

SUMMARY

Executive Summary

The United Nations Joint Programme for Gender Equality (UNJPGE) was a five-year programme (2010-2014) funded through a GBP 12,927,611 grant from the Department for International Development (DFID), under UK Aid¹. Eight UN agencies participated in the programme (known as Participating UN Agencies (PUNOs))². The UNJPGE was implemented at national and district level. Ten districts received programme interventions including: Gulu, Lira, Nebbi, Masaka, Mbarara, Pallisa, Moroto, Kween, Kaabong, and Kitgum.

The programme intended to achieve gender equality in access to and use of services and opportunities in Uganda through delivering five outcomes. **Outcome 1** sought to strengthen government capacity for gender-responsive planning, budgeting and programme management, while **Outcome 2** was aiming at improving access to legal, health and psychosocial services by SGBV survivors. **Outcome 3** was to increase school participation, completion and achievement rates of girls in primary education. **Outcome 4** was focused on increasing capacity of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to advocate and demand accountability from government for delivery on gender responsive laws, policies and strategies. Lastly, **Outcome 5** was to result in UN partners delivering effective, strategic and efficient support for gender-responsive governance. **Outcomes 1 to 4** were funded through the DFID committed funds while **Outcome 5** was financed by PUNOs.

Overall, the UNJPGE scores a B. Despite a myriad of challenges, the programme managed to achieve results that have the potential for delivering more gender-responsive government programmes. However, these results need to be consolidated by: a) building capacity for implementation; and b) accountability and oversight for performance. Without this support the risk for reversal of gains is very high. The momentum on gender created within government needs to be utilized to facilitate changes that are still required to advance the gender agenda.

1.1 Lessons Learnt

Many lessons can be distilled from UNJPGE implementation. The lessons have been organised around the following:

- 1) Mainstreaming gender responsive planning, budgeting and service delivery in government;
- 2) Establishing a multi-sectoral approach to providing GBV services to survivors
- 3) Girls Education;
- 4) Engagement of government by CSOs on GEWE commitments; and
- 5) The UN delivering as one on Gender.

¹The programme received a one year no cost extension to 31 December 2015.

²ILO, UNCDF, UN Women, UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, OHCHR and WHO

There are other lessons that do not necessarily fit in the five categories above that need to be considered for future programmes of this nature.

1.1.1 Mainstreaming gender responsive planning, budgeting and service delivery in government

- a) Entry points in government are important as they have the effect of speeding up reforms. This should go beyond invitation to coordination meetings but should include their involvement in planning, implementation and review of performance of activities at the ministry level. This will ensure reforms are supported from the highest levels in the ministries. This approach calls for a greater involvement and flexibility in the UN organisational structures for senior level staff (country reps and their deputies) to engage with responsible MDAs executive leadership (that is minister and permanent secretaries). This approach should also recognise the importance building momentum at the lower levels of the ministry to ensure programme is supported across the government ministry or agency.
- b) Mainstreaming gender and GRB in government requires a dual and balanced focus on national and local levels especially in a decentralized governance structure such as in Uganda. The national level provides the policy framework, while local governments as the service centre, operationalise this policy framework. In working with local governments, a stronger involvement and leadership of the MoLG is needed to take advantage of opportunities for influencing changes at this level.
- c) Leadership of the Ministry of Gender is critical for the process. In building the gender capacity within different ministries, agencies and departments (MDAs), great care needs to be taken to avoid weakening the ministry as the overall leader of the national machinery. The approach to be adopted has to increase the relevance of the Ministry of Gender within the MDAs so its overall position is not diminished. This entails partners involving the MGSGLD in the building of capacity for gender mainstreaming in MDAs. This process ensures the results in MDAs are also linked to the Ministry of Gender which increases its relevance and in turn strengthening its position to coordinate the gender machinery. Furthermore, initiatives should be owned and spearheaded from the highest levels in the Ministry of Gender to ensure necessary support is provided for the initiatives. This approach may need to be supported by an assessment of the organization structure of the Ministry of Gender to be able to effectively and sustainably play this role. Furthermore, a workable framework that provides flexibility in working with MDAs and at the same time of strengthening the capacity of the Ministry of Gender needs to be agreed based on specific contexts.

1.1.2 Establishing a multi-sectoral approach to providing GBV services to survivors

- a) One of the key lessons from the joint programme with regards to GBV is that GBV directly deals with and shapes human life and therefore support needs to take this into consideration and answer the following:
 - a. how do we meet all the short term needs of the survivor in a way that does not reinforce implications of the experience of GBV (helplessness, insecurity, despair, and rejection)?
 - b. how do we reintegrate the survivor in society and support their long term needs to avoid repeated abuse?
- b) Approaches adopted by the UNJPGE show GBV needs to be supported in a multi-sectoral approach while addressing the “demand” and “supply” side of GBV. This means on the one hand comprehensive services are provided for the survivor (including health, justice, and social services) and on the other efforts are

directed at addressing causes of GBV. This requires an in-depth understanding of the needs of survivors and the underlying causes of GBV and a strong UN-government-CSO partnership for delivery.

- c) Results of the evaluation show capacity of the government to take-over and sustain any approach adopted for GBV need to be considered. Ways to test feasibility of the approaches being adopted for long term sustainability could entail having government take lead of the pilots in partnership with specialist CSOs (for technical support and guidance) with the UN as interlocutor.
- d) Furthermore, the capacities of public service providers in a multi-sectoral approach to meet an increased demand from GBV survivors need to be considered and ways of developing and sustaining capacity developed. Policy initiatives that are needed to foster this can be led by the UN.

