

## **Executive Summary**

This report presents the findings from the final evaluation of the Leadership, Empowerment, Access and Protection (LEAP) Programme, that was conducted between January and February 2021. The final evaluation was commissioned by UN Women to assess the Programme's achievements against the set objectives and identify and document lessons. The evaluation was guided by the six UN Evaluation Group (UNEG) evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, impact and sustainability) as well as standards based on Human Rights, Gender Equality and Value for Money as additional criteria. The evaluation questions and sub-sections under each criteria are detailed in the terms of reference (ToR) appended in Annex 10.

## **Evaluation Design and Methodology**

To arrive at the answers to the evaluation questions, the evaluation methodology used was mainly qualitative in nature and the evaluation team utilized a range of qualitative techniques and tools for data collection to allow for triangulation of the evaluation findings. The methods included: i) Document reviews; ii) Key informant interviews; iii) Focus Group Discussions. The methodology was guided by the [UN Women GERAAS evaluation report quality checklist](#).

## **Evaluation Findings**

From the analysis of indicator performance data, the evaluation was unable to map the extent to which the Programme achieved the goal due to missing 2020 actual performance data. Absence of such data weakened the analysis of cause and effect logic between the outcomes and goal level and due to lack of credible evidence. The performance of outcome and output results were used as proxy to assess their contribution towards the achievement of the goal. It is important to note that using lower level data for this kind of analysis in no way replaces the need for the real data that better informs the achievement of the result.

For two consecutive years, 2019 and 2020, Outcome 1 was achieved in Adjumani but not in Yumbe. However, there was noted sharp positive trend in performance in Yumbe, from 26% in 2019 to 46% in 2020 against the Life of Programme (LOP) target of 50%.

Outcome 2 intended to increase access to leadership and immediate income generating opportunities for refugee women and women in host communities and was measured by refugee women who have at least one role in the various refugee community structures or mechanisms. There was a positive trend of performance in Adjumani (49% of women in 2019 and 66% in 2020 against the LOP target of 20% for Adjumani). However, the performance in Yumbe was not as good (28% of women in 2019 and no data was reported in 2020. The LOP target for Yumbe was 50%).

Outcome 3 was measured by indicator percent of target refugee women who make an income of at least UGX 90,000 monthly or UGX 3,000/- per day from their labour/services. The LOP target of 70% for this result was not achieved. In 2019, 30 % of the women and girls engaged in the village savings and loan association (VSLA) activities earned an average of UGX 3,000 to UGX 5,000. In 2020, 61.7% of the 977 (806 refugee and 171 host including 32 PWDs) women were supported to access income generation opportunities and were able to earn an income of at least UGX 3,000 to UGX 7,000 per day.

Findings indicated that by design, the LEAP Programme to a larger extent was relevant as it responded to the identified needs of the beneficiaries. Key informants and beneficiaries confirmed that the choice of the LEAP Programme areas such as humanitarian response to the refugee and host communities and humanitarian action with a link to women rights, peace and security; capacity and skills development, were all relevant in addressing the consequences of the war in South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) without compromising the livelihoods of the host communities. However, the original LEAP design did not consider the emergency environment in which the Programme was operating. In addition, there was a gap noted in the area of livelihood component targeting women and girls only and not the entire household. The strategy of targeting women and girls was good for promoting gender equality, but the missing link was the lack of holistic targeting to include boys and male engagement. As part of the programmatic strategy, engaging men and targeting boys should have been applied as leaving the men aside limits total achievement of gender equality.

UN Women had a well thought out Theory of Change (TOC) that became a shared goal for the Implementing Partners (IPs,) UN Women, Office of Prime Minister (OPM), Local Governments (LGs) and other partners. This made it mandatory for all actors to direct efforts in the same direction for effective delivery of results. UN Women purposed to create a model that would include a business model. This is evidenced in the successful VSLAs that moved beyond handouts to a point where beneficiaries would invest their money and make a profit. However, in order to fully maximise profits, this evaluation identified a need to collaborate with financial institutions to create a digital system that links these VSLAs to banks.

Good coordination with the grassroots beneficiaries and ease of communication from top to down and from down to top made every stakeholder feel valued and made the management of LEAP Programme rated as effective. Generally, it was noted that the LEAP Programme realized the intended outputs and outcomes to a larger extent. Although a few performance indicators did not have data at some point, information from KIIs and FGDs pointed to the fact that the LEAP Programme effectively achieved results.

UN Women worked closely with other local women organizations in Adjumani and Yumbe, and this facilitated the achievement of the results. UN Women worked with the Adjumani and Yumbe Gender Based Violence Network that continued to strengthen the work of LEAP. Other various partnership were with other UN agencies, the High Commission for refugees, World Food Programme; and on the ground working with the UN area coordination offices in Yumbe and West Nile. The broad-based partnership promoted effective achievement of Programme results.

Another good strategy employed by LEAP was bringing women led organizations to work and collaborate and learn from one another. This was lacking before LEAP Programme was implemented. This kind of networking brought together all NGOs concerned with women's issues, which led to strengthened planning with a common goal. The following-up of Programme activities was so well coordinated. This made it easy to realise the gaps, the strengths and how the resources have been availed to implementing partners.

