



Evaluation of EU Collaboration in **Cross-Border Areas of the Horn of Africa**

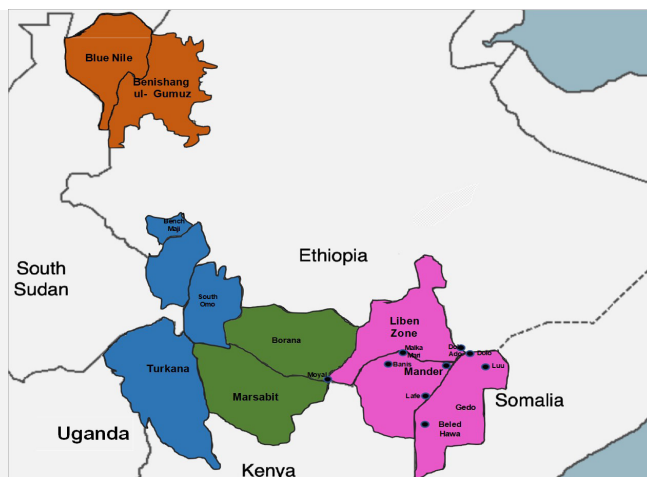
Findings and recommendations of the evaluation of the four clusters of projects under the EU cross-border programme, undertaken between February and August of 2023.

Programme Features

The overall objective of the cross-border programme is to prevent and mitigate the impact of local conflict and promote resilience in cross-border areas of Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan and Kenya.

The total expenditure was EUR 67 015 000 distributed across seven projects and four clusters. The activities began in December 2016, and most were finalised by March 2023 (one project, SEEKII, is continuing).

The consortium leaders were Vétérinaires Sans Frontières Germany, Pact, United Nations Development Programme, Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GIZ, and Danish Refugee Council.



- ▲ **Cluster I:** ODP, SEEK, Ethiopia and Kenya
- ▲ **Cluster II:** UNDP, Moyale, Ethiopia and Kenya
- ▲ **Cluster III:** GIZ, Ethiopia/Sudan
- ▲ **Cluster IV:** BORESHA, RASMI, Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya

Evaluation Aim and Methods

The evaluation aims to provide an independent assessment of successes, challenges and results. It also describes lessons learned, and recommendations, designed in part to inform a follow-up programme.

The team was able to access all required information to have sufficient confidence in the preparation of the evaluation report. The data collection is based on document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and 11 field case studies. The assessment is structured according to the Evaluation Questions.

The team was made up of Njeri Karuru, Rahma Abikar, Girma Tegenu, and Emery Brusset.

The case study locations were:

- Mandera: Belet Hawa, Dolo Ado
- Moyale: Yabelo, Bule Bora, Moyale, Marsabit.
- Turkana and Omo: Kibish, Lowarenga, Turmi.

A total of 177 in-depth interviews were conducted, along with four Focus Group Discussions for local conflict mapping.

The evaluation Steering Group comprised EU personnel from the Delegations in:

- ▶ Nairobi
- ▶ Addis
- ▶ Abeba
- ▶ Khartoum
- ▶ Brussels (EU Trust Fund personnel)

Alignment to Policies and Agendas

The programme's alignment with relevant regional, national and local policies is remarkable, from the first stages of its implementation.

This alignment then diverged across the projects as the programme moved forward. Some gradually gained a strong endorsement by local counterparts.

Other projects, those which most strongly focused on capacity building and on working with regional institutions, struggled with their own deployment and communication after the first stages.



Flexibility in Utilisation of Resources

There was a wide variation in the ability of the projects to adjust to the multiple unforeseen shocks that affected implementation. Three factors can be identified for these differences.

The ability of some of the projects to use the contingency funds foreseen in the EU procedures when conditions changed.

The ability to operate with physical presence on the ground and respond as the situation evolved, in particular to COVID 19.

The ability to benefit from a unified management which could work on both sides of the border.