1.1.3 Girls Education

- a) The work on the education provides a model of investments in gender which is: **small investments with high multiplier effects**. It demonstrated how evidence from the ground can be used to influence sector policy and programmes for scale-up of gender responsive education. This is important because the resources available for gender work are minimal and therefore identification of interventions that provide the best value for money (in results and scale) or “gender niche” need to be identified.
- b) In line with the characteristics of funding for the gender sector, and how resources were thinly spread out in the UNJPGE, it might not be prudent to invest in sectors where other UN agencies already provide significant investments. For example, support could be offered to ensure programmes of other UN agencies are gender responsive. In the education sector for example, support could have been provided to UNICEF to conduct gender audits of its education portfolio and defining ways that UNICEF could promote gender responsive education because this is at the centre of UNICEF’s work.
- c) Support to improve school attendance and completion rates among girls was important. It was clear, as with GBV interventions, the actions of bringing children back to school need to be supported with addressing the major drivers of girls dropping out of school.

1.1.4 Engagement of government by CSOs on GEWE commitments

- a) CSOs are key in advancing the GEWE agenda due to their relatively flexible nature, reach and role in building capacity of rights holders. The UNJPGE enhanced the relevance of participating CSOs especially in relation to the inroads made into government processes. In very specific ways, the focus in building capacity of smaller CSOs at local and national levels has the potential to build a critical mass for the women’s movement. However there is need to substantively involve CSOs in the planning and designing them into the resource allocation framework, so as to match the inputs with outputs and outcomes expected.
- b) Local CSOs need to know what to expect from the national CSOs so as to make the relationship more predictable as well as equitable.

1.1.5 The UN delivering as one on gender

- a) The UNJPGE has demonstrated that pooled funding is the most effective way for implementing joint programming for UN agencies. With the absence of a common budget and performance framework, it is difficult to foster inter-agency collaborations and integration of activities needed in a joint programme. This is clearly reflected in the challenges faced by the three joint programmes on gender (UNJPGE, UNJPGBV, and UNJPFGM) which operated parallel in most cases during the evaluation period because of funding was not pooled. Thus in gender, one gender programme for all agencies with pooled funding is a more appropriate approach to pursue and achieve the ideals of joint programming.
- b) In order for joint programmes to take full advantage of opportunities for value addition in inter-agency work and other value adding cooperation, there is need for flexibility among the PUNOs. This entails some flexibility to move out of “business as usual” or confinement to mandates to ensure delivery of the advantages of jointness.
- c) UN agencies are independent entities and operate at the same level making performance accountability by one agency to another problematic. The challenges the UNJPGE faced in this regard give prominence to the need for PUNOs in a joint programme to agree at the onset a commonly agreed mutual accountability framework. Having this agreement is not enough as shown by a lengthy process of enforcing performance undertaken by the PUNOs in the UNJPGE. The UNJPGE clearly showed the need for a separate UN agencies platform to oversee the performance of joint programmes. This is because the failure of one joint programme has a direct influence on development partners’ trust on using this approach.
- d) In addition to the performance framework it is important for the PUNOs to develop and agree on implementation guidelines for the programme from the outset to clarify procedures and expectations.
- e) Having outcome leads is important to simplify coordination and monitoring. However, the UNJPGE shows that if there is no commonly agreed and adequately resourced performance framework for the coordination function, an outcome leads’ role becomes unattainable. Second, the UNJPGE laid bare the question of which institutions should be outcome leads especially for a programme that involves government and CSOs. UN agencies should play the interlocutor between government and CSOs in joint programmes. This means UN agencies taking lead of all outcomes. CSOs, unless not possible, should not be made outcome leads. This is because of the lack of clout to coordinate government and PUNOs.
- f) The lack of a fully staffed coordinating secretariat in the designated coordinating agency especially for a wide scale and multi-faceted nature of the UNJPGE, undermines coordination and implementation of the joint programme. In a multi-sectoral joint programme, integration, technical support and implementation oversight are required. These demands can be over-powering for current organisational structures in PUNOs. Therefore the support of a separate secretariat within the designated coordinating agency is needed. This secretariat would need support from the PUNO technical staff in implementation. The UNJPGE has shown that at the minimum the secretariat requires senior level staff that can offer expert opinion in the following roles and positions:
 - a. Coordinator
 - b. Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist

- c. Monitoring and Evaluation Assistant
- d. Visibility, Communication and Advocacy Specialist
- e. Finance Officer

Management of the UNJPGE has shown that: to be able to offer the technical expert support required by partners in different themes a fluid structure has to be developed between the secretariat and the country office (which presumably should have technical experts in the themes of the programme supported by a country budget). This approach enables the secretariat to focus on its core business of coordination and implementation oversight.

- g) Delays in disbursement are inherent in the operational systems of some UN agencies and need to be taken into consideration during: selection of PUNOs for the joint programme, and agreements on delivery and work plans from the outset.
- h) The implementation structures for the programme promoted participation by PUNOs, MDAs and CSOs in planning and review. This process enabled implementers and reform targets to own the programme. Ownership ensures reform agenda is successful and contributed immensely to the success of the programme.

1.1.6 Other lessons

- a) Human rights based approaches need to be included in the design of the programme to facilitate consistent implementation across the programme. Adoption of a human rights approach ensures mechanism for sustainably supporting fulfillment of rights by duty bearers are put in place.
- b) Decision on thematic focus and interventions need to take consideration of: a) underlying causes of gender inequality, and women's disempowerment; and b) areas where investments can have the highest multiplier effects given the limited funding for the gender sector.
- c) Conducting a programme specific baseline is important to: verify interventions, assumptions underpinning them.