNDP and UNFPA should continue to promote the Shared Futures report, finding new ways to implement the advocacy component of the project after the Covid-19 pandemic subsides.

Ensuring good quality translation of the report is crucial in this regard. In parallel, it is important to capture the learning emerging from the ‘experiment’ of engaging young people in the research design. This is particularly important to ensure the replicability of the methodology and process (something that RYCO plans to do at regular intervals). The project has shown that doing research ‘with’ rather than just ‘on’ youth is possible and meaningful, but also that it raises challenges that should be carefully considered.

Management response: Fully Accept

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
Use the Shared Futures Report for the formulation of a follow up project as well as additional work on peace and reconciliation in the region. Follow up the implementation of the recommendation with UNDP IRH, UNFPA and RYCO.	2021 - 2022	UNDP IRH, UN agencies		Ongoing

Recommendation 6.

RYCO need to reflect on the persistent tension between administrative and financial rigor, on the one hand, and engagement of grassroots organizations, on the other hand. Looking at the experience of other grant-making bodies (in the region and elsewhere) may be useful to fine-tune the requirements to a level that is ‘just right’ for RYCO’s mission to support grassroots organizations

engaged in local level peacebuilding. For example, RYCO may want to consider a tiered approach, with smaller pilot grants (with limited budget and limited requirements), which serve to build capacity, and then larger, more administratively demanding grants for more experienced organizations or organizations that have 'graduated' from the initial grants.

Management response: Fully Accept

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
Facilitate and share lessons learned with other entities that are supporting RYCO. Follow up the implementation of the recommendation with RYCO	2021 - 2022	UNDP, RYCO		Ongoing

Recommendation 7.

RYCO need to Undertake a systematic mapping and analysis of its grants, not only against its strategic priorities but also (in more detail) against thematic areas of work (e.g. countering hate speech on social media; fighting sexism; etc.). This will allow RYCO to build a 'critical mass' of activity around key themes with distinctive policy influence; connect activists that work on particular themes across the region and facilitate shared learning; and possibly nurture specific areas through thematic calls.

Management response: Fully Accept

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
Facilitate and share lessons learned with other entities that are supporting RYCO. Follow up the implementation of the recommendation with RYCO. Actively support the advisory board of RYCO and GoA with information and knowledge sharing.	2021 - 2022	RYCO, UNDP		Ongoing

Recommendation 8.

Consider ways in which the RYCO regional approach can be complemented by national-level peacebuilding strategies. So far, the focus on RYCO has been on connecting young people across borders; this is important and should continue. Yet as RYCO enters a new phase, it is also crucial to

reflect on the diversity of the needs and priorities in the Western Balkans, and how this can be reflected in its grant-making process. For example, our consultation in Bosnia-Herzegovina have highlighted that – while cross-border dialogue is welcome – there is an unmet need for similar activities focusing on youth dialogue and school exchanges between the Federation and the Republika Srpska. At a time when the Local Branch Offices have acquired legal status and are ready to play a more prominent role, the Strategic Planning process can serve as an important forum to outline these national-level priorities.

Management response: Fully Accept

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
Follow up the implementation of the recommendation with RYCO	N/A	RYCO		N/A

Terminal Evaluation recommendation 9.

The Joint Project has highlighted the need, timeliness, and potential of peacebuilding interventions in the Western Balkans. The PBF should continue to invest in the region, adopting a strategic and long-term approach. While the specific forms of this support will depend on the outcome of the PBF regional application, future PBF interventions should build on a joint reflection of the lessons emerging from the three PBF projects in the Western Balkans.⁴ A lessons learned event might be considered as a way to structure this joint reflection.

Management response: Fully Accept

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
Follow up the implementation of the recommendation with UNPBF in the formulation of new projects and regional activities.	2021 - 2022	UNDP, PBF		Ongoing

⁴ In addition to the Joint Project evaluated here, these were the *Dialogues For the Future* (a joint project of UNDP, UNICEF and UNESCO to promote dialogue and social cohesion in and between Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia) and the project *Empowering Youth for a Peaceful, Prosperous, and Sustainable Future in Kosovo*, which brought together UNICEF, UNDP and UN Women.