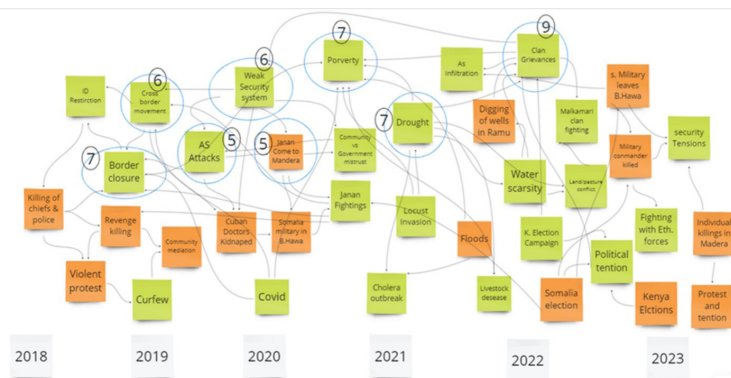
When these conditions were met the costs of operating cross-border were fully justified.

Conflict Analyses and Sensitivity

The conflict sensitivity of the programme is high, as is its ability to operate across a wide range of conflict scenarios.

The most effective programme activities were those whose implementation addressed locally defined events and trends, building on conflict analyses, and set out clearly defined beneficiary actors.

This sensitivity was achieved mainly at project level, while there was no overall programme layer of information and lesson learning.



Impact and Unintended Effects



The projects generated new structures of dialogue and provided an independent and novel third-party approach within local dynamics.

The economic opportunities created (particularly through the development of local and cross border trade, rural agriculture and the fisheries value chains) helped expand the resources, reducing scarcity flashpoints, encouraging cooperation.

This contributed to economic resilience as well as to social cohesion.

Sustainability of Interventions

The Programme created many assets with a high continuity of local ownership. The most challenging has been engagement with regional and state structures which are not positioned to focus on borderlands.

The more successful interventions were those that built simultaneously on peace

capacities and on economic opportunities, creating cross-border resource sharing, building coalitions.

Local authorities worked best when alongside faith-based civil society and/or negotiation structures created to deal with conflict.



Wider Learning

Borders exist as a concrete reality to a much lower extent for the local communities than for the organisations that are working with these communities.

The restrictions which the borders create for institutions and aid organisations are greater than for the population.

The best project results are achieved when the activities are closely anchored in very local drivers of conflict or of peace and projects are able to operate cross-border - such as expanding value chains.

The borders have above all a state and bureaucratic existence. The populations adapt around that by using them to their advantage or by avoiding them.

The primary value of a large programme is the weight that it gives to the cause of marginalised societies in the borderlands. Communication and donor identity are an important part of the programme.

The ability to mobilise networks of NGOs at the local level over prolonged periods of time is a considerable factor of performance.

The ability to work across borders improves the adaptability of the programme but creates greater pressures on project-level coherence.

The peace agreements reached need to be communicated widely and linked to an enforcement dimension.

The ability to work with security and state actors is important for cross-border programmes, as a recognition of the impact that these actors have on livelihoods and stability.

These types of programmes can combine an orientation towards peace as well as towards resilience into a single concept around the response to all types of disturbances. A good example is social cohesion.

The shocks and stressors confronting the populations and partners call for system-wide resilience capacities - which are not necessarily state capacities and are above communities. These are for example systems of conflict resolution.



FOR THE EU

- ▶ **The design of future projects should be based on geographical areas of operation situated across borders, containing specific systems (ecosystems, economic value chains) which can be influenced by the projects.**

Area-based design should take above all a systems approach to resilience. This could be social cohesion across communities, or organised dialogue between faith-based institutions, or value chains in food production and economic transformation. The evaluation recommends developing structures of dialogue, increasing access rights to water, animal health and trade infrastructures and confirming rights to land ownership and use, and the encouragement of systems of economic exchange (informal or formal).

- ▶ **A portfolio management approach should be used to enhance knowledge management and engagement across different projects funded in the programme.**

A team could operate as a programme monitoring function working closely with the Delegations for decision making. Its scope should cover all projects and consortia to

understand and address implementation challenges. Its monitoring system should start from a local identification of conflict drivers and cross-border risks, and from there analyse the actors that are most able to address them. It should include a well-developed spatial definition of the beneficiary populations, building on current geolocation and mapping technologies, to enable a modelling of the results achieved by projects.

