

Eurasia Partnership Foundation's offices in Armenia and Azerbaijan

**Evaluation of the
“Unbiased Media Coverage of Armenia-Azerbaijan Relations” Project**

FINAL REPORT

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

EPF – Euraisa Partnership Foundation
NGO – non-governmental organization
NK – Nagorny Karabakh
YN – Yeni Nesil
YPC – Yerevan Press Club
UK – United Kingdom

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This evaluation covers two stages of the *Unbiased Media Coverage of Armenia-Azerbaijan Relations* project supported by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office in Armenia and Azerbaijan. The project was implemented by Eurasia Partnership Foundation offices in Armenia and Azerbaijan in close collaboration with four core partners: Yeni Nesil (Azerbaijan), Yerevan Press Club (Armenia), Internews-Armenia, and Internews-Azerbaijan.

The evaluation assessed the effectiveness of the approaches used by the project, the quality of the products developed by the project, and the effects of the project.

The evaluation was conducted in March–April 2011.

The evaluation revealed that the project's strategic intent was clearly described in project documents. Stage II expanded Stage I from 'traditional' media to e-media. The outcomes of both Stages I and II of the project were consistent. At the same time project outputs were not explicitly presented in the project documents, creating a logical gap between activities and outcomes. Some of the project activities were not logically harmonized with the overall project framework. The expected long-term impact of the project was too ambitious for the intended interventions.

The evaluation found that for the most part, both stages of the project were implemented in accordance with their respective implementation plans. The environment for implementation of this project was more favourable in Armenia than in Azerbaijan. Implementation of the project in Azerbaijan involved numerous risks for both implementing partners and participants. Hence, project results will most likely be more visible in Armenia than in Azerbaijan. The implementing partners and project participants faced serious contradictions when dealing with sensitive issues related to NK or Armenian-Azerbaijani relations. The implementers were consistent in their search for mutual compromise and succeeded in most cases, which was very important for the project and for the parties involved.

The evaluation thoroughly analysed a variety of creative project outcomes such as documentary films, research reports, media monitoring reports, Media Bias Glossary, cartoons, articles, blogs, and a fictional book. These products constitute a valuable asset that can be used in future activities and as a foundation for future projects. In this respect, the project worked as a highly effective creative laboratory for joint cross-border, media-related activities. Products such as the films could become important assets in achieving the project goal, but only if embedded in processes and events that create special contexts for that purpose. Without the "wrapper" of a purposeful context, they will most likely trigger negative emotional reactions and anger in audiences in both countries. The trainings for journalists were effective and participant reactions to the trainings were very positive. Most likely, participants acquired new knowledge and skills and in many cases the training also affected their attitudes. Training is not a relevant tool for influencing the most prominent and active journalists. The majority of training participants were not the most prominent and active journalists and it seems likely that changes in their behaviour will make only minor contributions to "unbiased media coverage of the conflict," the project's intended impact. In the longer term, the project's effects may become more visible. The project's web-based activities were successful: Publications attracted the attention of an Internet audience and stimulated online discussions that were skilfully moderated by project participants.

The evaluation concluded that the main challenges EPF faces in the area of cross-boarder projects between Armenia and Azerbaijan are inside the organization.

The evaluation resulted in the following main recommendations:

Recommendation 1.

The implementing partners should pay more attention to the development of a comprehensive project model ('theory') at the design stage with a special emphasis on avoiding logical gaps. All

the project components including small projects should be logically harmonized with the overall project framework. To do so EPF may need to revise the existing practice of describing project logic in general and project outputs in particular.

Recommendation 2.

Differences in the country contexts and the related risks should be carefully explored and considered at the design stage of any cross-border project that involves Armenia and Azerbaijan. If the cross-border project is touching upon sensitive issues, contradictions between the parties involved should be expected. A process for resolving contradictions should be considered an important part of the project that needs skilful facilitation.

Recommendation 3.

Explore opportunities for using assets created in the current project. Note that some products such as the films or glossary are not yet final results in terms of the project intent. They need to be embedded in carefully constructed events whose purposeful contexts insure a positive contribution to the achievement of the project's expected goal and impact.

Recommendation 4.

The project partners should develop strategies and toolkits for using such products as films purposefully, with consideration of the overall project logic and hierarchy of goals. This work could become a natural follow-up for this project. It will be important to use focus groups, for example, to explore audience reactions to the products.

Recommendation 5.

EPF offices in Armenia and Azerbaijan need to foster dialogue and look for new joint opportunities that take into consideration their experiences and capacities, their strategic priorities and interests, the visions of their leaders, and their local contexts. When it comes to cross-border projects, the organization should operate as "One EPF." The new joint project could be used effectively to 'reboot' and further develop relations between the two offices.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Scope and Objectives.

This evaluation covers two stages of the *Unbiased Media Coverage of Armenia-Azerbaijan Relations* project supported by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office in Armenia and Azerbaijan. The project was implemented by Eurasia Partnership Foundation offices in Armenia and Azerbaijan in close collaboration with four core partners: Yeni Nesil (Azerbaijan), Yerevan Press Club (Armenia), Internews-Armenia, and Internews-Azerbaijan.

The first phase of the project (June 2008–January 2010) aimed at increasing the amount of accurate and unbiased reporting on the bilateral relationship between Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as fostering a cooperative network of editors, journalists, and media NGOs from Armenia and Azerbaijan. The project combined focus group research on public perceptions about media bias with training for 30 television, radio, electronic, and newspaper journalists and editors in each country, as well as meetings to foster dialogue between these journalists. It also produced two separate media monitoring assessments that measured changes in bias and further documented the types of inaccuracies that frequently occur. Finally, an innovation fund supported small cross-border pilot projects addressing issues of bias.

The aims of the second phase of the project (May 2010–March 2011) coincide with those of the first phase while focusing on Internet media and the blogosphere. EPF and its partners worked to establish a cooperative network of up to 30 citizen journalists, bloggers, and other media professionals from Armenia and Azerbaijan; conducted a baseline assessment of the bias in Internet-based media in Azerbaijan and Armenia; developed a Media Bias Glossary; and produced a 20–25 minute documentary film describing the existing mutual bias in web-based media sources and blogs in Armenia and Azerbaijan. The project takes a capacity-building approach to all of its main activities, so that participating journalists and bloggers build skills and experience that will last beyond the life of the project.

The objectives of the evaluation are:

- To assess the effectiveness of the tools (focus group reports, media content monitoring reports, in-country trainings, regional workshops in Tbilisi, joint small projects, etc.) in changing the perceptions and professional development of its participants (journalists and bloggers in each country).
- To assess the quality of the products (small projects, media content monitoring reports, glossary, films, etc.) produced as part of the two phases of the project and their correspondence to the project intent.
- To assess the impact of the project and its products on the societies (recognizing that the impact has been limited and that its assessment will be qualitative).
- To issue recommendations for future strategies of EPF on Armenia-Azerbaijan dialogue work, particularly within the focus of the project, i.e., working with young people, media, e-media, bloggers, etc.

1.2. Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation scope of work rightly described this evaluation as a qualitative study. There was no goal to test any existing hypothesis. In the course of this evaluation the consultant had to stay open to any information and use rigorous inductive analysis to come to conclusions and recommendations. There was only one way to collect the necessary information—by learning about the project, its participants and beneficiaries. The evaluator had no control over the project parameters and could not influence them.

For this evaluation we used a so called “purposeful sampling” strategy typical for qualitative studies¹: together with EPF offices in Armenia and Azerbaijan we selected sources of information that were most helpful for achieving the evaluation objectives. The research literature calls these sources “information-rich” ones.² The list of key informants included EPF senior managers and staff, representatives of the partner organizations, project participants from both stages of the project, and implementers of the small projects.

Two methods of data collection were used in the present evaluation: in-depth semi-structured individual interviews (face-to-face and via Skype) and document reviews. In addition, online data sources such as blogs were also used extensively.

Data necessary to achieve the evaluation objectives were collected from a variety of sources, using different methods, making it possible to validate findings through data source and methodological triangulation.

Evaluation findings were presented by the evaluator to EPF teams via Skype and discussed before the draft report was finalized. Comments and feedback from EPF teams on the online presentation have been considered in the draft report.

The preparation process for a report is markedly different from the analytical process on which it is based. The collected data and findings are analysed in a number of stages before the evaluator even begins to write the report. This preliminary work leads to a readable report, based on a solid foundation of evidence, whose logic is not overwhelmed by details of the analytical process. We strive for the right balance: the reader must encounter sufficient credible evidence to have confidence in the report; the evidence and the narrative must be readable and accessible.

It is important to ensure that evaluation participants are protected. The evaluator explained the purpose and tasks of the study to all the interviewees. When asked, the evaluator always allowed people to see the interview questions in advance. The evaluator also obtained permissions from individuals to collect and use information, and negotiated informal rules for joint work.

1.3.Challenges and Limitations

The two major challenges we faced were: (1) extremely complex context of this project (tension between the two countries) and (2) limited opportunities for data collection (the field study included only three days in each country).

To meet the first challenge we did some homework before the field visits to better understand the history and the current situation around NK, and were extremely careful while talking to people in both countries. We explicitly and sincerely demonstrated our neutrality and intent to better understand the situation and to learn from our respondents rather than to make any judgements.

To meet the second challenge we relied on the advice of the EPF staff in selecting key informants and the EPF offices did excellent job providing a rich variety of contacts in both countries. We also considered analytical and research products developed in the course of the project.

1.4. Outline of the Report

Chapter 1 “Introduction” provides an overall picture of this evaluation. This chapter explains the rationale for choosing the sampling strategy, data sources, and data collection methods based on

¹ Patton, M. Q. (2008). *Utilization-focused evaluation* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

² Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

the nature of the SoW and existing restrictions. The Introduction also contains a brief overview of the methods used to process and analyze data, and a description of ethical considerations.

Chapter 2 “Project design” explores the nature of the project, its components, and logic; analyses outcome statements; and provides a rationale for the approach used to evaluate project results in the existing circumstances.

Chapter 3 “Project implementation” includes an analysis of the process of project implementation, issues faced by the implementing partners, and the way those issues were addressed.

Chapter 4 “Project results” describes all the main results achieved and compares them with the project intent.

Chapter 5 “Meeting the future challenges” suggests several ideas regarding the future and ways to address existing and future challenges.

