

Kabar Ordo: Our Time for Dialogue

Final Evaluation

A project implemented by
Search for Common Ground and Youth of Osh

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The views expressed in this report are those of project participants and the authors and may not necessarily represent the official views of the USAID, SFCG and Youth of Osh in Kyrgyz Republic

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1.0 Executive Summary

The purpose of this evaluation is to inform further Search for Common Ground (SFCG) and Youth of Osh (YoO) programming in Kyrgyzstan as well as identify lessons for future start-up projects elsewhere. Its primary audience is the SFCG and YoO staff in Kyrgyzstan, as well as SFCG regional and headquarters teams. During the debriefing at the end of the fieldwork, USAID expressed an interest in the evaluation as one input into its reflection on the original Annual Program Statement.

Kabar Ordo (center of the news) was a partnership between Youth of Osh, Search for Common Ground, five private, three governmental and two public outlets in Southern Kyrgyzstan. The project focused on the conflict-affected southern provinces of Osh, Jalalabad and, to a lesser degree, Batken. Working with 10 media partners, SFCG and YoO have supported coaching of young journalists, who have created 474 media products using the Common Ground Approach to journalism. These reports have been published/broadcast by partner media outlets, then used as a starting point for dialogue and analysis in community discussions, roundtable events, nationally televised talk shows and conflict analysis reports. The project was for 24 months beginning February 2012, followed by a three-month, no-cost extension.

The overall goal of the project was to prevent the re-emergence of violent conflict in Kyrgyzstan's south. More specifically, the project's objectives were to:

- support the dissemination of conflict-sensitive information and analysis of local conflict trends
- increase public awareness and understanding of collaborative approaches to inter-ethnic conflict dynamics

In practice, the project involved the following four components: capacity building; reporting; outreach; and monitoring and evaluation.

Main evaluation questions and methods

- Are the project's stated interventions and achievements relevant to the issues being faced by the media in Southern Kyrgyzstan?¹
- Are the project's stated interventions and achievements relevant to the issues being faced by target communities in Southern Kyrgyzstan?
- Based on the project experience, what are the most relevant issues that need to be

¹ Compound questions raised in the ToR were split into separate questions to ensure each received adequate consideration.

addressed in order to promote peace, harmony and good governance in Southern Kyrgyzstan?

- How did the project adapt to changes in context?
- What are the major outputs and outcomes of the project? To what extent has the project been successful in:
 - Increasing the capacity of young journalists in conflict-sensitive reporting?
 - Increasing the capacity of local leaders in conflict transformation?
 - Demonstrating collaborative problem solving through its media outreach and events?
 - Improving access to information about conflict issues?
- What knowledge and skills has the project given to participants to ensure effective and independent application of those skills in the future?
- What major factors are contributing to the achievement or non-achievement of objectives?
- What change has taken place in the media's approach to conflict reporting and coverage as a result of this project?
- Are there any unintended positive or negative outcomes/consequences of this work in Kyrgyzstan?

In the absence of a conflict analysis completed by the project, and in order to consider relevance, the evaluators drew upon an analysis completed by Mercy Corps in late 2010.

The final evaluation was primarily based on qualitative data from observations and 40 semi-structured interviews including participants of the community discussions/roundtables, participating journalists, media directors, media experts/coaches, community dialogue facilitators, participants of Youth of Osh Media School, SFCG's program manager, SFCG's country director and other staff, relevant staff of partner organizations and representatives of three peacebuilding organizations operating in Southern Kyrgyzstan.

While the midterm evaluation focused on assessing the effectiveness of media products in achieving targeted results and the enhanced capacity of participating journalists on journalism sensitivities, the final evaluation has paid more attention to the overall process, and the results and effectiveness of the community events.

The evaluation used a guide/checklist developed by SFCG for project monitoring (undated) to assess the content of a small number of the media products. The focus was on most recent products using Common Ground principles because these are the most distant in time from the initial training and support and may provide some sense of the durability of the training.

Two ranking sheets on changes in the media environment and relevance of the issues covered were completed individually and discussed in the plenary of a workshop forum with the project team, under the supervision of the evaluators.

The evaluation assessed four community-based events, and observed two others. We identified information-rich cases and focused on one issue of national concern (the customs union), one issue within the national arena of extractives but played out locally (coal mining), an issue of identity (head coverings for Muslim girls in school), an issue of governance (parental/school responsibilities around absenteeism) and one that we could actually observe as it coincided with the evaluation (passports for foreign-born spouses of Kyrgyzstani citizens).

Despite our efforts, limitations of this evaluation are numerous and the threats to data validity are significant. Some of these are inherent to any social science research at this level. Others were more logistical and organizational, and could have been avoided with earlier and more thorough preparation, additional time in country, and better monitoring data up front and over the course of the project. Specific threats to data validity include:

- The selection of whom to interview may have been biased towards those likely to give a positive account.
- Lack of a formal written conflict analysis by the project hindered assessing relevance.
- The evaluators' inability to speak any of the local languages greatly hampered the evaluation.
- Due to last-minute recruiting, the planning and preparation time was limited.
- The monitoring failures from the beginning of the project limited the amount of data available for use in the evaluation.

To address these concerns as much as possible, each finding is supported by evidence from multiple sources. Information stemming from a single source is noted as such. Findings are based on information from the document reviews, semi-structured interviews and/or observation.

Principal findings include:

- The lack of a comprehensive conflict analysis early in the project left open the questions of what the issues were, how they should be identified, and which among them were more strategic.
- The project's actual interventions vary in relevance to conflict in Southern Kyrgyzstan. The major issues addressed in the project were relevant to emergent presenting issues and to proximate causes, and less so to root causes of violent conflict in Kyrgyzstan.
- Common Ground principles introduced by KO addressed a number of shortcomings in the field of media in Southern Kyrgyzstan including accuracy, balance and impartiality.
- All reports indicate that the level of professionalism of participating journalists has improved. However, a review of the content in actual media products suggests that the uptake of conflict sensitivity may have been less comprehensive.
- The major actual outputs and outcomes align with the plan as modified over the course of the project.

- The project demonstrated third-party facilitation of constructive exchanges of information and perspectives as well as solution exploration. However, the two- to three-hour timeframe and single-session format were not always conducive to comprehensive problem solving.
- The evaluation found little evidence of subsequent independent applications of the overall collaborative problem solving process modeled by KO. Obstacles cited by participants included resources, skills and perceptions of partiality.
- The project employed several of the necessary interventions and set the stage for change, but did not include a sufficiently robust complement of interventions over sufficient time to fully shift the bulk of Southern Kyrgyzstani media's approach to conflict reporting.
- The positive and negative unintended consequences that we were able to identify had little effect on the overall project.

Lessons learned and recommendations

The lessons captured here are not centered on the evaluation questions but refer to larger lessons throughout the project. Different people with whom we spoke offered the following lessons:

Connect designers and implementers. Challenges or problems with project designs often do not become apparent until it is time to implement. Connecting the designers and the implementers helps implementers understand the intent and designers understand the constraints.

Apply a holistic lens. Involving the media and facilitation experts in the project management team helped to integrate these components. For YoO, there was an additional lesson related to integrated or holistic programming involving youth and others.

Iron out partnership arrangements early on. New partnerships, particularly where one partner is new to the country, require work, negotiation and collaboration.

Engage the decision-makers. Although the project did not work exclusively at the bottom of Lederach's triangle, additional work at higher levels might have leveraged greater effectiveness.

Ensure sufficient and diverse interventions. Peacebuilding practitioners generally consider two-year grants to be insufficient for peacebuilding work.

Stick with it. Participants recommend that future work "provide follow-up until it is resolved." One media product alone is often insufficient to solve the problem.

Convene gravitas. The participation of experts was widely appreciated and brought clout, new information and perspectives to the community events.

Successful methodologies that merit use and consideration in future programming include:

- Pairing novice journalists with veteran media experts for mentoring and quality control over extended periods of time (i.e. 12-18 months)
- Linking media coverage and community events that engage all stakeholders or their representatives in a face-to-face exchange of information and exploration of solutions
- Engaging experts to assist staff with in-depth issue analysis used to orient staff, journalists, authorities and other stakeholders and to participate in community events
- Approaching sensitive and high-risk issues indirectly – with obliquity
- Retaining the flexibility needed to be able to address emergent issues
- Engaging a significant number (>7) of diverse media partners

Future work would also be well served by observing the following recommendations:

- Projects should build in ways of facilitating participatory conflict analysis and periodic updating (including a gender analysis) by and for the project staff from all partner organizations with inputs from experts on key issues and where possible with stakeholder input. This should not be a one-time event, nor should it be outsourced.
- Projects should strive for greater consistency in the strategies and the level of effort of the different components such as media and community outreach. Where the media components are anchored in specific media outlets over time, the community events should be anchored in community-based organizations or state agencies such as the office of the ombudsman.
- Efforts should include specific interventions that engage editors, media directors and owners in initiatives to transform media. Bottom-up strategies are more likely to succeed when integrated with work with middle- and top-level actors.

Kabar Ordo's greatest contribution may have been as a demonstration project. It clearly advanced the fledgling practice of conflict-sensitive journalism in Southern Kyrgyzstan and also revealed how much additional work is still needed to transform the overall media environment, particularly given the role media played during the June 2010 event.

As with many demonstration projects, additional subsequent efforts are required to support wider uptake of conflict-sensitive journalism beyond the initial trial plots. This often involves on-going demonstration, sometimes at a larger scale or under more challenging circumstance. It remains to be seen if the participating media outlets, the journalists and/or the duty-bearing stakeholders replicate the process when faced with recurring episodes of existing conflicts or new and emerging conflicts. So far, they have not. At least they can no longer say that it can't be done. Moreover, staff and participants can refer to numerous examples of successful nonviolent ways of handling grievances and addressing and solving problems through collaboration.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 Evaluation purpose and audience

The purpose of this evaluation is to inform further SFCG and YoO programming in Kyrgyzstan as well as identify lessons for future start-up projects elsewhere. As this was the organization's first project in-country, the evaluation looked for successful methodologies, lessons learned, and expected or unexpected consequences from the project. SFCG elected to focus on three of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee's peacebuilding standard evaluation criteria: relevance, effectiveness and impact.

Its primary audience is the SFCG and YoO staff in Kyrgyzstan as well as SFCG regional staff. During the debriefing at the end of the fieldwork, USAID expressed an interest in the evaluation as one possible input into its reflection on the original Annual Program Statement.

2.2 Context description

The Context in 2010

The following extended excerpt is from an analysis completed by Mercy Corps in 2010 in an unpublished paper entitled *Political Violence in Kyrgyzstan: Behind the Ethnic Masquerade*.² The analysis was conducted in August and September 2010 and involved semi-structured interviews with over 120 people throughout the south and in Bishkek. The evaluation draws on this analysis because no similar overall conflict analysis was available from the project. [*Begin Mercy Corps excerpt.*]

Overview

In the first ten years of Kyrgyzstan's independence it went from being the darling of the international financial institutions to being a poster child for debt relief (Olcott 2005). A once functional regional economy became a five-way adversarial competition over markets in Russia, water, and foreign military bases. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan blocked Kyrgyzstan access to Russian markets. Borders were closed, populations migrated, and corruption and organized crime flourished.

The regional Central Asian economic bloc envisioned at the collapse of the Soviet Union never materialized. Kyrgyzstan itself has become an enclave isolated from its immediate neighbors, estranged from Russia and ignored by China. Perhaps worse yet, Kyrgyzstan's fate appears closely linked with that of Afghanistan. Some of the drugs coming out of Afghanistan and

² Used with permission

weapons going into Afghanistan transit through Kyrgyzstan. The existing U.S. military base in Manas, outside Bishkek, supports U.S. operations in Afghanistan and was the source of bitter competition between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.

Establishing formal institutions has allowed local authority figures access to the system (and the resources thereof). This has not translated into democratic participation or in the open airing of demands and grievances. It has, however, enabled local patrons to act (to their own benefit of course) as “social safety nets” in societies where Soviet rigid mechanisms of control and coercion had imploded and no routine instrument of conflict resolution had been established. (Rabin)

Decentralization only reinforced patronage practices – amounting to old wine in new bottles. Yet, there was also a new bottle in the making, one with sharp edges.

