

FINAL REPORT

PROGRAMME END EVALUATION
WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP, EMPOWER-
MENT, ACCESS AND PROTECTION IN
HUMAN MOBILITY CRISIS IN CENTRAL
AMERICA CARIBBEAN (LEAP-TRAYEC-
TOS)

Final Report, May 2025

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ACRONYMS

APPM	<i>Agua Pura para el Mundo Sufrimiento (Honduras)</i>
CONAMUIP	<i>Coordinadora Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas de Panamá</i>
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CO	Country Office
COPECO	Permanent Contingency Commission (Honduras) - <i>Spanish acronyms</i>
CSO	Civil Society Organization
FGD	Focal group discussion
FAS	<i>Fundación Alivio al Sufrimiento (Honduras)</i>
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GERA	Gender-Responsive Approach
GWG	Gender Working Group
HIAS	Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
HR&GE	Human Rights and Gender Equality
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
INAMU	Women National Institute of Costa Rica - <i>Spanish acronyms</i>
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IP	Implementing partner
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
KIIs	Key informant interviews
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LEAP	(women's) Leadership, Empowerment, Access and Protection (project)
LGTBIQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, Bisexual, Intersex and Queer
LNOB	Leave No one Behind
LTA	Long-Term Agreement
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
UNEG	Comprehensive Framework for Protection and Solutions
MSC	Most Significance Change
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PSEA	Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
ToC	Theory of Change
RMS	Results Management System
RTE	Real Time Evaluation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SICA	Central American Integration System - <i>Spanish acronyms</i>
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNW	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNW ACRO	UN Women Regional Office for the Americas and the Caribbean
WRO	Women Rights Organizations

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

UN Women, in partnership with the Government of Japan, launched the "Women's Leadership, Empowerment, Access and Protection in Human Mobility Crisis in Central America" project to address the unique protection challenges faced by women, girls, and LGBTIQ+ individuals in human mobility. Running from 1 April 2024 to 30 March 2025, the project responded to the complex human mobility crisis exacerbated by socio-economic vulnerabilities, climate change, and violence. It aimed to address the specific needs of women, girls, and LGBTIQ+ populations, including increased risks of gender-based violence (GBV) and trafficking. The project emphasized culturally specific protection kits, improved humanitarian access, and ensuring that affected women led, participated in, and benefited from gender-responsive protection services and social cohesion initiatives.

The two main outputs of the project were: **(1)** enhancing the capacity of humanitarian actors to deliver protection services and **(2)** increasing the capacity of women in human mobility and host communities to access and influence these services. The project budget was USD\$2.2M and it incorporated a partnership framework with several implementing partners, such as, the INGO Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), two national organisations in Honduras *Fundación Alivio al Sufrimiento* (FAS) and *Agua Pura para el Mundo* (APPM), and *Coordinadora Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas de Panama* (CONAMUIP) for specific activities in the Darien area.

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation employed mixed methods and a participatory approach, emphasizing gender equality and human rights principles. It integrated HRBA, GERA, and MSC approaches to address inequalities and discrimination, focusing on

intersectional aspects to understand the experiences of women, girls, and LGBTIQ+ individuals. Quantitative and qualitative analysis, desk reviews, interviews, focus groups, and field visits were used. The assessment was primarily conducted remotely, with in-person data collection in Costa Rica.

Lastly, the evaluation upheld the highest ethical standards, following UNEG Ethical Guidelines, the UN Women Evaluation Consultants Agreement, and relevant Sphere and HAP standards.

FINDINGS

Relevance

Innovative and gender-sensitive methodologies effectively addressed the protection and empowerment needs of women, girls, and LGBTIQ+ individuals in mobility contexts. The Call for Action on Women in Human Mobility replaced need assessments, engaging target populations in customizing protection kits. Despite successes, challenges such as delays in procurement, kit distribution, and difficulties in reaching LGBTIQ+ individuals due to stigma and discrimination persisted.

A gender-transformative and rights-based approach ensured women's voices were integrated into decision-making processes. Implementing partners demonstrated strong capacities in delivering gender-responsive humanitarian responses. Adaptation to shifting migration dynamics through resource reallocation and strengthened coordination at national and local levels enhanced relevance and effectiveness.

Coherence

The project strongly aligned with UN Women, donor, and regional priorities, embedding gender-responsive humanitarian action into Central America's migration crisis response. It advanced GBV prevention, empowered women leaders, and fostered social cohesion, while adhering to

key frameworks like CEDAW, the SDGs, and MIRPS. Partnerships and technical integration amplified impact, though institutional capacity gaps and limited project visibility, especially in Japan, constrained broader recognition. Overall, it effectively bridged global commitments with local action, catalyzing inclusive humanitarian responses for women, girls, and LGBTIQ+ people in mobility.

Effectiveness

The implementation of this project established multiple causal pathways that meaningfully linked interventions to improvements in protection service delivery, leadership and women's empowerment, and social cohesion. In many instances, these pathways aligned closely with the Theory of Change, particularly in fostering humanitarian actor capacities and nurturing community cohesion. However, the evaluation reveals that while the project successfully triggered early-stage transformations, several pathways encountered fragility points, procurement delays, institutional inertia, financial rigidity, and persistent exclusion of marginalized groups. The result is a landscape of uneven progress: strong in localized empowerment and awareness-raising, yet vulnerable in institutionalization and sustainability. Outputs often exceeded numeric targets, yet critical qualitative factors, timing, institutional buy-in, and inclusivity, limited the depth and resilience of outcomes. Moving forward, reinforcing these causal pathways will require embedding adaptive mechanisms, institutional partnerships, and continuous learning frameworks that respond to both anticipated and emergent challenges.

Efficiency

The evaluation showed effective allocation of human resources and budget across several implementing partners, overcoming logistical and security challenges. HIAS received the largest

budget share, while Honduras faced the most significant operational difficulties. Despite adequate human resources, delays in contracting and fund transfers impacted efficiency. The project mobilized diverse actors and established partnerships to enhance training and capacity-building initiatives.

The project optimized resources through local partnerships but faced delays due to bureaucratic hurdles and infrastructure challenges. Mobile units improved responsiveness. The decentralized and context-specific design allowed tailored interventions, but coordination gaps and accessibility barriers affected efficiency. Project implementation varied across countries, with Panama serving primarily as a transit country and Honduras relying on grassroots organizations.

Sustainability

The project strengthened institutional capacity and women's empowerment in migration contexts through policy integration, training, and leadership initiatives. Despite significant contributions, long-term sustainability remains uncertain due to high staff turnover, deep-rooted gender inequalities, and the absence of a clearly defined sustainability plan. Continuous advocacy, education, and support are essential to maintain progress.

Changes in government commitments and migration policies present challenges to sustaining project initiatives. Adaptation to evolving needs, particularly for returning migrants, is crucial. Political transitions and leadership changes further complicate sustainability efforts, emphasizing the need for quality protection services and gender-responsive approaches.

Human Rights & Gender

The project integrated the LNOB approach, fostering community cohesion and awareness through workshops and empowerment

initiatives. Despite successes, challenges such as language barriers, cultural norms, limited reach to LGBTIQ+ populations, and the transient nature of migrant women persisted. Efforts to promote diversity included empowerment initiatives and bridging communication gaps using mobile translation applications and visual materials.

LESSONS LEARNED & GOOD PRACTICES

LL1 - Agile processes and realistic planning are critical for short-term humanitarian projects, particularly for development-oriented organizations

LL2 - Responding to human mobility dynamics requires flexibility to adapt to rapidly changing contexts and needs.

LL3 - Effective and agile project coordination among partners is key to maximizing impact and ensuring complementarity.

LL 4 - Proactive oversight and risk-informed planning are essential to mitigate delays and safeguard humanitarian delivery.

GP1 - Good contextual understanding enhances the relevance and effectiveness of humanitarian interventions.

GP2 - Involvement of project beneficiaries in decision-making processes brings success to the project, fosters ownership, improves relevance, and strengthens project outcomes.

GP3 - A holistic, multi-level approach—combining direct services like protection kits with capacity building of local actors—added significant value beyond typical humanitarian models.

GP4 - Strategic investment in local actors' capacity-building ensures continuity and localization of gender-responsive services.

GP 5 - Building inclusive and effective humanitarian responses through proven practices.

CONCLUSIONS

The project effectively bridged global commitments and local action, advancing gender

equality and inclusive humanitarian response for women, girls, and LGBTIQ+ people in mobility across Central America. The project's causal architecture held promise but demanded further consolidation to ensure that short-term successes evolve into long-lasting, systemic impacts. Embedding agility, institutional alignment, and inclusive protection measures will be essential for sustaining progress and fully realizing the vision of the original Theory of Change.

Additionally, LEAP-Trayectos represented a pioneering, gender-transformative approach to humanitarian programming in Central America. It introduced valuable innovations, fostered local leadership, and adapted services to dynamic migratory contexts. However, its strategic potential was undermined by operational constraints, short implementation timelines, and a lack of systems to institutionalize change. Future iterations should focus on systemic integration, inclusive design for marginalized groups, and sustainability mechanisms embedded from the start.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1 - Institutionalize and strengthen gender-transformative practices into humanitarian responses initiatives.

R2 - Strengthen the sustainability of knowledge on gender related issues by promoting inclusive capacity-building strategies.

R3 - Optimize procurement and logistical processes of UNWOMEN for humanitarian action initiatives.

R4 - Promote adaptive management for continuous learning on humanitarian actions responses

R5 - Strengthen institutional partnerships at regional and national level

R6 - Enhance multi-sectoral partnerships, expanding engagement with actors in health, legal and economic sectors to provide a more holistic support system

1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

UN Women recognises that women, girls and LGBTIQ+ in human mobility- such as refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and migrants- face unique protection challenges and barriers to accessing essential services and rights throughout all stages of the journey. These include gender-based violence (GBV), discrimination and heightened vulnerability to trafficking, kidnapping and murder. Traditional humanitarian protection planning and service delivery often fail to adequately consider the differentiated needs of women, girls and LGBTIQ+ in these circumstances.

In this context, in partnership with the Government of Japan, the **“Women’s Leadership, Empowerment, Access and Protection in Human Mobility Crisis in Central America”** project was designed to respond to the unprecedented displacement and human mobility crisis in Central America, particularly affecting women, girls and LGBTIQ+, while enhancing their ability to lead, to equally participate in and benefit from gender-responsive protection services and social cohesion initiatives in the border areas of Costa Rica, Honduras and Panama. Running from March 2024 to March 2025, the project supports UN Women’s commitment to gender equality, safety, and leadership by addressing critical needs within humanitarian, peacebuilding, and development frameworks. It aligns with Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 5 on Gender Equality and 16 on Peaceful and Inclusive Societies, with the UN Women Strategic Note Latin America and the Caribbean (2023-2025) and, it contributes to the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) in each country where it was implemented. The project is under the UN

Women’s globally implement LEAP-Gender Accelerator Model.

The project is finalized, with an evaluation being carried out during the last months of implementation by the UN Women's Regional Office for the Americas and the Caribbean (ACRO) independent evaluation service. The evaluation sought to operationalize the following guiding principles aligned with the UN Women Evaluation Policy: responsiveness to UN Women’s strategic priorities in the Americas and Caribbean region; timeliness, relevance, and utility to the most critical programmatic and operational needs of the organization; as well as innovation and flexibility to implement efficient and effective approaches in evaluating UN Women work.

The purpose of this report is to present the assessment conducted based on evaluation criteria, including relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, and the integration of a human rights-based approach, while ensuring a gender-responsive perspective. To this end, the report presents key findings, conclusions, and recommendations, offering actionable and evidence-based guidance to enhance future similar interventions.

1.1. Human mobility crisis in Central America

The Central America sub-region is one of the most dynamic, complex, and rapidly evolving areas¹ concerning mixed movements² with multi-causal displacement drivers. Outmigration from countries in the subregion, intraregional, transit, and return migration flows³ characterize the human mobility

¹ Migration Data Portal. Mixed migration. 2022. Available at: <https://www.migrationdataportal.org/themes/mixed-migration>

² Migration Data Portal. Regional Data Overview. Migration data in Central America. 2023. Available at: <https://www.migrationdataportal.org/regional-data-overview/migration-data-central-america>

³ IOM, World Migration Report, 2022. Available at: <https://publications.iom.int/books/world-migration-report-2022>

dynamics. Over the past 15 years, the number of international migrants in Latin America and the Caribbean more than doubled, from 7 million to 15 million people in 2022; of them, 48.7% are women⁴, most in transit to the north of the continent, making Central America a critical point for human mobility. Statistics vary at the country level as countries have different capacities to monitor human mobility flows with a gender approach, compounded by the challenge that mixed movements often use unmonitored routes.

During the implementation of the project, numerous contextual factors impacted and intensified human mobility flows through Central America, including the complex humanitarian emergency in Venezuela, which led to the emigration of 7,710,887 people, 85% in the Americas and the Caribbean. Haitian mobility also represented one of the most significant flows by nationality due to a deteriorating humanitarian situation marked by spiralling violence, protection and human rights issues, food emergencies, and the cholera epidemic. Socio-economic vulnerabilities further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change-related extreme weather events, including hurricanes Eta and Iota, and violence stemming from organized crime also had profound impacts on the Central American population, increasing international displacement flows. Additionally, drivers of migration in other countries and regions, including Afghanistan, Cameroon, Angola, and China, led to an increase in the arrival and transit of migrants through Central America.

Furthermore, In July 2024, electoral upheaval in Venezuela raised concerns about a significant increase in migration; but this did not materialise during the third quarter of the year, as the number of new arrivals of Venezuelans to Colombia increased by about 7% between July and August 2024.

However, a new increase was recorded in the number of Venezuelans crossing from Colombia to Panama via the Darien Province in September⁵. Along the same line, tensions arose between the Dominican Republic and Haiti, after the re-election of Dominican president, Luis Abinader, and the implementation of massive deportation of Haitians to their country, which resulted in the increase of Haitian migrants.

More recently, the inauguration of the 2025 U.S. Administration intensified uncertainty within Central America's migration landscape. Policies announcing mass deportations, along with shifts in migration and foreign policy, are directly disrupting asylum and transit processes across the region. These deportations heighten the vulnerabilities of displaced populations, as forcibly returned individuals frequently endure harsh detention conditions, insufficient legal representation, and family separations—serious breaches of their human rights and dignity. Women and LGBTIQ+ individuals are particularly at risk, facing heightened exposure to GBV and discrimination in return contexts where protections are often inadequate or absent.

1.2. Gender and human rights risks for persons in human mobility in Panama, Costa Rica and Honduras

The journey through Central America to the north follows a distinct route that begins in Panama, where migrants typically enter through the dangerous Darien Gap, a rugged jungle region connecting South and Central America characterized by limited infrastructure and high risks of exploitation and violence. Resulting from the increase in the flows in 2023 and 2024, authorities relocated reception points in indigenous communities to assist those in

⁴ World Bank, Migrant Women and girls in Central America risk their lives for a better future, 2022. Available at: <https://blogs.worldbank.org/latinamerica/migrant-women-girls-search-better-future-central-america>

⁵ According to the National Migration Service of Panama, 19 800 Venezuelans enter the Country via the Darien. <https://www.migracion.gob.pa/wp-content/uploads/IRREGULARES-POR-DARIEN-2024-1.pdf>

transit in nearby spaces⁶. In 2024 alone, Panama reported over 302,203 entries from Colombia, with approximately 35% of these being women⁷, 9% of the women being pregnant or breastfeeding, and children making up 5% of the transit population⁸, many of whom were unaccompanied or separated from their families, highlighting the growing vulnerability of young migrants⁹.

From these, at least 300,000 migrants travelled northward to **Costa Rica**¹⁰, before crossing into Nicaragua and continuing their journey through **Honduras**. For Costa Rica this created a significant pressure for service delivery as the number of arrivals in 2023 and 2024 surpassed the total registered in 2022 by 80% according to International Organization for Migration (IOM) data¹¹. The country became a frequent passage route for Haitians, Cubans, Venezuelans, and persons from other countries¹², and experienced a significant increase in the number of people applying for refugee status, mainly from Nicaragua and Venezuela¹³.

As a result, in September 29, 2023, the Government of Costa Rica declared a National Emergency in response to the migratory situation¹⁴, highlighting the need for an inter-institutional and comprehensive approach to provide a humane and orderly response to this complex situation, and develop joint

approaches with the government of Panama to optimize the verification and transfer of migrants who make up the mobility flow through the Americas. Shelters, bus stations, and public space in border cities were frequently over their capacity¹⁵, exposing persons in human mobility to unsanitary conditions, and an increased exposure to GBV, violence and trafficking networks.

