

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This report presents findings of a Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) of the “*Engendering Governance to Promote Peace and Security in Zimbabwe*” project being implemented by UN Women Zimbabwe Country Office with funding support from the Irish Embassy in Pretoria. The MTE was conducted by an independent consultant in June and July 2022. The project has been implemented in two phases, with the first phase running from 2020-2021 and the second phase running from 2021-2022

Background and Context

Zimbabwe has ratified key international and regional human rights instruments that protect women’s rights and seek to address gender inequalities including: the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa (PACRWC) and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Gender and Development Protocol. Other international instruments of importance are the UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security (including resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888, 1889, and 1960), which apply to all UN member states including Zimbabwe. At national level, Zimbabwe has a progressive national normative framework on gender equality in the form of the Constitution, The National Gender Policy (2017) and Implementation Strategy (2019), the National GBV Strategy as well as sectoral gender policies and strategies. All these instruments call for greater participation by women in all areas of decision-making, including peace processes and security matters, and for effective protection of women from all forms of violence. The country is however yet to fully domesticate these norms and standards into domestic laws¹. Moreover, knowledge and awareness of some of these instruments by government institutions, civil society organizations and citizens is limited. Further, despite having such a progressive normative framework, the major challenge has been the lack of effective implementation of the normative framework which has resulted in perpetuation of gender inequality in all spheres of the Zimbabwean society.

Women are still underrepresented in decision-making positions in the public despite constitutional provisions on gender parity in all decision-making positions. Women constitute only 31% of Members of Parliament (House of Assembly)². Women representation at local government level is at a low of 14%. More worrying is the fact that women representation has been decreasing over the last two election seasons despite special temporary measures implemented at national parliament level to have reserved seats for women. Participation of young women in political and leadership positions is also severely limited in Zimbabwe due to a myriad of barriers including gender-based discrimination, gerontocracy, lack of knowledge and awareness of political rights, lack of resources to fund elections, sexual harassment and exploitation, electoral related gender-based violence and patriarchal attitudes and practices of political parties. The decreasing trend in WPP needs to be arrested by supporting women so that they can participate competitively in the coming 2023 national elections.

Purpose and Objectives of the Project

Under this project, UN Women is working together with the Zimbabwe Gender Commission, the Women in Local Government Forum, the Women’s Parliamentary Caucus, African Women Leaders’ Network (AWLN) and other national stakeholders to provide support to women political candidates and those in office through trainings, peer-support and high-level stakeholder engagements in addition to advocating for the full implementation of the Zimbabwean Constitution and regional and international frameworks that the state is party to.

The following are the project’s key **objectives**:

- (a) To support young and senior women, and particularly those left behind, to effectively and meaningfully participate in national processes
- (b) To sufficiently leverage the leadership of women in governance and peace building processes at all levels
- (c) To enhance the capacity of governance institutions to implement the WPS agenda

The expected outcome of the project is “*Strategies to promote women's participation in decision making processes and structures at national and local levels formulated, enforced, implemented and monitored in line with national, regional and international provisions.*”

Purpose and Methodology of the Evaluation

The overall purpose of the MTE was to assess progress towards achievement of goals and objectives of the project at national level against the standard DAC/OECD criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and outcome since its inception in June 2020. The evaluation further sought to identify lessons learned, good practices, and factors that

¹ Ibid

² Zimbabwe National Gender Profile (2020)

facilitated/hindered achievement. The evaluation employed qualitative data collection methods namely desk review of project documents; Key Informant Interviews with project stakeholders including participating government ministries, UN Women, independent commissions, AWLN, media and CSOs; consultative workshops with AWLN members and other project beneficiaries. The evaluation was guided at all times by the UNEG Ethical Guidelines and the UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System. The main limitation of the evaluation was the unavailability of some of the key informants during the time the evaluation was being conducted and this constraint was addressed by inviting the stakeholders to a consultative workshop under one roof.