“In many areas... politicization has led to an increased willingness to protest. A regional official in Jalalabad complains: ‘In Jalalabad this stupid habit has appeared – the slightest problem, and everybody goes out on the street.’ It is this ‘stupid habit’ that the authorities are most afraid of. There were small protests during the last election period, but they were fairly easily contained. The eruption of unrest in Aksy, however, unnerved the authorities in 2002....” (ICG 2004)

The protests in Aksy were a harbinger of things to come. Street protest as a form of political engagement, and particularly violent protest, has been remarkably effective in influencing regime change in Kyrgyzstan. For instance, in March 2005, President Akayev’s 15 years in office came to an end during a popular uprising. In April 2010, President Bakiyev fared similarly, as street protests in Bishkek forced his removal as well. Despite early promises of national integration, 20 years after gaining its independence, Kyrgyzstan remains plagued by systemic corruption and the attendant potential for violence. Opposition groups continue to exploit institutional weaknesses in both the central and oblast governments for political and economic gain.

Areas of Concern

Distilling the dynamics involved in political violence in Kyrgyzstan into distinct areas of concern is challenging and somewhat artificial. They are unmistakably interlinked and part of a system, rather than isolated problems.

Violent Political Transition

At the time this report was written every transition of presidential power in Kyrgyzstan has either been preceded or followed by intense, but short-lived, episodes of political violence, beginning in 1990 as the Soviet Union collapsed, during the Tulip Revolution that ousted President Akayev from office in 2005, and in 2010 before and after the removal of President Kurmanbek Bakiyev.

Intercommunal clashes broke out in Osh City on June 4, 1990. The following day these spread to Uzgen and a number of surrounding villages. During the week of violence that followed “120

Uzbeks, 50 Kyrgyz and one Russian were killed. According to the report of the investigating commission, more than 5,000 crimes were committed (murder, rape, assault, and pillage). Violence was stopped by imposing a state of emergency and by sending army troops [Soviet] into the zone of conflict.” (Tishkov 1995)

The issues driving the 1990 violence included:

- allocation of land lots and housing
- access to positions in state structures
- recognition of the Uzbek language as an official language
- isolated calls for Uzbek autonomy in the south

In March 2005, a controversial parliamentary election generated unprecedented statements from the opposition and mass protests. (Marat 2006) President Akayev’s 15 years in office came to an end during a popular uprising known as the Tulip Revolution. Yet one year into President Bakiyev’s administration it was clear that little had changed, and some things had in fact worsened. “The rise in political violence is one of several negative repercussions stemming from this sudden transformation. Kyrgyzstan now suffers from violent activity of organized criminal groups and widespread corruption in political and economic sectors.” (Marat 2006)

“On 7 April 2010, following several months of intensifying anti-government protests, President Kurmanbek Bakiyev was overthrown after street clashes in Bishkek that left 86 people dead. A few weeks earlier, a group of opposition leaders had formed the Central Executive Committee (CEC) of the People’s Kurultay (assembly) to coordinate the protests. On 7 April the CEC assumed power, with Roza Otunbayeva as president, declaring that it would stay in office for six months to oversee a new constitution and both parliamentary and presidential elections planned for October 2010.” (ICG 2010)

The context surrounding the violence in June 2010 bears close resemblance to the context surrounding the violence 20 years earlier in June 1990. The party system remains nascent and many parties offer vague ideologies, exhibit weak internal organization and have limited or no national coverage. Many interlocutors we heard from in 2010 lamented the absence of an ideology along the lines of that of the Soviet Union. Politics remain urban-centric and personalized. Clan leaders remain the dominant social actors and political leaders, and they operate beneath the radar. Youth are still vulnerable to manipulation for political violence and, like 1990, in 2010 the economy is in tatters, political leadership is considered weak and ineffective, and the security sector’s allegiances are ambiguous.

Ethnic Nationalism: Exclusion and Discrimination

Although there were common perspectives regarding the causes of the June 2010 violence echoed within each ethnic group, there was no single uniform explanation of the events for either the Uzbek or the Kyrgyz respondents in urban areas in the south. There is considerable diversity in the understanding or interpretations within each group. Differences in the narratives included the initial triggers, the sequence of events, the degree to which ethnicity or nationalism was a driving factor, and the acceptance or legitimization of the use of violence.

Overall, Kyrgyz and Uzbek respondents shared a widespread understanding that the underlying causes of the June violence were political, not ethnic.³ This is probably much less true for victims and perpetrators. Violence that begins as political conflict and uses ethnicity to mobilize people may be experienced by victims and perpetrators as ethnic violence and later come to be categorized as “ethnic conflict,” when ethnicity is leveraged to mobilize people. For instance, a Kyrgyz woman in one city, responding to a question about local conditions, stated that the deterioration in inter-ethnic relationships was a direct result of machinations by political actors. In short, though not a “root cause,” ethnic tensions and polarization have certainly worsened as a result of the June violence and its aftermath and will need to be addressed in order to reduce their negative influence in the future.

Corruption and Patronage

“When a regime changes in Kyrgyzstan, a whole system of patronage has to be restructured. This covers not only politics but business and usually the criminal world, as the three elements are tightly connected and often overlapping throughout the south.” (ICG 2010)

“These two major failings of the [Akayev] regime – the ineffective political system and the systemic corruption – are frequently blamed not only on President Akayev himself, but also on the roles his wife and children play in politics and business. The expansion of family rule to include wider family members and interference in business is characteristic of Central Asian politics, and in this sense Kyrgyzstan is no exception. However, this widespread reach of family members into all aspects of society and the economy makes transition much more difficult and is an important contributor to the president's unpopularity.” (ICG 2004)

Subsequent to the Tulip Revolution and the consequent ouster of Akayev in 2005, the Bakiyev family raised nepotism networks to even greater heights five years later. When asked about connections to the violence in 1990, some interlocutors saw greater similarities to the violence in 2005 wherein loyalists, or more accurately beneficiaries, to outgoing presidents Akayev and Bakiyev acted to defend and preserve their power and influence.

Despite recognition of the importance of politics and political leadership among the people with whom we spoke, there was no specific mention of one of Kyrgyzstan’s longest-standing and strongest political forces – the clans. Clientelism continues to define the regional political economy and needs to be considered to improve national and local governance.

Impunity and the Weak Exercise of Justice

³ Certainly some interlocutors found political causes to be a more socially desirable explanation – particularly in discussions with foreigners. Social desirability refers to the value that motivates respondents to answer in the most socially acceptable manner, even when they know a different answer is more accurate. In light of the unusual, intense international attention and the concurrent release of a controversial HRW report, people were, understandably, cautious in their choice of words.

Almost all interlocutors reported they did not know how (or even if) the violence in 1990 had been resolved. The sparse written record⁴ suggests that only the actual perpetrators and not the organizers were tried in a court of law. The years 1990 and 1991 were times of great upheaval and uncertainty for Kyrgyzstan. Prosecution of the organizers of the 1990 violence was a minor task in comparison to setting up a newly independent state.

Twenty years later, few expect anything different from the investigations currently under way. A few respondents feared that a thorough investigation where “no one would look good” could cause as much damage as the June events. As opacity and impunity continue to define the exercise of justice in Kyrgyzstan, judicial and legal institutions need to be considered to promote reconciliation. [*End Mercy Corps excerpt*]

The Context Since 2010

Although the country has not re-experienced violence on the level of the 2010 events, it would be incorrect to assume it has enjoyed relative stability. The change most played out in public view was the removal of the former Major of Osh, Melis Myrzakmatov. ICG refers to him as the “the standard-bearer of an ethnic Kyrgyz-first policy and the most successful radical nationalist leader to emerge after the killings.”

Kyrgyzstan’s economic links with Russia, namely foreign remittances from employment in Russia, trade and energy, have come under greater public scrutiny in recent years. The issue with the most far-reaching consequences involves the possible engagement in a Customs Trade Union with Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan. The goal of the union is to create a common market without customs barriers where membership will open the markets of member states. The ramifications of this alliance are manifold, complex and could adversely affect larger numbers of entrepreneurs, traders and manufacturers, and consumers.

A USAID-commissioned study on gender issues in Central Asia⁵ in March 2010 found a number of paradoxes relating to Kyrgyzstan:

- *While women’s participation in civil society is at a high level, so is domestic violence.*
- *Bride kidnapping is on the increase, yet so are the numbers of women graduating from postsecondary education.*
- *While religious women activists may demand the right to wear a hijab (headscarf) and attend a madrasah (religious school), they are also demanding political rights within religious decision-making structures.*

More recent analysis on how women and men have experienced the post-June 2010 events is needed, but is not yet available to our knowledge.

⁴ Tishkov, formerly the Minister of Nationalities in Russia, offers unique insights to the court records of the 1990 trials, Tishkov, Valery. 1995. “Don’t Kill me I’m a Kyrgyz!” An Anthropological Analysis of Violence in the Osh Ethnic Conflict.” *Journal of Peace Research*. 32:133-149.

⁵ Susan Somach and Deborah Rubin. *Gender Assessment USAID/Central Asian Republics*, DevTech Systems, March 2010

ICG and The Economist report that old grievances remain but are kept quiet. “Time and fatigue have papered over the more jagged gashes in relations between the two ethnic groups. But the old problems that led them to fight each other—from unemployment and organized crime to unchecked rumors and the lopsided distribution of justice—have been left to fester.”⁶ The result, reports ICG, is that, “Uzbeks are increasingly withdrawing into themselves. They say they are marginalized by the Kyrgyz majority, forced out of public life and the professions; most Uzbek-language media have been closed; and prominent nationalists often refer to them as a Diaspora, emphasizing their separate and subordinate status.”⁷

This was also substantiated in the Mid-Term Review. To make matters worse, overseas options have diminished.

“The flight of many Uzbek business people and the seizure of Uzbek-owned businesses have sharply diminished the minority’s once important role in the economy. The sense of physical and social isolation is breeding a quiet, inchoate anger among all segments of the community – not just the youth, who could be expected to respond more viscerally to the situation, but also among the Uzbek elite and middle class. This is increased by an acute awareness that they have nowhere to go. Neither Russia, with its widespread anti-Central Asian sentiments, nor Uzbekistan with its harshly autocratic regime, offers an attractive alternative.” (ICG 2012)

The Kabar Ordo project was and remains timely. It was rolled out in a challenging and complex context that is slow to improve.

⁶ *Ethnic differences in Kyrgyzstan: Stubborn facts on the ground*, The Economist, 20 April 2013

⁷ ICG, “Kyrgyzstan: Widening Ethnic Divisions in the South.” Asia Report No.222, 29 March 2012

2.3 Project Description

A. Goals, objectives and expected outcomes

Kabor Ordo (center of the news) was a partnership between Youth of Osh, Search for Common Ground, and five private, three governmental and two public media outlets in Southern Kyrgyzstan. The project focuses on the conflict-affected southern provinces of Osh and Jalalabad and to a lesser degree Batken. Working with 10 media partners, SFCG and YoO have supported coaching of young journalists including freelancers and graduates of YoO Media School, who have created around 474 media products using the Common Ground Approach to journalism. These reports have been published/broadcast by partner media outlets, then used as a starting point for dialogue and analysis in community discussions, roundtable events, nationally televised talk shows and conflict analysis reports. The project was for 24 months beginning February 2012, followed by a three-month, no-cost extension.

The overall goal of the project was to prevent the re-emergence of violent conflict in Kyrgyzstan's south. More specifically, the project's objectives were to:

- support the dissemination of conflict-sensitive information and analysis of local conflict trends
- increase public awareness and understanding of collaborative approaches to inter-ethnic conflict dynamics

At the end of the project the expected outcomes were:

- Young journalists increased their capacity to produce conflict-sensitive reporting.
- Participating media outlets published/aired conflict-sensitive media products.
- Policymakers have increased access to conflict-sensitive news coverage and early warning analysis.
- Channels for constructive dialogue on local conflict trends were established between policymakers and civil society actors.
- Citizens from local communities in the Osh and Jalalabad oblasts have increased understanding of local conflict dynamics.