Honduras also witnessed a sharp rise in irregular migration between 2023 and 2024, with 341,000 entries recorded—highlighting a stark increase in migratory pressure compared to the previous year¹⁶. As in Panama and Costa Rica, a large part of the of the country's human mobility flows were women and girls¹⁷ (40%), and a large percentage of Women traveling alone with children, thus increasing vulnerability to gender-based violence and a having a decreased social capital during the transit¹⁸. Furthermore, the northern corridor, particularly the northern borders of Honduras and Guatemala represented critical points in the migration route, where migrants faced additional vulnerabilities and protection challenges.

In particular, the increase in flows exceeded the capacity of shelters at the main transit points, and the possibility to offer protection to survivors was substantially decreased.

⁶ UNHCR. Mixed Movements Darién and Chiriquí. September 2023. Available at: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/104240>

⁷ UNHCR, Mixed Movements Official Data, May 2023. Available at: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/100745>

⁸ UNHCR. Mixed Movements Darién and Chiquiri. September 2023. Available at: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/104240>

⁹ UNICEF. Records highest ever number of migrant children crossing the Darien jungle towards the US. 2021. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/2021-records-highest-ever-number-migrant-children-crossing-darien-jungle-towards-us>

¹⁰ IBC Human Mobility (April - June 2024). Available in: <https://www.rcplac.org/sites/default/files/2025-01/IBC%20HM%20July-Sept%202024.pdf>

¹¹ OIM. DTM Monitoreo del flujo migratorio de personas en situación de movilidad por las Américas en sitios específicos de alta movilidad y concentración de personas migrantes en Costa Rica, OIM, San José, Costa Rica. 2023 Available at: <https://dtm.iom.int/CostaRica>

¹² IFRC. Costa Rica Population Movement-DREF Operation N° MDRCR020. 2022. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/CostaRica/CostaRica-population-movement-dref-operation-ndegmdrcr020-final-report>

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Swiss info. Costa Rica registra el paso de más de 300,000 migrantes y declara emergencia nacional. 2023. Available at: https://www.swissinfo.ch/spa/crisis-migratoria-Costa_Rica_Costa_Rica-registra-el-paso-de-m%C3%A1s-de-300.000-migrantes-y-declara-emergencia-nacional/48850814

Presidencia de la República. Gobierno de Costa Rica. Comunicados. 2023. Available at: <https://www.presidencia.go.cr/comunicados/2023/09/presidente-firma-decreto-de-emergencia-nacional-para-atencion-oportuna-y-agil-de-crisis-migratoria/>

¹⁵ BBC News. Estamos sobre pasados: la grave crisis migratoria que llevó al presidente de Costa Rica a pedir la declaración de la emergencia nacional. 2023. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/articulos/c5179k0xdlo#:~:text=Seg%C3%BAAn%20datos%20oficiales%20de%20las,la%20atravesaron%20en%20todo%202022.>

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Consorcio Life Honduras. SITREP No. 11. 2023. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/honduras/media/3236/file/SITREP%2011.pdf>

¹⁸ Ibid

For example, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) reported that one case of sexual violence against persons in human mobility occurred every three hours in the Darien Gap, including rape against children and men; and with 95% of sexual violence survivors being women¹⁹. MSF called on the government to ensure that survivors of sexual violence can access medical care within 72 hours to avoid unwanted pregnancies, HIV, and other sexually transmitted diseases²⁰. In 2022, the CEDAW Committee also raised concerns about GBV, including the disappearances and rape suffered by migrant women crossing the Darien Gap, and urged the regional governments to take measures to address the high risk of GBV against women²¹.

The above was also compounded by the existence of Extreme poverty rates affecting primarily women, alongside recurrent climate shocks, chronic violence, and alarming rates of GBV, driving significant internal and international human displacement²² from within Central America. In specific, Honduras is listed as a high-risk country in the Inform Risk Index, according to Insight-Crime, it is among the most violent countries due to trafficking, gangs, corruption, and transnational criminal organizations. Resulting violence takes on many forms, including homicides, femicides, forced disappearances, restrictions on mobility and freedom, forced recruitment of children by gangs, GBV, extortion,

forced eviction, dispossession, and forced displacement²³.

These need gaps were evident from years prior. For example, according to a 2022 UNHCR and HIAS²⁴ regional study on GBV and women in human mobility across Latin America, 62% of women surveyed felt unsafe and at risk of GBV during transit. The study also revealed that 30% of women continued to be at risk of suffering GBV in their destination country, and 35% reporting feeling unsafe in the host community, reaffirming GBV is a reality for women²⁵. A UNHCR²⁶ survey taken in 2015 further revealed that 40% of Central American women asylum seekers who had experienced sexual assault, rape, attacks, or threats never reported them to the police, and 10% said the police were the perpetrators. Such symbolic violence created the conditions for the normalization and promotion of violence against women in human mobility²⁷.

This is why Panama, Costa Rica²⁸ and Honduras called on the international community for support. In October 2023, all three countries signed the Palenque Declaration, to obtain the support of international organizations to provide attention to people in human mobility with special protection needs, with a priority focus on women and children²⁹, reflecting the immediate support and regional articulation required to address the uptick in migration flows and complexities they pose at national level.

¹⁹ UNHCR, Mixed Movements Official Data, May 2023. Available at: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/100745>

²⁰ UNICEF. Records highest ever number of migrant children crossing the Darien jungle towards the US. 2021. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/2021-records-highest-ever-number-migrant-children-crossing-darien-jungle-towards-us>

²¹ CEDAW 2022 Report. Available at: <https://panama.un.org/es/173502-el-comit%C3%A9-de-derechos-de-las-mujeres-de-la-onu-publica-hallazgos-sobre-rep%C3%BAblica-dominicana>

²² OCHA. Honduras Humanitarian Needs Overview 2023. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/honduras/honduras-humanitarian-needs-overview-2023-september-2022>

²³ OCHA. Honduras Humanitarian Needs Overview 2023. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/honduras/honduras-humanitarian-needs-overview-2023-september-2022>

²⁴ UNHCR; HIAS (2022) Our right to safety: Placing forcibly displaced women at the center of searching solutions to address gender-based

violence. Available at: <https://segurasenmovilidad.org/2022/12/08/our-right-to-safety-executive-summary/>

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ UNHCR. Women on the run. First-hand accounts of refugees fleeing El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico. 2015. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/publications/operations/5630f24c6/women-run.html>

²⁷ Hourani, Jeanine, et.al. Structural and Symbolic Violence Exacerbates the Risks and Consequences of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence for Forced Migrant Women. Frontiers. (2021). Available at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fhumd.2021.769611/full>

²⁸ UN. Costa Rica recibe el apoyo de la comunidad internacional ante el desafío migratorio. 2022. Available at: <https://news.un.org/es/story/2022/09/1515031>

²⁹ Los Angeles Press. Resultados de la Cumbre Migratoria de Palenque. 2023. Available at: <https://www.losangelespress.org/noticias/resultados-de-la-cumbre-migratoria-de-palenque-20231023-6812.html>

The migration route through Central America presents unique challenges that necessitate complementary gendered approaches to relief and protection. This includes leveraging humanitarian diplomacy to prioritize the needs of women, girls, and LGBTQ+ individuals in human mobility. Additionally, there is a need to enhance humanitarian access and protection measures, and to ensure that GBV prevention information is available in relevant languages.

2. RESPONSE TO THE HUMAN MOBILITY DYNAMICS IN THE REGION

2.1. The project (evaluation object)

This project sought to address the gaps in women's leadership, their equal access and protection in the situation of unprecedented displacement and human mobility crisis in Central America. It aimed to enhance the gender responsiveness of the protection and social cohesion efforts in response to the intensification and increase of protection risks to GBV and human trafficking, thus, preventing and responding to the differentiated and incremented risks for women and girls in human mobility.

The project responded to the human mobility crisis in Central America particularly affecting women and girls, who faced challenges at all stages of the journey, including GBV, discrimination, and vulnerability to trafficking, kidnapping, and murder. According to the recent evidence, at least one in every four migrant women, refugees, and asylum seekers experienced harassment or abuse on their journey³⁰, 25% of family groups travel with a woman or girl, with transit being the riskiest stage. Women also felt reluctant to file complaints because of fears of being deported to their countries of origin in uncertain conditions, risk of abuse or harassment by authorities, fear of being re-victimized by the perpetrator, lack of information about available services, and long distances making it difficult to access such services during their journey³¹.

This is why Panama, Costa Rica³² and Honduras called on the international community for support. In October 2023, all three countries signed the Palenque Declaration, to obtain the support of international organizations to provide attention to

people in human mobility with special protection needs, with a priority focus on women and children³³, reflecting the immediate support and regional articulation required to address the uptick in migration flows and complexities they pose at national level. In addition, women, adolescents and girls in international mixed displacement were found to have limited conditions and resources to access minimum hygiene items, as well as essential elements that contribute to their psychological and physical well-being, including critical information on rights and services from first response institutions and humanitarian actors.

According to the project concept note, this situation required the creation of complementary gendered approaches to relief and protection concerns on the migration route through Central America, including leveraging humanitarian diplomacy to put the needs of women, girls, and LGBTIQ+ persons in human mobility at the centre of response, further improving humanitarian access and protection, and making available GBV prevention information in relevant languages. Protection kits needed to consider cultural specificities and the particularities of the geographical context, in which they were provided, based on previous needs assessment centred on women, adolescents, LGBTIQ+ and girls' voices, and including age and disability concerns³⁴.

With current changes in the context and migration flows, new country-specific challenges arose. Honduras, with nearly 5% of its population on

³⁰ Darien Panama: Mixed Movements Protection Monitoring February 2023, UNHCR. Available from: <https://data.unhcr.org/es/documents/details/98861>

³¹ "Migrant women and girls in Central America risk their lives in search of a better future", 2023, World Bank. Available from: <https://blogs.worldbank.org/latinamerica/migrant-women-girls-search-better-future-central-america>

³² UN. Costa Rica recibe el apoyo de la comunidad internacional ante el desafío migratorio. 2022. Available at: <https://news.un.org/es/story/2022/09/1515031>

³³ Los Ángeles Press. Resultados de la Cumbre Migratoria de Palenque. 2023. Available at: <https://www.losangelespress.org/noticias/resultados-de-la-cumbre-migratoria-de-palenque-20231023-6812.html>

³⁴ Global Protection Cluster. Dignity Kits. Guidance Note. Available at: https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/dignity_kits_guidance_note_en.pdf

deportation lists³⁵, faces multiples challenges to address poverty, violence, and climate-induced displacement. Guatemala estimates that nearly 2.7 million nationals are in the United States, but only 400,000 have the necessary documents to work³⁶ and may face deportation. In Mexico, after the U.S. CBP One app was disabled, an estimated 270,000 people are stranded on the Mexican side of the border, with no clear indications of when or how they will be able to apply for asylum. At the same time, ongoing U.S. migration dynamics could pose significant pressure for Panama and Costa Rica, particularly regarding the management of their shared transport corridor for mixed movement flows. Increased migration pressure could force the closure of this vital route, leaving many people stranded in precarious conditions in both countries.

2.3. Project response and objectives

Responding to the above-mentioned context, the “Women’s Leadership, Empowerment, Access and Protection in Human Mobility Crisis in Central America” project sought to address the gaps in women’s leadership, their equal access and protection in the situation of unprecedented displacement and human mobility crisis in Central America. It aimed to enhance the gender responsiveness of the protection and social cohesion efforts in response to the intensification and increase of protection risks to GBV and human trafficking, thus, preventing and responding to the differentiated and incremented risks for women and girls in human mobility.

At the **Outcome** level, the proposed project aims to ensure that women affected by the human mobility crisis lead, equally participate in and benefit from gender-responsive protection services and social cohesion initiatives in Panama, Costa Rica and Honduras. Two indicators measure the achievement’s degree of the outcome:

- **Indicator 1:** # of women in human mobility and women in host communities who have increased perceived safety in Panama, Costa Rica and Honduras (Baseline: 0, Target: 70%)
- **Indicator 2:** # of women affected by human mobility crisis demonstrating leadership in social cohesion initiatives in Panama, Costa Rica and Honduras (Baseline: 0, Target: 50%)

To achieve this result, the project includes two outputs:

- **Output 1:** Humanitarian actors have enhanced capacities to plan and deliver protection services, including GBV care, that are responsive to the needs of women in human mobility in Panama, Costa Rica and Honduras.
- **Output 2:** Women in human mobility and in host communities have increased capacity to access and influence protection service delivery and social cohesion initiatives in Panama, Costa Rica and Honduras.

The above is represented in this Theory of Change (ToC):

IF Humanitarian actors have enhanced capacities to plan and deliver protection services, including GBV care, responsive to the needs of women in human mobility.

IF Women in human mobility and in host communities have increased capacity to access and influence protection service delivery and social cohesion initiatives.

Then Women in human mobility will lead, equally participate in and benefit from gender-responsive protection services and social cohesion initiatives.

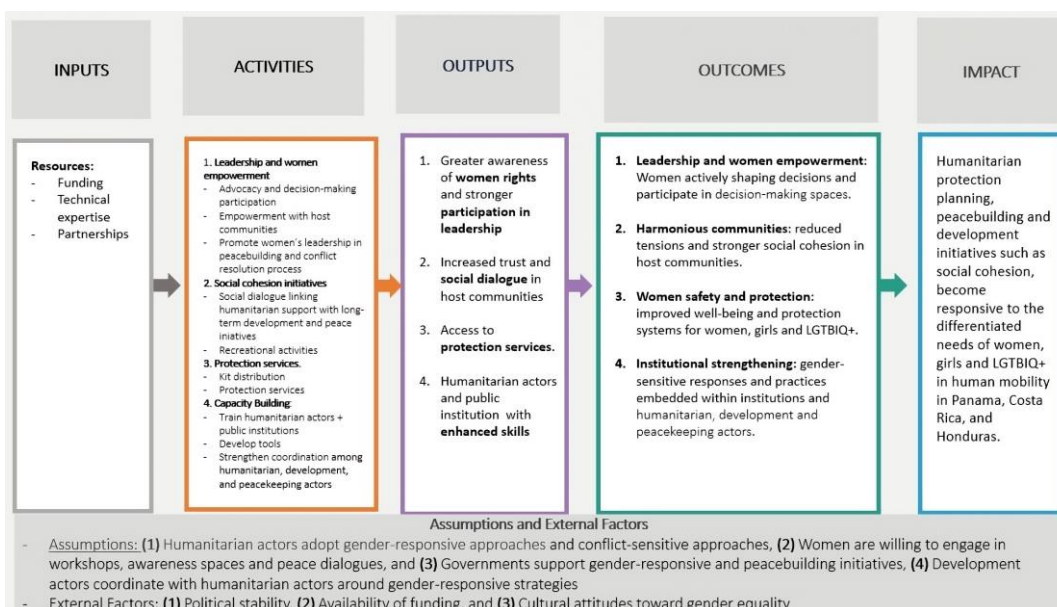
Because Humanitarian protection planning and services, as well as social cohesion initiatives become responsive to the differentiated needs of women in human mobility in Panama, Costa Rica and Honduras.

A reconstructed ToC elaborated by the Evaluation Team is provided below.

³⁵ Isacson, Adam (2025). Weekly U.S. – Mexico Border Update: Trump’s First Days. WOLA

³⁶ Swiss info (2024). EE. UU. deportó un récord de más de 61,000 guatemaltecos en 2024.

Figure 1- Theory of change of the project



Source: elaborated by the evaluation team

2.4. Project expenditure and partnership framework

An overview of the project budget allocation is presented below.

Table 1- Project budget

Budget allocation	
Output	Budget USD
Output 1	220,936.13
Output 2	1,158,770.14
Subtotal	1,739,706.27 USD
Personnel costs	243,152.06
Logistical support	66,707.40
Communications and Visibility	134,717.14
Audit	14,010.58
M&E	53,927.82
Indirect costs	69,258.12
General Management Cost (8%)	163,640.10
TOTAL	2,125,109.49 USD

Source: elaborated by the evaluation team based on information available in the project proposal.

Source: elaborated by the evaluation team

This budget was implemented through different partnerships³⁷ based on the country of implementation (see Table 2). In Panama and Costa Rica, the international NGO Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) served as the implementing partner (IP), while in Honduras, two national NGOs were selected as IPs, Fundación Alivio al Sufrimiento (FAS) and Agua Pura para el Mundo (APPM). In Honduras and Costa Rica, the IPs were responsible for carrying out activities related to Output 2. In Panama, HIAS was responsible for activities under Output 1 and 2³⁸. Lastly, FLACSO was contracted for capacity-building efforts (output 1)

Table 2- Partnerships framework

Partnership per country			
Output	Panamá	Costa Rica	Honduras
Output 1	HIAS, UNW	UNW	UNW
	FLACSO		
Output 2	HIAS, UNW	HIAS	FAS - APPM

³⁷ In addition to these partnership agreements, the country offices also established alliances with other actors and worked in coordination with other institutions, agencies, and CSOs present in the territories. Further details of these alliances can be found in section 6.