EVALUATION FINDINGS

Relevance: Overall, the project's goal of promoting women's participation in decision making processes and structures at national and local levels through ensuring that effective strategies are formulated, enforced, implemented and monitored in line with national, regional and international provisions was found to be highly relevant to the gender inequality context of Zimbabwe. Women are under-represented in the leadership, governance, peace and political structures and processes in the country. Women constitute only 34 per cent of Members of Parliament, 44 per cent of senators, 14 per cent of local government councillors and 36 per cent of permanent secretaries. The Gender Gap Index of 0.73 in 2020 shows significant gender equality gaps which will make it difficult for the country to attain the 2030 targets for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). With women currently grossly under-represented and with limited reforms having taken place to promote the participation of women, more needs to be done to ensure increased women participation in the coming elections. The specific focus on young women and marginalised women by the project is also critically important as these groups have multiple and intersecting barriers that make them even more excluded than other ordinary women. All stakeholders that participated in the evaluation, including young and senior women, concurred that the project is highly relevant to their needs and aspirations in terms of political participation and leadership in governance and peace building. Further, the relevance of the project hinges on the fact that the project objectives and expected outcomes are in alignment with global, regional and national commitments on gender equality and women empowerment as well as with the institutional mandates of national institutions tasked with promoting gender equality and economic empowerment. The evaluation concluded that the project's Theory of Change (TOC) remains relevant given the gender inequality context in the country.

Effectiveness: The project design is based on a Theory of Change that recognises that having strategies that promote women participation in decision making processes that are implemented and monitored; leveraging on the leadership of women; and developing the capacity of relevant government institutions with the mandate to promote gender equality in governance, peace and security will lead to gender equality gains and significant improvements in women empowerment. The ToC and the project design remain relevant because studies have shown that women participation in decision making is hamstrung by a number of factors including lack of capacity, inadequate financial resources and weak support mechanisms from institutions mandated to spearhead gender equality initiatives³. By targeting to tackle barriers that impede women participation in decision making structures and processes, the project design was noted to be generally valid and effective. There is however scope to increase effectiveness of the project design by ensuring that: all stakeholders are consulted at all stages of the project lifecycle, including design; the project becomes more inclusive by reaching out to marginalised women in rural and non-urban areas and women with disabilities; and the capacity of AWLN is strengthened, particularly in terms of resource mobilisation, to enable the network to be gradually weaned from UN Women so that it can exist as an independent institution owned by its members,

The project has contributed significantly to the strengthening of the women's movement by facilitating the creation of the AWLN national chapter and the Bulawayo provincial chapter. Since the launch of the AWLN Zimbabwe Chapter in 2020, UN Women has continued to provide technical support to the national chapter and to the youth caucus to enable these arms to build a strong women's movement. As of April 2020, the network membership had expanded to 150, up from 123 in December 2021. Through UN Women support AWLN has managed to engage in a number of activities including Annual Retreat for the Zimbabwe Chapter in February 2022 where the roadmap for the organisation was charted and which was attended by UN Women HQ representatives; establishing a website for the network; training of media personnel on gender-responsive and sensitive reporting; and development of eight knowledge products to enhance the capacity of stakeholders. The training of media personnel has resulted in the trained journalists showcasing success stories of women in leadership and the capacity of the journalist to mainstream gender in their work has been greatly enhanced⁴.

Through AWLN, the project has also managed to bring together diverse groups of women from different political persuasions to work for a common purpose of empowering women so that they can participate meaningfully and effectively in leadership and political processes. Given the extreme political polarisation in the country, the project has played a critical role in bringing adversaries together, make them realise that they have common interests and that they are much stronger and will have more impact if they speak with one voice. The project has also done well in bridging the generational gap between older women and young women and has given young women the opportunity to express themselves through the Young Women Caucus within AWLN. The members noted that the network provides a safe space for young women in politics as some of

³ Zimbabwe National Gender Profile (2020)

⁴ KII with trained journalists

them have been victims of political violence and cyberbullying while some have collapsed into depression. The project however needs to focus on WEE of the AWLN members so that they are able to compete at the same level with men for leadership positions. More financial resources are needed for the movement-building component of the project to enable AWLN to establish the remaining four provincial chapters to widen the movement's reach of marginalised women in the country.