B. Target groups

The primary target group included:

- 35 young professional journalists (aged 18-30) from a variety of state, private, and public media outlets
- 15 freelancers and graduates of the YoO Media School.
- 4 YoO staff from the recently opened YoO Media School

The secondary target group included:

- Directors and/or editors from the participating media outlets
- Key local community leaders, civil society and media actors
- relevant local and national government authorities

- over 2,100 citizens from local communities in the eight targeted regions
- citizens from the Osh and Jalalabad oblasts, who access Common Ground news coverage in the TV/print/radio media and on the project's website

C. Geographic focus of the project

In Osh Oblast, the project focused on Nookat, Aravan, Karasuu, Kara Kulja and Osh city. In Jalalabad Oblast, it focused on Jalalabad city, Alabuka, Aksy, Suzak regions, and where appropriate, other regions including Batken (Kadamjay raion) and Bishkek. Of the first 49 community discussions, 65 percent were held in Osh Oblast, 15 percent in Jalalabad Oblast and 4 percent in Batken Oblast.

D. Staff

The executive director of YoO served as the project director supported by a project assistant for the first 20 months. The project assistant took over as the project director after the project director left her position. SFCG provided the project manager, finance associate and, in the final year, a communications and monitoring officer. Three part-time media experts and three part-time community facilitators served with KO. The project director, project manager, the media experts and the facilitators constituted the project team. The vice president of programmes (the then-chief programming officer) and director of training was involved in training and providing strategic advice, particularly in the first year of the program. Sawn Dunning, the SFCG director of training, provided the facilitation training to the CD facilitators.

E. Principal activities per project component

Capacity building component

- Training in Common Ground reporting and conflict analysis for media professionals
- Partnership discussions with key directors/editors
- Creation of a training manual on Common Ground reporting
- Ongoing coaching for young journalists
- Training in facilitation for the Youth of Osh staff and project facilitators
- Three-month Youth of Osh Media School

Reporting component

- Production of Common Ground media products by the participating journalists
- Production of issue analyses

Outreach component

- Creation of a project website
- Collaborative problem-solving session in local communities and roundtables
- Kabar Ordo branding and publicity

Monitoring and evaluation component

- Baseline evaluation
- Performance monitoring
- Mid-term review
- Final evaluation

F. Revised major activities

- 8 trainings in Common Ground Reporting and conflict analysis for 50 young journalists and 4 Youth of Osh staff
- Partnership discussions with the editors of key departments within 10 media outlets
- Ongoing coaching for 50 young journalists during 18 months
- One SFCG training manual on Common Ground Reporting adapted to Kyrgyzstan's context, translated into Kyrgyz and Uzbek and published (500 copies)
- One training for 4 Youth of Osh staff and KO facilitators in debate facilitation
- Production and dissemination of 474 conflict-sensitive 'Common Ground' media products
- Creation of one website for the dissemination of CG reports and conflict analyzes
- 62 collaborative problem-solving sessions in local communities in Osh, Jalalabad and Batken oblasts
- Six TV and six radio roundtables with the participation of national decision-makers

G. Developments and modifications over the course of the project

As with most projects, and particularly new projects and for SFCG's first experience in a new country, project designs evolve and morph as staff gain experience, contexts change, and realities are better understood. The first two modifications below were captured in the midterm review (MTR) and hence are simply listed here. The others will be discussed further in the body of the report.

- Removal of the early-warning component including the quarterly analyses and workshops
- A reduction in the number of expected activities, i.e. from 72 to 62 community events
- A reduction in the number of participants per community event
- Increasing obliquity -- a more indirect approach to the issue of ethnic tensions
- A shift away from debate to collaborative problem solving
- An issue-based rather than community-based approach
- Shift toward issue analysis in the absence of formal comprehensive conflict analyses

2.4 Evaluation Methodology

In order to build evaluation capacity SFCG, Shiva K. Dhungana, a regional staff member of the Institutional Learning Team, served on the evaluation team. Shiva also participated in defining the evaluation objectives, the major lines of inquiry, and the evaluation plan and in select data collection activities, the analysis and reporting. This provided need continuity as Shiva also

conducted the midterm evaluation.

SFCG developed the key review questions and chose to focus on relevance, effectiveness and impact. The comprehensive baseline survey carried out by an external actor and the midterm evaluation done by Shiva, who is SFCG's Asia regional DM&E specialist, were available for reference and comparison and have been used wherever possible.

The final evaluation was primarily based on qualitative data collection around interviews of the participants of the community discussions/roundtables, participating journalists, media directors, media experts/coaches, community dialogue facilitators, participants of Youth of Osh Media School, SFCG's program manager, SFCG's country director and other staff, relevant staff of partner organizations and representatives of three peacebuilding organizations operating in Southern of Kyrgyzstan. A total of 40 people were interviewed. Data collection also involved observation of a preparatory meeting, a full-day journalists meeting, observation of two community discussions, and a wrap-up and reflection meeting with the team, Youth of Osh Director and SFCG program staff. The interviews were done at different locations of Osh and Jalalabad oblasts. No control or comparison groups were used.

In order to bound the evaluation and make it manageable, the evaluation team proposed dropping several of the evaluation questions, particularly on the section relating to impact, as well as minor modifications to the content of other questions. The team also organized them in order of priority. Please see annex for the list of key evaluation questions finalized by the evaluation team in consultation with SFCG Kyrgyzstan Team.

While the midterm evaluation focused on assessing the effectiveness of media products in achieving targeted results and the enhanced capacity of participating journalists on journalism sensitivities, the final evaluation has paid more attention to the process, result and effectiveness of the community events. The two reports combined provide a comprehensive picture of the project over time.

The broad geographical scope and large number of events (474 media products from 10 media outlets, and 62 community events) made it impossible for such a small evaluation team to cover everything, everywhere in such a limited timeframe. Thus, a variety of data collection and analysis strategies were applied.

The evaluation examined the content of a small number of the media products to determine the extent to which SFCG achieved its goal of increasing the capacity of young journalists in conflict transformation and media in conflict-sensitive reporting. The evaluation employed an analytical guide/checklist developed by SFCG for project monitoring that included criteria of conflict-sensitive journalism. The evaluation intended to sample one Common Ground product from each of the 18 participating young journalists still actively involved with KO at the time of the data collection and compare it to a piece they had prepared before or at the beginning of their involvement with KO. We were unable to obtain samples of prior work. We focused on most recent CG products because these are the most distant in time from the initial training and support and may provide some sense of the durability of the training. The project only furnished five recent transcripts in time for analysis.

During the facilitators' interviews the evaluation team explored:

- issue selection and framing, convening, agenda setting, etc.
- factors influencing success and failure of community events
- prospects for subsequent independent application of processes, skills and knowledge demonstrated over the course of the program

Semi-structured interviews with media actors touched upon, but were not limited to:

- the general media environment in Southern Kyrgyzstan today
- developments or trends that they see emerging in the media environment
- what needs to happen for inter-ethnic reconciliation to be considered a safe topic for the media in Southern Kyrgyzstan

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with select community event participants focusing on how CG products contributed to their understanding of the issue, outcomes and subsequent independent applications of the process. Participants were also asked if they think a similar process would be effective in reconciling ethnic groups and bringing closure to the violent events of 2010.

Two ranking sheets on changes in the media environment and relevance of the issues covered were completed individually and discussed in plenary of a workshop forum with the project team, under the supervision of the evaluator.

The questions for the final evaluation extended the scope and timeframe of the project. The TOR asked, "What knowledge and skills has the project given to participants to ensure effective and independent application of those [conflict transformation] skills in the future?" Future in this case can be defined as post-initial event. This begged the question: What are the instances of independent subsequent applications of demonstrated processes and skills to date? Without actual examples of independent subsequent application, the second part of the evaluation question remains a hypothetical argument – rather than one based on empirical evidence, something that can be observed.

The evaluation assessed four community-based events, and observed two others. The sampling was not intended to be representative. We sought to identify information-rich cases that might help SFCG understand what contributes to subsequent, independent application of the processes, skills and knowledge developed over the course of the project. We focused on one issue of national concern (the customs union), one issue within the national arena of extractives but played out locally (coal mining), an issue of identity (head coverings for Muslim girls in school), an issue of governance (parental/school responsibilities around absenteeism), and one that we could actually observe as it coincided with the evaluation (passports for foreign-born spouses of Kyrgyzstani citizens).

Data analysis methods included:

- process tracing – how different issues receive different levels of attention/coverage
- media content analysis - comparison with CG evaluation criteria
- fit between peacebuilding needs and types of issues covered in CG products

- comparison of community-based processes with good practices in public conversations and multi-party mediation

Additional questions that came up during the analysis were raised with KO staff by e-mail. We engaged a peacebuilding evaluator who provided a critical friend review of the draft report. SFCG and YoO, in particular former staff from both organizations, were invited to comment, offer additional information and evidence and refine the findings in ways that improved accuracy and utility.

Limitations of the evaluation

Despite our efforts, limitations of this evaluation are numerous and the threats to data validity are significant. Some of these are inherent to any social science research at this level. Others were more logistical and organizational, and could have been avoided with longer and more thorough preparation, additional time in country, and better monitoring data up front and over the course of the project.

The selection of whom to interview may have been biased toward those likely to give a positive account. Participants in the community events were stakeholders, had already been selected when initial invitations to the event were extended, and were willing and able to speak with us. We did not have enough time to pursue nonparticipating stakeholders who had not been invited or who did not attend.

Lack of a formal written conflict analysis hindered assessing relevance. Although the evaluation team was able to draw on the baseline and an independent conflict analysis, it was difficult to understand how and why the team selected its priority issues. This was further complicated by the lack of documentation around the issue identification process.

Although SFCG tried to find experienced national evaluators, the evaluators selected were both foreigners and their inability to speak any of the local languages greatly hampered the evaluation. We could not directly access media products, meaning radio and TV products had to first be transcribed and then translated, which should have been done prior to arrival in country and instead filtered in as the draft report was being written. Nor could we directly access the reports prepared by the media and facilitation experts. This invariably contributed to a loss of data fidelity stemming from translation, both written and verbal. Having a national on the team would have helped with background material, reinforced cultural competencies, and provided for more rapid document review and more efficient reviews of media content.

The lack of a good monitoring system from the beginning of the project limited the amount of data available for use in the evaluation. The project monitoring plan included the transcription and translation into English of the five most promising media products every quarter, but this was not done. The Common Ground evaluation criteria were never used. In the absence of these two important sets of monitoring data, the evaluation team had to backtrack and start from scratch.

To address these concerns as much as possible, each finding is supported by evidence from multiple sources. Information stemming from a single source is noted as such. Findings are based on information from the document reviews and the semi-structured interviews and/or direct observation.

3.0 Key Findings

3.1 Relevance

In a summative evaluation such as this, the relevance question differs slightly from that posed when considering just the design, which focuses on goals and objectives. For this exercise the question becomes, “Were the project’s actual interventions and achievements relevant to the issues faced by the media and the target communities in Southern Kyrgyzstan?” A large part of KO’s work went into identifying what those issues were.

The evaluation was tasked with addressing the following questions about relevance:

- Are the project’s stated interventions and achievements relevant to the issues being faced by the media in Southern Kyrgyzstan?
- Are the project’s stated interventions and achievements relevant to the issues being faced by target communities in Southern Kyrgyzstan?
- Based on the project experience, what are the most relevant issues that need to be addressed in order to promote peace, harmony and good governance in Southern Kyrgyzstan?
- How did the project adapt to changes in context?

Issues facing the target communities⁸ in Southern Kyrgyzstan

Finding R1: The lack of a comprehensive conflict analysis early in the project left open the questions of what the issues were, how they should be identified, and which among them were more strategic.

Evidence

Documented conflict analyses are generally considered essential in project design, the identification of issues and stakeholders, and strategies for intervention. Neither SFCG nor YoO understood the value of the quarterly written conflict analyses or that they were its intended audience and primary users. Each thought the other should complete the conflict analysis.