³⁸ UNW was responsible for the activities related to output 1 in the three countries, and for those related to output 2 only in Panama

3. EVALUATION OBJECTIVES AND GENERAL APPROACH

3.1. Objectives, purpose, and scope

The main purpose of this evaluation is to assess the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, organizational efficiency, sustainability and human rights and gender approaches of this project. The evaluation findings will be used for strategic decision-making, organizational learning and accountability as well as for the generation of knowledge. Furthermore, the evaluation also aims to draw lessons and practices regarding the implementation of this innovative humanitarian intervention by UN Women, and recommendations to be applied for future potential programming. The evaluation was conducted with a special focus on lessons learned.

The objectives of this evaluation are to:

- Analyse how relevant were the project interventions for women and girls in human mobility and in host communities, with a particular focus on vulnerable population (indigenous, afro-descendent, LGBTIQ+, amongst others).
- Analyse the different modalities of work across the three countries and what have been its strengths, limitations and weaknesses.
- Assess to what extent gender mainstreaming has truly been integrated within this humanitarian response, the achievements and gaps and how this integration has occurred.
- Examine to what extent the project has been able to achieve its objective of empowering and promote the leadership of the target population given the short implementation window, determining what empowerment really means and how the project helped women in human mobility and in host communities to improve leadership in these communities.
- Assess the changes experimented during project implementation, repercussion of these

changes and UN Women's capacity to respond to the changing humanitarian context for current and future similar programming.

- Measure to what extent the project was able to build institutional capacities to respond and serve target communities with a particular focus on women, girls from a gender diverse population.
- Identify and validate lessons learned, good practices and work innovations implemented by UN Women in relation to the mainstreaming of gender in humanitarian action.
- Provide actionable recommendations with respect to UN Women's work on the area for the benefit of the wider organisational priorities and resource mobilisation in the area.

The findings of the evaluation are expected to contribute to effective programming, organizational learning and accountability, as well as inform future programming and contribute to resource mobilisation.

The period to be evaluated covers the entire duration of the LEAP-*Trayectos* project, defined as being from March 2024 to March 2025.

The evaluation has a broad geographic scope covering Costa Rica, Honduras and Panama.

The evaluation is expected to be both summative and formative in nature. In summative terms, there is the requirement to conduct field visits to assess project performance. In formative terms, it's understood that a high level of importance is placed on learning and to incorporate in the analysis, conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned, gender equality, vulnerable groups ensuring that "no one is left behind".

Targeted users of the evaluation are the senior management and programme staff for the UN

Women ACRO, the counterparts at national and regional levels, including national and local institutions, NGOs, humanitarian actors, women-led organizations, civil society organizations and particularly the representatives and key stakeholders from the Government of Japan as the evaluation is a contractual requirement with the donor.

3.2. Evaluation criteria

To meet the exercise's stated objectives, the following questions were evaluated based on the key criteria of relevance/human rights and gender, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability using the standard definitions of the Assistance Committee (OECD) with the integration of human rights and gender in a cross-cutting manner³⁹. In these areas of evaluation, the exercise looked to identify lessons across its triple mandate of coordination, programmatic, and normative dimensions for potential application to future programming in the region. The evaluation questions and a detailed evaluation matrix, including the set of indicators and tools under which these questions were evaluated are included in *Annex 1 and 2*. A set of sub-questions were identified within the Tools in *Annex 9*.

3.3. Evaluability assessment

The Evaluability Assessment focused on the revision of the quality and availability of the documentation and identification of available data for use as secondary sources. The programme team provided access to several documents used by the programme including proposals, donor and visit reports, as well as write-ups from decision-making spaces. The information was initially reviewed and catalogued as per Annex 13. Information came mainly from interviews, focal

groups and field visit with the programme beneficiaries.

As this evaluation aims to assess the relevance/coherence, organizational efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and human rights and gender approaches of this project, and the evaluation findings will be used for strategic decision-making, organizational learning and accountability as well as for the generation of knowledge, the evaluability assessment seeks to determine whether this project is in a condition to be evaluated, justified, feasible and likely to provide useful information.

The preliminary revision of these documents helped to identify a series of gaps which were solved during the primary data collection. These are (see table 5 for mitigation measures):

- The **project ToC and results framework** effectively address protection needs for women, girls, and LGBTIQ+ in human mobility and host communities across Panama, Costa Rica, and Honduras, focusing on GBV and social cohesion. While the ToC clearly identifies target populations and aims to enhance stakeholder capacities and service accessibility, it could improve by detailing causal pathways and assumptions for better evaluation. The results framework is structured with measurable outcomes and indicators at the outcome level. However, the lack of a quantifiable baseline limited the progress assessment. In this sense, the evaluation incorporated contribution analysis to better attribute changes to project interventions.
- The **project's documentation** is primarily stored in UN Women's Results Management System (RMS). However, the availability of project documents and interim reports, both

³⁹ OECD, 'Better Criteria for Better Evaluation: Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use', OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation, Dec 2019.

OECD. 'Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully, OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation, March 2021.

narrative and technical, is somewhat limited. To address documentation gaps, this evaluation supplemented this data lacking, with interviews, focus groups, and stakeholder inputs to ensure comprehensive data collection and accurate impact assessment.

- The project operates in a complex and evolving **socio-political context**, where migration policies and flows, humanitarian needs, and political changes vary across poses new challenges for the three countries. Additionally, changes in various country contexts, prior or in response to the new policies of the U.S. Administration announcing mass deportations and with shifts in migrations routes also posed new challenges meant that the context under which project was initially designed and then evaluated, were particularly different.

3.4. Stakeholder mapping

The project key stakeholders were also identified during the preliminary evaluation meetings and data collection, desk review process, across the following categories.:

- *Main Duty Bearers*: those mainly responsible for provision of services to targeted population outside of the project implementation, such as governing agencies.
- *Secondary Duty Bearers*: supporting government and non-governmental organizations, but not directly responsible for drafting or implementing
- *Supporting Partners*: UN Women, IPs, and other UN agencies, that might be responsible for the provision of services during project delivery but are not governing agencies.
- *Right holders*: women and girls in mobility, and the CSOs, WROs, leaders representing them, and supporting partners.

The list compiled by the evaluators was then verified with each of the UN Women teams involved during the evaluation, as well as with the implementing partners. Additional stakeholders were identified during the data collection process, and the specific limitations that were likely to be found when trying to directly contact people in mobility that had been participants of the projects. Additional details about the process of consolidating a sample and the limitations encountered during the data collection process with these stakeholders are mentioned in the next chapter.

The evaluation sought to understand the different experiences and contrasting views of these stakeholders when working as supporters, participants, and external observers of the project strategies. Data analysis depended on the triangulation of information across these stakeholders. The detailed assessment of the stakeholders is included in *Annex 4*.

4. APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

4.1. Methods of data collection and analysis.

4.1.1 Overall design and conceptual framework

The assessment was conducted through a mixed methods approach and adopted a bottom-up, participatory approach aligned with the local stakeholders needs. It was carried out in accordance with internal and external guidelines⁴⁰ and placed emphasis on the integration of gender equality and human rights principles in the evaluation process with a focus on Leaving No One Behind (LNOB) and intersectional aspects.

Both the human-rights based approach (HRBA) and the gender-responsive approach (GERA) were used in this evaluation, together with the Most Significant Change (MSC) approach. The HRBA informed the way the LEAP-Trayectos project was designed, implemented, monitored and evaluated, using human-rights standards and principles to increase the enjoyment of rights. This includes confronting patterns of inequalities and discrimination and formulating responses that address the structural causes of exclusion, marginalisation, and the denial of human rights⁴¹. A gender approach was integrated throughout the data analysis by applying intersectional, rights-based frameworks to interpret findings across all contexts. This included systematically examining how factors such as sex, gender identity, age, ethnicity, migration status, and disability intersected to shape the experiences and needs of women, girls, and LGBTQ+ individuals on the move. The analysis drew heavily on qualitative data, such as testimonies from women in mobility, host community, participatory sessions, and focus groups, combined with

insights from Call for action on women in human mobility, which served as key tools to surface real-time, gender-differentiated risks and gaps in protection. The gender lens also informed how institutional capacities, community engagement, and access to services were assessed, ensuring that both individual and systemic dimensions of inequality were critically examined. Ensuring a HRBA and GERA to evaluation requires two elements. Firstly, a HR&GE responsive approach was applied to what the evaluation examined. Secondly, a HR&GE responsive approach informed how the evaluation was undertaken, thus, analytical frameworks considered power dynamics, access to resources, and decision-making roles to ensure that the analysis captured gender-specific patterns, inequalities, and potential impacts of the intervention.⁴²

The *Most Significant Change* (MSC) approach was primarily employed to capture qualitative insights and assess the impact of the intervention from multiple perspectives in Costa Rica, where the in-person data collection took place. This context enabled a richer and more grounded understanding of the intervention's effectiveness and impact, allowing for the gathering of more robust qualitative evidence to support the findings. By collecting and analysing stories of change, this method facilitated the identification of contributed valuable insights into key outcomes and lessons learned, providing a deeper understanding of the transformative effects of the initiative. Additionally, the MSC technique complemented quantitative data, ensuring a more holistic evaluation of progress and challenges.

4.1.2 Data collection methods

⁴⁰ These guidelines include the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation, the UNEG Guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations (2024) and the UN Women Evaluation Handbook: How to manage gender-responsive evaluation (2022).

⁴¹ UNEG (2024) Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations

⁴² UN Women (2022), UN Women Evaluation Handbook: How to manage

Methodologies for data collection and analysis included both the analysis of quantitative⁴³ and qualitative data and use of both in-depth desk review of the project implementation process., primary data collection to fill information documentary gaps and triangulation. Specific qualitative data collection methods were articulated in the inception report, and included the evaluation criteria, questions, and data analysis approaches. The assessment was primarily carried out through remote data collection and field data collection was done in Costa Rica. In total, 57 stakeholders were consulted, including one focus group discussion with seven rights holders' representatives during the field mission in Costa Rica (see table 4). Data collection methods included those below, with details about the number of documents revised, interviews and focal groups conducted included in the sampling and Annexes 3 and 8:

- *Secondary analysis* of project data, including M&E reports, other relevant metadata, and related documentation from corporate systems and obtained from UN Women project members.
- *Structured desk review* of key reference documents and knowledge products related to the project but not specifically linked with the project implementation. This includes information from particularly government and civil society stakeholders to understand key advances and limitations on policy areas. Other complementary documents were also added during the evaluation based on interviews.
- *Semi-structured interviews and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)* with a selection of the stakeholders identified, in accordance with the sampling table (see Table 3), were undertaken (by remote and face-to-face) in the three countries.

- *Focus Groups Discussions* (FGDs) with right holders, CSOs and WROs representatives were carried out during the field visit in Costa Rica.
- *Field visits and observation* at selected project sites, such as San José and Northern Border areas in Costa Rica.

The use of each of these data collection methods was articulated against each of the evaluation questions within the Evaluation Matrix (Annex 2), including the revision of specific indicators of success expected to be found during the data collection process. The data tools with the questions used for each of the different sets of stakeholders is included in Annex 6.

For the field visit, the agenda and stakeholders contacted was developed together between the Evaluation Team and the Evaluation Management Group based on the possibility of articulating KIIs and FGDs within an existing agenda of a monitoring and training visit. The agenda for remote data collection was mainly managed by the Evaluation Team with strong support from the Evaluation Management Team. The UN Women teams in country shared the contact details for each of the stakeholders mapped and sent introduction letter, whilst the Evaluation Team agreed the times of the KIIs and FGDs based on the preferences of those participating in the exercises. Strong flexibility was kept regarding the times of the interviews conducted, as well as the tools used for communication as not all users were able to connect through Teams.

4.1.3 Data analysis

Overall, data analysis used **content analysis** for qualitative data collected. The content analysis was based on the extraction of major and recurrent themes during the interviews/focus groups and draw out key trends based upon the preponderance of available evidence. Interview notes were kept

⁴³ Mainly programme indicators and budget allocation across UN participating agencies.

confidential and shared only among the evaluation team members, as outlined in more detail in the Data Management Plan (see *Annex 11*). This methodology was particularly focused on identifying qualitative results which are normally hard to measure and/or identify, particularly those related to gendered experiences of mobility, access to rights, and economic participation.

Triangulation was used to identify similarities and/or discrepancies in data obtained in different ways (i.e., interviews, focus groups, observations, etc.) and from different stakeholders (e.g., duty bearers, rights holders, etc.). Data analysis and triangulation of data were enhanced using ATLAS.ti software⁴⁴, which allows the qualitative analysis of many textual documents, such as strategic notes narrative sections, annual and quarterly reports and logical matrixes. Through the development of categories of analysis, ATLAS.ti allowed the consultants to identify gendered patterns of responses to the Evaluation questions. Indicators were developed for each of the Evaluation Questions, as well as sub-questions within each of the Data Collection Tools, which are distinctly directed to the different stakeholders to be consulted. This was the main mechanism to consolidate the data collection tools.

The “**Gender at Work**” framework was used as a key analytical tool to assess gender dynamics within the collected data. This approach enabled a comprehensive understanding of both formal and informal gender-related barriers, facilitating a deeper analysis of structural inequalities and power relations. By applying this tool, the study aimed to generate evidence-based insights to inform gender-responsive strategies and interventions. Additionally, this tool ensured that the evaluation did not measure gender-disaggregated outcomes but also identifies systemic barriers and opportunities for transformative change. This evidence-based approach used to inform gender-responsive strategies, improve project

design, and strengthen policies addressing women’s rights in human in mobility and migration contexts.

Data from different research sources was triangulated to increase its validity. The methodology and approach incorporated human rights, intersectional and gender equality approaches to ensure that women’s diverse migration experiences, especially those marginalized groups, are fully captured and analysed.

4.2. Sampling and stakeholders consulted

Based on the Stakeholder Analysis mentioned in the last chapter. The sample was purposive sampling was used to determine the names and numbers of the stakeholders to be consulted during the process. This non-probability sampling technique was used to deliberately select participants based on specific characteristics, knowledge, or experiences relevant to the research questions. Other considerations for the use of this sampling methodology included the limited time available for the evaluation and limitations in doing extensive field visits, the qualitative nature of the evaluation and the focus on in-depth understanding detailed insights about the programme.

As mentioned above, the stakeholders were identified both through the desk review and preliminary meetings, and a detailed list was then verified and complemented by the UN Women teams involved in the project design and implementation, as well as the partners involved. The list was then compiled using the detailed Stakeholder Analysis in Annex 4 and the Evaluation Matrix (Annex 2) to trace each of the selected groups against the evaluation questions.

For the implementation of the purposive sampling, it was used the Stakeholder Analysis (see *Annex 4*) following criteria to determine the sample of primary stakeholders and type of documents to consult and analyse. Thus, the following key sample criteria

⁴⁴ my.atlasti.com

was selected based on discussions with the Evaluation Management Group and the objective of the evaluation:

- *Geographical representativeness* ensuring data collection across the three countries and, when possible, the different border crossings where the project implemented activities.
- *Implementation approach representativeness* to capture the different approaches to the implementation of the programme, so its efficiency and effectiveness can be compared.
- *Participants representativeness* to capture stakeholders across all the stakeholder categories.

Table 3- Sampling achieved

Stakeholder Type	Population	Proposed Sample	Sample achieved	Mechanism
<i>Right holders' representatives: CSOs, WRO and other representatives.</i>	Honduras ⁴⁵ : 4 org. Panamá ⁴⁶ : 1 org; and Costa Rica org: 2- In total 7 orgs.	At least 80% of the organisations identified with at least one organisation per country ⁴⁷ and 1 FGD in each of the project areas visited	Achieved. 10 people in total – 7 org (100%). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Costa Rica: 1 FGD (7 people-1 org.) in Los Chiles; 2 KII (2 people-2 orgs.) in Los Chiles and 1 KII (1 people-1 org.) in San José Panamá: 3 KIIs (3 people-3 orgs.) by remote 	FGDs and KII
<i>Implementing partners</i>	Honduras: 2 orgs.; Panamá: 1 org., Costa Rica: 1 org., and Regional: 1 org.	At least 70% per category, with at least one organisation per country.	Achieved. 15 people in total - 5 orgs.(100%) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Costa Rica: 7 people (1 org.) Honduras: 2 people (2 org.) Panama: 3 people (1 org) Regional: 3 people (1 org) 	KII
<i>UN Women Teams (in Country and Regional)</i>	Honduras: 3 people; Panamá: 3 people; Costa Rica: 4 people; Regional: 5 people.	At least 75% per category, with at least one person per CO	Achieved. 15 people in total (100%). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Costa Rica: 4 people Panamá: 2 people Honduras: 3 people Regional: 6 people 	KII
<i>Other UN agencies</i>	Others UN agencies in the three countries and at	At least 50% of the population	Achieved. 5 people in total 5 orgs. (83,3%). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Costa Rica: 2 people - 2 orgs. Panamá: 1 person - 2 orgs. Honduras: 2 people- 2 orgs. 	KII

⁴⁵ Population numbers are based on the stakeholders mapped with the Programme Teams in each country. In cases like Honduras, despite having a smaller budget, the number of stakeholders mapped was higher, so samples were slightly adjusted within the sampling to avoid overrepresentation

⁴⁶ One of the implementing partners also represents key right holders in Panama (CONAMUIP).