The capacity-building initiatives supported by the project included a mentorship programme for young women leaders; Support AWLN Zimbabwe representatives to attend the annual inter-generational regional and global retreats and to engage regional and international leaders on GEWE; Support participation of AWLN in dialogues and or initiatives on gender responsive strategies with duty bearers and policy makers; and training of women leaders in peace committees on Conflict Management, Prevention and Resolution. The training was described by participants as very useful as it has equipped them with skills to enable them to participate meaningfully in peace and security leadership processes and structures. However, although significant progress has been made in enhancing the capacities of women leaders to engage in conflict resolution, mediation and management, this capacity needs to be cascaded down to grassroots level through the establishment of more provincial chapters.

The project also sought to strengthen the capacity of decision-makers to formulate, review, and implement gender-sensitive policies, and protocols that promote women's rights in line with the Women, Peace and Security and Youth, Peace and Security agendas. An assessment to identify barriers that women face in local governance participation was conducted. The assessment identified several barriers including: limited knowledge of electoral processes at local government level, lack of finances to fund participation in electoral processes, violence against women in elections and lack of confidence among women. Recommendations put forward to dismantle the identified barriers included the following: raising awareness among women on WPP; training and mentorship programmes; and networking and advocacy on WPP. The findings of the assessment were tabled, discussed and validated at a meeting attended by the Minister of Local Government, senior policy makers drawn from Government ministries, Local Councils, Councillors, CSOs, media and other stakeholders. The Foreword of the report was written by the Minister and this signified government recognition of the barriers identified in the assessment report and an endorsement of the remedial strategies proposed therein. A Pocket Guide for aspiring and elected women councillors was also developed to provide guidelines that will enhance the participation of aspiring women candidates at the local government level and strengthening the capacities of elected women Councillors to effectively discharge their mandates as Councillors. This is going to be a useful resource book for aspiring women leaders in general, including at grassroots and national levels.

The project re-ignited discussions and momentum around the development of a National Action Plan (NAP) for the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325. An induction workshop to develop the Zimbabwe National Action Plan for the United Nations Resolution on Women Peace and Security (UNSCR 1325) for the National Technical Committee (NTC) and stakeholders was conducted. This process enhanced the capacity and knowledge of the participants on the UNSCR 1325. A two-day drafting clinic on the NAP further enhanced the capacity of the National Technical Committee to draft national action plans and strategies as the draft NAP is now in place. The project provided technical capacity to the Women's Parliamentary Caucus for the domestication of UNSCR 1325, a resolution not well known by members of parliament and some government institutions responsible for operationalising it. With support from the project, a Handbook for Parliamentarians on UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security was co-developed by the UN Women and the Parliament of Zimbabwe. Members of Parliament and other stakeholders that participated in the development of the handbook confirmed that they have been empowered with knowledge and tools to spearhead the domestication of UNSCR 1325.⁵

Stakeholders were engaged, through a consultative process, to develop a costed roadmap for the development of the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) strategy. The establishment of a roadmap towards the development of a National YPS strategy is a positive development in the quest for a National YPS strategy. There is however further need for mobilisation of stakeholders and resources to implement the agreed roadmap leading to the development and finalisation of the National YPS strategy during the last half of the project life cycle.

Efficiency: In terms of delivery of outputs, the project managed to implement most of the planned activities substantively, although there were delays in some cases owing to a number of factors including unavailability of stakeholders, by-elections that were conducted in some parts of the country and holiday breaks during the implementation period. The other delays were caused by coordination challenges between the two principal ministries and lack of understanding of the objectives of the project, particularly with regard to the security component which is considered sensitive.

The training workshops were conducted locally, and some were conducted virtually, which was cost-effective in that local resources and venues were utilised. In future, however, there is need to utilise government facilities or relatively middle of the range hotels that are cheaper than venues that were hired for some of the stakeholder engagement and training sessions at top hotels. The resources saved on top of the range hotel venue hires could then have been channelled towards, for example, establishing of AWLN the remaining provincial chapters or conducting consultative meetings in the remaining four

⁵ KIIs

provinces. Since four planned AWLN chapters are yet to be established, there is need to increase the budget allocation for this activity beyond the € 5,000 allocated for 2022 to enable a more inclusive and wide reaching movement building process.