The baseline provides extensive and credible information on inter-ethnic relations, disaggregated by location and ethnicity, but does not engage in comprehensive conflict analysis. Beyond the baseline survey there were no formal community-based processes for engaging fixed geographic

⁸ The project did not work with specific geographic communities in the classic development sense, where some are included and others are not. Rather it worked in general project areas where the actual participants varied from one issue to another.

communities in ongoing conflict analyses and peacebuilding needs assessments. The project was not bound to its original project areas and expanded to other regions in the south where the issues were relevant. Issues came to the attention of KO originally through the facilitators and increasingly through the journalists as their capacity developed.

As illustrated in the table below, KO criteria for issue selection were a mix of newsroom priorities, strategic peacebuilding concerns as well as an appreciation of young journalists' limitations. They are in no particular order.

Issue Selection Criteria

<i>Criteria mentioned by different members of the team to select themes</i>	<i>Criteria commonly found in peacebuilding projects</i>
• Reflects some greater social issue/ big enough/priority to common society • Involves public opinion • Involves conflict-prone areas • Data can be obtained • There are prospects for solutions • Covers something not usually raised i.e., issues in the South that went unheeded by the media and the central government and have the potential for conflict or violation • Prevention of conflict • Within the team's competence • Conflicts due to bad information or poor quality services • Opportunities to model non-adversarial approaches to conflict	• Addresses root causes of conflict • Addresses structural violence • Significant risk of widespread escalation of violence or spill over • Potential for manipulating identity groups into destructive behaviours • Deteriorating relationships, isolation and marginalization over time • Potential to advance peace and/or reconciliation processes • Opportunities to model non-adversarial approaches to conflict

Once the team identified issues it wanted to address, the project employed two types of issue-specific analyses. For six issues there were analytical reports that served to inform journalists, staff and decision-makers. Originally these were to emerge from the participating journalists' inquiries around these issues. Given the weak starting point of the journalists, the program incorporated in-depth analyses by external experts using a KO template. The report on microfinance, although dense and somewhat difficult to read, was a very detailed and comprehensive overview of state of play of microfinance. The second type of analysis was found in the facilitators' reports. The report on headscarves in schools was prepared by one of the facilitators and was thorough, insightful and convincing. There was also ongoing undocumented analysis during regular project team meetings.

Implications

While having a conflict analysis is useful and important for strategic peacebuilding, the biggest benefit goes to those who actually conduct the analysis, as it tends to enrich and deepen their

understanding of the dynamics in play. It can also be an effective team-building exercise. In this case, YoO, SFCG and the team missed an important opportunity to anchor their choice of issues in a formal written conflict analysis that they themselves produced in collaboration with issue experts.

Despite the fact that issues related to ethnicity and religion are a root cause of conflict, USAID encouraged YoO to proceed with caution on issues of ethnicity and religion, considering these too sensitive to address directly. This stance was corroborated by USAID during a meeting with the evaluation team.

The team did engage periodically in informal conflict analysis and issue prioritization.⁹ The process largely focused on emergent issues, which kept the project very timely. However, the process tended to favor of national economic issues and current events over fundamental causes of conflict.

One criterion resonated well with many of the issues journalists were raising: conflicts due to bad information or poor quality governmental services. The nexus of state and citizen responsibility was at the heart of much of the content tackled by KO. For some journalists this, rather than conflict-sensitive journalism, became synonymous with the KO brand. When asked if KO principles would continue after the close of the project, one person we spoke with said that it was already continuing and offered as evidence an article in the Osh Shamy newspaper on 17 January 2014 with a headline that captured the essence of many of the issues covered by KO, “Cleaning the streets, Who is Responsible?”

Finding R2: The project’s actual interventions vary in relevance to conflict in Southern Kyrgyzstan. Generally speaking, the major issues addressed in the project were relevant to emergent presenting issues and to proximate causes, and less so to root causes of violent conflict in Kyrgyzstan.

Evidence

The following table compares the main problems identified by the baseline and the root causes of conflict identified in a Mercy Corps analysis in 2010.

KO Baseline, 2012	Mercy Corps Conflict Analysis, 2010
Divisive politics and manipulation of the population by elites	Violent political transition
Corruption and governance problems	Corruption and patronage
	Ethnic nationalism, discrimination, exclusion

⁹ It is unlikely that a conflict analysis in 2011 would have foreseen the issue of the Customs Union. Having a conflict analysis does not prohibit a project from adding new issues that emerge.

Lack of opportunities for youth and declining educational standards	
	Impunity and weak exercise of justice
A variety of issues related to economic development more broadly	

Combined, these issues provide a sense of the types of issues the project should address. The project need not address all of these or even address them directly. However, the project should articulate and document the linkages between the issues selected and a specific root cause of conflict.

The Mercy Corps study went on to identify peacebuilding needs. The first two peacebuilding needs align closely with many of the issues addressed by KO:

- promote nonviolent means of civic engagement and dissent
- promote transparency and integrity
- strengthen and support existing resources for peace – human resource, youth, processes, value identity without discrimination or exclusion
- support closure to the events of 2010

In the workshop we asked the KO team to individually indicate whether key issues covered by the project were related to root causes of conflict, proximate causes, triggers or were not clearly related to peace in Kyrgyzstan. There was considerable diversity in their responses. The following map illustrates the evaluation team's understanding of the relative scope in terms of people affected and relevance of the primary issues covered by KO's community events.

<i>People effected (estimated)</i>	<i>Relevance Unclear</i>	<i>Proximate cause or trigger</i>	<i>Key Driving Factor/ Root Cause</i>
<100,000	Cargo 200 (repatriation of deceased citizens) Basic services (heat, health) Passports for foreign-born spouses	Headscarves Land & housing	
100,000 – 1,000,000	Education & upbringing of children	Microcredit & finance Extractives (coal and gold mining)	Border issues (markets, mobility, economic migrants)
>1,000,000			Customs Union (markets, livelihoods, energy, borders)

Although the baseline disaggregated responses by sex, overall the project lacked a formal written gender analysis (either of its own or borrowed). The composite percentage of male and female participants in the first 49 community events was 45 percent women and 55 percent men. The issues of passports for foreign-born spouses of Kyrgyzstani citizens and head coverings for girls in school are issues of importance to women and men, however they do not specifically look at or address the differences in power and equity between women and men.

Implications

Without a common understanding of the root causes of conflict, each new issue has to be considered from scratch. There were certainly a number of media products that were not approved by the media experts due to questionable relevance or that had to undergo substantial revisions due to poor quality of journalism before they could be submitted. This is not surprising given the low capacity of the participating young journalists. There were also some issues that made it to the level of community discussions whose relevance to conflict in Kyrgyzstan was questionable. The 20-plus-year-old issue of passports for foreign-born spouses of Kyrgyzstani citizens¹⁰, while a very compelling humanitarian concern and arguably discriminatory, is not a key driving factor of violent conflict in Kyrgyzstan. Nor is the Cargo 200 issue concerning the return of the remains of Kyrgyzstani citizens who died in Russia. Not all issues involving frustrations with government have the same potential to incite violence. Given the small numbers of people affected, neither of these issues has the critical mass to escalate.

The baseline evaluation study concludes, “While ethnic tension is not high, social tension and socioeconomic problems are rife. Thus, there is a lot of space for the project to achieve its goals of building collaborative problem-solving skills among target communities and improving the quality of the media without necessarily focusing on ethnic conflict.” Although tensions may not have been high at the time of the baseline, and there was fatigue around the issue of ethnic relations, additional work is needed if the cycle of manipulation of identity during political transition is to be broken. The midterm evaluation gathered information around the prevailing fear and insecurity among people that led to unwillingness among people to talk about inter-ethnic relations. This was also corroborated by one of the interviewees of a peacebuilding NGO during the final evaluation.

Where the project did elect to work on identity issues, it was often intentionally in very indirect ways. Complaints of favoritism or discrimination in some cases were unfounded and dispelled with accurate information. The issue of head coverings for Muslim girls in school brought together atheists, orthodox Muslims and non-practicing Muslims. During discussions about the quality of education, concerns were raised about radical groups manipulating students who were absent from school.

The project responded to violent or destructive forms of protest, as for example in the cases of microfinance and gold mining. To some degree this is inevitable when working on the news. The challenge is to address these emergent needs without losing sight of the key driving forces identified from a deeper analysis.

Threats to livelihoods appear to pose the biggest risks of unrest and violence. The two largest-scale issues, borders and trade, are rooted in Kyrgyzstan’s independence from the Soviet Union, whereas microfinance problems are more recent and indigenous.

Issues relating to the media

¹⁰ During the community discussion observed by the evaluation team, participants showed USSR passports issued in 1988, which they were still carrying with them as they have not received a Kyrgyz passport to replace it.

There have been numerous efforts to improve the quality of journalism in Kyrgyzstan. For example, in 2011 Saferworld produced and disseminated throughout Southern Kyrgyzstan a pocket guide to good journalism. While necessary and important, it had no explicit references to conflict-sensitive journalism. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe established a Media Complaints Commission, a self-regulating body for media. The commission offers an alternative to court for those who believe they have been wronged by the media. The School for Peacemaking and Media Technology offered training in “peacemaking journalism” for reporters from Southern Kyrgyzstan. The Institute for War and Peace Reporting, Interpeace, and the International Journalists’ Network have all supported media work in Kyrgyzstan following the June 2010 events.

KO distinguished itself from these initiatives in two fundamental ways. First, journalist formation involved both training and extended accompaniment and mentoring by the media experts. Secondly, for key issues, media coverage was reinforced by community events that demonstrated the importance of accurate information and multiple perspectives in collaborative problem solving, which in turn generated additional media coverage providing voice to the people, particularly the marginalized ones. These community discussions provided a unique opportunity for citizens and government officials to interact face to face and try to solve some of the issues pending for extended periods.

Finding R3: Common Ground principles introduced by KO addressed a number of shortcomings in the media field in Southern Kyrgyzstan including accuracy, balance and impartiality.

Evidence

A 2012 monitoring and content analysis of 24 media outlets with support from the OSCE Centre in Bishkek found the following:

- publications containing intolerance, hatred and other forms of social aggression
- failure to comply with the principles of accuracy and objectivity -- publication of false information
- unjustified identification of persons suspected in crimes
- lack of balance and impartiality
- political advertisement and discrediting
- violating secret and immunity of private life, except for cases when the facts concern public interest
- plagiarism

In the same study, editors explained some of the causes of these conditions:

- lack of qualified journalists and rapid staff turnover
- pressure from politicians who own media outlets to engage in information wars
- lack of time, resources and knowledge
- disappointment over lack of government response or consequence
- use of sensationalism to enhance marketing

From the media consumers' point of view, the baseline evaluation concluded that "the population is tired of overtly political content, and there will be significant appetite for reporting that reflects everyday lives in Kyrgyzstan's south and focuses on socioeconomic issues." This was certainly born out with the wide public interest in gold mining and the customs union.

KO did not set out to address all of the above issues. KO sought to promote balanced, conflict-sensitive journalism, bring in the voices of all stakeholders, and set up a quality control gateway through the experts' review process.

Implications

Transforming the media from a vehicle of hate into a vehicle for peace requires more time and resources and additional reinforcing strategies than were available to KO. The needs described above were and largely remain substantial. This raises the question of how different NGOs working on conflict transformation and media collaborate and coordinate with each other. This was not raised in the ToR or the MTR and hence is not addressed here.

Adaptability to changes in context

The project areas remained relatively stable over the duration of the project. There were a number of shifts in the context:

- change in Mayor of Osh
- decreasing confidence in NGOs
- increasing national interest in extractives in general
- rapid turnover in journalists in the project

Project staff were well aware of these developments and adjusted where needed. KO covered extractives, both gold and coal. All media partners experienced a revolving door of young journalists. The long accompaniment provided by KO may have led some participating journalists to remain in their positions longer than their nonparticipating peers. The evaluation did not investigate the reasons for high turnover.

Participant perceptions

Finding R4: All but one of the community event participants interviewed indicated that someone from all of the relevant stakeholder groups was present at the community event they attended.

Evidence

The evaluation was unable to identify and contact project beneficiaries and focused instead on project participants. One might benefit from information generated by the project without ever knowing of the project.

Of the community event participants we spoke with, most men and women stated that the issue

at hand during the community discussion or the roundtable was the most important issue for peace in Kyrgyzstan at the time.