Based on those criteria, the following sample was consulted (see Table 3). The proposed sample size was consolidated with the Evaluation Management Group based on ensuring that at least 75% of all stakeholders identified as of high importance were interviewed (100% for right holders given its importance) and 50% of others. Data collection was continued until the point of data saturation was achieved, so additional data collection no longer provided new insights or information and where limitations in accessing specific sets of stakeholders made it impossible to acquire new information (see more in section 4.4.) Based on those criteria, the following sample was consulted (see Table 3).

⁴⁷ As most of the population benefited by the programme is population in mobility and passing through the project sites only temporarily, and contact data from them was not collected, it was impossible to consolidate a sample of former project users. Visits to the border crossing areas was also limited by cost-efficiency restrictions in the amount of travel for UN staff since February 2025. As a result, the Evaluation Management Group opted to focus on right holder representatives in each of the countries.

Stakeholder Type	Population	Proposed Sample	Sample achieved	Mechanism
	the regional level: 6 orgs.			
<i>Duty bearers: Government partners and national institutions</i>	Honduras: 4 orgs.; Panamá: 3 orgs.; Costa Rica: 2 orgs.	At least one per geographical area, 75% at least when more than 2 people.	Almost achieved. 7 people in total- 5 orgs.(55,5%). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Costa Rica: 2 people - 2 orgs. Panamá: 4 people - 2 orgs. Honduras: 1 people -1 org. 	KII
<i>Donor representatives</i>	Representative of the donor (JICA) and Japan Embassies	At least one person or representative	Achieved (100%). 1 person.	KII
<i>Others (Universities and Capacity Providers)</i>	Honduras: 4, and FLACSO	At least one provider	Achieved (100%). 1 person.	KII

Table 4- Type and number of stakeholders consulted

Type of stakeholder	PANAMA		COSTA RICA		HONDURAS		REGIONAL	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
<i>Right holders (women, girls and LGBTQ+ population, CSO, WROs)</i>	--	3	--	10	--	--	--	--
<i>Implementing Partners</i>	1	2	3	4	1	1	2	1
<i>UN System</i>								
UNW	--	2		4	1	2	1	5
Other UN Agencies	1	--		2	--	2		
<i>Duty bearers</i>	1	3	1	1	--	1	--	--
<i>Donors</i>	--	1	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>Others</i>								1
TOTAL	3	11	4	21	2	6	3	7

4.3. Ethics and data management

The evaluation upheld the highest ethical standards, following UNEG Ethical Guidelines, the UN Women Evaluation Consultants Agreement, and relevant Sphere and HAP standards. These frameworks guided all phases of the evaluation, design, data collection, analysis, reporting, and dissemination, to ensure it

was independent, inclusive, culturally sensitive, and accountable to affected populations.

From inception, the evaluation was carried out in a transparent and participatory manner, independence, and responsiveness to gender and human rights, upholding the principles of impartiality, integrity, respect for dignity and diversity, and

responsiveness to gender and human rights. Special care was taken to safeguard the privacy, security, and autonomy of all individuals engaged in the process, particularly women, girls, LGBTIQ+ individuals, people with disabilities, and migrant populations in vulnerable contexts.

To ensure ethical engagement, informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to any interview, focus group, or consultation. Participants were clearly informed of the purpose of the evaluation, the voluntary nature of their participation, their right to withdraw at any time and the confidentiality of responses and how data would be used. Special attention was given to cultural sensitivity and the inclusion of vulnerable and marginalized groups. Data storage and transfer protocols followed UN Women's standards for secure handling and access control, protecting sensitive information from unauthorized use or disclosure.

All data was managed according to UN Women's Data Protection and Privacy Policy, ensuring compliance with international principles of lawfulness, purpose limitation, data minimization, and storage limitation.

It was conducted transparently and inclusively, ensuring impartiality, independence, and responsiveness to gender and human rights and trauma-informed approaches. Special attention was given to cultural

sensitivity and the inclusion of vulnerable and marginalized groups. Confidentiality was maintained throughout, and findings and recommendations will be shared with stakeholders through transparent feedback loops to promote learning, accountability and fairness.

4.4. Methodological limits and risks

The evaluation was conducted under a few operational and methodological constraints, which may have influenced the depth and breadth of the findings. A key methodological limitation envisioned for this evaluation was the inability to conduct field visits across to all project areas, due to limited constraint and a tight evaluation timeline as the end of the project approached and operations were close to their end. Accordingly, most data collection for Honduras and Panama was carried out remotely via online interviews to key informants previously identified in collaboration with the project management unit, and direct engagement with some target population was limited.

Additionally, several contextual and methodological. Other risks were identified for the completeness, representativeness, and reliability of the evaluation results. There are presented in the next table along with mitigation strategies with measures to be taken to reduce their impact.

Table 5. Evaluation risks and mitigation measures

Risk	Level	Possible impact	Mitigation measures
Lack of sufficient implementation time and late access to documentation to properly assess change created and effectively contrasting evidence	Medium-High	Gaps in the evaluation report due to the lack of accurate information and data. Given the short implementation time and the fact that there was not a pre-existing quantifiable baseline, the methodological conditions to conduct an impact evaluation were not met. Instead, the evaluation focused on outcome or intermediate change and potential avenues for future change.	Project information requested from both UN teams and partners, including partner reports. Gaps to be filled through primary data collection. Effectiveness criteria was assessed using qualitative and theory-driven approaches, namely "contribution analysis" and "gender at work" (see <i>Annex 12</i>). <u>Additional data was triangulated through partner reports, stakeholder interviews, and focus groups.</u> Recommendations for future programme, in relation to the possibility of doing impact evaluations in the future are provided.

Risk	Level	Possible impact	Mitigation measures
Differences in the implementation approaches and partners across countries introduced challenges in assessing project effectiveness.	Medium	Challenges in assessing comparative effectiveness and scalability of practices, limited the comparability of results. This could impact the reliability of conclusions drawn from the evaluation.	Effectiveness was evaluated <u>individually per country modality</u> , and a <u>comparative lens was applied to highlight lessons learned and contextual differences</u> to provide recommendations for future work.
Impossibility to contact key stakeholders such as duty bearers aimed to be influenced by the project	High	Limited the amount of information available regarding the level of influence and insight created within duty bearers.	Where direct interviews were not possible, the evaluation team relied on secondary data sources, documented information, and inputs from intermediary stakeholders to triangulate findings and assess the level of influence achieved.
Inability to reach project's target beneficiaries given impossibility to visit all project sites and transitory nature of women in human mobility.	Medium	Limited data and evidence of change collected and inability to fully measure project goal.	Contact with targeted communities was emphasized during field data collection in Costa Rica, supplemented by extensive remote interviews and data collection with WROs, CSO and other representatives of local communities across Panama and Honduras (done remotely) Additional sources of information already taken in border areas were requested to enhance coverage. Where direct beneficiary input was not possible (Panama and Honduras), proxy sources were used (e.g., frontline staff that benefited from capacity strengthening activities)
Data fatigue and overload of key stakeholders	Medium	Collecting data while implementing the project may result in incomplete or low-quality information and could lead to exhaustion among participants.	The evaluation prioritized the use of existing secondary data and limited primary data collection to address key gaps. Stakeholders were engaged flexibly, respecting their availability and ensuring informed, voluntary participation. Ethical protocols were strictly observed.

Despite these constraints, the evaluation team adopted adaptive, participatory, and gender-responsive methods to uphold the credibility and utility of the findings. The limitations described above do not invalidate the findings but should be considered when interpreting their generalizability and depth. Acknowledging these methodological challenges transparently also contributes to learning and improving future evaluations, particularly those conducted under similar humanitarian or fast-paced operational contexts.

5. FINDINGS

5.1. Relevance

This section assesses to what extent the project addressed the needs for women, girls and LGBTIQ+ in human mobility and in host communities, including adaptations undertaken to the evolving humanitarian context throughout the implementation. It also analyses the implementing partners' capacity to gender-transformative and human rights-based approaches⁴⁸.

Finding 1. The project effectively addressed the protection and empowerment needs of women and girls, using Call for Action on Women in Human Mobility instead of need assessments. However, it faced challenges in fully reaching LGBTIQ+ populations.

The project demonstrated a strong alignment with the protection and empowerment needs of women, girls, and LGBTIQ+ individuals in mobility contexts. By providing protection services and capacity-building spaces with institutions, CSOs, NGOs, agencies, etc., and with women and female leaders, it addressed critical concerns related to gender mainstreaming and women and girl's leadership into the humanitarian response. This focus was further reinforced through participatory processes, carried out in the three countries, engaging women target population in the customization of the protection kits. These consultative processes were key to identifying the most relevant items in each of the contexts and for each type of population. Need assessments were replaced with systematic process that identified the key gender-related needs of, and risks faced by women, girls and LGBTIQ+ in human mobility -called Call for Action on Women in Human Mobility. These were carried out in the three implementing countries plus one related to the border between Colombia and

Panamá; in total four documents were produced. (see more information section 6.4. of this report).

A notable strength of the intervention was its innovative and gender-sensitive methodology. The project deliberately centred women and girls as primary beneficiaries. The inclusion of psychosocial support, safe spaces, and empowerment spaces reflected a nuanced understanding of gender-specific vulnerabilities and opportunities for transformation (see section 6.4). Stakeholders widely recognized this as a progressive shift in humanitarian programming, aligning with UN Women's mandate to prioritize gender equality in crisis response.

However, the project faced significant challenges in ensuring a comprehensive and timely response, with many stakeholders pointing to delays in procurement processes and kit distribution as major obstacles. These bureaucratic hurdles not only undermined the effectiveness of protection services but also raised concerns about the intervention's responsiveness in rapidly evolving displacement contexts. Structural and coordination issues further influenced the project's overall relevance, while the relatively short twelve-month implementation period limited its capacity to achieve sustained empowerment outcomes—suggesting that a longer timeframe would have strengthened its relevance.

Finally, the project exhibited commendable adaptability across different regional contexts⁴⁹. In Costa Rica and Panama, for instance, the emphasis shifted toward community-based workshops and social cohesion activities, which resonated well with local dynamics. Efforts to include indigenous communities in Panama through targeted consultations further enhanced the cultural relevance of the intervention. Despite these strengths, the project encountered

⁴⁸ The information is complemented in section 6.6 (see finding 13).

⁴⁹ The analysis is complemented in section 6.3 (see finding 7).

difficulties in adequately reaching LGBTIQ+ individuals due to persistent stigma and discrimination, which often discouraged them from seeking support. Additionally, limited data, insufficient tailored strategies, and weak engagement with LGBTIQ+-led organizations hindered the project's ability to address their specific needs in crisis and displacement settings.

to persistent stigma and unsafe migration routes.

Finding 2. The project applied a gender-transformative and rights-based approach, with implementing partners demonstrating capacities in delivering gender-responsive humanitarian responses, while also showcasing adaptability to shifting migration dynamics through resource reallocation and strengthening coordination at national and local levels.

The project demonstrated commitment and alignment with a gender-transformative and rights-based framework. It incorporated participatory principles by ensuring that women voices were systematically integrated into decision-making processes, both at local and regional levels. Such approaches not only enhanced the relevance and cultural appropriateness of the project intervention but also aligned with UN Women's mandate for gender-responsive and rights-based programming. By centering the perspectives of women and girls—particularly those in situations of mobility—the project fostered greater ownership and accountability, ensuring that services delivered were tailored to the realities of the populations served. This exemplifies a commendable adherence to internationally recognized standards for participatory evaluation and gender-sensitive humanitarian response.

The implementing partners HIAS, FAS, and APPM demonstrated recommendable capacities in delivering gender-transformative humanitarian responses. All of them are national (FAS and APPM) and international (HIAS) NGOs, with expertise in supporting refugee and migrant populations, particularly survivors of GBV. Their commitment to gender equality, their

localized expertise, and their collaborative approaches at both local and regional levels were instrumental in driving the project's success.

Regarding the adaptation capacity to the changing humanitarian context, the project demonstrated responsiveness to the dynamic migration landscape by adapting its intervention strategies. For example, as migration flows shifted, the project reallocated resources and prioritized emerging needs from the Darien Gap to the northern borders in Panama. Similarly, in Costa Rica, the project adapted to the evolving context by initiating work in shelters in San José and strengthening civil society organisations to enable them to deliver protection kits. In Honduras, adaptations also included collaboration with the Secretariat for Women to distribute protection kits to women returned from the United States, ensuring that support was contextually appropriate and gender sensitive. Besides, it also establishes strategic coordination mainly at the national and local level. Effective collaboration with national governments, civil society organizations, particularly women-led organizations, and other UN agencies enhanced the project's adaptability. Basically, at the local level, information sharing among humanitarian, civil society and public actors allowed for timely adjustments in response to contextual changes.

5.2. Coherence

The key evaluation questions for the coherence criterion focus on “the adhere to programme and strategic priorities of the donor⁴⁰, UN Women⁴¹ and other UN agencies⁴², and relevant normative frameworks and the local/regional/national government.

Finding 3. The project aligns with UN Women's strategic priorities and those of other UN agencies, enhancing gender-responsive humanitarian action in Central America. It integrates women's voices, promotes leadership, and addresses gender-based violence through a prevention-focused approach. The project supports various international frameworks

and conventions, contributing to gender equality and women's empowerment.

Since 2022, UN Women's role in humanitarian action was significantly strengthened by its position as Co-Chair of the Reference Group on Gender in Humanitarian Action and its full membership in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). These milestones have expanded its capacity to support crisis-affected women and girls and reinforce gender commitments across humanitarian responses. UN Women has been uniquely positioned to implement and deliver a gender-responsive approach to the human mobility crisis in Central America.

The UN WOMEN Strategic Note Latin America and the Caribbean (2023-2025) was designed to address the interconnected challenges of peace, security, humanitarian action, and development. It positions gender equality and women's empowerment as fundamental pillars for building more equal, peaceful, safe, and sustainable societies in the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC).

The SN highlights that *"the increase in mixed flows of migrants and refugees across Central and South America and the Caribbean also puts women at increased risk for gender-based violence, other human rights violations, stigmatization, and limited socio-economic integration in the host countries. LAC is experiencing the second-largest global migration crisis"*⁵⁰ To address these challenges, the project document noted that *"through the triple nexus approach, UN WOMEN seek to relieve immediate gendered needs during the human mobility crisis and decrease the conflict and social tensions by promoting the leadership, collaboration, and empowerment of local and national women's organizations"*⁵¹.

Additionally, the project adopted a prevention-focused, conflict-sensitive approach to strengthen social cohesion and mitigate social tensions that could escalate violence against women and girls in human mobility. This included social dialogues, community-based activities, and sports initiatives aimed at fostering peace.

Guided by the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) framework, the project also promoted women's leadership in peacebuilding efforts, leveraging the expertise of local women peacebuilders. While target countries have WPS Action Plans, their full implementation remained crucial for addressing gender-based violence, human rights abuses, and displacement drivers in a coordinated manner.

Through strategic partnerships with UN agencies, public institutions, and key stakeholders at both regional and national levels, UN Women ensured that technical expertise and existing knowledge are effectively integrated into the design, coordination, and implementation of its initiatives. This collaborative approach enhances synergies across programs and multidisciplinary teams, maximizing the reach, scale, and impact of gender-responsive humanitarian action.