The allocation of €50,000 to the new activity of capacity building for stakeholders is commendable given the role that these national stakeholders and decision makers play in the formulation, review, and implementation of gender-sensitive policies, and protocols that promote women's rights in line with the Women, Peace and Security and Youth, Peace and Security agendas. The indirect costs of the project are now 52 per cent of total programme costs, while remuneration costs are now 40 per cent of the total budget and 84 per cent of direct costs. The EU and UNDP recommended ratio is that indirect costs (remuneration) should equal 7 per cent of the value of the direct costs⁶. While the need for additional human resources for the project is undoubted, the indirect costs in general and the remuneration costs in particular are too high compared to the direct costs, which ultimately affects implementation of some of the planned activities.

Sustainability: the project has built foundation for sustainability through: national stakeholder engagement and co-creation of interventions which promotes buy in, support and ownership; capacity building initiatives targeted at AWLN, Women Parliamentary Caucus Committee, decision makers in national institutions responsible for implementation of the WPS agenda and commitments, CSOs and media houses which equips these stakeholders with skills to implement commitments on WPS beyond the lifespan of the project. There is however need to enhance the capacity of AWLN to exist as an independent entity beyond UN Women technical and funding support. There is further need to ensure that all stakeholders are consulted and participate in all stages of the project lifecycle.

Integration of Gender Equality and Human Rights: The evaluation established that the whole project is centred and focused on promoting gender equality, women empowerment and women's rights in the realm of governance, peace and security through the operationalisation of UNSCR 1325 and 2250. The project sought to ensure that women, including those that are left behind and marginalised as well as young women are empowered to meaningfully participate in governance, peace and security. There is however need for the project to be more inclusive by ensuring that there is increased participation by women with disability and those from grassroots in rural areas as they are still less visible in the project compared to other groups of women.

KEY CONCLUSIONS

- The project was found to be largely relevant to the gender equality and women empowerment in the realm of governance, peace and security in Zimbabwe.
- The project has generally performed well in terms of meeting its outputs and targets although there are areas needing more focus in the last half for the planned outputs and targets to be met.
- The project was managed fairly efficiently although there were some implementation delays caused by unavailability of stakeholders and inadequate coordination between partners. The indirect costs of the project (including remuneration costs) are too high relative to the direct costs and this might lead to non-implementation of planned activities owing to budgetary constraints.
- The prospects for sustainability are high if the capacity of AWLN is enhanced for the network to be able to exist as an independent entity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- There is need for further strengthening of the administrative, resource mobilization and movement building capacity of the AWLN secretariat (particularly the Young Women Caucus) to enable the network to be less dependent on UN Women and to work as an independent network for long term sustainability.
- AWLN needs further capacity strengthening to enable it to register itself as a legal entity, such as a Trust or PVO. Once formally registered the movement would then be formally recognized and be able to attract funding from donors.
- The project needs to be more inclusive by ensuring that more women with disabilities, rural women and other marginalized groups of women meaningfully participate in the capacity building activities of the project.
- Consider providing logistical and funding support to AWLN members, particularly those that are poorly resourced, to ensure that they attend capacity building trainings and meetings and participate in meetings conducted virtually.
- For ownership and long-term sustainability, stakeholders need to be engaged at all stages of the project life-cycle, including design.
- There is need for the project to consider economic empowerment capacity building initiatives for AWLN members, particularly young women, to enable them to generate economic resources that are so critical in running a leadership campaign.

- To promote efficient utilisation of the limited resources, there is need to secure cheaper venues for workshops of the project by considering government institutions and middle of the table hotels so that funds saved can be used to support outstanding activities that could not be implemented due to resource constrains such as consultations in provinces and rolling out of provincial AWLN chapters.
- Although most outputs have been achieved, there is need to accelerate implementation of key outstanding outputs including: decentralization of AWLN chapters; rolling out of the mentorship programme for young women; support for the finalisation of the National Action Plan for UNSCR 1325 and the Youth Peace and Security Strategy.
- Changing mind sets, values, beliefs and practices takes a long time and hence there is need to continue with the capacity building and awareness creation initiatives beyond the coming elections next year in 2023.