Implications

The project relied on media coverage of community events as a means of making known what transpired to those who were not invited or could not attend. While the community events tried to address the problem in-depth with a smaller number of people in a dedicated event, the media helped reach the wider public and generate awareness on issues concerning people in South Kyrgyzstan. The two approaches have complemented each other well wherever they were combined.

3.2 Effectiveness

The evaluation was tasked with answering the following questions about effectiveness:

1. What are the major outputs and outcomes of the project?
2. To what extent has the project been successful in:
 - increasing the capacity of young journalists in conflict-sensitive reporting?
 - increasing the capacity of local leaders in conflict transformation?
 - demonstrating collaborative problem solving through its media outreach and events?
 - improving access to information about conflict issues?
3. What knowledge and skills has the project given to participants to ensure effective and independent application of those skills in the future?
4. What major factors are contributing to the achievement or nonachievement of objectives?

Major outputs and outcomes

Finding E1: The major actual outputs and outcomes align with the plan as modified over the course of the project.

Evidence

KO media products were fairly evenly spread across the different types of media: 33 percent were carried by radio, 27 percent by TV, 26 percent by print media, followed by 14 percent by Internet. The production by media outlet, type and language are detailed in the following table.

Media Production

Media Partner	Number of Media Products	Type	Uzbek Language
Channel 7	31	TV	
JTR	31	TV	
Osh TV	31	TV	
Bashat TV	31	TV	
OTRK (talk shows)	6	TV & Radio	
Yntymak ¹¹	97	Radio	14
Demgedem Media production studio	59	Radio	
Aylakyikaty	31	Print	
Osh Shamy	92	Print	30
YoO media school alumni & freelancers	65	Online media	
Total	474		44

Even for a demonstration project, if we look exclusively at any given media outlet (excluding OTRK¹²), the monthly production per media outlet varies considerably. If we assume the media outlets were producing KO products over 20 months, then the lowest production was 1.15 products/month and the highest was 4.85 products/month. Unfortunately there is no known tipping point at which we might conclude that the number of products was sufficient to achieve the results sought. Another approach would be to look for increasing conflict sensitivity in media products not sponsored by KO.

Although the project met its media production goals, information on outcomes from those products is anecdotal and stems largely from unsolicited audience feedback to specific individual journalists or media outlets. Unfortunately, the project did not systematically document and collect unsolicited feedback about individual media products or its analytical reports. Nor did it specifically solicit feedback from selective audiences, or targeted users, such as policymakers and policy implementers.

¹¹ Yntymak, in its “Normalizer” show, used a segmented format where every day a portion of information was given on a single subject covered that week. The total word count for all of the segments combined in one week was roughly equivalent to the word count of other products. Therefore, for the purposes of the evaluation, four to five brief installments of the “Normalizer,” which were spread over the course of the week, were considered one product.

¹² The talk shows were cumulative products/events that drew on prior media products and community events and hence are excluded from the production frequency calculation.

<i>Major Outputs</i>	<i>Major Outcomes</i>
50+ face-to-face collaborative problem-solving and/or information exchange events were facilitated and supported with conflict- sensitive media/information Duty bearers, local and national and including some from Bishkek, directly heard from citizens and other stakeholders about the challenges they have in accessing services during participation in the community events 474 of media products 6 analytical reports: microfinance, mining, housing, the Customs Union, borders and education	Increased professionalism among participating journalists. Media exposure, information and discussions were positioned to contribute to policy considerations in microfinance legislation, and regional trade policy (Customs Union) Unfounded claims of discrimination were addressed with accurate information Citizens learned through direct participation in the events how to better access government services and the limitations of those services

Implications

Production is different from dissemination. One product may be used for multiple broadcasts over a variety of time slots over a number of days or weeks. Repetition and timing are important factors in assessing the influence of media. To our knowledge, the project did not track dates, repeated broadcasts and onward dissemination of KO media products.

In the absence of performance monitoring, data and feedback, staff are left to rely on reflection, past experiences and previous successes. While these too are important, particularly in a project like KO where the media experts and facilitators are so strong, monitoring data on progress toward results can provide important additional insights. Otherwise, the focus tends to remain on production quotas, as were raised in the MTR.

Conflict transformation capacity

Journalist capacity in conflict-sensitive journalism

Finding E2: All reports indicate that the level of professionalism of participating journalists has improved. However, a review of the content in actual media products suggests that the uptake of conflict sensitivity may have been less comprehensive.

Evidence

Each media product was intended to be ranked by the reviewing media expert according to the criteria for evaluating the application of CG principles and serve to monitor overall progress and continuing education needs. This important tool was dropped from the project, which effectively

eliminated documented monitoring of journalists' (individually and collectively) progress in assimilating CG principles into their practice.

The evaluation team was provided with five translated transcripts of KO media products. The sample is far too small to make any generalizations about the overall basket of products.

One product on taxing informal petty traders in jewelry did an exceptional job in capturing the participants' humanization of the other. Unfortunately, the piece ends with a summary by one of the authorities, who essentially relapses into restating his initial position, undoing the gains made through the process. Another product on shared water resources for irrigation did an excellent job of cataloging all the measures already taken by another project to counter anticipated future shortages, presumably as a model for other communities facing similar challenges.

One of the media products reviewed about school absenteeism was not conflict-sensitive. Key stakeholders were missing and in their absence those present engaged in stereotyping them. Questions asked to the primary stakeholders were not relevant to the issue. The journalist persisted in finger-pointing, asking three times "who is to blame." The product did, however, a good job of identifying a wide range of possible solutions.

Another media product was conflict-adverse – apparently, there was no conflict. It describes situations where old school structures have burned down or are inadequate for current needs. It also described the plans of the Ministry of Education to replace all traditional structures. It is the kind of coverage the Ministry of Education might include in its own promotional material.

The few products we analyzed provided impartial descriptions of the issues involved, engaged multiple points of view and identified potential solutions. We found less consistency in terms of relationship building, and consideration of future developments, potential scenarios and backup planning -- common considerations in dispute resolution and mediation. The issue of relevance has already been addressed.

KO staff pointed out that the media experts did not have final say and media products may have been altered or edited (for better or worse) by the editor of the corresponding media outlet. One of the journalists said, "I did a lot of research on the mayoral election and prepared an article, but the editor went through my article and said that he cannot allow it to be published as the research exposed the weaknesses of one of the candidates, who he likes."

Implications

Due to translation constraints, we were not able to examine the original draft media products prior to the media experts' review and the improvements and modifications to which they contributed. It would be irresponsible to make generalizations from this limited sample. We can say, however, that many of the shortcomings found in our analysis would have likely been found by the media experts, too, had they rigorously applied the same SFCG monitoring tool. Periodic consolidation of ongoing evaluations of media products may have helped to identify needs for continuing education in a more timely way.

Leaders' capacity in conflict transformation

Finding E3: Although a demonstration of conflict transformation is a necessary preliminary step for people to become aware that conflict can be transformed non-violently, demonstration alone was insufficient to result in a change in conflict transformation skills.

Evidence

The role of community leaders was to assist in identifying stakeholders and/or represent a stakeholder group in a community event. KO did not provide them with training, coaching or other formative assistance. At best they received some background information from the facilitators to aid in convening the right people. SFCG explained, “We eliminated a whole series of meetings (should have been 6) where the stakeholders would have worked together on conflict issues. When we moved to a thematic model rather than early warning, this was just too many meetings.”

Whereas journalists were trained and coached over months, community leaders were left largely to their own devices or what related information they obtained from the media or their position. Many received invitations to events two or three days in advance of the event. None of the interviewed community leaders, however, felt they needed more time to prepare, as they felt adequately immersed in the issue at hand. An individual community leader's involvement with the project was often limited to one event or one issue.

Beyond attending a community event and any preparatory meetings or phone conversations with the facilitators, KO offered no other mechanism for increasing the conflict transformation skills of participating community leaders. We asked 15 participants if their skill levels had changed as a result of the project. Only one participant stated that she felt her skill in facilitation had increased due to what she had experienced as a participant in a community event.

Implications

Projects requiring community leaders to acquire and practice conflict transformation skills need extensive formative investments, akin to the investments made in KO journalists. Issue-based programming complicates matters since the leaders involved often differ by issue. The “community” in practice is a diverse group of stakeholders rather than neighbors. Community-based programming (such as that carried out by ACTED and UNDP) on the other hand focuses on specific leaders and continues to work with them as different issues arise over time. Both approaches have benefits and challenges. The intent here is not to value one over the other but simply to distinguish them and describe KO's approach in practice. Leaders in the project area, whether coming from different stakeholder groups or representing community-based constituents, both suffer from too little knowledge about many of the issues covered by the project and lack skills in developing solutions that address all stakeholders' interests.

Demonstrating collaborative problem solving

Finding E4: The project demonstrated third-party facilitation of constructive exchanges of information and perspectives as well as solution exploration. However, the two-to-three hour timeframe and single-session format were not always conducive to comprehensive problem solving.

Evidence

The emergency housing issue in Osh resulted in residents and the mayor's office agreeing that a yet to be identified, third-party investor offered the best solution and that they would engage any investors who showed interest in the property. This put the onus of responsibility for a solution on an unspecified party who was not present during the initial community discussion. To the credit of the participants' effort to follow up on the proposed solution, at a subsequent meeting two potential investors floated proposals that the residents could not afford and hence were turned down. Since the appointment of the new mayor, neither the residents nor the new mayor have pursued the issue or returned to explore alternative solutions.

In Nookat, rather than come to an Oblast-wide decision on Muslim girls' use of head coverings in school, participants in the community event determined that this would be negotiated by parents and administrators in each school until such time as there were clear directions coming from Ministry of Education. This decentralization essentially delegated the decision to people who had not had the advantage of the community discussion, including opinions of experts, since authorities and parents from all the concerned schools who would need to negotiate in their respective schools were not present in the event.

The evaluation team observed two community events involving passports for foreign-born spouses of Kyrgyzstani citizens. Both events resembled a public service outreach event rather than a mediation or collaborative problem-solving process. Participants explained their circumstances and asked for advice. The passport office's representative explained recent changes in the process, how to access her office, and the timeframes people should expect for responses. In Aravan, little facilitation was needed and little was provided. Furthermore, the passport office's representative was not authorized to actually provide solutions, i.e., adjudicate applications, as a commission in Bishkek does this.

Other events, such as the mining community discussions, were reportedly more contentious and required advanced facilitation skill. Some but not all of the more volatile issues were wisely managed by a pair of facilitators. In discussions with the team and participants we did hear descriptions of standard good facilitation practices including use of a public agenda, mutualizing,¹³ active listening and issue reframing.

¹³ Mutualizing is the expression of a shared problem or interest

These constraints in actual problem solving in no way diminish the importance, value and necessity of facilitated information exchanges as essential prerequisites to solution storming and problem solving. Preparations alone often represent the bulk of the workload in any multi-party collaborative problem-solving process. They can require Herculean organizing efforts as well as the expenditure of the facilitator's own relational capital.

Implications

In a three-hour, one-off, multi-party collaborative event with significant numbers of participants, there is rarely enough time to fully explore multiple potential solutions, much less ground-test them for feasibility. A sentiment we heard repeatedly from staff and participants was “the initiative should work as a continuing process rather than a one-time event.” In multi-party mediation, multiple sessions are common and anticipated. Subsequent roundtables and talk shows provided additional problem-solving opportunities, but out of logistical necessity did not always involve all of the participants from multi-site community discussions.

Deferring solutions to other stakeholders who were not present during the community discussion essentially allows those who were present to ignore their responsibility in the matter. Where this happens, the facilitators should also ask participants what they can do and/or schedule additional sessions when those who were not present can attend.

Two KO staff and six community event participants expressed either a concern for or interest in follow-up sessions to either learn what had happened or to continue to explore solutions. Two community participants mentioned reporting back to their groups or associations. While the community events are innovative and novel in Southern Kyrgyzstan, repeated events without corresponding changes or action could add to the level of frustration and could conceivably become a grievance in its own right. This has yet to happen, as most KO processes are still very new and have led to a general sense of improvement if not resolution.