The project document noted that the project contributed to 1) *the recommendations of the Gender Accountability Framework Report presented to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's (IASC) Reference Group for Gender in Humanitarian Action (GRG)*⁵² and the *IASC Strategic Priorities 2022-2023*⁵³; 2) *responded to the Buenos Aires Commitment*⁵⁴; 3) *it was also aligned with the Los Angeles Declaration*⁷³; 4) *it adhered to the 2021 CEDAW recommendation*

⁵⁰ UN WOMEN SN (2023-2025) pg. 10

⁵¹ Pro Doc pg. 8

⁵² UN Women-IASC. Gender Accountability Framework Report. 2021. Available at: <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-reference-group-gender-and-humanitarian-action/iasc-gender-accountability-framework-report-2021>

⁵³ IASC. IASC Strategic Priorities 2022-2023. Available at: <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2022-01/IASC%20Strategic%20Priorities%20%282022-2023%29.pdf>

⁵⁴ U.S. Department of State. Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection. Lima Ministerial Meeting, 2022. Available at: <https://www.state.gov/los-angeles-declaration-on-migration-and-protection-lima-ministerial-meeting/>

(CEDAW/C/HND/CO/9)⁵⁵ concerning the persistence of gender-based violence against women, including sexual violence, high levels of insecurity, violence, and organized crime that negatively impacts women and girls' enjoyment of their human rights; 5) it also set forth recommendations to address the specific risks and needs of the different groups of returnees, refugee and migrant women who are subject to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, and to ensure that immediate humanitarian assistance needs and protection requirements are complemented by long-term strategies, and 6) further considers the priorities established at the Japan National Women, Peace and Security Action Plan, in particular the central Protection goal that aims to prevent various aid-recipients, including women and girls, from being subjected to human rights violations, such as sexual and gender-based violence in humanitarian crisis during and after a conflict, as well as a natural large-scale disaster, further providing assistance in cases where they have been subjected to such violence⁵⁶.

The evaluation also found that the project was aligned with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), particularly Articles 1, 2 and 3, which call for the elimination of discrimination against women and the guarantee of equal rights, as well as Article 14 on the protection of rural and migrant women. It also aligned with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, especially the critical areas of concern "Women and Armed Conflict" and "Human Rights of Women," by promoting women's protection, participation, and leadership in humanitarian settings. Furthermore, the project contributed to the implementation of the UNSC's Women's, Peace and Security agenda, notably Resolution 1325 (2000), which emphasizes the importance of incorporating a gender perspective into peacebuilding, humanitarian

response, and protection frameworks. Additionally, it contributed to advancement and implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and specifically the SDG 5 on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, SDG 10 on Reducing Inequalities within and among Countries, SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) and SDG 17 (Partnership for the Goals), ensuring a holistic approach to integrating mobile populations.

In Central America, various UN agencies implemented initiatives addressing human mobility and promoting human's rights. Key efforts include the work done by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) or the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Collaboration with these entities always took place through the different roundtables and coordination bodies on migration flows and humanitarian aid in the different countries where the project was implemented. The work carried out was always heterogeneous and complementary to activities being developed by the different agencies. It is worth noting that in the interviews conducted with key informants, it was highlighted the novelty of the project for focusing exclusively on migrant women, girls and LGBTIQ+ in mobility.

The coherence of the LEAP-*Trayectos* project with UN WOMEN commitments to and endorsements of various international gender equality conventions, declarations and strategies is assumed given the central purpose of the project is to advance gender equality and women's empowerment in crisis-affected contexts ensuring their protection, empowerment, and participation in decision-making processes.

The project complements and directly assists implementation of UN Women corporate and country priorities and strategies and is therefore fully aligned

⁵⁵ CEDAW. Ninth periodic report submitted by Honduras under article 18 of the Convention, due in 2020. CEDAW/C/HND/9. 2020. Available at: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UN-DOC/GEN/N21/080/97/PDF/N2108097.pdf?OpenElement>

⁵⁶ National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. Second Edition (2019-2022). Available at: <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000521395.pdf>

with and relevant for UNWOMEN commitments in the Central America region.

Finding 4. The project aligns with national and regional frameworks on human mobility and rights protection in Central America. It addresses institutional capacity challenges and integrates gender and social equity concerns into national strategies through training and collaboration.

While the project document provided a situational analysis of migratory flows and the factors that have influenced and intensified human mobility across Central America—particularly response to the complex humanitarian situation since 2022— a comprehensive understanding of the specific normative frameworks related to human mobility, humanitarian aid, and peace in each country required further assessment. Therefore, during the initial months of project implementation, baseline documents were developed to do an analysis of women's needs and gaps in available services based on these frameworks.

In this regard, the project aligned with national and regional normative frameworks governing human mobility and rights protection in Central America, including:

- The Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS), by enhancing protection mechanisms and durable solutions for displaced women and girls, consistent with MIRPS' emphasis on gender-responsive protection and integration strategies.
- National Plans on Migration and Human Rights, including Costa Rica's adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration, by supporting the protection of vulnerable migrants, addressing gender-based violence, and facilitating access to services in line with human rights standards.
- The Quito Process, aimed at harmonizing public policies in response to the Venezuelan exodus in the region, with a gender-sensitive and intersectional approach.

- Commitments under key regional declarations, including the Cartagena Declaration (1984), by recognizing broader definitions of refugee protection; the San Pedro Sula Declaration (2017), by addressing internal displacement and the protection of women and girls; the Los Angeles Declaration (2022), by fostering regional cooperation for safe, orderly, and humane migration; the Buenos Aires Commitment (2022), by promoting a gender and human rights-based response to human mobility; and Palenque Declaration (2023), by prioritizing the rights and protection needs of women and children in migration contexts.
- Membership in the Central American Integration System (SICA), by supporting regional integration efforts and coordinated responses to human mobility challenges, aligned with SICA's objectives on migration, security, and human rights protection.

By aligning with these frameworks, the project showed coherence with regional and national commitments, fostering a coordinated and rights-based approach to addressing human mobility, humanitarian response, and peacebuilding efforts.

However, like many countries that serve as migratory corridors to North America, Costa Rica, Honduras, and Panama face significant institutional capacity and resource constraints that hinder their ability to effectively manage migration and address the specific needs of women, girls, and LGBTIQ+ populations. Key informants confirmed that the regional units of the institutions representing the Ministries or National Institutes for Women in the implementation countries operate with extremely limited resources and are overwhelmed by the high volume of cases they must handle. Similarly, the Migration Police face considerable capacity challenges, further complicating efforts to provide adequate protection and services to vulnerable populations in transit. In order to complement these gaps and lessen the challenges faced by the project, significant efforts were made with training activities provided to humanitarian actors

and government staff to ensure the full coherence of the LEAP Project and the integration of gender and social equity concerns into the national strategies and public policies.

Finding 5. The project aligns with Japan's Development Cooperation Charter, focusing on human security and supporting vulnerable groups. It benefits from Japan's expertise in managing migrant communities and promotes gender-responsive humanitarian action. Despite its success, the project's visibility was limited to implementation countries.

Regarding the alignment of the LEAP – *Trayectos* project with the donor's priorities, the evaluation found that the project is well aligned with the core principles of Japan's Development Cooperation Charter⁵⁷, which emphasizes human security as a core policy for responding to humanitarian crises. It also reflected the Human Security Japan Action⁵⁸ and the Japan National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security⁵⁹ highlighting the importance of ensuring that all individuals live with dignity and without fear, with a particular focus on vulnerable groups such as migrants, women, and minorities.

The project document noted that by addressing the root cause of conflict and instability, *"the project aimed to build resilient communities, directly contributing to Japan's vision of strengthening peace and stability in regions affected by human mobility in Central America"*.

In line with these guiding documents, the project provided effective emergency humanitarian assistance and contributed to social cohesion, empowerment and the prevention of social conflicts and tensions through comprehensive and context-specific approaches that protect rights and promote the inclusion of populations in human mobility.

Additionally, key informants confirmed that the project benefited from the excellent relations between the donor with UN WOMEN, as well as Japan's extensive experience in managing and integrating migrant communities. This experience was instrumental in strengthening Japan's commitment and understanding of the project's relevance and objectives. By leveraging Japan's expertise in inclusion, social cohesion, and intercultural understanding, the project gained credibility and visibility, increasing its potential to attract additional resources and strategic partnerships.

To further enhance donor recognition, UN Women actively promoted the "Trayectos" programme through various publications, media interviews, and editorials. These initiatives not only highlight the project's impact but also underscore Japan's role in advancing gender-responsive humanitarian action, strengthening its position as a key ally in the region. However, the evaluation found that the project's visibility was primarily limited to the countries where it was implemented, with additional regional exposure through UN Women's social media channels and website. UN Women did not fully capitalize on the opportunity to promote the project through its office in Japan, which could have expanded its reach beyond national borders, gained international recognition, and even increased awareness among the Japanese public.

5.3. Efficiency

This section analyzes the allocated resources (human, financial and logistical) used across the three countries. It also assesses the project modality adopted in each country and the type of adjustments made throughout the implementation in response to the emerging mobility needs.

⁵⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. Development Cooperation Charter. Japan's Contribution to the Sustainable Development of a Free and Open World. 2023. Available at: <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/100514705.pdf>

⁵⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. Human Security Japan Action. Available at: <https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/oda/sector/security/action.html>

⁵⁹ National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. Second Edition (2019-2022). Available at: <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000521395.pdf>

Finding 6. The project effectively allocated human resources and budget across several implementing partners, overcoming logistical and security challenges while facing delays in contracting and fund transfers, with HIAS receiving the largest budget share and Honduras experiencing the most significant operational difficulties.

The project mobilized diverse actors in terms of human resources allocation. On the one hand, as detailed above, it involved partner agreements with different IPs in each of the implementing countries, two in Honduras with APPM and FAS and one in Costa Rica and Panamá with HIAS. Moreover, a partnership with CONAMUIP was established by exploring different agreement options that would best serve its needs.

Ultimately, the collaboration was formalized by integrating it into the Long-Term Agreement (LTA) that UN Women Country Office (CO) in Panama had established with SAGA, a travel and event management company. This arrangement facilitated logistical support for workshops in local communities, enabling CONAMUIP to provide training and capacity-building initiatives more effectively. On the other, in terms of management the project also involved staff in each of the UN Women COs and Regional Office (see table 6)

Table 6. UN Women staff allocated

UNW CO	UNW staff	
	<i>Funded by the project</i>	<i>Support staff</i>
CO Panama	1 project manager; 1 project associate; and 1 regional specialist ⁶⁰ .	1 head of office.
CO Costa Rica	1 project manager; 1 project associate; 1 regional specialist ⁶¹ ; and 1 consultant.	1 head of office.
CO Honduras	1 project manager; 1 project associate; and 1 specialist.	1 programme analyst; and 1 admin/finance associate.

⁶⁰ ACRO specialist in Gender in Humanitarian Action specifically designated to support this UNW CO.

ACRO	1 programme management, 1 programme associate; 1 WPS communication; 1 M&E analyst ⁶² ; and communications team.
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According to the stakeholders consulted, the human resources allocated were adequate to implement the activities. However, from the IP side, some adjustments were needed in terms of strengthening the capacities on humanitarian response, mainly in Costa Rica. In terms of the support received from UNW, while two IPs demonstrated clear support and procedures, another reported procedure that were very rigid and not always aligned with the agility that a humanitarian response intervention would have required. In any case, all of them pointed significative delays in contracting and transferring the funds to the respective countries of implementation.

Besides, the efficiency can be also assessed based on the budget allocations for the implementing partners, as shown below:

- HIAS: 768,833.03USD (36.2% of total budget)
- APPM: 96,720.00 USD (4.6%)
- FAS: 209,602.00 USD (9.9%)

According to the stakeholders consulted, the budget assigned to CONAMUIP though the LTA with SAGA company was approximately 78,500.00 USD (3.7% of total budget). The largest portion of the budget (36.2%) is allocated to HIAS. It is worth noting that this IP also had the highest project targets. In terms of timeframe and considering the agreements signed with each IP, HIAS operated for 8 months project, while APPM and FAS operated for 6 months, respectively.

All three countries faced unique logistical challenges. In Honduras, difficult terrain and security risks limited the effectiveness of mobile service units, while Panama struggled with complex logistical coordination due to its dual role as a transit and destination country. Border areas required additional mobile service

⁶¹ Idem.

⁶² Both positions started in October 2024.

units, and inland waterway transport to reach vulnerable populations and indigenous communities.

However, limited infrastructure in remote areas hindered the efficiency and agility of service delivery. Besides, security risks in Honduras further increased operational costs. Overall, Honduras faced the greatest challenges due to security risks and institutional limitations, while Panama required stronger coordination among stakeholders.

Finding 7. The project was efficient in optimizing resources through local partnerships but faced delays due to bureaucratic hurdles and infrastructure challenges. Adjustments like mobile units helped improve responsiveness.

The project employed a multi-stakeholder and multi-level implementation approach—including work at the national level, but also at the local level in the three countries, combining partnerships with governmental institutions, CSOs, and international agencies. A key aspect of the implementation modality was its decentralized and context-specific design, which allowed interventions to be tailored to the distinct socio-political and economic conditions of each country.

Efficiency was assessed also based on several factors, including resource utilization and coordination. By engaging local actors in Costa Rica, Honduras, and Panama, the project optimized financial and human resources, reducing operational costs while ensuring targeted impact in the specific decentralized locations where the key activities were executed. At the local level, strong collaboration among stakeholders helped minimize duplication of efforts and maximize outreach.

Despite these strengths, the project faced challenges that affected its efficiency. UNW bureaucratic delays in the three countries made significant delays in hiring implementing partners, all of them signed the

contract in August 2024, which also complicated fund disbursement and therefore slowed activities execution. Accessibility barriers further complicated implementation, as limited infrastructure in remote regions made it difficult to reach displaced women, despite efforts to deploy mobile service units for instance. Additionally, while partnerships were a core strength of the implementation modality, some stakeholders noted coordination gaps between government agencies, NGOs, and UN agencies at the central level. These gaps occasionally led to service overlaps and delayed decision-making due to differing priorities. However, efficient interagency coordination was observed at the local level.

Project implementation varied across the three countries due to differing contexts. In Costa Rica, a strong legal and institutional framework enabled quicker policy adaptation and better integration of migrant protection measures. In Honduras, the capacity to work under a humanitarian response was more consolidated due to the existing humanitarian architecture and the previous country's humanitarian response plan. Therefore, the project relied more on grassroots organizations and informal networks to reach migrant and displaced women and girls.

In terms of migration, Panama primarily serves as a transit country. In this sense, changes in the national government⁶³ during the project implementation produced some significant shifts in migration policies and increased also some bureaucratic processes. In Honduras, the team modified and adapted the kit distribution method, offering them in small local shops. In these spaces the kits were offered and each person asked for different items based on individual needs rather than pre-packaged sets.

Regarding the capacity to adapt to evolving needs, the project made several adjustments. Mobile service units were deployed in hard-to-reach areas,

⁶³ After Panama's national elections in 2024, the country experienced significant shifts in its migration policies prioritizing border security over humanitarian concerns.

particularly in Panama. Besides, the participation in several coordination mechanisms at the local level was also undertaken in the three countries. Finally, in the three countries, coordination with humanitarian actors was strengthened during the project implementation through increased partnerships with UN agencies, NGOs, and government bodies⁶⁴.

5.4. Effectiveness

This section provides a causal analysis of how the project's interventions contributed to strengthening the capacities of humanitarian and government actors in planning and delivering protection services, including gender-based violence care, tailored to the needs of women in human mobility. It examines the key factors that facilitated or hindered these efforts.

Additionally, it explores how these interventions, alongside efforts to empower women in human mobility and host communities across Panama, Costa Rica, and Honduras translated into concrete changes. The analysis also delves into the main enablers and limitations that shaped these processes and identified significant unintended consequences, both positive and negative. Finally, the section evaluates the project's overall impact on conflict prevention, social cohesion, and the creation of safe environments, as well as its influence on women's perceptions of safety. It considers whether the initiative successfully ensured their equal participation and access to gender-responsive protection services and social cohesion programs in the three countries. Where applicable, the pathways are lined to the original ToC to assess alignment between intended outcomes and observed effects.

In order to respond to the above questions, the Table 7 was consolidated to summarize the documentary and primary data evidence provided around each of

the output areas, as a mechanism to provide more clear evidence of the findings below.

Finding 8. The LEAP project strengthened humanitarian actors and women's groups, ensuring their participation in coordination. UN Women increased its presence in interagency mechanisms, advocating for gender-sensitive assessments. Operational challenges included high staff turnover, coordination issues, and delays. Capacity building was provided, but the short timeline and rigid financial processes created strong limitations.

The LEAP project introduced innovative initiatives aimed at strengthening the capacities of humanitarian actors, women's groups, and organizations. Described as “*unique in its kind*,” the project was particularly innovative because it provided training on gender and human rights to stakeholders who typically lacked access to such knowledge. By targeting actors previously lacking this knowledge, the trainings initiated a causal chain: humanitarian actors became better equipped to integrate gender considerations into their practices. This, in turn, contributed to the intended ToC outcome of ensuring humanitarian protection planning is responsive to the differentiated needs of women in human mobility.