Finally, Chapter 6 summarises conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER 2. PROJECT DESIGN

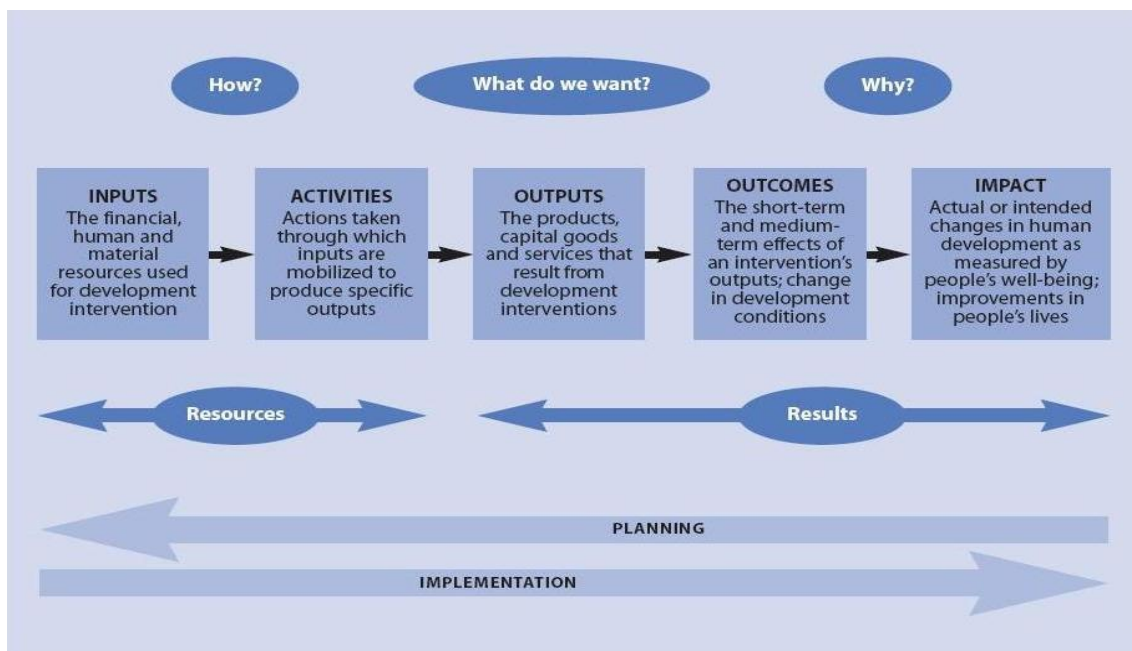
2.1. Project model: key definitions and framework for analysis

A project model describes a project as an intervention with connections between inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impact. Project (and program) models are often presented as chains of results (see Fig. 1).

Outputs are tangible, time-bound products resulting from a completion of activities and largely under the control of a development intervention. Outcomes, by contrast, are changes in the real world, triggered by a set of outputs and to a great extent not under the control of a project or programme. Impact is the overall, long-term effect of an intervention. Outcomes of a particular programme only contribute to its impact but do not guarantee that the impact will take place as impact depends on so many other factors.

Projects are “unique, transient endeavours undertaken to achieve a desired outcome.”³ Programme is often defined as a set of related projects that “together achieve a beneficial change of a strategic nature for an organization.”⁴

Figure 1. Chain of Results⁵



In the present case, we evaluated a project that included a number of sub-projects. Each of these sub-projects had to be designed and implemented within the project context and harmonized with the overall project framework in order to make relevant contributions to the project's results.

Figure 2 shows how the logic of the small projects should be harmonized with the logic of the project under evaluation.⁶ The chains of results (outputs-outcomes-impact) should be well

³ Association for Project Management. (2005). *APM Body of Knowledge. Definitions*. Retrieved 20 October 2010, from <https://www.apm.org.uk/download.asp?fileID=362>.

⁴ Association for Project Management. (2005). *APM Body of Knowledge. Definitions*. Retrieved 20 October 2010, from <https://www.apm.org.uk/download.asp?fileID=362>.

⁵ UNDP. *Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results*. NY, 2009, p.55

⁶ Kuzmin, A. (2010). *From 'monitoring and evaluation' towards 'planning, monitoring and evaluation'*. Paper presented at the International Evaluation School.

defined for both the project and its component sub-projects. Sub-projects contribute to project outcomes, but project outcomes can be achieved only if all the contributing sub-projects and a number of other activities are implemented successfully and their respective contributions made as planned. Thus, project outcomes should be treated as the impact of the sub-projects. In the same logic, sub-project outcomes become, it turn, project outputs.

Figure 2. Logical harmonization of sub-projects and project

Sub-Project		Project
		Project Impact
Sub-Project Impact	↔	Project Outcome
Sub-Project Outcome	↔	Project Outputs
Sub-Project Outputs		

Planning, therefore, should start within the broader strategic framework of the project: identifying its expected impact, the expected outcome that will contribute to the project’s impact, and a set of outputs that will trigger the expected outcome. Once this foundation is laid, the default impact of any sub-project developed within a project must be the project outcome, otherwise the sub-project will not contribute to achieving the project outcome. Sub-project outcome can be taken from the project outputs but may be somewhat new. In the latter case, any such sub-project outcome included in project outputs would enrich those outputs.

2.2. Project models for stages I and II.

Models based on project documents for both stages of the present project are shown in figures 3 and 4.

The project’s expected impact statements are different: the expected impact of Stage II is more specific and measurable. “Better informed public” is a much clearer expected result than “more constructive role of the media.” Interviews with the people who developed both project concepts showed that the project’s strategic intent was better described in the Stage II impact statement, and that it would be appropriate to apply the same statement to the Stage I as well.

The project’s expected outcomes are consistent and reflect the project’s intent to contribute to accurate and unbiased reporting of the bilateral relationship between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Stage I of the project involved representatives of ‘traditional’ media such as newspapers, TV, and radio, while Stage II focused primarily on the online media and blogosphere.

Core activities in Stage I included training for journalists and small joint projects. Activities in Stage II could be described as several very different joint projects that varied from “Media bias glossary” to a documentary film on the Internet ‘wars’.

Project outputs in both project documents are described the terms of products such as ‘report produced’ or quantitative indicators such as ‘60 journalists trained.’ Although project documents do not include an explicit logical link between activities and outcomes. This link could be reconstructed on the basis of the other project documents and interviews we conducted.

Figure 3. Project Model, Stage I

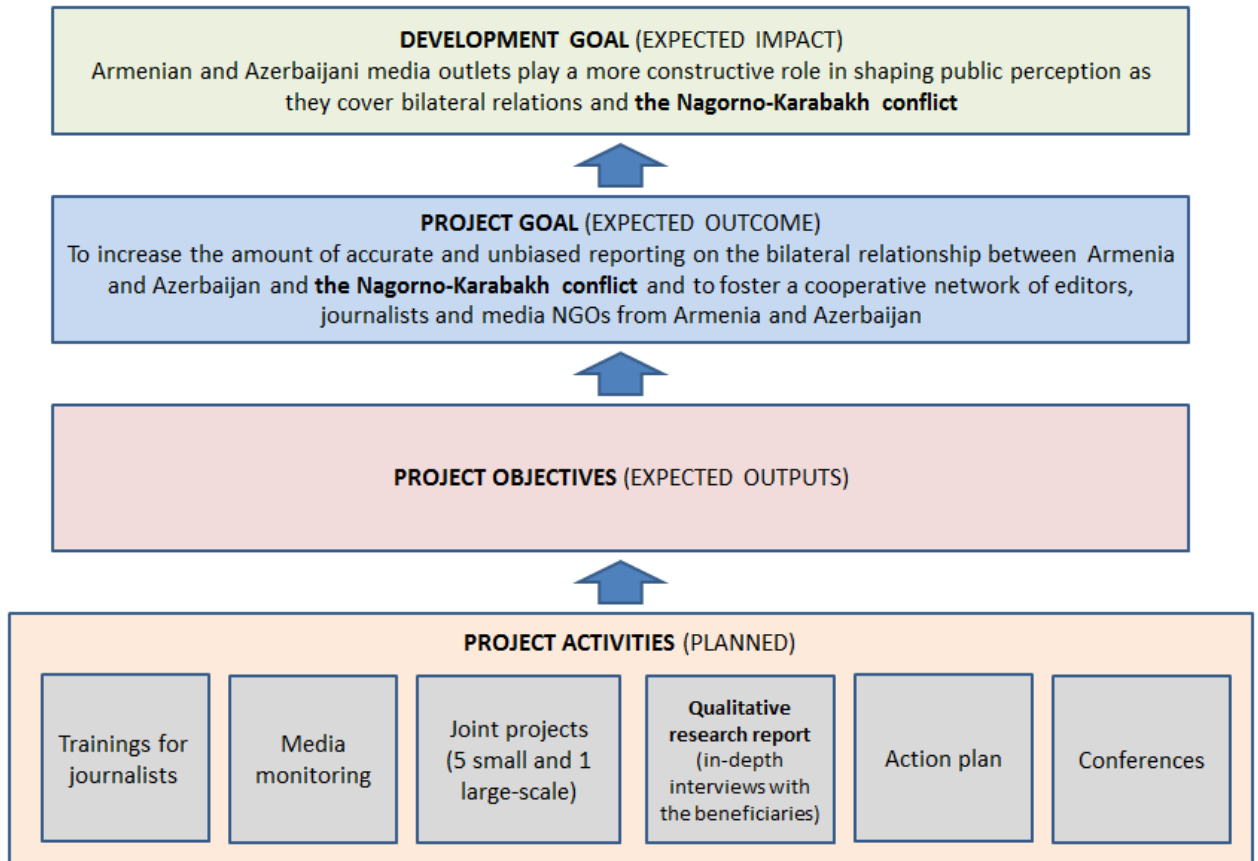
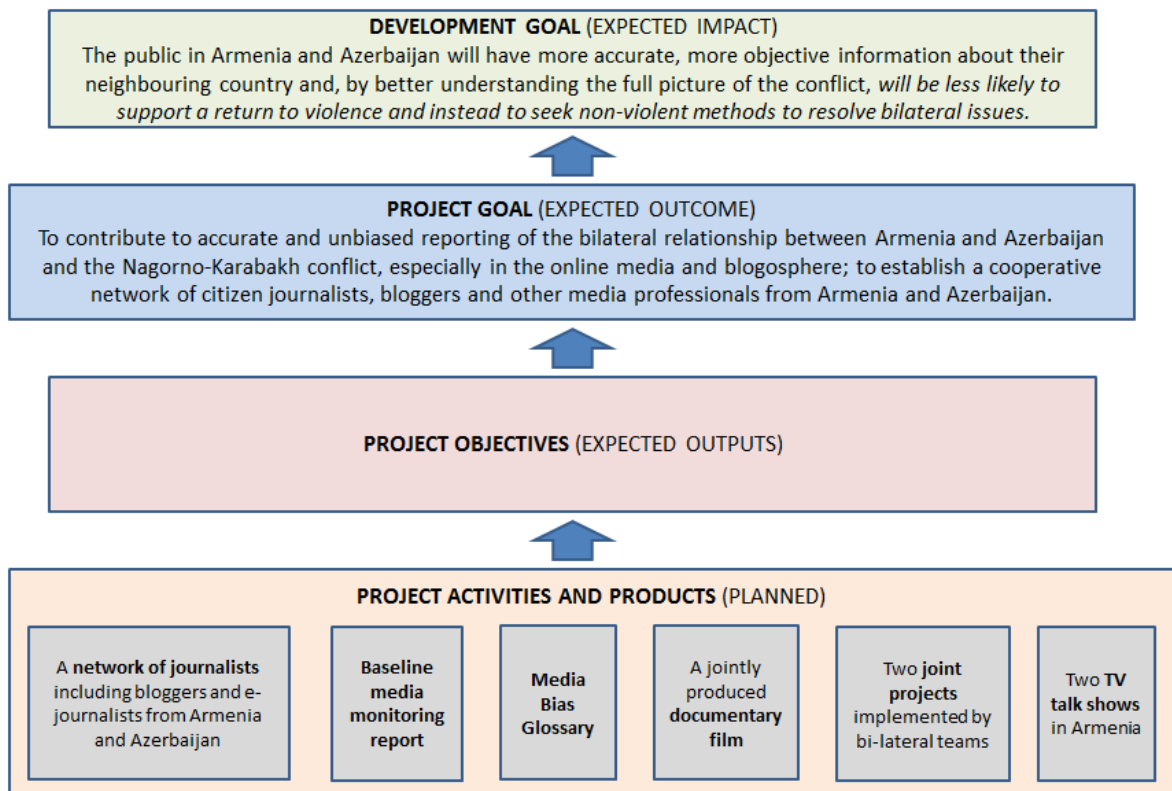


