**Executive Summary**

**Introduction**

Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) are implementing an area-based, gender responsive emergency livelihoods and economic recovery project (Uganda Host and Refugee Community Empowerment (UHRCEP) Project) which focuses on implementing emergency employment and livelihoods opportunities, including inclusive value chain development in refugee hosting communities of Obongi Adjumani and Lamwo districts. UNDP is using the 3x6 approach it developed to help build resilience of affected communities in crisis situations and facilitate a rapid return to sustainable development pathways, which is a critical step towards building resilience at individual, household, community and local institutional levels.

The study adopted a mixed methods approach in a review process that was structured around the project results framework and evaluation matrix including a series of evaluation questions, data collection methods, data sources and a data analysis plan. The evaluation matrix used during the review process and that provided guidance during interviews, was organized around the five OECD/DAC evaluation criteria - relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact. Based on the evaluation matrix, the mid-term evaluation team developed data collection tools and ensured relevant sections are cross-referenced against the evaluation criteria, evaluation questions as well as the level of analysis in order to easily identify the main purpose of the requested information.

**Key Findings:** **Relevance**

The UHRCEP project directly contributes to the achievement of the UNDP Emergency Response and Resilience Strategy (ERRS) that is based on the Refugee and Host Population Empowerment (REHOPE) Framework and aligned to the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) action plan, the National Development Plan III and the new Parish Development Model (PDM). Before the project, assessments and surveys by UN agencies had reported that limited access to livelihoods or job opportunities and skills training are the most commonly expressed needs of both women-headed refugee and host-community households. While at the time, there were few short-term and low-skilled livelihood opportunities provided by UN agencies and NGOs in refugee hosting districts.

Emergency livelihoods support was relevant to promote immediate job creation, stimulate agriculture production and other income generating activities in order empowering individuals, communities, national and local authorities to cope with and recover from the impact of the refugee crisis. The access roads that were opened were already in subcounty development plans as unfunded priorities. The project also helped to link survivors of SGBV to livelihood opportunities and skills training to prevent the risks of engaging in harmful coping mechanisms. It was also logical to provide technical assistance that is designed to strengthen the capacity amongst district local government to mainstream gender in local economic development since several women’s economic empowerment projects led by government and humanitarian agencies faced significant resource and capacity challenges.

**Effectiveness**

The overall goal of the UHRCEP project is to improve the socio-economic empowerment of communities with emphasis on women and youth in refugee hosting communities. The project interventions were implemented effectively which contributed to the achievement of the expected outcomes as reflected in the performance of the outcome indicators. The percentage of persons benefiting from livelihood opportunities increased from 0% at baseline to 84.5% by March 2022, while persons who are members of VSLAs also increased from 53.5% at baseline to 84% by March 2022, against a set target of 100% for both indicators by December 2022. The proportion of women aged 15-49 years who make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care was found to be 19.2% by March 2022 against a set target of 30% December 2022.

As a result of gender transformative programming which involved capacity development of district-level officers and livelihoods actors, who replicated trainings at community level for refugee and host communities. There was an improvement in gender sensitive livelihoods indicators as shown by the increase in the proportion of time spent on unpaid and domestic and care work from (female 41.3%, male 28.7%) at baseline to (female 55.6%, male 35.2%) by March 2022 against the set targets for the period of (female 55%, male 35%) respectively. On the other hand, the percentage of women in the target communities with access to and control over land and other resources also increased from 13.2% at baseline to 30% by March 2022 and was within five percentage points of set target (35%).

The capacity building of local authorities, the district-level officers on gender responsive budgeting/planning, diversity management, women’s human rights and economic empowerment resulted in improved understanding of GBV in the communities and increased awareness on GBV referral processes as demonstrated by the increase the percentage of young men aged 18-49 years who condemn GBV increased from 29% at baseline to 75.2% by March 2022, while the occurrence of child marriages in the target communities reduced from 33% at baseline to 17.4% by March 2022. Conversely, the proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and above who experience physical, sexual or psychological violence by current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months was at 20.9% by March 2022 and was lower than the national average of 35.6% (37.8% in West Nile, 64.9% in Acholi region)8, an indication that the project transformed the communities in the project area.

**Efficiency**

The UHRCEP project implementation, assurance, funding and regular monitoring activities are facilitated by UNDP while leveraging on its country office’s operational services (finance, procurement, and administration) on a cost recovery basis. The close partnership established amongst the project teams and district officials has resulted in harmonized project implementation, close engagement of target beneficiaries and communities, as well as efficiency in the project management structure. Monthly coordination meetings are conducted to discuss key achievements and challenges, and are summarized into reports which are shared with stakeholders. However, the lack of joint-review meetings of annual and quarterly reports with project stakeholders, Limited flow of information between local leadership and the project implementors during sensitization campaigns, and restrictions due to the covid-19 pandemic compromised the efficiency of project management.

There is agreement amongst partners and stakeholders that the project’s resources were managed in a transparent and accountable manner. Employing beneficiaries in the cash for work activities was cost effective during the opening of community access roads compared to the alternative of using machinery. However, the COVID-19 pandemic negatively affected the project management structure and execution, since there was need to procure additional materials along with other requirements of the SOPs which the project had not envisaged from the beginning and led to disruption of training routines and activities involving sensitization on gender equity, GBV and protection in the communities. In terms of programme delivery, the UHRCEP project has achieved a good performance, with a cumulative expenditure rate of 94% ($ 4,414,812 actual spend out of $ 4,696,072 funds received) for the first three years of the project which reduces the risk of rushing project activities towards the end of the project period.