One of the most pivotal causal levers was the enhanced participation of UN Women staff in the interagency coordination mechanisms, which catalysed advocacy for gender-sensitive security assessments and inclusion of women's safety in migration framework. Before the project's approval, UN Women had limited presence in these spaces. The project facilitated its inclusion in interagency coordination and technical working groups on human mobility and protection, as well as in bilateral protection platforms at both borders

Their amplified role allowed gender-sensitive perspectives to permeate migration frameworks and

⁶⁴ Based on the evaluation matrix, there is an overlap between indicators under the relevance and efficiency criteria, which may appear repetitive but reflect different perspectives. For example, “*Evidence that the project implementation adapted to the changing humanitarian context*” falls

under relevance, while “*Number and type of adjustments made to implementation modalities in response to emerging mobility needs*” is part of efficiency. Although they are similar, each addresses distinct aspects within its respective criterion.

security assessments, an alignment with the ToC ambition of embedding responsiveness into protection services. The influence UN Women exerted in these spaces was not incidental; it was the product of deliberate capacity-building that enabled the agency to elevate its voice.

However, the depth of this causal chain varied across countries. While HIAS in Panama had the required presence, experience, and engagement in humanitarian settings, unforeseen weaknesses, such as high staff turnover and internal coordination difficulties, hindered the efficiency of project implementation, mainly in Costa Rica and acted as bottlenecks, fragmenting the pathway from capacity building to effective service delivery, and partially limiting alignment with the ToC assumptions. In contrast, the two implementing partners in Honduras (FAS and APPM) benefited from their prior experience in delivering essential services, psychological support, medical assistance, and temporary shelter. Their ongoing work with the community allowed the project to integrate smoothly into existing efforts rather than having to build from the ground up. Additionally, their established relationships with other humanitarian actors facilitated more effective inter-institutional collaboration. However, despite their reputation, these organizations lacked a solid foundation in gender-sensitive approaches and operational tools. Recognizing this gap, UN Women took proactive steps to enhance their understanding and application of gender principles, ensuring the project's interventions were more inclusive and responsive to the needs of women and girls. Capacity building was provided to the implementing partners through different trainings all along the project implementation.

Donor reports in October 2024 and in March 2025, as well as key informants interviewed agreed that the implementation timeline was too short, particularly given the multi-country scope and ambitious goals. (*"More time was needed to work on the processes to have a greater impact. Besides having other scopes where other authorities can join in"*-IP KII; *"We were*

contracted for a period of 8 months starting in August to be able to implement a project effectively, let's say with the very ambitious goals that were expected, at least in the case of Costa Rica. They wanted agility and flexibility in such short of time, and I think that was lacking - IP KII ; *"The time extension for a regional project was too short - UNW KII"; 'The short period of implementation of the project was a challenge for everyone - UNW KII; 'We would need to do more training, as the one that was done left us with a seed' - Project beneficiary*) Except from Honduras, the rest of countries faced significant delays right from the beginning, which cause the loss of valuable time, delaying the implementation of key activities. Although some activities began well before acceleration plans were introduced, overall delays mainly due to slow start-up and inadequate planning. In response, an acceleration plan, developed in August and reviewed in January, was implemented to expedite all project activities, not only those related to IP. While the acceleration plans did help push activities forward, some KII indicated that UN Women introduced it to ensure timely delivery, as significantly delays and a challenging context were affecting progress. For the IPs, although the acceleration plan was highly appreciated and seen as a valuable step that enhanced coordination, aligned expectations, and fostered collaboration, it was also seen as overdue, *"a measure that should have been implemented months earlier to maximize its results"*.

Moreover, structural certain structural challenges, such as the absence of defined methodologies for outcome indicators and limited guidance for tracking early progress, weakened the feedback loops necessary for continuous improvement. While most output indicators were straight forward and quantitative in nature, the lack of clarity at the outcome level added a layer of complexity to the project monitoring. Coordination with key counterparts also proved challenging, particularly in Costa Rica, where resource constraints within institutions like INAMU limited their ability to effectively reach migrant population.

Unintended negative consequence emerged from donor-imposed rigid financial processes, which impeded timely fund disbursement. The donor's requirement for upfront payments conflicted with the local financial system in target countries, where payments for services such as Social Security in Costa Rica are made in arrears. This discrepancy created operational challenges, as HIAS could not meet the donor's financial deadlines without the necessary invoices or payments. Such limited flexibility placed undue stress on the project team, caused delays interrupting the intended causal flow and highlighted the need for more adaptable financial policies to facilitate smoother project implementation.

Finding 9. UN Women produced four Call for Action on Women in Human Mobility, identifying the needs of women, girls, and LGBTIQ+ persons. Significant progress was made in capacity building for humanitarian actors and government staff, though continuous training is needed due to high turnover. The project embedded gender perspectives into policy frameworks and exceeded training targets in all three countries, highlighting strong multi-stakeholder collaboration.

During the first five months of the project, UN Women collaborated across borders to produce four Call for Action on Women in Human Mobility in Costa Rica, Honduras, and Panama, and Colombia (bordering Panama). Monitoring reports showed that through 72 consultative meetings with key informants and 13 focus groups with over 80 women, UN Women identified the most pressing needs of women, girls and LGBTIQ+ persons on the move, as well as the gaps in gender-responsive humanitarian responses. They provided key recommendations for humanitarian and institutional actors to better address these challenges. Originally scheduled for release in the second half of the project, the Call for Action on Women in Human Mobility were meant to establish a baseline for capacity-building activities, support inter-agency coordination, and inform gender-sensitive humanitarian response planning. However,

due to shifting political and social contexts both nationally and internationally, their publication remained pending at the project's conclusion.

The most significant progress across the three implementing countries came from frontline humanitarian NGOs and workers at the Secretary of State for Women's Affairs, Women's Affairs National Institutes, Border Migration Stations staff or the security sector who view their capacities enhanced thanks to the different capacity building activities carried out by UN WOMEN. Training efforts, particularly for police officers, were reported to not enough to overcome the challenges presented by their high turnover rate. This created a need for continuous training to ensure that migrants received adequate protection and services. Although efforts to train police personnel were made, it was clear that without ongoing capacity-building initiatives, the standards of care could not be consistently upheld, particularly in such a fluid and high-turnover environment.

On the other hand, capacity-building efforts, especially the partnership between FLACSO and UN Women, highlighted the growing recognition of gender-responsive tools as a necessity in humanitarian settings. By the end of the second and third trimesters, 360 personnel from key government institutions had received training, laying the groundwork for institutionalizing gender-sensitive approaches in migration and protection responses. However, sustaining this progress requires ongoing engagement to ensure trained personnel can effectively apply their knowledge in evolving migration contexts.

Beyond individual capacity-building, UN Women's interventions have sought to embed gender perspectives into policy frameworks. The training of local officials within the Comprehensive Framework for Protection and Solutions (MIRPS) and the gender review of national contingency plans in Honduras highlighted the critical link between knowledge transfer and systemic change. These initiatives aimed not only to improve service delivery in the short term but also to

institutionalize gender-sensitive policies that can withstand political and operational shifts.

Public awareness efforts, such as prevention messaging at Costa Rica's Southern Border Migration Station and Panama's Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) training, complemented broader risk mitigation strategies. However, their effectiveness depended on the availability of comprehensive protection services and sustained institutional commitment.

At the end of the project, all three countries exceeded the training targets. Costa Rica achieved a 243% of target for trained humanitarian actors and 250% for women's groups' participation, while Honduras achieved a 674% of target for trained humanitarian actors and 100% for women's groups' participation and Panama achieved 368% of target for trained humanitarian actors, 325% for women's groups' participation. This showcased the potential of strong multi-stakeholder collaboration, but it also raises questions about scalability and consistency across different national contexts.

Findings 10. The project enhanced capacities of women and girls, addressing immediate needs with mobile units, protection services and essential kits. It strengthened social cohesion through women's networks and community structures. Challenges included procurement delays, need for flexible deployment, continuous training, and better coordination with local institutions

The project made heterogeneous contributions to enhancing the capacities of women, girls, and LGBTIQ+ people in human mobility and host communities, enabling them to access and influence protection services and social cohesion initiatives. The mobile service units proved to be an effective tool for addressing immediate needs; however, their success was contingent on flexible deployment. The fluctuating nature of migration required rapid adjustments in service delivery based on when and where migrants arrived. Key informants interviewed recognized this

need for agility but highlighted challenges in making quick operational changes without thorough evaluations.

The provision of protection kits was a crucial intervention in addressing the basic needs of women in mobility. Both direct beneficiaries and the IPs interviewed valued very positively the participatory methodology employed in selecting products for the sensitive protection kits, exemplifying a well-functioning causal pathway. These kits were tailored to the specific needs of girls, adolescents, adult women, elderly women or LGBTIQ+ people, a significant improvement over other agencies that used a standardized approach without consulting beneficiaries and lacked a gender-sensitive perspective. By directly addressing the needs of these populations, the project successfully filled a critical gap and ensured that the content of the kits was not only relevant but also empowering. However, delays in the procurement process hindered the timely distribution of kits, reducing the effectiveness of this intervention in a changing context where rapid response is essential and where flows started to decrease just as the kits arrived. For example, after the disbursement to HIAS was completed in September 2024, orders for the items were done in October and payment to the providers only done by December. Challenges with suppliers further complicated the process, underscoring the importance of improving logistical coordination for greater efficiency in future projects. While Honduras successfully distributed all the kits, exceeding the initial target (170%), Costa Rica reached the 100% and Panama were less successful, distributing only 95% of the kits. Additionally, in Honduras the project made notable progress in addressing the needs of women with disabilities, particularly in temporary shelters, which had previously lacked specific attention criteria. By providing colostomy collection bags and facilitating direct engagement between women with disabilities and shelter personnel, the project contributed to raising awareness and setting new standards for inclusive humanitarian response. This progression

highlights how initial small interventions, when contextually attuned, can mature into systemic contributions.

Conversely, support for LGBTIQ+ persons revealed critical weakness in the project's causal architecture. While some individuals, particularly trans women, were identified and assisted during their migration journey, the humanitarian network in Honduras, Costa Rica and Panama still lacks adequate tools to systematically address the needs of LGBTIQ+ populations in emergencies. A key barrier was the absence of safe spaces where they could disclose their identities without fear. IP confirmed that many opted not to self-identify due to the absence of protective mechanisms tailored to their needs, highlighting a critical gap in service provision.

To address these challenges, the project focused on integrating LGBTIQ+ organizations into decision-making spaces. In Honduras, a key achievement was the inclusion of an LGBTIQ+ organization in the Gender Working Group (GWG) within the humanitarian network, which had previously lacked representation from civil society, particularly feminist and LGBTIQ+ organizations. UN Women, in collaboration with OCHA and other agencies, successfully advocated for their participation, ensuring that gender and diversity perspectives were embedded in humanitarian strategies.

This contrast between progressive inclusion (disabled people in Honduras) and persistent structural exclusion (LGBTIQ+ individuals) underscores the incomplete realization of the ToC in this domain.

Beyond immediate service delivery, the project also contributed to strengthening social cohesion at the community level by fostering women's networks and reinforcing gender-sensitive community structures. These activities provided a platform for dialogue, peer support, and awareness-raising on issues such as violence prevention, self-care, and mental health. The project helped address xenophobia and mistrust among women in host and migrant communities.

Host community and migrant women interviewed recognised that a most significant changes of this project was that these sessions not only fostered greater empathy towards the realities and needs of women and girls in mobility but also empowered participants to break down personal barriers, overcome limitations, and ultimately develop new projects and initiatives aimed at both professional and personal growth. Additionally, these sessions provided them with opportunities to see one another differently, fostering stronger community ties and professional collaborations. By engaging in dialogue, women identified key issues affecting social cohesion, including their overwhelming workload, economic violence, and limited institutional support. By equipping local communities with tools to support migrant women, the project strengthened social networks and enhanced protective environments. Recreational activities further reinforced these efforts, promoting solidarity and reducing tensions between migrants and host communities.

Additionally, these social cohesion efforts laid the groundwork for deeper, multi-level transformations within the community, particularly when analysed through the lens of the Gender@Work framework. This framework enabled a nuanced understanding of how the project's interventions contributed to change across various dimensions. In the informal-individual quadrant, testimonies from beneficiaries of the social cohesion workshops revealed marked improvements in self-esteem, self-confidence, decision making capacity and critical awareness of gender inequalities, evidence of profound internal transformation among women and girls in mobility contexts. At the informal-systemic level, women project beneficiaries actively challenged restrictive social norms, contributing to the emergence of community spaces where gender roles are being redefined and opportunities for women's and girls' participation were expanding. Through social cohesion workshops and leadership training sessions, women in rural and migrant communities, such as Cristo Rey, La Trocha, and

San José de Campanario, began forming grassroots networks, creating safe spaces for dialogue, mutual support, and rights awareness. This emerging cultural shift represents one of the most impactful outcomes of the project. Conversely, in the formal-individual quadrant, there still significant areas for enhancement in strengthening participants' practical skills and socio-economic capacities, particularly in the realms of income generation, community leadership and navigating institutional systems. These improvements are critical to ensuring that personal empowerment can be translated into meaningful development opportunities. While some progress has been made in developing income-generation skills, especially in Panama, the project's most notable successes were observed in the domain of community leadership. In this area, women leaders demonstrated active engagement in advocacy processes, including their participation in consultations for the Cartagena +40 process. At the formal-systemic level, weak coordination with local institutions was identified as a potential barrier to the sustainability of initiatives driven by beneficiaries. This lack of alignment could limit the long-term impact and scalability of the efforts made by the project beneficiaries.

Table 7 shows strong progress in achieving output targets. Under Output 1, 100% of the output indicators exceeded expectations , particularly in training humanitarian actors and engaging women and girls in mobility with some by over 600%. Output 2 also reflects solid performance, with 89% of indicators either meeting or surpassing targets. Notably, protection services and social dialogues significantly outperformed expectations across all countries. Only one indicator (provision of protection kits in Costa Rica) slightly underperformed, reaching 95% of its target. However, no data was available for Outcome Indicators, limiting the assessment of longer-term impact to women's leadership and perceived safety.

Table 7. Project targets and completion rates to March 2025

Project Outputs (summarized titles) & Indicators	Baseline	Target	Actual	%
Outcome 1: Women affected by human mobility crisis lead, equally participate in and benefit from gender-responsive protection services and social cohesion initiatives in Panama, Costa Rica and Honduras.				
Indicator 1: # % of women in human mobility and women in host communities who have increased perceived safety in Panama	0	70%	Panamá: 96% Costa Rica: 84% Honduras: 66%	Panamá: 137% Costa Rica: 120% Honduras: 94%
Indicator 2: % of women affected by human mobility crisis demonstrating leadership in social cohesion initiatives in Panama	0	50%	Panamá: 48% Costa Rica: 90% Honduras: 50%	Panamá: 96% Costa Rica: 180% Honduras: 100%
Output 1: Humanitarian actors have enhanced capacities to plan and deliver protection services, including gender-based violence care, that are responsive to the needs of women in human mobility in Panama, Costa Rica and Honduras.				
Indicator 1.1: # of humanitarian actors trained in gender-responsive protection planning and programming in Costa Rica	0	60	146	243%
Indicator 1.1: # of humanitarian actors trained in gender-responsive protection planning and programming in Honduras	0	80	539	674%
Indicator 1.1: # of humanitarian actors trained in gender-responsive protection planning and programming in Panama	0	120	441	368%
Indicator 1.2: # of women's groups and organizations participating in the protection planning and programming in Costa Rica	0	8	20	250%
Indicator 1.2: # of women's groups and organizations participating in the protection planning and programming in Honduras	0	10	10	100%
Indicator 1.2: # of women's groups and organizations participating in the protection planning and programming in Panama	0	12	39	325%
Output 2: Women in human mobility and in host communities have increased capacity to access to and influence the protection service delivery and social cohesion initiatives in Panamá, Costa Rica and Honduras.				
Indicator 2.1: of women in human mobility received protection services as a result of the project in Costa Rica	0	4,000	4,508	103%
Indicator 2.1: of women in human mobility received protection services as a result of the project in Honduras	0	6,000	7,965	133%
Indicator 2.1: of women in human mobility received protection services as a result of the project in Panama	0	10,000	12,243	122%
Indicator 2.2: # of women in human mobility received access to protection kits disaggregated by: Age, Disability, Ethnic background, SOGIESC (Costa Rica)	0	4,000	3,781	95%
Indicator 2.2: # of women in human mobility received access to protection kits disaggregated by: Age, Disability, Ethnic background, SOGIESC (Honduras)	0	6,000	10,202	170%
Indicator 2.2: # of women in human mobility received access to protection kits disaggregated by: Age, Disability, Ethnic background, SOGIESC (Panama)	0	10,000	9,993	100%
Indicator 2.3: of social dialogues co-led by women in human mobility and members of local community in host communities and transit areas in Costa Rica	0	4	9	225%
Indicator 2.3: of social dialogues co-led by women in human mobility and members of local community in host communities and transit areas in Honduras	0	8	9	113%
Indicator 2.3: of social dialogues co-led by women in human mobility and members of local community in host communities and transit areas in Panama	0	10	10	100%