Figure 4. Project Model, Stage II



Project logic for the training component is reconstructed in Box 1. If journalists participate in the training, they will become aware of their biases and ways of writing unbiased reports (output). If this happens, they will change their behaviour and actually produce unbiased reports (outcome). If they produce unbiased reports, they will be published (impact). If those reports are published, people in both countries will gain access to more accurate and objective information.

Raising awareness and building participants' knowledge is largely under the project's control. Change of participants' behaviour in real life situations (production of unbiased reports), however, is only partially under project control because their behaviour depends on many other factors. Their editors' opinions, for example, are completely beyond the project's control. But if the project team considered all the risks properly, participants' behaviour may change as expected. Journalists may produce unbiased reports, but they need to be published in order to become available to people in the two countries. The project can not guarantee that the unbiased reports will be published as this is completely beyond its control. Hence, the impact level here is "media publishing unbiased reports." The project may contribute to this result if its "theory" is correct, but it can not guarantee the achievement of this result.

Box 1. Training component: logic reconstruction

- The public in Armenia and Azerbaijan will have more accurate, more objective information about their neighbouring country
- Unbiased reports are published (*impact*)
- Journalists produce unbiased reports (*outcome*)
- Journalists are aware of their biases and the ways of writing unbiased reports (*output*)
- Journalists participate in the training (*activity, not result*)

Another project component was media monitoring. A reconstruction of its logic model is shown in Box 2. For this component, the impact level will be at the change of journalists' behaviour.

Box 2. Media monitoring component: logic reconstruction

- Unbiased reports are published
- Journalists produce unbiased reports (*impact*)
- Journalists read monitoring reports and learn about the existing and potential problems with publications (*outcome*)
- Monitoring results are published and made available for journalists (*output*)
- Publications are monitored and analyzed (*activity, not result*)

Small joint projects such as production of cartoons or publication of a fiction book do not have an explicit clear logical link to the overall project framework. Some small projects such as film production had goals and objectives (Box 3).

Box 3. Film production goal and objectives

Goal: To increase the stakeholder awareness of existing mutual bias in Internet-based, electronic media coverage of Armenia-Azerbaijan relations and to avoid the misunderstanding of the information passed by the journalists and bloggers from each country.

Objectives:

- 1) Produce a joint film highlighting bias in Internet-based, electronic media in Armenia and Azerbaijan.
- 2) Increase awareness on mutual bias in Internet-based media among professional societies in Armenia and Azerbaijan.

As in the previous cases the logic or “theory” of this project needs to be ‘unpacked.’ A film is a product. In order to make a difference it should be shown to professional communities. If professionals in the two countries see it, their awareness of mutual bias in Internet-based media will increase. If their awareness increases, they will produce less biased Internet-based publications. If this happens, the information will become available to people in the two countries. If people read the information, they will become better informed.

Conclusions:

- *The project’s strategic intent was clearly described in the project documents.*
- *The outcomes of project Stages I and II were consistent.*
- *Stage II expanded Stage I from a focus on ‘traditional’ media to e-media.*
- *Project outputs were not explicitly presented in the project documents, which created a logical gap between activities and outcomes.*
- *The project included numerous activities that were supposed to make contributions to various project results, but some of those activities were not explicitly logically harmonized with the overall project framework.*
- *The expected long-term impact of the project was too ambitious for to the intended interventions.*

Recommendations:

- *Implementing partners should pay more attention to the development of a comprehensive project model (‘theory’) at the design stage with a special emphasis on avoiding logical gaps.*
- *All the project components including small projects should be logically harmonized with the overall project framework.*

CHAPTER 3. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

3.1. Following the project implementation plan

Stage I of the project (June 1, 2008–January 31, 2010) included the following activities:

- Exploration of public opinion and trust in media
- Baseline and final media monitoring
- Training for trainers
- Trainings for journalists and editors
- Development of a Joint Action Plan with recommendations and guidelines for initiatives that reduce bias in the media
- Qualitative research that included in-depth interviews with journalists in Armenia and Azerbaijan
- Implementation of pilot innovation projects (production of two films)
- Final conference of Armenian and Azerbaijani journalists and editors
- Second training for journalists and editors (was added later at no additional cost)

Stage II of the project (April 1, 2010–March 31, 2011) included:

- In-country (half-day) meeting with e-journalists and bloggers to present the project and discuss major issues of bias and cross-border work
- Baseline media monitoring (by Yerevan Press Club and Yeni Nesil) of 4–5 local Russian-language Internet-based news resources in each country
- Creation of the Media Bias Glossary (by YPC and Yeni Nesil)
- In-country (one-day) meeting in each country for identified beneficiaries to prepare for the joint workshop in Tbilisi
- Joint three-day workshop in Tbilisi to discuss the baseline media monitoring, qualitative research results, the glossary, and to develop joint project ideas
- Selection (by EPF) and implementation (by participating journalists) of joint projects
- Production of a documentary film describing the existing e-media bias in covering Armenian-Azerbaijan relations and its negative effects
- Concluding joint workshop (two days) in Tbilisi with project participants, partners, and donors to discuss project results. Participants will also finalize the Action Plan for the network of e-journalists, including plans for follow-on work and continued cooperation
- Two talk shows (in Armenia only) on the issue of media bias to generate public discussion
- A round table (in Azerbaijan) with participation of experts in conflict resolution area⁷.

Both stages of the project were largely implemented in accordance with the respective implementation plans. In March 2011, when this evaluation was conducted, we discovered that the project was behind schedule in only two cases: the final versions of the Media bias glossary and the fiction book were not ready yet. All other products were ready and all activities planned, including the final joint workshop in Tbilisi, were completed successfully and on time.

⁷ This activity has not been initially included into the project. The decision to implement it has been made in the course of the project to identify the strategy of EPF Azerbaijan in cross-border conflict related projects

We were informed that the Media bias glossary was in good shape (we saw the draft version) and that the implementing partners (Yerevan Press Club and Yeni Nesil) were finalizing it. It appeared likely that the glossary would be completed by the end of March.

Work on the fiction book was also progressing and we saw drafts of some stories. The delay was the result of lengthy negotiations during which the book concept evolved from a fantasy novel to a collection of short stories. The implementing partners assured us that they will complete the book soon.

3.2. Two countries with two different contexts for project implementation

All intended users of this evaluation report are aware that the environments for this joint project in Armenia and Azerbaijan are quite different. The reasons for those differences are also well known by the report's intended users and we shall not focus on them. In table 1 we focus on the differences in environments that affect project implementation. Quotes from interviews conducted in both countries that illustrate various aspects of the situation are italicised.

Table 1. Differences in the country contexts for project implementation

<i>Activity</i>	<i>In Armenia</i>	<i>In Azerbaijan</i>
Working in and with NK	Is welcomed by authorities and public. Avoiding that causes suspicion and pressure from the authorities. <i>“It would be much better for us to find opportunities to work with NK and in NK”</i>	Impossible de-facto. Could cause closure of an NGO or serious career problems. <i>“There is no way for us to work in NK”</i>
Dealing with Nagorny Karabakh theme	More or less OK for journalists and NGOs.	Risky. May cause negative reaction of authorities and public. <i>“It would be much better for us not to deal with the NK theme at all”</i>
Writing about another country and its people (for journalists)	Critical publications are more welcomed than unbiased. Possible to publish unbiased reports, but this is an extremely sensitive and somewhat risky area for a journalist. <i>“There is a trend to make such publications more negative than now”</i> <i>“Journalist is not 100% free to write what s/he wants and the way s/he wants to do it”</i>	Welcomed if the publication is critical and biased. Not welcomed if the publication is unbiased. <i>“There is a fashion to swear at the opposite side and such job is well paid”</i> <i>“I started using recommendations on how to avoid bias and very soon was prompted not to do so”</i>
Working with colleagues from another country	Is not very popular but does not seem to cause any problems for NGOs or journalists. <i>“We are working with our Azerbaijan partners for many years and will maintain our professional relationship in the future”</i>	Could cause serious problems and affect both the public image and career opportunities for a journalist. <i>“After our visit to Tbilisi a list of participants of our delegation was published on the web with the only purpose to show that we were dealing with Armenians”</i>

Having friends from another country/nation in the social networks such as Facebook	Does not seem to cause any problems. <i>“I am an active blogger for a long time and have not heard of any problems with that”</i>	Could cause negative reactions ranging from posts in the blogs to physical violence. May negatively affect public image. <i>“Somebody noticed several names of my Armenian friends in the Facebook and started a campaign against me”</i>
Writing on Armenian-Azerbaijani relations in the blog	Possible. Could cause intense and emotional discussions.	Possible. Could cause intense and emotional discussions.
Organizing public discussions of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations	Possible. Could be done both for professional communities such as journalists and for general public.	Impossible. Some people think that it could be done for certain professional groups such as students studying journalism or political science if prepared properly.
Organizing talk shows (radio or TV) to discuss relationships between the two countries	Not an easy thing to do, but possible. Needs to be properly prepared and facilitated.	Impossible. Will not be allowed by the media management and owners, let alone authorities

3.3. Relationships between the parties involved

3.3.1. The Eurasia Partnership Foundation offices

The key implementing partners are the offices of the Eurasia Partnership Foundation in Armenia and Azerbaijan. EPF is one of the very few organizations that has offices in both countries, which makes its position unique for implementation of cross-border projects.