Consistent annual needs assessment on the skills, knowledge and capacities of the partner institutions, in what the partners called the 'Grand Imperial Event' in Entebbe focused on identifying existing gaps in the implementation of the LEAP with support from UN Women finance and M&E representatives. Support was also provided to internal reflections for individual IPs to further improve on result delivery.

From the perspective of M&E function, instituting a results-based management system (RBM) helped partners to track the implementation of activities and targets achieved. RBM entailed clear identification of Programme beneficiaries and designing activities to meet their needs; defining realistic expected results, based on appropriate analyses and assessments (baseline assessment); a number of key underlying assumptions, risks and certain opportunities were put forward.

The UN Women management structure efficiently supported implementation and delivery of Programme results. UN Women had a field office that was empowered with independent operations. The sub regional office reduced the cost of managing the Programme from Kampala and this created efficiency and value for money rather than travel to and from Kampala. UN Women worked with IPs with well trained staff with support from UN field offices. In cases where CSOs lacked the requisite management and leadership skills, training was provided by UN Women in financial management, leadership, accountability. Efficiency was assessed from the perspective of the Programme operations in achieving the results. Through KIs, the evaluation team learned that implementation of LEAP was within budget and the planned timeframe. Funds were always disbursed on time and this enabled timely implementation of planned activities. Several coordination structures were in place ensuring that Programme resources were used efficiently. However, the team did not receive the actual funds disbursed versus utilization. Regular planning meetings with the OPM provided an accountability platform that enhanced the level of commitment and transparency by the UN Women and the IPs in the implementation of the Programme.

For interconnectedness, sustainability and impact, UN Women collaborated and partnered with other actors such as OPM that is mandated to coordinate efforts to care for refugees; the District Local Governments (LGs) in Adjumani and Yumbe districts, leveraging on decentralized government systems; CSO networks that have implemented similar initiatives for years; collaboration with other UN Agencies including linkages linked to regional and international processes/policies and discussions. This allowed for avoidance of duplication of efforts, alignment of LEAP activities with those of the districts that promoted systematic implementation of activities and readiness by the Local Governments (LGs) to sign operational memorandums of understanding (MoUs) to facilitate the implementation of the LEAP.

## **Conclusions**

The LEAP was designed in a way that eased coordination and effective delivery of Programme interventions. UN Women worked closely with the OPM, LGs, and other UN agencies in delivering the LEAP. Secondly, the choice of the IPs like the Refugee Law Project (RLP), CARE International and Uganda Women Network (UWONET) allowed the LEAP to tap into knowledge and experience of such partners that had implemented similar Programmes. The

network of local partners as well as a good presence of IP field offices helped the smooth implementation of the LEAP Programme.

The LEAP was also anchored in the national policy and legal frameworks like the Vision 2040, National Development Plan (NDP II), the Uganda National Gender Policy, Uganda's Refugee Act (2016), the ReHoPE strategy and settlement transformative agenda to underscore the need for gender mainstreaming in the delivery of LEAP services. The Programme was internationally anchored in the CRRF that was customized under the Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs) and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).

### **Recommendations**

- Considering that attainment of work permits from the OPM to work in refugee camps was a tedious process for IPs, the evaluation recommends that OPM should ease access to work permits by IPs to work in the refugee camps. These should be availed either at the approval of the Programme or from the OPM representatives in the operational districts.
- UN Women should expand the involvement of the grassroots women-led Community Based Organisations so that they participate in the formulation of the Programme and receive direct funding for their activities which are not related to capacity development. This may as well create flexibility for implementation in the current COVID-19 circumstances.
- In order to improve on monitoring programme performance progress, UN Women should ensure that the Result Framework is regularly updated since it is a living reference point. If a result is not tracked progressively (either because of no performance indicator or no data collected), it would be a good M&E practice to either drop or revise the result and indicator for ease of continuous monitoring. This recommendation is in reference to Output 1.3.
- The evaluation recommends that UN Women should engage financial institutions to create a digital system that links VSLAs to banks in order to fully maximise VSLA profits.
- UN Women should provide funds to the district so that they can reach the sub-counties that were not covered by the LEAP Programme as this would increase in accessing the benefits of interventions by all host communities.
- There is need for one stop centres/hubs for skilling, distribution of services, support for cash for work enterprises, enhance access to markets and ease access to government services for refugee and host communities to registration services and holistically support start-ups.
- Working through existing local groups would be a good entry point creating long lasting structures to foster continuity beyond the LEAP Programme
- It is recommended that the scope of the Programme should be extended to the entire district including non-hosting communities to be at the same level with the refugees and host communities in terms of empowerment.
- There is need to have a phased implementation of the training programmes especially where mind-set change is needed. Trainings should be staggered to allow time for the beneficiaries to digest the information while subsequent trainings would offer both a refresher course and new knowledge that would allow the Programme to easily break through gender norms that disempower women and create gender inequalities