Subsequent independent application of the process

To address the evaluation question, “What knowledge and skills has the project given to participants to ensure effective and independent application of those skills in the future?” we asked participants if they were familiar with any subsequent applications of the process independent from YoO and KO. Some of the events were over a year old, providing ample opportunity for “future” or subsequent applications. We assume that the likelihood of subsequent independent applications diminishes over time.

Finding E5: The evaluation found little evidence of subsequent independent applications of the overall collaborative problem-solving process modeled by KO. Obstacles included resources, skills and perceptions of partiality.

Evidence

Eleven out of 15 respondents were not aware of any subsequent independent applications of KO processes. One respondent spoke of a similar event that predated the KO event. Another respondent actually attended two subsequent “roundtables on religious education and crime in school.” Unfortunately, she did not recall who organized these events, but these were not KO events. At least two respondents in Karassu said that they plan to organize follow-up events related to education and upbringing of the children and the programme has already been incorporated in the school calendar. However, these follow-up plans are yet to be implemented.

Respondents representing organizations that might be in a position to apply the collaborative problem-solving process were asked if their agency could undertake this kind of process. Both a trade association and a state agency did not believe their organizations had adequate resources. One ministerial representative maintained that the ministry in Bishkek regularly organized events like those organized by KO. One woman indicated that she could organize similar events if she were trained and provided with a facilitation manual. Finally, one respondent from a state agency reflected that the organizers of such events are often suspected of pursuing their own interests and few, including her agency, would be perceived as being impartial.

KO staff were aware of other events and community-based exchanges in the project area sponsored by other NGOs, such as the Asia Foundation.

One of the media products included in the content analysis contained the following vignette:

*To put an end to water disputes between the neighboring villages, we have initiated to organize a roundtable, says Mohigul Borubaeva, leader of the local community. According to her, she has participated in the seminars and roundtables in other communities. And that experience was helpful to organize her own. They have invited elders, local leaders, youth and representatives of the local administration. The start of the discussion was not easy. And there were many people who could not keep their temper. At the end, patience has won.*¹⁴

Unfortunately, we were unable to validate the information and learn who organized the original roundtables mentioned, but it was not KO.

Implications

The project invested very little in preparing communities and service agencies to organize and run their own collaborative problem-solving processes. Facilitation training, while greatly appreciated, was limited primarily to KO staff. KO facilitators were highly qualified and capable mid-career professionals. There were two facilitators-in-training, as opposed to 50+ journalists-in-training. There were no designated community/state agency partners (i.e., the Office of the Ombudsman and the OCK -- the provincial-level bodies for conflict management and mitigation) along the lines of the partner media outlets. The capacity-building strategies of the media

¹⁴ K. Kambarbekov, N. Jeentaeva, “We wish we would not have water related conflict,” Aiy! Akyikat newspaper, No.1-2, January 23, 2014. Page 6.

component were not mirrored in the community outreach component. Consequently, participants have not and are unlikely to initiate the collaborative problem-solving processes modeled by KO.

Improvements in access to information

The project design anticipated that, “as a result [of KO media products], policymakers and citizens from the Osh and Jalalabad oblasts will have increased access to conflict-sensitive news coverage and early warning analysis.¹⁵”

Finding E6: The project has been successful in making 474 conflict-sensitive media products available to audiences throughout the project area and in some cases nationally. However, neither the project nor the evaluation team was able to gather evidence as to what extent they were accessed and considered by policymakers.

Evidence

Access to information may be influenced by a wide range of factors including: number of media outlets, broadcast hours in the day for TV and radio, subscription rates, availability of products, frequency of replays, duration/length of the product, internet speed, broadcast range and coverage, time of day aired, language, etc. The project strategy for increasing access to conflict-sensitive journalism was to make available 500 conflict-sensitive media products.

Given the project’s singular strategy for increasing access, the evaluation question “to what extent has the project been successful in improving access to information about conflict issues?” becomes a matter of substantiating outputs.

Implications

Availability of a media product does not guarantee that any given policymaker will actually access it, much less agree with it or use it. As one person we spoke with said, “The mass media is trying to discuss problem in the form of talk shows. Good things are being discussed, but there is no change in the decisions.”

Without a denominator (the total number of media products relating to conflict in Southern Kyrgyzstan during the project timeframe), it is difficult to weigh the significance of 474 media products over the 790 days of the project. We do not know how many media products relating to conflict were produced and disseminated by each of the participating media outlets and how many were produced by nonparticipating outlets nor how many were produced by all the media in the south during the same time period.

The evaluation was not able to address the deeper questions of actions stemming from increased access, such as:

¹⁵ The inappropriateness of the early warning component and its subsequent removal from the project was addressed in the MTR and hence is not repeated here.

- Did targeted policymakers and policy implementers use information provided by the KO media products? And if so, how?
- Was the information covered actionable for policy makers and policy implementers (news versus draft legislation)?

The focus on policy work puts KO closer to advocacy, which potentially risks compromising the project's reputation for neutrality. The project effectively managed this risk as KO's impartiality was recognized and appreciated by participants in the community events.

Community events require all participants to listen to (access) multiple points of view and different perspectives on the issues at hand. The facilitated discussion encourages participants to consider others' thoughts, opinions and concerns. In addition, the lived experience of a community discussion may be more personally engaging than the vicarious experience offered through even a well-done, balanced and compelling media product.

Contributing factors

Many of the factors contributing to the achievement and nonachievement of the project's objectives have been discussed already under the corresponding topic. In compliance with the TOR, they are summarized here.

Factors contributing to achievement	Factors contributing to nonachievement
Human Resources Highly qualified and dedicated media experts and facilitators Quality trainings provided Relatively long accompaniment of participating journalists Number and diversity of media outlets Getting the right people to the community events Committed team of KO Staff	Design Different theories of change in use from the theories of change in design Asymmetrical design – different intensity in investments between the project components Over-promising, characteristic of competitive proposals and insufficient time to realize the intended changes (hence, need for reduction in outputs)

Implementation	Implementation
Recognition of the project's limitations	Lack of clarity in early management and partnering arrangements
Ability to use oblique approaches to sensitive issues	Disjointed and ad hoc approach to conflict analysis
Flexibility in the choice and timing of issues to pursue	Disparity in planning versus implementation
Application of thorough process in developing media products	Limited capacity to deal with root causes of violent conflict
Good donor relations	Underrepresentation of the Uzbek journalists
	Work on marginally relevant themes
	Weak monitoring system

Design

As with many competitive bids, this proposal was tailored to the APS and responded to many of its desired objectives. The two-year timeframe was insufficient with regard to the higher-level objectives and the number of activities. Hence, there was a need to reduce the number of certain deliverables and revise some of the objectives. A better solution would have been for USAID to extend the timeframe of the project for another two years at least.

As one would expect, the theories of change in use differed somewhat from the theories of change in design. Many of the analytical components were either dropped or scaled back. The original design framed youth and leaders as key protagonists in conflict. In practice, many of the issues were between rights holders (including but not limited to youth) and duty bearers, both governmental and corporate. These changes were the source of some tension within the team and had clear implications in terms of implementation, which are described below.

In the original design, the investments in conflict transformation capacity building for community leaders and agency representatives paled in comparison to those for participating journalists.

Implementation

The rocky managerial start for the YoO and SFCG partnership and the weak monitoring practices were addressed in the MTR, but not fully remedied. There was no written plan of action in response to the MTR.

KO staff recognized the weak initial capacity of participating journalists and subsequently chose less-sensitive topics. As the journalists' capacity improved, the project got better at finding less direct, or more oblique, ways of addressing more sensitive issues. Generally speaking, the staff exercised the needed flexibility to remain timely and safe. However, in the absence of an internal conflict analysis to guide the selection of topics addressed by the project, a number of topics were addressed that were less relevant.

YoO and SFCG were in contact with USAID throughout the course of the project. A USAID representative was present at the community event one of the evaluators observed in Aravan. The USAID contact in Bishkek was from the project area and up to date on events and developments.

KO recruitment of Uzbek journalists proved challenging. Of 75 participating journalists, 65 percent were Kyrgyz, 9 percent were Uzbek and 2 percent were Russian. As one staff member explained, "We had trouble finding Uzbek journalists with strong Uzbek language skills. Many of the young journalists studied somewhere else and don't have strong language skills. Only the older people had the level of Uzbek needed. In Osh Shamy, the only Uzbek journalists are older journalists." Consequently, relatively few (44 out of 474) of the KO media products were produced in Uzbek.

The project fared better in reaching Uzbeks through the community events. The project's efforts to ensure a more-balanced ethnic participation in community events were important and helpful. Based on data from the first 41 community events, participants described themselves as: Kyrgyz, 73 percent, and Uzbek, 23 percent. This compares to estimates of the overall demographic distribution ranging from 75 percent Kyrgyz and 13 percent Uzbek nationally to as high as 40 percent Uzbek in Osh. Reasons for the ratio of participants by ethnicity participating in the project include:

- reluctance of the Uzbek community to speak out and engage openly in public events on sensitive issues – a reluctance to draw attention to one's group
- use of local authorities to help in identifying stakeholders and community event participants
- underreporting – more Uzbeks may have chosen not to self-identify their ethnicity
- the community event written feedback forms, which were provided by KO in Russian and Kyrgyz languages and not Uzbek¹⁶

However, there were some community events where a majority of participants were from the Uzbek community, such as the ones on passport issues held in Suzak and Aravan which the evaluators observed. The presence of a majority of people from the Uzbek community (mostly women) is because the problem mostly affects Uzbek nationals who are spouses of Kyrgyzstani citizens.

¹⁶ Given the role of language in the violence in 1990 and 2010, the absence of feedback forms in Uzbek raises questions of conflict sensitivity.

Human resources

The project's greatest strengths were in its human resources. The media experts and facilitators were very well qualified and very dedicated and persevered in the face of significant logistical challenges. Many of the journalists were open to learning, applied themselves and used the project to enhance their professionalism. The community events that the evaluation examined were all attended by diverse and relevant sets of stakeholders. The project made good use of experts and knowledgeable authorities in the community events. KO staff were committed to making the project succeed. The MTR noted that an additional full-time program staff member from the very beginning of the project would have definitely provided much needed impetus to the project implementation.

3.3 Impacts

The evaluation focused on two questions that SCFG listed under the criterion of impact:

1. What change has taken place in the media's approach to conflict reporting and coverage as a result of this project?
2. Are there any unintended positive or negative outcomes/consequences of this work in Kyrgyzstan?

Questions about goal-level changes, or impacts, do not automatically require evaluation methods designed to establish attribution. A formal impact evaluation would have required more resources than the entire M&E budget to date and would have best been initiated at the outset. Given the mobility of KO-trained journalists, the preexisting and ongoing rapid turnover in journalists, journalists independently sharing of KO materials among peers and colleagues, and dissemination of KO media products, it would have been very difficult to control for all of the variables in play in a way that would allow us to determine what changes can be exclusively attributed to the project.

Like the project's use of obliquity in addressing sensitive issues, the evaluation has to approach the question of changes in the media's approach to conflict reporting indirectly -- with obliquity. We began with a scan of the general media environment including work done by other NGOs, followed by participants' perceptions, and ratings by KO staff.

General developments in the media environment

The people we spoke with mentioned a number of general developments in the media environment. We assume that these were likely to have taken place with or without KO.

- Increase in media options – notably expansion in access to and use of the internet for news and information
- Increased competition among media outlets, including outlets in neighbouring countries

- Increasing awareness about responsibility and accountability -- highlighted by a case receiving national attention about an alleged connection between a Minister and an imprisoned terrorist that proved to be false and which was not covered by KO.
- Increasing willingness to address issues journalists were fearful of previously
- Increase in media literacy – media consumers we spoke with are making critical choices about where they get their information and can articulate the reasons for their preferences.

Among the topics covered by KO there were relatively few examples of issues previously avoided out of fear, such as corruption, policing, religious extremism, judicial interference and organized crime. KO staff maintained that these were not issues that relatively inexperienced young journalist were adequately prepared to address. When asked why KO had not covered corruption, one staff member explained that everyone else was already covering it. Regrettably, the evaluation was not asked nor was able to explore or test for contagion -- the uptake or application of SFCG principles by more senior, nonparticipating journalists addressing these more risky issues.