Eurasia Partnership Foundation’s (EPF) mission is *“to empower people to effect change for social justice and economic prosperity through hands-on programs, helping them to improve their communities and their own lives. Through its foundations, registered locally in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, EPF raises and delivers seed capital to emerging civil society organizations.”*⁸

All EPF offices are guided by five program mandates and approaches: Creating Opportunities for Civic and Economic Participation; Building Capacity for Evidence-Based Research to Improve Policy-Making; Fostering a Culture of Corporate and Community Philanthropy; Cross-Border Cooperation; and Open Door Grant Making.

EPF offices have a common history of transition from purely grant-making entities to an organization combining operational programs with grant-making. Most likely EPF is heading towards operational programs in the future.

At the same time each EPF office is independent enough to set its own priorities based on consultations with local and international stakeholders and the EPF Board. Thus, offices in different countries can have different priorities and different combinations of programs. EPF Country Directors play an important role in the process of identifying priorities.

⁸ <http://www.epfound.org/about-us.html>

The project we are evaluating was jointly developed by the EPF Armenia and EPF Azerbaijan teams in 2008.

The project was started by a Country Director in Azerbaijan and was completed by a different, recently appointed Country Director. In addition, the project was managed by a person who was replaced by the current project manager in Azerbaijan at the end of the Stage I. This turnover of key project staff in Baku during these two years affected project continuity on the Azerbaijan side. The current EPF project team in Azerbaijan manages the project in a professional manner but is not overly excited about it. The project clearly does not fit the vision of the new EPF Country Director in Azerbaijan as she considers the changing country context and emerging challenges, some of which we described in a previous section of this report. She cares about the future of EPF office in Azerbaijan and is concerned about projects of this kind⁹ and their potential harm to EPF's image in the country.

The project team in Armenia has not changed since the beginning of the project. All three key people on the team, including EPF-Armenia's Country Director, are very excited about this project and peace building activities in general. This project perfectly fits their vision and they are willing to undertake new creative initiatives in this area. It is also important to mention that the EPF Country Director in Armenia has a very strong background in peace building while his counterpart in Azerbaijan has a professional background in another area.

The core joint project team that included EPF-Armenia and EPF-Azerbaijan went through a serious transition in the second half of the project. Differences in perception of the project, its results and effects caused difficult internal discussions that primarily affected new joint proposal, not the current project. The former does not include an NK theme and is presented as an initiative for developing dialogue between the two countries rather than as a peace building activity. The EPF-Armenia team has respected the opinions of their counterparts from Azerbaijan and understood the challenges they faced. As a result of a compromise, the new EPF proposal did not include components related to the YPC-YN and Internews areas of specialization. YPC with YN developed their own new joint proposal built on the results of their collaboration in this project. We also have information that Internews from both Armenia and Azerbaijan were considering their own new joint proposal. Hence, the current project resulted in three new project ideas developed independently by different partners.

3.3.2. Yerevan Press Club and Yeni Nesil

These two organizations are old-time partners that have implemented a number of projects together. Their leaders have known each other personally for many years. They have similar and very clear professional focuses presented in Box 4.

In the current project, these two organizations were responsible for media monitoring and for the development of a Media Bias Glossary. They did not experience any problems working together, even when facing contradictions. When it became clear that EPF did not include their component in the new proposal, they decided to continue on their own.

⁹ Activities that directly address tough, sensitive and contradictory issues related to NK and the bi-lateral relationships

Box 4. Profiles of YPC and YN

YEREVAN PRESS CLUB

Was founded in July 1995 and is the first professional association of journalists in Armenia, established during the post-communist period. YPC is a non-profit, non-governmental organization that unites journalists, publishers, media leaders and experts, irrespective of their political ideas.

YPC Mission¹⁰:

Support and development of independent and professional media, seeking to help strengthen democratic institutions and establish civil society in Armenia.

YPC Objectives:

- To defend the journalists' right of freedom of expression and of free access to information;
- To assist in improving the legislative and the economic base of the media;
- To promote professional contacts between Armenian and foreign media and individual journalists;
- To strive for respect and adoption of principles of professional ethics by journalists;
- To assist in the growth of journalists' professional skills - through various workshops, conferences, trainings, etc.

“YENI NESIL” (New Generation)¹¹

“Yeni Nesil” Journalist union has been established in 1994.

It is one of the most active professional organizations coordinating the public activity and professional development of journalists.

The issues of professional development, commercial stimulation of media coordination of social activities of media organizations are the mainstream concerns of Yeni Nesil.

The center works in the following directions:

- press club;
- research and
- protection of journalists' rights.

3.3.3. Joint teams implementing small projects

The joint teams that developed three documentary films faced certain challenges. The major one was to produce films that are both well ‘balanced’, which means in particular equal timing of Armenia- and Azerbaijan-related pieces and similar approaches for selecting materials. The problem was clearly stated by one of our informants: “When each of the two parties involved in the film production wants to communicate its own truth, it turns out to be lie for the counterpart.” The joint teams had to go carefully, step-by-step, systematically resolving the numerous contradictions that arose throughout the entire film production process. This was an extremely important experience for them and can be considered a model for how this kind of work can be done in joint creative teams that include professionals from Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The joint team that worked on the cartoons did not experience any problems. They were able to work very well because the nature of their activity that did not touch on sensitive issues such as NK or relationships between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Bloggers from the two countries worked smoothly together. Materials they published caused some intense virtual discussions, but the bloggers had no insurmountable contradictions.

3.3.4. Participants in the joint workshops for journalists

For many, the workshops were the first time they had met colleagues from the neighbouring country. One of the participants said, “We knew about them only from their publications...”

¹⁰ Retrieved from www.ypc.am/eng/

¹¹ Retrieved from <http://www.peacebuildingportal.org/index.asp?pgid=9&org=5204>

When you meet face to face, you better understand what can be done and what to do next.” The experience was powerful, though not necessarily enjoyable: “I really enjoyed the in-country workshop for journalists. The joint workshop in Tbilisi was not that successful as there was the opposite side represented and we had a lot of contradictions.” The trainers reported on non-constructive and non-tolerant behaviour of only one participant that created problems during the joint workshop. The majority of participants were open to new learning and, though the discussions were sometimes tough, they were beneficial.

Conclusions:

- *For the most part, both stages of the project were implemented in accordance with the respective implementation plans.*
- *The project had only two products that were behind schedule: the Media Bias Glossary and fiction book. Both will be completed shortly.*
- *The environment for implementation of this project was more favourable in Armenia than in Azerbaijan. Implementation of the project in Azerbaijan involved numerous risks for both implementing partners and participants. Hence, project results will most likely be more visible in Armenia than in Azerbaijan.*
- *The implementing partners and project participants faced serious contradictions when dealing with sensitive issues related to NK or Armenian-Azerbaijani relations. The implementers were consistent in their search for mutual compromise and succeeded in most cases, which was very important for the project and for the parties involved.*
- *The unresolved contradictions that remained led to a major revision of the nature of the next stage of the project by the EPF and to separation of the core implementing partners. EPF offices, YPC-YN, and INTERNEWS developed their future plans separately. This fact could be interpreted positively: the project resulted in three different proposals. But it is the end of a partnership established and maintained in the current project, which is a loss.*

Recommendations:

- *Differences in the country contexts and the related risks should be carefully explored and considered at the design stage of any cross-boarder project that involves Armenia and Azerbaijan.*
- *If the cross-border project is touching upon sensitive issues, contradictions between the parties involved should be expected. A process for resolving contradictions should be considered an important part of the project needing skilful facilitation.*

CHAPTER 4. PROJECT RESULTS

4.1. Research

4.1.1. Report on public opinion and trust in media

The English, Armenian, and Azerbaijani versions of the research paper on public attitude toward and trust in media, especially Armenia-Azerbaijan relations, were produced. The name of the report is “Who’s Paying Attention to What? Armenian and Azerbaijani International News Coverage—Empirical Findings and Recommendations for Improvement.” The research was conducted by the Caucasus Research Resource Centers.

The report included recommendations to the governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan, to local and international NGO communities, to journalists, to the donor and research communities. In particular, the report recommended conducting training for journalists that would address ethical issues and to support the development of e-media and e-journalism.

The English version of the report was presented to the English-speaking stakeholders in Armenia and Azerbaijan on October 28, 2008 and February 27, 2009 respectively. The Armenian and Azerbaijani versions of the report were presented to the Armenian and Azerbaijani journalists and editors in Yerevan and Baku respectively in the course of the in-country trainings in February and March 2009.

The jointly elaborated Action Plan considered the research findings and identified three major areas for future bilateral cooperation: a bilateral news web-site, a series of bilateral documentaries about the victims of the conflict, and a series of bilateral articles about the conflict and related topics. The second stage of the project was focused on e-media, which was in line with the report’s recommendations.

Conclusions:

- *The report was used extensively by the project and contributed to the achievement of the project goal,*
- *The intended use of the report was discussed at the design stage of the project, which allowed incorporation of the research results in the project context.*

4.2. Media monitoring and glossary

In the fall of 2008, the Yerevan Press Club (YPC) and Yeni Nesil (YN), with assistance from the two British experts, developed a media monitoring assessment methodology. Based on the elaborated methodology, YPC and YN conducted a parallel two-month baseline media monitoring. The methodology was further improved for the second (final) media monitoring that was held during fall 2009 and then for e-media monitoring in 2010. YPC and YN now possess a methodology that they can use for future conflict-sensitive media assessments.