Baseline and Targets are from the LEAP M&E Tracker, "Results as of March 2025"

Table 8. Progress and achievements against outputs

	Self-score and achievement by March 2025	Additional observations from primary data and updated score
Outcome: Women affected by human mobility crisis lead, equally participate in and benefit from gender-responsive protection services and social cohesion initiatives in Panama, Costa Rica and Honduras.		
Output 1. Humanitarian actors have enhanced capacities to plan and deliver protection services, including gender-based violence care, responsive to the needs of women in human mobility in Panama, Costa Rica and Honduras.	<p>Output score: A (met milestones/ target). During first months of implementation, 4 Calls for Action on Women in Human Mobility covering Costa Rica, Honduras and Panama, with an additional report focused on Colombia's border with Panama were elaborated. These alerts were based on extensive consultations, including 72 meetings and 13 focus groups that engaged over 80 women, girls, and LGBTIQ+ individuals in migration contexts. The alerts pinpointed critical service gaps and challenges, offering concrete recommendations for institutional and humanitarian actors to develop more inclusive, gender-responsive responses. In Costa Rica, UN Women played a key role in validating an updated GBV referral and care roadmap through national protection and migration roundtables. 146 humanitarian actors were trained in gender-responsive protection (exceeding the initial target by 243%) and 20 women's organizations were actively included in planning (250% above target). In Panama, a landmark field visit to the Lajas Blancas Migration Station strengthened inter-agency cooperation. This visit influenced the national roadmap for border protection, ensuring that community-identified needs shaped official policies. Panama's achievements included training 441 humanitarian actors (over 200% above target) and involving 39 women's groups (325% of the original goal). In Honduras, UN Women revived protection coordination spaces in Trojes and Danlí, improving referral pathways and inter-institutional response mechanisms. The country trained 539 humanitarian actors (exceeding the target by 674%) and successfully engaged 10 women's organizations in protection planning. A regional training program on gender and humanitarian action (in collaboration with FLACSO) reached over 360 participants across migration offices, security forces, and women's ministries. In Costa Rica, UN Women developed and disseminated GBV prevention messages in Southern Border Migration Stations, empowering women in transit with information on protection services. In Honduras, six state institutions and multiple NGOs partnered with UN Women to train 320 humanitarian actors on gender-sensitive approaches, quadrupling the original goal. A national protocol for women in temporary shelters and a gender review of emergency contingency plans were also developed. In Panama, 20 frontline workers (primarily Indigenous women and NGO staff) were trained on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA). A follow-up mechanism was established to monitor safe practices and ensure accountability. Additionally, UN Women trained 41 local officials from border regions through the MIRPS Local Governance Group on minimum standards for GBV prevention, ensuring that local governments integrate gender considerations into municipal emergency responses.</p>	<p>Output score: A (met milestones/ target). KII confirmed that Calls for Action on Women in Human Mobility were thought as a baseline for capacity building efforts and ended up being strategic advocacy tools pushing for the integration of intersectional gender perspectives in regional migration response planning. Due to the international context development, these Calls for Action on Women in Human Mobility have not been yet published. All consulted humanitarian actors confirmed that the project facilitated joint strategies, strengthened inter-agency coordination at both national and community levels and showed engagement from both institutional and grassroots actors. The trainings provided to frontline responders, national institutions and local authorities were highly appreciated since it served to gain essential knowledge on gender-responsive protection and to address intersectionality, recognizing that gender, migration status and sexual identity create layered vulnerabilities. However, state actors consulted mentioned that there is a need for continuous learning mechanisms and monitoring systems to assess how well these lessons translate into concrete actions in humanitarian settings.</p>
Output 2 - Women in human mobility and in host communities have increased capacity to access to and influence the protection service delivery	<p>Output score: B (under-achieved but on track). In Panama, protection services were provided to 12,243 women in remote and high-risk areas, such as Darién, in coordination with the Ministry of Women and the National Migration Service. Information and Orientation Spaces for Protection (EIOP) were established at migration stations, facilitating access to information on rights and GBV risks. A total of 9,993 protection kits were distributed, tailored to specific needs based on age, disability, ethnicity, and SOGIESC. In Costa Rica, the</p>	<p>Output score: B (under-achieved but on track) Project beneficiaries confirmed that the protection services and sanitary kits were very useful. The participatory methodology used to decide what will be in those protection kits was highly appreciated since for once it was addressed the specific needs of different groups. They also highlighted that the inclusion of women community leaders in political dialogues allowed for greater</p>

	<i>Self-score and achievement by March 2025</i>	<i>Additional observations from primary data and updated score</i>
and social cohesion initiatives in Panama, Costa Rica and Honduras.	<p>coverage of protection services doubled, reaching 4,508 women. The project ensured the distribution of 3,781 protection kits at border points, incorporating inclusive messaging and risk mitigation guidance. In Honduras, the project exceeded its target, benefiting 7,965 women (initial goal: 6,000) and distributing 10,202 protection kits. Psychosocial and legal services were strengthened in collaboration with COPECO, FAS, and APPM in key areas. While in Costa Rica, support was provided to the “Red de Mujeres Migrantes y Refugiadas” and the Southern Border Humanitarian Network, enabling 42 women leaders to influence protection strategies. Participation in the Quito Process made it possible to highlight solutions for reducing GBV and xenophobia. In Panama, twenty-five indigenous women leaders were trained in human rights, leadership, and GBV prevention, leading to the organization of 10 social dialogues. While in Honduras, the Law on Women in Emergencies was implemented with regulations and shelter protocols, promoting social cohesion through community events. A total of 9 social dialogues were held, surpassing the initial target. UN Women’s approach strengthened the participation of women leaders in the planning and delivery of protection services. In Panama, indigenous women lead protection planning in Emberá, Wounaan, and Guna communities. In Costa Rica, women from humanitarian networks participate in inter-agency coordination and provide peer support to other women in mobility. In Honduras, trained women leaders serve as focal points in shelters and community organizations. Despite the program’s success, challenges arose due to the complexity of human mobility in the region: External factors: Economic crises, natural disasters, and conflicts increased pressure on institutions with limited resources. Inter-institutional coordination: Leadership changes and bureaucratic hurdles hindered the continuity of actions. Effective communication and advocacy strategies were key to overcoming these obstacles. Operational flexibility: Strategies were adjusted based on the political and social realities of each country, ensuring the program's effectiveness.</p>	<p>representation and local ownership. Social cohesion activities served to strengthening ties and breaking down limiting beliefs. Key informants consulted confirmed that the active participation of migrant women strengthened the sustainability of services, however it was also considered that mechanisms should continue to be developed to institutionalize their participation in decision-making and ensure a more effective and coordinated response.</p> <p>From the point of view of both implementing partners and UNW staff, the complexity of human mobility in the region and UNW's fast procedures in the humanitarian context made it difficult to implement project activities on time. UNW's fast track procedures were described as anything but fast, with high levels of bureaucracy that prevented the agility required by the situation. In addition, inefficient inter-institutional communication and changes in leadership positions was considered hindering the continuity of actions. Internal support and training strategies were key to overcoming these obstacles.</p>

5.5. Sustainability

This section responds to two evaluation questions, firstly, evidence of institutional capacity and women empowerment achievements to be sustained or expanded, and secondly, the effects of shifting political priorities, fundings and policy environment for the project sustainability. The related findings responding to these questions are presented below.

Finding 11. The project strengthened institutional capacity and women's empowerment in migration contexts through policy integration, training, and leadership initiatives. Its long-term sustainability remains uncertain due to high staff turnover, deep-rooted gender inequalities, and the absence of a clearly defined sustainability plan.

The project made significant contributions to strengthening institutional capacity within the national institutions in the three countries involved and advancing women's empowerment in migration contexts. It is worth noting that because cohesion dialogue initiatives, those primarily carried out in Honduras and Costa Rica, peer-support networks among women began to set up. According to those consulted, these networks might continue to function even after the project ends, thereby contributing to the creation of alliances and female leadership. Another key aspect of sustainability was the institutional capacity built through the project. In this sense, there is evidence that policies and protocols developed as part of this initiative were integrated into government structures, which increases the likelihood of their continuity. For instance, the National System 911, Permanent Contingency Commission (COPECO) and the Women's National Secretary in Honduras mainstreamed specific women's topics in the national emergency response, as well as the National Institute of Migrants in Costa Rica set up a reception centre for migrants. When institutions adopt gender-responsive policies and embed them into their official frameworks, they have a stronger chance of remaining in place over time. Additionally,

the project's emphasis on training and knowledge transfer contributed to equip government officials, civil society actors, and local organizations with the skills and understanding necessary to support migrant women and girls effectively. These capacity-building efforts are necessary to strengthen institutional responses in the long term. However, and due to high staff turnover, especially in the border points, might challenge the capacities already strengthened and knowledge transferred. Based on the consultations and desk review carried out, there's still a need to continue with the capacity building initiatives to enhance the capacities of humanitarian and government actors to mainstream gender into the humanitarian response. In this sense, the evaluation showed significant progress in Honduras, where the humanitarian action architecture was more developed and stronger background of including gender-sensitive humanitarian response than in the other two countries involved.

In terms of women's empowerment, the project also fostered leadership and participation among women affected by human mobility crises. Based on the documentation reviewed, all the women targeted by the project received protection services (4,000 in Costa Rica; 7,965 in Honduras; and 10,000 in Panama). Moreover, in the host communities where the social cohesion activities were developed, many women were encouraged to take on leadership roles, engaging in advocacy efforts, and influencing in community decision-making spaces. Stakeholders consulted pointed out that these activities have contributed to improving the women's leadership in rural communities, however the sustainability of these achievements will depend on the availability of ongoing support to continue with these empowerment strategies and to reach these remote areas. Additionally, deep-rooted gender inequalities and cultural barriers remain significant obstacles in the three countries. Without continuous advocacy, education, and awareness-raising efforts, the progress made in

empowering women and girls could face resistance or slow regression.

Lastly, and despite these efforts, there are critical gaps that raise concerns about the project's long-term sustainability. One major challenge is the lack of a clearly defined, long-term sustainability plan that ensures the institutional capacity built through the project will be maintained in the future. While certain capacities were developed, there is uncertainty about whether these will be sustained structurally. The absence of a formalized long-term strategy might put the project achievements at risk.

Finding 12. The evaluation showed evidence of changes in government commitments to addressing migration challenges. However, recent shifts in migration policies and leadership changes present significant challenges to sustaining project initiatives. The project must adapt to evolving needs, emphasizing quality protection services and gender-responsive approaches.

The evaluation showed evidence of changes on government commitments for addressing migration challenges throughout the project implementation. For instance, the Government of Honduras demonstrated a growing institutional commitment by developing the implementation and nationwide rollout of the Law for the Protection of Women in the Context of Humanitarian Crises, Natural Disasters and Emergencies⁶⁵.

However, recent shifts in migration policies, both domestically and internationally, presented significant challenges to sustaining project initiatives. For example, U.S. migration restrictions and bilateral agreements with countries like Panama and Honduras led to a dramatic decline in northward migration flows. Stakeholders reported an inverse trend, with increasing numbers of migrants returning to their

countries of origin rather than continuing their journeys. This shift altered the demographics and needs of the population initially targeted by migration-focused projects, requiring rapid adaptation and flexibility. Sustainability in this context hinges on the project's ability to recalibrate its strategies throughout the implementation, for example, by addressing the needs of returning migrants, rather than relying on static assumptions about migration patterns. It is crucial to adapt to the evolving needs within the continuously changing migration landscape.

Currently, uncertainty in government commitments, exacerbated by leadership changes, further complicates sustainability efforts. The 2023 Panama election resulted in a new administration that swiftly altered migration policies, underscoring how political transitions can destabilize partnerships, funding, and implementation frameworks. Future changes in leadership could either reinforce or reverse current policies, creating a volatile environment for long-term planning. Additionally, while migration flows may decline, the needs of migrants remain acute. Psychological support, GBV and protection services, and combating discrimination—particularly against vulnerable groups like women, girls and LGBTIQ+ population—are persistent challenges that demand attention. Projects should pivot toward these evolving needs, emphasizing quality of protection services and ensuring gender-responsive approaches in the human mobility crisis responses.

5.6. Human Rights and Gender⁶⁶

This section assesses to what extent the project strategies considered the Leave No one Behind (LNOB) approach and promoted diversity within the target population.

Finding 13. The project integrated the LNOB approach, fostering community cohesion and

⁶⁵ Law No. 9-2023 for the Protection of Women in the Context of Humanitarian Crises, Natural Disasters, and Emergencies was enacted in 2023. In 2024, UN Women collaborated with the Honduran government to support its implementation and nationwide rollout, ensuring

alignment with international standards and addressing gaps in enforcement.

⁶⁶ The gender analysis was considered in section 6.1. (see finding 2).

sensitization. However, challenges such as language barriers, cultural norms, limited reach to LGBTIQ+ populations, and the transient nature of migrant women persisted. Efforts to promote diversity included empowerment initiatives and bridging communication gaps.

The project integrated various strategies aligned with the Leave No One Behind (LNOB) approach, demonstrating a commitment to inclusivity and diversity. However, while the project made notable strides in addressing the needs of migrant women and girls' certain challenges persisted that require further attention.

One of the key strengths of the project laid in its efforts to foster community cohesion and awareness. The provision of workshops and empowerment initiatives was instrumental in raising awareness of migrants' rights, particularly in addressing issues related to violence, self-care, and mental health. Furthermore, the survivor-centred approach employed with GBV survivors was essential to ensure the necessary support in a confidential and secure manner. Additionally, efforts to adapt methodologies to different cultural contexts, such as psycho-education activities within Emberá Wounaan communities in Panamá (indigenous population), indicated an awareness of the importance of intercultural approaches in training programs.

Despite these achievements, several challenges remain. One of the most significant barriers pointed out by most of the stakeholder consulted were the limitations with language accessibility, particularly for non-Spanish-speaking migrant women and girls, including those from Haiti, Africa, and Asia. The absence of adequate translation services hindered the ability to seek humanitarian aid and report cases of

GBV. Cultural and gender norms also presented constraints, as women from regions such as Africa, and South Asia often face restrictive societal expectations and gender discriminations that limit their ability to engage with services independently as always must be accompanied.

Another notable gap also identified was the limited reach to LGBTIQ+ populations. Stakeholders observed that LGBTIQ+ organizations and communities were not substantially involved in emergency response efforts. The project did not implement targeted initiatives to address the specific needs of LGBTIQ+ individuals, which remains an area for improvement. Additionally, the transient nature of many migrant women posed a challenge, as their short stays—sometimes only a matter of hours—made it difficult for them to participate in specific sessions or receive assistance. Although interventions were adjusted to accommodate this reality, further efforts are needed to ensure that outreach and humanitarian response remain effective within the limited timeframes available.

Lastly, the promotion of diversity within the project was also evident in several aspects. In Honduras some empowerment initiatives, such as the menstrual hygiene initiative using recycled materials and made locally, provide both economic opportunities for migrant women and a means of strengthening tied with host communities. Additionally, some attempts were made to bridge communication gaps in the three countries, including the use of mobile translation applications and visual materials for information and dissemination with migrant populations.

6. LESSONS LEARNED & GOOD PRACTICES

The lessons identified are coherently drawn from the findings, offering an analysis of their potential broader relevance while acknowledging any limitations that may influence their applicability in different contexts. The key lessons learned, and good practices are outlined below.

LESSON LEARNED 1 - Agile processes and realistic planning are critical for short-term humanitarian projects, particularly for development-oriented organizations

The LEAP-Trayectos project underscored the difficulty of adapting traditional development protocols to the urgent demands of humanitarian contexts. The compressed timeline led to bottlenecks in procurement, staffing, and coordination, especially in Costa Rica and Panama, where delayed starts hindered service delivery. This lesson emphasizes the need to build internal flexibility, streamline decision-making mechanisms, and anticipate risks through acceleration plans. While such adaptations can mitigate the effects of rigid bureaucracies, their success remains limited without adequate planning time and contextual readiness.

LESSON LEARNED 2 - Responding to human mobility dynamics requires flexibility to adapt to rapidly changing contexts and needs.

The project faced changes in migration patterns, requiring adjustments in intervention points. For example, the reorientation of activities from the Darién Province to Panama's northern borders highlighted the critical need for agile operational frameworks. Resource reallocation and strategic coordination allowed for responsiveness, but limited infrastructure, changing policies, and the lack of real-time data hindered timely adjustments. This highlights a broader applicability: humanitarian interventions must include flexible deployment models and context monitoring to remain effective in volatile environments. However, the ability to adapt may be constrained by rigid donor requirements and delayed decision-making.