Media's approach to covering conflict

Finding I1: The project employed several of the necessary interventions and set the stage for change, but did not include a sufficiently robust complement of interventions¹⁷ over sufficient time to fully shift the bulk of Southern Kyrgyzstani media's approach to conflict reporting.

Evidence

In keeping with the TOR, during the workshop we asked the project team how much had changed regarding the characteristics of the media environment identified in the OECD analysis cited earlier.

¹⁷ A robust complement refers to the integration of a number of strategic interventions. This could involve a wide range of possibilities, including but not limited to :

- 1.) Working with the other nonparticipating media outlets
- 2.) Working with middle- and top-level actors
- 3.) Engaging senior journalists, too
- 4.) Enhancing media literacy and demand for conflict-sensitive reporting
- 5.) Developing additional channels whereby media can influence policy
- 6.) Using public opinion polls to explore support for and generate interest in alternative solutions
- 7.) Using the arts, such as radio soap operas, to normalize safe discussion about ethnicity and nationalism.
- 8.) Extending the program to Uzbek and Russian language stations broadcasting to Kyrgyzstan from outside the country
- 9.) Building a senior cadre of peace journalists, who bring a more sophisticated skill set above conflict-sensitive reporting
- 10.) Support governmental regulation and enforcement of national norms for conflict-sensitive reporting

Table: KO staff impressions¹⁸ of the media environment in Southern Kyrgyzstan today as compared to 2010

Characteristics	Much worse	Slightly worse	No Change	Slightly better	Much better
a. Publications with intolerance, hatred and other forms of social aggression		2	2		
b. Failure to comply with principles of accuracy and objectivity	1		2	1	
c. Lack of balance and impartiality		2	1	1	
d. Political advertising and discrediting		1	3		
e. Unjustified identification of persons suspected of crimes		1	2	1	
f. Failure to observe secrecy and privacy, except in cases when the facts have a socially significant character	1	1	2		
g. Plagiarism			2	2	

KO staff saw little or no improvement in the overall media environment, including the first three characteristics that align relatively closely with SFCG’s principles of conflict-sensitive journalism. This assessment was more pessimistic than that of community event participants.

General impressions of the community event participants we spoke with on the reliability of media coverage of conflict today are mixed. We asked, “How reliable is the information from the media which you have access to on local conflict dynamics?” Four men responded it was somewhat reliable, three women said it was somewhat unreliable and four people (two women and two men) said they did not know.

There was more agreement that the media coverage of conflict today is more reliable than it was in 2010. We asked, “Is the information from the media that you have access to today more or less reliable than the media that was available during the events of June 2010?” Three men and four women said it was more reliable today. One man and one woman said there was no change and one woman stated it was somewhat less reliable today.

As more KO media products were produced, other obstacles to change became more obvious. As one KO staff member said, “Now I think that maybe we didn’t work enough with the decision makers, only with the journalists who are powerless against the directors,” and we should add, the owners. The project did engage editors of participating media outlets, but did not employ a

¹⁸ Some participants placed their scores on the lines rather than firmly within a single box. In these cases we placed the ranking in the higher of the two, making this assessment slightly more optimistic than intended.

specific change process for bringing the gatekeepers on board. Working primarily with journalists rather than editors may have been too oblique.

The very brief two-year timeframe of the project undoubtedly contributed greatly to this finding. Larger-scale results affecting the overall media environment are more typical of five- to ten-year projects. More modest milestones along the way might have provided a better understanding of the incremental progress the project has achieved.

Implications

The vast majority of KO media products made it past the gatekeepers. We have no information about how less conflict-sensitive pieces from outside the project fared. Modeling and production, while necessary, were insufficient alone to effect change in the overall media environment. The gatekeepers -- directors and editors -- need to know and apply the standards for conflict-sensitive reporting to all of their staff and products.

Although the project did engage a significant number and diverse types of media outlets, additional subsequent efforts need to be made to directly engage a larger number if not all of the media outlets as part of a second stage, extension or continuation of the project.

Osh TV, Yntymak and Channel 7 expressed appreciation of consumer feedback, though only Channel 7 had a systematic mechanism for collecting, documenting and applying consumer feedback. More targeted media literacy interventions could lead to increasing public demand for more conflict-sensitive reporting.

These additional components could constitute a second phase of the project. The important achievements of the project with regards to journalism training in its first two years provide a strong foundation on which additional interventions can be built.

Participating media's approach to covering conflict

As determined in the MTR, a precedent has been set and a generation of young journalists in the south is better prepared to work in more conflict-sensitive ways.

Arguably it may be too soon to fully appreciate the project's contribution to the media's approach to covering conflict.

- It is too soon to determine the effectiveness of the training manual, which had still not been translated at the time of the evaluation data collection.
- There was little sustainability planning and then only at the end of the project with a focus on a KO alumni network,

When asked specifically about developments they attributed to the project, staff and participants tended to focus on two milestones:

- recognition that a journalist's opinion is not a fact
- understanding that a single point of view is an incomplete picture

In two media outlets, the achievements were more in line with the broader aspirations of the project. As one media director said, “We thought it would be difficult to introduce new principles to journalists. In my own company, only two journalists used the principles. At the end of a year, others learned from the participating journalists and now use them in their daily activities -- i.e., looking for solutions, being objective and neutrality – the three main SFCCG principles.” One of the journalists in a different outlet said, “We have meetings with senior editors every week and we analyze the conflict sensitivity (*read balance and impartiality*) of our media products.”

Unintended consequences

Finding I2: The positive and negative unintended consequences that we were able to identify had little effect on the overall project.

Positive unintended consequences

From the media partners, we heard of independent dissemination of handouts from the trainings and, in one case, the institutionalization of the CG principles within the editorial policy of a partner outlet. One partner said that “the technical equipment support provided by KO not only helped produce KO products, it also helped us to increase the technical quality of other media products and increase our ‘reach’ beyond the city boundary.” Another media partner was pleasantly surprised to find its outlet’s popularity had increased.

Some participants found positive feedback to be an unexpected consequence. This included the serious consideration of proposals developed in the course of a community event. As one participant noted, “Our proposal for a five-year waiver for Dordoi and Karashu Market was taken seriously by the government which was unexpected.”

Negative unintended consequences

Uptake proceeded at different rates among the different media outlets. Media outlets are not static; they too change, even those owned by the state. One of the team members explained, “We could not introduce the principles to all companies. Osh TV tried to introduce the principles, but all the new programs have been taken off Osh TV. Today we see Osh TV as it was before the project.”

Despite the project’s quality controls, last-minute footage of a foreign representative of a mining company who did not answer the questions clearly and who appeared culturally insensitive was left unedited and played at a national talk show, alienating the mining company. Arguably inclusion of footage of a stakeholder being offensive or insensitive renders the media product

conflict insensitive. The mining company was shown the material ahead of time. Staff were aware of the problem and proceeded with the existing footage. When staff became aware of the problem, the appropriate course of action would have been to offer the mining company a chance to provide a more appropriate spokesperson and refilm the segment.

3.4 Lessons learned

Although not included in the evaluation terms of reference, both the country director and the regional director requested the evaluation give some consideration to lessons learned. The lessons captured here are not specifically centered on the evaluation questions but refer to larger lessons throughout the project. Below are some of the lessons mentioned by different people with whom we spoke.

Connect designers and implementers. Challenges or problems with project designs often do not become apparent until it is time to implement. These can be particularly acute when the designers and the implementers are different people, as was the case with this project, and/or when the designer(s) or implementing staff are new to the organization. Prescriptive APRs and competitive bidding encourages over-promising and grandiose goals and objectives. Some organizations use detailed implementation planning as a way to ground the design in what is actually feasible. Connecting the designers and the implementers helps implementers understand the intent and designers understand the constraints.

Apply a holistic lens. Involving the media and facilitation experts in the project management team helped to integrate these components. For YoO, there was an additional lesson related to integrated or holistic programming: “Before we were only focused on youth. Through this project we raised issues not only for youth, but also for the whole community. We need to get all stakeholders, create a common ground place for youth and the larger society.”

Iron out partnership arrangements early on. New partnerships, particularly where one partner is new to the country, require work, negotiation and collaboration.

Engage the decision makers. Although the project did not work exclusively at the bottom of Lederach’s triangle, this was the focus of the vast majority of work. One participant suggested KO needed to “pay [more] attention to the capacity of the radio and TV companies.”

Ensure sufficient and diverse interventions. Peacebuilding practitioners generally consider two-year grants to be insufficient for peacebuilding work. As one media expert noted, “It seems the project is very short. Some issues were not covered by the project.” Another media expert explained, “I’m sure that the decision makers did not understand the principles. Perhaps it is better to start a new project with less budget, but more directly linked to the decision makers.”

Stick with it. Participants recommend that future work “provide follow up until it is resolved. One program [media product] cannot solve the problem.”

Convene gravitas. The participation of experts was widely appreciated and brought clout to the community events. One participant told us, “Advise the organizers to involve more people from different points of view with good ideas and a good educational background and good religious ideas who can bring good ideas.”

4.0 Recommendations

The terms of reference are very specific regarding the types of recommendations sought by SFCG: “As this was the organization’s first project in-country, the major focus of this evaluation should be on identifying successful methodologies and any expected or unexpected outcomes and consequences from the project, so as to guide future work.”

Successful methodologies that merit use and consideration in future programming include:

- pairing novice journalists with veteran media experts for mentoring and quality control over extended periods of time (i.e., 12-18 months)
- linking media coverage and community events that engage all stakeholders in a face-to-face exchange of information and exploration of solutions
- engaging experts to assist staff with in-depth issue analysis used to orient staff, journalists, authorities and other stakeholders and to participate in community events
- approaching sensitive and high-risk issues indirectly – with obliquity
- retaining the flexibility needed to be able to address emergent issues
- engaging a significant number (>7) of diverse media partners

While it is important to build on what works, it may also be important to recognize and develop those aspects of the project that could work better or contribute to greater effectiveness. Future work would also be well served by observing the following recommendations:

- Projects should build in ways of facilitating participatory conflict analysis (including a gender analysis) by and for the project staff from all partner organizations with inputs from experts on key issues and, where possible, with stakeholder input. This should not be a one-time event, nor should it be outsourced. It will need to be followed with periodic updating, including new and emergent conflicts.
- Projects should strive for greater consistency in the strategies and the level of effort of the different components such as media and community outreach. Where the media components are anchored in specific media outlets over time, the community events should be anchored in community-based organizations or state agencies such as the office of the ombudsman.

- Efforts should include specific interventions that engage editors, media directors and owners in initiatives to transform media. Bottom-up strategies are more likely to succeed when integrated with work with actors in the middle and/or top levels of Lederach's triangle.¹⁹

Issues worth further inquiry

In the ToR, SFCG asked, "Based on the project experience, what are the most relevant issues that need to be addressed in order to promote peace, harmony and good governance in Southern Kyrgyzstan?" This evaluation in no way serves as a peacebuilding needs assessment, as this requires an altogether different process.

The issues raised here are just a starting point. They merit further inquiry and are best explored along with other issues identified through a thorough needs assessment. Based on the existing analyses, such as ICG reports, and discussions with staff, some key issues worthy of further inquiry include:

- religious extremism
- judicial system
- political manipulation of identity
- borders
- policing

4.1 Conclusion

Kabar Ordo's work was relevant to the media environment and to many of the issues facing people in Southern Kyrgyzstan. The project appropriately postponed some of the more sensitive and central issues while conflict-sensitive journalism capacity was still nascent. When the project did engage on the more sensitive issues it did so in wisely indirect ways.

The interventions were necessary and appropriate but insufficient to achieve the project's higher objectives. Having demonstrated its impartiality through its handling of community events and the production of a new type of news coverage, KO is well placed to launch additional initiatives, such as work with editors and owners, that could, over time, leverage the changes sought in the media environment.