The results of this media monitoring were used at the in-country trainings for journalists and at the regional workshops.

Media monitoring allowed the partners to take the next step towards a Media bias glossary that included clichés, stereotypes and invalid information most often used by the media of the two countries in covering Armenian-Azerbaijani relationships and NK conflict.

The implementing partners envision several possible uses of the glossary¹²:

- Trainings for journalists and editors based on the glossary.

¹² UPC and EN

- Creation of a full-scale dictionary related to the NK conflict based on the glossary.
- Development of professional standards for covering Armenian-Azerbaijani relations.
- Establishment of a joint “Bureau of Verification” website that would use the glossary to verify publications in Armenian and Azerbaijani media in accordance with professional norms.

Interestingly, most of the journalists from both countries with whom we talked gave two reasons for why they were not sure about the usefulness of the glossary for them. The most common opinion was: “I am smart and experienced enough to know how to be constructive and careful in my publications on this sensitive topic. I do not need any glossaries of this kind.” Another opinion was: “My editor will not allow me to change the style even if I wish to do so. Thus, the glossary will not help if the editor does not change his attitude.”

Boris Navasrdyan, one of the authors of the glossary and chairman of the Yerevan Press Club, argues that those opinions show that the glossary *is* needed and that journalists are simply not aware of how their biases affect their writing. It is difficult to develop unbiased reports and Boris suggests that an exercise at the beginning of a training for journalists might demonstrate that point.

Another co-author of the glossary, Arif Aliyev, chairman of Yeni Nesil, was not overly optimistic about the use of the glossary by Azerbaijani journalists. But he still thinks that the glossary could and should be used in professional training programs and that it will make a difference in the long-term.

Discussing the usefulness of the glossary with journalists who have not seen it was somewhat problematic and lack of the final product was a serious limitation for our analysis.

Conclusions:

- *The media monitoring methodology is an asset that proved effective and could be used in the future not only by YPC and YN, but also by other interested parties who have relevant professional backgrounds.*
- *The importance of the Media bias glossary is currently fully appreciated only by a small group of people that includes the authors of the glossary and representatives of the other key implementing partners. It will take the time and additional effort of the partners to promote the glossary in the professional community, convince journalists and editors to use it, and teach them how to use it. Meanwhile, it can be used by the project partners and their staff.*
- *It will be more problematic to promote and use the glossary in Azerbaijan than in Armenia.*
- *Both media monitoring and the glossary are innovative products that represent substantial contributions to the project’s intended goal. They are a good foundation for future media-related joint activities.*

Recommendations:

- *There is no need to recommend that YPC and YN continue their joint work as they are already doing that. We support this direction.*
- *YPC and YN should thoughtfully plan glossary promotion and consistently promote the glossary to achieve effect.*

- *EPF offices in Armenia and Azerbaijan need to decide if they are going to include media related activities in their future plans. If they decide to do so, YPC and YN will be excellent partners to work with, and the results of the current project might become an excellent foundation for such collaboration.*

4.3. Training for journalists

4.3.1. In-country trainings

In-country trainings for two groups of 20 local journalists were conducted in Armenia and Azerbaijan in February 2009. The subjects covered by the training were objective reporting, journalism ethical codes, and reporting in conflict settings. The reference material used for the training included the Armenian- and Azerbaijani-translated versions of the report on public attitudes toward and trust in media, and a report on the two-month baseline media monitoring in Armenia and Azerbaijan. Four Armenian editors and eight Azerbaijani editors joined the last day of the training in Yerevan and Baku respectively.

The second cycle of in-country training (in addition to the originally approved implementation plan for two groups of up to 15 local journalists) was conducted in Azerbaijan and Armenia in October and December 2009 respectively.

A total of 70 journalists from the two countries were trained at the in-country trainings.

Participants rated trainings highly, they reported on acquiring new knowledge and skills, and expressed their intent to apply their new knowledge and skills in their work.

4.3.2. Joint workshop

A three-day regional workshop for the selected group of participants in the in-country trainings and for project beneficiaries was held on March 27–29, 2009 in Tbilisi, Georgia. The participants included a total of 22 journalists from Armenia and Azerbaijan, four representatives of the EPF's core partners from Armenia and Azerbaijan, and EPF staff from Yerevan and Baku.

4.3.3 Qualitative study of the training results

This study was based on series of in-depth interviews conducted in both countries with the training participants. Unfortunately the researchers from Armenia and Azerbaijan did not come to consensus on the research methodology.

A research approach made perfect sense for the development of the project. The project had to be able to demonstrate whether there were any sustainable effects from the training that the participants brought back to their work in the two countries. Although we have doubts about the methodological rigor of some of the research components, the results of the in-depth interviews were without a doubt very insightful.

These interviews showed that prior to the training most participants published only one or two materials on the NK theme or Armenian-Azerbaijani relations. After the training most participants who participated in the qualitative study said they preferred not to write on the topic at all, considering its complexity and sensitivity. Several prominent journalists who write about NK and relations between the two countries and who did not participate in the training were also interviewed (at least in Armenia). They said that they could not imagine participating in a training with Azerbaijani colleagues and would not put their professional reputation at risk by doing so.

Thus, the research raised at least three important questions:

- 1) Was the target audience of the training the most relevant for the project goal?
- 2) Was the training a relevant tool to affect the most active and well-known journalists writing about NK and Armenian-Azerbaijani relations?
- 3) What lessons could be learned from the fact that the training participants chose not to get involved with the project core theme?

Conclusions:

- *In-country trainings and the regional workshop were conducted in a very professional manner.*
- *Training was effective. Participants' reaction¹³ to the training was very positive. Most likely, participants acquired new knowledge and skills. In many cases training also affected their attitudes. Participants' behaviour changed after the training, but in an unexpected way: instead of choosing to produce unbiased reports they chose to avoid writing on the sensitive topic altogether.*
- *The majority of the training participants were not the most prominent and active journalists, and any changes in their behaviour is likely to make only minor contribution to the project impact (unbiased media coverage of the conflict). In the longer term the effect may become more visible.*
- *Training is not a relevant tool for influencing most prominent and active journalists.*

Recommendations:

- *Continue conducting in-country trainings for journalists and students studying journalism to achieve long-term effects: the more journalists who are informed about unbiased reporting, the better. One of the possible options might be an online course.*
- *This kind of training for the same target group should not be used to achieve immediate or short-term changes in journalists' behaviour.*
- *If EPF continues working with media, it should look for alternative and more relevant ways of communicating the message to the most active and popular journalists. Professional associations such as YPC and YN may help to find the right mode for this focused work and might become good EPF partners for such projects.*

4.4. Documentary films

4.4.1. "Neither War nor Peace"

This is a short documentary film that included interviews with ex-participants of the war in NK. The film is about the impact of the Nagorno Karabakh War on the destiny and lives of ordinary people from Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The film is available on the web.¹⁴ Peace Dialogue¹⁵ (Armenian NGO) reports on how the film was used to have thematic group discussions with young people in Armenia. We are aware of several other group discussions that took place in Armenia.

¹³ We are following the Kirkpatrick's 4-level model of evaluating training results (1. reaction, 2. knowledge and skills, 3. behavior in the real-life situation, and 4. system change). More information on Kirkpatrick's approach is available at <http://www.kirkpatrickpartners.com/>

¹⁴ <http://www.vimeo.com/18781418>

¹⁵ http://www.peacedialogue.am/english/activity_more.php?SID=2&AID=293&TopicId=7&Language=Eng

4.4.2. “Passenger”

This is a short documentary film made by Armenian and Azerbaijani journalists, Christina Vardanian and Framan Nabiyeu. The film includes conversations between the passengers and drivers of taxis in Yerevan and in Baku while listening to the Azerbaijani and Armenian music respectively.

The film has been available on the web since the Fall of 2010 and has been uploaded to the Armenian Media Blog¹⁶ and the EPF-Armenia website¹⁷. The film was used in several group discussions in Armenia.

The DVDs with both films (“Neither War nor Peace” and “Passenger”) were distributed among the participants of the second round training of the first stage and among the participants of the second stage of the project from both countries. They were also given to the NGOs working in conflict-resolution area such as Society for Humanitarian Research (Azerbaijan). Both films are available at Youtube.

4.4.3. WWW.ВОЙНА

This is a jointly produced documentary film describing the existing mutual bias in web-based media sources and blogs in Armenia and Azerbaijan. The film was completed just before the March 2011 regional workshop in Tbilisi and is still not as actively disseminated as the previous two. This film has not been put on the internet, its final version is only now being finalized, and it has not been discussed sufficiently. The difference of this film from the previous two is that it is the most challenging one. Thus the project partners agreed that they may not put it on internet at all. The EPF Baku office major comment was that this film makes people who watch it wanting to become media war propagandists rather than the other way around, thus the producers were asked to include some more explanation and guidance in the film to make sure that it is clear from the perspective of the authors that war propaganda and media war promotion are not good things to do.

We are going to analyse these three films in the context of the project, and will not assess their quality or adherence to professional standards for producing documentaries.¹⁸

These films were supposed to

- contribute to accurate and unbiased reporting of the bilateral relationship between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (project goal),
- help the public in Armenia and Azerbaijan to get more accurate, more objective information about their neighbouring country and better understand the full picture of the conflict (project impact), and
- make it less likely that people in the two countries will support a return to violence (high level impact).

As described above, the first two¹⁹ films (“Neither War nor Peace” and “Passenger”) were made available online. Several thousand people saw those films sitting in front of their computers. The project had no control over their reactions and thoughts. The project hope was that after watching those films people would have “more objective information about their neighboring country” and would tend “to seek non-violent methods to resolve bilateral issues.” Thus, the

¹⁶ <http://www.ditord.net/2010/09/passenger-armenian-azerbaijani-cross.html>

¹⁷ <http://vimeo.com/14736639>

¹⁸ Several experts told us that the professional quality of the films is high

¹⁹ It has been decided by the project partners that the third film on Internet ‘wars’ will not be put online

primary way to discover whether the films contributed to the project is to gather information on how common people in the two countries reacted to the films.

A relatively simple way of obtaining this information is to organize focus-groups in Armenia and Azerbaijan. We could not take this approach due to time and budget constraints. Nevertheless, we do have some information on how people reacted to the films from our observations and from the Web.

The screening of “Neither War nor Peace” at the Peace Dialogue in Armenia gave us some clues: “According to participants, the documentary raised controversial feelings. On one hand, when they heard from the Azeri²⁰ character, words like ‘Khojalu,’ or ‘disaster,’ they became very angry. On the other hand, they felt pity for the people who suffered from the conflict—regardless of ethnicity.”