- ▶ **A specific liaison role is required to implement a highly targeted capacity building function for state and regional institutions.**

Such an external orientation of the programme would help address specific aspects of cross-border activity that relate to governance and help structure collaboration with regional official structures such as IGAD. It should enhance rapid reporting, contextual analyses and help identify and facilitate processes to address risks and systemic challenges and gaps that affect implementing partners.

FOR PARTNERS

- ▶ **Project design and implementation should be underpinned by the longer timeframes of local populations. This gives priority to continuity and handover.**

When receiving funding, Implementing Partners should prioritise a continuity in their aid field presence and continue previous activities in the areas which are considered for intervention. They should at a minimum be aware of and build on past projects (even if not their own, at least previously funded by the EU or by like-minded donors), in particular as they relate to aspects that require time - such as small enterprise, negotiations and the implementation of past peace agreements.

- ▶ **There must be a continued effort by the Cluster consortia to maintain the same level of delegated authority and inclusivity for consortium leaders to quickly adapt the nature of their resourcing based on implementation risks and performance.**

The consortium leads should have the authority to reallocate resources from specific IPs when difficulties are encountered, rather than remain bound by earlier agreements on budget structure. They should also be encouraged to create reference groups comprising all Implementing Partners within a consortium and including smaller Community Based Organisations. The availability of contingency funding is very valuable to make the adjustments in light of unforeseeable changes of circumstances on the ground.

- ▶ **Partners initiating operations on the ground should conduct participatory conflict driver assessments and use it to clarify the selection of beneficiary stakeholders.**

Highly localised context assessments will allow the Partners to ensure that the right capacities are then monitored as part of project reporting. Cross-border stakeholders will need to be particularly well identified, to avoid a 'single-country' implementation which would negate the cross-border dynamics that justify the EU programme. These actors are part of the evidence that can enhance coordination with other partners on the ground.

- ▶ **Partners should ensure a clear focus on the roles of national authorities, with a priority for the established structures that seem to be working well across the border.**

Engaging with national and in particular with local authorities will include some explicit support to be provided by the authorities to the partners. This could be done in a time-bound manner with conditional assistance provided in return by the partners to the authorities. This should then feed into the reporting of the Partner, and be flagged to the EU for reinforcement when the authorities are not able to respond, so that the Partner is not locked alone into a local dialogue.

FOR THE EU & PARTNERS

- ▶ **Synergies with other borderlands projects should be extended, especially those with governance and rule of law goals.**

Some of these public sector projects focus on the integrity of state administration in synergy with socio-economic projects. Such synergies should follow an area-based logic and pool monitoring data. These parallel aspects concern the conduct of security agencies, the enforcement of agreements, the consolidation of land rights, and the monitoring of security incidents. Such synergies could be most usefully achieved at the County, District and Woreda levels, with some efforts at information sharing and advocacy toward central state governance structures.

FOR PARTNERS & LOCAL AUTHORITIES

- ▶ **Programme outcomes that operate at the level of systems should be considered by implementing partners as an important part of the resilience capacities to be developed.**

Systems operate above the level of individual communities. Systems-level resilience includes for example collaborative networks of fishing and processing in Lake Turkana,

or encouragement of interfaith dialogue in Marsabit. This approach will help strengthen the coherence of the Clusters across separate projects and help identify the appropriate capacities to strengthen. State administrators and officials should then be able to understand and reinforce these area-specific goals. Implementing Partners should work across the borders, under a single management line of reporting.

FOR THE EU, PARTNERS & LOCAL AUTHORITIES

- ▶ **Synergies with other borderlands projects should be continued, especially those with governance and rule of law goals.**

Performance reporting should focus on resilience capacities. It should be validated in real-time independently of the Implementing Partners. This capacity could also be able to address capacity gaps for local Implementing Partners and could be linked to the team working with the EU as per recommendation above.