LESSON LEARNED 3 - Effective and agile project coordination among partners is key to maximizing impact and ensuring complementarity.

The project illustrated how structured coordination spaces, particularly in Honduras, enabled alignment across UN Women, local NGOs, UN agencies and government actors. Gathering different implementing partners around the table, discussing the limitations, weaknesses and opportunities to work is not only important for a better management of funds and resources, but also to improve coordination and complementarity between them and UN Women. However, variations in partner experience, rigid procedures, and high staff turnover often fragmented coordination efforts. This finding suggests that coordination must go beyond information sharing: it requires shared decision-making protocols, clearly defined roles, and adaptive mechanisms that respond to emerging challenges. Broadly, this is applicable to multi-stakeholder humanitarian projects, though its effectiveness depends on prior inter-agency trust and strong local leadership.

LESSON LEARNED 4 - Proactive oversight and risk-informed planning are essential to mitigate delays and safeguard humanitarian delivery

In the LEAP project, initial delays in procurement and fund disbursement revealed the limitations of standard oversight practices. Strengthening accountability from the outset, particularly through tailored risk management plans, could have anticipated contextual, and operational risks. This lesson extends to other humanitarian contexts where rapid changes in policy or political leadership affect program stability. However, oversight mechanisms are only as effective as the adaptability of financial and administrative systems, something the project struggled with due to procedural constraints and local regulatory mismatches.

GOOD PRACTICE 1 - Good contextual understanding enhances the relevance and effectiveness of humanitarian interventions.

The project's initial Call for action on women in human mobility and tailored activities—like the adaptation of protection kits to local needs—enabled strong alignment with community dynamics. In Panama, incorporating indigenous perspectives and

social cohesion activities further validated this approach. This practice is broadly applicable across regions but requires early investment in participatory assessment tools and localized knowledge. However, the absence of robust needs assessments for LGBTIQ+ populations showed the limits of contextualization when there was no access to the group from data collection or consultation processes.

GOOD PRACTICE 2 - Involvement of project beneficiaries in decision-making processes brings success to the project, fosters ownership, improves relevance, and strengthens project outcomes.

Facilitating the participation of beneficiaries in the design of what should have a protection kit not only fostered a sense of ownership but also ensured that their voices were heard and that their actual needs were met, avoiding the imposition of items that may have proved less useful. This participatory approach reflects a scalable model for humanitarian design, where end-users co-create solutions. However, success depends on sufficient time, local facilitation capacity, and safe spaces for diverse voices, particularly marginalized groups such as LGBTIQ+ individuals, who in this case were often absent from the process due to fear of stigmatization.

GOOD PRACTICE 3 – A holistic and multi-level approach enhances the resilience and sustainability of humanitarian interventions

The project adopted a comprehensive strategy that combined direct service provision, such as protection kits, with capacity-building for humanitarian actors, women's networks, and civil society organizations. This integrated model is not always present in typical humanitarian interventions and added significant value to the project, as well as creating capacity in countries without previous experience in humanitarian responses.

GOOD PRACTICE 4 - Strategic investment in local actors' capacity-building ensures continuity and localization of gender-responsive services.

Recognizing the temporary nature of the project, a key focus from the beginning was on strengthening the capacities of implementing partners, local partners and stakeholders. This approach aimed to ensure the continuity of services and advocacy efforts

beyond the project's duration, by equipping actors with the tools and knowledge to deliver gender-responsive support and to engage effectively in protection and coordination spaces. In Honduras, existing grassroots organizations and networks enabled rapid uptake and ownership. This model is broadly transferable to other crisis settings, but its success requires early engagement, context-appropriate training tools, and follow-up mechanisms to address high turnover at governmental level, which remained a limitation in Costa Rica and Panama.

GOOD PRACTICE 5 - Building inclusive and effective humanitarian responses through proven practices.

The evaluation highlights the continuation and reinforcement of existing practices such as cross-sectoral collaboration, social cohesion initiatives, academic partnerships, and frontline engagement as good practices contributing to the success of the project. These practices have demonstrated their effectiveness in promoting gender-responsive and inclusive humanitarian action and should be sustained and scaled where possible. However, replicability depends on institutional openness and the availability of safe, inclusive spaces, still lacking for LGBTIQ+ populations in several intervention areas due to fears of discrimination and social exclusion.

7. CONCLUSIONS

1. Gender-responsive design and alignment with gender equality commitments.

The project's gender-transformative design effectively responded to the intersecting vulnerabilities of women, girls, and marginalized groups in migratory contexts, demonstrating both contextual relevance and alignment with UN Women's and Japan's humanitarian and gender equality commitments. Its use of culturally adapted methodologies and survivor-centered responses indicates a commendable application of the LNOB principle. However, limited inclusion of LGBTQ+ persons and language accessibility gaps reveal that intersectionality was not fully operationalized. These omissions highlight a need for stronger institutional mechanisms to systematically identify and respond to all forms of exclusion. Coordination challenges, especially with local institutions, further point to insufficient integration with national systems—limiting sustainability and scale-up. For future interventions, these findings suggest the strategic importance of early stakeholder mapping and long-term institutional embedding of methodologies to move beyond project-based gains toward policy-level transformation.

Related to findings: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 13.

2. Achieving gender-responsive outcomes

The project demonstrated a strong capacity to achieve short-term gender-responsive outcomes, particularly in enhancing access to protection services, fostering leadership and women's empowerment and raising awareness of GBV in mobile and host communities. Its participatory design and localized delivery models were valued by beneficiaries and show a clear pathway for gender mainstreaming in humanitarian action. Besides, the project made significant strides in advancing women's leadership and empowerment within migration and crisis contexts. By integrating gender-sensitive protocols, delivering targeted training, and fostering

leadership initiatives, it not only strengthened institutional capacities but also elevated the voices of women affected by human mobility. Guided by the WPS framework, the project contributed to empower local women peacebuilders to take active roles in peacebuilding and social cohesion efforts.

Nonetheless, persistent implementation bottlenecks—logistical delays, procurement inefficiencies, and limited flexibility to evolving migration flows—diminished timeliness and effectiveness. These operational weaknesses signal a lack of adaptive management systems that are critical in humanitarian contexts. Additionally, while qualitative feedback confirms positive behavioral shifts, the absence of robust impact metrics limits the project's ability to evidence systemic change. Strategic decision-makers should interpret these findings as a call for enhanced agility in delivery mechanisms, stronger quantitative frameworks for tracking institutional transformation, and more structured engagement with grassroots actors to ensure lasting local ownership.

Related to findings: 6, 8, 9, 10.

3. Sustainability of changes achieved

While the project made strides in embedding gender-sensitive protocols and fostering women's leadership, particularly among indigenous groups, these achievements remain vulnerable without a formal sustainability strategy. Its success in policy integration (e.g., the incorporation into Honduras' legal frameworks) illustrates the potential for institutional transformation when advocacy, capacity building, and leadership support converge. However, the durability of results is at risk due to political instability, inconsistent national commitment, and limited ongoing training mechanisms. Moreover, despite the project's short implementation period and the notable progress achieved through social cohesion initiatives, it remains crucial to ensure

sustained support for local actors to consolidate and expand peacebuilding efforts. These findings reveal a crucial insight: sustainability in humanitarian settings depends not only on technical interventions but on building resilient ecosystems of practice. Future efforts should prioritize the development of institutional anchors (e.g., permanent training units, local advisory committees), alongside advocacy strategies that maintain political momentum and civil society engagement during periods of flux.

Related to findings: 9, 11, 12.

4. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning

The project developed a robust M&E Analyst, which although starting late in the project stages, was instrumental in shifting toward a results-based management approach. The hiring of a dedicated M&E officer and development of tailored tools marked a turning point, enhancing both accountability and learning. However, inconsistencies in indicator design and misalignment with the project's dynamic context undermined data reliability and interpretability. This reveals a deeper design flaw: the indicators were not sufficiently flexible or context responsive. These limitations suggest that even strong M&E systems falter without adaptive planning and ongoing reflection. For future programming, investments in real-time data feedback loops, participatory indicator reviews, and flexible monitoring frameworks will be essential to ensure learning drives timely course correction and strategic adaptation.

Related to finding: 8.

5. Adaptability to evolving humanitarian contexts

The project's ability to reallocate resources and deploy mobile units in response to new migration hotspots showcases its tactical adaptability. Yet, this responsiveness was largely reactive, shaped by delayed assumptions about migration flows. The introduction of acceleration plans occurred after critical opportunities had passed, suggesting that early

warning and contingency planning mechanisms were underutilized. This pattern highlights the broader challenge of integrating foresight and anticipatory action into humanitarian programming. For decision-makers, this points to the urgent need for scenario planning and risk-informed programming that can proactively respond to the volatile nature of migration crises. Strengthening strategic foresight capacities will be essential to transform reactivity into resilience.

Related to findings: 2, 8.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Initial recommendations were built based on triangulation of the information collected and presented as a set of potential areas of work. These evaluation recommendations are derived from the findings and correspond to one or more of the conclusions outlined above. The recommendations have been validated by key stakeholders through meetings and communication exchanges and are classified according to their level of priority and timeline.

RECOMMENDATION 1. Institutionalize and strengthen gender-transformative practices into humanitarian responses initiatives.

Priority → High

Timeline → Short-term

Related to conclusion: 1 and 2.

Suggested steps to be taken:

- Ensure that gender considerations, such as gender analysis and gender need assessments are integrated from the initial phase of any project. Consider also the analysis from an intersectionality approach and incorporate data and information about different axes of vulnerabilities and discrimination.
- Embed gender-transformative tools (e.g., Calls for Action on Women in Human Mobility, GBV referral protocols) into national migration and humanitarian frameworks through formal agreements with governments or humanitarian networks at the national level.
- Continue the efforts to design and develop comprehensive leadership and women's empowerment component into LEAP initiatives/programmes that combine structured mentorship, targeted capacity-building workshops (on leadership, negotiation, and policy engagement), and support for the creation and strengthening of women-led networks and coalitions.
- Strengthen inclusive outreach to LGBTIQ+ population by developing targeted strategies, such as establishing safe spaces, partnering with LGBTIQ+ organizations, and integrating specific indicators into monitoring frameworks.
- Incorporate specific activities to work and engage with male population, either through prevention activities, or by involving them as equal and supportive intimate and/or affective partners, or even as agents of change against GBV, into the protection service delivery.

To be led by: UN WOMEN (Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action team), National Governments (migration departments and women's affairs machineries), CSOs and international humanitarian organizations and UN agencies.

Impact: ensure gender-responsive protection services in humanitarian response and gender discriminations practices within migrant population and improve social cohesion in host and migrant communities.

Difficulty: moderate due to institutional resistance (gender-transformative practices challenge existing power dynamics) and inadequate training or understanding of intersectionality and gender equality approaches among service providers and institutions.

If not implemented there is a heightened risks of failing to adequately address the differentiated needs of women, girls and LGBTIQ+ individuals in crisis setting. Gender-blind responses can exacerbate existing gender inequalities and limit the effectiveness of humanitarian interventions.

RECOMMENDATION 2. Strengthen the sustainability of knowledge on gender related issues by promoting inclusive capacity-building strategies with key stakeholders from the LAC region

Priority → High Timeline → Short-term Related to conclusion: 2 and 3

Suggested steps to be taken:

- Institutionalize training programs for humanitarian actors, border officials, and police on gender-responsive protection services, with refresher courses to counter high turnover rates.
- Develop tools and knowledge repositories to ensure training programs address diversity, including gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, etc. involving staff at all levels—not just those working in gender or social development.
- Deliver gender-responsive training on social cohesion and women's empowerment through mobile service units targeting women, girls in mobility and host communities.
- Collect short feedback surveys to monitor what women and girls in mobility and host communities are learning and use data to improve training program content over time.

To be led by: UN Women (WPS and Humanitarian Action teams; and UNW training centre), the gender or women department of academic institutions from LAC, protection areas and/or gender focal points of international humanitarian agencies (e.g. IOM and UNHCR) and potential IP of LEAPs initiatives.

Impact: Improved gender-responsive humanitarian services since frontline actors will be better equipped to understand and respond to the specific needs of women, girls and LGBTIQ+ in mobility crises. Strengthens the project's LNoB approach through inclusive outreach.

Difficulty: Moderate.

If not implemented: GBV, violence and trafficking networks will be perpetuated in human mobility crisis. Besides, it might also represent a missed opportunities for regional cooperation and partnership. Additionally, women and girls in mobility may miss critical opportunities to access information, support and capacity-building.

RECOMMENDATION 3. Optimize procurement and logistical processes of UNWOMEN for humanitarian action initiatives

Priority → High Timeline Short-term Related to conclusion: 2

Suggested steps to be taken:

- Streamline procurement procedures (e.g., pre-approved supplier lists, decentralized decision-making) to reduce delays humanitarian and emergency activities and service delivery.
- Negotiate with donors more flexible procurement timelines and policies.
- Develop agreements at local level with multiple suppliers to be agile and respond accordingly to the emergency.
- Review and adapt UNW fast-track procedures for humanitarian action initiatives.

To be led by: UN Women (Regional Office WPS and Humanitarian Action areas, procurement areas; and programme manager with linkages to WPS areas within the Country Offices).

Impact: it will improve the efficiency and the cost-effectiveness of humanitarian response initiatives since it will reduce bureaucratic delays, and it will accelerate service delivery.

Difficulty: moderate.

If not implemented: it will be missed gender-sensitive opportunities and it will be losing credibility with local and national partners and with donors.

RECOMMENDATION 4. Promote adaptive management for continuous learning on humanitarian actions responses

Priority → Medium-high Timeline → Medium-term Related to conclusion: 2, 3, 4 and 5

Suggested steps to be taken:

- Establish feedback loops to integrate lessons learned and adjust strategies, accordingly, and including participation of humanitarian staff and teams to review and adapt the logic of intervention according to the humanitarian and migration trends.
- Conduct regular context analyses to recalibrate programming in response to changing migration flows (e.g., rising returns, policy changes, etc.).
- Provide translation services, multilingual materials, and culturally adapted methodologies (e.g., visual aids, community liaisons) for non-Spanish-speaking migrants, particularly Haitian, African, and Asian populations in any humanitarian action response.

To be led by: UN Women (Regional Office WPS and Humanitarian Action areas, procurement areas; and programme manager with linkages to WPS areas within the Country Offices).

Impact: by integrating ongoing learning and adapting to changing migration trends, humanitarian actions responses become more relevant, timely, and effective. Besides, humanitarian teams may feel more engaged and capable of influencing change when they can adapt strategies based on what they learn (staff empowerment and ownership).

Difficulty: Moderate-high

If not implemented: without adaptive management, humanitarian interventions risk becoming disconnected from the realities of migration flows and needs on the ground. Additionally, there is also the risk of humanitarian staff frustrated.

RECOMMENDATION 5. Strengthen institutional partnerships at regional and national level

Priority → Medium-high Timeline → Short-term Related to conclusion: 2 and 3

Suggested steps to be taken:

- Convene permanent policy dialogue: Organize roundtable discussions with authorities at regional and national level to address more efficiently government needs, gain ownership and align project methodologies and approaches with national frameworks
- Develop MoU with different entities working on human mobility and gender-related issues at national level aiming at establishing formal agreements for long-term institutional adoption of strategies and collaboration with UNW
- Collaborate in building internal capacities— As part of the MoU train government agencies on gender-responsive human in mobility policies (migrants, refugees, IDPs)

To be led by: UN Women (WPS and Humanitarian Action areas) will serve as the lead agency in reinforcing collaboration with national protection institutions and civil society organizations operating at the national level

Impact: Greater sustainability of project interventions, institutionalized gender-responsive protection mechanisms

Difficulty: Medium – requires coordination among multiple stakeholders and policy adjustments.

If not implemented: Lack of continuity in protection services; short-term impacts without systemic change.

RECOMMENDATION 6. Enhance multi-sectoral partnerships expanding engagement with actors in health, legal and economic sectors to provide a more holistic support system

Priority → Medium-high Timeline Medium-term Related to conclusion: 2 and 3.

Suggested steps to be taken:

- Conduct stakeholder mapping to identify relevant actors in health, legal aid, economic empowerment, and other sectors working at the borders
- Develop pilot joint initiatives to implement small-scale multi-sectoral programs to test integration effectiveness.

To be led by: UNW (WPS, Humanitarian and Women Economic Empowerment areas), UNFPA, IOM (areas / departments participating in the IASC); local governments (with linkages to the national Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women) and WROs.

Impact: Holistic service provision, improved protection coverage, and strengthened coordination.

Difficulty: Medium: Requires engagement with diverse sectors beyond traditional humanitarian actors.

If not implemented: Limited-service coverage, fragmented assistance, and reduced support for migrants.