“Passenger” (feedback from our interviewees):

- “Good film. It shows that Azerbaijani people are less aggressive than Armenians. This is very true.”
- “I think that the Armenian part of it demonstrates variety of opinions, and the Azerbaijani part is simply well orchestrated.”

“www.война” (feedback from our interviewees):

- “When I saw the map of Armenia that included NK I became angry.”
- “The hacker from Azerbaijan is a criminal. In my country they would sue him. Such things are not appreciated in Armenia.”
- “This is not a peace building film.”

These reactions illustrate that the effect of the film may not be in line with the project’s intent, if the film is simply uploaded to the web and made available to everybody. However, if the film is used in an explicit context, such as skilfully facilitated group discussion before and after the screening, the results could be closer to what the project is hoping for. After this kind of discussion at the Peace Dialogue, young people said: “The film was very impressive, as it was addressed towards peace. Both conflicting sides do not wish for a new war, as they had passed through such disasters. Although I was too young during the war to remember anything at the time, the stories from my parents and relatives had left an impression of how terrible the events were. I would not like this to repeat.”

We believe that the films themselves are neither peace building nor conflict provoking. The effect of the films depends on the context. If the project does not offer an explicit constructive context, it is likely that the films will only trigger negative and aggressive reactions arising from the existing contexts in the two countries. Without a compelling, future-oriented context, there will be little desire to seek non-violent methods to resolve bilateral issues.

Conclusions:

- *The documentary films are quality products of journalism that address tough issues in the bilateral relationships. The films demonstrate an unbiased approach²¹ to presenting information by journalists: they describe the situation as it is and care about keeping the right balance.*
- *The films cause emotional reactions of the audience in the two countries.*

²⁰ Interestingly, even the Peace Dialogue is using inappropriate language here. If our understanding is correct, they should have used “Azerbaijani” rather than “Azeri.”

²¹ ‘Unbiased’ in this case means that the film producers are not biased in their intent to show the life as it is. Some characters in the films are extremely biased indeed. One of the goals of the films is to show that.

- *The films could become important assets in achieving the project goal, but only if embedded in special contexts constructed for that purpose. Without such an explicit context, all three films will most likely trigger negative emotional reactions and anger in audiences in both countries.*
- *The project did not include construction of effective contexts for the film. The films created a good foundation for future efforts rather than a contribution to the achievement of the present project's goal.*

Recommendation:

- *The project partners should develop strategies and toolkits for using the films purposefully with consideration for the overall project logic and its hierarchy of goals. This work could become a natural follow-up for this project.*
- *Explore audience reactions to the films by using focus groups.*

4.5. Cartoons

Four joint Armenian-Azerbaijani cartoon shorts on social topics were going to focus “on the contribution to the reconciliation between the ordinary people of the two countries that have lived in an unsettled conflict situation for decades or at least on tolerant attitude towards opposite side.”²²

The cartoons were published online on YouTube and shared through Facebook and other social networks.

Conclusion:

- *The project proved that this creative way of communicating messages predominantly to Internet-users is both technologically doable and cost-effective. It could be used in the future.*

Recommendations:

- *Further explore this opportunity.*
- *Consider project logic and the expected contribution and effect of the cartoons.*
- *Consider involving experts such as social psychologists and PR specialists in developing the characters and scenarios.*
- *Explore audience reactions and use this knowledge.*

4.6. Blogs and online articles

4.6.1. “The Neutral Zone”

This is the blog platform of the Caucasus Edition of the Journal of Conflict Transformation.²³ Its aim is “to serve as a platform for alternative voices from Armenia and Azerbaijan on social and cultural issues with focus on tradition, culture, education, healthcare, society and sensitive topics such as domestic violence, rights of minorities and more.”²⁴

“The Neutral Zone” blog has a section called “Parallel Stories” that features posts written by two authors, one Armenian and one Azerbaijani, on various topics of mutual interest.

²² SERVICE CONTRACT (#EPF-IP/UMC-10-11-29)

²³ <http://caucasusedition.net/about/>

²⁴ <http://caucasuseditionblog.wordpress.com/>

4.6.2. Articles

Production of joint Armenian-Azerbaijani articles on Armenians living in Azerbaijan and Azerbaijanis living in Armenia was part of Stage II of the project. The intent of this component was to show that despite the conflict people remained and continue living across the conflict divides. Articles covering the life stories of those people were published online²⁵ and disseminated through various online tools.²⁶

4.6.3. Women's voices online²⁷

This website created an opportunity for women, whose voices are often not heard in either country, to tell their stories and hear the stories of other women, notably from the other side of the border. Within the three-month span of the project, stories were collected through in-depth interviews with Armenian and Azerbaijani women, both in Yerevan and Baku as well as in the regions. The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, translated, and then put online.

All the publications were followed by active online discussions. Many comments were positive and somewhat nostalgic, but some comments were very aggressive despite the nature of the publications.

It is well known that in order to be attractive a web resource must be maintained and renewed regularly. Empirical studies showed that to make a blog popular one has to write at least two posts a week. Thus, to become 'attraction areas' the websites and blogs started under this project should be maintained in the future. This is not a costly activity. "The Neutral Zone" seems to have better prospects than the other resources.

Conclusion:

- *Web-based activities were successful: publications attracted attention of the Internet audience and stimulated online discussions that were skilfully moderated by the project participants*

Recommendations:

- *Implementing partners should maintain resources developed under this project. As one of the participants said, "The success should be measured not by the number of new initiatives, but by the number of sustained activities."*

4.7. Fictional book

The concept of this small project was to foster cooperation between two writers who create moving images involved in communication that can be described as civilized and compassionate toward the position of their perceived adversary. The Armenian and Azerbaijani writers were expected to follow the same schedule in writing chapters for the book and posting them online.

We can't say anything about this result as the work on the book was still in progress at the time we conducted evaluation.

4.8 Cross-border projects, relativity theory and criteria for success

In this section we would like to comment on the conversation around the unique and innovative nature of some of the products developed in the course of the project under evaluation, and more generally, on criteria for the success of a cross-border project. We joined this conversation that has been ongoing between the core project partners in the course of the evaluation.

²⁵ For instance on the news portal CONTACT (<http://contact.az/>)

²⁶ Such as Zarema Valikhanova's blog at <http://ru-ru.facebook.com/people/Zarema-Velikhanova/589760173>

²⁷ <http://armazwomen.wordpress.com/about/>

The EPF Armenia team considers the film on Internet ‘wars’ and the glossary far more advanced than any other results: “Metaphorically, they are Einstein’s theory of relativity in the world which still believes that the earth is flat. The very fact that two teams advanced and went so far in exploring each others’ issues, disconnecting themselves from the public opinion and the peculiar ‘censorship’ (the ‘glass ceiling’, what is ‘allowed’ to do in ‘peace’ or ‘dialogue’ projects and what is not), is another unexpected outcome of this project.”

EPF Azerbaijan also appreciates the efforts of the joint teams and the progress made, but points out that the actual usefulness of these products for developing cross-border relationships and achieving the overall project goal has yet to be proven.

EPF Armenia argues that Internews’ job is to produce high quality films: “Internews naturally considers the product as the key result, not paying much attention on its future destiny: how can it be promoted, what will be its impact on the public in both countries, etc. Thus they behave as a creative personality who is not market oriented, and EPF’s value added might be to try to help to shape their products’ social consequences and situate them in the dialogue or confidence-building processes.”²⁸ EPF Armenia’s conclusion is that simple market and social tools do not work in this case: “One cannot make a focus group decide whether or not the scientist should work on his physics invention or abandon it because people do not understand it.”

We agree that:

- The joint teams did an excellent job resolving numerous contradictions and addressing the most sensitive issues in their creative products
- The films and glossary are products that can potentially be used for fostering cross-boarder dialogue
- EPF’s value added might be to help shape these products’ social consequences and situate them in dialogue or confidence-building processes.

Based on the data collected we have concluded that EPF partially succeeded in shaping social consequences for the glossary but achieved less progress in shaping social consequences for the films. We believe that this work can be continued.

However, we also believe that the relativity theory metaphor is not 100% relevant to the current project. Even physicists are not supposed to undertake fundamental research when being paid to do something very specific and immediately usable.²⁹ The present project had specific goals and objectives and all of the products developed for the project should contribute to these intended results. Any product shortcomings should be considered the project’s shortcomings if they don’t.

There are additional logical connections. Contradictions might occur among the criteria for project success, if for some reason an implicit project theory were operating in addition to the explicit project theory described in the project documents. If the implicit criteria were not aligned with the explicit formalized criteria for success, there might be contradictory results. On the one hand, the implementing agency might be happy with a project that is not achieving its formal goals but is achieving the implicit goals. On the other hand, achieving project’s formal goals might not satisfy implementers if the implicit goals are not being achieved.

To illustrate this last point we have created an example based on the project under evaluation. The example does not necessarily reflect the real situation with the project. We are just using some project-related data to construct an *implicit* project theory.

Let us imagine that the joint project’s implicit goal is to support sustainable bilateral partnerships that may not change the overall situation dramatically but may become models for possible

²⁸ A similar point has been made by EPF Armenia about YN-YPC.

²⁹ It goes without saying that even if the product is outstanding in some respects, one has to prove that it is as great as ‘relativity theory.’ Thus, it is important that at least some other people (the brightest ones) understand how great it is and why.

collaboration and interlocutors across the divide if conflict were to escalate. The more partnerships of this kind exist, the more likely their overall impact on relationships between the two nations. Such partnerships might become a long-term donor and/or implementer strategy for preventing future conflict escalation. If this were the case, the key criteria for success should be related to bilateral partnerships (small groups) rather than to the impact of their activities and products on the general public. These criteria³⁰ might include:

- Common understanding of the partnership's mission, strategy' and objectives
- Common system of values
- Clear division of responsibilities between the partners and mutual dependency
- Equality in the rights of the partners and mutual benefit
- Reliability of the partners
- Stability and professionalism of partner organizations, availability of permanent teams from both sides
- Effective monitoring and self-evaluation
- Duration of joint activities
- Effective communication
- Joint creative work
- Open, fair and mutually supportive relationship between the partners
- Good interpersonal relationships between representatives of partner organizations at all levels

We might add two more criteria based on organization development research.³¹

Experience of successful joint work resolving problems of

(a) external adaptation, and

(b) internal integration of the partnership.