The project was effective in improving the professionalism of participating journalists. More work remains to be done to firmly anchor conflict-sensitive journalism within the media

¹⁹ John Paul Lederach's "triangle" contains three levels of actors with whom peacebuilders can engage: the grassroots, the leaders or elites, and the middle level. While peacebuilding needs to be done at all three levels, the middle level can be particularly strategic in that it links the top with the bottom and can also move horizontally.

landscape of Southern Kyrgyzstan. The project lacked the necessary and sufficient means to improve participating stakeholders' conflict transformation capacity and dialogue skills.

The project provided a needed process whereby diverse stakeholders and experts could meet face to face, share different and common needs and perspectives, and explore collaborative solutions to the issues that brought them together. Media coverage of KO events served to disseminate the discussion, agreements reached and commitments of the event participants to larger interested audiences.

The project also demonstrated the importance of in-depth analysis supported by experts, as in the case of the analytical reports, as background information for stakeholders and for journalists working on some aspect of the broader issue.

Kabar Ordo's greatest contribution may have been as a demonstration project. It clearly advanced the fledging practice of conflict-sensitive journalism in Southern Kyrgyzstan and also revealed how much additional work is still needed to transform the overall media environment, particularly given the role media played during the June 2010 events. By working with 10 different types of media outlets, KO demonstrated what is possible and what the obstacles to change entail.

As with many demonstration projects, additional subsequent efforts are required to support wider uptake of conflict-sensitive journalism beyond the initial trial plots. This often involves on-going demonstration, sometimes at a larger scale or under more challenging circumstances. It remains to be seen if the participating media outlets, the journalists and/or the duty-bearing stakeholders replicate the process when faced with recurring episodes of existing conflicts or new and emerging conflicts. So far, we found no examples of subsequent independent application of the KO process integrating media and face-to-face collaborative problem solving. Participants were skeptical about the resources, skills and impartiality that their group could bring to bear on similar issues. At least they can no longer say that it can't be done. Moreover, staff and participants can refer to numerous examples of successful nonviolent ways of handling grievances and solving problems through collaboration.

5.0 Appendices

5.1 Evaluation questions

The initial 17 evaluation questions developed by SFCG fell into three categories: relevance, effectiveness and impact, plus a question on sustainability. The questions differed in large part from those raised in the midterm evaluation. The project did not ask any questions relating to efficiency, coherence or coordination. Nor did it seek to update the quantitative data generated by the baseline evaluation.

The evaluation questions were negotiated between the evaluator and SFCG, initially during the preparation of the inception report and then as needed when new information or insight suggested alternative framing. Negotiations were facilitated by the fact that the SFCG staff member on the team was able to speak for the organization. Modifications at the inception phase were directed at bounding the evaluation in what was feasible given time and resource constraints. The following evaluation questions were dropped:

- Are there differences between how different stakeholders view the project (e.g., women and men, Kyrgyz and Uzbek, journalists and audiences, etc.)? The evaluation focused on select cases and a small number of specific individuals, not the entire population touched by the project. The sample was too small to be representative.
- To what extent has the project contributed to enhancing the capacity of its partner organizations and their staff? No capacity baselines were available and capacity assessment of 10 media partners and YoO exceeded the evaluation resources.
- What aspects of the project outcomes are likely to be sustained after the life of the project? Sustainability is not an empirical question and relies largely on demonstrated applications over time, projections and argument. Furthermore, the project lacked a sustainability plan that could be evaluated. Instead the evaluation sought to identify any subsequent independent application of KO processes.

Other questions did not align well with the actual practices in place and were also dropped. For example, “How has the project contributed in improving the capacity of youth in Kyrgyzstan?” There were no interventions exclusively targeting youth as a separate and distinct group.

Other modifications emerged over the course of the evaluation. For example, in a summative evaluation such as this, the relevance question differs slightly from that posed when considering just the design which focuses on goals and objectives. For this exercise the question became, “Were the project’s actual interventions and achievements relevant to the issues faced by the media and the target communities in Southern Kyrgyzstan?”

Compound questions were broken into parts and examined separately. The remaining 11 evaluation questions were prioritized to ensure that the limited evaluation resources were directed to the more important questions. The final evaluation questions, ranked in priority within each category, included:

Relevance

- Are the project's stated interventions and achievements relevant to the issues being faced by the media in Southern Kyrgyzstan?
- Are the project's stated interventions and achievements relevant to the issues being faced by target communities in Southern Kyrgyzstan?
- Based on the project experience, what are the most relevant issues that need to be addressed in order to promote peace, harmony and good governance in Southern Kyrgyzstan?
- How did the project adapt to changes in context?

Effectiveness

- What are the major outputs and outcomes of the project? To what extent has the project been successful in:
 - increasing the capacity of young journalists in conflict-sensitive reporting?
 - increasing the capacity of local leaders in conflict transformation
 - demonstrating collaborative problem solving through its media outreach and events?
 - improving access to information about conflict issues?
- What knowledge and skills has the project given to participants to ensure effective and independent application of those skills in the future?
- What major factors are contributing to the achievement or nonachievement of objectives?

Impact

- What change has taken place in the media's approach to conflict reporting and coverage as a result of this project?
- Are there any unintended positive or negative outcomes/consequences of this work in Kyrgyzstan?

5.2 Findings at a glance

Relevance

Finding R1: The lack of a comprehensive conflict analysis early in the project left open the questions of what the issues were, how they should be identified, and which among them were more strategic.

Finding R2: The project's actual interventions vary in relevance to conflict in Southern Kyrgyzstan. Generally speaking, the major issues addressed in the project were relevant to emergent presenting issues and to proximate causes, and less so to root causes of violent conflict in Kyrgyzstan.

Finding R3: Common Ground principles introduced by KO addressed a number of shortcomings in the media field in Southern Kyrgyzstan including accuracy, balance and impartiality.

Finding R4: All but one of the community event participants interviewed indicated that someone from all the relevant stakeholder groups was present at the community event they attended.

Effectiveness

Finding E1: The major actual outputs and outcomes align with the plan as modified over the course of the project.

Finding E2: All reports indicate that the level of professionalism of participating journalists has improved. However, a review of the content in actual media products suggests that the uptake of conflict sensitivity may have been less comprehensive.

Finding E3: Although a demonstration of conflict transformation is a necessary preliminary step for people to become aware that conflict can be transformed nonviolently, demonstration alone was insufficient to result in a change in conflict transformation skills.

Finding E4: The project demonstrated third-party facilitation of constructive exchanges of information and perspectives, as well as solution exploration. However, the two-to-three hour timeframe and single session format were not always conducive to comprehensive problem solving.

Finding E5: The evaluation found little evidence of subsequent independent applications of the overall collaborative problem-solving process modeled by KO. Obstacles included resources, skills and perceptions of partiality.

Finding E6: The project has been successful in making 474 conflict-sensitive media products available to audiences throughout the project area and in some cases nationally. However, neither the project nor the evaluation team was able to gather evidence as to what extent they were accessed and considered by policymakers.

Impact

Finding I1: The project employed several of the necessary interventions and set the stage for change, but did not include a sufficiently robust complement of interventions over sufficient time to fully shift the bulk of Southern Kyrgyzstani media's approach to conflict reporting.

Finding I2: The positive and negative unintended consequences that we were able to identify had little effect on the overall project.

5.3 Resources

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5.4 Illustrative semi-structured interview guidance

Semi-structured interview with Community Event Participants

Primary objectives

- Impression of collaborative approaches
- Engagement with local government
- Issue selection
- Access to reliable information
- Identification of subsequent independent application of model

Preamble

Thank you for making the time to speak with us today. This discussion is being conducted as part of a study of the Kabar Ordo Project. It will help us to plan for potential future work in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. We've found that we can learn a lot about changes in the situation from informal discussions with individuals and small groups of people, such as you. We are interested in different points of view, so it is not necessary that everyone agree. There are no correct answers and no wrong answers. We just need to learn about your impressions. Our report will not indicate who said what by name, but will indicate the type of position of the person speaking when quoted directly. At the end of the report there will be a list of names of all the people we spoke with. Is this acceptable to you?

1. Please describe your involvement in [*the community event of interest*] sponsored by the project that took place in your area.
2. How did this issue come about? Who organized the event?
3. Were all the necessary people present for the event? If not, who was missing?
4. What preparations were made ahead of time? Did you feel adequately prepared to engage in the process? If so, what helped you prepare?
5. Did the project help you to develop or strengthen any specific skills?
6. What was the most significant achievement of [*the community event of interest*]?
7. Is this approach to dealing with conflicting or incomplete information an appropriate way of handling conflict in your community? If not, why not?
8. Were there other issues for your community that were not covered in the event that you think have an even greater risk of violence or escalation than the issues that were covered?
9. How reliable is the information from the media on local conflict dynamics that you have access to? [*Read answers*]
 - a. Very unreliable

- b. Somewhat unreliable
 - c. Somewhat reliable
 - d. Very reliable
 - e. Don't know
10. Is the information from the media on local conflict dynamics that you have access to today more reliable than the information that was available during the events of June 2010? *[Read answers]*
- a. Much less reliable now than before
 - b. Somewhat less reliable now than before
 - c. No change – about the same
 - d. Somewhat more reliable now
 - e. Much more reliable now
11. Why?
12. Which specific media outlets do you look to for reliable information on local conflict dynamics?
13. Were there any unintended consequences of the results? Positive? Negative?
14. Have there been any subsequent independent applications of the same or a similar process to address local conflicts? If so:
- a. Please describe how the process started and the steps and sequence involved.
 - b. Please describe who convened people initially, who participated, who facilitated.
 - c. How things were left at the end
- [The interviewer should map the entire process]*
15. If this project were to be repeated somewhere else, what would you suggest be done differently?

5.5 People we spoke with

NAME	AFFILIATION
KABAR ORDO STAFF	
Nona Lambert	SFCG Program Manager
Ikbolzhon Isakov	SFCG Communications and M&E officer
Keneshbek Sainazarov	SFCG Country Director
Michael Shippler	SFCG Regional Director
Aizhan Toktosheva	YoO – Outgoing Executive Director
Akmaral Satinbaeva	YoO – Incoming Executive Director
Rasul Avazbek uulu	KO Facilitator
Elvira Ikramova	KO Facilitator
Asel Jumataeva	KO Facilitator
Elima Japarova	KO Media Expert
Sanjar Eraliev	KO Media Expert
Daniyar Sadiev	KO Media Expert
COMMUNITY EVENT PARTICIPANTS	
Maseev Talant	CU - Businessperson
Abdyvahab	CU - Parliamentarian
Kanybek Kudaiberdiev	CU - Minister of Finance
Madan Minova	CU - Community member
Kenzhe Jeekova	Head of Euro market
Danakon Bektoshova	Local Rayon Office
Jamilya Japasheva	Kaziat – Head of Women’s Department
Muhtar Mamataliev	Noonkat District Head of Education
Ainagul Pasanbekova	Specialist, Ministry of Education
Boronbaeva Motabar	Uzbek school director
Daniyar Raimbabaev	Parent, Nookat HS
Mr. Arabiddin	Mayor Kok Jangat
Janusuliev Beksultan	Head of Eco-tech Department
Akmat Mambetiev	Government official
Karabaev Mamat	Engineer of licensed mining Company
Kuntuiev Parpi	Director of licensed Mining Company
Nazquolova Mavlyudohan	Member of Suzak Migration Department

Kimsanova Zulphiya
Raimajanova
Kararbasheva Galiya

Parent committee Karasu
Karasu government official
Social pedagogy Karasu

MEDIA

Eliza Tashtanova
Illas Turdubai uulu
Kuttumidin Bizrukov
Zinat Turdubekova
Erkinazar Bainazarov
Kerim Kalykulov
Nazgul Abdyrazakova
Gazieva Gulzat
Zulkar Anarbaev
Ruslan Kalmatov

Journalist
Journalist JTR
JTR Media Director
Journalist, emergency housing
Osh Shamy newspaper
Osh Shamy newspaper
Osh Shamy newspaper
LTR
Deputy Director, Channel 7
Journalist, Channel 7

OTHER NGOs

Altynbek Kadyrov
Alexy Cruz
Asylbek Kochkorbaev

ACCORD
Saferworld
Foundation for Tolerance International

OBSERVATIONS

Suzak – Passports
Aravan – Passports
KO Planning session
KO Journalist workshop