**Sustainability**

There are sustainability elements in the design of the UHRCEP project which adopted the UNDP 3x6 model which provides for sustainable employment creation and inclusive economic growth through strengthening of local government capacities and economic linkages between new businesses and market actors and contains activities that focus on sustainability in the third phase of implementation. The benefits of access roads rehabilitated, and woodlots planted will continue to accrue to the target beneficiaries and communities even when the project comes to an end. However, it’s expected that for the case of access roads, the district or sub-county local governments will develop monitoring and maintenance plans and include these in their annual workplans. However, the inadequate capacity of the local governments to raise funds for carrying out the road maintenance and the higher likelihood of groups disintegrating after the project pose a serious risk to cash to work interventions.

All livelihoods’ interventions under the UHRCEP project encompassed an element of capacity building of target beneficiaries, local government officials and relevant actors or CSOs. The capacity building aimed to equip stakeholders with knowledge about the project interventions in order to enable them to conduct routine monitoring of activities that are directly linked with their respective district/sub-county development plans. However, the level of unfunded commitments in the district development plans is so high and it’s unlikely that these activities shall be taken up and executed. Maintenance committees were formed with a responsibility ensuring that roads are kept in a good state and to manage the planting of woodlots. The sustainability of the project is hinged partly on the continued existence of these committees when the project comes to an end which will depend on the availability of support from the local government towards these committees.

**Impact**

All stakeholders reported some level of positive change that has occurred to target beneficiaries such as starting of own businesses, including; sell of second-hand clothes, small merchandise shops, selling fish, hairdressing saloons, soap making, carpentry, and making of energy saving stoves which have improved beneficiaries’ livelihoods and resulted in a lifestyle change for women and youth. The trainings provided have enabled beneficiaries acquire good entrepreneurial skills which they have used to run their businesses effectively. The project is upheld for having created a mindset change amongst the beneficiaries especially the youth who now look for ideas and implement them. However, there were concerns that very few individuals benefited from business skills training and vocational skills training, and that the project did not utilize innovative practices but rather involved everyone in doing heavy manual labour during cash for work activities.

The project has helped to increase cohesion between refugees and host communities; by bringing together refugees and the nationals to work together during cash for work activities, through having joint trainings, and by creating partnerships with landowners during planting of woodlots. Participants in FGDs also reported an improvement in the levels of household savings, a great reduction in gender-based violence and a better understanding of child protection issues. In addition, refugee respondents revealed that they now feel dignified as it’s better to work for an income rather than being given financial aid all the time and there were reports of beneficiaries who have integrated bee keeping in the woodlots to earn more income. However, despite all these changes, there is still need for institutions and individuals to learn more about the results of the UHRCEP project activities or evidence of its impact in order to collect ideas about projects and activities and best practices within the right frequency and timing using a well-developed communication strategy.

**Overall Ratings for Review Criteria**

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| --- | --- |
|  | Relevance  |
|  | Effectiveness |
|  | Efficiency  |
|  | Impact |
|  | Sustainability |
|  | Coordination/ Coherence |

**KEY: GA = GREATLY ACHIEVED; ACHIEVED; PARTIALLY ACHIEVED**

**Conclusions and Recommendations:**

**Conclusions**

The UHRCEP project has been instrumental in providing emergency employment and creating livelihoods opportunities for vulnerable women and youth in the refugee hosting districts of Adjumani, Lamwo and Obongi in West Nile and Northern Uganda. The project goal and objectives remain relevant to the achievement of the current UNDP Emergency Response and Resilience Strategy. The project has largely achieved it’s intended outcomes and results within the first 3 years of its implementation and still has potential to achieve the set target in the remaining one year. The project has been efficient in achieving its results and outputs except for a number of challenges faced as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic that were not envisaged at the start of the project.

There is room for sustainability of project interventions since the UHRCEP project has built capacity of local government authorities at district and sub-county level who are expected to support continuity of the initiatives beyond the implementation period in coordination with the OPM, other stakeholders and the community groups that were formed. However, sustainability of enterprises created will highly depend on the willingness of women and youth to continue operating in groups and the continued support from the local authorities to address access

**Recommendations: Relevance**

* Review the amount for start-up grants and wage pay to cash for work beneficiaries in view of increasing commodity prices and the reduction in food rations from UNHCR.
* Continue creating awareness on human rights amongst beneficiaries to address issues of child labour and denial of child education.

**Effectiveness**

* Scale-up the project activities to support more vulnerable women and youth in the target communities
* Provide more time for the implementation of inclusive value chain development.
* Design outcome indicators for measuring effectiveness of value chain development interventions.
* Continue with awareness creation interventions GBV prevention focusing on intimate partner violence and barriers affecting women’s decision making on SRH issues.
* Support creation of financial and artisanal cooperatives in the refugees and host communities.

**Efficiency**

* Strengthen collaboration with local leaders and district technical teams from natural resources department and strike a balance between social and environmental safeguards.
* Procure tools used in cash for work activities through input dealers to avoid sourcing poor-quality materials.
* Review rationale for savings in human resource costs over the remain project period.
* Review and regularly update the logical framework matrix during the remaining project period.
* Arrange for joint-review or dissemination of quarterly and annual project reports with partners and stakeholders.
* Review the project risk management plan and update mitigation measures.

**Sustainability**

* Communicate the project exit strategy at all levels.
* Provide start-up kits to individuals who managed to establish enterprises.
* Support complete registration of VSLA groups beneficiaries.
* Provide refresher trainings to target beneficiaries on financial literacy and leadership skills.
* Lobby for passing of community by-laws or regulations to address environmental destructive behaviors.
* Link registered VSLA groups to existing microfinance institutions or banks.

**Impact**

* Develop a communication strategy to address the dissemination project outcomes and results.

Design innovative emergency employment options for beneficiaries in addition to road construction and planting of woodlots.