The more challenging and risky the partnership mission is and the more problems the partners resolve together, the greater the likelihood that they will build a strong organizational culture.

If we apply all these criteria to the partnerships established or maintained in the course of the project under evaluation,³² we come to the conclusion that the project successes were the partnerships between Internews-Armenia and Internews-Azerbaijan and between YN and YPC. This remains an unambiguous conclusion, notwithstanding the insufficient evidence of the expected influence on the Armenian and Azerbaijani general public of the products developed by these two partnerships. According to the *implicit* theory we constructed, the most important result of the present project would be the fact that the partners went to such great lengths in their search for freedom and mutual understanding in an extremely tense environment.

How can a contradiction between implicit and explicit project theories be resolved when it occurs in a real life situation? We believe that it depends not only on the implementing partners, but also on the donor. The donor's policy and theory of change either allow or do not allow partners to explicitly describe what they believe in and really want to achieve. Sometimes applicants simply have to "pack" their real intents to fit the requirements of the formal grant competition. We are not saying that this is the case with the project under evaluation and its donor. But it might be an interesting idea for EPF to discuss the overall cross-border partnerships strategy and the criteria for its success with the donor.

³⁰ Kuzmin, A. (2000). Evaluation of International Institutional Partnership Projects. Paper presented at the Evaluation '2000 Annual Conference of the American Evaluation Association.

³¹ This criteria is based on the Edgar Schein's definition of organizational culture: "A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way you perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems." Schein, E., H. (1992). *Organizational Culture and Leadership* . (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

³² Applying them to the EPF-Armenia and EPF-Azerbaijan partnership might become another interesting exercise

CHAPTER 5. MEETING THE FUTURE CHALLENGES

*“If you’re not part of the solution, then you’re part of the problem”
An observation often attributed to 1960s American activist Eldridge Cleaver*

We believe that the main challenges EPF faces in the area of cross-border projects between Armenia and Azerbaijan are inside the organization.

‘Reboot’ the relationships between the two EPF offices

To develop and implement joint projects EPF offices in Armenia and Azerbaijan need to foster dialogue and look for new opportunities with consideration of their experiences and capacities, strategic priorities and interests, visions of their leaders, and of course local contexts. Developing constructive dialogue and collaboration between the two offices is a prerequisite for any future success. This task is of strategic importance for the organization and is not an easy one. The two teams and their leaders will need to demonstrate genuine good will toward each other, use their professional skills to resolve existing and emerging contradictions, and negotiate mutually beneficial decisions that further their future endeavours.

Stay as “One EPF”³³ in cross-border activities

In principle, there are opportunities for the EPF offices in Armenia and Azerbaijan to develop cross-border activities with partners other than their EPF counterpart from the neighbouring country. Potentially, given their history and extensive networking, the EPF office in Azerbaijan can find some partner(s) in Armenia and EPF-Armenia can partner with some NGO(s) in Azerbaijan to implement cross-border activities. We believe that this scenario will be destructive for the EPF community and can become harmful for EPF’s image in the two countries and beyond. When it comes to cross border projects, the organization should operate as “One EPF.” While speaking about their collaboration with organizations from the neighbouring country one of our informants made an interesting statement about a core principle they follow: “We have a ‘symmetry principle’ which is very important for joint projects: when there are some things our partner can’t do for some reason, we also exclude those things from our agenda.”

Explore opportunities for using assets created in the current project (assets include both relationships and products.)

During the current project, EPF established relationships with very professional, well known and highly respected media organizations such as the Yerevan Press Club, Yeni Nesil and Internews. It goes without saying that those relationships could be an asset if EPF wants to keep media in its sphere of interests in the long term. EPF may want to discuss its strategy of work with media in the context of cross-border activities and look for new opportunities for maintaining relationships with its media-partners.

Several products developed by the current project, such as films, articles, blogs, websites, cartoons, and research reports, can be used in future cross-border activities, whether or not any media partners are involved. EPF may want to brainstorm how to use these products in future projects. Some of the possible ways of using those products were discussed in previous chapters. More opportunities can certainly be found.

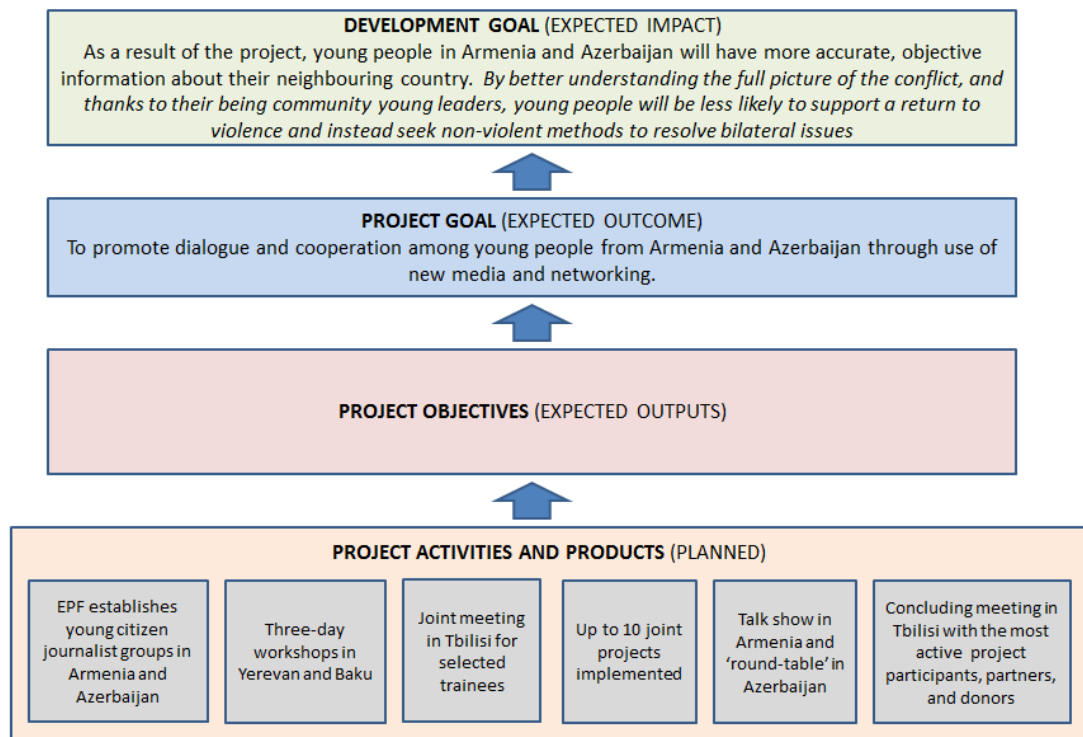
Use the new joint project to address the issues mentioned above

EPF-Armenia and EPF-Azerbaijan have an excellent opportunity to address all of the issues mentioned above and to build on the lessons learned from the current project in the course of implementing their new joint project (see Figure 5). In this respect the new project becomes even

³³ We purposefully used the analogy with the well-known “One UN” initiative

more important and meaningful for the organization. We would like to point out that the project target group (youth) and the idea of using new media and networking were very well-founded.

Figure 5. Model of the new EPF joint cross-boarder project



Consider the following practical steps:

- add financial and other resource opportunities to more frequently discuss together the overall environment for peace and conflict related projects, dialogue, confidence-building etc.
- organize training in conflict sensitivity, resolution, transformation etc.
- build EPF knowledge and database on existing past and current similar projects
- cooperate on a larger scale with other implementers of similar undertakings and via mutual influence to both increase the impact or all projects as well as criticize each other and better our strategies
- have a skilful international facilitator who goes from the country to the country and helps the two offices in their dialogue work.

CHAPTER 6. MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Main conclusions.

Project design

The project strategic intent was clearly described in the project documents. Stage II expanded Stage I from ‘traditional’ media to e-media. The outcomes of both Stages I and II of the project were consistent.

Project outputs were not explicitly presented in the project documents, creating a logical gap between activities and outcomes. We were told that describing outputs in the terms of activities implemented is a common practice in EPF.

The project concept included numerous activities that were supposed to make contributions to various project results, but some of those activities were not properly logically harmonized with the overall project framework.

The expected long-term impact of the project was too ambitious given the intended interventions.

Project implementation

For the most part, both stages of the project were implemented in accordance with the respective implementation plans. The project had only two products that were behind schedule: the Media Bias Glossary and the fiction book. Both will be completed shortly.

The environment for implementation of this project was more favourable in Armenia than in Azerbaijan. Implementation of the project in Azerbaijan involved numerous risks for both implementing partners and participants. Hence, project results will most likely be more visible in Armenia than in Azerbaijan.

The implementing partners and project participants faced serious contradictions when dealing with sensitive issues related to NK or Armenian-Azerbaijani relations. The implementers were consistent in their search for mutual compromise and succeeded in most cases, which was very important for the project and for the parties involved.

Project results

The project developed a variety of creative products such as documentary films, research reports, media monitoring reports, Media Bias Glossary, cartoons, articles, blogs, and a fictional book. These products constitute a valuable asset that could be used in future activities and as a foundation for future projects. In this respect, the project worked as a highly effective creative laboratory for joint cross-border, media-related activities.

Some products such as films could become important assets in achieving the project goal but only if embedded into a special context constructed for that purpose. Without the latter they most likely will trigger negative emotional reactions and anger in audiences in both countries.

The trainings for journalists were effective and participant reactions to the trainings were very positive. Most likely, participants acquired new knowledge and skills and in many cases the training also affected their attitudes. Participants’ behaviour changed after the training, but in an unexpected way: instead of producing unbiased reports they chose to avoid writing on the sensitive topic.

The majority of training participants were not the most prominent and active journalists. It seems likely that changes in these participants’ behaviour can make only minor contributions to

“unbiased media coverage of the conflict,” the project’s intended impact. In the longer term the effect may become more visible. Training is not a relevant tool for influencing most prominent and active journalists.

Web-based activities were successful: publications attracted the attention of an Internet audience and stimulated online discussions that were skilfully moderated by project participants.

Future challenges

The main challenges EPF faces in the area of cross-boarder projects between Armenia and Azerbaijan are inside the organization

6.2. Main recommendations.

Recommendation 1.

Implementing partners should pay more attention to the development of a comprehensive project model (‘theory’) at the design stage with a special emphasis on avoiding logical gaps. All the project components including small projects should be logically harmonized with the overall project framework. To do so EPF may need to revise the existing practice of describing project logic in general and project outputs in particular.

Recommendation 2.

Differences in the country contexts and the related risks should be carefully explored and considered at the design stage of any cross-border project that involves Armenia and Azerbaijan. If the cross-border project is touching upon sensitive issues, contradictions between the parties involved should be expected. A process for resolving contradictions should be considered an important part of the project that needs skilful facilitation.

Recommendation 3.

Explore opportunities for using assets created in the current project. Note that some products such as films or glossary are not the final results in terms of the project intent. They need to be embedded into a properly constructed context to make a contribution to the achievement of the project’s expected goal and impact.

Recommendation 4.

The project partners should develop strategies and toolkits for using such products as films purposefully, with consideration of the overall project logic and hierarchy of goals. This work could become a natural follow-up for this project. It will be important to explore audience reactions to the products, for example by using focus groups.

Recommendation 5.

EPF offices in Armenia and Azerbaijan need to foster dialogue and look for new opportunities with consideration of their experiences and capacities, strategic priorities and interests, visions of their leaders and local contexts. When it comes to cross-border projects, the organization should operate as “One EPF.” The new joint project could be used effectively to ‘reboot’ and further develop relations between the two offices.

ANNEX 1. Scope of Work

Unbiased Media Coverage of Armenia-Azerbaijan Relations

Project Evaluation

February 2011

Eurasia Partnership Foundation (EPF) is a development agency that does both program implementation and grants management in the South Caucasus. EPF is comprised of three locally registered offices in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia and governed by a Board of Trustees made up of international figures with expert knowledge of the region. With nearly 15 years of experience in the field of grassroots civil society development, and more than ten years of experience implementing cross-border programs, first as a representative office of Eurasia Foundation and now as locally registered foundations in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, EPF is uniquely positioned to lead and coordinate partnership programs across the conflict divide. Since the late 1990s, through a number of operational projects and grants to local organizations, EPF has supported collaborative cross-border initiatives between partners in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. These initiatives have addressed shared regional challenges by developing common approaches among engaged citizen groups. Regional issues addressed through these initiatives ranged from independent media dialogue, through cross-border civic dialogue on European integration, to consumer rights protection and peace- and confidence-building.

Overview

Eurasia Partnership Foundation (EPF) seeks an evaluator to carry out a qualitative evaluation of two stages of its *Unbiased Media Coverage of Armenia-Azerbaijan Relations* project supported by UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office in Armenia and Azerbaijan, and implemented in close collaboration with four core partners: Yeni Nesil (Azerbaijan), Yerevan Press Club (Armenia), Internews-Armenia, and Internews-Azerbaijan

The first phase of the project (June 2008 - January 2010) aimed at increasing the amount of accurate and unbiased reporting on the bilateral relationship between Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as fostering a cooperative network of editors, journalists, and media NGOs from Armenia and Azerbaijan. The project combined focus group research on public perceptions about media bias with training for 30 television, radio, electronic, and newspaper journalists and editors in each country, as well as meetings to foster dialogue between these journalists. It also produced two separate media monitoring assessments that measured changes in bias and further documented the types of inaccuracies that frequently occur. Finally, an innovation fund supported small cross-border pilot projects addressing issues of bias.

The aims of the second phase of the project (May 2010 - March 2011) coincide with those of the first phase while focusing on Internet media and the blogosphere. EPF and its partners worked to establish a cooperative network of up to 30 citizen journalists, bloggers, and other media professionals from Armenia and Azerbaijan, conducted a baseline assessment of the bias in Internet-based media in Azerbaijan and Armenia, developed a Media Bias Glossary, and produced a 20-25 minute documentary film describing the existing mutual bias in web-based media sources and blogs in Armenia and Azerbaijan. The project takes a capacity-building

approach to all the main activities, so that participating journalists and bloggers build skills and experience that will last beyond the life of the project.

The objectives of the evaluation are:

- To assess the effectiveness of the tools (focus groups report, media content monitoring reports, in-country trainings, regional workshops in Tbilisi, joint small projects, etc.) in changing the perceptions and professional development of its participants (journalists and bloggers in each country).
- To assess the quality of the products (small projects, media content monitoring reports, glossary, films, etc.) produced as part of the two phases of the project and their correspondence to the project intent.
- To assess the impact of the project and its products on the societies (recognizing that the impact has been limited and that its assessment will be qualitative).
- To issue recommendations for future strategies of EPF on Armenia-Azerbaijan dialogue work, particularly within the focus of the project, i.e. working with young people, media, e-media, bloggers, etc.

The evaluation should comprise a combination of **desk research** (analysis of the products, such as research reports, assessments, films, articles, etc..) and **personal interviews** with EPF staff, core partners, donors, participants, beneficiaries of the project, and other civil society and media representatives (about 30 interviews in total).

The evaluator should travel to Yerevan and Baku and, possibly, to Tbilisi where the concluding meeting of the project will take place on March 17-19, 2011.

EPF has allocated up to USD 12,000 for the evaluation. This is a gross amount that includes honoraria, taxes, transportation, accommodation, and meal expenses. At the same time, EPF will help the evaluator(s) with a) the arrangement of the air and ground transportation to/from the region and within the region and b) the arrangement of accommodation in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia.

Also, miscellaneous costs related to the evaluation, such as translation/interpretation, can be covered directly by EPF.

The results of the evaluation will be presented to the Donor and shared with other stakeholders in both countries. It might be also used as a guide for EPF's further Armenia-Azerbaijan projects.

Deliverables

- Final report, including methodology, not exceeding 20 pages. The report should be in English, and should include an executive summary, main findings, key conclusions, and recommendations.
- A power-point presentation summarizing the report.

Timeframe

- February 10, 2011: request for applications announced
- February 22, 2011: deadline for applications
- February 28, 2011: selection of evaluator announced
- March 7, 2011: start of evaluation

- March 17-19, 2011: regional meeting in Tbilisi; a first draft version of the evaluation findings presented to EPF
- March 25, 2011: the second draft of the evaluation findings presented to EPF for Comment
- April 1, 2011: the final version of evaluation and PPT presentation completed and submitted to EPF

Applicant Eligibility

Individual evaluators or teams consisting of individual evaluators are eligible to apply. The evaluator(s) should meet the following criteria:

- Experience in evaluating peace-building regional projects
- Good knowledge and understanding of the South Caucasus region
- Fluency in Russian and English languages
- Ability to cooperate with a multi-ethnic/multi-cultural team
- Citizenship of a third country (not of Armenia or of Azerbaijan)
- Ideally, the applicant should not be a resident of either Armenia or Azerbaijan.

Application Package

Applicants must submit:

- A letter of interest
- Action plan including proposed methodology
- Budget
- Short descriptions of the three most recent evaluations of a similar type conducted by the applicant OR other type of work (i.e. research) that can demonstrate the ability of the applicant to conduct the evaluation (descriptions not to exceed one paragraph each).
- CV

Review Process and Selection

Please note that cost-effectiveness of the proposed action plan and budget will be one of the major selection criteria.

The deadline for the submission of application packages is **17:00 (GMT +4) February 22, 2011.**

Applications should be submitted by email to the attention of Ms. Ilaha Rasulova, Program Manager, irasulova@epfound.az AND Ms. Isabella Sargsyan, Project Manager, isargsyan@epfound.am.

Please note that only shortlisted applicants will be contacted for an interview.

The selected applicant will be announced on **February 28, 2011.**

ANNEX 2. List of documents studied

- Armenian-Azerbaijani relations in media of Armenia and Azerbaijan, 2009
- Bidding forms (EPF Project Concepts) of 2008, 2010 and 2011
- Blogs “The Neutral Zone” and “Women’s Voices”
- Blogs of S.Rzaev, Z.Veklikhanova
- Cartoons (“Man without name”, “R.I.P.”, “Building boarders”, “The world in not enough”)
- EPF’s Project Updates
- EPF’s Quarterly progress reports and final narrative project reports (2008-2010)
- Films (“No peace, no war”, “Passenger”, “www.voina”)
- Media Monitoring Report (2008)
- Presentation of the Qualitative Research Outcomes (in-depth interviews with participating e-journalists and bloggers in both Armenia and Azerbaijan)
- Rafikgyzy A., “I would like everybody to return to Baku”
- Rafikgyzy A., “Maybe international organizations will hear me”
- Regional Workshop Evaluation Results, 2009
- Samira Ahmedbeili, “Liana-Leila”
- Small projects concepts
- Training module on Principles and Standards of Conflicts Media Coverage
- Who’s Paying Attention to What? Armenian and Azerbaijani International News Coverage – Empirical Findings and Recommendations for Improvement, Caucasus Research Resource Centers, 2008
- Yeni Nesil and Yerevan Press Club, Research “Doubtful information, cliches and stereotypes in the online media of Armenia and Azerbaijan”, 2010

ANNEX 3. List of people consulted

Armenia

1. Adrine Der-Bogossian, journalist, Independent Journalists Network
2. Arevik Martirosyan, researcher, sociologist
3. Artur Papyan, trainer, journalist, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty
4. Boris Navasrdyan, chairman, Yerevan Press Club
5. Gegham Vardanyan, journalist, trainer
6. Gevorg Ter-Gabrielyan, country director, EPF-Armenia
7. Isabella Sargsyan, project manager, EPF-Armenia
8. Marianna Grigoryan, journalist, co-founder of NGO MediaLab
9. Naira Martikyan, TV-producer, Internews-Armenia
10. Naira Sutanyan, Project Manager/Political Officer, British Embassy, Yerevan
11. Olya Azatyan, Project Support Officer, British Embassy, Yerevan
12. Vazgen Karapetyan, associate country director, EPF-Armenia

Azerbaijan

13. Arif Aliyev, chairman, Union of Journalists of Azerbaijan “Yeni Nesil”
14. Asaf Guliev, journalist, currently unemployed
15. Asif Nasibov, assistant of the Deputy of Azerbaijan Parliament, lecturer of the Academy of Public Relations
16. Gultakin Knyazgizi, correspondent of the “Azadliq” newspaper
17. Ilaha Rasulova, program manager, EPF-Azerbaijan
18. Ismail Ismailov, editor of the Russian version of the www.medaiforum.az, Internews-Azerbaijan
19. Maharram Zeinalov, journalist, free-lance creative consultant
20. Malik Bayramov, vice president, Democratic Journalists League
21. Naila Hashimova, managing director, EPF-Azerbaijan
22. Nigar Kazimova, free-lance writer, media-expert
23. Rizvan Huseynov, correspondent, The First News Information Agency
24. Zarema Velihanova, editor, internet information agency day.az